



The Director's Thread

This first eduWeavers newsletter marks an important celebratory inflection point for us. We have moved past the “start-up” phase and are consistently engaged in exciting proposal developments. While awaiting final approval from the IRS regarding our 501(c)3 status, we are actively engaged in developing projects, writing curricula, and meeting with like-minded educators across the globe. With so much underway, we want to get you, our friends and supporters, up-to-speed and invite you to grab on, take hold, and actively engage with us. eduWeavers is giving context to the often-used phrase “21st century education” by implementing our transformative notion of teaching and learning in this ever “flattening” global landscape. It’s the philosophy you can cite when people ask, “What does 21st century education look like?”

Newsletter Contents

Staying true to our mission of collaboration and reciprocal learning, the articles within are written by American students who have been part of the eduWeavers experience during the “start-up” phase:

- Grace, our intrepid editor, interviews two high school teachers at Marin Academy High School who traveled to South Africa on a trip where much of the educational component was facilitated by eduWeavers. She also interviews eduWeavers facilitators at eSibonisweni School in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
- Scotty reflects on his personal visit to his partner school, eSibonisweni School.
- Max writes deftly about his experience in a teacher exchange facilitated by eduWeavers.

Former Zambian journalist and friend of eduWeavers, Zilose Lyons, worked assiduously to support the students during the writing phase of their articles.

Along with a reflection of where we’ve been, we want to share where we are going! Scattered throughout the newsletter are updates on current projects, and attached is a flyer that highlights our Professional Development Workshop for schools and educators; please, pass it on. We’d love to share the partnership philosophy with your community. While we can directly connect schools to schools in specific areas in Africa, the philosophy can underpin any existing relationship and ensure that initial connections become lasting partnerships fostering collaborative learning environments.

Netball/Basketball area in new sports facility at eSibonisweni



Visit us at www.eduweavers.org and email learn.more@eduweavers.org for more information!

New Pathways to Understanding

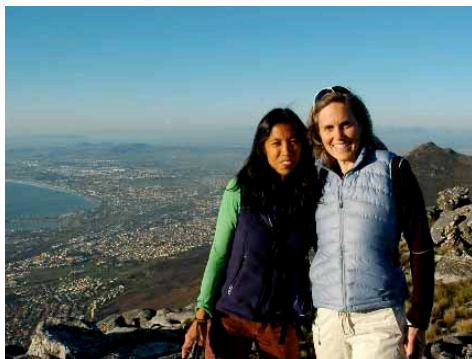
by Grace Lukach

Last summer, two teachers from Marin Academy set in motion plans to develop enriching learning partnerships that bridge the 10,239 miles that lie between San Francisco and Cape Town. English teacher Trixie Sabundayo and history teacher Betsy Muir have taught South African literature and history respectively to sophomores at the San Rafael high school for over a decade. They undertook a trip of discovery to South Africa as part of a larger mission to fully understand the subjects they teach by witnessing and experiencing South African life first-hand. Jennifer Getz of eduWeavers, helped set the logistics.

Getz introduced them to the Wynberg School, a school that she thought would connect well with Marin Academy. Despite the socio-economic and cultural differences between the two schools, the clear similarities amazed both teachers. The students' curiosity, the educational rigor, and the setting of the schools themselves were all similar. The Wynberg School is nestled outside of Cape Town, a big city, while Marin Academy is located just outside of San Francisco. Sabundayo described the universal power of the student-teacher

relationship that she observed briefly in South Africa and daily at Marin Academy as “irreplaceable”.

Upon returning to the States, Muir and Sabundayo are optimistic about Marin Academy's developing a sister school with the help of eduWeavers. They envision expanding the learning environment for their students and the South



Sabundayo and Muir in South Africa on their summer trip in 2009.

African high school students beyond the physical walls of each school and borders of the two countries. They will engage in broader discussions between the two schools around the themes and essential questions of identity, conflict, negotiation and forgiveness. They hope to broaden understanding of these issues through the exchange of curriculum and understanding how others come to understand:

- What factors inform identity and why?
- What does it mean to belong in a society and how does that

belonging impact both the individual and community?

- What does it mean to be an insider vs. outsider?

They are thinking of skyping, emailing and blogging as some of the ways they would “expand the classroom.” This new relationship would supplement the theme of a broader academic understanding of the world. While Muir and Sabundayo do not expect the program to focus on personal interactions, the ability to hear from afar new thoughts and perspectives will expand the students' minds to the wider world around them.

Conveniently, Marin Academy is gearing up for its Strategic Plan, which is trying to “include the global community,” as the document on the M.A website states (visit ma.org for more). A sister school would fit into this new direction for the school seamlessly, but Muir and Sabundayo acknowledge that getting started is the hardest part and realize that they will need the help of the eduWeavers team. Together, Marin Academy and the Wynberg School are beginning to create a path for a different sort of connection between cultures in order to form another route to global understanding by youth.

