



SMART SCHOLARS' PRESCHOOL



Photo: Some of the Smart Scholars pupils just after the morning circle.

By Modesta Kuzenzia, owner of Smart Scholars' Preschool

PRESCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT PROPOSAL

In 2021, I started a preschool in my home with three children. Now in 2025, my home and courtyard have been taken over by the school. We are bursting at the seams, trying to run a school with 49 students in my family's home and transporting them in our very small family car.

This proposal seeks to update our infrastructure to meet the needs of our students by:

- Making the final steps in converting our family home and preschool fully into a preschool building and yard.
- Building a small, replacement house for my family to live in adjacent to the school building.
- Replacing our economy-sized family car with a van in which we can more safely transport our students.

These important steps would allow the school to be registered with the Ministry of Tanzanian Education and to occupy the space that a school serving 49 students needs.

A BRIEF BACKGROUND ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Mpiji Magoe ward in Mbezi Dar es Salaam is a community with diverse backgrounds and with various economic activities for their livelihoods. It is a rapidly developing area, approximately 33 kilometers from the city center, that is home to middle class and lower-class Tanzanians.

MY BACKGROUND

I have an undergraduate degree in development studies from Martyrs University in Uganda and a high school degree from Kodaikanal International School in India. Until 2020, my professional work was in the area of educational film production with a non-profit organization that made movies and TV shows with embedded public health messages. My husband, Matthew, worked for the same non-profit, also in film production. In 2020, specifically for the love of children, we opened a preschool in our home. A distinguishing feature of this school is that all instruction and communication is in English. Unlike our neighbors who use Swahili or other tribal languages in their homes, Matthew and I speak English with our kids, because of my international background and because Matthew is from Kenya.

HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

For Matthew's birthday in March 2020, he asked to have a party with all of the neighborhood children (Matthew and I love children). We invited a few parents to help us—the parents who attended commented repeatedly during and after the party that Matthew and I should start a preschool. They said we were “natural with the children.”

In January 2021, we started a preschool with three children in our sitting room (two outside kids and one child from our own family). We had two tables, ten chairs, two mats, me as a teacher, and a volunteer helper. Surprisingly, after three months, we had ten children. The parents loved it because the kids LOVED coming to school and they were learning English rapidly.

At this point, because of the success of the school, Matthew and I closed the shop we ran in order to focus full time on the school. We think of work at the school as “having fun,” and we wanted to focus there. As someone who has benefited greatly from education, I see the school as a meaningful way to give back to the community and to give others opportunity. The kids call me “Mom,” and of course I'm not their actual mom, but they really feel I care for them and am helping them. This is a great feeling.



Photo: Baby class pupils in a class session.

In the first couple of years, we didn't provide transportation, but many families were asking if we could provide transport and enroll their kids. Matthew started collecting kids with our family car. We now drive our car for over two hours each morning and afternoon. Matthew leaves the school at 6 a.m. and picks children up until after 8 a.m.. He does the same trips in the afternoon for drop off. Transportation takes a lot of time because we use our small family car and the roads in our area are all unpaved and sometimes terribly washed out by the rains.



Photo: Route One pick up of the kids.

As our numbers grew from three to 49 students, I took over the garden in my compound to build three small classrooms; I built a small swingset in another part of the courtyard, as well as basic toilets for the children. My sitting room and kitchen have been taken over by the school for an indoor play area and for cooking school snack and lunch every day.

WHY WE NEED TO CHANGE THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Under Tanzanian law, if I wish to register my preschool with the Ministry of Education, my family must not be living on the same compound. Furthermore, given our growing numbers and ongoing demand from families to send their children to the school, I also feel the need to expand the classrooms, which are currently very cramped. Allowing the school to completely take over the remainder of my house and building a separate, small residence for my family adjacent to the school would achieve these two goals.

