



Annual Report
2016-2017



Building for a Bright Future!

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Contact us!

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Our Mission

Enrich children's lives by establishing world-class early childhood teacher education in Rwanda.

Children thrive in schools where teachers are well-prepared and kind. The three accredited schools in TEACH Rwanda's system all serve two purposes:

1. to provide the best available early education in Rwanda for children at all income levels
2. to build capacity of Rwandan teachers who teach in, and observe children learning in, these unique and "amazing" schools



Children in TEACH Rwanda schools LOVE their teachers, and the feeling is mutual!

TEACH Rwanda's Accredited Exemplary & Project Schools

All schools accredited by TEACH Rwanda must meet high standards for quality.

Classrooms. Enrollments are limited to 20 children per preschool class, 22 in primary. Classrooms are equipped with world-class, culturally relevant furnishings and learning materials to assure that children continue to develop their analytical thinking and communication skills through play.

Teachers. All teachers in our schools have successfully completed Modules 1, 2, and 3—teacher preparation workshops and mentoring that concentrate on modern knowledge and skills for teachers of young children. Teachers are kind, enthusiastic, and passionate about high-quality education!



Bright School in Muhanga, Southern Province

Since 2012, Bright School has been a shining star for families who want the best early education in Muhanga. Bright School was started by Louise Batamuriza, who soon enlisted the help of TEACH Rwanda's Founder, Janet Brown. The school has expanded—because parents repeatedly asked—from just one preschool classroom to three preschool classrooms, two P1 classrooms, and one P2 classroom in 2017.

With this expansion came more children when the school year began again in January 2017. Enrollment is now 132 children. Bright School employs 9 Rwandan teachers and relies on several other Rwandans as substitutes and volunteers. J Lambert Nzabonimpa, one of our talented teachers, designed the Building for a Bright Future logo shown above.

In order to enable children from vulnerable families to benefit from a high-quality education, our Fund a Future school fee assistance program was initiated in 2017. About 60% of the children enrolled at Bright receive at least partial assistance. This inclusion program is financed by donations from the U.S., as well as from Bright School parents who have the capacity to pay tuition and purchase uniforms for their own children.



Children frequently work together doing REAL construction with bricks, sand, and water. They added a sheet of plywood for a roof and later a sign that said "For Rent—100 Rwf."

This year, Bright School embarked on an enormous challenge, its biggest ever. At the demand of government officials, construction was started on a new campus. In partnership with Eglise Presbyterienne au Rwanda (EPR), our up-to-date educational facility will house

- 3 preschool classrooms
- 12 primary classrooms
- a National Teacher Development Center
- an English chapel
- community meeting rooms, and
- offices for EPR, TEACH Rwanda, and Bright School

During the year, a fundraising campaign—Building for a Bright Future—was initiated. Construction started in March with the cornerstone laying, and is expected to continue as funds are available. Total cost for the project: about \$800,000.

Harmony School/Ready for Reading in Rwinkwavu, Eastern Province

Harmony School, our oldest partnership school, has been a TEACH Rwanda accredited Exemplary School since it opened in 2014. Morning and afternoon classes for 40 children are held in the Rwinkwavu Community Library and Learning Center, which is a beacon of hope for all ages in this rural community that often faces drought and food shortages.



Jean captivated children with his reading of *Are You My Mother?* Notice that these preschoolers stopped playing with new cars, brought their writing papers, and put their yarn projects on hold so they could hear this ever-popular story read with excitement.

Children in this school especially benefit from the Head Teacher's leadership. Jean d'Amour Ndizeye has been teaching with TEACH Rwanda since 2011. He is a remarkable story reader, source of creative ideas, and an enthusiastic documenter of children's progress. His assistant, Clementine, and the substitute, Elana, assure continuity of quality in this well-established school.



Cows are an endless source of fascination, and they often wander with their cow boys onto the school grounds at Kigabiro. After this walk to a cow house, led by Veronize, TEACH Rwanda published the children's book *Rwanda, Where Cows Wear Earrings*.

Kigabiro Brilliant School in Gasabo District, Kigali

Our only public school is also located in a poverty-ridden rural area just outside of the nation's capital. Doors to this new building opened in April 2016.

