



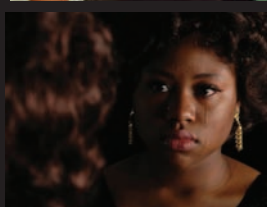
# EXCELLENCE ON STAGE AND IN LIFE: The Mosaic Model for Youth Development through the Arts

Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit

Lorraine M. Gutiérrez, Ph.D. University of Michigan

Michael S. Spencer, Ph.D. University of Michigan

Funded by The Wallace Foundation



“I realized that the training that I received was not just about the arts, but about developing as a person.”

97%

of alumni agreed that Mosaic improved their ability to make positive decisions in life.

“Mosaic taught me how to really work hard at getting something I want.”

“Mosaic really changes lives and it made me a better individual.”

“I think Mosaic influenced me more than any other experience in my life.”

“The greatest lesson I learned from Mosaic was that anything is possible.”

“Mosaic introduced me to people of different colors, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds.”

“I attribute my personal goals of expecting ‘only the best, nothing less’ out of myself to my Mosaic training.”

89%

of alumni state that Mosaic helped them to see themselves as capable of academic success.

“If not for this organization, I would not be in college today.”

EXCELLENCE ON STAGE AND IN LIFE:

# The Mosaic Model for Youth Development through the Arts

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94%

of alumni state that Mosaic helped them to develop and maintain a positive sense of self/identity

“At Mosaic I learned to expect excellence from myself and others.”

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# Letter

FROM MOSAIC FOUNDER, RICK SPERLING

I founded Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit fifteen years ago based on the incredible artistic potential I saw in young Detroiters. While working as an artist-in-residence in the Detroit Public Schools, I saw great need and I also saw a great opportunity. The need I observed was for advanced-level theatre and music training at a time when budget cuts had led to the elimination of most school-based arts programs. The opportunity I saw was to create a world-class youth arts organization based on the incredible talent of young people throughout Detroit.

These goals were realized in Mosaic's first ten years. Mosaic brought together talented young artists from more than 50 schools each year to create an award-winning performance company, the Mosaic Youth Ensemble: made up of the Mosaic Acting Company, the Mosaic Singers and the Mosaic Technical Crew. The Mosaic Youth Ensemble was chosen to represent the United States at international festivals in Denmark and England and at cultural exchanges in Asia and Africa. In addition, Mosaic's young artists toured across the country, including performances at the White House and the Kennedy Center.

Yet, over the years I began to see that the Youth Ensemble program was having an impact on its young artists that went far beyond artistic pursuits. I saw that a great majority of our Youth Ensemble members were going to college – a much greater percentage than Detroit students in general. When we compiled the numbers, a remarkable 95% were going to college. While it is true that some of our members were college-bound before they ever joined Mosaic, we saw that “positive peer-pressure” and performances at colleges and universities were inspiring many members who never considered college to apply – many becoming the first in their families to attend college.

We also saw that skills they were gaining at Mosaic were transferring over to other parts of their lives. The high expectations, discipline and professionalism they were learning at Mosaic was having a tremendous impact on their ability to succeed in high school, college and the job market. Furthermore, we saw the intense bonding between Youth Ensemble members continue long after they left Mosaic, creating life-long friendships and, in many cases, professional networks that allowed them to build the “social capital” needed to succeed.

Along with these observations, we heard testimonials of Mosaic alumni who would tell us that Mosaic had changed their lives. Some would tell us that they would not have achieved their current level of success in their careers if it were not for Mosaic. Others would say that they would not be in college if it were not for Mosaic. A few even told us that they didn't believe they would be alive today if it weren't for Mosaic.

Based on these observations and testimonials, it became evident that Mosaic had evolved into much more than an arts organization. We decided to define ourselves as “Youth Development through the Arts.” And we took on the slogan “Internationally-Acclaimed... Excellence on Stage and In Life”

While we were observing these exciting outcomes, we had not yet documented them. Though we refined our methods, we never published our “model.” We had never defined Mosaic's “Theory of Change.” It became clear that it was necessary for us to create this document. While we could tell people – anecdotally – about the incredible success stories we were witnessing, it was hard to sway many people who were set in their belief that the arts were an “extra” and could not significantly impact youth development. Our hope is that by documenting our outcomes, many will be convinced of the tremendous potential for the educational and youth development impact of programs like Mosaic.

We also decided to create this document because we wanted to share our model with educators, youth workers, arts organizations, and policy-makers. After Mosaic was featured on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, NBC's *Today Show* and in *The Wall Street Journal*, we received enthusiastic responses from all over the country. From Maine to Mississippi to Miami, people contacted us asking if we would be willing to start a Mosaic program in their communities. After much reflection as an organization, we decided that we did not have the capacity at this time to replicate our program nationally. Instead we decided that we could help move the field forward by disseminating our work as a model for other organizations nationally and internationally.

This document would not be possible without the funding and programmatic support of The Wallace Foundation and the countless hours of work by professors and students of the University of Michigan's Psychology Department and School of Social Work, especially Dr. Lorraine M. Gutiérrez, Dr. Michael Spencer, and Antonia Alvarez. Also instrumental in creating this document have been Mosaic's Artistic Director Kenneth Anderson and Education Director Megan Miller (both alumni of the Mosaic Youth Ensemble), Consultant (and dear friend) Kelly Stupple, the Mosaic Board of Directors, and numerous members of my family.

This document is not meant to be the final word on youth development through the arts. Instead, we hope to add one more voice to this ongoing dialogue. I look forward to your responses as we all work together to provide “Only the best, Nothing less” for our nation's young people.

Sincerely,



Rick Sperling  
Founder & CEO  
Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit

# Mosaic and the Mosaic Model At-A-Glance

## MISSION AND HISTORY

Mosaic's mission is to empower young people to maximize their potential through professional performing arts training and the creation of first-rate theatrical and musical art.

Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit was founded in 1992 by Rick Sperling, a professional actor and director. Sperling was inspired to start Mosaic when budget cuts forced most Detroit schools to eliminate arts from their curriculums. Through his experiences as an artist-in-residence in the Detroit Public Schools he had witnessed both incredible talent and the incredible need for advanced arts training. As Mosaic progressed over the years, Sperling and his staff observed that participation in program was yielding significant youth development outcomes. In particular, they saw that Mosaic's insistence on high expectations, active participation and total acceptance of each individual had led to an extraordinary percentage of Mosaic alumni not only graduating from high school, but attending college. ***Even though Mosaic students are disproportionately minority and from low-income families, over 95% of Mosaic alumni have been admitted to college, dramatically above the national average for young people of similar backgrounds.*** These outcomes led Sperling and the Mosaic staff to devise The Mosaic Model for Youth Development through the Arts.

Mosaic's core program is the Mosaic Youth Ensemble, made up of more than 100 young people, age 12 to 18, from throughout metro Detroit. The Youth Ensemble is made up of three companies: the Mosaic Acting Company, the Mosaic Singers, and the Mosaic Technical Crew. Additionally, Mosaic provides intermediate and beginning programs for more than 1,000 young people, age 6-18, annually.

## INTERNATIONALLY-ACCLAIMED ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE

- Selected as sole United States representatives to the 1996 World Festival of Children's Theatre in Denmark and the 2000 World Festival of Youth Theatre in England.
- In 2007, received the highest National Endowment for the Arts grant award of any youth arts organization in the nation, and the top NEA grant award of all Michigan arts organizations of any size.
- Featured on NBC's *Today Show*, on NPR's *All Things Considered*, in *American Theatre Magazine*, and in *The Wall Street Journal*.
- Performed as opening act for Maya Angelou, Aretha Franklin, Pete Seeger, the Four Tops, Al Green, Sweet Honey in the Rock, and the Temptations
- Presented with the *Coming Up Taller Award* as one of the nation's top ten youth arts programs in 1999 at a White House ceremony, selected by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.
- Toured critically-acclaimed all-youth performances to Africa, Asia and Europe, and twenty-five states throughout the U.S. and Canada, including performances at the White House, the Kennedy Center, the Millennium Dome in London England, and at Goree Island in Dakar, Senegal.

## DETROIT AMBASSADORS, MICHIGAN MODEL OF SUCCESS

- Named "Best Managed Nonprofit" by *Crain's Detroit Business*.
- Winner of numerous State and Local Awards, including Governors' Award for Arts and Culture, State of Michigan History Award, Wayne State University Community Leadership Award, and the NCCJ Humanitarian Award.
- Subject of Michigan Emmy Award-winning PBS documentary *And They Flew: the Story of Mosaic Youth Theatre*.
- Successfully completed \$3.5 million *Imagine Their Next Stage* Campaign supporting Mosaic's facility needs and a long-term partnership with the Detroit Institute of Arts.
- Founder Rick Sperling the youngest person ever to win the *Detroit Free Press* Award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre.



## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

### ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

- **95% of Mosaic Youth Ensemble members graduate from high school and go on to college.** According to U.S. Department of Education statistics, nationally only 51% of all African American students graduate, and only 20% of all African American students leave high school college-ready. In Michigan, 78% of all public school students graduate high school and only 32% of those students graduate with a college-ready transcript.
- Mosaic alumni receive scholarships to many of the nation's top institutions of higher learning.
- **A three year study by the University of Michigan reported that participation in Mosaic had a positive impact on academic achievement.**
  - Data from transcripts showed that mean grade point averages improved after joining Mosaic
  - Data from pre and posttests indicate Mosaic has a positive impact on educational aspirations, time spent on homework and confidence regarding academic goals
  - Mosaic alumni reported that participation in Mosaic significantly impacted their ability to develop effective study skills, improve their academic standing, decide to apply to college/university, and see myself as capable of academic success.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The University of Michigan study reported data from pre and posttests identified multiple ways in which participation in Mosaic contributed to professional development. Many of these changes were statistically significant.
- In the University of Michigan study, Mosaic alumni cite Mosaic's significant impact in improving their ability to conduct themselves in a professional manner, effectively organize/manage their time, be creative, manage stress in healthy ways, speak/perform in public, give and receive productive feedback, cooperate with others in a group setting, and effectively lead a group.

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- The University of Michigan study also found that 81% of Mosaic alumni reported that they experienced more personal growth and transformation at Mosaic than in any other activity they participated in as a teenager, while 92% stated that "Participating in Mosaic gave me the confidence to know that I had the ability to pursue and accomplish my dreams and goals."
- Mosaic alumni surveyed by the University of Michigan cited Mosaic's significant impact on their ability to develop and maintain a positive sense of self/identity, to make positive decisions in life, to interact effectively with people from different backgrounds, to develop and maintain a positive body image, and to expect great things from themselves and others.

## THE MOSAIC MODEL

The Mosaic Model for youth development creates growth in *skills*, *self-image* and *societal commitment* by focusing on the following elements:

**EXPECTATIONS:** setting high expectations for youth through high standards of excellence, commitment and professionalism.

- Rigorous rehearsal and self-review process, supported by professionals
- Focus on exemplary conduct, accountability and technical mastery
- Tackling advanced-level material. Actors study Shakespeare and other classics as well as contemporary plays. Mosaic Singers repertoire is usually considered outside the ability of teenagers, including *Lacrymosa* by Mozart, *How Lovely in Thy Dwelling Place* by Brahms and *The Heavens are Telling* by Haydn.
- Expectation that every member will go to college is reinforced through college performance tours and college preparation workshops.
- After one year in Mosaic, more than 97% of young people state that they believe they will graduate from college and/or go on to graduate school (up from 64% in pretests).
- Participants in Mosaic develop college-level and professional-level artistic skills, academic achievement strategies, and employability skills

**ENVIRONMENT:** creating a safe, supportive environment for youth which stresses total acceptance of each individual, family atmosphere and a sense of belonging.

- *Safe Space* and *Total Acceptance* mean that there are no judgments at Mosaic other than Mosaic's high artistic standards. Mosaic stresses to the young artists that they are only judged based on three things: 1) their skill-level (a subjective judgment by their director), 2) how hard they work, and 3) how well they treat other people.
- Mosaic is a completely inclusive environment that does not discriminate based on race, religion, economic class, sexual orientation, size, age or disability.

- Directors and instructors have to commit to “check at the door” any personal prejudices that they carry with them. Common prejudices such as “leading ladies should always be thin,” “only boys should move heavy scenery,” and “a 12-year-old cannot lead a group as well as an 18-year-old” are not tolerated.
- Young people develop trusting relationships with peers and adults, leading to the development of positive social networks and social capital.

**EMPOWERMENT:** engaging youth through active participation, providing opportunities for them to learn to make life choices.

- Young artists at Mosaic are involved in every element of production including music composition, playwriting, historical research, stage management, set design, lighting design, fundraising, public relations and marketing.
- Mosaic’s young artists were awarded the State of Michigan History Award for creating original plays based on oral history interviews conducted with older Detroit residents for the play *Hastings Street* about Detroit in the 1940s and *Now that I Can Dance* – a play about the early days of Motown.
- Youth are given leadership roles and responsibilities autonomous from adults.
- Mosaic young artists contribute to their community by providing performances for nursing homes, homeless shelters, juvenile detention centers, domestic abuse shelters and hospitals.
- Mosaic Youth Ensemble members serve as goodwill ambassadors for metropolitan Detroit, both locally and internationally. *Detroit Monthly* magazine named Mosaic “Detroit’s Best Role-Models.”

## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR THE MOSAIC MODEL

- A number of studies report a significant relationship between high involvement in the arts and better academic achievement, as measured by academic scores, drop out rates, and grade point average. Research also reports that the arts contribute to lower recidivism rates, increased self esteem, the acquisition of job skills, and the development of creative thinking, problem solving, and communication skills.
- The use of arts processes have been shown to improve academic self-regulatory behaviors, such as paying attention, persevering, problem solving, self initiating, taking positive risks, cooperating, using feedback, and being prepared.
- Based on a national sample, students involved in arts programs who come from troubled family situations and attending violent schools are more likely to excel in academics and school life than youth from less troubled backgrounds.
- Research demonstrates that high school “high achievers” exhibit patterns consistent with the Mosaic Model including 1) developing a strong belief in self 2) having supportive adults around them such as teachers or counselors, and 3) having a network of other high achieving peers.
- Mosaic’s focus on developing of strong trusting relationships with adults is supported by research that shows that positive adult relationships can play a significant role in the lives of disadvantaged urban youth, thus minimizing risks for substance use, gang involvement, and violence.

## THE MOSAIC MODEL

Providing Opportunities for Positive Youth Development through Performing Arts Training



# Expectations

High expectations for young people are a central tenet of Mosaic's model. This is seen by Mosaic's motto "Only the Best, Nothing Less." The motto has many meanings, but common in all of them is that in Mosaic, you never settle for anything but the best: the best effort from yourself, the best performance possible. The focus on high expectations is also exemplified in the fact that the young people in Mosaic are referred to as Young Artists, not as kids. Mosaic believes in setting the bar high and challenging and supporting young people in their efforts to reach the bar. In urban areas, expectations are often lowered for young people, with the idea that setting high standards would lead to more failure and lower the self-esteem of urban youth. Mosaic has found the opposite to be true. Mosaic has found that setting high expectations increases self-esteem in young people because they come to believe in their ability to do great things. Even when they come up short of the high expectations, Mosaic has observed that the young artists come away from the experience understanding what is required to achieve excellence and believing that, with hard work and persistence, excellence is possible. One respondent to the University of Michigan survey of Mosaic alumni speaks directly to this.

***"One of the most significant moments of my life was a particular year when I was demoted from a lead actor having been on tour with the group to merely an understudy. At first I thought about quitting, but instead I stayed, refocused myself, worked harder than ever, and got back into top shape, eventually becoming a lead actor the following year. That experience really shaped my life from that point on."***

(Alumni Survey)

## STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE

Mosaic is known for the professional-level quality of its performances. This is one of Mosaic's main goals, as is expressed in its mission: "Creation of first-rate theatrical and musical art." The idea that young people in middle school and high school can create artistic work on a professional-level seems far-fetched to many. While the young artists and their adult collaborators sometimes come up short of "professional-level" this is always the goal. Setting the bar at the highest level possible motivates the young artists to push themselves to go beyond their preconceived image of their potential. When the young artists do reach professional-level or college-level quality in their performances, it is a life-changing experience. The young artists have a first-hand visceral experience of what excellence feels like and that it is possible to exceed expectations through extraordinary effort.

