

Margaret Carpenter: Narrative 1

I'm living the dream! Education has taken me from Cornell and Columbia Universities to international schools in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, Panama, Scotland and Cyprus. Teaching in such diverse regions of the world has provided a fantastic adventure for a person so curious to learn about and from the world.

Together, my family has traveled from rice paddies and rainforests to heather-covered highlands and deserts... from Asian street markets to Europe's art museums... on sampans, tuk-tuks, overnight trains and camels. We feel that the "grittier" and the more "confronting" the culture is, the more it is likely to help us gain insight and grow. We know it makes us more creative. To contribute successfully in an international school setting, it helps to be excited about different cultures and to develop sensitivity and insight. **In short, you gotta love the world.** But also...

Ya gotta love others... and know that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. I'm one of seven siblings born within the span of 12 years. Picture a raucous, jolly, competitive, ever-changing scene of playfulness, serious debate, and in-your-face stimulation. My Dad (a.k.a. *The Great Provider*) brightened days with his ease, word wizardry, and wit. My mom (really a very shy woman) wanted nothing more in life than to be cheerleader, bus-driver, chief giggler and tutor to her seven wild achievers. From her example I learned that "the next best thing to an education is a pushy mom." I grew up in a household where curiosity, achievement, integrity and humor were all greatly valued. We Joneses tested each other continually, and we all learned to stick up for what we believe in. We were spoiled by the great confidence our parents had in us. Each sibling out-did the next in leading community activities, forever instilling in me a "can do" and "where's the group fun?" attitude.

I thrived amidst the energy of others and learned how to work cooperatively for the good of the whole. I'm driven by a desire to make a difference—to help others tackle problems and be on the team that's making the world a little better, day by day. My fascination with other cultures has helped me understand events from different perspectives and develop as a bridge-builder. I feel proud of my leadership skills and ability to express ideas (through writing, speaking, digital imagery and web design.) But communication requires the two ears that go with the mouth, so I try to be a good listener. I have learned that affirming others can help to unleash their potential. In international schools, so many times I've enjoyed synergy with other professionals as we integrate our coursework. I know, also, that my students' brains are social, so I devise cool project-based learning for children so that they will be motivated with their peers to go further than book learning and worksheets might take them.

Ya gotta love learning... and know that it's a lifelong process. Teaching the subjects of history and social studies provided a wide open experience where I was able to study psychology, economics, sociology, politics, diplomacy and art history for starts. But a lifelong love of books and an interest in finding answers to children's questions took me into library science. Hong Kong International School asked me to be the coordinator of Gifted and Talented services so I developed expertise in that field and grew my administrative, counseling and curriculum development abilities. My journey educating students in grades 3-12 in so many subjects has moved from a preoccupation with "what to teach" to a better understanding of "how children learn." (A great interest of mine is brain-based learning.) This field we're in always offers challenge and embraces change and I get great energy from both. It is so rewarding and motivating to know that the work that gives such pleasure to me is also helping the next generation of problem-solvers.

Students in my classes feel an enthusiasm for learning and see a model of hard work, resourcefulness and creativity before them. My adaptability and love for learning and fun with others have made me a successful international educator.