Many challenges have faced this school, including very low family incomes that make it impossible for many parents to pay school fees or provide nutrition for their children. No water or electricity is available in the building. Low, intermittent teacher pay resulted in the loss of the first Head Teacher and an assistant teacher at the end of the 2016 school year.

Nevertheless, children are thriving because the four remaining teachers—Head Teacher Veronize plus Olivier, Nadine, and Theodette—remain dedicated to enriching the lives of 40 children in their isolated community.

Our Vision

Build capacity to provide high-quality professional development to teachers of young children in Rwanda.



Rwandan teachers, Rwandan children, authentic Rwandan themes, and respect for each child's learning pace lead to success. The results of learning through play are clear: our P1 and P2 children love to read, write, & discover how math works!

Pre-Service and In-Service Early Childhood Teacher Education

Combine nearly 50 years of teacher education experience in the United States with 7 years of learning with Rwandan teachers—and the result is the **only research-based, modern, skill-focused, culturally relevant teacher education system in Rwanda!**

TEACH Rwanda's hands-on, field tested, Rwandan-led workshops rely on current theories and recent research to offer teachers hands-on learning about modern teaching practices. When teachers are prepared and then supported by mentors in their classrooms, they make amazing professional progress.

By 2017, our unique teacher education system had been

- field tested for 7 years with a variety of Rwandan educators in different parts of the country,
- regularly revised to be ever-more responsive to Rwandan culture, language, history, and teacher attributes, and
- demonstrated by 7 years of successful experience at our three schools to lead to teachers' and children's exceptional success.

In order to expand our ability to provide professional development in Rwanda, by Rwandans, we employed our first full-time Teacher Mentor, Leonce Mwizerwa. He had demonstrated his prowess not only for teaching but also for mentoring his assistant, so he now skillfully mentors teachers all over the country!



Visiting teachers are astonished to see children choose to illustrate their own imaginative stories, to eagerly build intricate block structures, and to pretend that they are cow boys calling their cows. In most of the country's classrooms, even preschool children just sit for 3 or more hours, repeating what the teacher says. High dropout rates result.

Module 1. Observe & Discuss. Seeing children learning through play in a TEACH Rwanda Exemplary School is a shock! Never before have Rwandans seen teachers who are kind to children, who sit on the floor having friendly eye-to-eye conversations, and who plan active learning experiences around themes as varied as weddings, poetry, goats, and cassava.



*Many children in Rwanda **may** be able write their names by about P4 or P5, but may never learn to read or love to read. In our schools, P1 and P2 children can read in Kinyarwanda, English, and sometimes in French.*

Teachers who had little idea about how to implement the Rwandan competency-based curriculum see that it is indeed possible. Children in our classrooms are fully engaged. They make choices about whether to read, play with blocks, or paint, for example. By the end of P1, most children are readers and writers in Kinyarwanda (many children in Rwandan schools cannot yet read in P5).

Afternoon classes? Most parents and educators think children will fall asleep in the afternoon. Not so, when they are learning through play.

Our classrooms truly are groundbreaking eye-openers for Rwandan educators. A total of 3,366 teachers, TTC students and tutors, and other educators came to observe in our schools this year! For the first time, these visitors saw world-class early childhood education in action.

Module 2. Observe & Implement. After teachers have seen classrooms buzzing with excitement, they discover the understandings and skills needed to be effective teachers. We build on what teachers already know about children. Teachers learn by pretending stories, practicing skills, and exploring Rwandan learning materials. They begin to integrate the curriculum so that children's experiences are meaningful.



*In our Module 2 workshops, **teachers practice their new skills** with each other. They enjoy pretending to be children. Do you recognize which teacher demonstrated story-reading techniques to his colleagues?*

TEACH Rwanda Module 2 workshops are as unique as our schools. They are...

