



## **RAMEZ MALEK**

*Egypt*

Physics Teacher – College Prep Charter School, West

Born and raised in Egypt, I studied mechanical engineering at the American University in Cairo. After working for seven or eight years as an engineer, I switched to the teaching profession because I wanted to do something more useful for society.

After teaching science and high school physics for seven years at private schools in Egypt, I was offered the opportunity to teach in the United States under a J-1 teacher exchange visa sponsored by the Cordell Hull Foundation. I welcomed this opportunity for two reasons: first, to introduce a change in my life, and second, to take on the challenge of trying to teach students from a different culture and see if I could succeed at that or not.

Teaching in the States for two and a half years has been truly an amazing experience!! The school community (students, teachers, parents, and administration) have made me very welcome, and I really enjoy working with my American students. They have a refreshing curiosity about my life and culture, a certain maturity about life, and amazingly decent behavior in class. Even though they are not big on academic achievement (exam scores), most really want to learn the subject matter. This photo was taken by one of the students in the science lab recently.



When I returned to the American Embassy in Cairo last July (just after it reopened), the paperwork went very smoothly and there were no hassles whatsoever, but I could only get one year.

As for Egypt, things are going from bad to worse I think. People had been considering the army as a rock of stability in the middle of a tempest, but now the army is showing its true face. People getting imprisoned without trials, violence against protesters, extreme corruption... and the people are starting to feel that there is no one to turn to. What I felt personally during the summer was a lack of security that wasn't there before, places we can't go to, times we can't be outside, and numerous protests about everything. The country is in disarray. There are elections at the end of November. It looks as if the Islamic brotherhood is going to win big time in the elections that are now taking place ... perhaps another Iran is in the making.



My family and friends are safe, and that's what matters most.

Living in the states has helped me see beyond the stereotypes about American people that we are exposed to in the media. I have seen and experienced many positive qualities such as friendliness, easygoingness, kindness, and love of animals.

I really enjoy teaching physics and making it accessible to many students because I believe it is a very important subject that gives confidence to students, teaches them how to think, enables them to know how things work, and opens more possibilities at universities.

My two years' teaching experience in the West has demonstrated that we as people are fundamentally the same. I also enjoyed the small differences between teaching at a private school in Egypt and teaching at a public charter school in the United States. One of the highlights of my stay has been deeper involvement in extra-curricular activities which allowed me to run a meditation club, a weightlifting club, and culminated in my participating in a classical music concert with some really talented students (who luckily for me didn't have a pianist).

I am grateful to the Cordell Hull Foundation for making it possible for me to have this valuable educational experience. I have grown a lot, and learned to appreciate the qualities of people from another culture based on direct experience. I am really enjoying my third year in New Mexico.

Thanks to the Cordell Hull Foundation and a special thank you to Marianne Mason for giving me this opportunity and making it happen!!!