



Opportunity Education Foundation

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November 2012

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Does Africa have the cure for what ails us teachers?

Do you suffer from volunteer burn-out or lesson plan boredom? Do you long for your retirement vacation? If you answered yes to any of these symptoms, read on, I have a cure for your problems.

As educators we do so much, for so many in our buildings. We help with projects both inside and outside the classroom everyday for our co-workers and community. We have all been asked to do more with fewer resources.

To add to workload fatigue, I sometimes feel like I am in a lesson plan rut. I never wanted to be bored doing the same project and lesson every year. I would try taking continuing education classes in the summer for new ideas. I usually found classes that were nice but really did not energize me for the upcoming school year.

Travel has always been fun and re-energizing for me. Like many teachers, I have always looked forward to retirement so I could travel and see the world. It occurred to me, what am I waiting for? Oh yeah - the time and money!

I want to share how to take time for yourself and bring energy and enthusiasm back in your life as an educator.

I was fortunate this past summer to get involved with a non-profit sister school pen pal program called Opportunity Education Foundation in Omaha, Nebraska. They work very hard to provide materials, curriculum, and instruction to schools in Africa and Asia. Teachers from all over the world can volunteer their time and talents to participate in their summer trip to teach in their schools.

I must admit I did not jump at the chance to go on Opportunity Education's trip to Uganda for 14 days. I was excited but hesitant. I did not want to leave my 3 kids and husband. I was unsure if I should spend my free summer time and money to go on a trip. I played lots of games in my head and spoke to everyone I could about this decision. I told myself if I got the grant I wrote for the trip, then it was a sign to drop everything and go!

No grant - but I still could not stop thinking about this trip. After going over the pros and cons I took a leap of faith and signed up to go. I was told that this trip would change my life. It did, in so many ways. The Uganda Education Experience trip was the best learning opportunity I could have ever done for myself, both personally and professionally.

So what did I do and learn? I spent one week in the Kasubi Primary School teaching art to K-7th grade. I went on an amazing safari to see all the animals of Africa in their natural environment. After floating down the Nile, I came back to a week of professional development with the teachers of Uganda.

The most amazing part of the trip was the students, teachers, and principal at Kasubi. I found myself excited for these kids who were able to paint for the very first time. Their faces lit up when I gave them a pencil or Sharpie to use in class. The teachers were so very grateful for the materials I left behind.

I could write so much more, but will summarize it with the top 10 reasons the trip to Uganda has helped me be a better teacher.

1. Accepting that kids don't bring pencils to class is universal.
2. Being humbled by the teachers in Uganda who make \$100 a month and work longer hours.
3. Finding that I don't need art supplies to create art! I can use everything around me!
4. I waste too much and need to recycle more in class.
5. Being shocked that 200 kids in a classroom that was made for 25 kids is normal for Uganda's well-behaved students.
6. I don't always have control, so let it go.
7. Not a day goes by without me thinking of these people and smiling.
8. All the love, hugs, and smiles from their students - will fill me forever!
9. I love to teach. Children. And art!
10. All kids love to be creative and learn.

So - take a trip - big or small - and find the place
that helps you remember why you are proud to be a teacher.

Submitted by Carla R., a teacher at Beadle Middle School, Omaha, NE who shared our Education Experience Trip to Uganda in July 2012.

OEF invites you to join our Education Experience Trip to Ghana - June 2013.

The trip includes an orientation tour, 5 days in Ghana Schools interacting with teachers/students & an Adventure Excursion!

What can you expect on our trip?
Take a quick video vacation to learn more.

