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To Whom it May Concern:

I had the pleasure of co-teaching with Margaret Nelson for the week of Illinois Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in June, 2012. Our group consisted of 9-12 year old boys and girls. The session theme was Compassion.

Among our challenges was the fact that not all the children were at the session from the beginning; two arrived for only the last day. We never knew exactly how many children to expect. Another challenge was that our classroom was a tent with some tables and chairs in rural Central Illinois; we had to bring in all our materials and supplies for the week. A further challenge was that our children had varying skill levels, and we did not know the children prior to the session. Another challenge was that Margaret and I had never worked together and we had assistants whom we had just met. Finally, we had not combined our lesson plans prior to sessions.

After discussing themes of compassion, empathy, and bullying, Margaret taught us to create incredible hand puppets out of styrofoam eggs, paper maché, cloth, and paint. On the last day Margaret helped the children create a puppet show combining superheroes with bullying which they performed later at a talent show. Margaret engaged children who only came for one day to participate by making the scenery.

Margaret is a true team player for co-teaching. She has the flexibility to plan materials completely in advance for an unknown setting and unknown student group. She is able to work with children with varied skill levels and to keep them all engaged. She can work companionably with whomever shows up to assist or to work without assistance. She stays calm and cheerful throughout all the challenges. She respects the children and allows them to take their time to do their best work. Margaret's teaching style fits with any subject matter or context.

Not only was it a pleasure to work with Margaret, but the quality, creativity, and variety of the hand puppets we made was astounding. The puppet show engaged the audience. Each child was an active participant throughout the entire process. They were not only proud of their puppet show but visibly cherished their puppets as they carried them around afterwards. I know I am in awe of the puppet I made!

I heartily recommend Margaret Nelson for teaching puppet-making in any setting for any age group.

Very truly yours,

  
Meredith George