



Teacher Education and Children's Enrichment



Respecting Children in Rwanda

Annual Report
2020-2021

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Teacher Education and Children's Enrichment

Our Mission & Vision

- Enrich children's lives by establishing world-class early childhood and primary teacher education in Rwanda.
- Build capacity to provide high-quality professional development to teachers of children in Rwanda.

Overview

This year alone, 270 children in Rwanda experienced evidence-based, high-quality education at Bright School, with class sizes between 20 to 25, ensuring that each child receives the attention that they need to thrive. Bright School's Mobile Library operated during COVID-19 school closures, providing children with COVID-safe story reading with teachers and access to books to take home each week. This helped maintain and even improve literacy skills among children during school closures.

More than one-fourth of the students at Bright School are from vulnerable families. These children received generous scholarship support, covering their school fees for the year. Their families also received emergency food during COVID closures. Approximately 40% children in Rwanda have shown evidence of malnourishment and stunted growth. We all know that it is difficult for hungry children to concentrate on learning, so provision of food continues to be central to our work.

The families of every student at Bright School are engaged in the educational principles of TEACH Rwanda. As a result, whole families are invited into a greater love of learning, and the opportunities that this provides for their future.

TEACH Rwanda provided mentoring to 46 Rwandan teachers during 2021, supporting education providers across the country to embrace the evidence-based learning and a respect for children. During the last 12 years, TEACH Rwanda volunteers and staff have mentored at least 450 teachers, who through innovative teaching practices have changed the lives of perhaps 15,000 Rwandan students.

Vision for the future

Given the considerable demand across the country for the work of TEACH Rwanda and the addition of new classes from P1 through P6, we are excited to have begun to build a new Bright School campus. Some land has been purchased next to the rented building in Muhanga, the first two classrooms have been built, and campus planning and design is underway.

This new campus will enable TEACH Rwanda to expand its work, mentoring many more teachers in engaging, evidence-based educational practices. It will also provide space for 100 more children from the local area, who will benefit from an exceptional, affordable education, and demonstrate the power of these teaching methods to Rwanda.

To find out more, and support this endeavor, take a look at our website:
<https://www.teachrwnda.org/donate.html>

Letter from the President

TEACH Rwanda volunteers have been providing evidence-based teacher mentoring for nearly 12 years. We have demonstrated and fostered respect for children, curiosity, and a love of learning in teachers, families, communities, and the country.

We are delighted to present to you the impact that's been possible in the last year, despite the challenges of COVID 19 and a number of lockdowns in Rwanda.

Bright School has become a vital learning hub and demonstration school for East Africa and beyond. **Visitors see the impact of innovative, evidence-based teaching methods.** Our Rwandan partners—Ready for Reading/Harmony School, African Road/Togetherness School, Dignity Academy, Bright Horizon School, Rwanda Education Assistance Practice/Ineza Academy, and Komeza Children—have already been inspired by our home-grown teachers as well as Head Teacher, Leonce, and Teacher Mentor, Anitha.

Bright School's ever-expanding campus is a testament to the community's support of the transformation work our teachers demonstrate every day. Members of Rotary Clubs in the U.S., Rwanda, and beyond are among our most ardent supporters.

“Bright School a beauty to behold...of the lovely school children at the mercy of an English-speaking couple whose lives are dedicated to their education at no pecuniary benefit.”

--From a poem written by Rotarian Godswill Mmoye, Nigeria after a visit September 12, 2021

Our dream is to complete construction of our Bright School campus. And to see our students pursue their educations so they can become productive, caring, and respectful workers and parents themselves! Thank you for pursuing the dream with us!

Janet F. Brown

Founder & President

JBrown@TEACHRwanda.org

Our Impact on...

TEACH Rwanda is investing in lasting change in a rapidly developing country. We are excited to review how, despite the challenges of COVID-19, our organization continued to implement our mission.

Bright School, a TEACH Rwanda Exemplary School and our teacher mentoring demonstration facility, grew quickly—from a single, empty preschool classroom in 2012 to two preschool classrooms and six primary classrooms by 2021. We invite you to see the profound impact on the lives of children, teachers, and families, as well as helping build strong communities and a hopeful future for Rwanda.