***"I definitely consider Mosaic to have been a great experience, and a reason for some of my success. Mosaic firstly introduced me to people of different colors, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds, while encouraging me to maintain professionalism in my craft and pursue my dreams and goals endlessly through dedication and hard work."***

(Alumni Survey)

Mosaic explicitly seeks through its performance to surpass what society thinks teenagers are capable of accomplishing. "If the audience just sees a bunch of talented teens on stage, then we have failed in our pursuit," says Mosaic founder Rick Sperling, "They were talented before they ever joined Mosaic. Our goal is nothing less than 'blowing away' the audience."

One way Mosaic is able to reach such a high quality level is by choosing material that the young artists can excel in – and sometimes more than their adult counterparts. By creating plays where the majority of the characters are teenagers, Mosaic allows the young artists to perform art that they are uniquely suited for. In music performances, Mosaic young artists create highly-skilled, yet uniquely youthful renditions of classical, world music, spiritual and Broadway songs.

As stated earlier, these high expectations for excellence are especially powerful for urban youth. When Mosaic is chosen to represent the U.S. at world festivals and international exchanges, when they are chosen to perform at the White House and the Kennedy Center, it totally changes how Mosaic young artists view themselves. Instead of Mosaic being seen as merely "City kids doing something positive," it is seen as "These dynamic young people are the best our country has to offer."

## COMMITMENT

The concept of "Total Commitment" in the Mosaic context means giving 100% energy when performing, giving your all to everything you do, giving "only the best, nothing less." The teenage years can be a time of great self-consciousness for many. For this reason, Mosaic has found that by assertively encouraging – sometimes even demanding – that young people totally commit, great strides can be made in enabling the young artists to push past their self-consciousness. While it is often a

**"You have made  
Detroit and  
America Proud."**

President Bill Clinton in recognition of  
Mosaic being selected as the U.S.  
Representative to the 1996 World  
Festival of Children's Theatre in  
Denmark.



struggle to get young artists to go beyond their comfort zone, once they experience committing 100% to something, it unleashes a creativity and dynamism that they did not realize they possess.

One way Mosaic is able to get young people to fully commit is to make it safe to “fail.” If young people are worried about making mistakes, they cannot commit totally. Mosaic employs many exercises where the goal is not getting it right, but totally committing to the task. Many sayings are used to inspire total commitment, including:

***“It is better to commit 100% and be wrong, than to commit 50% and be right.”***  
***“It is better to fail courageously than to succeed tentatively.”***

“Total Commitment” at Mosaic is also about hard work and giving maximum effort. Mosaic does not put a great emphasis on talent. The assumption is that all Mosaic young artists have talent and it is hard work, dedication and persistence that determine success, more than innate characteristics. Another Mosaic saying speaks to this: “Talent and 85 cents can get you a Coke” – meaning that talent without hard work has no value.

Much of this philosophy is supported by the research of psychologist Carol Dweck (1998, 2007) and her team at Columbia (now at Stanford) studying 400 students in the New York City public schools. Her research found that students were much more resilient and proactive in dealing with educational struggles when teachers put an emphasis on the value of effort rather than focusing on praise for innate ability. “Emphasizing effort gives a child a variable that they can control,” she explains. “They come to see themselves as in control of their success. Emphasizing natural intelligence takes it out of the child’s control, and it provides no good recipe for responding to a failure.”

Several responses from the Alumni survey focused on this concept

One alumnus said one of the most important things they learned at Mosaic was ***“the fact that it’s not how good you are but how hard you work for what you want to do in life.”***

Another alumni member stated: ***“The greatest lesson I learned was to never get complacent with where you are. But continue to remain diligent, keep that fire burning for what you’re doing and keep working to get better and better at your craft. Mosaic taught me how to really work hard at getting something I want.”***

## PROFESSIONALISM

The Mosaic Model stresses the importance of **Professionalism**. When Mosaic alumni were asked to rank the impact of Mosaic’s different areas of focus, “developing standards of professionalism” was ranked second, behind only “achieving artistic excellence.” Going beyond the definition of a professional being “one who earns a living in a given or implied occupation,” Mosaic defines professionalism as an ideal combination of exemplary conduct, accountability and technical mastery. It is an ideal that can never be fully attained, but a target that the young artists are always pointed towards.

## CONDUCT

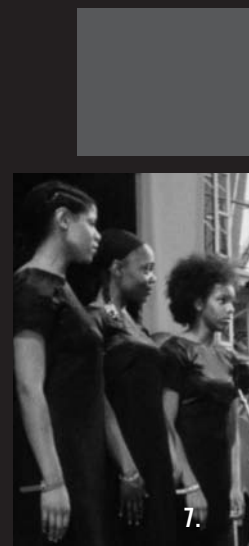
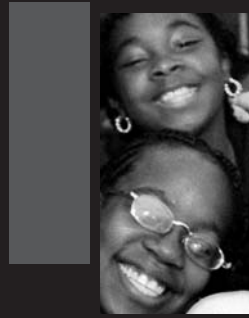
Mosaic expects young artists to always act with respect and courtesy towards fellow young artists and staff. Mosaic’s handbook includes rules requiring proper rehearsal behavior and attire, as well as having all necessary materials at all times (scripts, music, etc.).

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Being personally accountable for one’s actions and one’s responsibilities is emphasized. If young artists arrive late for rehearsal, they must apologize to their company, even if the lateness was not their fault. They are required to call in advance to alert staff if they know they will be late or need to request an excused absence. “No show, No call” is grounds for probation or removal. If they miss a rehearsal, they are responsible for calling staff or other young artists prior to the next rehearsal to get caught up on what they missed. If students do not live up to Mosaic standards of conduct or performance and are placed on probation or removed, they may petition the decision based on a plan of improvement which they devise with the Youth Support Director.

## TECHNICAL MASTERY

The concept of “technical mastery” differs with each artistic discipline. For Ensemble members in the Mosaic Singers it involves diaphragmatic breath support, tonality, music theory, blend and interpretation. For members of the Mosaic Acting Company, it involves exact memorization, mastery of cues and blocking, as well as proper volume and articulation. For members of the Mosaic Technical Crew it involves extensive knowledge of shop safety, names and purposes of all stage equipment, proper use of all tools, general knowledge of all technical jobs and advanced knowledge in one technical area.



This focus on technical mastery separates Mosaic from many youth arts programs which stress only the expression of creativity. Mosaic's high expectations for technical mastery exceed the normal expectations for middle and high school students, and are more consistent with college-level expectations.

## Environment

If high expectations were Mosaic's only focus, it would not have been able to achieve such profound outcomes. Equally important to the Mosaic Model is creating a *Safe Space* for youth to thrive. Mosaic is a *Tough Love* environment. It is tough because students must struggle to meet the high artistic and personal demands. But there must also be *Love*—unconditional affection and support—in order for these young artists to be able to develop in a healthy and holistic manner.

### TOTAL ACCEPTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL

***“...I have to say one thing that Mosaic is big on it's the whole acceptance thing. Like, whoever you are, whatever you are, it's cool.”*** (Young Artist Focus Group)

Mosaic's name is based on the concept of total acceptance of each individual. A mosaic is a work of art made up of many different pieces. Unlike a collage or melting pot, each piece is complete and whole in itself. Each piece has its own borders and yet each piece works in concert to create the artwork. Likewise in Mosaic, each young person maintains his or her own individuality and unique cultural identity while working together to create a work of art.

*Safe Space* and *Total Acceptance* do not mean that there are no judgments at Mosaic. Clearly the young people are always being judged in their ability to meet Mosaic's high artistic standards. But, Mosaic stresses to the young artists that they are only judged based on three things: 1) their skill-level—a subjective judgment by their director, 2) how hard they work, and 3) how well they treat other people. Beyond those three things, Mosaic promises that the young artist will not be judged. They will not be judged by race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation. They will also not be judged based on size, age, disability, fashion, political ideas, etc.

This commitment to non-judgmental acceptance is not easy. Directors and instructors have to commit to “check at the door” any personal prejudices that they carry with them. Common prejudices such as “leading ladies should always be thin,” “only boys should move heavy scenery,” and “12-year-olds cannot lead a group as well as 18-year-olds” are not tolerated.

This non-judgmental, accepting environment becomes a haven for young people who are often bogged down not only by peer pressure, but also by pressure from adults to conform to rigid roles. In Mosaic, young people are allowed to be their true selves and explore their unique identities. For many young people who feel constricted by living up to other people's expectations, Mosaic can be a liberating experience similar to what many young people experience when they go away to college for the first time. While Mosaic does not promote homosexuality—or heterosexuality, for that matter—it is impressive that many gay and lesbian Mosaic members feel safe enough to “come out” to their peers about their sexual orientation during their high school years.

Parents of Mosaic young artists commented on the power of this environment of total acceptance during a parent focus group as part of the University of Michigan study:

***“...the creativeness of all the artists here – they all feed from each other and they all just lend to that atmosphere of “it's okay to be you here.”***

***“...felt like he got a place in Mosaic because he was so accepted... the attitude of “everyone here deserves to be here” and as long as you're doing your part, you deserve to be here.”***

***“[This is] something unique from the public schools where [youth] were ostracized, or picked on because they are different...”***



## SUPPORT: PERSONAL, ACADEMIC, CAREER

Early in Mosaic's evolution, it became clear that the young artists needed extra adult support in order to thrive in Mosaic and to take full advantage of youth development lessons that Mosaic provided. It was difficult to expect "Only the best, Nothing less" from young people if they were dealing with crises outside of Mosaic which were sapping all of their emotional and physical energy. It was difficult to expect strong academic performance if young people were not getting parental support and didn't know where to seek tutoring. It was difficult for Mosaic to encourage the young artists to go to college when they had little or no guidance in how to select an appropriate college, pursue scholarships or financial aid, fill out a college application, or select the necessary college-prep classes in high school.

This need led Mosaic to create a Youth Support Department where staff had no artistic responsibility and would be focused completely on the well being of the young artists. While the artistic staff members are powerful mentors for the young people, the responsibilities of directing large numbers of young people do not allow them to be as available as they would like to be to hear every young person's concerns.

Founder Rick Sperling explains:

*"In the very early days of Mosaic, I was the only mentor for the young artists while trying to direct these very challenging productions. Young people would come up to me to express something personal and I was under so much pressure, I would just say "Don't talk to me – don't say anything to me right now." I realized that this was just continuing the negative pattern that many of the young people were experiencing outside of Mosaic – that adults had no time for them. Sometimes young people just need an adult they can talk to, who will really listen and not judge them. I realized I could not always be that person. Now that we have Youth Support staff, there is always someone ready to listen to a young person. And now, often the young person does not even have to initiate it – a Youth Support staff member will see someone looking distraught or stressed and will pull them into his or her office to talk."*

Mosaic's Youth Support Department provides workshops in college-prep, college applications, college financial aid, audition/interview skills, time-management, study skills, presentation skills, health and nutrition. These workshops, called "Personal Development Days," are conducted by Youth Support staff and outside experts, and take place monthly.

While Mosaic does not have the staff or resources to be able to act as a social service agency, the Youth Support Department acts a clearing house where they can refer young people to the resources they need. Youth Support staff members have referred young artists to health clinics, psychological counseling, tutoring programs, crisis hotlines, support groups, etc. One example was a young artist whose family had their home's heat cut-off because of non-payment. A Mosaic staff member was able to refer them to an agency whose mission was to insure that no disadvantaged families had to go through a harsh Michigan winter without heat. Having his heat restored allowed the young artist to continue to thrive in Mosaic and at school.

Even though the leadership supporting the young artists comes from the Youth Support Department, all Mosaic staff members are engaged in acting as mentors for the young artists. Many times strong bonds develop with directors and other staff members, even on the administrative side. A former Marketing and Development Director became a personal mentor for one young woman, even flying with her to enroll her in college because the young artist's family could not afford to go.

Mosaic young artists participating in a focus group for the University of Michigan study commented on the supportive environment at Mosaic.

*"You know there are people here who are not going to let you fall by the wayside, and that's something that's been helpful to me. I have a busy family and so it's not always like they're there when I need to talk about something... but I know there are people here who are going to make themselves readily available."*

*"Knowing that you belong and knowing that people care forces you to want to do the best that you possibly can. You always want to do it for yourself, but even if you don't want to do it for yourself, those people who care about you – you don't want to disappoint them. You go out of your way to be the best that you can."*



85% of alumni agreed that “being a member of Mosaic gave me a deeper sense of community and belonging than any other experience I had as a teenager.”

(Alumni Survey)



## FAMILY ATMOSPHERE: JOY, HUMOR, LOVE, BELONGING

An essential element of the Mosaic Model is the creation of a family atmosphere. The two earlier elements of Total Acceptance and Support contribute to this atmosphere but do not fully account for it. The ingredients that create a family atmosphere at Mosaic – Joy, Humor, Love, and Belonging – are often difficult to quantify.

### JOY

Perhaps the hardest to quantify is joy. One would think that with the high standard of excellence at Mosaic, that the atmosphere would be almost oppressive. While rehearsals can at times become quite intense and stressful – even involving yelling by directors – for the most part there is a very joyful feeling at Mosaic. Visitors comment that when they walk into a Mosaic rehearsal they are engulfed by positive youthful energy. Before rehearsal starts and during breaks there is a cacophony of exuberant talking, laughing, and even singing. Much of this comes from a philosophy that while the young artists are not working the adults should “let kids be kids.” Another factor contributes to this joyful environment: when you bring together positive young people, free of the highly judgmental and negative attitudes of many of their peers, there is a sense of freedom which is unleashed.

*“You have to realize that if you had a bad day, you have to leave it outside the door and Mosaic will make you feel better and you won’t even remember where you put it when you walk back outside..!”* (Young Artist Focus Group).

### HUMOR

Hand-in-hand with Mosaic’s joyful environment is the constant use of humor by adult staff and the young artists during the day-to-day interactions of the Ensemble. Mosaic staff members model behavior that shows that you can work at a very high level and still be able to find the humor in things. Much of the humor consists often of gentle teasing which is not intended to denigrate, but to let everyone know that it is ok to laugh at our perceived shortcomings. At Mosaic, this gentle teasing has often been observed to actually improve some young artists’ self-esteem, because they come to understand that these perceived shortcomings do not prevent others from accepting them or cause others to see them as less than capable. One word of warning: while gentle teasing has a positive impact within the context of Mosaic’s supportive environment, it may have a negative impact if it is used in an environment not committed to total acceptance.

*“You could be cryin’ when you get here, but you’ll be laughin’ when you leave.”* (Young Artist Focus Group)

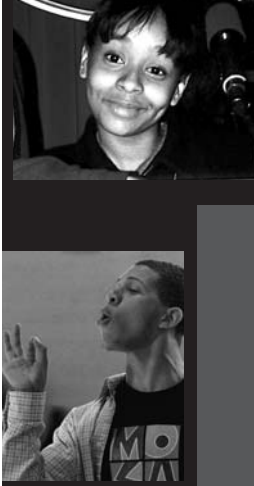
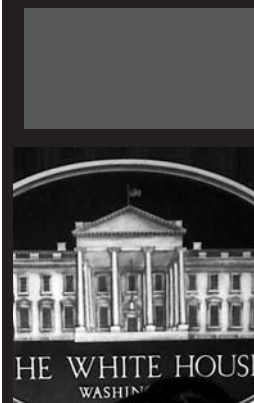
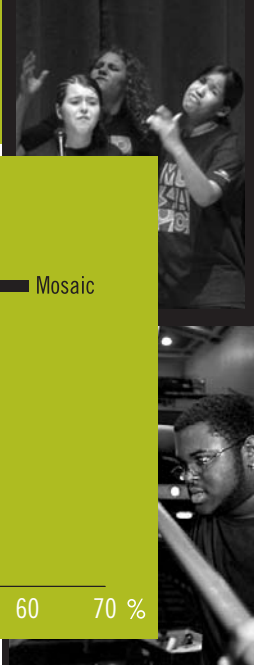
### LOVE

At Mosaic, Love is defined as “commitment to one’s growth” – a variation of M. Scott Peck’s definition of love in his book *The Road Less Traveled* (1978). This means that the young person believes that everyone at Mosaic – the staff and young artists – is ultimately acting in their best interests. This can be “*Tough Love*” where young artists are forcefully motivated to overcome obstacles. This can also be demonstrated through affection or simply by telling the young artists “I love you.” Sometimes young artists are removed from the Ensemble, not because they have broken a rule or not lived up to expectations, but because the staff members feel it is in their best interest to focus on other things at that time of their life. Interestingly, many young artists express that it is the extreme level of honesty in the criticisms they receive from staff members – while sometimes quite painful at the time – that makes them feel that they are truly loved, that staff is truly committed to their growth.

