

One School At A Time

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BECAUSE OF YOU, BBINIKILA SCHOOL WILL SOON HAVE ENOUGH WATER!

Bbinikila School (partner school #2) had severe water challenges. In July 2018, this school was the ONLY partner school that had completely run out of rainwater (collected off the roof and stored in above ground tanks). Because they kindly share their water with the local community, they had run short. Their water shortage could be easily addressed by installing 2 more 10,000-liter water tanks (\$6,000 total cost). Wonderful One School at a Time donors rallied to the cause this October and Bbinikila School will soon be blessed by greater water storage capacity. We feel immense gratitude to the One School family here in the USA that makes this all possible!



Boys collect water from swamp.



Water tank soon to be installed.



Ugandan Schools Deliver Valuable Lessons to Founders

Patty Gilbert and Bay Roberts founded One School at a Time in 2005. In July 2018, they visited the five One School partner schools in Kassanda District, Uganda.

Over the years, Patty and I have often questioned whether One School at a Time really makes a difference in people's lives. This summer, we got our answer.

Ten years ago, the teachers, parents and community members told us, "We are poor. We can't do anything for ourselves. Can you help us — what should we do? What can you give us?" All the focus was on us as visitors, making us comfortable and attending to our every need (e.g. bringing us a sofa while watching a school sports day) while asking us for new classrooms, water systems, text books, and desks.



Patty on a velvet couch

But now, these people are too busy doing their OWN work to be bothered to fuss over us, their foreign visitors. Instead they can't wait to share everything that THEY are doing. They tell us, "Look at us. We work as a team. When we succeed, we succeed together. When we have a setback, we have that setback together." Sylvia, head teacher at Mirembe Kawesa school, eagerly shares with us her journal where she assiduously keeps notes from every One School training — non-violent communication, financial management and SMART goals. Then she pulls out the next note-book where she records information about every single older girl at her school who receives re-useable sanitary pads, and their challenges — our favorite was a list of boys who "bother my girls". Agnes, head teacher at Bbinikila Primary School, tours us around, proudly showing us the thriving school gardens (corn, banana, cassava, coffee) and the school lunch program where EVERY student receives a bowl of porridge. Annette, a teacher at Kassanda Boarding Primary, provides us a tour of P1 and P2 classrooms — we are astonished at the richness of the learning environment (a play house, a play store with fake currency, a crafts table, posters and colorful displays, math manipulatives made of bottle caps) and the creativity of the teacher needed

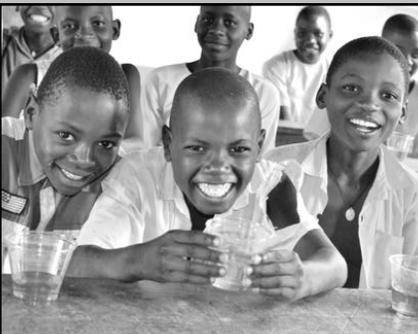
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The Joy of the Big Balloon

Patty Gilbert (One School co-founder) brought the gift of hands-on science to the 2,250 students at the 5 partner schools this July 2018. From a giant solar black balloon shaped like a hotdog (to learn that hot air expands) to electricity sticks (the human body makes a great circuit) to invisible slimy orbs in a bucket of water (not everything can be seen), Patty's science experiments had everybody thinking... and laughing!



Solar Balloon



Mixing Colors



What's in There?

to make an impressive learning environment with the most meager of materials. The best was an abacus made of toilet paper rolls that stretched across the classroom. When we noticed a "mistake" in the sequence of the numbers on the abacus, the teacher proudly informed us that she incorporates these sorts of mistakes to encourage her students to think. Later, we were told by the head teacher that these young students have been recently identified as the best readers in the district. Teachers from far and wide are stopping by to see the classrooms and absorb some of these teachers' magic.

