

A Letter to 8th Grade Students Regarding the Culmination Trip from Mr. Benioff:

Recently, a letter was sent home to 8th grade students regarding the change to the 8th grade culmination trip. Students and parents were rightfully surprised and disappointed by a change from the traditional trip to Disneyland. I really do understand. We were/are frustrated with the situation as well, it was not something we wanted to change. We tried to explain the situation in the letter home, but the issue may not have been clear on how and why a decision was made.

We have to reserve the buses for these trips around October because every school has graduation or end of the year trips all at the same time. We do not purchase the park tickets at this time because we don't send out the culmination packets and collect donations this time of year. When we looked at the dates back in October, Disneyland had the day open to single-day tickets. Sometime in the last couple months, they blocked it out to only selling multiple-day tickets. The reason is that they sell Senior Trip tickets for high schools and this is one of the weeks they blocked off for that. We would be asking for double the price - and the kids would be with almost all senior high school students. We never used to conflict with this week because we ended our year in June.

We looked at changing the date of our trip, and tried to reschedule the buses, but couldn't find enough available; so we were stuck with the date of the May 23rd for any kind of trip.

I know some students and parents are saying they would be fine with having our 8th graders in the midst of celebrating 12th graders, but I had spoken to other parents and we would have many who would be uncomfortable with this situation. Frankly, I am not comfortable with that situation.

We then looked at other options. Conejo schools attend Magic Mountain and Las Virgenes schools attend Universal Studios. Magic Mountain doesn't open until 10:30, which shortens the trip, as we were not able to extend the trip into the evening. Universal Studios opens earlier and we saw the added attraction this year of the opening of the Harry Potter area and rides.

In order to get the group tickets, we had to make fairly quick decisions on where to go, and we settled on Universal for all the reasoning above. We simply did not have time to bring the issue to multiple groups for input; it was either move forward or risk losing a trip altogether.

I know that many students have stated that they are just not going to go. I would encourage any or all to reconsider. Having a celebration day with the entire class is exceptional – you only get to do that once. No matter where the trip is,

going as a whole class will be a great day and the 8th grade students definitely deserve the reward.

I definitely know and understand the disappointment of the students. Disneyland is my preference (and many other staff members too!) overall and we hope to see if it might work in future years. The tradeoff, however, is that it might not be during "Culmination Week". I hope that that students will have a fun day with friends, even with the unfortunate "plan B".

I encourage any student who has questions or concerns to please contact me. I would be glad to speak about the decision.

Thank you,
Brad Benioff