<http://www.opportunityeducation.org/videos/load/ugandashort/>
and

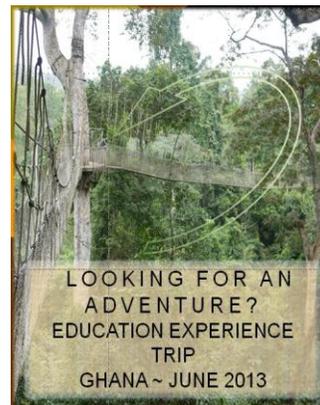
<http://www.opportunityeducation.org/videos/load/ugandalong/>

Want more info? [Click Here](#) or Paste Below for Ghana June 2013 details.

http://www.opportunityeducation.org/pdf/newsandarticles/Ghana_Summer_Trip_Brochure.pdf

Don't just take our word for it - take the words of an educator who shared our previous trip.

"The greatest benefit I gained was being able to establish lifelong relationships with the people from Uganda as well as those people traveling with Opp Ed. It also broadened my knowledge and understanding of Uganda as a country so that I am able to share with my family, school and community." - **Jill, Special Education Teacher from Colorado**



Send a Quick email to Win!

A cure for the winter blues? Take a trip with a good book.

In appreciation of your commitment to our pen pal program, we are again offering the chance to win a Kindle Fire! Just email schools@opportunityeducation.org with your response to the following three questions:



- 1) How can we help with your biggest obstacle to writing your pen pals?
- 2) One specific benefit of the pen pal program?
- 3) Did you receive our DVD post mailed in October?

Your email response is all you need to win!

Please email schools@opportunityeducation.org with your survey responses by 12/15/12.

Staff Week a Bowling Success!

During October we were fortunate to host an amazing group of passionate change-makers from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Ghana, India, Tanzania, Uganda, & Zambia.

Meetings were held during the week to determine the future of OEF's service to the students, teachers and schools in their countries.

We were able to share the fun of Halloween with Loveland Elementary, visit a pumpkin patch and challenge everyone with a friendly game of bowling.



OEF is deeply grateful for all their time and effort to help us improve our programs.

OEF Teachers Make the Difference!

OEF teachers make the difference for students everywhere!

Thanks to Jill B. and Leslie D. - two outstanding OEF teachers whose persistence and generosity resulted in a new wheelchair for Douglas (pictured right). Education was out of his reach due to his physical handicap but he is now smiling ear to ear on his way to school!

St. Mary's Primary in Mubende, Uganda has strong students, despite a weak building. Most OEF schools emphasize accepting students over their capacity to fit them in a classroom. Learn more about how to help your sister school by visiting our website.



Start Writing to This School Now!

Sanu English School, Tanzania

Sanu English Pre and Primary School was established in 2006. It is a privately funded school with 7 teachers for 108 students in pre-K to primary 6. The school faces some issues with the buildings but is excited to be working with Opportunity Education.

The principal of the school emails me weekly asking when they will get pen pals..can you help?

Simply email, "I want a pen pal" to schools@opportunityeducation.org and you can start writing today!



Welcome New Schools



We are excited to welcome 114 new schools to our pen pal program. It was awesome getting to meet all the educators who stopped by our booth at the AMLE Conference in Portland and the NCTE Conference in Las Vegas.

Featured Sister School & Gift Certificate Winner

Congrats to Thomas Jefferson Middle School,

Valparaiso, Indiana. The winner of our monthly drawing for schools who send letters!

Just email schools@opportunityeducation.org

after you mail your letters and you are entered to win!



Need Ideas?

**Need Ideas for Letter Topics and how to integrate letter writing into your lesson plans?
Want to win a Gift Certificate?**

We created a Facebook page just for you!
With interesting ideas, stories, and links to help generate enthusiasm and discussion about education and integrating pen pal letters into your mission and curriculum.

Simply "Like" us and we will randomly select winners who show up on our Facebook page for a gift certificate drawing!

Like us on Facebook 

Need Help Finding Your Sister School?

Whether you need the name, address, or mailing instructions...you can find it on our website:

<http://www.opportunityeducation.org/our-schools/sister-schools/>

or email: schools@opportunityeducation.org



More About Opportunity Education Foundation

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about Opportunity Education Foundation

[CLICK HERE](#) to refer friends to our pen pal program & get a gift certificate!

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