

May 11, 2020

Dear Live Oak Families and Friends,

Budget Outlook:

This is an unprecedented time right now. All across the State, public education funding is being cut. Since we are a public charter school, the State budget crisis will impact Live Oak as well. To date, the Board and Leadership have been using the following five budget priorities to help guide the decision-making process around budget impact:

1. Create a balanced budget with no intentional deficit spending.
2. Use accurate and realistic numbers with all revenue streams.
3. Maintain fidelity to our Waldorf roots with respect to Specialty classes.
4. Minimize Human Resource modifications.
5. Minimize classroom budget reductions.

Live Oak Leadership is in the process to identify areas of reductions and prioritizing those areas. However, please know that the unknown state of budget cuts may include our inability to support our priorities. To not sugar coat this, the reductions coupled with anticipated distance learning scenarios will impact a depth and breadth of how things have looked at Live Oak. I wish I could tell you specifics but at this point we just don't know. The budget information has been changing since distance learning has started. The two main streams of revenue California uses to fund public education, income tax and sales tax, are down due to COVID-19 and more specifically a high unemployment rate and Shelter in Place. Under current projections, we anticipate the shortfall to be around 15% of our budget which translates to approximately a 450k reduction in our budget. Please understand that this is not solely a Live Oak budget reduction. Instead of a 3 billion dollar increase of funding, the State is reducing its entire budget to public school funding by a projected 18 billion dollars over the next two years. The governor's budget revise (also known as the May Revise) is expected to come out this Thursday, 5/14 and I anticipate that it will shed some light on public education funding at Live Oak for the next year. We will get an update about 2020/21 funding from our CBO at the regular May board meeting which will take place Thursday, 5/14 at 6pm via zoom. Public is welcome and encouraged to attend and here is the zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86408078835?pwd=OWp0NFc2RW1TNEZhYTJ0K0hOZWl2Zz09>

Despite all of this, Live Oak Faculty and Staff will continue to offer an excellent education inspired by Waldorf pedagogical practices! We will continue to hold the relationship between the teacher and the student in the highest regard and continue to focus on giving our students an amazing K-8 educational experience. I suspect that this next year will be a great time to incorporate more volunteerism around the school including festivals and traditions and I look forward to continuing to build community and grow even stronger under these unusual times.

Distance Learning:

I appreciate everyone's participation in distance learning during this time and despite a variety of obstacles and experiences, the Live Oak community is alive and well!

Live Oak faculty continues to collaborate and listen to the needs they are hearing from home. We recognize how hard parents are working to manage home life while supporting the learning activities and assignments that teachers are sending to families. Too much work going home can be overwhelming, particularly for families with multiple children, and sending too little means more work for parents to manage their children. As a way to impact the experience, please remember to reach out to your teacher with your feedback around workload so they can make adjustments. Thank you for your continued kindness and patience.

Also, I want to acknowledge that it is a loss to be in distance learning in early May and not have danced around the maypole at Spring Faire and participated in so many activities that weave and strengthen the bonds of our community. Our teachers and staff are working diligently to maintain these connections with students and families via distance learning, and yet all across the State families acknowledge distance learning does not replace going to school. Having said that, we don't yet know what school will look like in fall 2020, not only because of budgetary uncertainties, but also because of great unknowns in public health and potential impact of requirements for public schools. There have been many ideas spoken about starting back up in the Fall, including schools starting earlier in the summer, staggered daily schedules, hybrid models of distance learning, and social distancing requirements. Any and every change has complicated logistical and financial implications not only for Live Oak, but also for every public school in the state of California. Live Oak is not alone in this time of uncertainty.

Looping Change:

Some of you may remember that back in January Live Oak teachers brought a proposal forth in order to change the looping cycle. At the March Board of Directors meeting, the proposal was unanimously approved, and we are moving forward with making preparations to initiate this change and will be announcing new teacher assignments as soon as possible.

Special Announcement: Unfortunately, we are saying goodbye to Ms. Kulkarni who announced she will be leaving Live Oak. Instead, she will be embarking on a new adventure up in beautiful Mendocino. We wish the Kulkarni family all the best on their new journey!

From the Fairgrounds: The Sonoma/Marin Fair has been cancelled this year. Although another casualty of COVID-19, the silver lining is that we will not need to move out of the Middle School or Annex this Spring.

From the Board:

The Spring is also the time of year that we have openings on our Live Oak Board. This year, the Live Oak Charter School Board of Directors is looking to fill two seats for volunteer terms beginning July 1, 2020 and lasting 2 or 3 years. The Board of Directors is responsible for school governance which includes ensuring policy and fiscal oversight, student achievement, and strategic planning in accordance with the LOCS charter.

The Board is interested in potential members with experience in education, finance, real estate, and public policy/planning, but recognize that many backgrounds and talents are relevant to

board work. If you think you might be a good fit and want to learn more about this volunteer opportunity, please contact Board Chair Sarah Grossi, at sarah.grossi@liveoakcharter.org

Board meeting link for 5/14 meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86408078835?pwd=OWp0NFc2RW1TNEZhYTJ0K0hOZWl2Zz09>

Lastly, I leave you with a quote that I found helpful during this time:

“You can’t calm the storm, so stop trying. What you can do is calm yourself. The storm will pass.” Timber Hawkeye

Onward and upward,

Justin Tomola
Director