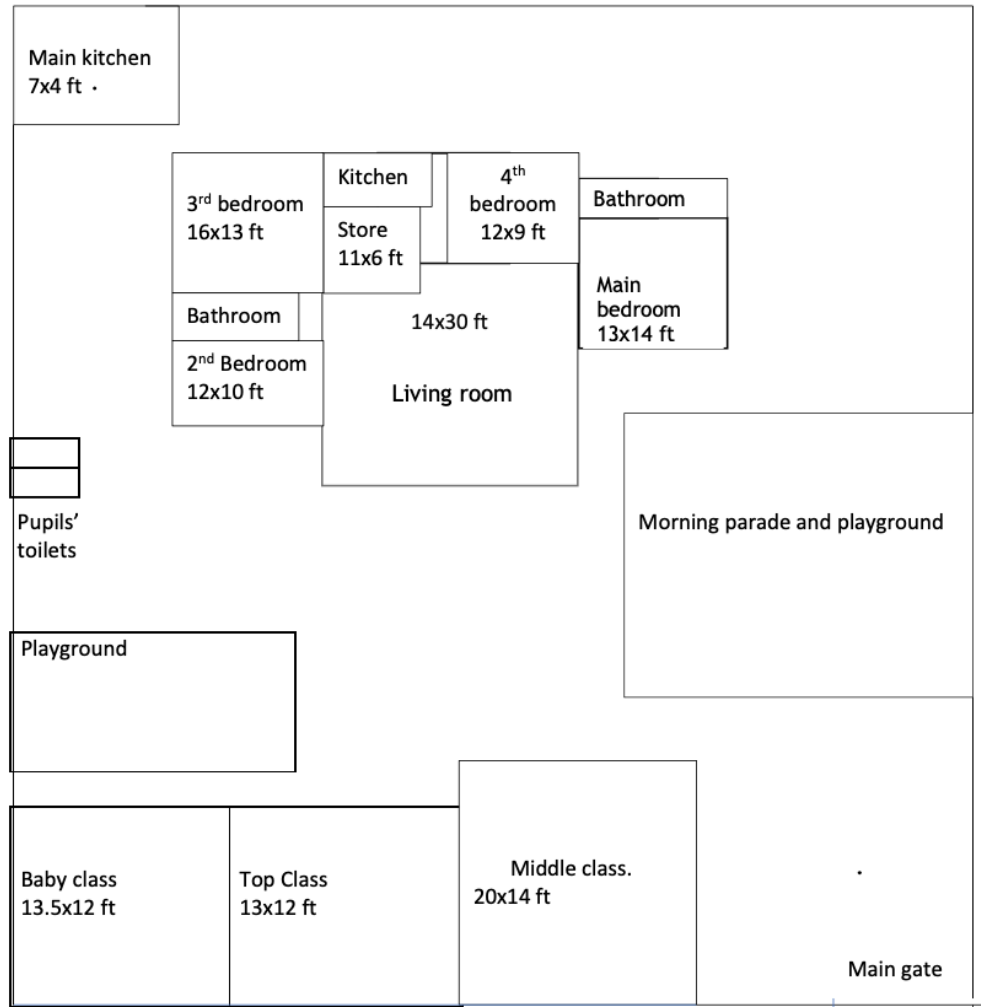
I have visited government approved pre-schools. There are two differences between those schools and mine: increased space and higher quality learning materials (books, toys, etc.) due to higher revenue from school fees. The building proposal I have described here would allow for three large classrooms, one for each of the three levels at the school, as well as space to set up learning corners, like a fruit corner, a Tanzanian traditional clothing corner, a musical instrumental corner, and a games corner. It would also allow for proper, tiled bathrooms for boys and girls, and a walled courtyard that could be dedicated to outdoor play space.

Registration with the Ministry of Education would help to reassure parents (and me) of its continuity, because it wouldn't get shut down for failure to follow the law. Registration would also allow me more opportunities to get loans for other school projects.

BUILDING PLAN

Allowing the school to take over my current home makes the most economic sense, because the home is relatively large and the compound already contains three small classrooms and an enclosed space for children to play outdoors.

Current House sharing Preschool and residential space on a 23 x 25 m area



Map: This is the current layout of my house and yard with the current added preschool buildings.

