

Rwanda School Project presents
15 years of Leadership in East Africa
Questions & Answers from our May 20th Zoomshare

Are there elective classes, and if so what are those? What is offered outside the general syllabus?

In addition to core courses in English, mathematics, science, social sciences, and computer literacy, students may also choose to take art, guitar, music and classes in agriculture. At times, volunteers who have come for long term stays have also offered classes on various topics such as photography, karate, crocheting and drama. We'd love to do more with robotics or coding and with Double Dutch jump-roping or Step.

Is there an interscholastic sports program?

Prior to COVID-19 and quarantine, our students participated in interscholastic sports with schools in the area around Rwamagana. We look forward to those opportunities beginning again once the government is able to relax the necessary virus-related restrictions.

What are the qualifications to be a student?

Each student takes an entrance exam to determine their readiness for enrollment. Every student who meets the entrance criteria and wants to enroll will be able to do so, regardless of their ability to pay tuition. Our mission is to develop Rwanda's next leaders, even if they are unable to afford a strong education. After enrollment, a positive school report and results of the annual National Examination are used to determine a student's readiness for promotion to the next grade. When we have limited spaces, we look for students who demonstrate a real eagerness to be in school or who have shown leadership in previous grades. An example would be S-----, whose former principal told us, "she is always the leader of her class but her family doesn't have funds to send her to secondary school."

What is the cost to sponsor a student for one year?

It costs \$1,920 to sponsor a student, which pays for tuition, room, board, books and supplies. This amount has been increased over the last few years to help us achieve our goal of being financially sustainable for years to come.

Our greatest need to achieve this goal is to increase our number of sponsors, so every student who qualifies to attend our school may do so, even if they are unable to pay their full tuition. If you are interested in sponsoring such a student, please read more about Sponsorship at our website: <http://rwandaschoolproject.org/get-involved/sponsor/> We also encourage people to think about sponsorship with friends....we've had a whole family sponsor a student, and a pair of dentists in practice together. At another point, a church sponsored a student and a group of students did a fundraiser to sponsor a student. While our school fees are higher than some African schools you may have read about, it's

because we pay teachers a living wage and work to retain good staff; we spend more on books (library) and food.

Do students pay tuition?

Yes, every student pays something, depending on the family's ability to pay. The tuition paid in Rwanda averages to about \$1,000 a year however our actual costs are closer to \$2,000 per student. It is one of the reasons that building the library and administration building frees up more classroom space in the original classroom building which will allow us to increase our student body and therefore decrease the actual per student cost.

What is the annual budget?

Our 2021 Annual Operating Budget is \$337,513.26, which does not include capital construction expenses. You can find the details and our audited financial reports on our website.

<http://rwandaschoolproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/RSP-2021-Budget.pdf>

What is needed to complete current projects?

Currently, we are in the process of completing our Library Project. To date, we have raised \$245,354 and need approximately \$100,000 more to complete it. This project consists of administrative offices, faculty work space, sick room, science lab and the library itself. We are currently using 3 classrooms in the main classroom building (Founders Hall) for the library, faculty work space and administrative offices. Building a third science lab will make it possible to offer instruction in the biological sciences in addition to those already offered in the environmental and physical sciences. Completing this comprehensive project will give us the opportunity to increase the number of students we educate, as we reclaim the use of the three classrooms in Founders Hall.

What are the various sources of the school's income?

In a non-COVID-19 year, approximately 25% of our income comes from tuition paid by our families. 25% comes from donors for sponsorships of students in need of financial support. 24% comes from grants from our partner organizations and 26% comes from general donations.

Who and how are students admitted to the school? What are the qualifications to be a student?

We admit students who have completed their primary school education. Students apply and sit for an entrance exam. An interview with the student is held to help us learn of the academic needs and areas of passion/interests of the student. Information for students who indicate they come from financially struggling families is verified by their local government leaders. Family visits are often done to further verify the information provided by the parents and student. We sometimes talk to former teachers and principals, too.

The school used to be called the Rwamagana Lutheran School, why the change?

Our Christian roots run deep and continue to remain part of our core values. As our school grew and our reputation became more widespread, using the name “Lutheran” in Rwanda implied we were owned by the Lutheran Church of Rwanda. Since we were not affiliated with the Lutheran Church of Rwanda, a name change was necessary. Because our school had become known for producing leaders, we changed our name to be more descriptive of our identity. The name change in no way implies we have moved away from our Lutheran roots.

How many girls and how many boys are current students?

We currently have 98 girls and 90 boys.

Are there other schools like Rwamagana Leaders’ School (RLS) in Rwanda?

