

**LAGUNITAS SCHOOL DISTRICT**

One Lagunitas School Road  
San Geronimo, CA

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BOARD**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 2023**

**Open Session: 6:30 pm - (Multipurpose Room)**

*Richard Sloan, President*

*Aaron Michelson, Clerk*

*Denise Bohman*

*Steve Rebscher*

*James Sanders*

*Laura Shain, Superintendent/Principal*

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER:**

Richard Sloan, Chair

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

This is an opportunity for the public to address the Trustees on matters related to school business that are not on the agenda. No comment, discussion, deliberation, or action can be taken by the Trustees unless the matter is placed on the agenda.

**3. APPROVAL OF OPEN SESSION AGENDA:**

Board Members will review and approve the Open Session Agenda.

**4. CORRESPONDENCE / INFORMATION ITEMS**

4.1. Letter from Anne Mannes and Michelle Olsen

4.2. Letter from Amy Valens

4.3. Letter from Emma-Louise Anderson

4.4. Letter from Amos Klausner

- 4.5. Letter from Michelle and Russell Olsen
- 4.6. Letter from Stephen Scafani and Eddy Scafani
- 4.7. Letter from Greg Reis and Erika Obedzinski
- 4.8. Letter from Anna Schell
- 4.9. Letter from Jessica and Craig O'Connell
- 4.10. Letter from Shayna Kreps
- 4.11. Letter from Matthew and Michelle Granelli
- 4.12. Letter from Helen Ferlino
- 4.13. Letter from David Guendelman and Carolina Balazs
- 4.14. Letter from Parents who left Lagunitas School District
- 4.15. Letter from Katie Nason and Levin Nason
- 4.16. Letter from Open Parent Community
- 4.17. Letter from Montessori Parent Community
- 4.18. Letter from Parent to Parent Meeting Organizers
- 4.19. Packet from Parent to Parent Meeting

## **5. DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS**

- 5.1. Unify Elementary Programs  
Proposal to unify the two elementary programs into one based on the pillars of the two current programs.

## **6. ADJOURN**

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Lagunitas School District is scheduled for Thursday, April 20, 2022 at 6:30 pm.

**Accessibility Accommodations:** The Lagunitas School District adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Should you require special accommodations, or more information about accessibility, please contact Liz Wickersham at 415-488-4118 x 201. All efforts will be made for reasonable accommodations in accordance with applicable law.

**Public Records:** In accordance with Government Code section 54957.5 and the Public Records Act, public records that are distributed to a majority of the Board of Trustees concerning the open session agenda will be made available upon request. Such records distributed less than 72 hours prior to regular meeting are available for inspection at the Lagunitas School District Office located at One Lagunitas School Road, San Geronimo.

COPIES OF BOARD AGENDAS AND REPORTS PRESENTED AT THIS MEETING CAN BE FOUND UNDER THE MENU TAB LABELED "SCHOOL BOARD" ON THE LAGUNITAS SCHOOL DISTRICT WEBSITE:

**[www.lagunitas.org](http://www.lagunitas.org)**

## **The Future Belongs to the Young**

*by Anne Mannes and Michelle Olsen, Lagunitas School District parents*

Located 18 miles northwest from San Francisco, in west/central Marin you will find one the most idyllic bucolic school districts in the county- with lush green hills, plenty of natural open space, grazing cows, horses and rustic charm. Known for its counterculture vibe, creative community and alternative approaches to education, the Lagunitas School District has been teaching children from San Geronimo, Woodacre, Forest Knolls and Lagunitas for over 150 years. It has prided itself on listening to what the parents want for their children both from an educational and social emotional aspect. The district currently houses 3 main programs: Open Classroom developed in the 1970's, the Montessori program that started in 1981 and the middle school program that merges those two elementary programs and eventually helps prepare students for high school.

Both of our families chose this location, invested in our homes, and developed roots based on this promise of a *progressive alternative education* with a small student to teacher ratio and a tight knit creative community environment. Our children went through the Open Classroom program during a time of robust student enrollment and solid teacher configurations. For us, that promise was mostly fulfilled yet only because we supplemented on the academic aspects that lack in the Open Classroom program. Our families loved a lot about Open Classroom, yet we had to supplement our children's education by paying thousands of dollars to tutors to keep academics strong. We can supplement but not all families have this privilege.