*“Mosaic is a family. Within every family, there are sure to be fall outs but with any family, there is always going to be love. My Mosaic family upset me to the point of tears some days but their love for me was unconditional day in and day out.”* (Alumni Survey)

### BELONGING

During the teenage years, studies have shown that young people are often striving to find a place where they can have a feeling of belonging. This desire for belonging is seen as a reason why young people are so susceptible to negative peer pressure. For many urban youth, this desire to belong can lead them to join gangs and participate in other anti-social behaviors. The arts, like sports teams and school clubs, can provide a positive place where young people can feel like they belong. Mosaic stresses this sense of belonging by giving the young artists a sense of *Membership*. Instead of the young artists being merely in a class or in a play; instead they are members of an *Ensemble* – The Mosaic Youth Ensemble – further, they are a member of a specialized *Company* – the Mosaic Singers, Mosaic Acting Company, or the Mosaic Technical Crew.



This sense of membership allows them to feel that they are part of something bigger than themselves and yet, where they truly belong. Posttests of young artists in the University of Michigan study support this. [CHART 1]



# Empowerment

In their *Guide to Social Change Led By and With Young People*, Joseph Vavrus and Adam Fletcher (2006) define youth empowerment as “an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including youth and adults.” Empowerment is a central concept of Mosaic’s Model, with its clearly stated mission to “empower young people to maximize their potential.” A Mosaic young artist’s experience is incomplete if they only learn to follow directions and do as he or she is told. A young artist’s Mosaic training is only complete if he or she leaves Mosaic equipped with the tools to take action based on their own choices, having internalized the self-discipline and self-motivation required to succeed. Mosaic teaches empowerment through stressing active participation, autonomy from adults, and positive risk-taking.

*“If you want to do it, do it! If you need to say it, say it! If you want them to know it, teach it.”* (Alumni Survey)

## ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Mosaic’s young artists learn by doing. They learn through hands-on, active participation. They spend very little time learning through lecture or watching demonstrations. Mosaic has found that active, participatory learning is especially effective with young people, because they can absorb and integrate much more material through hands-on experience. Even when teaching very complex concepts, Mosaic directors develop active exercises and games which allow the young artists to physically experience the concept.

Rehearsals always begin with “Warm-ups” in each group. In addition to warming up the necessary muscles to do the work, warm-ups are also a ritual which allows the young artists to transition from the outside world to the highly engaged Mosaic environment. They have to be fully engaged, physically and mentally, to do the strenuous warm-up exercises correctly. When warm-ups are done the young artists are ideally focused, energized and ready to work. It is then up to the director to make sure the young artists remains actively engaged and do not cool down or lose their focus through inactivity. It takes much planning by the directors to create a rehearsal plan where all young artists are active the majority of the time. In rehearsals, young artists are regularly broken into small groups practicing simultaneously so that no one is sitting and watching for an extended period.

Mosaic’s focus on active participation also helps young people overcome fear and self-consciousness by requiring them to repeatedly get up in front of others and attempt difficult things. The more experience they have “putting themselves out there” the easier it becomes and the less tempted they are to give in to the paralysis of self-doubt. One way Mosaic accomplishes this is by giving the young artists an extremely short amount of time to accomplish an activity. For example, rather than give the young artists 45 minutes to devise a short scene demonstrating an acting concept, Mosaic directors will give them only 10 minutes. With such a short time, there is no time for hand wringing or self-doubt. They know in 10 minutes they will have to get up in front of the rest and show something and so they waste no time getting to work. Then, when they perform the scene, they are critiqued by the director and the other young artists – on what worked and what could be improved. Then they are back in their group with another 10 minutes to implement these changes before they show the scene again.

This process of instruction, practice, feedback and implementation is re-iterated throughout the year during rehearsals and performances. There isn’t time at Mosaic to be anything other than proactive. Of course, in such a fast-paced intense environment, Mosaic directors realize that they must provide times in rehearsal – and sometimes after rehearsals – for the young artists to reflect on what they have learned and ask questions. Yet, at the end of an effective rehearsal, the young artists feel a great sense of accomplishment and amazement at how fast the time flew by.

## AUTONOMY FROM ADULTS

Mosaic emphasizes the importance of young artists learning to give maximum effort and concentration without the influence of adults. If young persons are only motivated by their fear of adults or their desire to please adults, then they are not truly empowered. What power and agency do they have if they are dependent on adults for their motivation?

Mosaic does not expect this autonomy when a young artist is first starting with Mosaic, because the young artist has to learn the professional way to do things before they can effectively do things on their own. The longer a young person is in Mosaic, the more autonomy they are expected to exhibit.

By the midpoint in each year, Mosaic directors purposely create opportunities for young artists to be more autonomous. Experienced young artists are chosen to lead the warm-up exercises. They are responsible for gathering the group and starting rehearsal exactly on-time. Directors experiment with leaving the room and re-entering to see how well the young artists are overcoming their dependence on adult supervision. If the intensity or concentration changes significantly when the adult enters or leaves the room, then the young artists have not yet developed the necessary self-motivation. Ideally, by the end of the year, a rehearsal observer would not be able to tell by the work-ethic of the young artists whether an adult director was in the room or not.

The final test of this autonomy comes during the end-of-the-year performances, at professional theatres where the young people are expected to manage all elements of the production. At the professional theatres where Mosaic performs, the pre-show speech includes the proud announcement “There are no adults back-stage, no adults in the lighting booth; the young people have literally taken over the theatre.”

Mosaic also teaches young people to be less dependent on their parents and family in fulfilling their responsibilities. While keeping parents informed, Mosaic primarily communicates expectations and evaluations to the young person without parent participation. Interestingly, underprivileged youth often handle Mosaic’s focus on autonomy better than young people from more privileged backgrounds. Young people who have less parental involvement – for economic, health or other reasons – have often learned to be more self-reliant and independent than young people who are used to being more dependent on parents.

Mosaic also develops autonomy by having the young artists participate in self-assessment exercises throughout the year. On a monthly basis, young artists fill out self-assessment rubrics rating their own progress. This is essential because many young artists are motivated purely by grades given in school by adult teachers. Many have no experience honestly assessing their own work. The belief is that if young people develop self-assessment skills during their time at Mosaic, they will continue to use them in college and beyond.

## RISKS AND LIFE CHOICES

### RISKS

One of the key elements of the empowerment at Mosaic is positive risk-taking. This does not refer to risky behavior which might endanger their health or well-being. The risks referred to at Mosaic are acts of courage and overcoming one’s psychological barriers. Larger young artists may be afraid to move their bodies because of insecurity over their weight. Young artists who are struggling in school may be afraid to get in front of others because of memories of being laughed at in school. Most teenagers carry around the fear of making a fool of themselves in front of their peers. It is enough of a risk to get up in front of peers, let alone to be emotionally honest and intellectually adventurous in front of them. And yet, that is exactly what the arts require.

This is why the creation of Safe Space as discussed in the Environment section is so important. The arts can create a space where it is safe to express emotions, actively experiment and be vulnerable in front of your peers – without being humiliated.

Furthermore, Mosaic creates a space where it is safe to fail. Essential to arts excellence is having the freedom to fail, and to learn from those failures, on the path to success. With Mosaic’s focus on commitment, the young artists are encouraged to “go for it 100%” and if you are going to fail, fail boldly. Mosaic young artists come to understand the tremendous learning which comes from failing. They learn to take daring and adventurous risks, knowing that no matter how it turns out, they will learn something significant and get closer to the excellence they are striving to achieve. At Mosaic, they learn that when you fail, it does not mean you are a failure. The only real failure is in not trying.



“Mosaic introduced me to the whole idea of peer leadership which has continued to be one of the most important skill sets I’ve learned.”

(Alumni Survey)



*[At Mosaic I learned] Taking risks on stage, not being afraid to go all out and just do anything – and see if it actually works.”*  
(Young Artist Focus Group)

### **LIFE CHOICES**

Mosaic is a place where young people are constantly making choices and learning from the consequences of those choices. In order to thrive in Mosaic, young artists are constantly forced to set priorities. If they choose to neglect their school work or home responsibilities, or choose socializing over attending rehearsals or practicing at home, they may not stay in Mosaic long. While many people have suggested that Mosaic young artists should get paid or get high school credit for the long hours they devote, Mosaic has resisted this type of compensation. If the young person is staying in Mosaic for academic credit or money, it stops being a full act of choice. There is the danger that participating in Mosaic would become an act of obligation. Participating in Mosaic is a choice, and the directors always remind the young artists that “the exit door is always open.”

Young people are never pressured to stay in Mosaic. The goal is always the growth of the young person. This may mean that the best thing for the growth of a young person is to leave Mosaic. Founder Rick Sperling comments,

*“Surprisingly, many alumni who messed up and got kicked out of Mosaic come back years later and tell me that getting kicked out was the most significant growth experience of their teens. They say it hurt a lot but it made them really understand how precious good opportunities are and taught them to make better choices in the future. One year, a young artist who had been with us for five years decided to quit just before the end of her senior year so that she could focus on her academics. She knew her final grades would have a great impact on what college accepted her. She felt so ashamed, like she had failed, like she had let us down. We told her that her ability to make a brave choice to take responsibility for her own success was exactly what Mosaic was all about.”*

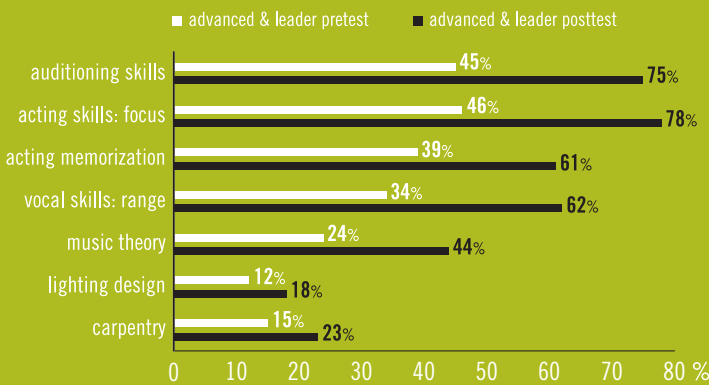
**97% of alumni agreed that Mosaic improved their ability to make positive decisions in life.**

# Skills

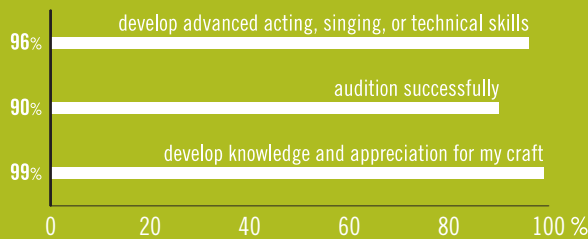
*“Mosaic’s unique mix of sincere support and ambitious discipline created the professional community that makes the Ensemble an incredible place to develop into a person with skills, both marketable and priceless.” (Alumni Survey)*

Mosaic’s training is based in skill-building. Much of what is learned is specific to arts disciplines. These skills are clearly valuable for the young artists who choose to pursue performing arts majors in college and performing arts careers. Yet, as the phrase “Excellence on stage and in life” implies, many of the skills learned are very valuable outside the realm of performing. Young artists and Mosaic alumni have reported that Mosaic provided them with real skills that they can use to pursue success in whatever field they choose.

**CHART 2: Art discipline & skills**



**CHART 3: Participation in Mosaic positively impacted my ability to:**



## ARTS DISCIPLINE AND SKILLS

Mosaic’s focus on specialization and mastery, instead of general exposure, clearly leads to participants developing significant skills in their artistic discipline. The data from University of Michigan’s pre and posttests indicate a strong and significant impact on artistic development across the different aspects of the program including acting, vocal music and technical skills. [CHART 2]

This impact is also evident in the results of the Alumni Survey: [CHART 3]

These skills have prepared many Mosaic young artists for success in the performing arts field. Mosaic young artists have received scholarships to some of the nation’s top performing arts institutions, including The Julliard School, New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, Berklee College of Music, the California Institute of Arts, Boston Conservatory, Carnegie Mellon University, University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theatre Actor Training Program, the College for Creative Studies, Columbia University Film School, and the American Musical and Dramatic Academy.

Mosaic alumni have gone on to perform on Broadway, in national and international touring companies, on television, and in feature films. Alumni performers have been nominated for prestigious awards, including a Tony Award, and have signed recording and modeling contracts. Besides performing, Mosaic alumni have worked as television producers in Los Angeles, professional stage technicians in regional theatre companies, and producers for major record companies.

## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT – HIGHER EDUCATION

**95% of Mosaic alumni graduate from high school and go on to college.**

In addition, the University of Michigan study reported:

*“The results from the three sets of transcripts collected showed an increase in both the mean grade point average and the GPA range after having been involved with Mosaic” and “Data from pre and posttests indicate that Mosaic has a positive impact on educational aspirations, time spent on homework, and confidence regarding academic goals.”*



Mosaic's impact on academic success is attributable to several factors, including:

- 1) Report cards are collected at Mosaic and young artists are motivated by the fact that their participation in Mosaic is dependent on maintaining or improving their academic standing.
- 2) The self-discipline and effective learning habits developed at Mosaic transfer over to improving academic study skills.
- 3) The enthusiasm and motivation experienced at Mosaic creates a positive, proactive attitude which carries over to academics.
- 4) Mosaic Youth Support staff members refer young artists to academic support resources.
- 5) Positive Peer Role Models: young artists are inspired by peers in the Ensemble who effectively excel at their art form and in school.
- 6) Mosaic Performance Tours to colleges give young artists an understanding of the importance of academic achievement and a clear goal to pursue.

One particular story illustrates how all of these factors impacted one Mosaic young artist, Kenya McGilberry.

***“My sister and I were abandoned by my mother when I was a teenager. My sister went to a foster home and I dropped out of high school and lived in a homeless shelter. Singing was the only thing I seemed to have going for me so I auditioned at Mosaic.”***

When Kenya passed the audition, she was told she would have to return to high school and maintain good academic standing to stay in the Ensemble. At Mosaic, for the first time in her life, Kenya was doing something she loved, developing discipline and good work habits, and she was surrounded by positive proactive young people. It was the first time she was surrounded by young people who were excited about school and college and were self-motivated.

***“Although I was very intelligent, I never did anything in school but run my mouth. I felt kind of lower than others. I never even thought about going to college. Mosaic had a plan for me, though. They were not letting me exit the program without entering college.”***

Mosaic staff provided support to help fill the gaps because Kenya was receiving no parental support. Even though she did not meet some of the requirements for touring, Mosaic support staff made an exception to allow her to travel on Mosaic's one-week College and Performance Tour.

***“I was allowed to go on the college tour, and there I decided I wanted to be a music educator and help teach people about the thing that I love doing, the way Mosaic has taught me.”***

While on tour, Kenya auditioned for Tougaloo College in Mississippi and was offered a scholarship on the spot. The scholarship offer came with one condition: she had to graduate from high school. Kenya came back from that tour more academically motivated than ever. She graduated and enrolled at Tougaloo College. After graduation Kenya plans to pursue a Masters Degree and possibly a PhD in Music Education.

***“My year in Mosaic was the most important time in my life. It changed my life forever. If not for this organization, I would not be in college today.”*** Kenya R. McGilberry, Mosaic Alumna

Kenya's story is extraordinary, but many Mosaic participants have had to overcome the challenge of growing up without college graduate role-models. The most recent Census data showed that only 11% of Detroit residents had attained a bachelor's degree or higher. Just under 44% of Mosaic alumni reported that no member of their immediate family, other than themselves, had attained a bachelor's degree.

Mosaic also serves many young people who do not face such challenges. Many young artists have parents with college degrees and many enter Mosaic already having good academic standing with plans to attend college. For these young people, Mosaic provides skills to allow them to seek admittance into some of the nation's most competitive colleges. Mosaic alums have been accepted to top academic institutions such as Brown University, Cornell University, Howard University, Oberlin College, Morehouse College, Macalester College, Spelman College, Miami University, University of Michigan and Michigan State University.

