



2019 EDUCATION QUALITY AWARDS



OPPORTUNITY
EduFinance

2019 EDUQUALITY AWARDS

Opportunity International is pleased to announce the winners of the **2019 Education Quality Awards**, recognizing schools in the EduQuality program that have demonstrated the greatest level of innovation and determination to improve the quality of education for their students.

Winning schools were evaluated based on their ability to implement their school development plan, and creatively use limited resources to maximize the impact of their learning environments. The award committee looked for approaches that both engaged and benefited the school community, students, and families.

In order to be eligible for the award, schools must be enrolled in the EduQuality programme, currently accessing a School Improvement Loan from their local Opportunity EduFinance partner financial institution and be in good standing with their loan repayment plan. Award winners receive a cash prize and wall plaque for their school which is presented during awards ceremonies at each school.

The 2019 Education Quality Award winners:

- **First Prize (US\$5k)**
Pax Junior School, Uganda
- **Second Prize (US\$2k)**
Kireka High School, Uganda
- **Honourable Mention (US\$1k)**
Acropolis Maranatha Academy, Ghana
- **Honourable Mention (US\$1k)**
Busia Trust Secondary School, Uganda
- **Honourable Mention (US\$1k):**
Solid Rock Foundation School, Ghana

During the awards ceremony for Pax Junior School, Renée McAlpin, Global EduQuality Manager, explained why the EduQuality Awards were created. “We are thrilled to acknowledge the hard work of these schools on their journey to improving the conditions for learning. The awards are also a reflection of the support provided by Opportunity Education Specialists to the schools.”

THE EDUCATION QUALITY PROGRAM OF OPPORTUNITY EDUFINANCE

The EduQuality program at Opportunity EduFinance brings together local entrepreneurs of affordable private schools in a self-improving school system (a network of school clusters). Collaborating with EduFinance financial institution partners lending to these schools, the EduQuality team offers this holistic school development program, allowing them to opt-in for the three-year program including the following components:

Professional development training to senior school leaders with a focus on instructional leadership and management best practices.

Professionalization of the teacher workforce in affordable private schools with foundational teacher training; i.e. pedagogy, teaching and learning, and classroom management.

Strategic school improvement planning with Pathways to Excellence. Each school owner diagnoses the quality of education at their school using measurable indicators of school quality and then develops a school development plan to improve upon areas of greatest need.



FIRST PRIZE

PAX JUNIOR SCHOOL, UGANDA



SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Pax Junior School, located in Kampala, Uganda, opened its doors to 7 students in 2011. Owners Christine and Charles Kitasimbwa now educate 707 students in pre-primary and primary school.

- 341 girls (48%)
- 517 primary
- 190 pre-primary

EDUQUALITY PROGRAM

The Kitasimbwa's are loan clients of Stanbic Bank Uganda, which led to their introduction to the EduQuality program in June 2018. After attending an Introduction Seminar for the program, the Kitawimbwa's decided to join the program. Pax Junior School is currently a member of the **Champions Cluster**, supported by **Dr. Innocent Masengo**.



PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

After learning about the value of having a school development plan during a School Leadership Professional Development (SLPD) workshop in June 2018, Pax Junior School decided to begin a process of drafting a 2018-2020 school development plan (SDP).

The SDP was developed in consultation with parents, who were surveyed, along with teachers, and support staff. The final plan was disseminated to all staff during a school workshop and to parents during a school parents meeting, ensuring that the plan is available to the full school community and laying out the vision of what Pax Junior School hopes to achieve by 2020.

PRIMARY FOCUS AREA: Child Protection & Safeguarding

ACHIEVEMENTS

While Pax Junior School improved across a wide number of areas in 2019 related to quality, leadership identified Child protection & safeguarding as a top priority for improvement. Key deliverables and activities implemented to achieve this goal included:

- A comprehensive **child protection policy** was developed in coordination with teachers and disseminated to all staff, accompanied by a training for staff on child protection, which included a focus on recognizing emotional abuse. Teachers were taken through alternatives to corporal punishment during the training, in line with recommendation developed by the Ministry of Education.
- A **child protection officer** was appointed to oversee any cases of suspected abuse reported. Parents were fully briefed on the policy and asked for input.
- All staff signed the child protection policy, and a **yearly review process** has been established to improve the policy as needed and provide a refresher training to all members.
- To improve school safety in line with child safeguarding, the school created a **Fire and Safety Policy** and placed fire extinguishers and lighting arresters around the buildings. The local electricity distribution company was invited to visit the school and sensitize students on how to properly handle fire, fire extinguishers and electricity safely.

The school community response to the improvements in child protection and safeguarding have been extremely positive.

- **Parents** and **students** have expressed being more comfortable and confident students are being safeguarded.
- **Teachers** report being happy with the clarity around expectations for teacher-student interactions, which school leadership correlates to reduced teacher disciplinary cases.

