

When to Leave a Student Back at School

In the early years of The Mosaic Project, we encouraged teachers to do their best to bring every student to our Outdoor Project. After more than 20 years and serving thousands of students, we have learned a lot. We have seen clearly that when students are having a really a hard time, the cost to the other students around them sometimes far outweighs the benefit to one single student. This cost not only negatively impacts our students, but it can also put our organization, your school, and thus our very important work, in jeopardy.

Sending a student home early from the Outdoor Project is a very difficult thing to do and is hard on everyone involved, including the student. We want to set all our students up for success at The Mosaic Project, and thus have developed some guidelines for when it is best to leave a student back at school. These are simply guidelines, not strict rules. They were tricky to develop, because many students who have a hard time at school unexpectedly thrive at The Mosaic Project. If you are unsure about a particular student, please give us a call so we can try to figure out the best plan of action together.

Only very rarely will we recommend a student be left at school. Out of the many thousands of students we have served, we have sent only a very few home early. While it is rare that students disrupt the program enough to warrant considering sending them home, the impact is so serious when it does happen that we ask you to read this document carefully. We hope it will help to ensure that every student who comes to Mosaic's Outdoor Project can have the very best experience possible.

Please leave your students back at school if:

- You sometimes question whether they should be in a mainstream classroom. If you think a student would be better off in a very small class where they could receive constant, intensive one on one attention along with intensive therapy, the student is probably not ready for Mosaic's Outdoor Project. If they are unable to make it through a school day successfully in a mainstream classroom, they are unlikely to make it through an entire week at the Outdoor Project.
- You don't think they are ready to receive the lessons that Mosaic teaches. Often, teachers say about particularly challenging students, "They're the ones that need Mosaic the most!" It may be true that these students desperately need the lessons we teach, however it is also important that the students are able and ready to learn them.
- The Outdoor Project is NOT a summer camp. Our curriculum is intensive. If you think the main benefit to the student will be the opportunity to swim in the pool at down time, rather than the lessons they will learn, they are not yet ready for the Outdoor Project.
- You have ever felt that they may be a danger to themselves or others. We need to know that we can keep all our students safe, both physically and emotionally. If a student consistently lashes out at others, either physically or verbally, it may be best to leave her/him at school.

- More than once this school year, they have refused to move to where you asked them to go. We need to know that our students will move where we need them to move if we are to keep them safe in an expansive outdoor setting.
- They have run off, away from the group, more than once during the school year. Again, it is very important that we are able to keep all students safe in an expansive outdoor setting. We also very strictly enforce our “rule of three.” This means we must always have two of our staff follow students if they run off, which can also put the other students’ safety in jeopardy.
- They have such anxiety about coming to the Outdoor Project that their parents have had to bribe them to go and have told them, “Just try it for one night. If you don’t like it, I’ll come pick you up.” (Please encourage parents to take our suggestions on the “Minimizing Home-sickness” document in their packet and to never tell a child they’ll pick them up if they don’t like it. This will absolutely set the student up for failure.) Note – Before you leave a student dealing with intense anxiety at school, do be sure that the anxiety is their own, and not their parents’. We have had several students thrive at our Outdoor Project after a parent told us they had “Anxiety Disorder”. It was clear from the beginning that it was the parent who was far more anxious than the child.
- Their parents have a very negative attitude about our program and have passed that attitude along to their child. Chances are high that we just won’t win this one. It will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The students will arrive at the Outdoor Project with a negative attitude and thus will not have a good time (or will be afraid to admit it if they do). This negativity will spread, especially to the other students from their school. In cases such as these, parents may be in “I told you so” mode and may further spread negativity. This could threaten your school’s relationship with Mosaic.

It is our highest priority to keep everyone in the program physically and emotionally safe. Please keep in mind that, as mentioned in your Service Agreement, we reserve the right to remove anyone who we believe to be a disruption to the program. In this case, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to arrange transportation home, however, if the parent/guardian is unable to do so, that responsibility falls on the school’s teachers and administrators.

In the vast majority of cases, we have been able to identify students who struggled to make it through the week within the first hour of arrival. We will let you know immediately if we have a concern about any of your students and will ask that you take immediate steps towards creating a plan for the student’s removal, just in case.

Thank you for supporting us in creating a safe, positive learning environment for all your students! Again, please let us know if you any questions about these guidelines or about a specific student, and we will work together to make the best decision possible.