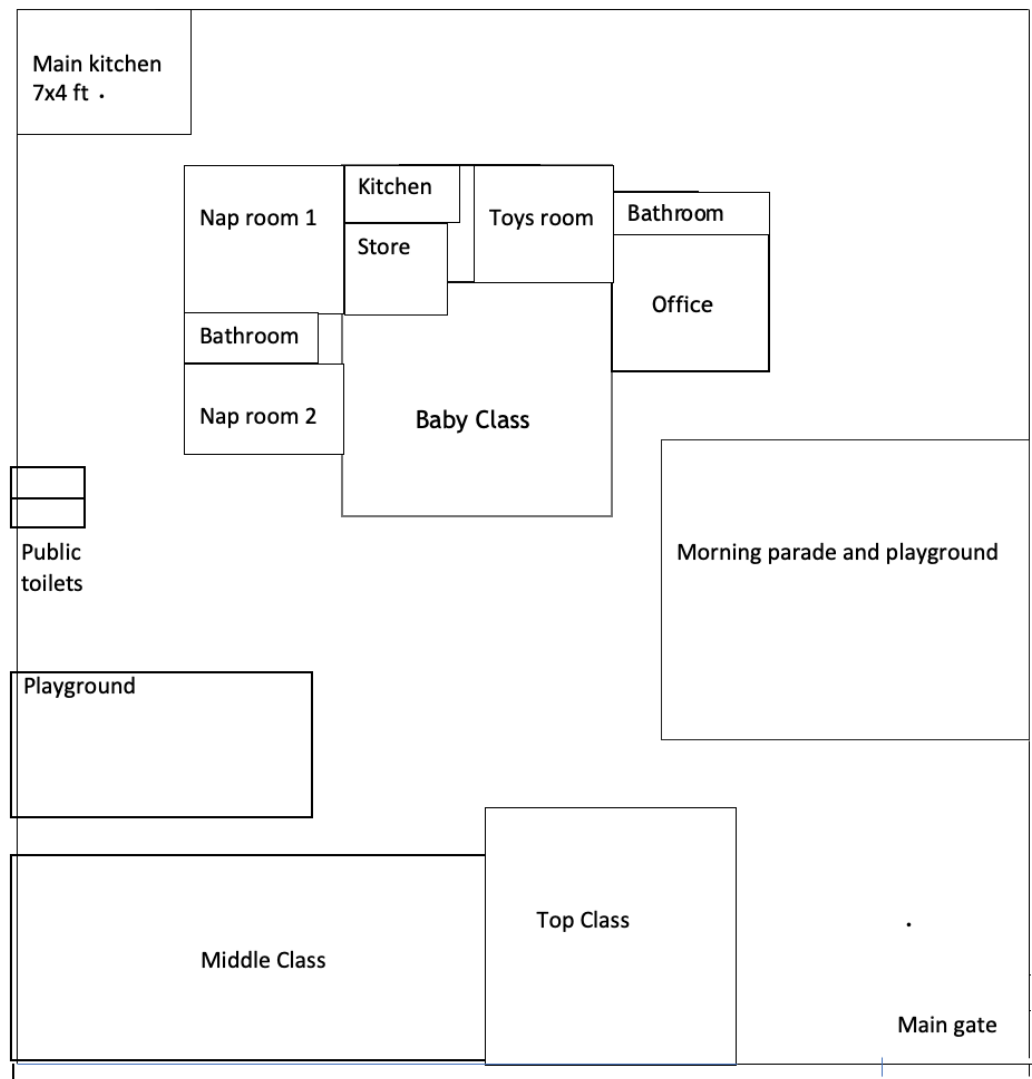


Photo: This is the current view of the house that would be remodeled taken from the current classrooms



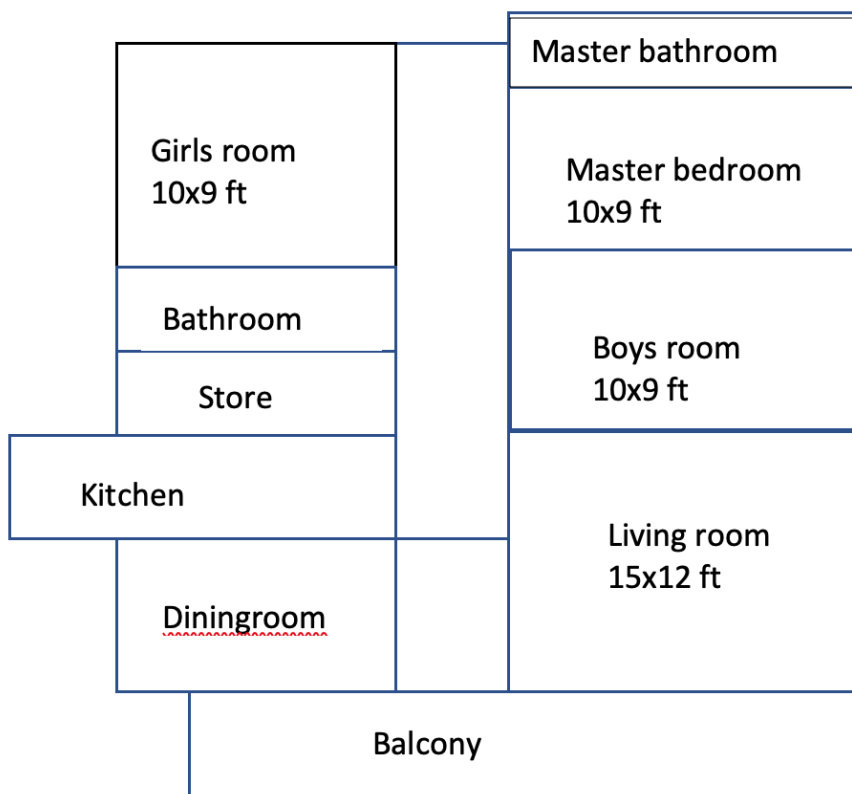
Photo: The current playground with swings that I built in place of my house's garden –the kids love swinging!

