

Why We Choose Sacramento Valley School

My husband and I both went to public school and had every intention of sending our children through the public school system as well. Sure, we were bored by public school but we thought we had no choice and got through it and so would our children. Yet here we were, with our older son half way through third grade at the neighborhood elementary school, starting to hate school and even learning in general. We agreed with him that the homework was boring but we thought there was no way around it it was essential and mandatory, and so the nightly homework battles increased along with the stress on our family. Our son was not being challenged and being forced to do the same homework dittos night after night seemed so pointless to him that he couldn't force himself to go along with it anymore. We were reaching his breaking point and it was so real and obvious that it seemed you could put your hands out and feel it.

As luck would have it, a couple of weeks prior to this before our crisis, a friend had told me about Sacramento Valley School, a Sudbury school here in town that her daughter attended. Having I had never heard of the Sudbury schools, I , but fortunately, the founder of the original school in Massachusetts was in town to give a presentation and I was able to go attended an evening talk with the founder of the original school in Massachusetts to learn more. What I was hearing from the founder, the staff, and previous graduates resonated with me and spoke to my dreams for my own children, so I came went the following week for a tour of the school Sudbury school in Sacramento. It was a lot to take in, this idea of giving children their freedom and believing that they could be successful in the world without having been being drilled and tested until eighteen years of age. More than anything, I was excited by this idea and couldn't wait to tell my husband about it. As soon as we were able began to think outside of our only frame of reference of what education should look like, we were both able to embrace the Sudbury philosophy.

So when our son hit his breaking point, I told him about Sacramento Valley School. I explained that the children there were free to learn what they want, when they want and that they make the decisions about how to spend their time. I told him that

there were no tests and no homework. I explained it further until he stopped me and said, “You mean I can draw whatever picture I want whenever I want?” This broke my heart because it spoke volumes about how restricted he was in public school. And some may say as I originally did:, “but he can draw at home.” True enough, except there was never much time with six hours of school a day, two hours of homework a night, soccer or baseball season obligations and birthday parties and events on the weekends. The Our weeks always went by in a blur.

My husband and I gave him the choice, and we thought it would not be an easy choice for him to make. Our son is a creature of habit, change has always been hard for him and he had many wonderful friends he would miss seeing every day. Yet he decided quickly to leave his public school behind for the freedom of Sacramento Valley School.

Our family happily adjusted to this new life without nightly homework battles and school projects that had eaten away at our free time. And our son became free from bells ringing to tell him when to eat, when to use the bathroom, when to play (for ten minutes) and when and what to think. In turn, at Sacramento Valley School he is learning to work in a community, think for himself, follow his own passion, and enjoy being a kid.

Now, as our younger son reaches school age, we are happy and relieved to have the option of sending him to Sacramento Valley School for him. Not He is simply not the type of child to sit learn while sitting at a desk (or even tolerate sitting at a desk), and we are sure he would have struggled greatly to fit the mold in traditional public school. At Sacramento Valley School he will be embraced for being the imaginative, energetic, HAPPY five year old that he is and will learn to be a part of the school community and it’s democratic process as he matures.

In standing back and reflecting on this change that has occurred in our family, I know we have made an important decision. As public education veers further farther and farther away from nurturing children as individuals, our children will be free to be discover and be themselves. And never again will drawing a picture of their choice at school seem so unattainable.

-An SVS Parent

