

# Elementary teacher will lead team of educators in Uganda



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Submitted

*Carol Peterson, a Grade 4 teacher at Brighton Public School, has volunteered for a fourth time to take part in Project Overseas, a program in which teachers from across Canada help teachers in other countries become better at their profession. She will be making her second trip to Uganda this summer, to deliver professional development workshops to as many as 160 local teachers.*



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By [John Campbell](#)

Brighton Public School teacher Carol Peterson is looking forward to the holidays when she'll spend part of her summer vacation abroad-teaching. It will be the fourth time she's participated in Project Overseas (PO), a program of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, in which teachers from across the country work with co-tutors in host countries to deliver professional development workshops to local teachers.

Peterson has taught in Ghana and Guyana, as well as Uganda, where she'll be returning but for the first time as a team leader, with three other teachers.

The Grade 4 teacher got involved in Project Overseas a decade ago when a fellow

teacher, who had already taken part in the program, urged her to give it a try, saying "it's the best teaching she had ever done."

Her colleague was right, Peterson discovered.

"Most PO participants say that they learn as much as they teach," she said. "I say likely more. One of the most important things I learned in Uganda is the value of expressing appreciation for jobs well done. It means so much to the students we teach and it is an effective means of building rapport and engaging all students in the learning process."

Peterson said the experience has allowed her "to see the world through new eyes and return to Canada seeing my classroom and school in different ways that allow me to solve problems in new ways."

Working in classrooms where there are no books, "or consumables of any kind," has made her "appreciate the importance" of teachers and the skills they possess. "When all you see is desks, chairs and chalkboards you know it is really up to the teacher to make learning come alive," she said.

"That's one of the challenges, the lack of materials," said Peterson, who's 57 and has been teaching for about 27 years.

Living conditions are another, "in a country where malaria and yellow fever are a problem," which requires the use of medication every day and getting shots prior to leaving home.

The rewards include "fall[ing] in love with teaching all over again," Peterson said, because the teachers she's teaching "are very passionate and excited about what they're doing."

The first time Peterson taught in Uganda was in a village called Hoima but she and her team will be going to a different place, Iganga, a town in eastern Uganda where families "don't value education." It's "a little scary," she admitted, but "that just means what we're going to do is all that much more important and [makes it] worth going."

"Canada does have a very good reputation worldwide for having an excellent education system so they know that they're getting quality teaching when they invite us," Peterson said.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation and affiliated federations, including the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, cover all the expenses of the teachers, who volunteer their time. There are out-of-pocket expenses, such as the purchase of souvenirs, but they're "minimal," said Peterson.

She's "very excited" about what lies ahead but she also admits to having "a few concerns," being a team leader for the first time in charge of teachers considerably younger than herself who have never been involved in Project Overseas before.

Personal safety is another issue. Uganda "is quite a stable country," Peterson said, but "there are threats of terrorism from time to time," and the United States currently has a travel alert warning

its citizens to be wary while in the capital city of Kampala, where Peterson and her team will be for part of their stay.

But Peterson said she feels "very safe" whether staying in a hotel in Kampala or in a compound on location, because the security provided is "excellent."

She volunteers for the overseas projects, which last three to five weeks, because she's "making a difference," she said. Being able to help someone "is a wonderful thing," she said, but adds: "I help my kids here in Brighton every day ... It's just a different way of doing what I do right here [with her 24 students]."