Current House remodelled into Preschool



Map: This is the plan for what the preschool would look like after the remodel and after my family moves out into the adjacent small home.

"New Small Residence for My Family Adjacent to the School on a 20 x 15 m area



Map: This is the plan for the new residence for my family. We started construction last year with the beginning of walls but had to put the rest of our available money into building a culvert and bridge on the way to our school after the road washed out with the rains.



Photo: This is the beginning of the new smaller residential house under construction. Your donation would help to finish this residence and to convert our current home fully into a school.

WHY WE NEED A LARGER VEHICLE TO TRANSPORT STUDENTS

Our economy-sized family car (four-seater) has incurred heavy use transporting students to and from school. The potholed and terribly eroded roads in our area make driving challenging. An even bigger challenge is the small size of our car, which forces us to make many runs, often with students packed in standing on the back seat and foot-rest area (see photo below). Our hope is to sell our family car and

to replace it with a used Toyota Noah van (eight-seater), which would double seating capacity and allow us to do fewer runs to pick up the kids.



Photo: On many runs, we currently squeeze up to eight children into the backseat of our family car. The kids actually love the car rides, but a replacement van would provide safer transport.

WHY SHOULD YOU MAKE THIS DONATION TO OUR SCHOOL?

We are known for providing family-styled school care at our preschool. For example, when a kid registers, we always do a home visit and meet the family first. This way we can get to know the child in the home. Parents also get a chance to meet me and to know who their child is with. Kids call me, Modesta, “Mom” and they call Matthew “Dad.” Unlike other schools that leave transport up to the families or to young men who are paid to drive kids (often dangerously) on the back of a motorbike, we provide transport in our family car with “Dad” and other students. The kids love the ride, because most come from families without cars.

As an owner, I am always present, helping kids who are sick, working in classrooms. I give 100% of my time to the kids and the school, and people notice my hard work. I feel like it’s a God given talent. Typically owners of schools will often open a school and then go to work somewhere else—that’s not my style.

One other distinguishing factor to our school is our focus on play. Kids at our school have fun. For example, when we teach a kid to write the number one, we have a whole charade that we take them through about a “standing line.” When we teach syllables—for example, ‘b’ for ball—we also have a ball with us in the class and we go outside to play with it. If we’re learning about fruits, we taste them. This way kids get to learn by playing and doing, not just through theory. Finally, we love singing and dancing—we do it every day—and taking walks around the neighborhood to explore and to learn about different plants and animals in the region.

In addition to using play as a focus, another feature that distinguished our school is our use of English as the language of instruction and play, unlike other preschools and primary schools in the TZ system. In TZ government schools, English is taught only as a subject in primary school, but the medium of instruction is in Swahili. Starting in secondary school, it switches fully to English. I know first-hand that waiting to suddenly learn math and history and other subjects in English at the start of secondary school sets students up to feel confused and to struggle. We find that those who start in English at my school go on to do very well in later years in school, because of this early foundation in English.



Photo: Top class pupils' classroom. Some of these students have been with us for three years. They all play, read, write and do math comfortably in English.

Finally, another distinguishing factor that I'm really proud of is that we welcome ALL students from our neighborhood into our school. We have a sliding scale of school fees based on what parents can afford. The full cost of attendance for families that can afford to pay is TSh 70,000, (\$27) per month, but some pay Tsh 60,000, (\$23) per month, some pay Tsh 50,000. (\$19) per month, and some pay nothing at all. This includes, school fees, stationery, play materials, staff salaries (I employ three teachers—one for each classroom, plus a cook), and food (porridge and lunch each day). We operate on a very tight budget, but I am proud to say that we have never sent away a child for lack of payment, even when we feel the parents could be paying. I simply leave this to God. I know the child will miss out if they don't attend, so I allow them to keep attending.

