

March 13, 2020

Dear Live Oak Families and Friends,

This letter is intended to bring you up to date on our understanding of the COVID-19 situation as it impacts Live Oak.

The public health response to the COVID-19 situation is evolving daily. We are now many weeks into the pandemic and some patterns and best practices are coming into view.

The primary goals of the public health response include:

- Minimizing the number of people infected.
- Maximizing Health Industry response to infections.
- Ensuring services are available to treat patients with severe symptoms.

This last goal is central to the concern of public health officers and is why we are seeing such extensive and surprising responses in other countries. It is essential to slow down the rate of infection in the population. By slowing down the rate of new illnesses, hospitals can ensure they have capacity to treat more severe cases. If too many people contract the illness and develop severe symptoms all at once, the demand for health services can overwhelm local hospitals.

As we have heard, health departments are placing strong emphasis on hygiene and sanitation to reduce communication of the illness. These protocols include:

- Self-quarantining (staying away from others) if you are sick
- Covering coughs/sneezes in your elbow
- Washing hands with soap and/or hand sanitizer
- Sanitizing surfaces
- Keeping hands away from your face; not touching mouth, eyes or nose

However, these measures alone appear insufficient to adequately slow the infection rate in the community. Therefore, many communities have instituted “social distancing” practices as a key strategy to slow the spread of the illness. Social distancing limits contact between people through cancellation of public gatherings and closing down areas of congregation such as large businesses, schools, and places of worship. These actions reduce time that people spend in common spaces with each other and thereby greatly limits the spread of the virus.

The California Department of Education has instructed all school districts to keep students and staff, who meet certain criteria, away from schools, in order to better protect the health of our entire community from possible exposure to COVID-19. Until further notice, Live Oak will exclude students and staff who have traveled, during the previous 14 days, to areas identified by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as a Level 3 Travel Health Notice location.

### **Spring Break Guidance**

As spring break approaches, we would like to remind families to please take all necessary precautions to protect yourselves and our community from this and any illness. Please note the following:

- If you travel to mainland China or any country with level 3 COVID-19 travel advisories during the upcoming spring break (including Iran, Italy, and South Korea), you will be subject to the above guidelines and any new guidelines that may be implemented. Visit the CDC website for a list of destinations with risk of community spread of Coronavirus.
- If you travel to any affected countries, we urge you to follow all related guidelines to support the health and safety of our community.

- People who travel outside the country will be screened upon re-entry to the United States, as determined by federal and state officials. Live Oak does not have the authority to monitor travel of our students or staff.

### **Emergency School Closure is Possible**

Live Oak does not have the authority to make an independent decision to close school. As I mentioned in a previous update, we work in collaboration with the Sonoma County Public Health Department and Sonoma County Office of Education. If a staff member or student in a specific school is confirmed to have COVID-19, the Superintendent of the Sonoma County and Sonoma County Public Health officials will consider, based on the specific facts and circumstances of that case, whether closure of a specific school is warranted. The Sonoma County Public Health Department is not recommending school closures at this time because individuals under 18 years of age have not been shown to be a high-risk group for serious illness from this virus. Should the Public Health Department and County Superintendent determine school closure is warranted, classes will return when the Public Health Department determines reopening school can happen, likely about two weeks.

Although Live Oak has not been informed of a pending school closure at this time, given the trajectory of infections in California, and given the example of other countries deeper in the timeline of the epidemic, we anticipate that school closure may be instituted at some point in the future. We do not have a definitive forecast of when a closure may occur. If the Public Health Department notifies the school of the need to close, the school will comply.

Live Oak Faculty have been working on developing our contingency planning in the event of an extended closure. Though we have some experience with emergency closure days for smoke/fires, the duration of closure for social distancing appears much longer, perhaps as long as 14 calendar days. It is possible the duration could be extended or reduced by the Public Health Department.

### **Remote Learning during Emergency Closure**

Live Oak's plan for an extended emergency closure will include Remote Learning for students. The goal of Remote Learning is not to replace in-class instruction, but to provide continuity of learning in the event of an emergency school closure. This program will assist students to stay in academic practice, continuing engagement with learning, and supporting social emotional needs by providing an opportunity for a daily routine.

In the event of a school closure, Live Oak faculty and staff will be in contact with families in order to provide learning opportunities and activities for students to complete each day. This Distance Learning opportunity will start as soon as possible after school is closed. Faculty will draw from a pool of resources in order to develop a plan to provide brief lessons or presentations and keep students learning and families informed.

We are aware that some families may have limited access to internet or electronic

devices at home. If this is the case for you and your child, we have some limited additional resources that we can provide as a loan to families. If you need assistance with internet access, or want to request a Chromebook, please report your need to the office so that we may help identify a solution.

### **Food Service during Emergency Closure**

Live Oak plans to announce a continuation of Food Service through our provider in a possible modified form if school is closed. The food service staff is committed to providing nourishing meals for our children if at all possible. Meals will be distributed, with appropriate precaution, at a designated location in Petaluma. Further details will be announced upon the closure of school.

### **Special Services**

Some special education services will be temporarily interrupted during an emergency closure. However, special education staff will continue to monitor student engagement with the Remote Learning and will collaborate with the classroom teacher in order to be available to respond to inquiries and requests for assistance from students

and families. Once back in our normal school session, IEP teams can meet to consider if additional services are needed.

### **Public Health Guidelines**

Please review these important reminders that were recently updated from Sonoma County Public Health to address the COVID-19 outbreak:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use a hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cough into a tissue or your elbow (not your hand). Then throw tissue away and wash hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Keep student home if temperature is above 100.0 F (37.8 C) or they report not feeling well, appear weak or ill.
- Consult your health care provider if you or your child has special health conditions that put you at increased risk.
- Everyone should stay home if sick until they have had no fever, cough or other respiratory symptoms for at least 72 hours after symptoms resolve or 7 days after symptoms began, whichever is longer.
- Individuals with cold-like symptoms should manage their symptoms at home with over-the-counter drugs whenever possible, regardless of whether they have a cold, the flu, or COVID-19.
- Individuals who develop difficulty breathing, feel extremely tired, or were feeling better but then feel a lot worse should call their health care provider. If they will be going to the provider's office or urgent care center, they should call ahead so that the health care provider can be prepared to take care of them.
- People should only call 911 or go to an emergency department if they believe that their life is in imminent danger. Other emergencies are still occurring, and emergency resources must be available to address all of them, not just COVID-19.

### **In Conclusion**

Live Oak is working to ensure we provide our community with timely updates about the COVID-19 situation and how it affects schools. The rapid developments related to COVID-19 mean that information is changing by the day and sometimes by the hour. We are making all efforts to stay on top of developments and commit to keeping you informed.

We appreciate the efforts made by the staff with the Sonoma County Office of Education and will continue to collaborate with them and other school districts in Sonoma County as we seek to coordinate our efforts and general guidance for schools, staff, students and families.

I specifically thank our Live Oak teachers, aides and office staff for their tremendous work and continued professionalism as we work through a challenging time. Also thank you to the Live Oak Board of Directors for your leadership and support and a big thank you to you, our community members, for your patience and sensitivity to the evolving nature of this outbreak and the greater goal of doing your part to protect our most vulnerable community members.

As a gentle reminder, please take a moment to be sure that if you changed any personal contact information, please stop by the office in order to update the information in our records.

Our community's health is a collective effort. Thank you for your support.

Best,

Justin Tomola

Director