- conducted in **Kinyarwanda** by two Rwandan Teacher Mentors who have themselves been teachers in our Exemplary Schools—20 in-depth, full-day Module 2 workshops were held this year
- aimed at just **10-12 participants**, in contrast to the hundreds who usually attend other “trainings”—in 2016-17, 50 more teachers developed, understood, and are prepared to implement modern education strategies
- filled with **hands-on, playful, and interactive** experiences—teachers learn much the way **THEY** will teach, and discover the rewards and creativity of teaching
- focused on **key skills**, such as how to find free or inexpensive learning materials in their communities, how to read a book with drama and re-enact it with a group of children, what to say to encourage analytical thinking, and how to honor children’s original writing and creations



*Teachers spend much of their time in Module 2 trying out new skills—
such as finding **natural, captivating, and FREE learning materials** just steps from their school.*

After just four fun, compelling sessions, teachers have begun to be equipped with the power to transform their classrooms—and realize that children can be eager, joyous learners.



Fidel at Togetherness School has made many remarkable changes in his classroom. Desks are now tables facing each other, so children can communicate and work together. He sits on the floor and interacts with children. Children's original art is posted on the wall at their level. Children choose to do many different things. Leonce is there to lead Fidel on his professional journey.

Module 3. Observe & Practice—Classroom Mentoring. Seeing is believing. Studying opens new doors. But follow-up, personalized coaching, documented by photos of the learning environment and teaching practices, ensures continuous progress.

TEACH Rwanda's Teacher Mentors, Emmy and Leonce, often along with Jan, spend a day, sometimes one or more each month, observing, modeling best practices, and encouraging teachers who have completed the first two Modules. Mentoring usually addresses changes...

Transform the learning environment—move desks around to make tables, place a mat on the floor, remove the widely ignored “teaching aids” and hang up children's original art, and rely on natural learning materials all around, such as banana leaves and Rwandan clay.

Choose authentic themes—when the curriculum is integrated, themes offer children multiple opportunities to develop math, science, language, physical, and social skills. Some popular themes include transport, construction, weddings, cows, and water.

Build a lively library—books for young children are just now being published in Rwanda. Teachers are encouraged to match books with themes. read with gusto and

appealing props, and re-enact stories so they become memorable and children will love to read for themselves.

Switch from teacher-centered to child-centered classrooms—most teachers use the traditional colonial style, so they stand in front of the class all day and talk...and talk...and talk. Children listen, get bored, fall asleep, and forget. But when there are no rows of desks—and there are blocks, puzzles, blank pieces of paper, balances, bottle caps, sticks, along with small classes—children create their own pretend play themes, make their own constructions, and document what they discovered by writing and drawing about it.

Change is difficult, because Rwandan teachers have only known learning through memorization and intimidation, enforced with a stick. But after these teachers see modern methods, and try them with their peers, they are eager to put their new skills into practice. **Seeing children thrive is evidence of success.** With continued coaching support, teachers around the country are blossoming. They, too, will soon be coaching their fellow teachers!



Christian was in a moto accident. When he returned to school with a bandaged head, Erneste encouraged him to draw in his journal. Christian then dictated his frightening story to Erneste, who documented it for him. And then...

In-Service Professional Development

Similarly, in our TR-accredited Exemplary and Project Schools, our Teacher Mentors and in-country volunteer expert spend many days each month coaching new as well as more experienced teachers and volunteers to further develop and refine their skills.

Learning plan reviewers. All learning plans are reviewed in advance, so recommendations for improvement can be implemented. Leonce reviews plans from all teachers in all TR schools. Some plans are e-mailed, others submitted by WhatsApp on a phone. In addition, Roxanne Klauka, Kaitlin Carrig, and Ashley Shaheen, experienced primary teachers in the U.S., are volunteers who review the primary plans at Bright. Computers, cell phones, and Internet connections are essential to our system of professional development.

Classroom coaching. Leonce, Dative, Emmy, and Jan arrive unannounced in classrooms nearly every day. We catch teachers at their finest...and occasionally find room for improvement. Children come running to show us what they are doing. Leonce often demonstrates new techniques, such as for handling transitions or resolving conflicts. Many photos document that **curriculum is what happens**, so again technology is essential to conducting research and documenting teachers' and children's progress.

Daily reflection. Dative and teachers at Bright take turns conducting daily reflections to analyze their successes and challenges. Leonce or Jan occasionally lead the discussion as well. Lively discussions often ensue, as do solutions to concerns about children who are always hungry, effective strategies to welcome new children, and planning for the next Family Festival. Teachers in the other TR schools also meet often to address their successes and challenges.



