

Greetings from Kenya!

This has been an eventful month. Our first term (corresponding to a trimester in the U.S.) ended at the beginning of April when students took their final exams. Most of them did poorly. Almost half the students at the school (including my own) failed the math exam, on which their grade is solely based. The results were disappointing but not surprising, since the exams are designed to be difficult and include material covered two or three years earlier, if at all.

At the end of term, I organized two events which I hope will motivate my students to work harder. The first was an auction, for which the students were given “classroom dollars” to spend based on the points they earned on quizzes, midterm exam, and homework. Items on offer were small packs of cookies and other treats, school supplies, and a few things brought from home (small-denomination \$ bills, t-shirt, thermos, and tote bag). Bidding was loud and enthusiastic, and everything sold at a high price. Three other teachers attended, and one has already told me he will host an auction next term.

The second event took place after classes ended. Twenty of my most diligent students were invited to attend “math camp” for one week. Each day for about 90 minutes we reviewed one topic from last year’s math course (such as fractions and decimals, solving equations, graphing straight lines), interspersed with riddles and math puzzles, and followed by a snack and outdoor games. I taught them how to play dodgeball, kickball, and keep-away, but most of them still preferred to play football (soccer). The kids seemed to enjoy the camp and were especially happy that they were allowed to come to school dressed in their own clothes, not in school uniforms.

Shortly after that, I flew to Mombasa to spend a few days of our school break with my tutor and his wife at a church retreat center near the city. They go there every year to celebrate Easter with fellow church members from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. On most days I went into the city, either with Patrick or by myself, to visit historic sites (16th century Portuguese/Arab/British fort; waterfront; government square; the old town) and to see craft and art exhibits. Each evening I returned to the retreat center, ate dinner with my friends, and sometimes attended their worship services – very lively with a professional choir and band, lots of singing, dancing, and fervent preaching. The highlight of the trip for me was attending Easter morning service at the Anglican Cathedral in Mombasa, singing familiar hymns, and hearing liturgy that reminded me of Sam (as did bells that were ringing from the Cathedral tower afterwards).

Now I am home, preparing for Term 2 classes that start next week and looking forward to a short visit this weekend from the other white-haired PCV in our cohort. The pictures attached below were taken in Mombasa. Some include Patrick and our tour guide in the fort and the old town.

Much love to all, M/M

