



Fall, 2009

# DISPATCH

The newsletter of Education without Borders

## DONATE TODAY

[educationwithoutborders.ca](http://educationwithoutborders.ca)

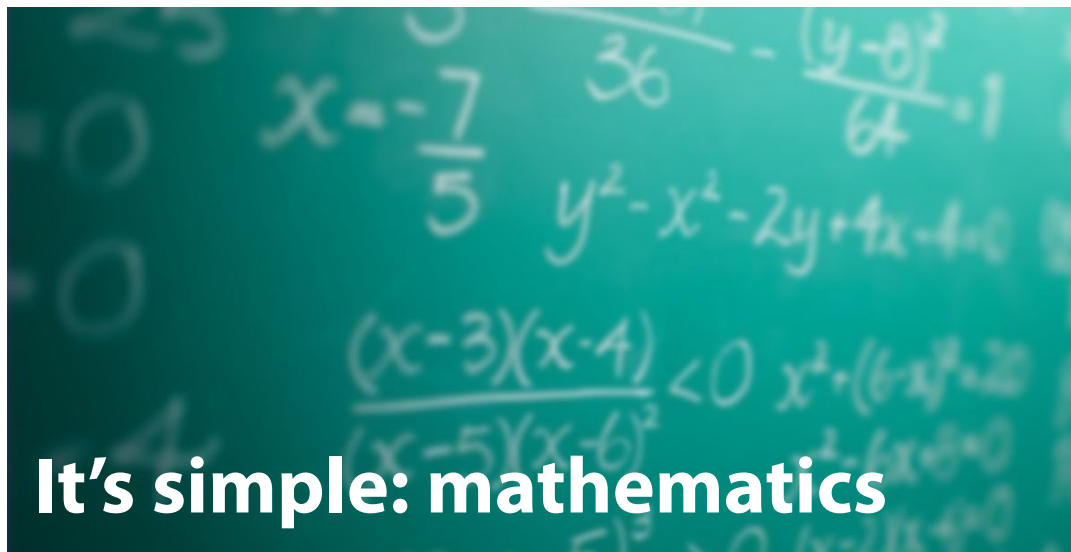
Education without Borders (EwB) is a Canadian non-profit and charitable foundation. Our mandate is to foster educational opportunities and provide educational facilities in the disadvantaged regions of the world. Our primary current goal is to help create a better future for Fezeka High School, South Africa, and its students.

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Mathematics support arrives in force for Fezeka
- EwB's volunteer program continues to grow
- A heartwarming, and heart-breaking, update from our superwoman volunteer teacher, Alex Abraham
- Poetry, poetry and more poetry. Fezeka students bare their emotions in print
- Positive programming: updates on the photography club, chess club and lots more...

## SAVE THE DATE

- **EwB Poker Night**  
**Thursday, October 8**  
The Shark Club, 180 West Georgia  
Register at 5:30 p.m.  
Beginners welcome! (No pros)  
\$60 buy-in; \$600 first prize
- **Woza Afrika!**  
**Saturday, October 24**  
Kay Meek Theatre, West Van  
[educationwithoutborders.ca](http://educationwithoutborders.ca)



## It's simple: mathematics

EwB is excited to announce that Dr. Rahael Janan of the Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences (PIMS) arrived in Cape Town this month to run a seven-week workshop at Fezeka Secondary School in "The Language of Mathematics."

Achieving good marks in mathematics has been a tremendous challenge for many students at Fezeka. Across the board, the pass rate is no better than 20 per cent. In Grade 12, only five per cent obtain marks of 70 per cent or above.

Dr. Janan (pictured with Britannia Secondary graduate) has an impressive track record, most notably through her work at inner-city Britannia Secondary in Vancouver.

The workshop is designed to en-



able students to acquire the basic mathematical skills necessary for any grade curriculum.

The first week involves the teachers and tutors only, while the following six weeks involves the students. One hundred and 50 learners at Fezeka were selected from Grades 9 and divided into groups of 15, with each group supervised by a mathematics teacher and tutor. Special workbooks were printed in Cape Town.

Dr. Janan has master's and PhD degrees from the Indian Institute of Technology at Mumbai and brings a different philosophical mindset to teaching mathematics.

She previously worked at the University of Alberta and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. PIMS was founded in 1996 by a consortium of five universities in Alberta and British Columbia.

