

**TABSA.** What makes TABSA special is not something that can be planned. It is something to be experienced. Time with colleagues was most rewarding and the bonds we made across the world were truly the best gift. Not long after we returned from South Africa, I received emails and Instagram posts from our South African colleagues. Our TABSA family continues to keep in touch via WhatsApp and there's (almost) not a day that goes by without someone posting. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to challenge myself to teach across borders; to dive into a curriculum whose (teaching and learning) standards are similar but not the same as ours and to work with a passionate group of people who were willing to take time off from their vacation to continue their professional development in collaboration with us. The takeaways far outweigh any other experience I have had in my lifetime. Here's part of the journey.

### **A reflection from A Day in the Life of TABSA**

**6h00-7h30**

**BREAKFAST**



The alarm goes off and we all make our way to breakfast! We are at the same lodge for three weeks and develop special relationships with those who are there. The hotel service staff becomes part of our extended TABSA family. Alice was always there to check us in and knew what beverage to hand us. Dubehu prepared eggs just the way he knew we liked them. By the second week, we just showed up at the counter and he'd review what he knew we would be ordering. It wasn't so much about the eggs, but getting to know Dubehu and the people who lived and worked where we stayed- that's what made it hard to leave after our third week there.

**7h30**

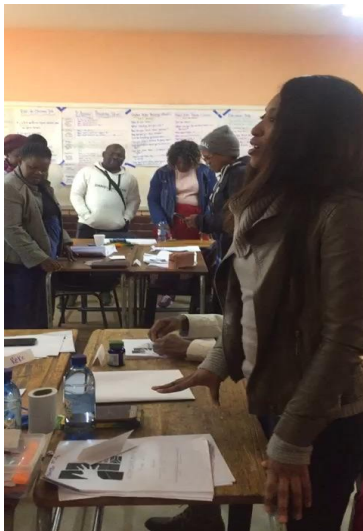
**RIDE TO SCHOOL**



We depart for Tsostolesto High School, where we work alongside our South African colleagues. This is no ordinary drive to school. As our van leaves the hotel, we play track #6, Shosholozo, a song which we all join in together to sing, and eventually share as a group during the closing ceremonies that end each week. Shosholozo is usually played a number of times before changing to additional songs on the CD. Conversation begins and we prepare for our day. There's no better way to start each morning.

**8h30-10h00**

**SESSION 1**



Our colleagues meet us and we begin with song and prayer. Without hesitation, one or more colleagues begin. Our room beams with enthusiasm and we can be heard from outside our classroom. It is joyous and uplifting as it brings a sense of warmth to the heart amidst very cold mornings. The best sound, however, comes one day from the bus, carrying our colleagues, who greet us as we walk through the halls towards the rooms. As the doors open, one can see that 4 rows of 5 double desks with chairs are the only furniture in the room, chalkboards replace computer generated slides, tape replaces magnets and push pins to hang charts, recycled materials replace items ordered from a catalog, One outlet is the available source to various

extension cords into which phones and personal heaters are plugged. And so the first session begins.

**10hr00-10h30**

**TEA**



We gather for tea in the hall. With gloves, jackets, and scarves and one heater to heat the entire room, we enjoy each other's company and conversation. It's the perfect time for a break and small snack; tomato and cheese sandwiches, boiled eggs, muffins, coffee and tea. This becomes the place to connect with colleagues you wouldn't otherwise get to know. It's a place that took me out of my comfort zone, breaking away from the colleagues I've traveled with and going it alone to find a table with a group of people unfamiliar to me. It's where I met Annette. I met many people this way and if it hadn't been for a bit of encouragement from Yunus, I would have missed out on an important experience.

**10h30-12h45**

**SESSION 2**



Our second session continues. Activities include those that are hands on, interactive and show that lessons can be taught with more than a pencil and paper. The best lessons of all, however, come from those conversations rich with discussion; the how, why and what can we do to teach a

specific concept. We make comparisons with methods used in math and what teaching practices are most effective and efficient. I am able to take away and learn from them just as much as they learn from me- a true collaborative effort.

**12h45-13h30**

### **LUNCH**

This is yet another opportunity to sit, relax, and enjoy the company of everyone involved in the workshops.

**13hr30-15h30**

### **SESSION 3**



Our final session of learning, exchange of conversation, collaboration and articulation.

**15h30-16h15**

We clean up and prepare lessons for the next day; materials are gathered and posters created.

**16h15-17h00**

Our workshop day has come to a close and we all come together for our daily staff meeting. It's a time for reflection: what happened that we didn't expect to happen, what we experienced, what was learned, what worked and what didn't work and what might we do to change things for the next day or next week, or maybe it was a word to describe the day.

**17h00-20h00**



We travel back to the hotel. On some days we stopped to pick up our laundry at the launderette. On other days we took excursions to the fabric store or to the mall. Shared experiences are what connects us and we didn't even look at it that way at the time.

**5:45-10pm**

**DINNER and...**



Dinner brings everyone together for one last time before we end our day. We'd order our food from various places but we would all end up eating together. The evening continued through dinner; some played cards, others sat to watch the World Cup (in support of Marisol, who was rooting for her home team, Panama!). Others sat to simply talk. These times continued to bring us together.

Life is a journey and I am grateful to have this amazing experience be a part of mine. Thank you, Yunus, and to the rest of our TABSA team.