
TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

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Endings (Katelyn)

It's very strange to think about leaving in just 30 hours. As one last "hurrah" we hiked Mount Kyejo with over 30 of our students. We ran, we walked, we dragged our feet (pretty much in that order). We made it to the top after trudging up steep hills covered with layers of thick mud, which oh by the way isn't an easy feat. Some of the girls wore flip flops, maybe because they didn't have any other shoes or maybe as a blatant disregard to our footwear suggestions. But regardless, by the middle of the hike they were either broken or taken off.

The "summit" was really a crater where everyone gratefully lounged and shared biscuits, mangoes, bananas, and Mama Malanga's mandazi. Mwakaje shared stories of MLJS that left the students rolling with laughter. He got serious for a moment to prepare them, as well as anyone can prepare a teenager, for the coming years at secondary school. Elieza, the 2009 winner of the Pre-form One English scholarship, accompanied us and shared his own stories of secondary school. The students enjoyed his first hand accounts and became giddy with excitement at what was in store for them. We rested a little longer, soaking up the gorgeous views of endless greenery and what would sadly become our last moments shared together. We picked up our trash and moseyed on down the mountain, walking towards the unavoidable sentiments of saying goodbye.

I will miss so many characteristics about our students: their beautiful smiles, their endless tenacity, their open hearts and minds, their ridiculous humor, their end-of-the-day groans and moans, their harmonious singing, their obsession with cameras, and their committed love to learning. This time in Tanzania has been a blessing and a curse. Only a curse because the showers of blessings we have so warmly experienced have come to an end, even though I know the ripple effects will be endless. Our students and the Manow community will be missed from the depths of my heart...until the day I travel back! *Asante sana* to all the Gloria

Dei and community members who made this immeasurable opportunity possible.

Last days with our students....(Dot)

I have grown so attached to them and will be very sorry to be gone when they move up to Secondary School.

I can say from this experience that teenagers are pretty much the same all over the world. Regardless of economic status, teenaged boys are pretty goofy and teen girls are concerned with clothes and hair-dos and "accessories". On the first Sunday of Advent we were surprised to find it was Confirmation for a class which included three of our students. What a surprise to see two of our girls in long satin dresses, high heels and fancy hair-dos and one of our young foot-ballers in a suit and tie and cuff links! It was a real "coming of age" event which brought memories of my own confirmation many years ago and how similar the two were. We were invited to one girl's house for her party. There was lots of music, dancing and wonderful food. Two of her friends who had already been confirmed acted as sort of maids of honor. The honoree and her two friends and her sisters began the dancing and then everyone danced their gifts up to the table. It was a great party in a house with a dirt floor and no electricity and everyone dressed beautifully. It seemed like another little window into this culture.

Every teacher has to let go and hope she has given her students the tools to be successful. It is perhaps harder for us to let them go when we will be going so very far away and may not be able to follow them as they move into young adulthood. I believe we have given them a jump start to moving into classes with more English. They certainly heard a lot whether they understood everything or not.

Some of our students have been a constant source of amusement, especially some of the boys. Even the more serious ones got sillier the last couple of days. And of course, there are the funny answers on tests: Rules for Staying Healthy: Wash hands in toilet

every time. Given the definition of erection, one student filled in “emergency”.

Thanks to the example of Hannah and Katelyn, some of the girls began to play football (soccer). They were super competitive and in the game between boys and girls, although the girls lost, they proved they could really mix it up.

Endings (Hannah)

Tomorrow is our last day in Manow and only now is it really beginning to feel like we are leaving. The last day of class (the day before the hike up Kyejo) was chaotic and emotional as we handed back final exams, letters to the parents, and announced the scholarship winners. I held my tears until everyone had gone and one student, who did not do very well in the course but I had grown very close to, was sitting in the back of our classroom. He was upset and when I asked him what was wrong he quickly hugged me and fought back tears. It broke my heart to see such a bright boy, and friend, so sad, both about his exam score and about us leaving. It forced me to recognize how close I had become with our students and how much I will miss seeing their personalities everyday.

As we’ve been getting ready to leave I’ve started reflecting on my first teaching experience and my first group of students. It was a struggle at times to find the balance as a young teacher between authority and friend. There were times when I wanted to reach out as a friend but needed to keep my distance as a teacher who must share her attention with the entire class. There were also times when my closeness to the students made it nearly impossible to take me seriously as a teacher. I started playing soccer with the boys during *chai* and although they were shy and giggly when I began, they were pushing me to the ground by the end of the class. I was proud that they had accepted me as an equal in their games but I was still the teammate that determined when break was over and class would resume. My call to go back inside was always met with protests from both boys and girls who all dragged their feet to get one last drink of water.

The last week as been a mad rush to get everything finished before our departure and I’m left with so many thoughts about what I have learned here. I think it is very important that as I leave this experience and all the friends I have made here, that

I remember that I am still a student. Although stepping into a new position challenged me to understand very unfamiliar relationships, I think it also helped me to reach some of the students in our class who may not have done as well. I will always remember this class of students because, both through their friendship and their learning, they have taught me so much about education. As a student, I have figured out how to learn, but in this class I figured out how to share knowledge. I’m leaving Manow and Pre-Form One with so many new ideas and I’m so excited to meet next year’s volunteers!

Get Involved!!

Here are some ways you can get more involved with this project:

- Volunteer to be one of our teachers
- Sponsor a student.
- Learn about the program from our website:
<http://tanzaniateachingfoundation.org/>

God’s Blessings and Peace,
Dot, Katelyn, & Hannah