Questions and Answers with FERNANDA PERNAMBUCO By Grace Lukach

Fernanda Pernambuco and her husband Zach are living in South Africa for a couple months helping to improve communications between St. Mark's and eSibonisweni (the partnership discussed by Scotty Jacobs on Page 3).

How have the teachers and students at eSibonisweni reacted to your stay?

They have been extremely friendly. We have felt at home at eSibonisweni and I know that it is because of the way that the teachers and the students have treated us.

What is the best lesson the students have taught you?

We really feel that this experience has taught us so much, that it is hard to choose just one. The best lesson would have to be the way that their spirits are high even with all of the challenges that they face. It is something so natural to them. When they look at you and smile, it is so sincere that it is contagious.

Learning Lessons Halfway Around the World by Scotty Jacobs

Until the summer of 2008, I had minimal global travel experience: the only stamp in my passport was from Cabo International Airport. Upon embarking on our journey to eSibonisweni School in Maputaland, South Africa, a sense of the unknown seized my being. What would this foreign culture unknown to me be like? Would I be welcomed into the local community or viewed as an outsider?

Continuing along the bumpy, unpaved roads of rural Kwazulu-Natal, the train of cars in front of us began to turn.



Scotty and a young eSibonisweni student during his 2008 visit.

Finally, after three years of planning, we had arrived. The voices of children singing filled the air. As we came around the bend in the road, we were greeted by hundreds of children, waving and singing joyously, welcoming us, embracing us not only as guests, but also as friends. Although we had never directly communicated with any of the people surrounding our car, we were greeted as long lost companions. Never in my life had I felt that anybody had been so happy to see me. This exuberant welcome became a daily ritual over the course of the week; each and every day we were sought out individually and greeted. Whether it was kicking the soccer ball or walking from classroom to classroom, both the students and I were grateful that, despite an insurmountable language barrier, we were able to interact almost effortlessly. By watching these strangers act in such a gracious, friendly manner to other strangers, I was taught a valuable lesson in how to treat people. Despite the fact that we had not met face-to-face, the students of eSibonisweni treated us as though we were old friends. As I proceed through my life, I will often try to embody the way in which these students treated us: with utmost respect and kindness.



Scotty teaches the kids how to use the XO laptops donated by Change a Habit.

Midway through the trip my family was blessed with the opportunity to visit one of the students at home. Her living situation, just a few stick huts with dirt floors, appeared bereft to us outsiders. We were used to a home of American standards. The family was happy with what they had. When asked about their simple way of life, they responded that they had all they needed. As long as they had food, water, their health, and each other, they were satisfied. Coming from a country where there is such an emphasis on materialism, I was struck by this family's philosophy. As compared to my hometown of San Francisco, California, where there is such a materialistic rat race (meaning that one always seems to be on the quest to attain a better, more expensive version of something they already have), the fact that this impoverished family was genuinely satisfied with what they already had was inspiring.



Children of eSibonisweni School.

While there were many lessons to be learned from this eye-opening trip, the most lasting lesson was being able to distinguish need from want. Nearly two years after my visit with this family, I still use it as a compass to conduct my life. I will often ask myself, "Do I need this, or do I just want it?" Often times I don't need, but want. And when I think back to the family I visited, and remember how happy they were with so little, I realize that I have everything I could possibly need.

Although we had very little in common, the students of eSibonisweni taught all of the American visitors on the trip many valuable lessons about how to conduct our lives. I guarantee that if you were to ask any of the Americans on the trip if the SA students impacted the way they conduct their lives, they would undoubtedly say "yes." Even though we live half way across the world from each other, these students impacted my life profoundly.

South Africa to California:

Closer Than We Think by Max Norman

D.C. with Ms. Kaptein for a week-long tour of the capitol.

Ms. Kaptein was always able to ask thought provoking questions, willing to converse with the students, or stand, as awed as the rest of us, in front of some marble monument or another. I vividly remember her profound reaction to the National Holocaust Museum. As a Jew, I found this response across time,

national and cultural boundaries, very moving.

In South Africa, Mr. Fargo taught a course on the civil rights movement complementary to that of Ms. Kaptein, beginning with the American Civil War, and ending with the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

However, Mr. Fargo taught more than just history: "What really made an impression on the students was that a white man would come into their school and candidly admit the wrongs committed by whites and encourage their examination of those events," he wrote.

Through the exchange program, the commonalities in our histories were brought to life because of the interactions between teachers and students in San Rafael and Guguletu. Reflecting upon her experiences at St. Mark's, Ms. Kaptein remarked, "I came to believe that values are important for the school as a whole and for each individual student and teacher. It stands out about Saint Mark's. Good values do not need money. It is already something I have been 'preaching' about since I returned to South Africa. I have learned that kids have even more endless potential than I ever thought they could have, and that schools and teachers should help kids to explore the full extent of that potential." Mr. Fargo was also transformed: "The whole thing was a very moving experience. I returned home with an increased global awareness and appreciation for the ongoing struggle for disadvantaged youth in South Africa".