Part of the effectiveness of the Mosaic Model is that it mixes together academically motivated college-bound young people with young people who are struggling in school and/or not considering college. For this reason, the Youth Ensemble does not have a mandatory minimum grade-point average. Mosaic recognizes that young people in urban areas come from a wide range of backgrounds and many may not have parental academic support. Mosaic accepts the young person wherever they are at academically, as long as they are enrolled in school. A minimum grade point average would have eliminated young people like Kenya. Instead of a minimum grade-point average, young artists are required to maintain or improve their current academic standing to stay in the Ensemble.

***“Helping me to change the way I acted in school as far as my school work is the greatest gift Mosaic has given me. Going on the college tour was wonderful, and I know now that I want to go to college when I graduate from high school.”*** (Young Artist Testimonial)

The Alumni Survey from the U of M Study strongly supports these outcomes: [CHART 4]

***In addition, 71% agreed that “Participation in Mosaic increased my interest in and ability to pursue higher education.”***

Mosaic alumni also commented that their Mosaic training not only helped them to graduate from high school and go to college, but gave them the coping skills to handle the demands of college.

***“...when others my age couldn't handle school I was able to handle the stress and remain organized as well as become a leader in my college community.”***

***“...being able to cope with college even though musical performance and theatre is not my major... I find immense satisfaction in knowing that Mosaic prepared me for life and not just musical theatre.”***

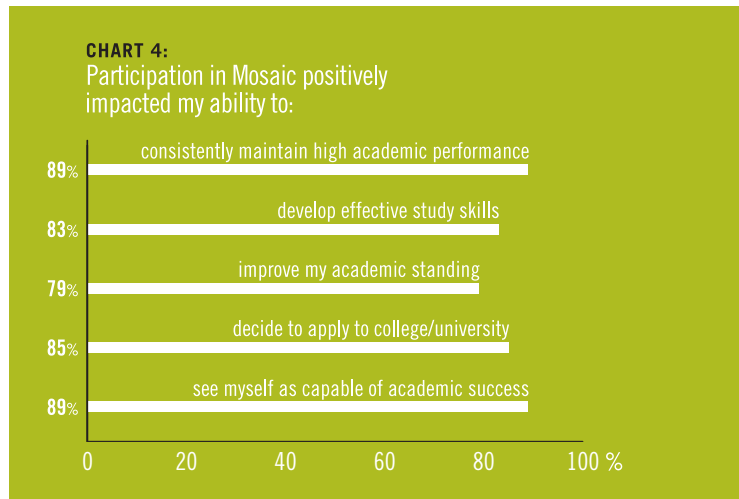
### EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

***“Employability Skills are not job specific, but are skills which cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all jobs from entry level to chief executive officer.”*** (Sherer and Eadie 1987, p. 16)

Overwhelmingly, Mosaic alumni have stated that the skills they gained in Mosaic were transferable to other non-artistic fields and greatly enhanced their employability. In her article *Developing Employability Skills*, Kathleen Cotton (1997) identifies the common “high order thinking skills” and “affective skills and traits” that the majority of researchers cited as critical Employability Skills. The Mosaic Model provides skill-training in all of these areas:

- Problem Solving
- Learning Skills, Strategies
- Creative Innovative Thinking
- Decision-Making
- Dependability/Responsibility
- Positive Attitude Toward Work
- Conscientiousness, Punctuality, Efficiency
- Interpersonal Skills, Cooperation, Working as a Team Member
- Adaptability, Flexibility
- Enthusiasm, Motivation
- Self-discipline, Self-motivation
- Appropriate Dress, Grooming
- Honesty, Integrity
- Ability to Work Without Supervision

Findings of the alumni survey and focus groups with Mosaic young artists provide evidence that Mosaic positively impacts young people’s ability to attain employability skills. [CHART 5]



***“Mosaic instilled time management in me at an early age. Furthermore, my training helped me in leadership, public speaking, and working effectively with peers.”*** (Alumni Survey)

***“My ability to adapt in the most adverse situations came from being in Mosaic. We went to many different venues and in most cases the stages were small or nonexistent. We knew we had to have heart and perform regardless of our fears and inhibitions.”*** (Alumni Survey)

***“...Before I came to Mosaic, I never knew what time management was... I had never been organized; I had been so disorganized; waiting for the last minute on everything. But once I got into Mosaic it was like, I have schedules, I got a planner, and everything is all written out. And like now, like I manage my time more wisely now.”***

(Young Artist Focus Group)

*“Learning to deal with others... This is a key lesson in life, and Mosaic taught me how to interact with all types of people in a constructive manner.” (Alumni Survey)*

*“...Knowing that when I’m going into the work force that there are going to be people there who I don’t necessarily agree with or who I don’t get along with, but still being able to keep that professional, you know, balance with them so that we can get the work done because that is what we have to do.” (Young Artist Focus Group)*

The University of Michigan study goes on to say:

*“Data from pre and posttests identified multiple ways in which participation in Mosaic contributed to professional development. Many of these changes were statistically significant. The program appears to be making significant contribution to this area. Participation in Mosaic encourages young people to take responsibility for themselves and the group, to work hard despite setbacks, and to manage their time.”*

## Self

**81%** of Mosaic alumni reported that they experienced more personal growth and transformation at Mosaic than in any other activity they participated in as a teenager.

*“I realized that the training that I received was not just about the arts, but about developing as a person and setting positive goals for myself.” (Alumni Survey)*

For many Mosaic young artists and alumni, the greatest impact they received from their Mosaic participation was personal development. The outcome is that young people leave Mosaic with a heightened sense of self and confidence in their abilities.

[CHART 6]

### POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE

In the very tumultuous teenage years, peer pressure, identity confusion and self-doubt are prevalent. Mosaic’s combination of *high expectations*, *safe space* and *empowerment* allows many young people to overcome these obstacles to developing positive self-images.

Many Mosaic young artists and alumni have stated over the years that Mosaic was the first public place where they felt they were able to truly be themselves. They stated that at Mosaic they did not feel the pressure to change their behavior or appearance to conform to the cliques and restrictive norms they experienced at school and other public environments. Mosaic is often a haven for young people who are ridiculed for being different in other contexts. Mosaic’s celebration of difference and uniqueness is often liberating for these young people.

For example, you will often see large young men and women dancing in Mosaic productions. Before they joined Mosaic most of these young people would never have the courage to move their bodies in public, because of shame and self-consciousness. When these young people not only dance, but dance well, in front of an audience it has a three-fold effect. First, it allows the young person dancing to overcome their inhibitions and develop a more positive body-image. Second, other members of the Ensemble witness this act of courage and are provided with a positive role-model, making it easier for them to attempt such a courageous act. Finally, the audience is impacted because their stereotypes of “who is a dancer” are exploded.

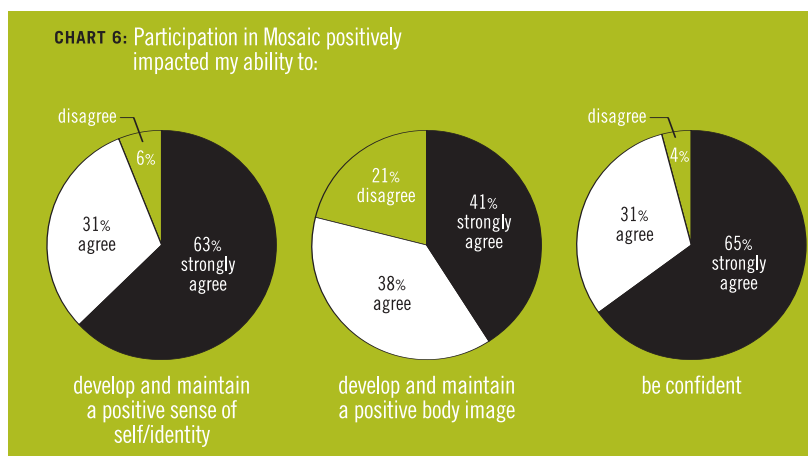
Mosaic has observed this three-fold effect not only in regards to size, but also in regards to transcending stereotypes based on race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and socio-economics. Mosaic young artists experience the inverse of oppressive peer pressure: an environment where differences and uniqueness are admired and celebrated.

In focus groups, Mosaic young artists echo these sentiments:

*“The biggest thing I learned from Mosaic was not to be afraid of being who you are at any time.”*

*“If I can be who I want to be in Mosaic, who is to say that I can’t be that anywhere else? There’s no one to stop me but myself.”*

*“There is nothing like being proud of yourself... You can do anything if you are proud of yourself.”*



A major element contributing to the young artists' positive self-image comes from the sense of accomplishment which Mosaic young artists derive from meeting Mosaic's high expectations and standards. Mosaic young artists develop a sense of confidence and self-assurance because they have had palpable experiences of achieving excellence after overcoming difficult obstacles. Founder Rick Sperling says,

***“There is so much talk about excellence, but young artists at Mosaic get to actually feel excellence – in their bones. It is no longer just a concept. Whether they decide to pursue a career in the arts or not, they now understand the level of commitment it takes to achieve excellence – and they know they are capable of getting there because they have experienced it.”***

## HIGH SELF-EXPECTATIONS

One of the outcomes that Mosaic alumni frequently cite is the sense of high self-expectations they gained during their time at Mosaic. Many alumni state that they have internalized Mosaic's motto of “Only the best, Nothing less” to remind themselves after they leave Mosaic to always have high self-expectations. [CHART 7]

In the context of college and the workforce, Mosaic alumni often become leaders because of their self-imposed high standards. Many alumni express frustration when they find a lower standard of professionalism in certain college and professional contexts than they experienced at Mosaic. One alumni survey response expresses this:

***“I was frankly surprised at what I encountered in the ‘professional’ adult work environment after leaving Mosaic. At Mosaic I learned to expect excellence from myself and others, and to enjoy operating at peak performance. When I entered the adult workforce, I found a lot of people who were unwilling to give their best and seemed intimidated or resigned to operating without excellence. Because of my experience at Mosaic, I continue to have high expectations for myself and I am able to inspire others to give the best of themselves when they work with me.”***

## AMBITIOUS GOAL-SETTING

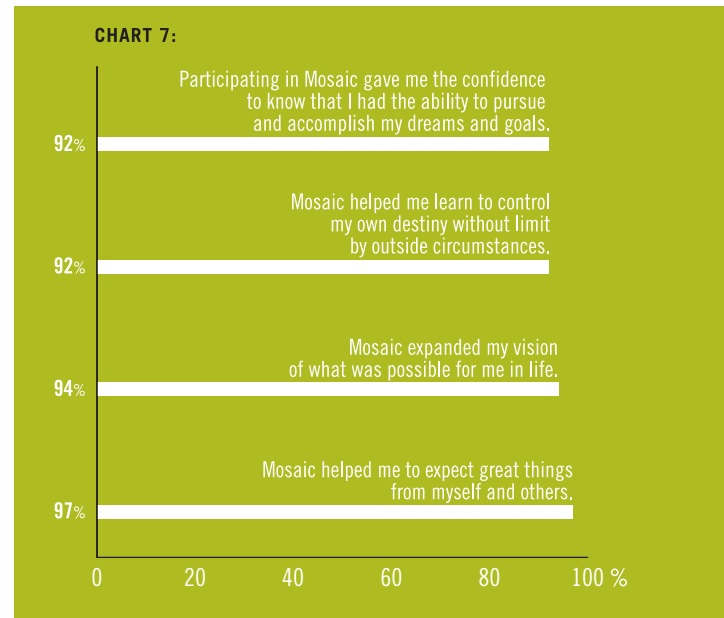
***“The greatest lesson I learned from Mosaic was that anything is possible. Only in Mosaic can kids from different backgrounds come together and accomplish the things that we did. I was just a young guy from the ghetto and I always saw the President on T.V., but I never dreamed that one day I would sing for him. Mosaic makes dreams come true. It gives you purpose and if you don't have one, it can give you a home, because it gave me one.”*** (Alumni Survey)

The positive self-image and high self-expectations many young people develop at Mosaic enhances their willingness and ability to set very ambitious goals for themselves. Additionally, the fact that Mosaic exposes young people to many new experiences often has the effect of broadening their horizons.

Working side-by-side with accomplished professionals – whom they call by their first name – demystifies the professional world. They learn that these adult professionals are people just like them, and that if they work hard and get the necessary training, the professional world is open to them.

Mosaic's focus on travel also impacts young artists' ability to set ambitious goals. In many urban areas (especially those with poor mass transportation, like Detroit), a young person's universe can be very small. Even within the metro Detroit area, performing in different schools, different neighborhoods, and different cities can help young people overcome their fear of the “outside world.” When that travel extends across the country and internationally, the effect is multiplied. For many young people the experience of performing on college campuses allows them to see for the first time that college is not as foreign as they believed. During a tour to Singapore, one Mosaic young artist was offered a college scholarship. While he did not choose to go to college in Asia, he came back to the U.S. with a heightened perspective on the range of educational opportunities that were available to him.

***“Mosaic gave me the opportunity to do things, go places, and experience a whole new culture that I would have otherwise been ignorant to. Growing up in Detroit's inner city is not easy. I'm forever grateful for my time spent with Mosaic, and it's members!”*** (Alumni Survey)



Mosaic alumni Celia Keenan-Bolger, who was recently nominated for a Tony Award for her performance in the Broadway musical *The 25th Anniversary Putnam County Spelling Bee*, explained on NBC's *Today Show* how Mosaic broadened her horizons:

***“It was one of the greatest experiences I had before I came to New York. I felt like there was a whole world out there that I never knew about, or even thought about, that suddenly was opened up for me.”***

Two young artists in a focus group of the U of M study expressed a similar sentiment:

***“I have found my purpose. I have found where I want to be and I know who I am. And that’s the thing that before I thought would come by itself. I didn’t realize that I had to work at it. I never realized that I had to, you know, want to do something in order to do it...”***

***“[Mosaic] helped us realize that this isn’t the last stop. There is other stuff happening out there...”***

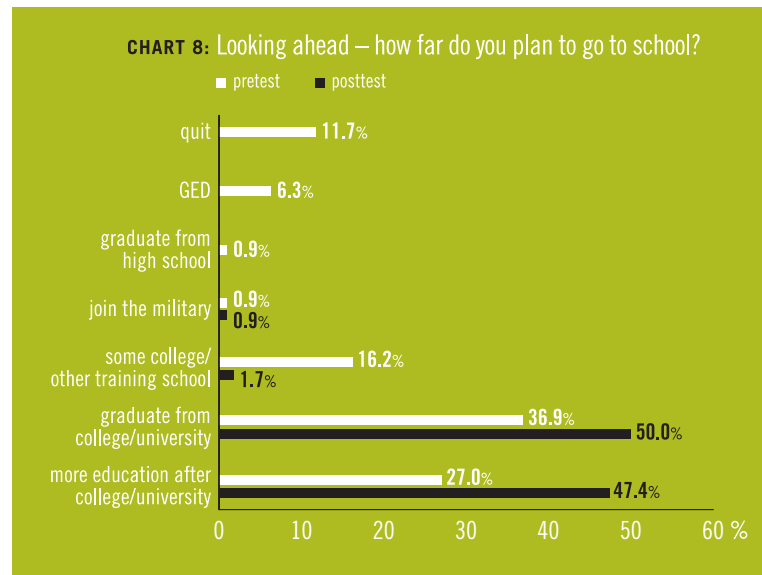
The impact of Mosaic on the ability of young people to set ambitious goals can be seen clearly when looking at academic goals. The difference between pretests and posttest responses after one year of participation in Mosaic are significant when young artists were asked “Looking ahead, how far do you plan to go in school?”

In the chart below, 11.7% of young artists expected to quit school when surveyed in pretests. Posttest surveys after one year of participation in Mosaic showed 100% planned to graduate from high school. In pretests 64% planned to graduate from college or continue beyond college. In posttests that percentage rose to 97.4%. **[CHART 8]**

This focus on setting ambitious academic goals is seen in how two Mosaic alumni described their greatest accomplishments since leaving Mosaic:

***“By far it has been my education. I have received an undergraduate research fellowship to study the effect of hip hop culture on the political ideals of young African Americans. I have also had the opportunity to study outside of the country twice; once for two months in Paris and once for six months in the Dominican Republic. I attribute my personal goals of expecting “Only the best, Nothing less” out of myself to my Mosaic training.”***

***“Following my dreams through perseverance and determination- i.e. my current tenure at Howard after being forced to wait two years due to the lack of finances to support my education. I attended another school in Michigan but it was not where I truly wanted to be...I took ‘Only the best, Nothing less!’”***



# Society

In addition to the skills attained and the personal development which results from participation in Mosaic, many young people also gain a greater understanding of the society and their place in it. This heightened societal understanding can be seen in three outcomes of Mosaic participation: 1) Respect for Diversity, 2) Community Involvement and 3) Positive Social Capital.