...Children

This year alone, 225 children experienced high-quality, inclusive, evidence-based education at Bright School. Our well-prepared teachers integrate and enrich the Rwandan curriculum. Children gain both skills AND knowledge through engaging play and projects. These students are curious and respectful, responsible, and creative. Analytical thinking as well as executive function skills such as initiative and planning are all built into the curriculum.

Class sizes range from 20 in preschool to 25 in upper primary, assuring that children are treated with respect and can fully participate in every learning experience. Children love to read, and can choose from hundreds of high-quality fiction and nonfiction books. They also love to write and illustrate their own stories.



Bright School's Mobile Library operated during COVID-19 school closures. Teachers sometimes read books about homes, so children could compare houses in their community with those in the book.

Each week, children flocked to the Mobile Library to choose another book to read at home, to greet their friends, and of course to be part of story reading with their teachers.

*Our Mobile Library was in operation through November, so **children returned to school with improved literacy skills.***

Seventy of these Bright children in Muhanga come from vulnerable families, and attend on scholarships, valued at about \$450 each this year. Many children soon to enter P6, including some on scholarships, began to attend Bright when they were in preschool!



*As part of their studies about the parts of buildings, P2 children constructed their dreams for a future Bright School campus—including a secondary school. They used loose parts—blocks, recycled cardboard, plumbing supplies, lumber, rocks, and a body lotion bottle for a water tank. Three TTC students (white shirts) were observing that day—and saw first-hand why **Bright children love their school!** Mary Louise, on the left, is their well-prepared, highly skilled teacher.*

We also address chronic malnutrition at Bright School. About 40% of Rwandan children are stunted. Bright School serves traditional, enriched porridge every day to every student, at a cost of about \$1 per child each month. During exams for primary students, we also offer students amandazi, a local favorite bread, to assure their brains are fueled.

At Harmony School in Rwinkwavu, a TR Exemplary School since 2014, 40 preschool children in two classes receive the same high-quality education and nutrition. This school is supported by Ready for Reading and located in the Rwinkwavu Community Library and Learning Center. Books are, of course, abundant in this school as well.

In our five other partner schools, many more children are beginning to experience respectful, evidence-based education as their teachers start to implement best practices and equip their classrooms with appropriate, child-centered learning materials.

...Teachers

Rwandan preschool and primary teachers are required to have a secondary (high school) diploma in education. Since 2010, we have been continually refining our approach to teacher mentoring. In those early days, teachers had never seen a children’s book, or blocks, or puzzles.

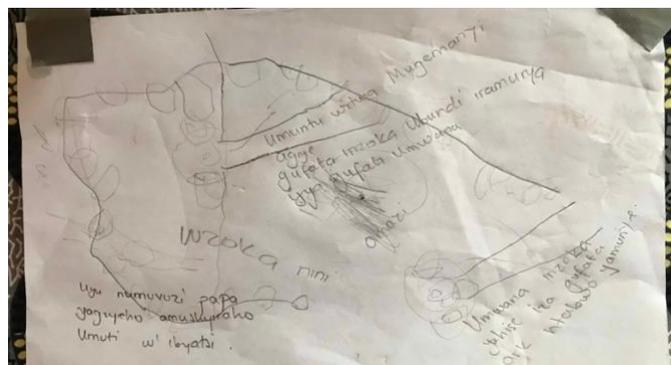
Our four-step teacher mentoring process is designed to fundamentally change the way the Rwandan education system works, by preparing teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to support children’s integrated learning through play and projects.