Christian presented his story at reflection so teachers could better appreciate the impact of everyday life on the children in their classrooms—and the importance of honoring them when they tell and illustrate their stories.

Months later, Christian was building health centers with blocks to care for sick children.

*And then he was in another moto accident shortly after his wounds healed from the first. **Rwandan children lead precarious lives!***

Exemplary and Project School supervision. At least monthly, one or more TR Teacher Mentors arrives unannounced to make an official supervisory visit at every accredited school. Travel on dirt roads is essential to reach rural schools. Reports focus on successes, challenges, and goals for improvement. Photos document findings and support the value of regular mentoring visits.

Our goal is continuous quality improvement and capacity building of Rwandan teachers. Tremendous professional gains were realized in 2017 by all of our Rwandan staff as we succeed with our mission and vision.



*Increased access to education, higher quality schools, better teachers—TEACH Rwanda is developing Rwandan capacity to reach the country’s ambitious goals. At this rural public school, crowds often gather to watch what children are doing outdoors—and residents become familiar with the **NEW face of education in Rwanda.***

We Align With Rwandan Goals

Rwandan Goals	How TEACH Rwanda Addresses the Country’s Goals
<p><i>Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP)</i> Increase access to 9 years basic education for all children</p>	<p>Operate Bright School, pre-primary through P2, a TR-accredited Exemplary School Partner with Harmony School (a TR accredited Exemplary School) & Kigabiro Brilliant School (a TR Project School), both with pre-primary</p>

Increase access for students with special education needs	Successfully integrate children with special needs in 3 schools into regular classrooms with their age mates
Improve quality & learning outcomes in primary & secondary	Supervise three high-quality schools Provide modern professional development of teachers
Prepare qualified, suitably skilled, & motivated teachers	Implement a unique professional development system with Modules 1, 2, & 3
Improve access to school readiness programs	Serve a high percentage of children from vulnerable families at all three high-quality schools
<i>Vision 2020</i> Provide intensive teacher training programs	Offer Modules 1, 2, & 3
<i>EDEPRS (Poverty Reduction Strategy)</i> Assure that all young children will achieve their full developmental potential	Provide world-class education in all 3 TR schools
Support pre-primary education to increase school readiness, including training of caregivers	Operate high-quality pre-primary programs in all 3 TR schools Prepare teachers through Modules 1, 2, & 3 Employ well-prepared teachers
Reduce class sizes & pupil-teacher ratios, improved curriculum, more learning materials, improved assessment implemented by a higher caliber of teachers	Allow no more than 20 children in pre-primary with 2 well-prepared teachers (classes typically have 40+ children with 1 teacher) Enroll no more than 22 children in primary Equip all 3 accredited schools with high-quality books, blocks, puzzles, dolls, & an array of Rwandan learning materials such as bones, sticks, & rocks
<i>Muhanga District Development Plan</i> Construct and equip new classrooms	Bright School's new campus is under construction
Promote early childhood development with qualified, motivated, & skilled teachers	Offer Modules 1, 2, & 3 to all teachers in the District
<i>Kayonza District</i> Improve education quality & accessibility	Partner with Harmony School/Ready for Reading as a TEACH Rwanda-accredited Exemplary School
Increase capacity building	Continue to provide professional development of Harmony School teachers, both of whom have completed Modules 1, 2, & 3
<i>Gasabo District</i> Increase pre-primary education	Partner with the District to operate Kigabiro Brilliant School, a public school, with 2 pre-primary classrooms
Improve teacher-to-pupil ratios & quality of teachers	Enroll 20 children in each class with 2 well-prepared teachers

Partnerships



Working together is the most effective catalyst for change. TEACH Rwanda is joining with an increasing number of other organizations to build Rwandan educational leadership capacity.

