



The Walking School Bus

Increasing access to education through research-driven solutions and mutually beneficial partnerships

Who is The Walking School Bus...

Our vision for educational access

Literacy is a key indicator of later-life success. But environmental, economic and geographic issues prevent many students around the world from developing a foundational literacy education.

To help, UBC PhD candidate Aaron Friedland founded [The Walking School Bus](#). Since 2015, TWSB has been developing research-based innovations that increase access to education and promote literacy.

As an ethical nonprofit, we are committed to a sustainability and self-sufficiency model, working with teachers, community leaders and local experts to guide our partners towards autonomy within a five-year timeframe.

Last year, we signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to provide our services to displaced people in Uganda's [Bidibidi refugee settlement](#).

Take a look at our team of driven and compassionate innovators and researchers.

Who benefits? We work with some of the most underprivileged communities in the world, from high-altitude rural schools in India to Ugandan refugee settlements, where education is limited by infrastructure shortages, student-to-teacher ratios as high as 226:1, student-to-textbook ratios of 8:1, and schools lacking electricity.

Our vertically-integrated approach

TWSB's curriculum program and all TWSB interventions are informed by a vertically-integrated approach, using research by Canada-based students and academics. Our [Think Tank](#) was designed as a space for researchers to connect their academic work with our projects.

Our academic community has leveraged TWSB interventions and partner communities to develop research on a variety of subjects, from the effects of TWSB-designed [reading-while-listening software](#) on reading fluency, to analyzing the impact of [distance on school completion](#).

How do we build infrastructure (Our Brighter future Solution)...

TWSB BrightBox Macro

The [BrightBox Macro](#) is our innovation centrepiece—a fully solar-powered classroom, created using a repurposed shipping container and placed in the grounds of an existing school. Macros include projectors, laptops and digital curricula, a water catchment system, a community cellphone and healthcare device charging room (in partnership with [Cradle VSA](#)), an attached bike-share system, and supplemental solar energy for the surrounding school buildings. They enable learning for up to 6000 students per week.

Why a device charging room? The ability to offer community device charging enables Macros to produce a revenue stream. Any excess funds can be reinvested into the program, increasing classroom self-sufficiency and sustainability.

TWSB BrightBox Micro

The [BrightBox Micro](#) is a suitcase-sized, solar-powered, digital education kit, designed to enhance both classroom learning and teacher training. Micro classrooms provide access to education for up to 1000 students per week.

TWSB Learning App

Both Macros and Micros leverage TWSB's offline [curriculum program](#). Raspberry Pi computers contain 60GB of UI optimized educational content, including thousands of books, Wikipedia, TED and Khan Academy. These resources are delivered in combination with our [proven curriculum model](#), which uses a [reading-while-listening app](#) to fast track literacy attainment.

The TWSB ownership model ensures all content is continually reviewed in collaboration with local teachers and matched to the national curriculum. Partners have full autonomy over BrightBoxes to help avoid risks of interventionism.

What's next? TWSB is collaborating with the UNHCR, Finn Church Aid, and Hope Health Action to implement additional BrightBox Macros and Micros in Uganda.

Where we've been & where we're going...

Our impact

To date, TWSB has impacted over 32,500 students through three Macros (two in Uganda, one in India) and twelve Micros. We've supported more than 120 researchers, and have helped extend [Simbi literacy solutions](#) to over 50 schools at home in Canada and abroad.

Our Expeditions

TWSB has been in Uganda on a yearly basis since 2016. Our first Expedition to India was in March 2018 when we initiated our operations in-country, and we have returned twice annually every year since. Beginning in January 2019, we return to UNHCR Settlements in Uganda tri-annually in support of our partnership with the UNHCR, scaling our projects through research in the Bidibidi, Nakivale, Rhino, Palorinyo, and Imvepi settlements.

Who's noticed? Together with Simbi, TWSB has been recognized by Nat Geo Magazine, TED, CNN's Anderson Cooper, The New Scientist, and The Next Einstein award.

Our future

TWSB will continue to work closely with Simbi, transitioning its name to **Simbi Foundation** in mid-2020. As we scale, we are excited to continue developing the most effective, resilient, and culturally-sensitive ways to help students build a basic education!