**BOARD UPDATE:** The EwB Board has remained active and vibrant with the addition of new faces who have strengthened the organization. With regret, we say farewell to **Terra Sweet**, a major contributor to the Board over the last few years. Terra has relocated to New York and is teaching in an elementary school at Columbia University.



## FUNDRAISING

### Puppets and the power of song

It's been another exciting (and varied) year for EwB events with a sold-out show of The Old Trout Puppet Workshop and an evening with renowned songstress Jane Mortifee. In addition, EwB continues to raise funds with annual wine tasting and auction events, and regular poker nights. Thanks to your support, EwB raised close to \$30,000 in the past year.

This Oct. 24, at the Kay Meek Theatre in West Vancouver, we will be putting on Woza Afrika 3, which includes the Universal Gospel Choir, Jane Mortifee (pictured) and the Pro Arte Dancers under the direction of the talented Astrid Sherman. EwB thanks all its donors and supporters!

## More on the way

EwB's volunteer program is ever expanding.

Alex Abraham will stay on at Fezeka until July, 2010 and will continue to teach Grade 11 English as well as assist with the management of various projects. Laura Egdorf (pictured) is set to arrive this September at the school. Her primary role is to set up and manage an after-school tutorial system that complements classroom teaching in the subjects of Mathematics, English and Science.



Laura will connect with other NGOs in Cape Town for advice and tutors and the intended outcome is an improved pass rate in these subjects for Grades 8 through 12.

EwB has continued its connection with Old Dominion University of West Virginia. This was the second year in a row that a group of their students under the leadership of Dr. Jennifer Fish visited Fezeka.

Their daily interaction with students was limited because it was exam time, but a couple did connect with the poetry club and others worked to revamp the library that had been sitting unused, cluttered and under-resourced.

Fezeka can now proudly boast a freshly-painted, reorganized and furnished resource room and library. The group also generously donated a new stereo to the choir and have committed to coming on a yearly basis. <http://odu-sojourners.weebly.com/blog.html>

## ■ VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

### From the heart of Fezeka school

*Alexandra Abraham was the first Canadian sponsored by EwB to work as a volunteer teacher at Fezeka Secondary School in Guguletu, South Africa. She's now completing her second full year and has been a tremendous asset for EwB and the school. Alex shares her experiences with eloquence and heart at her blog — [ndisafunda.blogspot.com](http://ndisafunda.blogspot.com) — and provided this report.*



A rainy Wednesday afternoon in Gugs and I marvel — not for the first or even 20th time — how quickly the last year and a half have gone by.

My time at Fezeka and in Cape Town continues to be the experience of a lifetime and shows no signs of letting up any time soon.

Cape Town continues to shock, awe and inspire me. Rarely a day goes by where the natural beauty of this city doesn't take my breath away. I had heard about the African skies but have never been so fortunate to experience them for such a prolonged period. Even in winter the palate that Mother Nature uses for her sunsets alone is humbling.

Her beauty, however, can also turn ugly in the winter months, as with torrential downpours come flooding, homes destroyed, countless lives displaced and lost. I have not, though, become immune to the racial inequalities that are part of this country's patchwork, as often happens with privileged foreigners living in less developed places.

On a work front, I feel more connected than ever with my students, colleagues and the Fezeka community on the whole. Because of my open-door policy and being a part of several extra-curricular activities, my classroom has become a popular gathering place for students at lunchtime and after school, and I have become somewhat of a confidante for many students — several of whom I do not teach. When I turn onto the road that leads to Fezeka off Gugulethu's main road in the morning, familiar faces wave and greet me, community members who have long stopped wondering who the white girl in the blue car who works at Fezeka may be. It's a wonderful feeling.

Hands down some of my favorite times at school are when students wander in to my classroom to chat. As with most kids, when out of a

classroom context, even the most disruptive ones are precious. They make me laugh so much.

But yet many continue to struggle with their schoolwork. The lack of basic literacy is inescapable. The issues faced at the school around teacher absenteeism and neglect of teaching responsibilities continues to be significant. So frequent is my encouragement of those students who are victim to this disregard to speak out that I am just waiting to be called into the principal's office for rocking the boat too much. Even if that day comes, though, I'll still keep doing it.

When a student confides in me it is rarely about something good. The debilitating helplessness that I often experience in these situations is devastating. Reading about their experiences of rape, abuse, neglect, victimization and discrimination in their written work is infuriating. And still, I have yet to hear a complaint. When they ask me about my life, it's out of curiosity rather than envy. They know that when I leave school my reality does a 180. But they don't resent me for this.