TEACH Rwanda continues to develop formal and informal partnerships with government entities and non-governmental local and international organizations whose goals align with ours. We were proud to work with these partners in the United States and in Rwanda during FY 2016-17:

- Abana Writers' Café
- African Road
- Azizi Life
- Bangor Middle School
- Better World Rwanda
- Chameleon Resources
- Child Care Information Exchange
- Child Fund Rwanda
- Ecole La Colombière
- Farmersville Elementary School
- Gama Arts
- Gasabo District, Stephen Rwamulanga, Mayor
- Gillingham Charter School
- Gitarama Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (EPR)
- Help a Child Rwanda
- Judith's Reading Room
- Library for All
- Longswamp UCC
- Michigan State University

- Ministry of Education, Rwanda (MINEDUC)
- Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF)
- Ministry of Sports and Culture (MINISPOC)
- Mudacumura Press
- Muhanga District
- Peace Corps
- Poplar Valley United Methodist Church
- Premier ECDE Teachers College
- Ready for Reading/Rwinkwavu Community Library and Learning Center
- Right to Play
- Rugalika REA School
- Rwanda Education Board (REB)
- Rwanda Education NGO Coordination Platform (RENCP)
- Saint Francis Fraternity
- Save the Children
- UNICEF
- University of Rwanda College of Education
- VSO (Volunteer Service Organization)
- Wellspring Foundation
- Wesley United Methodist Church
- Wilkes University

Our advocacy—primarily through partnerships and the influence of RENCP with its working groups of which we are members (teacher education, early childhood education)—is even more influential now that **Bright School has convincingly showcased how children who attend high-quality preschools can succeed far beyond traditional expectations when their engaging learning experiences continue in primary.**

Our Successes

With each passing year, TEACH Rwanda realizes a greater positive influence on the lives of

- Rwandan children
- Rwandan teachers and education leaders
- Rwandan families and communities
- Rwandan institutions, public and private
- international organizations working in Rwanda



Emilene is a budding young architect at Kigabiro Brilliant School. She recreated the Kigali Convention Center, which she can see in the distant skyline, with blocks. Olivier, her teacher, is documenting her amazing work.



TEACH Rwanda is...

- The only Rwandan INGO that has more than 50 years of **leadership experience** with high-quality, international early childhood program accreditation and teacher education
- The only INGO in the country with 7 years of **demonstrated success** operating and supervising world-class schools for young children with Rwandan teachers who skillfully implement the Rwandan Competency-Based Curriculum
- The only INGO here that provides **intensive, hands-on, small-group professional teacher education** about strategies to implement Rwanda's new curriculum with modern, international best practices refined for Rwanda—led by experienced Rwandan teachers in Kinyarwanda
- The only INGO in Rwanda that offers practical, follow-up **mentoring** to teachers after our teacher education modules
- The only Rwandan INGO that promotes and demonstrates the successful use of free and recycled local learning materials in flourishing classrooms, increasing the possibility for **sustainability**
- The only INGO in the country that has developed a hiring process to identify Rwandan teachers who are eager to learn new skills, are kind to children, and share a passion for learning more about **high-quality ECE within a Rwandan cultural context**

Impact on the lives of Rwandan children, families, teachers, & communities



How old is Abouba? He's still the size of a small 3-year-old, but he was 6 when his grandmother enrolled him in Bright School. Lack of food, family violence, and poverty took their toll. Today, a year later, he dances, writes, and always has this beaming smile on his face. **TEACH Rwanda transforms lives!**

TEACH Rwanda continues to make a huge difference in a growing number of lives of Rwandan children, teachers, families, government officials, and all others who learn about our revolutionary work in the country! Here's a glimpse of our impact this year.

TR Transformed Lives in 2016-2017	TEACH Rwanda Schools	Other Rwandan Schools
Rwandan teachers & substitutes prepared to provide high-quality early education	24	263
Children's lives directly enriched	319	480
Volunteers in the U.S.A.	125	--
Volunteers who live in Rwanda	2	--
Visitors & observers—Rwandan educators, international educators, government officials, NGOs, book illustrators/writers, parents, community members, TTC tutors & students—at Bright School, Harmony School, & Kigabiro Brilliant School	3,336	--
Weekly learning plans reviewed for teachers in TR schools	270	--
TEACH Rwanda teachers & volunteers promoted to leadership positions	4	--

