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My son was floundering as a 7th grader. He struggled to understand the material, and he was far too unsure of himself to ask for help from his teacher or his peers. After watching him struggle, his mainstream teachers suggested we switch him to the MESA program, an all inclusive outdoor education program at his middle school. Prior to the switch, my son would literally bang his head on the table with frustration while trying to understand his math homework, despite our attempts to explain it on paper. The X axis, the Y axis, and the slope of the line just didn't make any sense. Then, mid year, he switched to MESA. The very first day they were in the woods learning to calculate the height of a tree. The following day they applied the same formula they'd used on the trees to the math they had been learning—the x axis was the distance along the ground, the height of the tree was the Y axis, and then there was the slope of the line! The lightbulb went on, it all clicked, and my son couldn't wait to tell me about it when he got off the bus! From that point on, everything shifted for him. He was no longer floundering, he was thriving. The outdoor, project based learning environment suited him so well that he became a leader among his peers, no longer the kid who was too unsure to speak. I have no doubt that his outdoor experiences changed the trajectory of his life. I'm forever grateful he had that opportunity, and I hope these programs will be protected and expanded for children of the future.