Over the past year many students have approached me to ask for money. As a rule I do not give them money, though I do keep a supply of apples and oranges in my classroom cupboard for those who are hungry. That said, there are two young people who I have connected with in a way different to others.

The first is a young woman who was in absolute crisis, a history of rape and abuse, a living situation which was absolutely toxic. She was identified to me and an EwB colleague as someone that we could perhaps help. The other is a young man whom I first met when he came into my classroom last year and asked me to read some of his poetry. I was blown away by his work.

He became a regular visitor when I didn't have any classes, and bit by

bit he told me about his life. He was living with his mother and step-father, she HIV-positive, he a victim of full-blown AIDS. Neither could work so they had very little money to live on, often going hungry for days at a time. I began giving him money here and there for groceries, to pay for electricity. Then one Monday he wasn't at school, which was rare, as despite the adversity he faced, he is extremely committed to his studies.

When I finally found him on the Wednesday something in his face had changed. His step-father, the man who had raised him from when he was a child and with whom he had been very close, had died on the weekend. The student was devastated. Two days later his mother told him she was moving back to the Eastern Cape to be cared for by her family. He would stay in Cape Town, alone in the house that they had been living in.

EwB agreed that an emergency fund of money would be set up to help these and any other students in dire need. It was to my discretion how to allocate the money. Since then the money has been able to help both of these young people regain some independence and sense of dignity in their lives, helping them buy necessities. Both are doing much better in school and in spirit.

There are so many projects to speak about — the drama, photography and chess clubs to name three — but the poetry club continues to inspire me on a daily basis. This group of students is incredible and their words never fail to elicit an excess of emotions from anyone who has the privilege of hearing them recited. There have been many visitors over the last few months and all have been blown away. **What follows is a selection of poetry from the group, to offer you a taste of the kind of talent, emotion and realities these kids possess. Enjoy...** — Alex

## What's there to live for?

When my heart is piling with  
Questions  
Empty stomach cries of  
hunger  
My heart beats with  
hatred and Anger

Having to live with  
An alcoholic mother  
An abusive father  
A prostitute sister

"NO!" I cry out loud

Where is the leader?  
Where are the providers?  
I mean the givers?

I seek love  
I seek help

— Puseletso Khati

## Tears of the World

Tears of the world  
I mean look at the world  
What they have done  
to you  
My wonderful land

Tears of the world  
Look what they have done to you my  
wonderful land  
I ask? myself is this  
the start of tomorrow  
or is this the end of  
tomorrow?

My thoughts make me  
wonder – Where is the love  
hope respect trust?  
My thoughts make me  
wonder – Where is the  
future of tomorrow?

OH! you black poor person  
OH! you black poor person  
You just make me wonder  
where is the future of  
tomorrow?

Tears of the world  
Where is the hope of  
the world?

Tears of the world  
Where is the hope of  
the world?

## You

Your hand is a shining crystal  
As pure as gold  
Your heart is full of pity  
You are a star lighting up the dark  
You make the world a place of peace  
and paradise  
You are everybody to somebody  
Only you

— Katleho Phenduka

## Hold me Close

Hold me close  
Make me feel at home  
The love that you gave me  
Made me the happiest person  
In the world

Even in the dark days  
Sleeping on the streets  
I still felt your love  
And comfort  
You never stopped believing  
In me

You made me  
Feel at home  
Hold me close

— Thobeka Taaibos

## Education

Thou shall come  
Embrace and face  
The provision and lights  
Thou shall be  
Reality and responsibility  
With smile in miles  
With strength in struggle  
With patience in vision  
Thou shall come  
Thou shall be  
I salute you, Education.

— Moeketsi Sebolai

## I have met an angel

I have met an angel that  
touched my heart.  
I have met an angel that  
blinded my eyes  
because her beauty is like  
a star shining in the night.  
I have met an angel that  
made me forget about everything.

I have met an angel  
that no mortals can  
describe because she  
looks like she was picked  
From heaven.

Her beauty shocked  
Me like I was seeing  
A ghost that wanted

To take my soul and  
Tear my heart apart  
Like my heart was a building  
That was exploded by a  
Nuclear bomb. I wish  
I could see an angel  
As beautiful as that again  
Because  
Deep inside my heart  
She has a special room  
That is covered  
With white and red roses.  
When we meet again I will  
Collapse.

