

# Math Teacher Secondary Education

## THE PEACE CORPS: CREATING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you help translate host country development plans into community level action, thus improving the lives of local people. You arrive, not with funds or equipment, but with skills and knowledge as well the willingness to adapt them to your community. A successful project is one that continues to function effectively after you leave.

Before starting your two-year assignment, you receive up to three months of training that focuses on language, cross-cultural, and technical skills. It is usually provided in the country where you serve. The training focuses on language and cultural training to give you an understanding of the country's governmental system, cultural norms, and interpersonal relations. This assists you in becoming an integral member of the community. Technical training enhances your ability to effectively transfer your skills and knowledge to host-country people.

## YOUR WORK AS A PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER

The primary goals of education projects are to strengthen teacher-to-teacher relationships, build links between schools and local communities, provide quality teacher to student instruction, and develop resource centers and materials. As a Peace Corps mathematics teacher, you are helping countries meet their immediate needs for an educated populace and their future needs for trained math teachers.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you are assigned to a secondary school and are considered a professional member of the school faculty, supervised by the school principal. Your duties may include:

- Teaching math for an average of 25 hours per week following the guidelines set by a national syllabus which outlines the recommended sequence of activities for math. Subjects include remedial math, geometry, algebra, statistics, probability and calculus. Class size is between 20 and 100 students, ranging in age from 12-20 years. When presenting your lessons, you need to take into consideration that students may be accustomed to rote learning methods. You must often prepare students for passing the national exams.

- Teaching basic science, environmental education or English depending on the needs of the school and your own knowledge.

Peace Corps provides intensive training—including practice teaching—in education methodology, lesson plan preparation, and classroom management.

You may also participate in activities that extend beyond the walls of your classroom. Initiating extra-curricular or community activities helps you gain greater satisfaction from your Peace Corps experience. Examples of projects include: libraries, adult literacy education, tutorial projects, sports or conservation clubs, latrine construction, health education, and vegetable gardening. Peace Corps provides assistance in project planning and implementation through training and advisory support.

You will be challenged to make the best use of limited resources. Common conditions include: overcrowded classrooms, outdated or nonexistent textbooks and equipment, lack of support from the school administration, or inadequate facilities. In some countries, students leave their schools to assist with planting and harvesting of crops. Despite these limitations, your efforts to develop the knowledge and problem solving skills of your students will be an important contribution to their education. This is an assignment that demands more than a math degree—you need a sense of humor, perseverance, patience, individual initiative, an open mind, and the ability to listen.

### EXAMPLES OF PEACE CORPS SECONDARY EDUCATION - MATHEMATICS PROJECTS

**Namibia.** Upon attaining independence in 1990, the Government of Namibia began reforming and restructuring the education system to incorporate the rights of individuals to education and to rid itself of the discriminatory provisions as practiced by the former apartheid regime. To address Namibia's first priority of educating its populace, Volunteers teach math, science, and English. Math teachers often teach more than one subject, model teaching techniques for their peers and develop resource materials. The math curriculum is roughly equivalent to U.S. grades eight to 12 and is geared towards passing the national exam. Volunteers have also established libraries, organized sports activities, and drama clubs.

**Nepal.** To meet the need for qualified teachers, Volunteers provide in-service training to Nepali teachers of math, science, and English. In the first year of service, Volunteers gain an understanding of the educational system, social context and language by teaching in a Nepali junior or senior high school. In the second year, they work in a teacher training project with a Nepali counterpart—often trekking from village to village for two to three weeks. The schools vary in size from 200 to 1,500 students and have five to 25 teachers. Since school supplies may be practically non-existent, Volunteers use teaching aids constructed from local materials.

**Guinea.** Secondary education suffers from both insufficient quality and quantity of teachers. During pre-service training, Volunteers learn French before being assigned to a secondary school where they teach, in French, subjects ranging from algebra to calculus and real analysis, and prepare students for the national exam. They develop professional support groups among teachers and provide opportunities for in-service training for their peers and colleagues. They also promote girls' education through activities such as stay-in-school programs

### A REWARDING EXPERIENCE

Service as a Peace Corps Volunteer offers you a unique opportunity to learn about critical development issues from the inside by helping people address community problems that they themselves have identified. You can make a tremendous contribution to the lives of others. At the same time, you discover that your experience is as much about your learning as it is about teaching.

Volunteer service develops or accentuates your professional abilities and enhances your personal growth. Virtually all returning Volunteers agree they have received far more than they have given. Recent college graduates gain hands-on experience and sometimes further define their career goals. Others confirm their commitment to their profession and receive career-boosting international experience. Retirees bring their accumulated life experiences to those that need and respect them.

Many employers place great value on the Peace Corps experience. You will find that your worldview, resourcefulness, and cross-cultural skills set you apart. You can have easier access to federal government jobs or earn college credit or scholarships because of your Peace Corps service. Whatever you decide to do after Peace Corps, you will bring with you a rare knowledge of the world, of people, and of yourself.

While there may be days of frustration and disappointment, there will also be a lifetime of satisfaction. The courage, patience and fortitude you call upon helps you understand why Peace Corps is still the toughest job you'll ever love.

### VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Nearly all the Volunteers in Secondary Math Education are recent college graduates with degrees in math, engineering, or computer science. They often have at least three months of practical experience including tutoring, informal teaching, or community service. Because of their flexibility and interest in community service, the Volunteers possess several of the following skills or attributes:

- public speaking/presentations;
- youth development skills such as day care or camp counseling;
- willingness to learn;
- problem solving and listening skills;
- self-motivation.



*It is the policy of the Peace Corps to provide equal opportunity in all its programs for all persons and to prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, age (over 40), sex, disability, political affiliation, and sexual orientation in the recruitment, selection, placement, service, and termination of Peace Corps Volunteers.*