Few schools in Rwanda are like RLS. It is our value system and approach to educating our students that sets us apart. Because we believe students learn best by experiencing and doing, we have adopted Expeditionary Learning (EL) as our instructional model. Because we believe all of us must be good stewards of our earth, we teach the importance of environmental sustainability through teaching about our school’s solar power, water catchment system, biodigester waste system, raising cows and chickens for milk and eggs, and planting vegetables to enhance our school’s menus. Because we believe in the value of raising up capable and ethical leaders, we give students a chance to develop their leadership skills by learning from volunteers from around the world in programs such as Princeton in Africa, travel to leadership programs, take on leadership positions in our school and look for opportunities to make a difference in their communities.

How does the school promote and instill technology and college/career readiness for our global economy? (21st century skills: critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication)

All students take classes on basic computer applications. We recently were accredited to offer two Computer Science combinations at the Advanced Level. Students have the opportunity from 7th grade onward to participate in activities like debate, presentations, and our annual Talent Show. Presentation Day is an annual event at which every student is expected to present something about what they’ve learned. Critical thinking is infused throughout the entire curriculum. Students learn to defend and prove ideas, write with nuance and consider their place in the world. Reading outside of class is also an integral part of school life. Unlike a lot of schools in E Africa, our school library allows students to check out books and take them to their dorms.

What is the best way to support the library - money or is there a need for actual books to be sent?

Cash contributions are most appreciated and give us the greatest opportunity to stretch every dollar. It is very expensive to send books and materials to Rwanda, and when we buy materials locally, the economy is boosted. Stores can flourish, jobs are provided, and we can target exactly what students need. Donations can be made through our website at <http://rwandaschoolproject.org/>.

What is the school doing to be sustainable in an era of climate change?

We have dedicated ourselves and students to be economical in the usage of natural resources at our school. We have a water catchment system that allows us to store up to 80% of the water needed for the year during the rainy season decreasing the need to purchase water during the dry season in Rwanda. We also use solar energy as power for about 80% of our electrical needs and a biogas digester which converts waste into cooking gas for some of our kitchen needs. Several Princeton in Africa volunteers have focused efforts on Environmental education projects and we are working to incorporate our learnings into class curricula and club activities.

What are students growing in the gardens?

We grow many kinds of vegetables such as beets, carrots, cabbages and cucumbers.

What percentage of children are able to go to school in Rwanda

In Rwanda, primary enrollment is about 99%; secondary school enrollment is 44%.

Can you elaborate on Expeditionary Learning (EL)? I think that's really a unique aspect of the school. In 1991, EL Education was born from a partnership between Harvard Graduate School of Education and Outward Bound, USA. EL Learning joined the character-infused philosophy of Outward Bound founder Kurt Hahn, which focuses on teamwork, courage, and compassion with an active approach to learning crafted by leading Harvard scholars. Together, they developed 10 founding principles for the EL Education model. Greg Farrell, was a partner to Kurt Hahn in founding the New York Chapter of Outward Bound, and upon his retirement from Outward Bound, joined the board of the Rwanda School Project. You can find more information about EL Education at <https://eleducation.org/>

Moses, what is the biggest stress for you? What is the best way to help you?

The inability to take in a larger number of students from financially needy families at the beginning of the academic year causes me great stress. An increased number of donors who are willing and able to sponsor a student is one of the ways that would not only help me, but would also play a key role in transforming the lives of such students in whom we see future leaders.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in Rwanda over the last 10 years?

Rwanda desires and is working toward becoming the technology hub for the region. As a result of that drive and effort, great advances and resources have been made in technology, internet and communication improvement. For example, John and Robin used to fight to get 1 kilobyte per second to be able to download email. Tonight, we see Moses online live! Women empowerment has also been improved; women now number more than their male counterparts in Parliament, and barriers that used to stop girls from attending school have been mitigated. Electricity access is up from 6% nationwide when we started to 62% of households now, which includes both the national grid and off-grid sources. The impact of that is hard to overestimate: students can do homework, families can be productive in the evening, businesses can thrive, clinics have more power, etc.

The same can be said of the national grid for road construction and water access. When we started, many families were still walking as much as 5 km to get a jerrican of water. Each district now has target goals to reduce that to less than 1 km. A lot of progress has been made, but clean water access is still a big need.

Could we do this once a year? Having a ZOOM event once a year is a very good idea.

How do we get some of the art Bosco is making?

Bosco is making a traditional art from Eastern Province (where he's from) called Imigongo. We will investigate some ways to make it possible.

How can we find Rita's Music online?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwPqIqdQwJ8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yO3tjuO36yg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsWO70OWDPs>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjQJ0U_sShE

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsWO70OWDPs&list=RDBsWO70OWDPs&start_radio=1&rv=BsWO70OWDPs&t=28