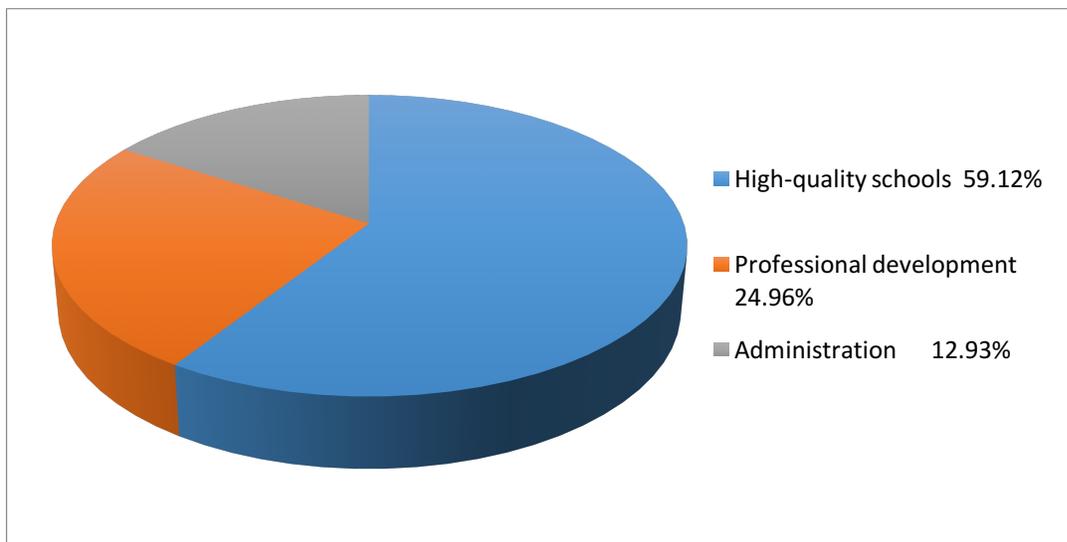
Number of children receiving tuition assistance through Fund a Future at Bright School & the cost	94 children \$9,756	--
Rwanda-relevant, high-quality children's books donated to school libraries	200	250



Carol Mbabazi is a Rwandan and TRRAB member. She holds a master's degree from the University of Maryland in special education. Her expert recommendations have led to amazing gains by children with disabilities when they were placed with their age-mates..

Finances

TEACH Rwanda's total expenditures were \$102,605.75 for the year. Your donations were invested in three key categories as shown here.



THANK YOU!

It seems like only yesterday when I began working with Rwandan teachers—and it's been 7 years! At first, I spent a few weeks in country, and now Rwanda is home for most of the year. Bill and I are blessed to have supportive families in the U.S. and Rwanda who have made it possible for us to continue to give back to the world and enriched our retirement beyond all expectations.

Our challenges in Rwanda keep us young, and sometimes frazzled, as the years creep up on us. The endless hills seem higher here. Most importantly, we have been privileged to gain a longer-term perspective on TEACH Rwanda's growing influence in Rwanda.

- Children we first met as 3-year-olds are now enthusiastic second grade readers & writers—often in 3 languages on one page!
- Children who came to school afraid, hungry, and failing are now bubbling with energy as they play in water, dance with their friends, & dress up like cow boys.
- Teachers who began with little English are now quite fluent. They write comprehensive learning plans & reports in a language that was once a struggle.
- Teachers who began with uncertainty & few skills (except to have children memorize whatever they told them) are now paragons of excellence in lively classrooms.
- One teacher, who began as a substitute who taped numbers on children's heads, has become a role model for primary teachers in the whole country.
- Teachers who began careers in classrooms with little professional preparation or skills are now confident Teacher Mentors who encourage others to implement best international practices & advocate with policy makers.
- Orphans, adults whom we befriended by chance, are building stronger lives for themselves.

The time to implement planned-for transitions is approaching. Rwandans are becoming better educated, more skilled, and compassionate about high-quality teacher education. They are increasingly taking the reins for the day-to-day operation of our INGO. TEACH Rwanda's board is maturing, too. We are all preparing for the day when other committed volunteers and an Executive Director will oversee TEACH Rwanda U.S. operations.

Most importantly, we know the day is coming when Rwandans will be fully responsible for realizing the dreams of one relentless American who responded to a phone call in the middle of the night from a Rwandan teacher.

Let's all celebrate TEACH Rwanda's mission and vision as we leap into another year of successes, fueled by our passion, your donations, and everyone's energy!

Janet F. Brown
Founder & President



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