1. **Needs assessment** at each participating school—with photos and notes to document classroom environments, teaching strategies, and children’s engagement. A reflection with teachers and school leaders as well as a full written report follow.
2. **Observation (Module 1)** at a TR Exemplary School—where teachers and school administrators see small class sizes (20-24), children’s original writing and drawing displayed in classrooms, learning materials for children to choose, children’s literature for reading pleasure, and teaching practices that encourage understanding. The day is capped with a guided reflection time with Bright teachers.
3. **Workshops (Module 2)**, four day-long sessions, are held at least a week apart, so teachers and their supervisors can try new strategies with their students between sessions. Teachers begin to understand child/brain development research, implement evidence-based practices, use time-tested planning and teaching tools, and plan an engaging learning environment.
4. **Classroom mentoring (Module 3)** supports teachers as they implement their new skills. We have found it takes about 2 years, with at least monthly mentoring, for teachers to be comfortable and articulate about their teaching.

Why ask open-ended questions? A

teacher found out soon after a workshop when she had practiced her new skill. She reported that a 3-year-old child drew a straight line on his paper. “What is it?” she asked. “A snake,” he replied.

When she asked him to tell her about his drawing, this is what she heard: “My father found a snake at home. He got a long stick to kill it. He beat the snake, but instead, the snake bit him. We went to a traditional healer. The healer put mud and leaves on my father’s arm.”



Notice that the child drew FAR more than a straight line. The child’s story is written in Kinyarwanda by the teacher.

Teachers who engage in the TR mentoring process soon become passionate about integrating curriculum to make learning meaningful and memorable. Their careers are rewarding as they see children’s curiosity, knowledge, and skills blossom. At this point, about 450 teachers have completed at least Module 2. With 20 to 24 children each year in their class (sometimes more), they can change the lives of hundreds of children!

Liliane enrolled her two young children at Bright several years ago, and soon joined the Parent Committee. She became curious about evidence-based teaching, returned to the TTC to get her teaching credentials, did her internship at Bright, became a regular substitute...and then our P4 teacher left abruptly.

*Liliane stepped in and within weeks was expertly leading her class both on and off campus. She completed her TR Module 2 workshop with great enthusiasm, and is now even more **excited about integrating the Rwandan curriculum in ways that engage children!***



In anticipation of school opening, TEACH Rwanda developed a Welcome Back to a SAFER School After COVID-19 workshop. A total of 40 teachers and supervisors at three schools were coached on ways to nurture empathy and resilience. We also conducted three focus groups at Bright School with 36 children so we could better prepare teachers to support students who faced challenges—hunger, illness, beatings, boredom, loneliness—during COVID lockdowns.

...Families

Families who choose to enroll their children at Bright School are exceptional. They have spread the word about how children love to learn through play and projects and are treated with respect in very small classes. For the first time ever, Bright School has a waiting list!

Family engagement and support is central to the education of each child, and in expanding the notion of what is possible for schools in Rwanda. Bright School requires that families come to observe their children in class at least twice a term, for many reasons. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, even siblings see right away what happens when adults respond to children with kindness. They are amazed how responsible even 3-year-old children are at school: they pour their own porridge, put on their own shoes, and return their toys to shelves.

At home, families report that their children are different from their neighbors' children. "If you ask them to bring three potatoes, they bring three potatoes. Neighbor children can

count to 20, but they don't know what three is." "Our children get up early to be sure they get to school on time."

Families are especially appreciative that their children can bring books home to read and re-enact with each other. The Mobile Library was a main attraction while schools were closed. Bright School teachers provided weekly Family Activity Guides to assure that children would continue to learn by play and projects at home. Children gardened, sewed, created their own books, re-enacted stories with siblings, painted furniture, and built structures with mud bricks, leftover lumber, and cardboard.



*During COVID-19 school closures, families came with their young children to the Mobile Library. **Every interaction between children and teachers demonstrates positive parenting skills.***

Families observed how teachers greeted children lovingly and encouraged them to talk and write their own original stories at home, in their notebooks.

Teachers read books—dramatically and with intriguing props—while children paid rapt attention, so families could repeat this literacy-support strategy at home.

For about 60 vulnerable families, Bright School distributed emergency food during COVID. Older students helped pack beans, rice, and other necessities for families whose children who attend on Fund a Future scholarships.

