

Aug 10, 2021

Dear Live Oak Charter School Families,

The purpose of this letter is to continue to share information that we have available to us so that we can update the community with accuracy and timeliness. We continue to closely monitor and collaborate with our local health department and we will provide any updates that we can on practices and protocols based on guidance and/or requirements.

Town Hall #1

In collaboration with the Community Response Team, we will be hosting a Back-To-School Town Hall for families this week on Wednesday, August 11 at 6pm. The Town Hall will be held via the video conference platform of Zoom. Here is the information you will need to join the Town Hall:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86941039855?pwd=ZTdUMkpVYTBPQzFzK2RrRDVEMDJ2UT09>

Meeting ID: 869 4103 9855 Passcode: 108854

One tap mobile +16699006833,,86941039855#,,,,*108854# US (San Jose)

Mask Mandate:

In accordance with CDPH guidelines as well as Sonoma County Public Health per the August 3 2021 mandate, all students and staff will wear a mask while indoor school facilities.

Live Oak to fully reopen school:

The Live Oak campus is scheduled to be opened for the 2021-2022 school year. We will be adhering to guidance provided by the CDPH for all California schools. School districts throughout the state have received information related to the safety measures to reopen schools and Live Oak Charter is adhering to those safety measures.

Live Oak Academic Program Offering:

Governor Newsom and the State Legislature have approved a new law (AB/SB 130) which makes full-time and "in-person" instruction the norm for this year. Also, the [Centers for Disease Control](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), and [California Department of Public Health](#) agree that it is safe for students to return to school for in-person learning when the right safety measures, like masks, are in place. They all support in-person learning as the best and safest place for most students to learn and engage with their peers.

Instead of Distance Learning for those who are unable to return to campus due to their health being put at risk by in-person instruction, the State is now emphasizing an Independent Study (IS) program. Charter schools, including Live Oak, are explicitly exempt from needing to offer a long term IS program for the 2021-2022 school year. Even though we are exempt, we looked at

how and whether it would be possible for Live Oak to offer a long term IS option to our families in need of such an option. A special LOCS Board Meeting was held on 8/4/21 about this topic which several families joined via Zoom as well. After deeply considering many factors, we concluded that we could not offer a long term IS program at this time that would be worthy of our values and our beloved Live Oak students. Therefore, we will not be offering a long term IS program as specified in AB130.

One of the hard lessons we learned from COVID is that students need to be with teachers in the classrooms to gain adequate measurable progress in their respective grade level. We also acknowledge that a priority must be placed on our students' social-emotional health and well-being, in addition to their academics. The new IS program not only continues to leave the student out of the classroom which means learning in isolation from their teacher and Live Oak peers, but also would include the following programmatic challenges:

1. All IS students K-8 would be in the "one room schoolhouse" model and would share the same teacher; students would not have their current classroom teacher
2. IS students may have no peer in their IS class
3. IS students would not have Specialty classes
4. IS students would have significantly less Zoom time with the IS teacher than in last year's Distance Learning model
5. IS students TK-3 would not have live daily check-ins
6. IS students 4-8 grade would have approximately 1-2 hours weekly instruction on Zoom
7. IS parents would spend considerably more time helping their student than last year
8. The IS teacher is unknown
9. IS expenses are not in our approved 2021-2022 budget

However, we will continue to offer our short term independent study (IS) program. In accordance with AB 130 our short term Independent Study program can be granted for up to 14 days. Any parent who is interested in starting the year in short term Independent Study for up to 14 days, please contact Live Oak Secretary, Dori King in the office at 707-762-9020. **If you plan to start the year on an IS agreement, please notify the office no later by 3pm Thursday, August 12.**

Enhanced Programming at Live Oak:

As we prepare to welcome students back to the 2021-2022 school year, we understand that the last 18 months have been very difficult for families and students in particular. We know that coming back to school, although exciting, will be another transition/change. To that end, the following are some of the ways that we are preparing to increase student supports in order to have a successful year:

- We will be providing homework tutoring during After School Program (ASP)
- Middle School gives student assessments pinpointing areas of extra need

- We have hired an Academic Intervention Coordinator to work with students and teachers in Reading, Writing, and Math.
- We are partnering with the Child Therapy Institute of Marin as an additional resource to meet student needs and provide extra Social Emotional connection and support
- We are hiring four Academic Content Coaches to support student learning, help assess for present levels and move students towards grade level proficiency

Furthermore, in general students experienced a COVID slide in their academics. This has been difficult for us as an educational institution, including teachers, parents, Board members, and Administration. We are happy to say that with offering a classroom based program we will be getting back to what we know is great pedagogical practices including a Waldorf inspired curriculum.

As part of our practices, Live Oak teachers will use assessment strategies that reflect its commitment to recognizing individual strengths and challenges and to assessing students in academic and non-academic areas using a variety of assessment tools. Below is a list of the various assessment tools that teachers will use to determine students' current academic levels and continue to measure their progress:

- *Records of teacher observations and assessments* for each child are maintained. These include a record of individual growth and achievement in all three areas of development (intellectual, physical, and emotional).
- Comprehensive *Main Lesson Books* are collected throughout each year. They include samples of main lesson work, practice papers, tests, written work, reports and artwork for each unit and function as the student's portfolio.
- Completed *student projects*, both individual and group, are documented. Samples of these are displayed in public exhibitions.
- Site based Benchmark *reading and writing assessments* using standardized CCSS-aligned rubrics and assessment tools such as Lucy Calkins, Core Phonics, Fountas and Pinnell.
- *Norm-referenced standardized tests*, such as CAASPP, are administered in compliance with state law regarding charter schools.
- *EL Language competency assessments*, such as ELPAC, are administered in compliance with guidelines for EL students
- *Attendance rates, CALPADS and civil rights* data submitted for state and federal monitoring.
- Use of the *California School Dashboard* reports of several key elements of data.
- *Oral recitations, presentations, reports, performances, and demonstrations* occur regularly in the life of each class and involve group and individual work.
- *School-wide assemblies and open house* is planned at least twice a year, during which student work is displayed and samples of class work are exhibited. Members of the District and general public are invited to attend.

- A *comprehensive grading rubric* is prepared and provided to parents at the end of each school term for each child. This includes an overview of the course work and a discussion of the child's achievement, performance, and growth in each of the various curriculum blocks and enrichment classes, as well as in social skills and work habits
- A *summative narrative* is prepared annually to provide parents with a review of the student's participation and performance throughout the school year.

Additionally, we will be adding benchmark assessments three times a year (Fall, Winter, and Spring) to all students in grades 3-8. These assessments will be given by the classroom teachers for the first time this year in the academic areas of Reading and Math. The program that we are using is called Star Renaissance and it is a widely used and accepted benchmark assessment program for students throughout the County and State. Additionally, the program provides data at the individual student level as well as a schoolwide level.

Important Extra Tidbits:

1. We would love to extend an invitation to our parent body to consider joining our LOCS team or passing along the two positions that we still have open to viable candidates. You may review the job descriptions [here](#).
2. We are highly encouraging folks to consider becoming classroom substitute teachers. Please consider! The pay is 135.00 dollars a day and we will help usher you through the paperwork process. Please stop by the office to get the ball rolling!
3. In collaboration with Petaluma City Schools, we will be able to continue with the "seamless summer program" by offering free lunch service to any student who would like a lunch throughout the school year.

Like you, my family is also making preparations for the new school year. Excitement abounds with curiosities, wonder, and longing for connection. Coming off of a year that we came closer together due to the challenges and struggles, I thank you for your continued patience and assuming the best intentions of others. Remember that kindness matters and that we are all striving to do our best each moment of our lives.

In the words of our recently retired Muriel, "Onwards"!

Justin Tomola
Executive Director
Live Oak Charter School