Over the last few years, we have seen a stalemate between the two programs around how they could operate optimally. We are soon to be exiting middle school families of the district with older children. However, we see the division of offering two separate programs as a disservice to younger families. The promise of progress and the hope of unity is teetering, and the imbalance can be felt throughout the valley at school board meetings and along the hiking trails. With dwindling enrollment in the K-5 elementary school programs, the significant attrition of families leaving for area charters (2021-22 lost 19 students to charters; 2022-23 we have lost nearly 30 students to charters) and others leaving the area all together seeking better opportunities, it is time to redefine and re-envision the future of the Lagunitas School District with the focus on YOUNG families and the future. When students move to charters in our Basic Aid school district, we lose funding. With the above attrition, our district has lost nearly \$200,000. These alarming trends jeopardize the district's ability to continue to properly serve families that live here. Rachel Felder, a Forest Knolls resident, and mother of three, shared, "After years of voicing frustration about wanting a healthier elementary school program and naming the low morale, we decided to move our youngest son, in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, to RVC. I would like to see more funding used for extracurricular activities and more consistency within the teaching staff to restore my confidence in this district."

As with most schools, parent involvement is what makes school communities thrive. This year, a dedicated group of parents have been doing the hard work of uniting the district. We imagine they see what we have been observing, a district in trouble. LEAP has transformed the image of the school with new logo, fundraising efforts, a robust social media campaign and more. In the March 15 Pt. Reyes Light article "Lagunitas School parents will discuss fate of two elementary programs"

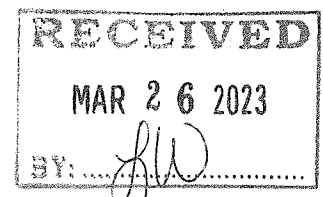
it was revealed how folks are feeling about the situation. In our view, we are seeing much of the population wanting to unite with one new program. We have witnessed this sentiment recently at the parent only parent led meeting on March 22. We have observed the efforts of LEAP parents, many with new or younger kids in the district. So, it was with much disappointment to see Open Classroom's statement indicating no interest in working for the greater good. The article quotes, "The Open Classroom Community remains committed to our current program, philosophy, and pillars. We are not interested in creating a new school."

The Open Classroom was started in the 1970's and relies heavily on parent involvement in the classroom to have it function well, and the Montessori began 1981 in our district with educational philosophies that have not changed. Progressive education by nature is ever evolving, it changes and adapts to the environment. It is not 1970. It is 2023 and most households have two working parents, living with a lot of inflation and incredible cost of living pressures.

Given the times we are living in and the increasing stress on families to survive in one of the most expensive counties in the country, it is time to put ego driven outcomes aside. It's time to listen to the young families and unite with ONE elementary school program that brings the best of all educational philosophies together.

We believe in this community including parents, teachers, and our principal. Our kids have had a great experience here – especially with the excellent core teachers in the middle school program. United we will be able to provide children more resources, connections, and academic possibility. We believe the time is now, this is an opportunity, let us move forward together. This community is filled with passion, care, creativity, and intelligence, let's use it for something that aligns more with our current reality. Let's stand on the shoulders of the past and keep moving forward.

The School Boarding meeting to determine the direction of this district is on Friday, March 31 at 6pm. Please attend to show your support of unification of this district.



Dear School Board Members,

The first time I walked into Open's TK/K/1 classroom in the fall of 2021 and saw kindergarten students sitting at desks working with dittos I was heartsick. The absence of serious mentoring in the approaches that are the basis of this form of progressive education left the young teacher at a tremendous handicap. That was mentoring the two retired teachers would have been happy to give, but felt actively discouraged from offering. I see a similar misguided idea returning, and it astounds me.

That fall I was back volunteering in the art room on Friday afternoons, as I had done before the pandemic. That young teacher watched me interacting with children and asked for my help, leading me to volunteer in her class every other Thursday for the rest of the school year. I spent many hours with her redesigning her room into a welcoming Open Classroom setting, as well as offering guidance about the social, emotional and developmental needs of her students. Over the course of the year it became evident to both of us that although she had gained some insights into Open education, this was not the right setting for her.

