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Language Gap, Culture Chasm: Teaching Haitian Children in Springfield

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- A 2021 Cedarville University graduate is helping French-speaking Haitian children bridge not just a language gap but a huge culture chasm in his efforts to teach them English.

Since the fall, 2021 [linguistics](#) graduate Ian MacPhail-Fausey has been teaching Haitian children how to speak English in Springfield, Ohio, schools, an area in dire need of help with their growing Haitian immigrant population.

[Reportedly](#), Springfield schools saw their English as a Second Language (ESL) student population more than double by the end of 2021. This is due to the low cost of living, thriving job market and well-established immigrant outreach efforts in the area.

In response, Springfield schools hired numerous ESL teachers throughout the last year, including MacPhail-Fausey, who originally applied to be a French interpreter for Springfield's school district.

For two months, MacPhail-Fausey interpreted French for students at multiple schools in ESL classrooms. In December, after a position opened, he was granted an ESL teaching role with Springfield High School, where he has been working since.

"A lot of the students come in as what we call newcomers, speaking no English at all," MacPhail-Fausey explained. "My role is to give them English language instruction so they can go into their content courses."

"It's like teaching a regular high school classroom, but the students aren't regular," he added. "There is a lot of unique culture and entirely different needs to address. I love interacting with them and they teach me so much about their culture and themselves."

MacPhail-Fausey describes one interaction with a student as more influential than the rest, "We were able to sit down and talk about life, politics and culture entirely in English," he shared. "That student had so much to talk about and finally, because of our work in class, could

share it with someone they were around in America. Afterward, he was so comfortable coming to me for help in class.”

Speaking at an advanced level in six languages, MacPhail-Fausey is equipped to teach students at a variety of skill levels. “Even within my ESL 1 beginners' course, I have some students closer to an intermediate level and some with no English experience at all,” he said. “A lot of what I have to do is bridge that gap and differentiate between the two, so I address each of their individual needs.

MacPhail-Fausey leverages his knowledge of the students’ languages to show them how their native tongue can be a tool in learning English. “From my degree, I have learned to identify common grammatical themes between English and other languages. I enjoy helping students understand how their current way of speaking is actually an advantage when switching languages.”

“By making the effort to learn the languages they speak and building relationships with them, I have made them feel more connected and established here.”

Ultimately, MacPhail-Fausey's reward comes from the children themselves.

“When the students have a huge smile on their face when they see you, it feels really good,” he continued. “God has been good to me and has blessed me in many ways. Being able to serve them is an overflow of the grace God has given me.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,715 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including the Bachelor of Arts in [linguistics](#), strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit [cedarville.edu](#).

Written by Alex Boesch

Photo captions:

- 1- MacPhail-Fausey Celebrates Graduating from Cedarville University with his Wife and Brother
- 2- Cedarville University’s English, Literature and Modern Language Department Ensures their Students are Well-Read

Photo 1 by Ian Macphail-Fausey, Springfield, OH.

Photo 2 by Scott Huck, Cedarville University