

Top 10 Reasons to Choose Mistletoe

1. We are family

At Mistletoe School we don't just teach subjects, we teach children. We know that you can't teach the head until you reach the heart. For that reason, you'll find our teachers greeting your child with a smile at the door each morning.

We take an interest in your child that goes beyond their report card. We participate in their interests, and your child's teacher puts in much time beyond the clock and goes way beyond the classroom to establish a positive and powerful relationship with your child.

Our friendly custodian, Don, knows *every student in the school!* It is not uncommon for our teachers to attend their students' games and performances. Many of them are in their classrooms at lunch time so students can work on homework or just visit.

Older students work with younger ones across grade levels as helpers and mentors. Reading buddies and science buddies are a normal part of our days. Electives are built across grade levels as well so that students can work together cooperatively just as siblings do in families.

Children feel safe and valued here, just as they do in their family, so they are much more likely to show respect and to do their best. Because of this, parents and children describe Mistletoe as their extended family. Our staff truly *cares* about your child as a person.

Because of our family atmosphere, everyone knows everyone, and students treat one another better than they do at most schools. Our teachers know what works and what doesn't with each individual child, so we can customize our approach and our programs. We pride ourselves on partnering with parents and families to maximize this experience to best suit your child.

2. One school for everyone in your family

Because we are a kindergarten through 8th grade campus, you won't have to shuttle your young child to elementary school while their older child attends a different middle school. We even have a preschool!

Many of our 8th graders have been bulldogs since they were four or five years old! Mistletoe was the first school in Shasta County to provide parents with the choice of a K-8 as an alternative to a traditional middle school.

At Mistletoe, older siblings help take care of their younger brothers and sisters. Our upper grade students also partner with the younger bulldog pups as reading buddies, science buddies, and mentors.

You don't want to transport your family to two or three different campuses. You don't want to figure out conflicting school calendars from multiple campuses. You're too busy for that. During parent conference week, we work with multi-child families to schedule back-to-back conferences for your convenience. We know it's challenging to get time off from your busy schedules, so our teachers work together to make it easier for you to participate in your child's education.

We have families who have had one of their children or another at Mistletoe for over 15 years. We also have many second generation families. A primary teacher who once helped a little bulldog tie his or shoe is now the one ironing their gowns at their 8th grade graduation. Wouldn't it be nice to know that all your children from preschool through 8th grade are on one caring campus?

3. Minimal behavioral issues

Just like in your own family setting, there is a level of trust and respect that permeates the campus. Because of our small size, most of the staff will know your child by name. Cliques don't form as in larger schools.

In this environment, serious behavioral issues just don't happen that often. Our students feel valued and safe, and we enjoy a climate of inclusion. When issues do arise, we deal with them on a personal basis. We approach each situation with the mindset of what is best for the child. Our goal is not to impose tons of rules on students but to instill principles such as safety, respect, and kindness. We are not trying to force students to simply obey adults; we want them to learn to manage themselves independently and responsibly.

Students are constantly coached in character development and leadership so that they get the skills they need to cope in social situations. Because we are small and personal, discipline issues can often be resolved informally and in a way that is best suited to each individual child. What often takes a referral or after-school detention can often be handled with a simple one-on-one talk with a child. Respect is the foundation of our approach, and when a student has an ongoing issue, we don't give up on them. We are bulldogs, and bulldogs are determined and loyal.

Because of this, many students who slip through the cracks at other schools find success and smiles here. It's easy to get lost in anonymity and feel that no one knows you on a larger campus. But at Mistletoe, this is not the case. Because we take an active and personal interest in every child, we rarely see the quantity or level of discipline issues larger schools face. It feels like you've gone back to Mayberry at Mistletoe!

4. We are award winning

And winning...and winning! Mistletoe is the *only* kindergarten through 8th grade school in America to win the coveted *Schools to Watch Award* three consecutive times! This award takes into account academics, curriculum opportunities, school climate, and more.

We first won this award in 2010 and were one of less than a dozen schools in California to do so. The award is given every three years, so we reapplied in 2013 and were re-designated. The judges arrived again in 2016 and raved about our continued improvement. "This was a gift to us," commented judge Irv Howard. No other K-8 school in the nation had won this award three times, let alone three consecutive times. Not willing to rest on our laurels, we are beginning the process of reapplying in 2019.