Whatever happened with the 2/3 teacher, who now seems to be doing well at RVC, I do know that expecting Anita to guide two new teachers with no relief time, and when her own classroom was not contiguous to theirs, was much too great an expectation.

The 2021/2 school year ended with many parents discouraged. But as soon as people in the community heard that Marlene and Larry were coming back to share a position, several families considering leaving the district decided to stay. In the weeks and months since then, more families have joined, and Open feels like Open again. Classes may be small compared to earlier times, but the building hums with purposeful activity and a wonderful mixing of ages. New parents have had the kind of introduction to this form of progressive education that allows them to be successful contributors.

Please do not repeat the mistake of two years ago. Marlene and Larry bring an understanding not only of how to create Open's version of a child-centered classroom, but how to welcome and support parents to be active participants in their children's education. They need to be on board in substantive ways to guide both a new Open teacher, and the new parents, as well as continue to offer guidance for Jason. Beyond the mentoring, the continuity they provide for students and parents is vital. Ideally they would have major in-classroom and planning time teaming with the new teacher for the entirety of the school year.

There are some other pieces of the process the district is involved in that I am compelled to address.

I have thought long and hard about the letter that the middle school teachers and Alex sent to the board. While I sympathize with the wish for higher salaries, the way this wish was threaded into criticism of maintaining two approaches to elementary education showed an antipathy that seems entirely based on financial concerns. Their letter judges the value of different educational philosophies by how students appear similar when they arrive at middle school. My short answer is: it's the journey that interests parents and their children. Given a choice, different families choose different approaches that mirror and support their values. The fact that each child enters middle school with their own personality, their own accomplishments, is a sign that program choice served them and their families well.

The other awkward part of this letter is the statement that the writers are the majority of the school's teachers. Which school? It is very odd to portray the middle school teachers as part of the elementary school faculty, and to speak for them. Other than the PE teacher, they are not involved in the work of the faculty of the elementary grades. Only one teacher who signed

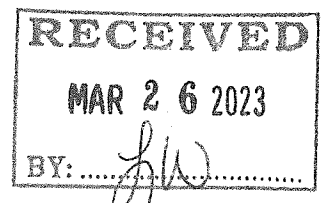
the letter is a classroom elementary school teacher. Although changes may occur next year, currently there are 6 classroom teaching positions in our elementary school program with 7 teachers employed, and 4 classroom teachers in our middle school.

I also need to tell you how uncomfortable it was to watch Denise, whom I consider a friend, during the last board meeting. After informing the audience that the board wanted to create a space where those who hadn't felt comfortable speaking would get a chance to be heard, Denise repeatedly rolled her eyes, shook her head and even made negative gestures with her arms, when people spoke with whose views she disagreed. As a board member, this was particularly unfortunate. It may well have influenced the audience to further discord.

I admire all the members of this board. I believe you can be far-seeing enough to realize the value of having more than one approach to elementary education, and can find a solution that embodies that. When I presented our films at conferences across the nation, one of the things people commented on was that this small school district had found a way to meet the values of a diverse community. Please don't give up on that goal just because of what could be a temporary dip in enrollment.

I hope to continue as a volunteer and occasional substitute teacher in a parent participation program that respects the whole child, building on my 48 years of experience at this particular school, and over 55 years of growing and learning about holistic education, keeping up to date by attending conferences and participating in online discourse. I never tire of being in the company of children, seeing the world through their eyes.

Sincerely,  
Amy Valens



Dear Lagunitas Board Members:

Thank you all for your ongoing service and commitment to our incredible school.

I'm writing an email to you that I never imagined I would write as I love and cherish the open classroom - and yet would like to support the effort to merge the two elementary programs to keep our school vibrant and fiscally responsible.

We joined the district 13 years ago and had in fact enrolled Victoria in the Waldorf program - many of the arguments for closing that program remain relevant today - small class sizes and low enrollment - and the district floating a program that was no longer sustainable. It was a blow to us and the Waldorf community but I believe made the school stronger and Victoria was able to thrive in the open classroom. She went through K-5 there (she did struggle academically at the beginning of middle school however). Julian, on the other hand, was K-3 at open and we opted to move him to Montessori as he was really behind and suffering academically (and not just with the pandemic). Since being with Alex he has caught up to his grade level (and beyond) for all subjects and is thriving. All the strengths of the social-emotional program at open are apparent at the Montessori as well and he is a confident, respectful, and kind student - a testament to all his teachers.

