



Exponential Education

Looking to the Future

May 2014

Greetings Expo Family,

This month we look towards the future: not just the future of our organization and programs but, most importantly, the future of our students. Next month, students in Ghana at the JHS3 and SHS3 levels are hard at work, taking the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and the West African Secondary School Certification Examination (WASSCE). These two tests, taken at the end of junior high school and senior high school respectively, essentially determine a child's educational future. When a student passes the BECE he or she is usually offered a seat at a secondary school in their region. If they fail the BECE their formal education is essentially over and they are expected to join the work force. The quality of high school a student is able to attend depends entirely on how poorly or how well they do on this exam. The same goes for the WASSCE and a senior high school student's ability to attend university. These exams are everything. Arguably at 13 and 18 or 19 years old, these kids are studying for and taking a test that has the ability in many ways to determine the outcome of their lives.

Every year around this time I am repeatedly amazed at the poise and grace with which our students handle the seriousness and pressure of these tests. With a majority of our JHS students and a handful of our SHS students taking the BECE or WASSCE this June our team is working overtime to make sure they each have the best opportunity to succeed. Despite their own busy schedules many of our SHS tutors are working overtime to help their JHS buddies. At the risk of sounding overly sentimental - watching our kids help and support each other is a beautiful and inspiring thing and essentially what Exponential Education is all about!

Looking at the future of our organization, this month we welcomed three new Program Managers to our ranks who will replace some of our outgoing staff in the coming weeks. In this May edition of the newsletter our newest staff introduce themselves, several of our JHS students share how they are preparing for the BECE, two of our SHS tutors tell us their career aspirations, and one of our best and brightest scholarship winners from last term answers a number of questions about his university and career plans and how participating in Expo has helped him along that path.



SHS Scholarship Winner Joshua Attah Larbia

As always I want to thank our "Expo Family" for your continued support. Instead of writing any more here I will leave you with the words of our scholarship winner Joshua Attah Larbia whom you will hear more from at a later time:

" Your gift represents much more than just a monetary gift. It is a belief in the promise of equal opportunity. By providing resources to students who need and deserve it the most, you are helping to ensure that one's economic situation is not a barrier to their intellectual growth. Moreover, you have shown that you believe in the power of education and its ability to better both the world and individual. There are no words to express my gratitude for the interest you have taken in my personal and intellectual wellbeing." - Joshua Attah Larbia

Until next time!

Amber Shevin & Helen Gradstein

Asokore Mampong Program Spotlight

Junior High School students are around fourteen or fifteen years old when they begin to prepare for the BECE. This test will either open doors for them by letting them move on to senior high school or shut them out of formal education in the future. Looking back at myself as a fourteen-year-old, I'm not sure how I would respond to such an ultimatum. Would the challenge motivate me to work hard, or simply discourage me? Hoping to understand how JHS students feel about the test and their own efforts to prepare, I posed a few questions. - Summer Wheeler, Program Associate



Summer and one of her JHS Expo Students

Rashida Salifu - Rashida says she will be very happy if she passes the BECE. She wants to go to nearby Kumasi Academy and study visual arts because she wants to be a fashion designer. Rashida often draws for fun, and she doesn't know how she makes the drawings—they just come out of her. She wants to study so she will understand this creative process better. Rashida says the Expo after school program has helped her with math because she used to go home after the close of a subject and forget it. After working with Expo tutors, she remembers the material.

Enoch Agwin - Enoch says that he is nervous to take the BECE next month. He feels he is well prepared, but he knows that the test is important and some of the questions are very hard. When asked whether his parents are worried about him passing, he answers "Somehow..." About his experience in the Expo program, he says: "I have been able to improve in my class work, examinations, class tests and much more. I have also been told by my class teacher that I have improved. At first when I read the bible, I can not read, but after this class, I can read the bible even in the church."



Enoch Agwin



Asokore Mampong JHS Students with their SHS tutor Paul

Tabi Emmanuel - Tabi is not at all worried about the BECE. He wants to study General Arts and go on to be a lawyer so he can make laws in his district. He says he doesn't know what law he would like to change, but that's why he needs to go to school and learn more.

Interview with Expo SHS Tutor Joshua

This month, I interviewed Joshua Attah Larbia, an SHS tutor from Kumasi Academy, about his plans for the future. Joshua recently earned a scholarship for exemplary performance as a tutor in Asakore Mampong JHS. Watching him teach, I have noticed unusual dedication to his students and obvious joy in the act of teaching. I wanted to find out more about what motivates and inspires him. - Summer Wheeler, Program Associate



Joshua with his Asakore Mampong Expo Team

What would you like to study at University?