Bright and Harmony School families also received detailed progress reports for their children. Developmental landmarks as well as curriculum expectations are included so families can see specifics about their children's progress in school. Teachers meet each term with each family, sometimes including students, to discuss portfolio contents and progress reports.

Respect and kindness—instead of fear and punishment—are increasingly changing the lives of children at Bright School and other TR schools.

Mama Junior has been volunteering at Bright for many years. She greatly appreciates the high-quality education that her two children receive at Bright School, on Fund a Future scholarships.

She helps at community events, planted much grass to contain erosion around our two new classrooms and Outdoor Learning Area, and often helps prepare and clean up after porridge—230 cups a day!



...Communities

TEACH Rwanda Exemplary Schools—in the Southern and Eastern Provinces—are models of modern, effective education in Rwanda. Five more communities with TR Project Schools—in Kigali, Southern, Northern, and Eastern Provinces are also being forever changed in their approach to education. Teachers, families, government officials, TTC tutors and students, neighbors...all are welcome to observe in TEACH Rwanda schools at any time.

In addition to education, TEACH Rwanda is committed to investing in communities, knowing that educational and economic opportunities go hand in hand. The design, building and operation of a new campus at Bright School, will only increase this community impact:

- TR is **purchasing land** from local property owners. Like all other private schools, we are required to house our campus on our own land.
- Our **architectural firm**, General Architecture Collaborative (GAC), is based in Kigali. They are creatively designing our campus with the environment in mind.
- When the **fully expanded campus** is complete, in 2025, we will have 14 classrooms, Outdoor Learning Areas, toilets, a kitchen and bakery, community meeting room, offices, library, kitchen gardens, an orchard, animals to support the kitchen, and a National Teaching Mentoring Center. Temporary construction jobs are created, and construction materials are purchased locally, with each step forward. With more classrooms, more teachers and support staff will be hired permanently.



*The temporary gate to Bright School's newest plot...and the far edge of the land on which we continue to **expand our campus**, as required by Rwandan law.*



- The kitchen, bakery, and meeting room are expected to **cater** to weddings, teacher workshops, and other events, bringing more people into the community. And they are a source of additional employment opportunities.
- **School uniforms and supplies** are in growing demand in Muhanga, too, as Bright School expands.
- **Bright School's Parent-Teacher Committee** is actively engaged in all aspects of the school's operations. Members include local leaders, family members, educators, and health care providers.

...Country & Beyond

When children are respected and work in harmony at school, students are well-prepared to promote peace at home and in their communities. Memories are still vivid...just 27 years ago, Rwanda was engaged in genocide, so every teacher, every child, is a peacemaker.

Fighting diseases—such as malaria, typhoid, and COVID-19—are national priorities, which is why hygiene and nutrition are embedded in the curriculum and in our schools' daily operations. Feeding programs, kitchens, isolation rooms for sick children, and handwashing sinks are all essential components of a high-quality school.

One of the most effective challenges for our advocacy efforts is through RENCP, the Rwanda Education NGO Coordination Platform. We are active in both the Early Childhood Development and Teacher Development working groups to improve the quality of services to children and the professional development of educators. TEACH Rwanda was prepared to present a PowerPoint presentation on the Power of Blocks to the ECD working group that was cancelled at the last minute due to COVID.

TEACH Rwanda’s support for healthy, respectful, peaceful classrooms, schools, families, and communities encourages rapid development of the country. When students’ global understandings, curiosity, analytical thinking, and problem-solving skills are nurtured, they are being prepared to be world leaders!



Welcome to TEACH Rwanda’s inviting, engaging, ever-expanding campus—a student-centered, economical, culturally appropriate learning environment that is a model for other schools in developing countries. We thank All Girls Allowed and the Kigali International Club for grants that made our transformational construction possible!