I have experienced first hand the open classroom conflict with the issue of putting in doors or not. It was an incredible fight and highly charged issue. While I appreciated the passion of the open community, I did feel some of the sentiments were misguided and it alienated me from the open community (I stopped going to parent meetings as they were unbearable). and once the doors were in, we all adapted and life went on... possibly stronger (and quieter) for it.

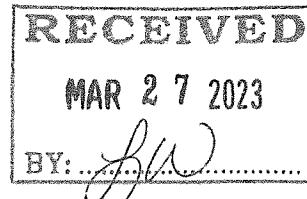
Victoria is leaving for high school and Julian will be in the middle school this academic year so this decision won't directly affect our family - we have no skin in the game as it were - but I will say as someone who loves the school, the district and our community I hope you will vote to merge the programs and unify the school. No one likes change and yet we must all embrace it - perhaps our climate can show us in reality what a resilient and adaptable community we really are. We have to face flooding, wind damage and wildfires all within a few months of one another - and yet we adapt and I hope our school community can adapt as well. There's (generally) always extreme opposition to putting in a new bike path or taking out parking spaces and yet when they happen it is often the most vocal of the opponents who express surprise and gratitude for the infrastructure change (not least because property prices go up or their business revenues increase). I only use this analogy to suggest that change can be hard to swallow but can be unexpectedly beneficial.

With the resources saved I believe the children will be better served and enriched - not to mention socially stronger - small class sizes (while appealing to parents) are actually incredibly challenging for kids - or can be.

Lastly I offer my lasting and wholehearted support for Laura in her recommendation. Throughout our time at Lagunitas I have felt Laura always puts the needs of the children first - she is patient and excellent listener and extremely hard working (who else would respond to a late night email after 10pm?! not that I would expect that but Laura goes above and beyond. always. Please listen to her recommendation)

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter - it is certainly not an easy decision to make.

Emma-Louise (Anderson)



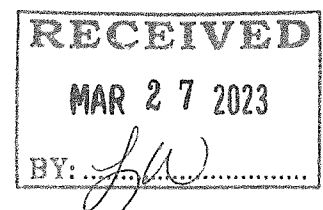


Dear School Board Members,

I hope you're all well. I don't envy you this decision but I wanted to share my two cents. As you may recall, I was in favor of combining the two elementary programs in the spring of 2022. In my opinion, the time was right back then and now the time is perhaps even more right as the schools face the dual pressures of enrollment numbers and the difficult prospect of finding great new teachers for next year. I am but only one former board member but I do see the opportunity here to both create a vibrant combined program and free up more money to support your goals for the district.

Best,

Amos



Dear Lagunitas School Board,

We want to add our voice to the pending decision about the possibility of unifying the two elementary schools. We have two children, a daughter in 7th grade and a son in 5th grade. We started at Open Classroom in 2015 and loved a lot about the program. We did have to supplement our daughter's education by paying thousands of dollars to an outside tutor to support her academic progress. We have the resources to do that but not all families do. We think keeping equity at the center of public education is vital.

In 2021 our connection with Open Classroom was disrupted when two long term teachers retired and one of the strong academic teachers moved to another position in the district. Our children did not want to be in the same classroom which was a combined 4-6th grade so we made the decision to move our son to the Montessori program.

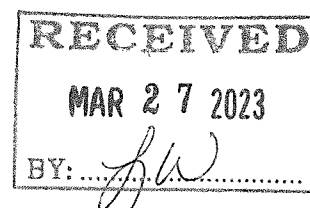
We were nervous about changing programs and leaving Open Classroom. To our delight and surprise, our son is thriving there. His teacher is excellent, and when he had second thoughts a few months in, he went up to visit the Open Classroom campus and decided he was learning more in the Montessori program and wanted to stay.

Our daughter is in the middle school and doing well. We now have a bigger picture of the district and wholeheartedly think that unifying the programs make sense as it will create more resources for everyone, including social connections as well as financial and academic possibility.