The greatest surprise to us was what changes these schools felt were most valuable TO THEM. As Westerners who do not live on \$2/day, we surmised that the most important improvements would be water systems, new latrines, new classrooms and new textbooks. But to our surprise, that is NOT what they told us. Instead, what mattered most to them was the improvement of **relationships** between teachers, between teachers and students, and between teachers and parents. Teachers often shared how relationships with students had improved greatly now that students no longer were "caned". Another improvement that was a source of great pride was the girl's sanitary pad program. The program had broken "the silence about menstruation". Girls were getting the support they needed to stay in school. And finally, the teachers mentioned how much easier it was for them to do their jobs now they were using collaborative learning in the classroom. Instead of spending their days tediously lecturing to students in rows and trying to maintain discipline, the teachers were free to move around the clusters of desks where students worked together to learn.



All of this really struck home the day that Bay was invited to accompany the five head teachers of the partner schools to visit a passion fruit farmer. Passion fruits are a local delicacy and cost about 25 cents each. These teachers wisely ascertained that growing passion fruits at their schools could potentially generate much needed income that could be used for things like hiring a

school cook and security guard, paying for first aid and educational supplies, and creating a fund for water system maintenance. Always game, Bay came along. As soon as they arrived at the farm, the teachers were abuzz, talking excitedly with the farmer in Lugandan about all things passion fruit. "How long does it take for the vines to produce fruit? How do you water the plants? Have you had any problems with pests or disease?" And on and on. Given Bay's knowledge of Lugandan is poor, she was completely lost: "Hey everyone, What are you talking about? What about me?" They were so engaged in their own work that they couldn't be bothered with Bay. And Bay celebrated that. The teachers were amazed that this simple man with barely a 2nd grade education had figured out how to grow these fruits and that his operation had paid for his new house and his children's school fees.

They agreed amongst themselves that Kassanda Primary School should be selected for a pilot project. Head teacher, Majeed, enthusiastically shared with Bay the passion fruit plan he and the teachers had created. Within a month, they had enlisted the local farmer to consult with them on how to plant, how to amend their soil, and where to obtain the seedlings. The students measured out the plots, did the math, and peppered the farmer with questions. One School at a Time celebrates the energy, intelligence, and can-do attitude of these teachers. We can't wait to see how this turns out! Stay tuned.



Local farmer instructs students.

The Beautiful Project

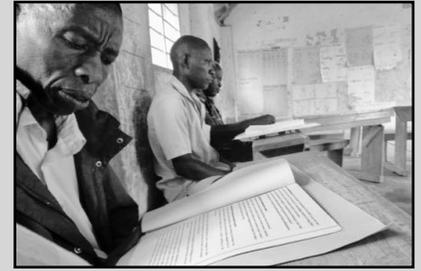
Fifteen Ugandan students held their paintbrushes with intense concentration. Classes for that day were long over, but these students were transfixed with the task at hand. Complete the shading on a leaf, add the colors of the Ugandan flag to a giant heart (red for blood, black for skin, yellow for the sun), climb the ladder up and down, clean the paintbrush and pick a new color. Community members join in, "Can I paint the butterfly?" Young children leap with excitement, passersby stop to take it all in. The One School at a Time driver diligently completes his work on a section of tree bark while the One School Field Office manager paints a flower.

Why invest scarce resources in creating something beautiful at an impoverished Ugandan school? Because poor communities need beauty and art as much or more than affluent communities. The shared experience of creating art can heal and can bring communities together in profound ways. Creating something of great beauty can remind the students of what they are truly capable of. Last July, artist Pam Sukhum, collaborated with 60 eager Ugandan students from Kassanda Secondary School (One School partner school #4) for 7 days to paint a mural together on the school's 40,000-liter water tank. Creative warm-up exercises in the classroom helped the students



loosen up. In one exercise, students drew with their eyes closed —something completely new to them. No one had ever asked these students what was beautiful or meaningful to them before. This question precipitated an explosion of colorful images — flowers, fruits, corn, butterflies, animals, cows, soccer balls, soccer players, cooking pots, grass shacks. Pam used these images to "pencil in" a cohesive mural on the tank. Students then joined Pam to work in groups of 15 to paint the images. Seeing the mural come to life was a joyful experience for everyone in the school community — the mural is now the talk of Kassanda town!