“... it changed me now because I can say that I am more open to people.”  
(Young Artist Focus Group)

## RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

Respect for diversity is a major outcome of participation in Mosaic. Decades after the end of overt and legal segregation in metro Detroit, the region remains one of the most racially, ethnically and economically segregated metropolitan areas in the nation. For many young people, Mosaic provides them with the first opportunity to have a substantive experience with young people of a different races, ethnic groups, religions or economic backgrounds. It should be clarified that breaking down racial divisions, while an organizational goal, is not part of Mosaic’s central mission. The term mosaic, as explained earlier, focuses on accepting each member of Mosaic completely for the unique “tile” they bring to Mosaic. There is no ideal racial or demographic balance that Mosaic strives to achieve.

Mosaic’s racial composition is not as diverse as metro Detroit but closer to that of the city of Detroit; with 75% to 85% African American participants. Those percentages are even higher if you factor in the number of students who identify as Bi-racial. On average 10% of participants are white, 3% Latino/Hispanic, 2% Asian American, and smaller percentages Native American and Arab American. Much of the racial imbalance is attributable to the ongoing social forces that continue to lead to metro Detroit’s high segregation. This includes Detroit’s racial and economic city-suburb chasm which contributes to non-African American suburban parents being less likely to allow their children to travel into the city of Detroit on a regular basis.

While Mosaic does not shy away from being a predominantly African American group within a predominantly African American city, there is a concentrated effort to make sure that all young people in metro Detroit feel that Mosaic is accessible and open to them. Mosaic has initiated outreach programs in the predominantly Arab American and Latino areas, including a bilingual *Teatro Mosaico* program, and in mostly white inner ring suburbs such as Grosse Pointe.

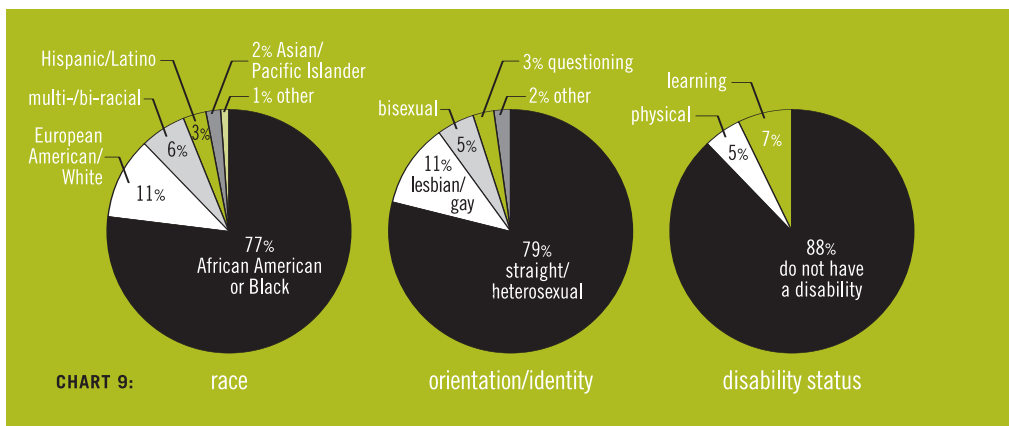
Despite the obstacles to diversity, Mosaic remains one of the most diverse youth groups in the region. It is one of the only programs to involve African American, white, Latino, and Asian American youth. Mosaic is one of the only programs where city and suburban youth interact on a regular basis. Mosaic is also a very diverse group for young people in terms of sexual orientation and learning and physical disabilities

Perhaps the greatest diversity is in terms of economics. On average, Mosaic’s young people generally break down evenly into three groups, with one-third coming from extremely low income households (qualifying for subsidized school lunches), one-third from low-moderate income households and one-third from above-moderate income households. Mosaic has many anecdotal stories of young people from “different sides of the tracks” becoming life-long friends through their participation in Mosaic.

The results of the U of M study support Mosaic’s outcomes on respect for diversity:

**96% of Alumni agreed that Mosaic improved their ability to interact effectively with people from different backgrounds.**

The alumni respondents’ demographic make-up is consistent with Mosaic’s demographics historically: [CHART 9]



**In addition, 31% of alumni reported that they qualified for free lunch as middle or high school students and Mosaic demographic statistics show that 46% of Mosaic young artists come from female head of household single parent homes.**

Mosaic alumni highlighted respect for diversity when discussing the lessons learned at Mosaic:

***“By being in an environment of all ethnicities and people of different sexual orientations, I was able to learn and appreciate people for who they are. When I came into Mosaic, I was a very judgmental teen. To this day, some of my best friends are of opposite races or gay or lesbian. Now I am able to educate my friends and family. The biggest attribute I gained from Mosaic, was of a more personal growth.”***

***“I also realized later in college that Mosaic had introduced me to [trusting relationships] that crossed racial barriers, that as a white girl in Detroit, I had not experienced to that same depth before. That experience really made me question quite a bit about race and how the structure of society affects interpersonal relationships.”***

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Over Mosaic's fifteen year history, Mosaic has seen that many alumni have become more involved in community efforts due, at least in part, to their participation in Mosaic. While Mosaic's Ensemble program does not have an explicit focus on community service, many alumni have reported becoming more community active because of Mosaic.

Social isolation is a significant obstacle facing many urban youth. For some young artists, Mosaic is their first or most significant experience of functioning within a community other than their family. As cited earlier, in the Alumni survey:

***85% of alumni who reported that “being a member of Mosaic gave me a deeper sense of community and belonging than any other experience I had as a teenager.”***

One activity where Mosaic does explicitly promote community service and involvement is Mosaic's annual December Holiday Perform-a-thon. It is a 12-hour marathon where the Mosaic young artists travel to provide holiday performances at locations where people are generally unable to attend holiday shows. The locations include juvenile detention centers, hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, domestic abuse shelters, youth homes, homeless shelters and substance abuse treatment centers. In Mosaic's early days, the Perform-a-thon would reach seven locations. Currently, the Youth Ensemble members are divided into ten groups and present performances in approximately 70 sites in the 12-hour period.

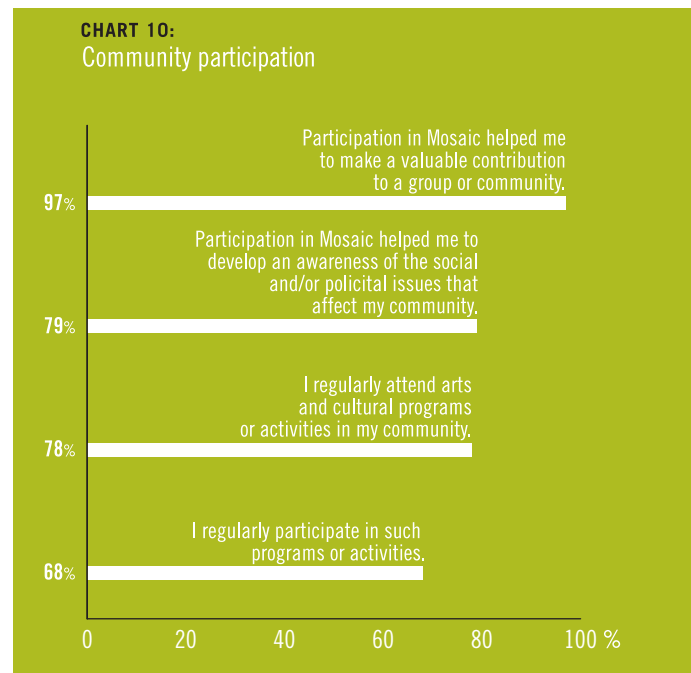
The Perform-a-thon is often a very emotional and educational day for the young artists. They experience fear, discomfort, and empathy. They shed tears of both sadness and joy. Some young artists have never been exposed up-close to people dealing with aging, illness and personal crises. Others have dealt with these things in their families, but had never had the opportunity to feel that they could make difference, even in a limited way, with their efforts and talent.

Experiencing a taste of community service through Perform-a-thon, in addition to the strong sense of community young artists feel within the Ensemble, may contribute to the fact that so many Mosaic alumni are engaged in community activities. [CHART 10]

51% of Mosaic alumni volunteer in their local community, including mentoring youth, serving food to the homeless and elderly, civil rights activism, neighborhood organizing, tutoring in the arts and literacy.

***“I think Mosaic influenced me more than any other experience in my life. It has a direct influence on all of the things that I hold most important to how I live my life, such as living in a community, telling vital stories through theatre, following with all your attention and effort an activity that you are passionate about.”*** (Alumni Survey)

***“Working for youth at a non profit organization... Although, it is not arts related, the passion and the need is still there, and I wanted to be in this field because of being and working at Mosaic.”*** (Alumni Survey)



## POSITIVE SOCIAL CAPITAL

Mosaic alumni develop *Positive Social Capital* as a result of their participation in Mosaic. Popularized by the work Robert D. Putnam, the concept of Social Capital is being used to measure the value that is gained through social networks.

***“The central premise of social capital is that social networks have value. Social capital refers to the collective value of all “social networks” [who people know] and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other [“norms of reciprocity”]. The term social capital emphasizes not just warm and cuddly feelings, but a wide variety of quite specific benefits that flow from the trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation associated with social networks.”***

The Saguario Seminar: Civic Engagement in America – Harvard Kennedy School of Government (2000).

Young artists gain social capital from the social networks they develop as members of Mosaic’s Youth Ensemble. Young artists develop social ties to the professional staff at Mosaic, to adult guest artists, to their fellow Ensemble members and to Mosaic alumni from other years. The worth or “capital” they receive from these connections can come in many forms including 1) information leading to opportunities, such as notice of auditions or job openings; 2) introduction into new “uncharted territory,” such as an alumni member serving as a personal tour guide for a young artist visiting the alumni member’s college; 3) career guidance, such as advice from a professional set designer about what she considers the wisest path for pursuing a career in technical theatre.

The main factor in the development of this social capital is the extent to which many of the relationships developed at Mosaic continue on long after individuals have left the Ensemble. **Today, 55% of alumni report that fellow Mosaic alumni are still among their closest friends.**

One example of social capital is the benefits gained by many Mosaic alumni living in New York City who have created a supportive social network. These alumni socialize together, share apartments, let each other know about career opportunities, and provide emotional support for each other.

Another example is an alumnus who successfully used the social capital gained at Mosaic for his benefit over several years. He was introduced to the college he would eventually attend by Mosaic members who were enrolled there. He received financial aid to the college through a scholarship fund that had been created specifically for Mosaic alumni. After graduation, he used his connections to Mosaic staff to line up several part-time jobs at Mosaic. Proving himself in those jobs led to full-time position at Mosaic. At Mosaic, he facilitated a workshop with Mosaic young artists and members of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Based on advice and support from some of the RSC actors, he moved to London to pursue his acting career. In his first months in London, he slept on the floor of the apartment of another Mosaic alumnus until he could find his own apartment. Then, he used his connections with the RSC actors to secure a job touring Italy with a traveling children’s theatre.

Essential to the power of these “social ties” is the trusting and long-term nature of these relationships. This is why the strong personal bonds developed through participation in Mosaic can become an asset. [CHART 11]

While privileged youth often have social networks through family connections, the social capital Mosaic provides is particularly powerful for young artists from disadvantaged backgrounds. Michael Woolcock (2001), in *The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes*, states

***“...the absence of social ties can have an equally important impact... A defining feature of being poor... is that one is not a member of – or is even actively excluded from – certain social networks and institutions, ones that could be used to secure good jobs and decent housing (Wilson 1996).”***

Mosaic refers to the outcome of these social connections as “Positive” Social Capital, distinguishing it from the negative and destructive outcomes of some forms of social capital.

Woolcock explains

***“...social ties can be a liability as well as an asset. Most parents, for example, worry their teenage children will “fall in with the wrong crowd,” that peer pressure and a strong desire for acceptance will induce them to take up harmful habits.”***





The positive cooperative attitude that is instilled in Mosaic young artists helps to promote positive supportive social networks which will grow and develop into positive social capital over the years. Mosaic young artists learn to appreciate the value of associating with other positive self-motivated young people and this encourages them to continue to create their own supportive social networks beyond Mosaic.

*“Mosaic really changes lives and it made me a better individual. It exposed to me all different types of things and people that I would have never met.” (Alumni Survey)*

**76%** of Mosaic alumni stated that “out of all the activities I participated in as a teenager, Mosaic had the most positive influence on my ability to succeed in life.”



# The Mosaic Model for Youth Development through the Arts: A THEORY OF CHANGE

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## INTRODUCTION

The Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit was founded with a dream for urban youth to pursue their artistic passions. Long recognized for its high-quality theatrical and musical programs and performances, Mosaic's mission goes beyond excellence on stage—it seeks to motivate and inspire its youth to pursue excellence in life. Today, the dream, from which Mosaic grew, is alive and exemplified in what is referred to as *the Mosaic Model for Youth Development through the Arts*. Using a *theory of change* approach, we review the conceptual framework of the Mosaic Model and ground it in the existing research and literature on community programs – particularly arts-based programs – and positive youth development. Although research in this area is still in its infancy, there is growing evidence that interventions, such as Mosaic, play a valuable role in promoting the social and emotional development of youth.

Our review demonstrates that the Mosaic Model holds many of the elements identified by researchers and practitioners as keys to effective community programming that promote youth development. The emerging evidence from a three year evaluation led by Dr. Lorraine M. Gutiérrez provides further support for Mosaic as a highly effective youth development program. Articulating a theory of change through the Mosaic Model is significant because it provides a base for strategic planning, ongoing evaluation, continuous quality improvement, sustainability and replication. It also brings us one step closer to understanding how programs like Mosaic can impact young artists from urban environments both “*on stage and in life*”.

In this report, we hope to achieve the following goals: 1) to describe the problems facing urban youth in the United States today and define why it is critically important that counteractive measures exist to support positive youth development; 2) to review the elements of the Mosaic Model within the context of the existing youth development literature, and specifically how it is situated within the literature on effective arts-based programs for promoting youth development; and 3) to describe future directions for the development of the Mosaic Model and implications of this review for similar arts-based programs nationally.

## THE PROBLEMS FACING URBAN YOUTH

Youth in many urban areas of the United States are exposed to adversities that have the potential to limit their chances for successful transition into adulthood. Poverty has been linked to a

number of negative outcomes including lower cognitive abilities and school achievement (Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997), depression and antisocial behavior (McLeod & Shanahan, 1996). Such risks may be particularly harmful during adolescence when the combined influences of social, emotional, psychological, and biological transitions may intensify risk (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). Family situations, education, employment, crime, delinquency, and substance use are among the challenges that urban youth face on a regular basis.

One of the most significant problems facing poor, urban youth is the increasing educational disparities witnessed across the country, which put youth of color at particular risk. Compounding the structural problems of under-resourced schools in some urban communities, the ways intelligence is constructed within schools can be especially harmful for racially, ethnically, and economically marginalized youth (Hatt, 2007). This can be destructive particularly to students' self-concept and feelings about their ability to perform successfully in school, which can lead these students to have low achievement, a lack of motivation, and a desire to drop out of school. High school dropouts make up almost 50 percent of all households in poverty and half of those in prison, and are twice as likely to be unemployed. This is exacerbated by the changing economic structure of the country and already diminishing job security.

Residential segregation by race and discrimination also intensifies the barriers to obtaining jobs in higher-paying businesses and professions – especially for low income African Americans (Holloway, 1998). Employment outcomes for youth are greatly based on job access, derived from information linkages provided by personal networks. Unemployment rates for African American youth are found to be significantly higher in cities where African American poor are more socially isolated (O'Regan & Quigley, 1991).

Many youth in the inner cities have been exposed to serious violent crime, which increases the risk for the externalization of violent behavior (Schwab-Stone et al., 1999). The relationship between family troubles and deviant peer groups to delinquency is strong (Brendgen, Vitaro, & Bukowski., 2000). Gangs, characterized by a sense of belonging, may be appealing to urban youth. Additionally, the absence of social skills and a strong positive sense of self are both highly predictive of problem behavior among young people living in urban settings, including alcohol and substance abuse. Substance abuse during adolescence compromises the attainment of educational and career goals, is associated with increased exposure to disease,

“At Mosaic I learned to expect excellence from myself and others, and to enjoy operating at peak performance.”

susceptibility to poverty, and increased risk of becoming involved in crime and violence (Kilpatrick, Acierno, Resnick, Saunders, & Best, 1997).

