

English Learning Center – Marimba Sweet Dreamers (NPC)

Dear Reader,

We are the Marimba Sweet Dreamers!

We are a nonprofit company founded by young adults of the Jerusalem township community in Mpumalanga, South Africa. The province of Mpumalanga (which is Zulu for “the land where the sun rises”) is about 350 kilometers north-east of Johannesburg. The capital of Mpumalanga is Nelspruit. The population is about 4 million, with the majority of people being Black. The black community is mainly Shangaan (20%) and Swazi (80%). The language of Siswati is the main first language in the Mpumalanga province.



It all started with the Marimba Band Project founded by our manager **Danmore Kusaya**, who is a musician, music producer and musical coach from Zimbabwe, living in South Africa. Danmore has a strong belief that playing music – African indigenous music in particular – will give the youth not only creative musical activities after school but also the self-confidence and joy they need to healthily grow and develop. That’s why he has started the Marimba Band Project which provides students a meaningful activity as an after-school programme where they learn to play the marimba and later play shows where the bands can earn some pocket money. This project has become so popular among our whole community due to its positive impact on the youth that we have decided to continue this work by founding a Non-Profit-Company in order to offer our gained knowledge to our younger members of the community, to schools and also other communities.

What is the English Learning Center?

The outbreak of COVID 19 and the associated consequences have forced us to come up with alternative rehearsals and shows in order to survive. During this time our coach and manager Danmore Kusaya realized how hard it was for students from rural communities to keep up with education when there was no equipment for any kind of online learning. This gave rise to the initiative to use the money earned from online live shows to buy inexpensive tablets with free English learning software in order to be able to learn together in small groups.

But the best way to learn a language is to use it! So, during the Covid 19 lockdown Danmore organized a letter exchange programme with students from Switzerland in order to keep our students busy with English learning in a very motivating way.

This not only led to new international contacts and friends but also aroused the wish to improve our English knowledge and vocabulary. Now we set up an English Learning Center where all students from our community are welcome to show up and improve their English with learning software and coaches provided by us – **Marimba Sweet Dreamers** – and the community.



What are the problems of township and rural schools in South Africa?

South Africa's educational system is complicated, with a huge gap in the standard of education between Private, Government, Township and Rural Schools. Township and Rural Schools face numerous challenges caused by poverty and lack of funds. Some of the challenges they face are:

- Not enough classrooms and large classes – between 60 and 100 children per class.
- Not enough desks, textbooks, stationery, teaching aids etc.
- None or only few after-school programmes
- Teenage pregnancy and drug abuse poses a huge problem too

These circumstances make it difficult, if not impossible for the students, to be successful with their studies, to improve their skills or to explore and develop their talents.

Unfortunately, moments of success are few and mostly not recognized by teachers. This strongly affects the student's self-esteem and confidence which is so important in order to be successful in life.

Why is the English Learning Center important?

In the township schools of Mpumalanga, good English language skills are essential for a successful school career since all the subjects at school are taught in English up from grade 4. This is a big challenge for most of the students because it is rarely spoken among their social environments.

With the school closure during the first lockdown in spring 2020 most of the students in the township were deprived of any opportunity to learn. It made it obvious that rural learners do not have access to smart phones, tablets and data and if they do, they struggle with mobile signal availability. But how should we attend the distance-learning programmes when we didn't have access to data or any equipment required? Covid 19 has made it clear; whenever there is a crisis, the inequality of education shows its ugliest face!

How can we reduce this rampant inequality? How can we narrow this deep rift between rich and poor? It shouldn't be up to us to solve this problem, but we are affected and therefore want to help alleviate the problem.

The English Learning Center is a small contribution that has already made a big difference. It provides a room and learning material such as tablets, books and writing gear for students from the community who are willing to improve not only their English knowledge but also their study for school. The English learning sessions are coached by English skilled members among us and volunteers of the community. When the kids come in the afternoon, they can also bring their homework when they have problems to understand and we help them with their homework. This English study helps them a lot to understand what they are doing at school. It's a wonderful thing to give kids the opportunity to play music with our Marimba Band Project and at the same time help them with their studies. But this project is a lot more than that. With this project we want our community to strengthen and improve. Everything comes from the community and goes back to the community!



What are the goals of the English Learning Center?

- Good English language skills are essential for a successful school career since all the subjects at school are taught in English up from grade 4. With the improvement of their English language skills, it will be easier for students to understand the topics taught at school. This will lead not only to a higher motivation but also to better school results in general.
- Besides our musical Marimba Band Project, which is very popular among the kids, we want to set an example that school is important and that we care about our students' school results as well.
- We want our students not only to play music together but also to help each other with their studies. This will build strong bonds with reliable peers and coaches, teaching them responsibility, team building and improving their musical skills as well as their studies at school.
- Being together is fun, no matter if it is playing music or studying! Providing a place where students can meet for studies will provide a meaningful activity after school and help to keep them away from the dangers of the streets.



What funds are needed and how are we going to use that funds?

In order to continue our English Learning Center for this year we set up a budget with all the things needed to pursue our goals.

1. Internet access and data for a year:
5000 Rand \cong 350 \$
2. Stationery and teaching aid:
2500 Rand \cong 165 \$
3. 6 tablets + covers:
10000 Rand \cong 660 \$.
4. One computer for the teacher:
4000 Rand \cong 265 \$.
5. Payment for the volunteer teacher for a year:
10000 Rand \cong 660 \$

We strongly believe that our English Learning Center will help our students to improve their academical knowledge while they are left behind because of poverty and inadequate infrastructure.

“Do not do nothing – do what you can with what you have where you are!”

We will be very grateful for your donation – thank you so much for supporting us!

Marimba Sweet Dreamers NPC

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Account Number: 62875824396

Branch Name: Riverside Park

Branch Code: 256405

Swift Code: FIRZAJJ

