

Hello Fellow 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Parents,

Now that the forms for The Mosaic Project's Outdoor School have come home, I imagine some of you may be wondering what the program is like or have concerns, or possibly questions about this rich experience in store for our kids. As you probably know, teachers join the kids at Mosaic -- so the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers are obvious resources since they have been to Mosaic several times. But I wanted to mention that my son, who is now in sixth grade, attended when he was a fourth grader, and I am happy to be a resource too, if I can be of any help. I have not been to Mosaic myself, but I witnessed its transformative effects.

My son still looks back on that week as the best of his life. And, frankly, he's had a pretty good life!

The folks at Mosaic do a phenomenal job of quickly creating a memorable shared experience for kids from several schools, which by design have student bodies that draw from very different socioeconomic strata. The schools in our district already feature a big mix of kids, but what's important about the Mosaic days is that the kids really talk about those differences, and what they mean -- and don't mean -- and how it all makes them feel. Probably the most important thing for kids attending Mosaic (more important, in my opinion, than any of the supplies on that long list you received) is to go with an open mind, and an open heart. The Mosaic staff work very hard to get kids to think about bullying and stereotyping and about being empathetic and inclusive. It is fun, but it is hard work too. Kids who are open to the lessons can reap some significant, character-building rewards.

These lessons are woven into days of fun. A different cookie baked each day. Free time in the forest. Chances to bond with counselors who are so much cooler than we parents ever can hope to be -- and they care about kids to boot. There are some great surprises in store for the kids -- some so secret that my son has never told any of us for fear that he might spoil the experience for his younger sister.

I was at the school two years ago when the bus left for Napa -- and there five days later when the bus returned. I can tell you that, bar none, the kids who were crying as they departed were only sad on Friday because the week was over. I specifically asked the kids who were apprehensive that first morning what they thought about it -- and they were elated. The staff at Mosaic are experienced with homesickness and the other tribulations that can be part of an overnight camp experience. They have our kids' backs.

I hope that you and your children are looking forward to Mosaic. We are lucky as a school to be able to offer this experience to our students. The goal is that our kids will come back to school with new skills, and a renewed energy, for coping with the challenges that are part and parcel of getting along with one another. The great hope is that Mosaic "graduates" will become models of acceptance and fair play so that the entire student body benefits from their experience.

Sincerely,

Joanna, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent