

From: Live Oak Charter <no_reply@liveoakcharter.org>
Subject: Letter from Faculty re: Looping Proposal
Date: March 8, 2020 at 4:05:05 PM PDT
To: officemanager@liveoakcharter.org

Dear Live Oak Parents,

The question of how to best create and orchestrate a looping system has long been alive in our community. To “loop” means to teach the same class of students for more than one year. As teachers committed to Waldorf pedagogy, we hold the relationship to the child in the highest regard. We also feel that the bonds we strive to create are more a function of attention and intention than of time. This year, through a series of specialized and focused conversations, the faculty has reached consensus regarding a new looping proposal. This is a unique opportunity, as we have come to enthusiastic and unanimous agreement on such an important educational decision.

In mid-January, Ms. Julie, Ms. Lois, and Ms. Shepherd spoke on behalf of the faculty at a board meeting and subsequently presented at a Town Hall meeting on February 4. The faculty recommends the following model:

TK-K / 2 year loop

Grades 1-3 / 3 year loop

Grades 4-5 / 2 year loop

Grades 6-8 / 3 year loop

The faculty arrived at this looping model after an extensive process of discussion and consideration. Our proposed model keeps teacher and students together for four developmental stages: TK-K where play and imitation are vital; 1-3 where we lay foundations for reading, writing, math and form the social structure of the class; 4-5 where the real world opens via stories in history and observation in science; and 6-8 where students strive for independence and gain perspective through their successes and challenges. By meeting a new teacher in grades 4 and 6, students are provided the opportunity to make themselves anew in the teacher/student relationship. The combination of nurturing existing relationships while forging new ones allows for continued growth and development in our students.

In general, the shorter looping model offers benefits for both teachers and students. For teachers, shorter loops mean a smaller team of teachers focusing on each developmental stage. Smaller teams can collaborate more often and with better attention to the specific needs of each class. By working in a shorter loop, teachers will have greater capacity for deepening and enriching the curriculum as well as tailoring it for the current students of any given class. Teachers will also have more energy, flexibility, and creativity for meeting the social and emotional needs of students on a daily basis. For students, shorter loops mean being taught by teachers who are confident and well-prepared for lessons, thus having the mental and emotional capacity to connect with students and build the relationships that we all hold so dear. Students will also benefit from curriculum, projects, and field trips that have been honed by a team of teachers for each developmental stage. Live Oak students will have more adults who know them well, care about them, and shepherd them through their childhood journey.

The Live Oak Board of Directors hopes to make a decision on our proposal at its March 12 meeting. If the proposal is approved, the faculty and Mr. Tomola will work together to place teachers for next year and plan thoughtful transitions for students and parents. It is our intent to keep the proposed looping cycle for the foreseeable future. In any given year, there may be exceptions made per the discretion of the Executive Director regarding particular classroom and/or teacher circumstances.

We are grateful to Mr. Tomola, the board, and the parent community for the support we have already received regarding our proposal. We assure you that your children, our students, remain at the heart of every decision we make. We look forward to engaging with the Live Oak community to embrace the new model with thoughtfulness, intention, and integrity.

Sincerely,

Live Oak Faculty