### **COUNTERACTIVE MEASURES FOR URBAN YOUTH PROBLEMS**

Society holds a number of negative generalizations about adolescents in general and urban adolescents in particular; yet, there is a great deal of positive adjustment and resiliency among urban young people. Despite living in high-risk contexts, youth can overcome adversity and experience healthy development (Werner, 1989). They can adapt to challenges and threatening situations even though their environment is not ideally supportive (D’Imperio et al., 2000). For example, extra-familial support is a protective factor important to the positive adjustment of children in high-risk contexts (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Good relationships with teachers and other adults are major protectors against negative environmental pressures. Positive adult relationships can play a significant role in the lives of disadvantaged urban youth, thus minimizing risks for negative outcomes (Ryan, Miller-Loessi, & Nieri, 2007).

A sense of belonging is also important during adolescence. Thus, membership in different groups and subcultures can provide an environment of social connectedness and acceptance. Unfortunately, some of these subcultures, such as substance users and gangs, may not be the most productive groups for young people. The goal then is to involve youth in positive activities that support their developmental needs in this area, such as extracurricular activities and community-based programs. Youth who participate in extracurricular activities are less likely to use substances, due to less unsupervised time and prosocial bonding with adults at these activities (Catalano, Kosterman, Hawkins, Newcomb, & Abbot, 1996).

Additionally, creating and maintaining a sense of self-esteem and overall sense of self is essential for low-income youth to succeed in urban areas. Research demonstrates that high school “high achievers” exhibit patterns of 1) developing a strong belief in self, 2) having supportive adults around them, 3) having a network of other high achieving peers, 4) being involved in extra curricular activities, 5) challenging their learning experiences, 6) having personal characteristics of strong motivation and appreciation of their cultural background and having a strong sense of will power, 7) being highly resilient and 8) having strong family support (Hebert & Reis, 1999). Furthermore, the existing literature suggests that these types of characteristics can be promoted through highly effective youth

development programs. Therefore, an important aim of this report is to examine the core elements presented in the Mosaic Model and to compare them to the emerging literature on effective community programs for youth, particularly as it relates to the arts. We also examine the various outcomes highlighted in the model and compare these to the emerging literature on the impact of such programs on youth development.

### **THE MOSAIC MODEL AS A THEORY OF CHANGE**

A theory of change can be described as an explanation of the causal links that tie a program activity to expected outcomes (Weiss, 1998). The two components to a theory of change include:

1) conceptualization and operationalization of the characteristics, needs, and strengths of the population to be served; the desired outcomes for this population; and the strategies designed to accomplish the articulated outcomes and 2) building an understanding of the relationship between these three elements and expressing that relationship clearly (Hernandez & Hodges, 2001).

The Mosaic Model as a theory of change is operationalized by three core elements that guide the young artists and nine outcomes across three broad areas which are hallmarks of positive youth development and support success in life. As the Model demonstrates, Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit focuses on social change, using its own indigenous belief and values as well as best practices from successful programs to promote the growth of personal and social skills. Mosaic believes that by providing young people with the opportunities for participation and development through performing arts – specifically its core program, the internationally-acclaimed Mosaic Youth Ensemble – participants acquire important skills that promote positive outcomes in their adult lives. Mosaic welcomes all youth, regardless of race, gender, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, etc. and emphasizes teamwork, community, and accountability of young artists and staff to a high standard of artistic excellence as well as personal conduct.

### **CORE ELEMENTS OF THE MOSAIC MODEL**

Through its mission, vision, and the core elements of its program, Mosaic sees itself as more than a performing arts troupe. Mosaic believes that young artists benefit from participation through three important mechanisms: high expectations, a supportive and accepting environment, and the empowerment of its young artists. We review these core elements and discuss how they apply to promoting youth development.

# “The greatest lesson I learned from

## EXPECTATIONS

Giving young people high expectations messages promotes resiliency, particularly for disadvantaged youth (Benard, 2004). High expectations reflect a deep belief in young people’s innate resilience and capacity to learn. It involves “seeing the possibility” and holding a vision for youth that they could not see themselves. Benard (1996), in her report of turnaround teachers who change the lives of the children they teach, describes individuals who not only see the possibility in young people, but also recognize their existing strengths, help them to think differently about their lives, not to see adversity as permanent or setbacks as pervasive, or to accept any excuses for failure. While the literature on high expectations focuses largely on its link to academic success and resiliency in adolescence, clearly having high expectations for youth plays an important role in effective youth development programs as well.

Across various studies that describe how arts-based programs positively affect the lives of young people, high expectations also appears to be a common characteristic. The *Coming Up Taller* report, an initiative with the Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities to showcase cultural excellence and enhance the availability of out-of-school arts and humanities programs to children, reviewed more than 200 programs and found that one of the key characteristics of success was an emphasis on excellence. In a Surdna Foundation report called *Powerful Voices*, high expectations are also noted as a key element to effective arts program design for teens (Levine, 2002). The report states that in order to engage the attention of youth in a sustained way, programs must be rigorous and challenging, regardless of the level of prior experience youth bring to the process. According to its model, Mosaic strives to create an environment that allows for young people to thrive and develop to their fullest potential, to fulfill a *standard of excellence*, and provide evidence for this through its evaluation.

The *Powerful Voices* report also notes sustained and consistent contact and student ownership as other effective program design elements. The report states that sustained contact deepens youth experience and provides ample opportunity for individualized attention. These design elements are reflected in Mosaic’s insistence on *total commitment* from their young artists as well as the dedication of the artist-teachers who act as coaches and nurturers for the youth.

The Mosaic Model inspires youth to achieve beyond their expectations by treating *youth as professionals* and promoting meaningful challenge within a consistent and predictable structure. As Vygotsky (1978) noted, youth learn best in environments that provide information and support at a level that is at or above their current level of cognitive functioning, also known as the zone of proximal development. Similarly, in the *Champions for Change* report, which examined a variety of arts education programs using diverse methodologies, Steve Seidel (1999) from Harvard University’s Project Zero found that successful arts programs that promote complexity in the learning experience and “refuse to simplify” were most effective at passionately engaging students. The Mosaic Model exemplifies this element as illustrated by its motto: “Only the best, Nothing less.” Data from the various evaluation sources confirm that participants benefit greatly from the meaningful challenge that the program provides and the insistence on the highest standard of professionalism, both in performance and in conduct.

## ENVIRONMENT

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), youth development is impacted by the multiple systems and settings that young people interact with in their daily life. Within these settings, youth are exposed to a web of relationships that compose the community in which they reside in and the culture and society that provides the scaffolding for development. Thus, the development of youth almost always occurs in interaction with environment. This suggests that individuals are extremely malleable and, given the right environment or fit, can thrive in their development.

A supportive environment is clearly an important attribute of effective programs that promote youth development. The Committee on Community-level Programs for Youth describes a number of features of positive developmental settings for youth programs including a physically and psychologically supportive environment (Eccles and Gootman, 2002). Physically supportive environments include health-promoting facilities and practices that increase safe peer interactions. Psychologically supportive environments involve those setting where caring, loving, and competent adults provide secure attachments, are good mentors and managers, and provide scaffolding for learning. Just as positive parental support is associated with a number of positive youth outcomes, supportive relationships with adults outside the home is related to educational success and greater self-esteem (Eccles and Gootman, 2002).

# Mosaic was that anything is possible”

Consistent with the youth development literature, Mosaic believes in creating a safe, supportive and joyful space for young people. Mosaic values teamwork and community. The *Coming Up Taller* report confirms the significance of a safe, accepting, and supportive environment as a crucial building block for successful arts programs. The report describes a supportive environment as one that offers opportunities for youth to develop close, interactive relationships with adults and constructive relationships with their peers. In the *Powerful Voices* report, a vital aspect of effective program design is an environment where participants have the opportunity to model community, while they explore issues of dependence, interdependence, and independence. Mosaic views itself as a “family” and encourages good communication, guidance, responsiveness, caring, and closeness among its members, which are described in the literature on successful community programs for youth as key features of positive developmental settings.

In this supportive environment, *total acceptance of the individual* can occur. *Coming Up Taller* describes this as a *safe space*, where youth are given a chance to build on what they value and succeed as a way to build their sense of worth and achievement. *Powerful Voices* speaks to several important areas of skill development for youth, including the ability to express themselves fully through art, speak with their own voices, think through problems for themselves, and have a greater respect for individual viewpoints, traditions, and beliefs. While the Mosaic Model stresses these elements, they take the concept of total acceptance even further than the arts-based literature. Besides the individuality, ideas and talents that youth bring with them, Mosaic tolerates no less than total acceptance among its participants. This is a critical element of safety, particularly for the diverse population of youth found in urban areas. Thus, the program promotes tolerance and meaningful social inclusion of youth based on gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age, etc. At the same time, differences are openly addressed when needed and young artists are taught to problem-solve and resolve conflicts. Therefore, we see Mosaic as going beyond the existing literature in its explicit promotion of tolerance beyond individual expression, which provides opportunities for socio-cultural identity formation and support for cultural competence. While absent from the arts-based literature, the opportunity for belonging and meaningful inclusion, regardless of one’s social identities, is a major feature of the broader literature on community program settings and youth development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

## EMPOWERMENT

Youth empowerment is a key element to promoting positive outcomes. Positive youth development recognizes young people as active social agents and shifts the attention from youth as “problems to solve” to a perception of youth as individuals with abilities and positive traits who can succeed if provided with adequate resources and opportunities, relationships with caring adults, activities that build marketable skills, safe places, healthy living, and opportunities to help others (Checkoway & Gutierrez, 2006; Ginwright & James, 2002; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). In a major report by the Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, an important feature of a positive developmental setting for youth is support for efficacy and mattering, which is described as employing empowerment practices that support autonomy (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). The concept of empowerment overlaps with previously described elements, such as self-expression, meaningful challenge, responsibility, and accountability.

The Mosaic Model promotes youth empowerment in several ways. First, they encourage *active and participatory learning* as important tools for personal and professional growth. Active and participatory learning is essential, in part, because schools so often stress passive learning techniques. Durlak and Weissberg (2007) describe active learning as an important evidence-based training approach in its study on the impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills among youth. They state that youth learn best by doing and that active learning requires youth to act on the material, which entails a cycle of receiving basic instruction, having an opportunity to practice new behaviors, and receive feedback on their performance until mastery is achieved. Learning should be hands-on, which facilitates behavioral change. This is clearly an area that Mosaic excels.

Developing autonomy among youth is also an important element of the Mosaic Model. The Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth cites research on families that shows that when parents support adolescents’ autonomy by allowing them to express their point of view, young people develop positive motivation, show higher ego development, and engage in more identity exploration. The Committee further states that parents’ encouragement and acceptance of their children’s desire to take risks and learn new skills in a supportive and carefully monitored environment facilitates competency and motivation in adolescence. The Mosaic Model demonstrates this through its willingness to allow students not only to learn from their

# “I have found my purpose. I have found

successes, but also through their failures. Mosaic understands that sometimes the most powerful learning experiences come out of “failure,” and that taking an artistic risk is a victory in and of itself and deserves to be acknowledged. An environment that is safe for young people to experiment is essential to cultivating a supportive community. However, this must occur within the developmental context of the youth and an understanding of their cognitive and emotional readiness for such risks and responsibility, which Mosaic takes into consideration in terms of length of time in the program, individual talent, and demonstrated readiness.

## POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

The Mosaic Model articulates three areas in which it promotes youth development: skills, self, and society. Within these three areas lie important outcomes that have the potential to support positive transitions to adulthood. We describe these outcomes below and contextualize them within the youth development literature.

### SKILLS

#### • Arts discipline and skill

Successful community programs help young people to learn to manage their lives effectively by teaching skills, providing resources, and developing their talents and interests. Mosaic provides opportunities for skill building in physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social arenas. The learning experiences are active, intentional, and inferred. Dulak and Weissberg (2007) describe sequential skill building as an essential component for successful programs. Mosaic strives to accomplish this over its nine month curriculum. A study conducted by Brandeis University and the Skillman Foundation, which included Mosaic, examined the impact of culture and arts programs on youth development. The study found that training in art forms can be a powerful vehicle for learning and obtaining transferable skills.

*The achievements of Mosaic in teaching young artists the discipline and skills of acting, singing, and the technical side of theatre are evidenced by: a) the success of and recognition received from its performances, b) the success of Mosaic alumni have found professionally, and c) its own evaluation data in which alumni report that the program has been extremely successful in developing advanced acting, singing, or technical skills.*

#### • Academic achievement

Perhaps the most abundant research in the area of youth development through the arts is in the area of academic achievement. Research has found that young people can attain higher levels of achievement through participation in arts-based education and programs, which can help level the playing field for youth, particularly those from disadvantaged communities. Consistently, a number of studies report a significant relationship between high involvement in the arts and better academic achievement, as measured by academic scores, drop out rates, and grade point average.

In addition to traditional measures of academic achievement, participation in the arts also improved students’ attitudes about school and problem behaviors in schools. For example, McEwen (1995) found that participating in an arts program led to higher grade point averages and a greater commitment to school life by students, particularly for African American students. Fejgen (1994) also found that student participation in music and/or drama decreased discipline problems and increased grades. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that participation in art-based programming can increase rates and quality of class participation (Wolf, 1999), and levels of confidence about academics (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 2000)

The impact of the arts also seems to transcend socio-economic lines. For example, research by Catterall & colleagues (1999) has found that the gap in level of achievement by high arts-involved students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds narrows in comparison with higher SES students. In a study by Brice Heath (1999) using a national sample, even students involved in arts programs who were from troubled family situations and attending violent schools were more likely to excel in academics and school life than youth from less troubled backgrounds.

*Mosaic takes great pride in the success of their student-artists in the area of academic achievement. Evaluation data presented from the alumni survey corroborate with the hypothesis that Mosaic positively impacts academic achievement, as a vast majority of alumni reported that their participation improved their ability to maintain high academic performance in school, develop effective study skills, improve their academic standing, decide to apply to college/university, and see themselves as capable of academic success.*

# where I want to be and I know who I am.”

## • **Employability skills**

The YouthARTS Development Project (Clawson & Coolbaugh, 2001) provides evidence of the value of arts-based programs for skill development. In this study, it was found that participants in the arts demonstrated an increased ability to communicate effectively, improved ability to work on tasks from start to finish, decreased delinquent behaviors and court referrals, and improved attitudes about school. Reporting findings from the SCANS 2000, Brice Heath (1999) links arts education with economic realities, asserting that “young people who learn the rigors of planning and production in the arts will be valuable employees in the idea-driven workplace of the future.” Furthermore, Baum and Owen (1997) found that the use of arts processes improved academic self-regulatory behaviors, such as paying attention, persevering, problem solving, self initiating, taking positive risks, cooperating, using feedback, and being prepared. Furthermore, the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices reports that involvement in the arts is “one avenue by which at-risk youth can acquire the various competencies necessary to become economically self-sufficient over the long term, rather than becoming a financial strain on their states and communities.” The report also states that the arts provide one alternative for states looking to build the workforce of tomorrow by providing learning opportunities, increased academic performance, reduced absenteeism, and better skill building. The NGA notes that this advantage is even more compelling for disadvantaged populations, where the arts contribute to lower recidivism rates, increased self esteem, the acquisition of job skills, and the development of creative thinking, problem solving, and communication skills.

*The Mosaic Model promotes employability skills. For example, Mosaic alumni reported they received important and transferable skills that enhance employability, including: creativity, giving and receiving productive feedback, speaking in public, time management, leadership, and working effectively with peers.*

## **SELF**

### • **Positive self image**

As Nitzberg (2005) states, “adolescence is a period in which young people develop skills to negotiate the world around them and equip themselves for adult life. By using these skills, they develop a positive self-image, gaining confidence in their ability to operate as self-managing individuals and cope with difficult life circumstances.” Models of youth development often include personal development, including a sense of self worth, independence, an ability to contribute, and control over one’s life as a key outcomes, while low self-esteem,

low expectations for success, and hopelessness place young people at risk for problem behavior (Greenwald, Pearson, Beery & Cheadle, 2006). These models also assume that young people who function well personally and socially become resilient to the challenges of adolescence and resist adverse influences. Other studies have shown that people with high self-esteem respond less negatively to failure than people with low self-esteem (Dodgson and Wood, 1998).

