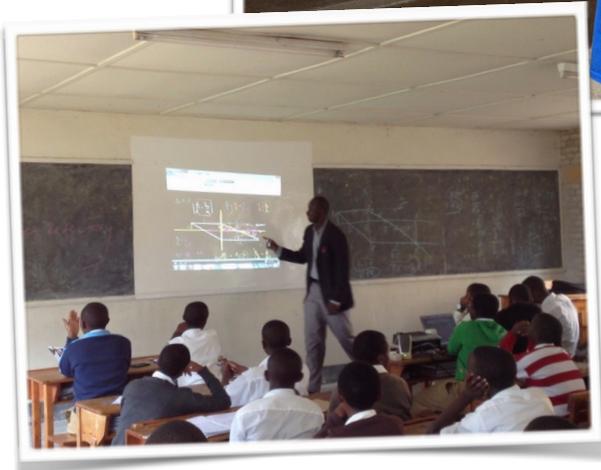


# Byimana School of Sciences

- *Sponsor Students - Help Teachers -*

- *Promote Entrepreneurship -*



We have just passed the ten year mark of working with our friends at the Byimana School of Sciences in Rwanda. We thought we would start this report with a few reflections and observations:

Back in 2005, Brother Straton, Byimana's headmaster suggested that the best help we could bring was to enable the poor students who couldn't afford even the modest school fees to get an education. We started with a handful that year and with your generous support built the program up to a peak of 110 students by 2010. The first two students we personally sponsored completed university and are now working. Boniface is a doctor at a hospital in the capital. Clarisse is married with a young daughter and runs a shop in the center of the country. When we return to Rwanda we are often contacted by graduates with messages of thanks for their sponsors. Théodore BAGARAGAZA recently emailed Anne van Nostrand to let her know that he had become a Chemistry and French teacher. He teaches in one of the new primary/middle schools established to enable Rwanda's universal education.



This is exactly what we aimed for, helping needy students like Fabiola NYONSHUTI (in the cover photo) with potential to get their secondary education, move onto university and into the workforce. Fabiola's parents are no longer living. She lives with her aunt who is a widow with three children of her own. Her aunt sells vegetables on the street, despite her fear that she may be arrested, as this is not legal. "When she makes some money we have food; but often we are hungry." Today the need at Byimana for this type of support is between 50 and 60 students each year. It is a good sign of progress for the country, but also an indication of Byimana attracting even more competitive middle class students. Last year Brother Straton admitted some refugees. The hope that this gives them -secondary schooling is not available in the camps - is beyond description. We hope to do more of this going forward.

A few years into our work at Byimana, we began looking for other ways to help. Brother Straton's advice was to find a way to get the teachers using computers to improve their skills and productivity in the classroom. We started by bringing the latest e-books on tablets and really 'Wowed' the teachers. You can imagine our disappointment when we returned a year later to find the e-books unused in a drawer. It was just too much.

Two years ago we had our first success with a simple inexpensive document camera which allowed the teacher to show material from the textbook, notes or prepared material and save tons of time copying material on the board. Essentially the teacher could have 20 minutes more in a typical class to work with the students. Guess what - we came back the next year and they had modified several classrooms to use the document camera. The 'African White Board' ( a



dollar's worth of white paint in the middle of the existing black board) did the trick. They needed more cameras so the teachers could use them in more classes. You responded with donations and more of the classrooms are outfitted this year.

In 2014, we had an 'Aha!!' moment when we discovered a massive digital library called RACHEL which could be delivered without the internet (which has been so slow to arrive.) RACHEL provides a complete set of Ck-12 math and science textbooks, 3,000 videos from the Kahn Academy, hundreds of classic books, 6,000 entry Wikipedia for class research assignments and more. We trained a group of 9 teachers. They formed a teacher



enabling, or 'eMwalimu' club (in Swahili). Again it took off. 'More projectors, and document cameras please' was the cry after we left. Again you responded with donations and support.

This year we opened up these tools to 5 additional schools. Each was asked to send their headmaster, IT coordinator and four teachers to a four day e-Mwalimu Workshop. The beauty of this year's workshop is that the Byimana Teachers from their e-Mwalimu club taught the workshop! Success here will be a self sustaining program where Rwandan's help each other.



On graduation day we had the best teacher in each subject present a lesson plan to their peers. It was truly impressive. Each got a certificate of completion and we hope to involve them in future workshops.

On the second day of the workshop Rwanda's Minister of Education brought his team to observe, question and hopefully adopt some of these techniques across the country. He took a moment here to view the new biology lab and admire the microscopes donated by Duxbury High School.

Our third initiative began in 2011. As our students graduated from university, they were having difficulty finding jobs commensurate with their education. We realized that for them, their education had outpaced the local economy. Our friend Dennis Hanno, now President of Wheaton College and formerly Vice Chancellor at Babson, had the answer, "If you can't find a job; make a job." We got him together with Brother Straton and the Byimana Entrepreneurship Workshop was born. Last month, we had our fifth annual workshop. 112 high school sophomores and juniors from 18 schools across Rwanda learned to start a business. 14 teachers from the US led them in small team sessions taking them through self assessments, identifying needs, generating ideas to solve them, learning some accounting and marketing basics and delivering their plans through a three minute 'Rocket Pitch'.



A real bonus, this year, is that four of the entrepreneurship teachers are Rwandan graduates of prior workshops. Now, we have come full circle, from learners to trainers. That's sustainability!

The final presentations on graduation day were inspiring. **Pax** came in third with his proposal to become a motivational speaker for fellow students and faculty. **Oriella** was runner up with her business to sell solar panels. **Prince** won the competition with his business to sell flowers. The judges favored **Prince's** business because it was so simple and easy to execute - "pick 'em and sell 'em..."

...and while business propositions are the goal – The presentation skills, confidence, command of english, (which was only introduced in the schools six years ago), 'blew the judges away!'

So here we are, starting our second decade... Thanks to your generosity and support, more than 450 students have an education and are actively building a middle class in Rwanda. Byimana's teachers are really beginning to embrace these technology based tools, 10 classrooms have been fitted with the 'African White Boards', new laboratories have been added for the sciences, a new library has just opened this spring. 35 teachers can now give workshops using these new tools and techniques. ... and with this year's entrepreneurship workshop, more than 400 young Rwandans understand how to build a business plan of their own.

*What's next? We believe our focus should be on helping these motivated young Rwandans generate more progress. We will continue the student sponsorship for the needy students with priority for refugees; get the teachers positioned to give more workshops to their peers; build a sustainable platform under the entrepreneurship workshop; and look for the next simple tool or idea to introduce to our Rwandan friends. If you would like to learn how you can help please see [www.byimana-school.com](http://www.byimana-school.com)*

*Thank you so much for your encouragement and support.*

*Penny and Mike*