Teacher Story 1

**The teacher is always in the centre**

Since its conception, E3 has consistently held one crucial belief: Teachers are at the centre of our initiative. They are the fuel in the machine that will produce engaged and motivated youth. It follows therefore that they are intrinsically people of integrity who are kind, nurturing, giving, and supportive.

“Teaching is not a profession of the cynical or indifferent.”

These are the words of a teacher whom E3 has been very fortunate to follow in his educational journey: Mr Ian Le Roux.

**A Teacher’s journey**

Ian Le Roux grew up in a state of uncertainty. Constantly battling the fear of parental unemployment, financial insecurity, and eviction, Ian threw himself into the resources provided for him by his school. It was not long before he realised the value of a teacher - a person who provides structure and hope in the life of a student.

“Teachers do more than teach,” he says, “and their impact extends far beyond the classroom. As a teacher, you are more than just an educator: you are a mentor, a confidant, and a friend. Someone who makes a difference. For this reason, I do not believe that I chose teaching. Teaching chose me. Teaching chose me to inspire, motivate and create critical thinkers who, despite their circumstances and geographic location, believe in their ability to strive and succeed in life. Ultimately teaching chose me to make a difference.”

**An E3 Ambassador**

In April of 2019, E3 held their first big conference to share ideas about the Active Learning Pedagogy. Ian attended with the Western Cape representatives and took part in the Project-writing workshop that took place that weekend.

At the conference and the workshop, E3 modeled Active Based Learning Pedagogies to transfer the theories and ideas around student-centred learning. Ian, representing Life Orientation, found it insightful, and as a natural life-long learner, excelled in taking on the ideas E3 profiled.

**Taking PBL to the classroom, and beyond**

Upon arriving back in the Western Cape, Ian started designing projects for his Business Studies classes.

His Grade 10s had to research and devise a song, poem, or other creative productions that used Business Studies terminology. The class was able to engage with the concepts at a creative level and the results were entertaining and profound.

His Grade 11s were to make products to sell out of recycled materials. Ian wanted to make sure that each project his students were involved in would be socially sustainable and would create opportunities. Another project included learners going back to their communities and devising a way to engage and help in an area that needed it. Students worked with children, the elderly, and animals, and were able to link their work back to the topic at hand: Corporate Social Responsibility.

This style of learning, Ian quickly realised, was inclusive of students who were not as academically strong as others. He noticed different learning styles in his classroom: learners who are kinaesthetic (learn with their hands) as well as visual learners. He was able to incorporate these learning styles within the Active Learning Pedagogy and was blown away by his students’ ability to use creative thinking and problem solving within their projects.

**Nothing comes without its challenges…**

Ian is well-acquainted with the difficulties experienced by his students. He knows that people tend not to believe in students who come from a community like his. Learning barriers like substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and insufficient nutrition are realities for many of his students, and without the support of a community, learners struggle to achieve both academically and within their personal development. He knows that poor expectations lead to poor results and is acutely aware of his value in providing encouragement and therefore confidence.

On how he finds the strength to overcome these challenges, Ian says:

“I see myself in every pupil. I see a better South Africa through the perseverance and small role that I can play and hope that it can be contagious”

**A Teacher Rewarded**

In 2019, Ian Le Roux won the National Teachers Award (NTA) in Excellence in secondary school teaching. The E3 team could not be prouder of everything he has done in the run up to this award and cannot wait to hear about his endeavours following it.

In his own words:

“(the students) deserve to be taught by the best. By “best” I don’t mean those who are best qualified, but those who know how to enthuse and connect with children regardless of their own levels of education.”