



# THE SANDY TEACHER

Deanne Gochanour's Newsletter; School So Far ; Dec 2024

## The Short Summer

I was in the U.S. for about 7 weeks this summer. Because the school year had quite the busy end, I tried to take some time to decompress from Addis and the teacher life. I didn't have much time, so it only lasted a week or so. It was just enough time to get over jet lag and start connecting with family, friends, and supporters. Lutheran Bible Translators, LBT, had their all organization gathering in Missouri. It was a wonderful time to connect with coworkers! I was able to learn so much about our programs in LBT. It was also a great time to have deeper conversations with our missionaries from various countries; I learned so much about other countries and their challenges, and ultimately it was an encouragement to continue my teaching in Addis. Also, a close friend from high school flew back to Addis with me and was able to experience some of my life here. What a blessing to combine my U.S. and Ethiopian lives!

## The Start of the School Year

Bingham started school on August 15<sup>th</sup>, but many students and some staff were still in their home countries. This is a unique situation that we experience as an international mission school. Students return to Bingham after the first days of the school year because families must take extended home assignments, have businesses in other countries that need extended attention, or this year we had many families stay with their oldest child who was transitioning to college. It's challenging as a teacher to have new students entering a class after the year has begun. Expectations are constantly re-taught, and I must be prepared to give all the class materials to new students at any point through the school year.

This year, along with my duties as Deputy Athletics Director, I teach grade 8 PSSHE and grade 10 IGCSE Phy. Ed.. PSSHE is our Bible class, but it also encompasses Physical Spiritual Social and Health Education. I absolutely love teaching this class! I love combining all the "secular" topics with our Biblical topics. Most students are surprised to learn all the secular things have a connection. One of my favorite units to teach is mental health, because I get to show students that God has emotions such as love and anger just like us sinful humans. I get to teach students to throw their anxiety and worries on Christ, and that He can handle all our problems. This year my PSSHE class has 2 Muslim students and many denominations of Christian.

Because I assist in running our athletics department, I also teach our highest level of PE which is like sports science. I organize games for our student-athletes, maintain equipment and our facilities, organize internal events for our staff and students to compete against each other, and many other tasks as an athletics director.



This is Rhiannon, my friend from high school who flew to Addis with me in August. She experienced quite the intense raining season!



Field Day! A student track meet I organize as AD.

## Activities Week

Every year at Bingham, the school I teach at, we host a week of service called Activities Week. In the past our grades 6-12 have gone to various places around Addis or even around Ethiopia. Grades 6 and 12 stay in Addis for their service projects. This year they split the grades and went to several ministries; one of them is a ministry that brings kids off the streets and starts giving them an education so they can enter the local school system. They also teach the Gospel! Two other places these grades went are schools for students with special needs. Grades 7, 9, 10, and 11 go on a “camping” trip by a lake right outside of Addis. It’s like a summer camp with underprivileged students who live next to Bingham. It’s incredible that we get to take local students to hear the Gospel alongside our students leading to relationships that continue to grow for the remainder of the school year!

The grade 8 trip is known as the history and geography trip. It connects with their grade 8 curriculum of learning about their local society. Ethiopia has so many cultures and such a rich history though. I chaperoned this trip, and we flew to the Southern Regions.

One place we visited was Konso. If you’ve read a previous prayer letter of mine, LBT dedicated the Konso Bible last year! It was a great experience to return to this village with our students and show them some of the Bible topics we’ve been discussing. About 25% of the Konso people are protestant. It’s incredible to see how God works in their lives after receiving a complete Bible less than a year ago.

We visited another village called Dorze. LBT doesn’t have a tie to this community, but their culture is very rich! They dressed us in their traditional clothes and taught us how they make a bread-like dish called “False Banana.” It’s very popular in Ethiopia, so seeing them shave the trees and ferment the dough was very cool. The tree looks exactly like a banana tree, hence the name “False Banana.” We also took the most incredible hike around Dorze. I saw a teff field! Teff is an ancient grain that grows in Ethiopia and is very important to their culture.

Finally, we toured a banana farm. This farm also grows coffee, lemons, and papaya. They sell their fruit to people in Addis, so it’s very possible I’ve eaten something from their farm. They picked bananas right from a tree and cut up papayas for us to eat. Some of our students flew back to Addis with a papaya for their parents. Although I was a chaperone on this trip, I was learning just as much as the students! We had quite a few disciplinary incidents with our students, but God works in marvelous ways. Every time I ask my 8<sup>th</sup> graders how they saw God on our trip, they say how much of His grace they felt, especially from the staff. This is the fruit of 2.5 years of ministry with these students. How encouraging!



The top left is coffee! Coffee is woven into most aspects of Ethiopian culture. When it turns red, the fruit is ready to pick. The top right is a woman making “false banana bread.”



## Extended U.S. Time

I’m excited to announce my extended home assignment. I will be in the U.S. starting in mid-March until I leave for the next school year in August. I get to spend 5 months with all of you!

I am underfunded so I will be in the States to gain prayer and financial support. If you have a Church service or Bible study, a small group, or just a group of friends that I can share my ministry with, I would be very grateful to make more connections. Please let me know what dates you are available!

For now, while the ocean separates us, please join my Facebook group for more updates and pictures:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/896035981026297/>

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