Participation in arts programs can also improve young people’s socio-emotional development, particularly rates of self-esteem and self-concept. For example, Fejgin (1994) found that participating in the performing arts was positively linked to measures of positive self concept. Other researchers have also found a relationship between participation in the arts and self concept (Clawson & Coolbaugh, 2001; Wexler, 2002) An individual’s self concept may be improved by participating in theater, as performers are often required to reflect upon themselves and explore in-depth who they are and what they feel. Nicholson, Collins, and Holmer (2004) note that structured arts-based programs with appropriately trained professionals connect creative expression to emotional health, help youth release tension, and allow youth to explore their individuality.

Participation in arts programs can also indirectly impact academic achievement through increased socio-emotional development. Qualities such as low self concept, low self esteem, lack of professionalism, procrastination, poor peer relations, and insensitivity have been identified as barriers to academic achievement (Lewis, 2004). In a recent review of 73 after-school programs by Durlak and Weissberg (2007), the researchers found in addition to school performance, youth also achieved significant gains in self-perceptions and positive social behaviors, and reduced problem behaviors and drug use.

*Beyond artistry and academics, Mosaic believes that participation enhances young artists’ socio-emotional development. Alumni report the program helped them to develop and maintain a positive sense of self/identity, as well as experience personal growth and transformation.*

### • **High self expectations and ambitious goal setting**

As stated earlier, numerous researchers and studies such as the *Coming Up Taller* report found that community arts programs that emphasize high expectations – demonstrated by exposing youth to high quality staff and programming – provide crucial “building blocks” for children’s healthy development. Catterall and colleagues (1999) found that sustained student involvement in theater arts is associated with a variety of developments for low SES youth, including



gains in positive self concept and motivation. Mosaic believes that the high standard of excellence it expects from young artists will lead to high self expectations for oneself beyond their participation in Mosaic and into their adult lives. Levine (2002) uses the Maslow's "Hierarchy of Human Needs" to describe how students in the arts progress through lower level "deficiency needs" toward the highest level of need, which is self actualization or the instinctual need of humans to make the most of their abilities and to strive to be the best they can.

The youth development literature is filled with similar constructs that mirror the notion of high self expectations and self actualization as a critical outcome in adolescence. For example, Catalano and colleagues (2004) cite self-determination (the ability to chart one's own course), self-efficacy (the perception that one can achieve desired goals through one's own action), and fostering a belief in the future as important objectives for youth development programs. They describe "belief in the future" as the internalization of hope and optimism about possible outcomes, which are linked to long-range goal setting, belief in higher education, and beliefs that support employment and work values. Furthermore, the researchers cite studies which demonstrate that positive future expectations predict better social and emotional adjustment in school and a stronger internal locus of control.

Oyserman, Terry, and Bybee (2002) refer to "possible selves" – the future component of the self-concept – as an important feature of their intervention to enhance school involvement. They contend that schools do not effectively link current behavior to future adult selves, thus often leaving young people to creatively do this on their own. This can be particularly challenging for poor youth of color given their historic systematic exclusion from educational and employment opportunities. These possible selves, which include the self that one would like to attain and the self one would like to avoid, are seen as critical motivating factors for positive developmental outcomes.

High expectations are also related to goal setting. Catalano and colleagues (2004) note that self-efficacy beliefs include strategies associated with personal goal setting, which is influenced by self-appraisal of one's capabilities. They also cite studies that document

"the stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goals people set for themselves and the firmer their commitment to them" (p.106). Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, et al. (2003) also found that effective youth development programs often included interpersonal and life skills, such as goal setting.

In *Powerful Voices*, goal setting is considered a critical element of effective programs. This includes setting interim and final goals that demonstrate to students and others that progress has been achieved. This goal setting helps keep students engaged and committed to the process. Clearly, these skills are transferable to both school and employment settings. The report further describes the importance of cultivating analytical skills, so that student can make ongoing, personal assessments of progress and set individual goals. The concept of ambitious goal setting is closely tied to related life skills such as self-awareness and self-confidence, problem solving, decision making, introspection, assessment, revision, and leadership abilities.

*Evidence for achieving high self expectations can be found from alumni who report that Mosaic helped them to expect great things from themselves and expanded their vision of what was possible for them in life. Mosaic also positively affects the artists' leadership skills by allowing the space for self-awareness, as well as encouraging its members to actualize their goals. Many of the young artists noted that they had learned new aspects about themselves that they could use in the world outside of Mosaic and in their future ventures.*

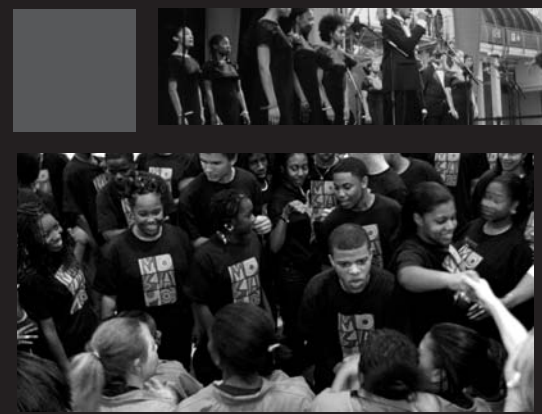
## SOCIETY

### • Respect for diversity

Since development occurs within and is influenced by environment, it is critical that young people have a thorough understanding of the different dimensions of their environment, including the physical, cultural, philosophical, and social. In his book, *New Frontiers for Youth Development in the 21st Century*, Delgado (2002) quotes Walsh (1999) who states:

"There is no more powerful way to appreciate, understand, and have compassion for the strengths, skills, and effects of another person





than to really be with them on equal terms. And there is no more important way for you to build an appreciation for diversity among the youth you work with than to create an inclusive program.” (p. 27)

Nicholson, Collins, and Holmer (2004) affirm that “programs serve youth best when the environments in which they function are intentionally inclusive, multicultural, and systematically nondiscriminatory. A safe and supportive place in which to develop an identity and confront the tough issues and extraordinary pressures of growing up is at the core of youth development environments that make a real difference.” (p.55)

Diversity is valued in youth development programming because it is good preparation for handling the diversity of adult life. Unfortunately, inter-group conflicts are present throughout the world and are frequently related to individuals’ social affiliations and identities (Stephan & Stephan, 2001). In the United States, inter-group conflicts often exist between groups of different races, gender, religions, and social classes. Inter-group conflict is relevant particularly among adolescents who are at a stage of life that emphasizes social and personal identity development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Stephan & Stephan, 2001). The recent events in schools across the U.S. where conflict has led to violence, as well as the conflicts on the world stage, provide evidence for the need for skill development and capacity building in understanding and respecting diversity.

*Mosaic takes great pride in its support of diversity. Furthermore, there is evidence that demonstrates that Mosaic participants learned to work collaboratively and thrive in diverse environments.*

#### • Community Involvement

The *Coming Up Taller* report suggests that sustained, regular arts-based programs provide opportunities to be a valued community member. Developing a sense of oneself as a valued member of a community facilitates community involvement. Catterall and colleagues (1999) state that youth highly involved in the arts consider community service more important than those with little or no art engagement.

Other studies have found that some of the most highly effective youth development programs support the notion of community service as an important component of civic engagement and positive mental health. As Nicholson, Collins, and Holmer (2004) conclude,

“The best programs help young people become competent, confident, caring, and connected citizens who contribute to the community and demonstrate responsibility and strong character. The best programs take into account the particular challenges young people face and engage with them as change agents—designing and implementing solutions for themselves and their communities.” (p. 67)

Additionally, Eccles and Gootman (2002) contend that optimal conditions for development exist when there is an integration between family, school, and community efforts, including cohesion and information flow between systems as well as a shared perception of community standards for behavior and prosocial norms. Communication across these systems also facilitates young people acquiring social capital as well as adequate structure in the setting. On the other hand, lack of integration can lead to more problems in adolescence including negative behaviors in the community.

*Mosaic alumni reported that being a member of Mosaic gave them a deeper sense of community and belonging than any other experience they had as a teenager and that this experience of community extended beyond their participation in the program.*

#### • Positive Social Capital

According to Robert Putnam at Harvard University, *social capital* has great social value for building a civil society together around common pursuits founded on mutual trust. Three elements characterize situations where social capital is likely to develop: bonding among individuals of like interest; bridging between individuals of diverse backgrounds or cultures; and repetition of activity, where close interactions take place on a regular basis. Arts-based programs often exhibit these tendencies, which support young people’s ability to work collaboratively and thrive in diverse settings. Socially and economically disadvantaged communities may be limited in the social capital that is available to them, where valuable resources may be



depleted or are inaccessible. In the absence of relationships and networks for positive development, youth may seek social capital from negative sources to meet their developmental needs. This reinforces the need for effective community programs for urban youth that promote positive social capital.

The *Powerful Voices* report asserts that direct participation in art-making builds social capital. This social capital is formed through the process of shared participation in art-making and commitment over extended periods of time to achieve common goals, which provides an environment where intense connections can occur. For example, in projects supported by the Surdna Foundation, powerful mentoring relationships between students and artists-teachers – and the continuous close engagement of artistic staff – set the stage for the building of a strong community. This community building effect strengthens social networks and supports norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.

*As in the Powerful Voices report, Mosaic also found that participation in its Youth Ensemble has had a positive impact on developing young artists' social capital, including their ability to develop a sense of belonging to the Mosaic family and develop strong and trusting friendships with other young people.*

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Although we are only beginning to understand the necessary elements of highly effective programs for promoting youth development, the existing literature appears to converge upon many of the components found in the Mosaic Model for Youth Development through the Arts. This has important implications for understanding the best practices for intervening in the lives of urban youth and building their resilience against adversity. Detroit youth, like many young people growing up in urban cities, are challenged in their daily lives and some face tremendous odds for successful transitions to adulthood. Mosaic provides an important haven for Detroit youth to develop and achieve their full potential.

However, despite the strong evidence for Mosaic as a highly effective program for youth development, this report provides only the beginning of an ongoing evaluation of the elements that make for its success. Theory of change models are not meant to be stagnant, but rather are dynamic, living documents that provide the basis for future planning, development, and evaluation. Rick Sperling, Founder and CEO of Mosaic, and his staff have demonstrated a long term commitment to examining the foundation on which Mosaic stands and its impact on young artists through continuous rigorous research. While the program has demonstrated commendable success, there are still avenues and alternative pathways to explore, both in terms of understanding how Mosaic impacts youth and for improving the array of services it can offer young people participating in its program. These include, but are not limited to, improved integration of family, school, and community, enhanced academic and career development services, and integrated follow up and re-engagement of students after completing the program. No one program can do it all—as the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. However, Mosaic holds itself to the same standards in which they demand from their young artists and rather than accept the limitations of the program, Mosaic will continue to seek excellence in the services in which they provide for youth, both on stage and in life.

Finally, Mosaic hopes that its model of youth development and this report will help other arts-based programs nationally to better understand how it can impact the lives of young people. The Model provides many explicit examples of how this can be achieved, particularly those programs serving urban youth. In 1992, Mosaic was founded on a dream. The leaders of Mosaic are aware that others too might have a similar dream. It is their hope – and the hope of the authors of this report – that these new dreams will become reality.

## APPENDIX A: Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit Mission, Vision, Programs and History

**MISSION** Mosaic's mission is to empower young people to maximize their potential through professional performing arts training and creation of first rate theatrical and musical art.

**VISION** By definition, a mosaic is an array of different pieces joined together to create a work of art. Accordingly, Mosaic Youth Theatre is founded on the richness of difference. Our young artists come from over 50 city and suburban schools, and a variety of social, economic, racial, cultural and religious backgrounds. Through our professional performing arts program, these young artists blend their ideas and talents and achieve excellence in their theatrical and musical performances. Yet, their success is perhaps best measured by how they excel in life. We proudly report that over 95% of Mosaic youth ensemble artists graduate from high school and go on to college.

### PROGRAMS

**MOSAIC YOUTH ENSEMBLE** The Youth Ensemble is the core program of Mosaic, providing nine months of free intensive education and training in acting, vocal music and technical theatre. Each year, approximately 100 young people, ages 12-18 are chosen for the Youth Ensemble by audition and interview. Ensemble members work with professional actors, writers, musicians and designers. Rehearsing after school and on weekends, these young artists are involved in every element of production, which include writing plays, composing music and designing and building sets. Throughout the year, the Mosaic Youth Ensemble tours original performances to schools by way of Mosaic's Metro Tour. Additionally, the Mosaic Youth Ensemble presents public performances at the Detroit Film Theatre inside the Detroit Institute of Arts, and at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's Max M. Fisher Music Center. The Youth Ensemble is trained in three separate groups – acting, singing and technical theatre.

**THE MOSAIC ACTING COMPANY** This advanced and comprehensive program finds the young actors progressing through acting technique practice, memorization of lines and cues, improvisation and arduous rehearsals at a rapid pace. In addition, these young artists are actively involved in researching and developing the various plays they perform throughout the year.

**THE MOSAIC SINGERS** The Mosaic Singers create and perform all of the original songs for Mosaic's yearly productions. In their annual concert, Magnificat, they bring their unique brand of energy to a cappella, classical, world and popular music. Their repertoire includes novel renditions of traditional music, as they explore the creative history of song in America.

**THE MOSAIC TECHNICAL CREW** Mosaic's technicians study all of the fundamentals of technical theatre – working on set design and construction; designing and operating lighting and sound systems; managing and building props; and designing and building costumes. Upon receiving a completed script from the Acting Company, the Technical Crew begins brainstorming ideas for professional designers to implement, and then proceeds with applying their learned technical knowledge in production.

**NEXT STAGE COMPANY** The final phase of Mosaic's performing arts education and training is the Next Stage Company. This company is comprised of the more experienced members of the Mosaic Youth Ensemble. As members of Next Stage's professional company, young artists receive a stipend for their performances, thus beginning the "next stage" in their development as theatre and music professionals. The Next Stage Company is made up of three groups; The Mosaic Quartet and Octet, singing groups which perform a full repertoire in addition to creating original medleys, and Act IV, an acting company which creates original short plays. Mosaic's Next Stage Company has been commissioned to create and perform original pieces by the Detroit Zoo, The Detroit Institute of Arts and The Skillman Foundation.

**INTERMEDIATE TRAINING PROGRAM** In order to serve the talented young artists who are not quite ready for the Mosaic Youth Ensemble, Mosaic's Intermediate Training Program (ITP) provides mid-level theatrical and musical education and training to approximately 65 deserving young artists annually.

**EDUCATION OUTREACH CLASSES** Throughout the year, more than 1,000 youth from more than 50 schools participate in Mosaic's performing arts training programs held at multiple locations throughout Metro Detroit including the Mosaic Summer Camp, Detroit/Grosse Pointe Summer Performing Arts Institute, Teatro Mosaico bilingual theatre classes in Southwest Detroit, Inkster Public School District, University Prep High School, YouthVille Detroit, and the Wayne County Community College District Summer Institute.

## APPENDIX A: Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit Mission, Vision, Programs and History [cont.]

## HISTORY

## 1992-1993

- Mosaic is founded by Rick Sperling.
- First season opens with the Broadway musical *Runaways*, a co-production with the Attic Theatre. Kenneth Anderson is one of the young artists in the cast.
- Independently produces first original play, *Fittin' In*.
- *Fittin' In* tours to Detroit schools and is presented at the Attic Theatre.

## 1994 - 1995

- Youth Ensemble expands to include technical crew.
- Mosaic produces original play with music, *What Fools These Mortals Be!*, a modern adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Detroit News says "This is not just a well-meaning community program but genuinely striking entertainment."
- NEA Chair and award-winning actress Jane Alexander visits Mosaic and states "Your commitment to artistic excellence is evident."
- Moves into new home at Historic Fort Wayne, a decommissioned army base.
- Tours *What Fools* to metro schools and to Chicago – Mosaic's first tour outside of Michigan.
- Hires full-time managing director, Annette Madias.
- Mosaic produces original production *Who Killed Johnny Maze?* which tours schools, is performed at Marygrove College, the Performance Network in Ann Arbor, and at the Theatre Space in Chicago where the *Chicago Reader* names the show "Critic's Choice."