We have empathy that Open Classroom has been a 50 plus year program within the district and it must be hard to let go. But we know that with so many families feeling discontent and fleeing the district, it is time to reinvigorate the district with one robust elementary school that can serve the entire community well. It is time to evolve, keep the best of Open Classroom and add more of what families need today. This is truly an opportunity to create something better together.

Lastly, we want to acknowledge and appreciate the hard work of Laura Shain. We imagine it took courage for Laura to make the recommendation for unification and we applaud that leadership. Some people have chosen to target her in a negative light but what we see is a professional with 30 years in education who has access to all the programs, teachers, students and parents. She has the big picture view, we think it is vital for the health of the district and the community to trust her leadership and thinking.

Respectfully,  
Michelle and Russell Olsen



27 March 2023

Dear Board Members,

We are current parents of an Open Classroom student, members of the community, and tax payers.

We understand that this Friday you will be voting whether to have one or two elementary school programs in the Lagunitas School District.

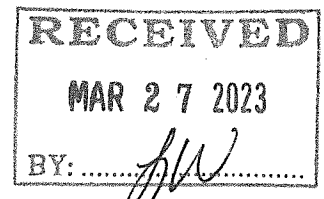
We implore you to maintain the Open Classroom. It has been wonderful to watch our six year old son, now in his second year in the Open Classroom, develop and flourish. The emphasis on social emotional learning has been nothing less than amazing for his growth and maturity.

Our family appreciates having two choices of Elementary school and recognizes that it is a unique and valuable asset to the community. We think that having a choice of programs is an amazing privilege. Whatever you decide, we strongly advocate that you maintain the Open Classroom program.

Your consideration in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

**Stephen Scafani**  
**Eddy Scafani**



March 27, 2023

Dear Lagunitas School Board Members,

After meetings and discussions regarding “Montessori joining Open Classroom,” we were very concerned to learn of the Principal/Superintendent’s recommendation that instead appears to eliminate Open Classroom and start a new and possibly very different program. This announcement came out of left field in a parent meeting that was supposed to be focused on how a merger could look—a meeting where there was a lot of excitement and support expressed from Open parents about the Open Classroom program, and a lot of interest from Montessori parents as they learned about Open’s program. Open is a thriving program working for the majority of families enrolled in it this year and it would be very disruptive to abandon it and replace it with something new.

The Principal/Superintendent’s recommendation suggests that a new combined program might “rely heavily on the values and traditions that have developed over time in the current Montessori and Open Classroom programs.” She will leave it up to the “school team and parents to determine how these values and traditions will inform the daily practices in and out of the classrooms.” However, it is important to note what the letter doesn’t say—it doesn’t say we are keeping Open Classroom with its proven and successful practices.

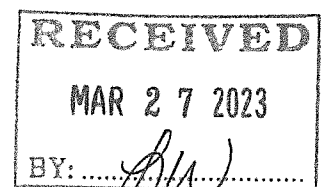
The recommendation supports changes reflecting “the desires of our current and future school families.” The Board should understand that the clear overwhelming desire of the majority of Open families is to continue the Open Classroom program. Therefore, it would be consistent with this recommendation for the Board to adopt Open Classroom as it is currently configured as the single program going forward, if it chooses a single program. Any necessary changes to daily practices would be determined by the school staff and parents, as the letter recommends. Open’s existing parent and teacher governance structures have proven successful in guiding the program over time and should be maintained.

We also feel strongly that one or both of Open’s current TK/K/1 teachers should be invited back next year in order to maintain stability, continuity, and community. Their guidance is what has stabilized the program this year and created a vibrant community in the youngest grades, which the school has struggled to do in recent years. It is essential for the program and its teachers to maintain what has been rebuilt this year in order to continue increasing enrollment. The loss of experienced Open teachers at this crucial time would mean a loss of additional families from the district, as we have seen with past staffing changes that were not supported by parents.

It is disorienting and confusing to suddenly be facing the possible end of Open Classroom as we know it. A lot has happened in the last few weeks. If the Montessori program does not have enough support to continue, do not use this as a reason to eliminate the currently thriving Open Classroom program as well. Right now, we need stability, and Open Classroom with its current teachers is stable. Anything that destabilizes the school is harmful to families. We ask that you end this misguided push to end Open Classroom and commit to maintaining the Open Classroom program going forward.