Other target areas for improvement that Pax included and addressed in the School Development plan included:

- **Teaching & Learning Resources.** School management organized a computer training for all teachers aimed at enabling teachers to use the internet for specifically teaching and learning purposes, promoting research and enhanced content quality.
- **Teacher & Lesson Oversight.** To improve the practice of lesson observation and feedback as a part of regular teacher professional development, the school leadership planned a 'teacher supervision week' where lessons were observed, learner work cross-checked and interviews were conducted with students to assess learning. A 'best teacher of the month' award was created and displayed on the notice board.



- **Parent Engagement.** Because of challenging, sometimes hostile meetings between parents and school leadership in the past, Pax spent 2 years without inviting parents for a meeting. However, after EduQuality's School Leadership Professional Development training emphasized the importance of strong parent engagement, both for the learners benefit and the sustainability of the school, Pax organized a parent meeting. With the support of the Education Specialist present, parents and school leadership agreed to improved communications and selected three parents as Board representatives.
- **Teacher Recruitment.** With guidance from EduQuality provided resources, the first Pax employee manual was developed and disseminated, covering recruitment procedure and staff orientation to ensure the best candidates are recruited, focusing on improved teacher retention. Since joining the EduQuality program, no teachers have left the school to date.

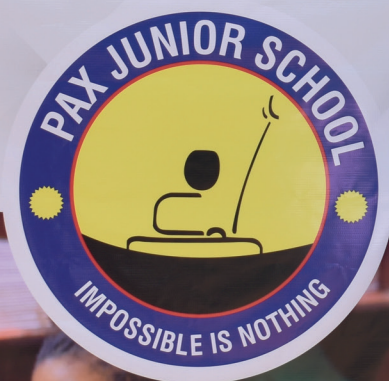
Responding to the news of this award, Pax Junior School director Christine Kitasimbwa pledged to use her new knowledge to support other schools within their cluster, saying, "We remain committed to learning and implementing what we have learned, for impossible is nothing."



PAX JUNIOR SCHOOL

Winner of the 2019

Opportunity International Education Quality Award



OPPORTUNITY
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UNLOCKING QUALITY
EDUCATION FOR THIS
GENERATION THROUGH
FINANCIAL INCLUSION
AND HOLISTIC SCHOOL
DEVELOPMENT.

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AWARD CEREMONY SPEECH

“As you are aware, private schools in Uganda have contributed significantly to educating this nation despite the challenges they are facing. Some of these challenges have led to the closure of some schools and this affects pupils, teachers, the parent and the community where these schools are located.

It is sad to note that as teachers, our universities and colleges trained us to teach in the classroom and business management was not part of our training. We were therefore not prepared for the business challenges that we are facing in the private schools today. We have challenges in financial management, strategic planning, human resource management, customer care, governance, records management, legality of our institutions, etc. These challenges spill over and affect the performance of pupils and staff thereby undermining the quality of education and long-term stability of private schools.

It's against this background that Stanbic Bank found it fit to partner with Opportunity International to train both school leaders and teachers in school management. This training would go a long way in ensuring quality education is given to the pupils and therefore a long term existence of our schools....

We pledge to use the knowledge we have learned from Opportunity International to support other schools in our cluster” – **Christine Kitasimbwa, Director Pax Junior School**



SECOND PRIZE

KIREKA HIGH SCHOOL, UGANDA



SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Kireka High School was first opened by Mr. Moses Mugerwa in June 1994 with only 80 students, and has since grown to 750 students across two campuses.

- 323 girls (43%)
- 545 lower-secondary
- 207 upper-secondary

EDUQUALITY PROGRAM

Mugerwa is an active loan client of Stanbic Bank Uganda. After Stanbic Bank partnered with the EduQuality program, Mr. Mugerwa decided to opt-in to the program in June 2018 and joined Stanbic Bank Uganda. After Stanbic Bank partnered with the EduQuality program, Mr. Mugerwa decided to opt-in to the program in June 2018 and joined the **Achievers Cluster**, supported by Senior Education Specialist, **Dr. Innocent Masengo**.

PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

PRIMARY FOCUS AREA: Teacher & Lesson Oversight

ACHIEVEMENTS

To ensure students are benefiting from engaging, child-centered teaching practices, Kireka High School selected Teacher & Lesson Oversight as one of their primary areas of focus in their school development plan. Before receiving oversight and training through the EduQuality program, teachers reported being left to manage their classrooms without observations and feedback, that they often did not make a lesson plan, and that student performance was not good, as morale for learning was low and teachers were demotivated by students' scores.

Through school development planning, Kireka High School has now implemented a more supportive teacher and lesson oversight structure, creating full accountability in all classroom activities, and hiring supervisors who overseeing the quality of instruction and work given to learners. In addition, teachers are now given firm guidelines, including requirements to prepare lessons before class and instructions to engage students in ten minutes of activity each session. Teachers are taught to address the range of learning styles, and teacher evaluations are regularly administered and reviewed.

Since these changes have been administered, students have indicated that they appreciate the variation in teaching methods. One student commented that he feels he understands chemistry better because his teacher has been able to incorporate real life examples into classroom explanations. Parents are continuing to advocate for their students, and have vocalized their support of the use of classroom supervisors to help spot check and monitor what learners are doing in various classes.