## 1996 - 1997

- Mosaic Singers become their own company, independent of the Acting Company.
- Mosaic Alumnus Kenneth Anderson returns to direct Mosaic Singers.
- Satire *Crossing 8 Mile*, based on Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, which is performed at Detroit's Music Hall, the Court Theatre in Chicago and Ann Arbor's Performance Network.
- Mosaic wins Best of Detroit award from Detroit Monthly Magazine.
- Reprises *What Fools* which tours to SUNY – Plattsburg in upstate New York, Miami University in Ohio, and to the Grand Valley Shakespeare Festival.
- Selected as sole U.S. representative to the World Festival of Children's Theatre in Denmark.

## 1998 - 1999

- Creates and performs *HeartBEAT*, inspired by an ancient Greek play by Aristophanes.
- Mosaic Singers open for Aretha Franklin at the Fox Theatre.
- *HeartBEAT* tours to Miami University, Central Michigan University, the University of Michigan and The Henry Ford Museum.
- Receives Governors' Award for Arts and Culture.
- Performs at the White House and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.
- Creates *Everybody's Talkin'* based on Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*, which is performed at Music Hall, Miami University, and at the Nashville Shakespeare Festival.
- Starts annual Mosaic College and Performance Tour, a week-long tour where Mosaic young artists perform and audition at colleges across the U.S.

## 2000 - 2001

- Selected as sole U.S. Representative to the World Festival of Youth Theatre in England.
- Wins national "Coming Up Taller" award from the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities and the NEA. Receives award in White House ceremony.
- Mosaic Singers perform national anthem at both the final opening day and the final game held at Tiger Stadium.
- Mosaic Singers open for the Temptations at Detroit 300 Gala.
- Mosaic Singers produce first-ever CD.
- The Next Stage Company created.
- *Hastings Street* created in collaboration with U of M in honor of Detroit's 300th anniversary. Based on oral history interviews, the play explores the teenage life in Detroit's famed Black Bottom Neighborhood in the 1940's.
- Travels to perform *Medea* in Singapore.

## 2002 - 2003

- Celebrates 10th Anniversary.
- Mosaic alumnus Kenneth Anderson is named Mosaic's Artistic Director. Rick Sperling moves to CEO.
- Moves into General Motors Mosaic Theatre on the campus of University Prep High School.
- Opens for folk legend Pete Seeger.
- Opens for Al Green at Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor.
- *Hastings Street* tours throughout Michigan to Flint, Ann Arbor, Mount Clemens and Battle Creek, as well to Miami University in Ohio.
- Travels to Africa to participate in cultural exchange in Dakar, Senegal.

## 2004 - 2005

- Serves over 750 Metro Detroit area youth annually.
- *MAGNIFICAT: Mosaic Singers in Concert* premieres at Max M. Fisher Music Center.
- World-premiere production of *Now That I Can Dance - Motown 1962* opens.
- Featured on NBC's *Today Show*, on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and in *The Wall Street Journal*.
- Intermediate Training Program (ITP) created.
- *Teatro Mosaico* created, bringing no cost, bilingual performing arts training to Latino youth in Southwest Detroit.
- Receives American Alliance for Theatre and Education's "Ann Flagg Multicultural Award."
- Opens for Sweet Honey in the Rock at University Musical Society Ford Honors Program.

## 2006 - 2007

- Serves over 1,000 Metro Detroit area youth annually, with programs at eleven sites throughout metro Detroit.
- Rick Sperling given Detroit Free Press award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre.
- Establishes long-term partnership with the Detroit Institute of Arts.
- Successfully completes \$3.5 million *Imagine Their Next Stage* Campaign.
- Selected by Crain's Detroit Business as Metro Detroit's best-managed nonprofit.
- Produces world-premiere of *City in a Strait*, by acclaimed playwright Oyamo.
- *And The Flew: The Story of Mosaic Youth Theatre* wins the Michigan EMMY for best documentary – Cultural.
- Mosaic featured in American Theatre magazine.
- Mosaic young artists study Shakespearean acting with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Stratford Shakespeare Festival.

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## APPENDIX C: Mosaic Youth Theatre Ensemble Evaluation Executive Summary<sup>1</sup>

Lorraine M. Gutiérrez, Ph.D., University of Michigan • February 9, 2008

This executive summary is a glance at data from 2004-2007 of the Mosaic Youth Theatre Ensemble Evaluation conducted in collaboration with faculty, staff and students from the Detroit Initiative within the University of Michigan Psychology Department. The Detroit Initiative, a partnership of the University of Michigan Department of Psychology and community based organizations in Detroit, partnered with the Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit on this multi-year evaluation. The research and evaluation project was solicited by Mosaic directors and stakeholders in an effort to identify and assess *program goals, practice methods, and expected outcomes*. Evaluation methods included a literature review, statistical analyses, self-administered surveys, an on-line survey, and focus groups. The evaluation team engaged Mosaic in participatory research and evaluation methods, with annual reports on the process, to assist in the development of the Mosaic Model. The overall research project was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Through dialogue and discussion with Mosaic staff the evaluation team created a logic model that identified the following outcomes for the Youth Ensemble: academic achievement; leadership skills; professionalism; artistic ability; and community development and participation. Therefore, the overall evaluation question was: *How does participation in the Mosaic Youth Theatre Ensemble affect a young person's: academic achievement, artistic ability, professionalism, leadership skills, and community development and participation?*

### METHODS

#### Pretest and Posttest Measures

The Detroit Initiative evaluation of the Mosaic Youth Theatre Ensemble was a single-group pretest-posttest design. Measures were designed by the Detroit Initiative Evaluation Team with input and feedback from the members of the Mosaic staff. It included questions related to the young artists' personal and Mosaic-related experiences, and individual demographics. Each year some minor modifications were made to the measures, based on organizational interests and concerns.

Data collection took place over a three-year period. Each year a pretest and a posttest were administered to all of the Ensemble members who had completed parental consent for the evaluation. The respondents in the evaluation were not selected randomly, and there was no control or comparison group. This lack of a comparison group means that it is not possible to attribute the changes that are observed entirely to participation in Mosaic.

Between 2004-2007, 262 Mosaic Ensemble members took Pretest Surveys and 170 took Posttest Surveys. The analyses reported in this summary are for those 113 individuals who completed both the Pre and Posttest Surveys over the three-year period. Only the first survey completed by each individual is included in these analyses.

Individuals in this sample were most likely to be in the first or second year of the program. The majority of the respondents were participating in Choir, with the smallest percentage in technical. Respondents ranged in age from 11 – 18 years old, with the majority age 14 or older. This is reflected in their grade in school, with the majority in 10th grade or above. In years one and three, the majority of the respondents were female. Questions regarding sexual orientation were asked only in years two and three, those years combined, 85% of the sample described themselves as Straight or Heterosexual. No more than 5% of the sample described themselves as having a physical or learning disability.

Respondents were asked their parents' marital status in years two and three only. A slight majority described their parents as widowed, divorced, separated, or never married. 23% of the respondents described themselves as receiving a free or reduced lunch in school, which would be based on a lower income.

A third of all respondents indicated that they had a brother or sister in Mosaic.

The majority of the respondents (85%) described themselves as African American. The next largest racial group was European American (5%). The sample was most likely to describe themselves as Christian (60%), with the second largest religious group being Baptist (16%). When asked about responsibilities in addition to Mosaic, the majority described themselves as being involved in other organizations (69%) with 38% indicating that they had major home responsibilities.

Respondents in all three years were asked to indicate whether they had experienced specific stressors over the past year. The list of stressors was developed from a similar measure that has been used with urban adolescents. The majority of the respondents had experienced two or more stressors from the list. Most common stressors included not doing well in school, ending a close relationship, death of a friend or relative, serious family problems, and frequent fights with family members.

#### Mid-year Individual Assessments

Data were collected from mid-year assessments of young artists' leadership skills, academic performance, artistic development, professionalism, and his or her life outside of Mosaic. Data from the Individual Assessment tool and transcripts were collected over three marking periods during the 2003-2007 school years. Only the data from Ensemble members who completed parental consent forms are included.

#### Alumni Survey:

In 2007 Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit alumni were surveyed to provide information on their current thoughts regarding their experiences with Mosaic. A web survey format was used with direct email messages sent inviting all alumni who could be located to participate in the survey. All respondents received iTunes or Amazon gift card as incentives. The response rate was over 50% with a total of 175 respondents. Mosaic and Detroit Initiative staff collaborated with the development and implementation of the Alumni Survey. There is no way to determine how representative these respondents are of all Mosaic Youth Theatre alumni.

Alumni who responded to the survey were most likely to be female (63%), straight/heterosexual (79%), not disabled (88%), and African American (77%). The majority (60%) participated in Acting, with Singing (49%) the next largest group. The smallest percentage were involved in Tech (15%).<sup>2</sup> Almost half (47%) had a member of their immediate family who had graduated college, with 18% indicating no member of their immediate family had more than a high school diploma. The majority of the survey respondents were currently attending college, with 17% indicating that they had not gone beyond their GED or high school diploma. Those who were not currently in school were mostly likely to be working in the performing arts (15%), education (6%), music (6%), or business (5%).

#### Focus Groups

The evaluation team conducted focus groups in order to complement the quantitative data and provide additional qualitative insight into the members' academic goals, expectations, resources and needs. The team interviewed groups of Youth Ensemble members to understand the experiences of young artists in their own words.

- Year 1: Three groups of approximately ten young artists each were held. The participants were 10th-12th grade high school students who had participated in Mosaic for at least two consecutive years.
- Year 2: Two focus groups were conducted with nine actors, seven singers, and one technician.

<sup>1</sup> The entire evaluation report and more information regarding methodology are available from Lorraine Gutiérrez, (734) 936-1450 or lorraing@umich.edu.

<sup>2</sup> Responses to this question sum to more than 100% as individuals could select more than one program.

- Year 3: All of the graduating seniors, including those who did not complete the year, were invited to attend a focus group. Seven young artists participated.

In Year 2: a focus group was conducted with twelve parents of Mosaic young artists to solicit their experiences with the program.

#### Staff Interviews

In 2005 telephone interviews were held with the Youth Support Director and the Program Administrator. These interviews were used to complement the focus group findings and provide another perspective to the evaluation. The staff members were asked nine questions that were slight variations of the questions the youth ensemble members were asked during the focus groups.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on these results over the three-year period, Mosaic appears to be having the following impact on *academic achievement, artistic ability, professional development, leadership skills, and community development and participation.*

#### Academic Achievement

- Data from the pre and posttests indicate that Mosaic has a positive impact on educational aspirations, time spent on homework and confidence regarding academic goals.
- Data from respondents' mid-term evaluations reflected high academic goals and the desire to develop more effective organization and study skills.
- Data from transcripts showed that mean grade point averages improved during one year of participation in Mosaic.
- Data from focus groups with youth indicate that participation in Mosaic has motivated them to improve their grades, encouraged them to work harder in school, and communicated high academic expectations.
- Data from staff interviews suggest that the academic support communicates high academic expectations to the youth while providing them with the tools to reach their goals.
- Data from alumni identify multiple ways in which participation in Mosaic affected their academic performance. Over 80% of the survey respondents had graduated from or were attending college.
- Alumni provided many examples of how Mosaic had contributed to their academic achievements.

#### Leadership Skills

- Data from the pre and posttest measures reflect a modest impact of the program on leadership skills over the one-year period.
- Data from focus groups with youth suggest that Mosaic has developed leadership by increasing individual self-awareness, encouraging them to work toward goals, and by making them accountable to the larger organization.
- Data from focus groups with parents identified ways in which Mosaic had contributed to the development of emotional maturity and skills for working with others from many different backgrounds.
- Data from the alumni survey identified many ways in which Mosaic had supported the development of leadership skills, including the ability to control one's own destiny and to be confident. They provided many examples of how this had affected them individually.

#### Professional Development

- Data from the pre and posttests identified multiple ways in which participation in Mosaic contributed to professional development. Many of these changes were statistically significant. The program appears to be making a significant contribution to this area.
- Focus group results support these observations regarding professional development. Participation in Mosaic encourages them to take responsibility for themselves and the group, to work hard despite setbacks, and to manage their time.

- Interviews with Mosaic staff identified the challenges youth face with time management and outlined multiple ways in which they assist in developing organizational skills.

- Parents indicated that participation in Mosaic may lead to time management difficulties for youth and that Mosaic staff can be instrumental in assisting them to manage these time conflicts.

- Alumni endorsed these observations regarding professional development. They indicated developing standards of professionalism as the second greatest impact of the program on their lives.

#### Artistic Ability

- Data from the pre and posttests indicate that Mosaic is having its strongest and most significant impact on artistic development. The impact is across the different aspects of the program including theater, voice, and technical skills.
- Youth in focus groups identified many ways in which Mosaic contributes to artistic development. Not only do they learn critical skills, but they also learn to take risks, receive constructive criticism, and how to work to improve their craft.
- Data from the alumni survey identified that the majority of alumni agree or strongly agree that Mosaic had a positive impact on their artistic abilities. A significant percentage of alumni reported that they are working in the performing arts.

#### Community Development and Participation

- Data from pre and posttests suggest that within a one year period, Mosaic has very little measurable impact on community development and participation.
- Data from focus groups identified multiple ways in which Mosaic builds community among young artists, including valuing individual and cultural diversity. Overall, focus group participants shared that although competition between individuals exists, overall Mosaic is a community in which they feel accepted for who they are. Some focus group participants described Mosaic as having a family atmosphere.
- Alumni survey results provide very strong evidence regarding the impact of Mosaic on community development and participation. Alumni agreed or strongly agreed that the program had a significant impact on learning to work with others, to accept those who are different, to develop trusting relationships, and to be aware of political issues in their communities.
- Alumni data also demonstrate that young people who participated in Mosaic are likely to contribute to their larger communities through volunteer activities organized to enhance quality of life for others.

### EVALUATION AND RESEARCH TEAM

Over the past three and a half years, the research team has been headed by the Principal Investigator, Dr. Lorraine Gutiérrez, MA, PhD, and the Evaluation Project Coordinator Antonia Alvarez, MSW. The Evaluation Team was staffed by the Detroit Initiative Program Manager, Kara Denyer MSW; and Research Associates: Sarah Richards MSW; Sara Crider; Raquel Castañeda MSW; and Laura Rosbrow. Research Assistants include: Irene Kyprianides; Cassandra St Vii MSW; Tania Dimitrova; Sonya Hovsepian; Christine Rinke; Angelica Botchway; Jessica Eiland; Hsun-Ta Hsu, Laura Norton-Cruz, and Shantel West. Additional assistance was provided by UROP students: Blake Rowley, Tamika Baldwin, and Christina Toppin; and, SROP students: Maria Rendon, and Jasmine Heim. Additional data was analyzed and submitted by Sealoyd Jones, III, MSW, Lori Hollander, MSW/MPH, and Leigh Moerdyke, MSW.

TO READ THE MOSAIC YOUTH THEATRE ENSEMBLE EVALUATION REPORT IN ITS ENTIRETY, PLEASE CONTACT DR. LORRAINE M. GUTIÉRREZ AT LORRAING@UMICH.EDU

“The biggest thing I learned from Mosaic was not to be afraid of being who you are at any time.”

81%

of Mosaic alumni report that they “experienced more personal growth and transformation at Mosaic than in any other activity they participated in as a teenager.”

“I know now that I want to go to college when I graduate from high school.”

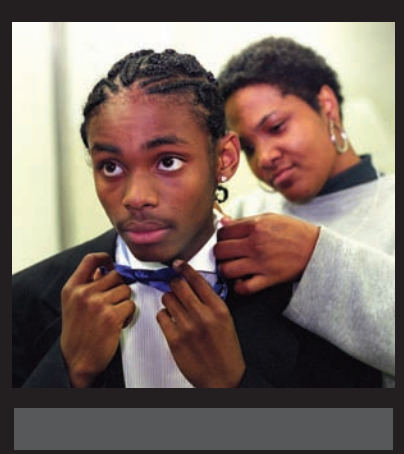
“I have found my purpose. I have found where I want to be and I know who I am.”

“My year in Mosaic was the most important time in my life. It changed my life forever.”

85%

of alumni agreed that “being a member of Mosaic gave me a deeper sense of community and belonging than any other experience I had as a teenager.”

“Mosaic prepared me for life.”



INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED



EXCELLENCE ON STAGE & IN LIFE

Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit  
[www.mosaicdetroit.org](http://www.mosaicdetroit.org)

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