



## TC Spotlight

# Peter Cassidy

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***TC has opened many new doors and I remain forever grateful.***

- **originally from Canada**
- **Carleton University,  
Lakehead University,  
Columbia University,  
University of Alberta**
- **currently the WASC  
Coordinator with the  
Canadian International  
School in Tokyo**

**Tell us about yourself and your work recently.** After graduating from TC in 2011, I took on the position of Language Support Coordinator with the Canadian International School (CIS) in Tokyo and currently teach the Primary Years Programme (PYP) as a grade three homeroom teacher. Having recently completed an M.Ed in Educational Studies and Leadership (MES Program) at the University of Alberta, I pursued and accepted a position with the administration team at CIS where I have enjoyed working in the role as the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Coordinator.

**What drew you to TC?** After doing some research about Master programs in Tokyo, it became apparent that the MA TESOL Program in Tokyo being offered through Columbia University Teachers College was very reputable and a good fit for working teachers. After sitting in on a class before being accepted to the program, and later meeting with Dr. Terry Royce about the program and how it could help me meet my goals, I was sold. The decision to study at TC while working as a full-time pre-kindergarten head teacher was daunting at the time, but has proved to be one of the best decisions I have ever made with regard to my education, career and pursuit of furthering my development as an educator.

**Describe your path from TC to now.** As I approach the end of my teaching career, I often reflect on how Teachers College (TC) has been an instrumental part of the changes I have undergone as a teacher. The program allowed for me to feel more confident in my teaching practice as well as giving me a deeper connection to the education community in Japan. The year that I graduated from the TESOL program is the same year that I gained employment as the Language Support Coordinator at the Canadian International School (CIS) in Tokyo. I have since gained valuable international school teaching experience in the Primary Years Programme (PYP) with the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) where I teach grade three. My current administration position as the WASC Coordinator at CIS is the newest chapter in an eclectic teaching career and I believe that it was the experience of learning through the TC Tokyo TESOL program that inspired me to pursue and complete an M.Ed in Educational

Studies and Leadership at the University of Alberta. TC has opened many new doors and I remain forever grateful.

**What did you learn at TC that ensured you would never be the same again?** The facilitation of cooperative learning and reflective activities in the TC program has changed my teaching practices forever. Working toward the goal of understanding educational theory and constantly reflecting on ways to extend this knowledge into best practices in the classroom was the foundation of every course of study while at TC. This happened during each and every course with peers from all walks of life and I learned something from every single person in my classes. I now have a greater focus on cooperative learning and reflection in my grade three classroom and consciously promote inquiry-based and cooperative learning in order to support my grade three community.



*cover designs of Peter's Jigglesprites series of adventure books*

*more information at:  
[www.petercassidy-ca.com](http://www.petercassidy-ca.com)*

**\*Peter is looking for a publisher!\***

**What is a favorite memory from TC?**

Moving to New York city in order to study at TC Columbia is a very fond memory for me. Living in residence again was somewhat bizarre but I have since done the same at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. I loved my time in NY so much that I returned the following summer to take the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) workshop; I plan to do the other workshops or courses at TC in New York whenever possible and my daughter wants to do it again too.

**What class/teacher/classmate has had a lasting effect on you?**

I began the TC program with the Writing Center course and was fortunate to have Dr. Sandra Gillespie as my professor along with five other students who were already well into the program. I would be met with many unknowns at this early stage of my TC experience, but will always remember the guidance and support from everyone involved in this course. Of course, I had many great teachers and classmates as I progressed through the program, but the support that I received in this very first course was instrumental to my

signing up for Grammar and P&P. Later, many of us from the WC course contributed to a chapter in the "Realizing Autonomy" anthology.

**What is your favorite thing about your current job? The hardest thing?**

Teaching grade three has been fun and challenging at the same time. The students crave autonomy and are able to do so many things with minimal facilitation. The range in ability is still fairly wide and differentiating instruction based on this, along with considering different interests and different learner profiles, keeps me very busy and always on my toes.

**What motivates you?** I am motivated when I watch my daughter and my students achieve success, grow as learners and develop a wide-range of abilities while remaining principled in their actions. Witnessing progress in young people based on a strategic plan is very inspirational and often motivates me to be a better father or teacher and reflect on where I can improve.



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