

TEACHING AT STAR TOP COMMUNITY SCHOOL

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Star Top School is a local community school in Ng'ombe, a compound in Lusaka, Zambia. The school was founded in 2023 by Mercy and Isaac Sakala, and has been providing both high quality education and a safe space for local children.

Initially a small tuition centre, the school's has grown to nearly 150 pupils, ranging from ages 3 to 11. While Star Top is keen to welcome more children from the surrounding area, this growth comes hand in hand with a need for more resources - sufficient tables, money to provide the students with a free lunch and the additional costs of employing more teachers.

SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

- Taught Maths, Science and Technology Studies covering Grades 1,5,6, taking pressure off overstretched teachers.
- Sought to invest (through fundraiser) in infrastructure that improves the learning environment.
- Created lasting teaching resources for science.
- Taught children to use computers

SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

- Contributed to the (as yet not completed) implementation of a borehole and pump system.
- Will provide a reliable supply of clean water to students at Star Top School.
- Especially important during the dry season, when council water only reaches the school a couple of times per month.

SDG 10: REDUCE INEQUALITY

- Zambia is the 6th most unequal country in the world with over 60% of the population living on less than \$2.15 per day [1].
- Zambia has an illiteracy rate of 28%, and this is even higher in compounds such as Ng'ombe [2].
- Providing low-cost, quality primary education drives up literacy rates and access to higher-paying jobs.

GOAL 1:

Ensure that Grade 5 students can independently perform two and three-digit long multiplication and long division

PARTLY SUCCESSFUL

- Testing started earlier than I thought so I was more limited on time than I had planned for.
- End of Term Tests had mixed results, but showed strong improvement for all with a number scoring over 20/26.
- All students scored well on two-digit long multiplication, with long division still proving difficult for some.

GOAL 2:

Ensure that Grade 5 and 6 students at Star Top School are proficient at the basic elements of text formatting in Microsoft Word

SUCCESSFUL

- Many students had never used a laptop before, and will need basic text editing skills for their Grade 7 exams.
- We covered font styles, bold/italic/underlined text, text alignment, bulleted and numbered lists, highlighting, and copying and cutting text.
- **All** students were able to complete the text formatting exercises set for them during class by the end of the six weeks

GOAL 3:

Carry out at least 5 interactive physics experiments with the grade 6 students to foster scientific curiosity

IN PROGRESS

- Only 2 experiments carried out during my time teaching - demonstrating air has mass using balloons and investigating the relationship between frequency, pitch and the length of a ruler.
- Found students trying to explain and recreate this experiment for younger pupils during break time.
- Still working on a booklet of science experiments for Grades 1-6, such that these experiments can continue

CHANGE-MAKER VALUES

- **AMBITIOUS:** Having to adjust my SMART goals taught me that there is a fine line between being ambitious and over ambitious - I learnt how to be realistic with aims while still maximising impact
- **GOOD:** Decided to slow down pace in maths and prioritise real understanding of the basics over getting through all the content.
- **DETERMINED:** Progress was initially slow, requiring determination both from myself and the students to move forward.

CHARACTER

- **TEMPERANCE:** Staying calm and consistent while managing an often hectic classroom dynamic.
- **COLLABORATION:** Cross-cultural cooperation and cultural exchange, working closely with the three other Scholars and teachers at Star Top.
- **JUSTICE:** Helping teachers at Star Top instill positive values in the students by clearly identifying good behaviour whilst discouraging disruptive or damaging behaviour.

CAPACITIES

- **PEOPLE:** Working together with the team of scholars and teachers, engaging in cultural exchange and cross-cultural communication. Navigating sensitive conversations with parents about reports.
- **PROCESS:** Digitising the school's test papers, creating a reusable template for future tests. Learning to help the students to navigate the process of developing new skills.
- **PERFORMANCE:** Consistent reflection, adapting plans and planning lessons. Creative problem solving under constraints (e.g. designing experiments using minimal materials).

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Worked with Grace, Henry and Rebecca to set up a GoFundMe for the school, aiming to raise money for desks (Y6 learn outside).
- Helped to facilitate the implementation of a borehole and pump on school grounds to ensure access to clean water all year.
- Experiments workbook left in the school library for teachers to use, hopefully continuing to foster scientific curiosity.

REFERENCES

- [1] World Bank. 2025. Zambia Poverty and Equity Assessment 2025: Turning Things Around After a Lost Decade. © World Bank.
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- [2] World Bank Open Data,
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS>