



January 19, 2021

Dear Dr. Lorie Chamberland,

This letter is to update you on the work of the Live Oak Work Group on Racial Justice. We have now met three times, with our last meeting taking place on Sunday, January 10. In light of the Capitol riot, we changed our agenda and spent our time listening, sharing, and processing the feelings that event brought up for each of us. It was an emotional, powerful, and vulnerable conversation that could only take place in a safe space.

As a reminder, we have LOSD alumni in our Work Group (three high school students and one college student), and what they shared brought us ALL to tears and serves as the impetus for this letter. **Our black and brown students do not feel safe or welcome here.** We say this not just for Live Oak, but Santa Cruz in general. They feel as though they don't have a voice and they fear speaking up because they may be ignored, mocked, or judged. And they felt pain when the Capitol riot was NOT brought up by teachers in their classes. We must do better for them.

We need to LISTEN to what they are telling us about their educational experiences. A cultural shift will be required by an educational system that is truly anti-racist. Racism is difficult to discuss – as a group, we have adopted “discomfort” as part of our meeting norms because it is the only way our conversations can move forward. We understand teachers’ discomfort in discussing racism with their students. However, to not discuss it is to ignore the experiences of their students thereby further isolating them AND perpetuating racism through silence. With that said, teachers need to be encouraged and supported to have these conversations, AND must be properly trained or they could do more harm than good. (Please see below for a link to a guide for discussing the Capitol riots with students that addresses the perspective we believe was missing from the resources sent out by the County’s school districts.)

We believe that it is part of our role as this Work Group to advocate for the kids in our community and therefore, we make the following requests:

1. We would like safe spaces to be created for our students of color which are facilitated by an expert in race, racism, and equity. It is common for students not to find this space until they enter high school (ex. Black Student Union; Latino Student Union) or even college. That is too late.

2. We also want structures to be put into place by which students of color are actively sought out, asked for feedback, listened to, and then consulted as actions are put into place. What these students share should be heard by all staff in the Live Oak School District.
3. We want the Live Oak School District to make a statement that commits to system-wide work on anti-racism. We want it to acknowledge that Black Lives Matter, that cultural and system-level changes are required, and that the Live Oak School District is committed to sustaining and investing in anti-racism as part of its core practice.

Members of this group will be attending the School Board meeting on February 3 in order to follow up on this letter.

Sincerely,
The Members of the Live Oak Work Group on Racial Justice

Andrea Brooks
Amy Canizal Flores
Theresa Cariño
Yadira Flores Martinez
Sasha Godet
Stoney V. Godet
Crystal Hernandez
Kate Hinnenkamp
Arin Hunt
Stacey Kyle
Steffanie Martinez
Lynda Otero
Kai Parker
Deontae Ratliff

*[“Resources for teachers on the days after the attack on the U.S. Capitol,”](#) by Jennifer Bradley
for *Beyond the Stoplight**

cc: Live Oak School District Governing Board
cc: Dr. Faris Sabbah, Superintendent, Santa Cruz County Office of Education
cc: Kris Munro, Superintendent, Santa Cruz City Schools