— Sibusiso Xaba

I know I can  
Change the world  
Change the world  
My mind, body, spirit  
and soul tells me so

Pledge my hand and  
give my time  
to change the world for good  
for each stride I take

My history  
I am a child of revolution  
I know I can change the world  
Change the world

— Lwando Magwaca

# EwB Cape Town

With the arrival of a new principal at Fezeka Secondary — Mr. Bobi — there has been plenty to communicate and coordinate on the ground for our EwB Cape Town connections.

Mr. Bobi (pictured below with EwB founders Cecil and Ruth Hershler) has met with our colleagues (Ted Weber, Roger Trythall and Louise Egedal) on numerous occasions and shown a real enthusiasm for the partnership. EwB Cape Town is committed to assisting Mr. Bobi as much as possible, as he has immense challenges which he is facing with determination and good humour.



Mr. Bobi has met with the principal of Hector Peterson School in Kraaifontein and plans are afoot to provide Mr. Bobi with more ongoing assistance from past and present principals in the community.

EwB Cape Town has also brought inspirational speakers to the school and has met, on a few occasions, with members of the Western Province Department of Education and the Fezeka School Board of Governors.

■ This July, nine Fezeka and Songeze maths teachers spent 10 days in a residential skills development and problem solving workshop at the University of Stellenbosch. The feedback was unanimously positive. The African Institute for Mathematical Sciences School Enhancement Centre (AIMSSEC) managed the program and are interested in supporting EwB further.

## PROGRAMS



## A snapshot of their lives

In March of this year, EwB collaborated with talented Cape Town photographer Vanessa Cowling to run a weekly after school photography course for 10 Grade 12 students.

Students learned the basics of camera use and went on field trips. They've had several opportunities to express their creativity through this exciting medium and recently took part in a childhood-themed exhibition at the Cape Town School of Photography where their work hung along side images of learners from the Frank Joubert Art Centre, as well as established artists like Jody Bieber and Terry Kurgan.

"It has been an amazing experience to view these images," said Cowling. "To 'see' what these talented students see. The exhibition was a very proud moment for all."

In early October, the group is spending the weekend in the Cedarburg, where students will be able

to enjoy a camping experience and a part of the country that many have not before seen.

Funding for the photography program comes from the Compassionate Eye Foundation ([compassionateeye.org](http://compassionateeye.org)), and Cowling plans to train one student as a professional wedding and events photographer. A student's self-portrait is pictured above.

■ Chess has taken hold in Fezeka Secondary with the club thriving months after lessons stopped. iKamva LaBantu, the organization that was running the Chess4Hope program, had personnel issues but thankfully was able to lend Fezeka some boards and pieces.

Several students are playing every day at lunch and after school and the chess club was fortunate enough to meet Maurice Ashley, the first black Grandmaster of chess, during the first term.

Groups have been to various tournaments and a couple of them

did very well and are now potentially able to qualify for the Western Province team. Stay tuned!

■ Currently, both Fezeka and Songeze schools are involved with iKapa Dance ([ikapadancetheatre.co.za](http://ikapadancetheatre.co.za)) and 60 students take part twice a week. Directors Tanya and Theo are going to choose one student for a dance scholarship at the University of Cape Town.

■ Fezeka students have created an educational podcast with the help of Ciel, a British media company. Ciel is currently making a film on the Fezeka choir and its leader, Mr. Phumie ([fezeka.com](http://fezeka.com)), and they've partnered with EwB with the intention of doing further student podcasts or perhaps creating Guguletu Youth Radio.

■ Fezeka's drama club has been growing and recently a group of students visited from a private arts school in California. The two groups spent a few hours together, performing and talking.

## Seed funding for exciting projects

Through friends in the Vancouver-based Townships Project, EwB was connected to Yvonne Radinku (Tetla Financial Solutions) in Cape Town. Yvonne will set up a micro-lending initiative with a select group of Fezeka mothers. This will involve the support of the teachers at the school and the use of school premises. The initiative will likely be in the field of food preparation/catering with the objective to pro-

vide students with nutritious food at subsidized rates, as well as provide catering services.

■ Funding from the Compassionate Eye Foundation has kickstarted an initiative with SEED, a Cape Town-based NGO, to grow a food garden at Fezeka. Starting in Jan., 2010, it's a three-year program and involves community, teachers and students. It has educational and food production objectives.

## Education without Borders

[educationwithoutborders.ca](http://educationwithoutborders.ca)

604-224-3077

104-2786 West 16th Ave.  
Vancouver, BC V6K 3C4