BUILDING AND REMODELING BUDGET

S/N	ITEMS	UNIT	QUANTITY	RATE	AMOUNT (Tsh)	AMOUNT(\$)
Stage 1						
1	Blocks 5"	Pcs	600	1100	660,000	\$254
2	Stones	Trips	1	320,000	320,000	\$123
3	Cement	Bags	40	16000	640,000	\$247
4	Sand	Trips	3	100,000	300000	\$115
5	Reinforcement steel bars 12mm	Pcs	29	22000	638,000	\$245
6	Binding wire	Pcs	5	5000	25,000	\$10
7	Binding ring	Pcs	30	1500	45,000	\$17

8	Play wood	Pcs	3	15000	45,000	\$17
9	Rental timber (hire)	Pcs	60	3,000	180,000	\$69
10	Nails (mixed)	Kg	10	5,000	50,000	\$19
11	Roofing iron sheet	Pcs	100	30,000	3,000,000	\$1,154
12	Roofing timber 2x2	Pcs	80	3,500	280,000	\$108
13	Roofing timber 2x4	Pcs	110	7,000	770,000	\$296
14	Gypsum board	Pcs	30	17000	510,000	\$196
15	Gypsum scating	Pcs	30	2500	75,000	\$29
16	Gypsum pounder	Psc	3	21,000	63000	\$24
17	Nails	Kl	30	5000	150,000	\$58
18	Silk paint 20 Lts	Buckect	3	200,000	600,000	\$231
19	Skimming pounder	Bags	20	21,000	420,000	\$162
20	Emulsion paint 20 Lts	Bucket	2	120,000	360,000	\$139
21	Electricity installation	Item	Item	2,500,000	2,300,000	\$884
22	Plumbing Installation	Item	Item	2,500,000	2,500,000	\$961
23	Steel windows	Pcs	10	150,000	1,500,000	\$577
24	Aluminium windows	Pcs	10	3,000,000	3,000,000	\$962
25	Door and flame	Pcs	2	500,000	1,000,000	\$385
26	Septic tank and soakaway pit	Item	Item	2,500,000	2,400,000	\$923
27	Floor Tiles	Pcs	50	33,000	1,165,000	\$448
28	Toilet doors	Pcs	2	250,000	500,000	\$192
29	Labor charge	Item	Item	5,000,000	5,000,000	\$1923
30	House fencing	Item	Item	2,300,000	2,300,000	\$885
31	Wall plastering	Item	Item	1,200,000	1,200,000	\$462
32	Bank charges			117,000	117,000	\$45
	BUILDING CONSTRUCTION TOTAL				31,502,600	\$12,116
	School pick-up car replacement					
1	Tanzania Used Noah car purchase (good condition)				17,000,000	\$6, 359
2	Sell price family car				-4,000,000	\$-1,538
3	Total difference				17,000,000-4,000,000 =13,000,000	\$5,000
	VEHICLE TOTAL					\$5,000
	TOTAL BUILDING AND VEHICLE PROJECT BUDGET				44,502,600	\$17,116

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER CONSTRUCTION AND VEHICLE REPLACEMENT

Smart Scholars' Preschool will register with the Tanzania Ministry of Education and will continue to grow according to demand. With increased space, we will create themed play areas with materials such as instruments, art supplies, and books, as we can afford to buy them. We will also work with residents in Mpiji Magoie to develop the capacity of individuals to play an active role in governance and delivery of education in the schools. A Parents Association will be formed to cooperate with the Smart Scholar's Pre-school to ensure the school's future sustainability. Finally, at the completion of fundraising, we will provide frequent updates with photos to donors through email and/or WhatsApp messages.

We love the work we do and are excited to continue to respond to demand in our neighborhood. We have found that children often do not want to leave our school at the end of the day. Many of them have parents who work full time and they may have to stay with house girls who don't treat them properly. As a result, they truly feel happy and at home when they are with us. In fact, at the end of the day, some wander back to our school after they have gone home, because they would rather be with us. We feel very lucky to do this work and we appreciate any help you can give us!



Photos: Middle class students enjoying a lunch of ugali and meat (above) and baby class tasting watermelon during a lesson (below). We feed our students lunch and snack every day.