TR Transformed Lives in 2020-2021	TR Partner Schools	Other Rwandan Schools
Rwandan teachers & substitutes prepared to provide high-quality early education	38	8

Children's lives directly enriched	380	110
Volunteers around the world	120	--
Visitors & observers at all TR schools (decreased due to COVID restrictions)	425	--
Learning plans reviewed for TR teachers (decreased due to COVID lockdown)	320	--
Number of children receiving tuition assistance through Fund a Future at Bright School & the cost (school closed for 4 months for COVID lockdown)	71 \$12,817.21	--
Humanitarian COVID Response (food distribution & other assistance to vulnerable families)	\$9,786.34	--



“Our values and culture must remain the foundation of our children’s education. Let’s continue to base our nation’s transformation on who we are and on instilling a sense of self-worth in our children.”
–Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda since 2000



P3 students and their teacher examine clouds and predict what will happen next! Our curriculum approach assures that children understand content, follow their curiosity, make and check their predictions, communicate, and work together!

We Align with Rwandan Goals

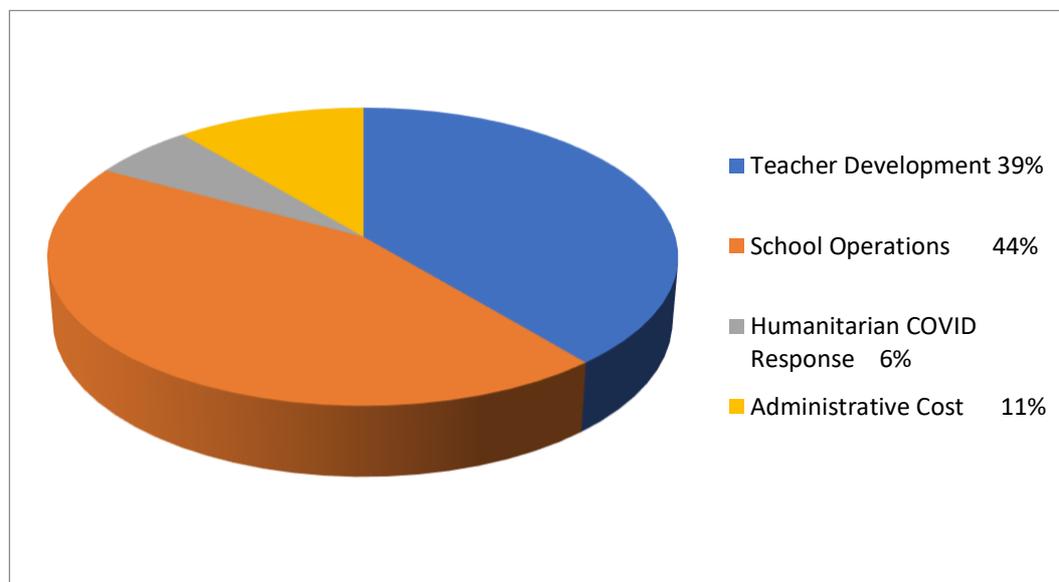
Rwandan Goals	How TEACH Rwanda Addresses the Country's Goals
Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) Increase access to 9 years basic education for all children	Operate Bright School, pre-primary through P6, a TR-accredited Exemplary School Partner with Harmony School (a TR-accredited Exemplary School) and 5 other Project Schools across the country
Increase access for students with special education needs	Successfully integrate children with special needs into regular classrooms with age mates at Bright School
Improve quality & learning outcomes in primary & secondary	Supervise two high-quality schools, mentor teachers in 6 others Provide effective professional development
Prepare qualified, suitably skilled, & motivated teachers	Implement a unique, lasting teacher mentoring system with needs assessments followed by Modules 1 (observe), 2 (workshops), & 3 (classroom mentoring)
Improve access to school readiness programs	Serve a high percentage of children from vulnerable families in high-quality schools
Vision 2020 Provide intensive teacher training programs	Offer needs assessments and Modules 1, 2, & 3 mentoring to partner schools
EDEPRS (Poverty Reduction Strategy) Assure that all young children will achieve their full developmental potential	Provide world-class education in all TR-affiliated schools
Support pre-primary education to increase school readiness, including training of caregivers	Offer high-quality pre-primary programs in all TR schools with well-prepared teachers