HONOURABLE MENTION

ACROPOLIS MARANATHA ACADEMY, GHANA



SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Acropolis Maranatha Academy offers classes from pre-primary through lower secondary. The school is run by Dr. George & Ms. Clara Ghanem, with a total enrolment of 608 students.

- 288 girls (47%)
- 125 pre-primary
- 336 primary
- 147 lower-secondary

EDUQUALITY PROGRAM

The Ghanem's are active loan clients of Opportunity International Savings & Loan in Ghana. After attending an Introductory Seminar for the EduQuality program in May 2016, the Ghanem's joined the program and became members of the **Prestige Cluster**, supported by Education Specialist, **Shula Glymin**.



PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

PRIMARY FOCUS AREA: School Culture

ACHIEVEMENTS

As part of school development planning, Acropolis Maranatha Academy focused their efforts on the creation of a positive school culture. To foster healthy communication and an environment conducive to learning, leadership established a school culture committee. This committee planned a series of internal events and team building activities throughout the school year in order to help grow strong relationships within the school community. The principal and Executive Director held multiple stakeholder meetings with the PTA, staff, and students to collectively discuss the benefits of improved school culture related to achieving academic excellence.

Because of these activities and steps to intentionally improve school culture, students and teachers can both explain and live out the school's mission and vision. Parents, staff, and students have all noted their appreciation for the changes at the school and feel responsible for creating and maintain a positive school culture and learning environment.



HONOURABLE MENTION

BUSIA TRUST SECONDARY SCHOOL, UGANDA



SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Busia Trust Secondary School is located in eastern Uganda and owned by Nathan Wabwire. The school currently educates 1075 students in lower and upper secondary.

- 356 girls (33%)
- 750 lower-secondary
- 325 upper-secondary

EDUQUALITY PROGRAM

Mr. Wabwire is an active loan client of Stanbic Bank Uganda. When Stanbic Bank partnered with the EduQuality program in June 2018, Mr. Wabwire chose to opt-in to the program. Busia Trust Secondary Schools is currently a member of the **Busia Secondary Cluster**, supported by Education Specialist, **Peter Matsanga**.

PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

PRIMARY FOCUS AREA: Teacher & Lesson Oversight

ACHIEVEMENTS

After evaluating various areas for improvement during the school development planning process, Busia Trust Secondary School chose to prioritize teacher and lesson oversight as a key focus.

Leadership initially faced resistance from teachers against developing schemes of work and lesson plans. The school also did not have a tool to conduct and evaluate lessons through classroom observations, and teachers did not want to be observed.

Despite these challenges, the school has made great progress. In order to begin improving teacher and lesson oversight practices, the leadership organized a sensitization workshop to share the importance of lesson planning, lesson observation, and feedback as a form of professional development for teachers. This workshop helped overcome the initial resistance teachers felt towards the new practice.

Leadership then introduced the practice of peer lesson observation and feedback for teachers and trained all staff on how to use a lesson observation tool. During the training, methods for effectively using teaching and learning materials were also discussed.

Since implementing these standards, the school community has positively embraced the changes. Teachers have become more active in their lesson preparation and have begun focusing on learner-centered approaches to teaching. They also sought out parents' input in an effort to increase awareness and support for improving education in the school. This collaboration with parents included providing additional learning and instructional materials.



HONOURABLE MENTION

SOLID ROCK FOUNDATION SCHOOL, GHANA



SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Ms. Victoria Hazel opened Solid Rock Foundation School in 1995 initially offering pre-primary and primary classes to a small number of students. Today the school educates 251 students from pre-primary through lower secondary and includes two campuses.

- 141 girls (56%)
- 66 pre-primary school
- 120 primary school
- 65 lower-secondary school

EDUQUALITY PROGRAM

Ms. Hazel is an active loan client of Opportunity International Savings & Loan in Ghana. After attending an Introductory Seminar for the EduQuality program in May 2016, Ms. Hazel joined the program and became members of the **Aburi/Adenta Cluster**, supported by Senior Education Specialist, **Mina Sarpong**.

PATHWAYS TO EXCELLENCE

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

PRIMARY FOCUS AREA: Teaching & Learning Resources

ACHIEVEMENTS

Solid Rock Foundation School prioritized enhancement of learning resources and technology in their most recent school development plan. Before joining the EduQuality Program, the school had challenges providing students with access to computers and internet for use with their lessons. There were only a few computers in the school, so when a teacher wanted to use a computer as part of a lesson, at least five students had to gather around a single screen.

Ms. Hazel decided that in order to improve the teaching and learning resources for her school through IT, she would take out a loan and procure a company to set up a new computer lab.

With the full new computer lab in place, both teachers and students are now able to connect online and access relevant content for lessons. Lessons are more engaging, and students have the opportunity to watch short videos on science, mathematics, and creative arts as a part of the overall lesson.

These steps towards improvement have translated into noticeable improvements in teaching quality and students' academic curiosity. Teachers are now actively looking for content online to show pupils during their lessons. Students are now extremely excited for computer lab lessons and often get to see real world events and examples projected on screens during their classes. With the resources at school and resources at home (i.e. parents' phone), students are able to access research information and get experience compiling data and information into reports.



