

Building a better future

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Racial inequalities, poverty, disease, death; but also hope, encouragement, effort and happiness are all felt by these people.

Apartheid ended in 1994. The native South Africans, those of mixed race, European and Dutch have been working to create equality, and a desegregated world in their country.

South Africa is working hard to build a middle class. Children in grades 8 to 12 live too far out in the country to get to school, and there is no public bussing. Consequently, they live in hostels or boarding homes during the week, and then travel home on weekends.

There are more primary schools in the country to accommodate the younger children. There is no property tax system, so education must be paid for by parents. There is very little state aid for education. If someone absolutely cannot pay, then the state must absorb the cost.

I have also come to realize the students are learning different languages within the schools - Native tribal tongue, Africana, and English.

The children of South Africa have unsupervised free time while teachers take 25 minutes for tea and crumpets twice a day. Regretfully, the students only have approximately one computer per school.

A child without shoes or with little food or clothing is a common sight within the country. However, a more common experience in South Africa is the sight of a child smiling and laughing.

These experiences mentioned here were between our school district as part of an educational exchange. The exchange was an attempt to learn about the culture and geography of South Africa, as well as share educational ideas and strategies.

It was the third exchange between our school district and Graaf-Reinet, a city of about 40,000, and the fourth oldest town in South Africa.

This exchange was an effort to improve the quality and accessibility of basic education, as well as helping individuals and communities reach their full potential, with a particular emphasis on enhancing the performance of educational systems, including IT, through improving finance for educational materials; transportation; and access as well as accountability in South Africa.

I invite all to partake in Building a Better Future. With the help of donations from supporters such as you, we will continue to see improvements in education at home and abroad.

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