



Opportunity Education Foundation

"Educating Children Around the World"

July 2013

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WHAT DID WE LEARN?

What did we learn from our Ghana Education Experience trip in June?

First and foremost, we learned to be grateful.

Grateful for:

- Our infinitely patient and kind hosts, (Perpi, Tina, Solomon, Ali, Nathaniel, Abigail, Yaw, Oduro and everyone with Student Youth Travel Organization)
- The 18 generously gifted trip participants who volunteered their time in OEF schools
- The 6 educators affiliated with Louisiana College who presented professional development seminars for hundreds of Ghanaian teachers
- The schools in Ghana that opened their classrooms and hearts to us all.



OEF Ghana Education Experience 2013

We had a remarkable group and amazing trip.

We all learned a lot – from each other, but even more so from the students, teachers and administrators at the schools.

Janet, the principal at Tarkwa Islamic Primary, summed up the value of education and her staffs' devotion to their students' success.

"When our students pass the (high school) placement tests and get the chance to continue their education, we (teachers) are so thankful – we celebrate this great joy with our students and their families."

While we enjoyed the excursion trip to the coastal paradise of Elmina, Kakum National Park and learning more about the slave trade history – all our trip participants agree, the best part of the trip was spending time at OEF schools.

To learn more in preparation for future trips, we send out a post-trip survey to ensure we are always maximizing the benefit for our schools and participants. The following response is from one of our participants, Ariko Kaziboni. His feedback reveals the impact that we hope will inspire future OEF trip participants.

ZIMBABWE. USA. GHANA.

What do all three of these countries have in common? Ariko Kaziboni!

Ariko Kaziboni is a student-teacher at Northwest High Magnet School in Omaha, Nebraska. He is currently pursuing his master's degree in education. He also coaches soccer at both the high school and collegiate level.

Born in Zimbabwe, he attended school there until his family left to pursue the "American Dream." His dream is now to teach technology education to under privileged children in the US and developing world.

While travelling is his passion, he also enjoys music of various genres (African, rock, country, jazz) and recently checked a Bruce Springsteen concert off his bucket list. He is a good cook who likes Spanish dishes, but is relegated to a 'sous chef' when his brother is around. He may have taken heat for being a Manchester United fan but we could always count on Ariko for a smile and kind words after a long day.



What was the determining factor that led you to join an OEF trip?

When I visited the Opportunity Education office and met with Mr. Ricketts and Mrs. Roll, I was inspired by the various resources and pictures around the building. I knew then that I had to be a part of the Ghana Education trip, and that it would be a life changing experience.

Hearing about the Foundation's strong belief in achieving a meaningful education for as many children as possible gave me all the motivation I needed.

Despite going to primary school in Zimbabwe, I wasn't sure what to expect in Ghana. Being a newly qualified "Zimbabwean American" teacher, I saw an opportunity to observe and be part of an education system in another part of Africa. I wanted to be an active participant on a journey back to the type of classroom I was a part of as a child, before coming to America.

A significant number of black students at Northwest High School (where I teach) are African refugees and are seeking the American Dream. Being of African descent myself, I am aware that there are elements of identity crisis and alienation from both their native and adopted American cultures. Students are often misunderstood by their parents, teachers and peers, resulting in low self-esteem and passive aggressive behaviors that negatively affect their learning.



I wanted to find African connections to class topics and projects to motivate these students to be academically present in class and at the same time kindle an interest in the global village among the American students.

What "surprised" you the most about your OEF Ghana travel experience?

I was surprised by how quickly and willingly the teachers and students at the schools embraced and accommodated us. I did not expect the schools to be located in such remote areas, and was amazed by how few resources some of these schools had for their students. Travelling to the schools we passed by some of the most beautiful scenery I had ever seen. I experienced the generosity of Ghanaians everywhere I went.



I was further amazed at how much fish is consumed in this part of the world. I ate more fish and fish heads in a week in Ghana than ever before in my life. The cuisine is spicy, flavorful, and delicious—be willing to try it!

What was the greatest benefit that you gained through this trip?

I appreciate the value of education even more after seeing how the people in Ghana treasure their education despite comparatively harsh conditions.

The teachers at the schools in Swedru showed me how to teach and learn with minimal resources. They always have a smile when working with students.

I got to interact with them and ask questions about the challenges they face and how they overcome them.

I also had the privilege of conducting a physical education lesson and helped coach soccer games on the dusty Swedru fields!

It was also wonderful to have a diverse group of professionals on the Ghana Education trip.

