

**Winter Update Newsletter****January 2014**

11th grade student, Roda, with our first enrolled student hailing from Abaarso Village

We want to wish you a Happy New Years from the Abaarso School team. 2013 was a pivotal year for us. We had our inaugural graduating class in July, opened a new 7<sup>th</sup> grade in the summer, now have 19 of our students to the United States and 6 more in other countries around the world, and received our certification as an official ACT test center. For years, the Abaarso School team believed whole-heartedly in our young school and our tenacious students, but the milestones we accomplished this year gave credence to what we have long believed: that we can be a truly transformative school for the Somali people. We're reaping the benefits of our flourishing reputation by getting the best students for our incoming classes and the full support of the government. In America, boarding schools and universities are increasingly eager to work with us as they are seeing the value our students bring to their campuses. Looking ahead to a new year, the Abaarso School team is working to make our improvements and success sustainable in 2014.

**Keys to Success in the US**

CK at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington DC

We take pride in our students' academic development in Abaarso; advancing 3 English reading grade-levels per year on average and rapidly building a strong foundation in math and science. But the biggest key to our students' success in the US is their character development in Abaarso. Our students perform beyond expectations in America because their character exceeds their skill base, and with that character, they develop new skills at a torrid pace.

Much of this character development is built into the very essence of Abaarso. For Somali kids coming to a school of Americans who are speaking in a foreign tongue, merely surviving their first year in Abaarso builds character. When students watch their teachers hold firm while elements of society unfairly condemn them, character is modeled and students and staff

become united in their drive for success. However, perhaps our best means for producing tenacious students is being completely upfront about their role in creating something that is much bigger than all of us. When students leave Abaarso campus for studies in the US, we make sure they understand that with great opportunity comes greater responsibility. Their success breeds opportunity for others.

### Success breeds Opportunity for Others

Nothing meant more for the future of Abaarso than to have our first students in the US succeed. Mubarik will be forever revered in Abaarso for his contributions as our first student to study in the US, excelling in all walks of life at Worcester Academy, as well as being the valedictorian from our inaugural graduating class, and our first student to matriculate to MIT. However, all Abaarso students who place at new schools know their performances determine whether or not current partner-schools will continue taking our students and potential partner-schools will join. Mohamed's academic and cross-country performances this year at Northfield Mount Hermon, gaining admission to Amherst College and placing as the fastest runner in Massachusetts while setting two course



Mohamed at Northfield Mount Hermon

records, proves to schools that our students are capable of dominating in both American classrooms and sports. Deka's incredible accomplishments, winning Best Delegate out of 400 participants at a Boston College Model UN conference and becoming the first international student in institutional memory to win Worcester Academy's annual speech competition, show schools that our students have remarkable English language and critical-thinking abilities. Schools see that our students are not just nice kids from an underserved corner of the world but are serious students, fierce competitors, and gifted athletes, who will positively contribute to a school's community. With our students doing all the hard work in the US, we can focus on developing the next generation of prepared, tenacious Abaarso Students.

### Developing the Next Generation



12th grader, Abdirahman, with two new 7th grade students on 'exam day'

This school year we took both our first-ever 7<sup>th</sup> grade and our last-ever 9<sup>th</sup> grade simultaneously. Starting in Fall 2014, we will only be accepting new students in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but for this year we welcomed almost as many new students as we had returning students. It was a lot to ask of Assistant Headmaster, Ava Ramberg, and her team, to acclimate and incorporate twice as many students as we had ever taken before. But Ava and her staff, including Head of Upper School, Will Martin, seamlessly blended the old

students with the new, continuing our unique, tight-knit culture on campus. Our returning students took in the 'little ones', looking after them as would protective older siblings. Our teachers continued to challenge the youngsters, just as we would any new students in our school, and the future is very bright for these young scholars. With our next generation of Abaarso Students having 5 or 6 years in our program before heading to the US or other countries for further education, our program results will only grow stronger and we can move our attention to the sustainability of our school program.

### **Road to Sustainability**

Abaarso School added a subtle, yet critical, component of its operations this year. By employing one of its graduates, Suleikha, to serve in an operational role, we took our first step towards our model of employing Abaarso alumni to teach, operate, and even manage the school. Simply stated, despite her young age, Suleikha is the most effective local employee we've ever hired. With many Abaarso School students in the US having already pledged to come back to Abaarso after graduating college, the future should be in excellent hands.

Abaarso School has begun a crowdfunding campaign to sustain Abaarso for the future. With your support, we can continue to provide scholarships and first class education in an area of the world where it is drastically needed. When we all pool our resources, we can achieve enormous impact for a better future. Tax deductions can be made via our US non-profit, Horn of Africa Education Development Fund — please support with a tax-deductible gift today here: [www.hedfund.org](http://www.hedfund.org)



A group of new 7<sup>th</sup> grade students on Abaarso School campus

If you, or someone you know, is interested in applying for a teaching position at Abaarso School starting in Fall 2014, please visit our school website to learn more: <http://www.abaarsoschool.org/the-teachers/apply-to-teach/>

Again, everyone at the Abaarso School team wishes you all the best in 2014. Thank you so much for being a part of our school family.

[www.abaarsoschool.org](http://www.abaarsoschool.org)