

A Day in the Life of our Tanzanian Students  
By Bo Skillman  
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First and foremost, thank you so very much for showing love and compassion though support of children in Iringa, Tanzania! Education will change lives of the student, his/her family, their village and over time the entire nation.

A day in the life of your student...

Ever wonder what your student is doing right now or what a typical day is like? Although each student has their own circumstances, daily life in Tanzania is pretty universal. Nearly all students attend boarding school where they are awakened at 6:00 a.m., giving them time for Morning Prayer and ugali (stiff cornmeal porridge) for breakfast. Hand washing of clothes must be accomplished in the mornings so that they can dry in the heat of the day.

Classes generally begin at 8:00 where they learn subject matter taught in English and out of shared text books (often only one book per class). Depending on the school, classes will rotate days of the week to be responsible for gathering firewood, fetching water or working the school farm (their food source). This can take away from learning time but provides the necessities of life.

At some point in the day the students will be given free time to play football (soccer), netball (volleyball) or a form of basket ball. Singing is also an organized function which they all seem to enjoy. Mid afternoon, the students will be called to take lunch which consists of ugali with beans or spinach and cabbage. All this is made over an open fire in 55 gallon drums and large cooking pots. Each student is responsible for providing their own plate/bowl and cup and needs to clean these and put them away after each meal.

In the evenings, studying must be completed by 10:00 PM as this is when the generator which produces electricity for lights is turned off. Sometimes later study by kerosene lantern is done but this is an expensive option not often utilized. Weekends and holidays are typically spent at school due to the expense and time involved in traveling home.

Realizing these kids are kids, discipline is at times necessary. Not making a bed can bring on extra farm work for the week but other offenses are still dealt with by caning. The Lutheran schools are strategically located out in remote villages to minimize bad influences of the larger cities on these students. Overall our group of students is very respectful and well behaved.

When a long day is over and they spend time giving thanks, you too are a part of their everyday life – they are thankful for two solid meals, an education and the opportunity to make a better life! For them, I say asante sana!

*Bo Skillman is a member of Christiania Lutheran Church in Lakeville, and a member of the Saint Paul Area Synod's Companion Congregation Iringa Task Force. In 2007, over 1300 Tanzanian students received scholarship support from members of the congregations of the Saint Paul Area Synod. SOTV supports 110 secondary students.*