This remarkable project has brought pride and a feeling of accomplishment to the students and the school. Pam wrote: "Day after day, we worked side-by-side to create a work of beauty and inspiration. Through the common bond of art making, we quickly came to know one another and ourselves so intimately. We shared the challenges — the blood, sweat and tears, AND the joy, laughter and triumphs together. I have witnessed again and again in these projects that the creative spirit is always faithfully waiting to come forth if given just the slightest encouragement (even in the darkest of moments). This spirit illuminates our divinity and indomitable spirits within. May this mural serve as a symbol of life, communion with nature and each other, and the creative spirit that is alive and well in each of us just waiting to burst forth!"



The School Board That Could Not Get Anything Done

Typically, when One School at a Time partners with a school, the stakeholders get energized, the board gets to work, the parents begin to volunteer enthusiastically, teachers pitch in and momentum builds.

But after two years of partnering with Kassanda Secondary, none of those things had happened yet.

It turns out that Ugandan public secondary schools typically have a paid board. The cost for Kassanda Secondary to have a single board meeting was \$536! This explained why only one board meeting had occurred in the past five years—the school simply did not have the money. And because these board members were paid, everyone wanted the job. The board members were not from the local community and themselves had no children attending the school. Serving on the board was just a private windfall. Therefore, the only action item accomplished was board members collecting their paychecks. One School encouraged this school to create a volunteer board of parents and locals. At a cost of \$10 per meeting (food), the board now celebrates achievements such as obtaining the school's land title and providing a party for the graduates.

We assume that for most of us, school boards are boring entities, but they are critical to the healthy development of a school.

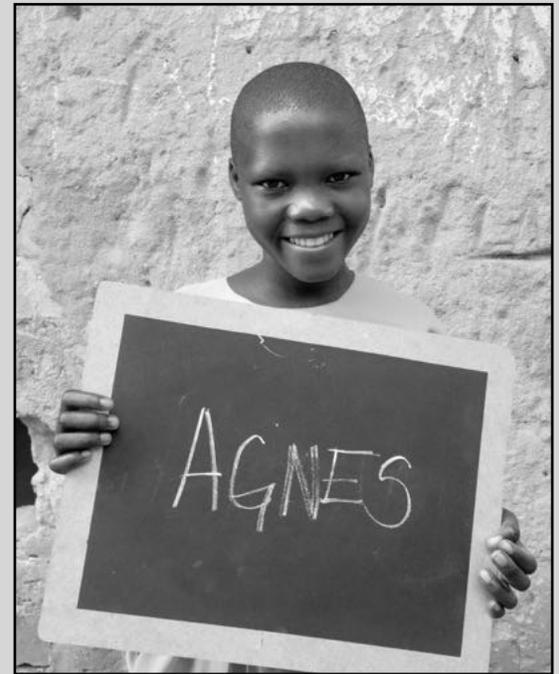


How to Help

By donating to One School at a Time, you are doing so much more than helping a poor Ugandan school. You are bettering the life of every child that attends, and their families and community. A little support goes a long way.

Helping schools succeed in Uganda is not about dumping resources on problems and moving on, it is about building strong partnerships with local communities to harness the remarkable intelligence, vision and commitment that they share for education.

Join with us in this beautiful work! Go to 1schoolatime.org and click on: **Donate Now**. We now accept recurrent donations. Even \$5 or \$10 a month can make a huge difference. You may also donate using the enclosed envelope.



Help us ensure Agnes stays in school in 2019.
Donate now!



One School at a Time
P.O. Box 342
Eldorado Springs, CO 80025