Looking Forward:

Our next issue will highlight Saint Mark's School's recent delegation trip to eSibonisweni School in South Africa. This year's delegation will reflect on the addition of the recently built soccer field (just in time for the World Cup), the continued development of the girls' scholarship program, the viability of connecting teachers and students using the XO deployment installed there, and, of course, new and renewed friendships.

Most people may not consider the students of San Rafael, California and students of Guguletu, a township in South Africa, as part of the same community. Through an exchange program initiated and facilitated by eduWeavers, however, similarities in history and values emerged and important bonds were formed. eduWeavers' unique teacher exchange program brings a deeper level of interaction with people that otherwise might not occur.



Mr. Fargo (back) and Ms. Kaptein (forward) in Guguletu, South Africa with students from I.D. Mkize High School.

In April 2009, Janine Kaptein, from I.D. Mkize High School in Guguletu, a township outside of Cape Town, came to teach our eighth grade class at Saint Mark's School. Meanwhile our

teacher, Mike Fargo, went to teach in Guguletu. We met with Ms. Kaptein nearly every day

and quickly marched through modern South African history. She began ascertaining our knowledge of the subject at hand, our familiarity with the people and events of apartheid and its eventual collapse. We reciprocated with many of our own questions ranging from the general to the specific.

I was struck by the similarity between the struggle for civil rights in America and apartheid in South Africa. They

corresponded with a disconcerting regularity. In both histories, people were subjugated out of fear and selfishness and grew impatient with their oppression. A noble leader eventually emerged from the masses, determined to quell a violent tendency



Ms. Kaptein (left) engages in classroom discussion with Max (right).

and expound the virtues of peace. Wouldn't Americans benefit from an education in apartheid, and South Africans in the American civil rights movement? The response, or at least my own answer, is a resounding "yes."

After a week of classes, our class flew to Washington,

Thank You!

eduWeavers is yours as much as it is ours. We could not have made the connections and impact we have already made without our wonderful website donated and supported by BigMedia (www.bigmedia.co.za). Specific thank-yous go out to Irwin Manoim and Libby Young. Josh Scott, our fabulous logo generator, thank you for patiently developing it with us. Thank

you to Cheryl Finley, who generously donated hours (that turned into months) of her time to support our application for non-profit status, and Jessica Getz, who donated her accounting expertise. Milton Reynolds of Facing History and Ourselves shared his wisdom generously. Dylan Wray of Shikaya is an extraordinary contact in South Africa. And finally, a heartfelt thank you to our board of directors whose invaluable expertise continues to inspire and focus us.



Interested in Supporting eduWeavers?

Time, expertise, and resources are always welcome! There are so many ways you can help share the vision with others.

- Forward our newsletter and workshop information to anyone who may be interested in us.
- Think outside the box and spread the word. While we formally facilitate partnerships only between schools in the US and schools in specific areas of Africa at this moment, our philosophy of partnership transcends those specific relationships. Our workshops are helpful to any community interested in becoming better partners on a local or global level.
- Grant writing is an art! Do you have experience writing grants? Help us help others by helping us seek out and apply for grants. We are particularly interested in grants that allow us to share the vision of reciprocal learning with public school teachers and students and/or allow us to develop public/private partnerships.
- Specific Project Contributions: Each partnership raises funds to ensure students can learn collaboratively. Funds are distributed to pay for sustained connectivity and the equipment necessary to share lessons, sports facilities, as well as scholarships so students can stay at school. Mentoring and food programs also receive support. If you are specifically interested in supporting any of these at a grassroots level (eduWeavers takes no overhead fee for facilitating this), let us know.
- Host an eduWeavers Information Evening.
- Travel to schools, sharing the vision, developing materials, and sustaining the partnerships takes time and resources. There are visionaries out there who want to invest in the foundation of this vision and get the concept and the skills out to as many educators as possible. We need to meet those people so that they can help eduWeavers provide professional development and support to any school that wants to create sustainable partnerships. If you have contacts, we'd love to share the dream.
- Do you have contacts we should know about? Press contacts? Foundation contacts? Non-profit contacts who would be great collaborators? Please help us connect.

Resource of the Moment:

Interested in in-depth multimedia curriculum for global units? Project Explorer may just have what you are looking for. We, of course, particularly like the fact that they have a unit on South Africa. Award winning and always striving to "bring it live!" You should check it out: <http://www.projectexplorer.org/>. Follow CEO Jenny Buccos on Facebook. She shares what it takes to make the curricula happen.