

Dear Prospective Mosaic Teacher,

I want to share information about Mosaic since I truly love what they are doing for children, adults, and the entire human community!

I lived in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 70s and returned five years ago. One goal I had was to find a social/community project that I could support. It took only one phone call to Lara, the Executive Director, for me to be involved wholeheartedly with The Mosaic Project. At the time I was teaching a 5th grade group of children, and because the group was small enough, Lara was able to make room for us to attend the outdoor school that spring. It was a life changer for the majority of the group. To hear a 10 and 11 year old speak of how something has changed their life in such a strong and positive manner was so refreshing to me. I had a couple of kids that went with sour attitudes and returned with chips removed from their shoulders.

I have been a teacher for 38+ years, and the curriculum Mosaic has created is one of the most beautiful I have seen. It flows and builds from the minute the kids arrive until they leave the property on the final day! I truly feel the lessons and experiences they have at Mosaic will last a lifetime for them. (As you probably know, Mosaic has now grown an in-school program available to participants, and they developed a beautiful curriculum book that helps teachers continue Mosaic practices in the classroom after they return from the week-long outdoor school. Their music CD also helps to carry the Mosaic concepts well beyond the outdoor school.)

I changed schools the following year and continued to introduce the new school to Mosaic. They are sending classes now for the 4th year. I have since needed to move back to Texas (to be with family). I still attend a Mosaic week each year, and work with them from here when they can use my help.

I am not generally a "joiner," but I fully embrace this organization. The people involved are dedicated and talented. Each year I have taken children they have truly loved the program, and it is highly valuable. (Some families have spoken of how **they** are changed when their child returns from the program!) The key to maintaining the values is to continually practice them; having a teacher that will continue to help the children use the things they learn in their everyday lives. I took a group of Texas teachers to the Mosaic Community Fundraising Brunch last year, and we also visited three Bay Area schools so my colleagues could see how each school beautifully incorporated their Mosaic experience into their own school cultures.

The program is quite effective in exposing everyone to people of different backgrounds. The kids are pushed outside their comfort zones, and they truly

appreciate that aspect of the experience. They step out and see how "safe" they are while sharing worlds they previously viewed from afar.

We have always had almost 100% parent praise. Most parents are very supportive and excited that their kids will have the opportunity to experience new people and events in an environment that supports and teaches values of respect, empathy, and open-mindedness. Once in a blue moon there will be a parent or two who try to rock the boat. Usually, this stems from their fear of sending their children on an extended trip away from home. The two schools I taught in have very involved, concerned, and vocal parents. Conversation, education, and enthusiasm helped calm and prepare them, and in the end almost everyone was on board. Having parents who are on board engage the others can also be very helpful.

Lara does a very nice job easing the concerns of parents new to the program. Also, the teachers' confidence in the program helps tremendously. Teachers are right there on site, and one thing I truly appreciate is that I am not obligated to be "in charge" (except for a 45-minute period each day), which leaves me free to participate with different groups and watch my kids as they mingle in their daily experiences. If I pace myself at two groups per day, I end up seeing every group by the week's end.

As a teacher, and as a parent who would have the same initial concerns, I can attest to the fact that the outdoor school is one of the safest environments, both physically and emotionally, I have ever known. The staff is extremely well-trained in both areas, and like the entire program, they give uninterrupted attention to any situation that might arise. As a parent, I would feel most comfortable sending my own child, and as a teacher who is very cautious each time I take children off campus, I feel quite satisfied that my kids will be in perfect hands.

I do hope at some point you will get your kids to Mosaic -- it is an experience of a lifetime!!

I wish you the best,  
Cindee McMahon