I hope to study medicine. My family has always supported this because I am good at science. I want to become a surgeon, but I love to teach, so I would also like to lecture in medicine at a Ghanaian university.

Does your experience having him as a tutor and mentor impact the way you work with students at Asakore Mampong JHS?

Yes. He has helped me so much and I want to offer my students the same support. They really need someone to help them and give them individual attention they don't get in school. Some of the schools here, they don't prepare the students. My junior sister is in JHS now at a different school in Kumasi. She is top of her class, but I still worry she is not doing as well as she needs to. I even worry she won't pass the BECE because the level of education at that school is not good. I try to help her with her homework but she's very independent and wants to do everything herself. I think it's important to have someone older than you who looks out for you and helps you understand things that are challenging.

You mentioned earlier that you would like to become a professor because you love to teach. Had you taught or tutored before working with Exponential Education?

Yes. Starting in JHS, when the teacher left the class, I would go up to the front of the room and start to teach. This happened a lot in JHS, almost every day, because there are always meetings and things the teachers have to go to. It still happens sometimes in SHS, but not as often.

That's interesting! How did the students respond? Did they behave and listen to what you taught?

Yes! I think they really loved it. There were some naughty ones, and I ignored them, but most of them were really good and wanted to learn. I love it too. I think teaching is so lovely.

I guess you weren't nervous then, when you started teaching with Expo, since you had done it before?

I wasn't nervous, but it was difficult because these students' level is so much lower than other students I taught—far, far lower. It was a shock. The first few weeks, I felt like “these kids are in school and they don't know anything...how to add or

Introducing Stephen

Hey, I'm Stephen, the token Brit of Expo for the foreseeable future. Aside from the inevitable accent mimicking and jokes that'll be coming my way over the next year, I'm so excited to be joining the team in Ghana and getting involved in to all that Expo has going on. I graduated a couple of years ago with Geography and since then I have been working within the Development sector. I'm a big cricket and rugby fan, but generally love anything sporty. I'm really looking forward to all the challenges coming my way, both as a new Program Manager but also from the experience that living in Ghana will bring. As for my time with Expo I'm looking forward to boosting my teaching experience, but also seeing how I can help Expo push into new ventures during my time in Ghana. As a Brit abroad, languages aren't my forte, but I'm looking forward to trying my hand at Twi, but more importantly, teaching these American's how to speak properly! - Stephen Hunt, Program Associate



**Incoming Program Associate
Stephen Hunt**

Introducing Rachel

My name is Rachel Widany and I'm from Pittsburgh, PA. I graduated last year with a degree in International Affairs and minors in French and Economics. For the past two and a half years I have worked with various refugee and international awareness NGOs in Cairo, the West Bank, and the United States. In the past my work has involved fundraising, strategy, and communications, so I'm excited to be spending more time in the field with Exponential Education. I'm very passionate about the value of youth education, and I'm excited to begin work with our students in Kumasi! - Rachel Widany, Program Associate



Incoming Program Associate Rachel Widany

Introducing Emma

Hello everyone! I'm Emma Fesperman and I've been in Ghana for a little over two weeks now. I'm so excited to be working with Expo. My time here so far has been busy, but it's been wonderful getting to know Kumasi, my new neighborhood, and all the great people I work with. I'm from Baltimore, Maryland, and during college I studied abroad in Delhi, India, and taught English for a NGO there. Now, I'm excited to be working again in education abroad but in a role that involves more programming and organizing. I am eager to get my programs started here and to work with middle and high school students who care so much about their academic achievement. - Emma Fesperman, Program Associate



Incoming Program Associate Emma Fesperman

Expo Tutoring Services Students Share Their Future Goals

Student: Derrick Yeboah Obiri

Age: 17

School: Opoku Ware Senior High School

“I want to study abroad mainly because I want to challenge myself. A top college in the U.S. seems appropriate. Also, I want a type of education that makes use of students’ creativity, not one that stifles it. Although many schools in Ghana offer the courses I want to pursue, I strongly believe that education in the U.S. will still have the upper hand.”

Student: Kofi Osei Afram

Age: 17

School: Opoku Ware Senior High School

“Since childhood, I have always had the desire to be an actor. From Kindergarten through to Junior High School, I have always been commended for my talent and skills in acting when I perform in various drama contests. I have always dreamt of becoming a Hollywood actor one day. Aside from my God-given talents, my love for Economics has brought forth a strong burning desire in me to be an Economist in the near future.”



Expo Staff Taking Over a Tro Tro

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