

Perseverance

Peace Corps is the most difficult thing I have ever done in my entire life. At times the challenges I face make me wonder why I am still here when so much awaits me at home, but the will to finish and do good through development drive me to stay put and keep trying.

In the Eastern Caribbean volunteers start off their service with a main assignment and a school attachment. During training, youth developers are required to implement a service learning activity with their school attachment to demonstrate their ability to plan and execute a project. At my school attachment the kindergarten class seemed to be the only class with enough flexibility to do this kind of activity. So I spent most of my time familiarizing myself with the class and talking with the teacher about the project. Many days I found myself alone with about 30 five-year-olds running around, throwing things, and screaming. It was exhausting and at times terrifying. We accomplished the activity, a schoolyard clean up, and the kids loved it, but I was ready to be done with the school. As soon as Peace Corps gave me the go ahead, I was planning to make a clean break. I did not feel cut out for the wild and chaotic school environment. I doubted that there was anything at all that I could contribute. However, as suggested by Peace Corps staff, I stuck with it for a little while longer.

Within a few months I developed a great relationship with the principal of the school. We started sharing ideas and found that our passions were similar. Soon we began life skills lessons with some of the classes resulting in some neat behavior improvements among the students. Next we started a chess club that blossomed to almost 50 students immediately. Both programs are now operating successfully and almost entirely on their own, and I still have another year to go! Currently our sights are set on expanding the life skills program, hosting a chess camp, and improving the library and resource center.

Looking back I am so glad that I ploughed through the challenges and persevered with my school. My work there has become precious to me. Peace Corps volunteers often talk about how rare it is to see the fruits of your work. I feel honored to have a part in changes that have affected children in a positive way. Those moments are the ones that give me the will to see this to the end.