Mistletoe is one of the most award-winning schools you will ever find. We are a California Distinguished School. This award puts us in the upper level of California schools, but our accolades don't stop there. We are also a Title 1 Achievement school, which is an even harder

award to win. That means that we have done an outstanding job at accelerating the growth of students who struggle. Recently we were named an Honor Roll school as well.

Many of our teachers are also award winners. Some have won the Shasta County educator of the year. Three of our middle school teachers and our principal were nominated for northern California educator of the year, and one was state middle school educator of the year. Many of our staff have presented at educational conferences throughout the nation.

Our STEM program was selected as a model for an instructional video that was filmed on our site and is used throughout the country to train other districts.

Our achievement results rival those of much more affluent districts. These awards are not our goal though; they are simply the reflection of the hard work our staff puts into the daily education of your child.

5. Great academic results

Mistletoe's test scores rival the best in the county. In multiple measures of academic success, we consistently outperform schools in our district, county, and state. In 2016 we had the highest growth in language arts scores in the county. When compared to similar schools, we score a perfect 10 out of 10! No other county school with such high scores can boast that.

We institute multiple programs for students who struggle and take proactive approaches instead of reactive ones. We prefer to catch problems *before* a child falls behind.

On the other hand, we also offer great opportunities for extensions and explorations. Our music teacher, Ms. Ayabe, works wonders with students of all grade levels through band, choir, honor choir, guitar, and music composition. We offer STEM (integrated instruction in science, technology, engineering, and math) to *all* students in middle school; the first in Shasta County to do so!

Because we are small and know our students on a more personal basis, we can invest more time in each individual. We consistently have more than half our students on honor roll. We constantly recognize and award students for academic success. We do this through weekly recognition, trimester award assemblies, and parent conferences. We focus on and build upon a child's strengths.

We also offer honors math in 8th grade to prepare students for a seamless transition to advanced high school classes. This allows our top performing students to earn more than a 4.0 grade point average. These high academic programs are typically found only at more elite preparatory schools.

Our local high school counselors tell us that overall Mistletoe students are the best prepared freshmen they see. Many of our bulldogs go on to excel in academic and leadership roles at high school and beyond.

6. Informal structure

Because we are a small school, we enjoy a flexible and informal schedule. Our grade level teams are clustered together to maximize cooperation. Middle school students need only walk next door to change classes. We don't even need bells!

Instead, the theme from Mayberry plays pleasantly in the morning to call students to class. This allows us to flex our schedule to best suit the educational needs of our students. In the middle grades, your child's teachers are next door to one another. Transition time is easy – simply walk next door! Forgot your pen next door? No problem. Want to ask your history teacher a question when you are in science? Feel free. Need to use the bathroom? No hall passes required. It is not uncommon for a student to ask a teacher if they can run over to another class and deliver a message to a younger brother or sister.

Discipline issues often can be handled with informal counseling instead of punitive reactions. We try to match the response to the child rather than match all unique children to a rigid rule or program. In fact, we tend to guide students by principles instead of programs. Is it safe? Is it respectful? Is it a good choice? These are the “rules” that guide us in our school community. Students learn to adopt these principles in their own lives so they can live successfully long after they have left our school. Our goal is not to control a student's behavior as much as to help them succeed independently from our oversight.

Above all, when a student does stumble, we show them how to get back up. Failure is a part of a process but not the end of the road. They learn that we can separate their actions from who they are. Even if we might not approve of what they did, we still love who they are.

7. Creative curriculum opportunities

Even though we are small, we offer a variety of programs and electives for your child. We have music, sports, art, Spanish, STEM, photography, technology, student government, and leadership classes.

You might think that a smaller school lacks the opportunities for enrichment and extension classes, but Mistletoe offers a unique variety of electives and programs. Here are some of the opportunities your child will have here. In addition, because your child will be in a smaller school, he or she will get more individualized attention in these programs.