There was a lot of learning and teaching among this group. From the novices to the experienced; teachers, a dentist, musicians, students, and business people, all came together to share their knowledge, skills, and life experience. Working with these people in Ghana was inspiring.

What did you think about the overall trip and itinerary?

The best part of the trip was that we always had the schedule ready for the day so we knew what needed to be done in advance. We were notified of any changes in ample time.

We were able to see a lot of scenic places along the way, and the places we stayed at were very comfortable and safe.

We were surrounded by great locals like our tour guide Yaw, who clearly explained the different places we were in and the stories behind the areas.

The itinerary was perfect because we had

time to visit tourist spots, but spent the majority of our time focused on our work with the schools.

Dividing time between work and play can be difficult, but I feel that it was balanced really well on this trip.



What advice would you give to next year's prospective participants?

Opportunity Education trips will change your life in a way you never thought imaginable.

I advise prospective participants to embrace every moment just as it comes. There are days when you feel as though something is not enough, but try to make the best out of everything you do and focus on the things you can control.

Always keep in mind that you are only there for a short time, and your goal is to make the people you are helping get the most out of your interactions and the time that you have together.

In order to truly appreciate your experience, you have to adopt the locals' way of life and embrace the culture.

Remember, you can't change the world in one day or one visit, but each day of the Opportunity Education trip you are creating change.



OEF is grateful to Ariko for giving us permission to share his responses. We all enjoyed getting to know him and experiencing his passion to teach. We also thank his family, which he constantly credits for making him into an exceptional teacher and caring friend.

START WRITING TO THIS SCHOOL NOW!

What country has the highest percentage of practicing Hindus (81% of total population)?

With eight of the world's ten tallest mountains, including the highest point on earth, *Sagarmatha*, and more than 240 peaks over 20,000 feet; this country has earned the nickname, "The Rooftop of the World".

OEF is proud to serve 29 schools in Nepal, including Karkigaun Secondary.

We have letters from their students in our office waiting to be delivered to a new pen pal school. These students love to share their love for Nepal and explain their culture. Suman Adhikari, an eighth grade student wrote the following regarding the Hindu festival of Diwali/Depawali.



Nepal Letter Delivery

"Hindus observe many festivals. Tihar is one of them. It is also called Depawali or the Festival of the Light. It is observed for 5 days. The first day of the festival starts with honoring cows. On a leaf plate people give food to cows. Cows are taken as our messenger (for good). On the second day, the people put tika on their foreheads and garland around their necks. The third day is known as Laxmi puja. Laxmi is the goddess of fortune and wealth. Hindus associate honoring cows in the form of Laxmi. People clean their homes because there is a belief that Laxmi enters into only clean homes. People light candles and turn on lights waiting all night for Laxmi to visit. Oxen are honored on the fourth day. The fifth and final day is Bhaitika. Sisters honor their brothers wishing them a long life, adorning them with flowers."

These letters are an excellent opportunity to learn more than textbooks or even the internet can offer...just email us and we will put a Welcome Folder in the mail to you today – including these letters for your students to start a fun and informative pen pal relationship when classes resume.

Email schools@opportunityeducation.org and you can start writing today!

If you already have a pen pal, refer a friend to our [OEF Pen Pal](#) link.

If you prefer a different school, simply email us and note what grade you would like to write to and we can get you writing, right away!

WELCOME NEW SCHOOLS



Welcome Melbourne Central Catholic in Melbourne, Florida. Our free, international pen pal program is a fun and easy way to meet Language Arts, Social Studies and History/Civics standards – [share this link to invite others to join.](#)

FEATURED SCHOOL & GIFT CERTIFICATE WINNER

Congrats to Lisa at St. Joseph the Worker School in Orefield, Pennsylvania!

On behalf of your pen pals from Tanzania, thank you for sending your creative surprises and letters.

Want to win next month?

Just email schools@opportunityeducation.org after you mail your letters and you are entered to win!



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Write Your Pen Pals!

Even if it's been a while, now is still the best time to write. The name, address and mailing instructions are available on our website start by [clicking here](#).

You can also email: Schools@OpportunityEducation.org



Get Others to Write!

We have 358 schools very eager to have an English speaking pen pal. Share the following link – and make sure you CC schools@opportunityeducation.org – to get a gift certificate.

[Click Here to Refer A Friend and Get a Gift Certificate!](#)

Visit an Opportunity Education school!

Take a life-changing trip to teach, share and learn in an Opportunity Education school in Africa or India.

[Click Here to Learn More.](#)

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STAY CONNECTED 

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