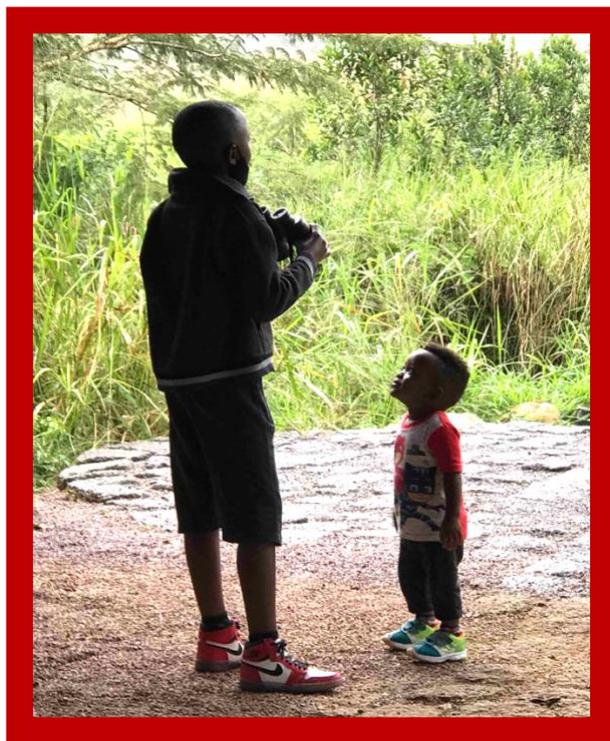
	Prepare teachers through Modules 1, 2, & 3
Reduce class sizes & pupil-teacher ratios, improve curriculum, more learning materials, improve assessment implemented by a higher caliber of teachers	Limit 20 children in pre-primary with 2 well-prepared teachers, enroll up to 25 children in primary Encourage TR-accredited Exemplary and Project schools to choose high-quality learning materials, such as children's books
Muhanga District Development Plan Construct and equip new classrooms	Bright School is purchasing its own land and expanding into a full campus with 14 classrooms and related facilities
Promote early childhood development with qualified, motivated, & skilled teachers	Offer Modules 1, 2, & 3 to teachers in the District Hire qualified, well-prepared teachers at Bright School implement and extend the Rwandan curriculum, pay competitive wages, continuously mentor all staff

Investments in Rwanda

TEACH Rwanda's total expenditures were \$138,516.29 for the 2020-21 year, which is more than previous years due to construction and humanitarian responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, even though schools were closed. TEACH Rwanda support for Bright School operations, including teacher & staff salaries, greatly increased, to allow the school to continue through a period of no revenue. Travel and school visitation restrictions limited opportunities to mentor teachers from July through November.

Your donations were invested in four key categories as shown here.





Going Forward

TEACH Rwanda is committed to ensuring that even more young people can access a life-transforming education, through teacher mentoring and the work of Bright School. To make this a reality, TEACH Rwanda has a vision for a new campus which will provide space for 350 children to learn through play and projects, spaces designed to maximize teacher mentoring across communities in Rwanda, and to implement income-generating opportunities.

In the past year, TEACH Rwanda purchased our first plot of land, on which we constructed two classrooms and an outdoor learning area. By the end of the fiscal year, we were in the process of purchasing three additional small parcels. These are only about 25% of the amount of land needed to fully develop the Bright School's campus.

Income-generating opportunities to reach our long-term goal of self-sufficiency include

- Complete construction of our own rent-free Bright School campus, including classrooms, a library, and a National Teacher Mentoring Center for which school and workshop fees will be charged
- A kitchen and bakery to serve both school and community needs, funded by a Rotary Foundation Global Grant, which is also intended to train local bakers
- A multi-purpose meeting room/dining room available for rental for weddings & other community events
- Agriculture—animals and crops—to supply the kitchen, enrich students' learning experiences, and provide jobs for vulnerable families

Could you sponsor...

- construction of a classroom,
- Fund a Future scholarships,
- purchase of a piece of land, or
- even some classroom furnishings

all of which will help make this vision a reality?

To find out more information and or make a donation, visit our website, or contact Janet Brown directly at JBrown@TEACHRwanda.org.



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