- Art
- Band
- Guitar
- Choir
- Show choir
- Spanish
- Cooking
- Outdoor education
- Fitness
- Photography
- Web design
- Honors math
- STEM
- Computer programming and coding
- Electronics
- Robotics

- English language development
- Leadership skills
- Computer coding
- School government
- Community service
- Classroom aide
- Sports: flag football, co-ed soccer, cross-country, girls' soccer, volleyball, skiing and snowboarding, basketball, track, baseball, and softball

And since we have fewer students, your child has a much better chance of making the sports team of his or her choice!

8. Great “beyond the walls” learning opportunities

Our field trips extend through all grade levels. Our bulldogs visit three college campuses, attend a week-long environmental camp, visit the California state capital, attend Shakespearean plays in Ashland, Oregon,

visit fish hatcheries and Old Shasta State Historic Park. They also kayak on Whiskeytown Lake, raft the Trinity River, and camp at the ocean. We believe students learn well in these real-world classrooms and that *all* students should have these opportunities.

We also take students to Shasta College, C.S.U. Chico, and U.C. Davis. We promote vocational education by visiting the Institute of Technology and inviting in local businesses.

Students also have the opportunity to participate in a summer program to Washington D.C. and New York City.

9. Character development programs

We believe character counts at Mistletoe School, and we help our students grow as citizens and leaders. We are often complimented by visiting schools on the character and friendliness of our students. Our athletic teams focus on sportsmanship and character as well as teamwork.

We have a comprehensive leadership program called WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) that begins in 5th grade and runs through 8th. The program is led by two-time educator of the year nominee, Kristine Wagner. Her program helps students grow into leaders who develop and run our character assemblies. These WEB leaders take an active role in our school climate by helping younger students learn important character skills as well.

It is common to see our WEB students go on to participate in student government in high school and even go on to civic leadership. Citizenship is a topic at every grade level, and we have come to see that character development is the best way to ensure your child grows to realize their purpose and potential.

We have an active school government program as well. Because of our small population, your child has a better chance of serving in office here at Mistletoe.

We also partner with a school in Kenya. We work to raise money to help them get water, computers, wi-fi, and other needs.

Our 8th graders participate in a program called *The Seven Noble Tasks*. They are given the opportunity to complete seven character-building tasks such as overcoming obstacles, serving others, goal setting and more. This program was developed here at Mistletoe and is being implemented at other schools in America.

We could spend thousands bringing in professional presenters at our assemblies and have the students sit in the stands and watch. However, we think it's better in the long run to allow your child to help design and deliver these assemblies. The skills they develop will help them gain confidence to enter the career fields in later life. Who knows, maybe your child will become that thousand-dollar-a-day presenter!

10. Full STEM instruction

Our middle school was the first in Shasta County to offer STEM (Integrated Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) instruction to *all* students. STEM is the fastest growing and highest paying career field.

Many schools are trying to implement STEM instruction for advanced students or offering it as an elective choice. We believe *all* students should be prepared for 21st century careers. For that reason, STEM is part of the normal instruction for every middle school student. We even have STEM buddies in the lower grades, and technology and engineering tasks are incorporated across the grade levels.

Mistletoe took this challenging step of transitioning to STEM instruction because we feel students need curricula that prepares them not for the present, but for their future. STEM careers are the fastest growing and highest paying job sector. Your child will have access to the educational opportunities that will give them better chances of being hired when they complete their education. We also take all of our students to a campus visit at C.S.U. Chico, one of the nations premier engineering schools.

In our STEM classes, students work in teams to engineer solutions to problems using science, math, and technology as tools. Our STEM program is run by educator-of-the-year nominees Megan Belcastro and Brad Fulton with support from our district STEM coordinator, Mark Lewin.

Our students study electronics, robotics, hydraulics, and more. They engineer solutions to environmental problems, physics problems, and more. We even built a working hovercraft that can carry four students at a time!

Recently, our program was featured in a national training video series. The video featured the work of second grade teacher, Rachel McCarville, and 5th grade teacher, Jana Hult. The middle grades were also featured in the series.

Teachers from coast to coast use this program to build successful STEM and project-based learning models at their schools.

There are many other good reasons to choose Mistletoe School for your child. Ask the parents whose children attend here; they are our best advocates. Give us a call for a campus visit, and we'll show how you and your child can become a part of the Bulldog family.