
TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

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October 2023

A Proud Moment

After the third week of classes we talked to groups of students according to their average scores. This was the breakdown we had on average scores:

- 90-100% - 3 students
- 80-89% - 13 students
- 70-79% - 7 students
- 60-69% - 10 students
- 50-59% - 7 students.

During tea time we sent the students at or above 80% out to play soccer and Frisbee, as usual. Nancy and I gave the 50-59% students the hard news that they had to improve on the next two weekly tests, or they may not qualify for the second half of our course because they wouldn't be able to keep up with the faster pace. TTF will pay for them to enroll in another pre-form one course that should be more helpful to them because it requires less advanced understanding of English. Jordan and Nancy told the 60-69% group that they needed to study more because their test scores must not go down. Both Nancy and Jordan are both very good at hard love messages so they took on this most challenging task!

I had the pleasure of talking to the 70-79% group. I opened by telling them that they were good students and doing fine in our class. That statement alone broke the tangible tension in the room! (They had been certain that by being singled out then put into a group, they would receive a harder message!) I then told them that I thought they could all do better if they studied harder. I challenged them to work to get an 80% or above on the next weekly exam.

Last weekend I got the results. Every single one of them had scored above 80%! And one got a 93%! Seeing those scores was the most gratifying moment

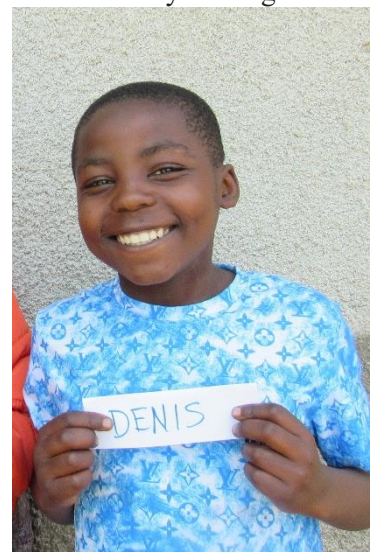
I've had in teaching. Our classes form a very small sample size, but in my experience Tanzanian kids in this age group respond incredibly well to encouragement.

Marty

Denis

We're officially at week 5 of our 10-week teaching course here in Manow Tanzania. It has been an interesting five weeks that I wouldn't trade it for the world. I've built many relationships with the students that had helped me connect with them and understand them better. One such student is a sweet, goofy boy named Denis. Denis brings energy in everything he does. He makes it a point to make people laugh no matter what he does. It's absolutely comical. In the beginning, Denis focused on being funny rather than on his studies, so we had a "come to Jesus" talk about no football at tea time if I saw any scores below a 60%. After our talk he dialed back the goofiness and took the class more seriously; and his grades improved mightily.

I've enjoyed playing football with the boys during tea time because it lets me show a less serious side of myself to them. Football is essential in their lives and talking about it gets them engaged much more than anything else. The two big teams in Tanzania are Simba Football Club and the Young Africans. I am partial to the Young Africans because of Martin Mwakaje's



influence; however, most of the students favor Simba. I've never argued with 12-year olds so vehemently before -- until it came to Simba vs Young Africans. They try greatly to use English in these arguments because they want to win the argument at all costs. *Jordan*

Tumsifu

One of the first things I noticed when we started teaching was that the girls are much more reserved than the boys. This is because they are just not being given the same opportunities as the boys slowly but surely. One of our students Tumsifu was one of those girls who was very shy at the beginning of our class. She lives in the dorms, so we see her around Manow quite a bit. The first few weeks she was afraid to speak to me because I was a young male. But talking with her after class and engaging with her more, she has come out of her shell.



She now goes out of her way to try and speak English with me. This week I raced the fastest kid in the village -- Goodluck who is 19 years old and one of last year's Pre-Form 1 English students. On the appointed day of the race we could not find him. I asked Tumsifu to

help me locate him, and she used her English perfectly to ask the other students where he was and to let him know that we were waiting for him. It was great to see how far she's come now that we are at the halfway mark of the course. *Jordan*

Our Students

The girls in our class are generally doing really well this year. We've been seeing over recent years, but this year is extreme. The top seven scores over the first four exams are all girls! Of the top 15 scores, 12 are girls!

In both 2010 and 2015, when I taught the top 3 to 5 scores were boys. Nancy has also seen this as a

consistent trend. What is going on? Of course, we want to make sense of this even while we fully know we can never understand the complexities of this society.

One thing we can say with confidence is that the English of the students entering our class has improved steadily since 2009 when we started this course. Apparently, the primary schools in the area are putting more effort and expertise toward teaching English. This year, our students come from 9 different primary schools and we can see a difference in their English proficiency depending on their primary school. But, again, compared to earlier years they all seem to have a better grasp of English.

We discussed the trend between girls and boys with Martin Mwakaje. His hypothesis is that boys are becoming disillusioned with the economic opportunities after getting higher degrees. They see older male relatives with advanced degrees having difficulty getting jobs. Indeed, we talk to many of our former students with university degrees and some of them are having trouble finding jobs. Martin's sister is supporting one of our scholarship students, and she insisted that it be a boy because she thinks boys need encouragement to stay engaged in their education. Our program has always stressed the importance of educating girls. Of course that is still valid, but we also need to be aware of what may be going on with the boys.

Perhaps the ball is now in the court of those who have the power to improve Tanzania's economy. If they are able to create more career opportunities for their citizens, they have a work force, better educated than in the past and craving opportunities. (Again, I am sure this is overly simplified, but I cannot resist the temptation of trying to make sense out of what we are seeing.) *Marty*

The Next Generation

In 2001 when I taught biology to Form 3 (juniors in high school), Allen Mwandosya was one of the 63 students in my class. To say he was at the top of the class would have been misleading -- no a complete

lie. Despite his standing, he was an incredibly nice kid – rather shy, respectful, kind, and he had a desire to learn English, if not Biology.

He failed my class, and at least one other, and did not complete high school at Manow. But he did keep in touch with me via email. He kept me apprised of his life, including his love life. In 2010 (the second year of our Pre-Form 1 English course) Allen invited me to his wedding to Victoria, which volunteer Emily Conrad, Liz (my daughter), and I attended. Years later I met his kids. Each year I returned, he made a special effort to see me and shower me with kindness and gifts of food. Allen always calls me Mom.

He told me once that failing my class was the “kick in the butt” that he needed to get motivated. As I said he is a kind soul. And he was right. He became a secondary school Swahili teacher and has now moved up to a district education official.

This year he brought his daughter Hellen to take the entrance exam for our class. He was so confident in her English abilities, he paid for the dormitory for her to stay here in Manow before the exam. I was flabbergasted at this confidence – especially based on his performance 22 years before. I am the one that needed more confidence. As it turns out, Hellen is top of the class academically, out-going, and a born leader. She helps the students at her table (one who can barely see the board, and one who is definitely at the other end of the English curve). She helps us understand when kids in the class get sick or hurt. And she helps girls in the dormitory both in our class and the Manow Lutheran Junior Seminary course. What’s crazy about Hellen - is that she wants to be an actress. I think she will. I feel blessed to have witnessed the next generation of students here. What a gift!

Nancy

Send email!!

We would love to hear from you. We may not be able to respond as quickly as in the US, but we really like hearing from you.

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