Sincerely,

Greg Reis and Erika Obedzinski



Dear ,

Firstly, I'd like to thank you for your service on the School Board, which I can imagine has been particularly tricky during these past few years. I appreciate your continued patience and ability to listen closely to the members of the school community in order to make difficult decisions that will best serve our students and families.

I'm writing as a parent of two Lagunitas district students. Henry is in 2nd grade at the Open Classroom and Sammy is in Kindergarten at Montessori. I'm also writing as a supporter of Laura's recommendation to merge the two programs, as I believe this shift will make our community stronger and more equitable.

I chose Open classroom initially for Henry because I was excited about the co-oping model and emphasis on parental involvement. In addition, I loved the prioritization of art and SEL. Henry has been thriving in the program and absolutely adores going to school.

I chose Montessori for Sam because he gets overstimulated and likes structure and doesn't thrive as much in an environment with noise. I also liked that he would have some separation from his older brother, allowing him more autonomy after they spent two years in Covid lockdown attached at the hip. Sam has been thriving in the program and absolutely adores going to school. In many ways, the two-program model has worked well for our family.

But having one child in each program, I also have unique insights into the ways this model is failing both our community and children. We are a small, tight-knit community, and continuing the two program model given the declining enrollment is not only unsustainable, it also isn't leveraging our most powerful asset to its fullest extent: parent collaboration, participation and engagement.

In both programs, I see the same parent volunteers constantly raising their hands to take on more and more volunteer work, burning themselves out for the sake of filling volunteer needs because no one else has the bandwidth to step up. Oftentimes they are playing redundant leadership roles that wouldn't be necessary if the parent community were a single entity all working towards the same goals. I'm not privy to what happens internally with the teachers and staff, but I imagine the situation is similar in that we could be leveraging that collaborative, collective power much more effectively if their efforts weren't being duplicated on two different campuses. We are a campus that requires heavily on the efforts of teachers and parents, and having these communities divided isn't optimizing our limited resources effectively.

I also strive to look at situations through a diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging lens, and in continuing a two-program model with one "alternative" program emphasizing parental involvement as a pillar and another that's a more "traditional" K-8 public school, I have concerns that the district will run the risk of dividing the district racially. My reasoning stems from evidence we've seen in Sausalito/Marin City, where the state DA had to step in with a desegregation order. Please see [this](#) article for the backstory. Choice seems on its surface like an attractive idea, but choice can also breed racial segregation.

My concern locally is that ESL and low-income families (which typically include more people of color) will be less inclined to join an alternative program that requires more parental involvement, which isn't always an option for working parents. I believe this to be a barrier to entry that I've yet seen the Board tackle in a comprehensive way. It's worth looking at the data: where do our ESL families typically place their children? If our valley population were more diverse both racially and socioeconomically, what would the racial make-up of our two programs look like and would we run the risk of dividing our elementary programs down racial lines?

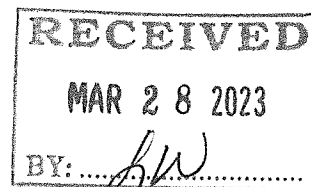
Progress requires diversity, and diversity requires many voices represented all in the same room. If we continue as a divided campus (divided students, divided teachers, divided parent groups), we will not be fulfilling the progressive values that we so proudly state on our district's webpage. Progress may be challenging, but in the end, the best way to set an example for our kids is to show them that we're unafraid of facing challenges for the sake of progress.

I believe that a lot of the anxiety around merging the programs would be reduced if all of the parents could see what I see: two very similar school programs that could each benefit from one another's support. They are complimentary in so many ways, and I'm optimistic that by bringing the two programs together, we can create a truly extraordinary program and a strong, vibrant, connected school community.

Thanks so much for taking the time to give this important decision time and thought. I'm happy to talk further with any member of the Board prior to your final decision.

Sincerely,

Anna Schell



March 28, 2023

Dear Lagunitas School Board Members:

Thank you for your service and dedication to our school and Valley kids. As many of you know, we have been an engaged part of the Lagunitas School District community for seven years. After six years in Montessori, our son, Wyatt, is now in 6th grade and thriving and our daughter, Farrah, is in 2nd grade in Montessori and is also thriving. Jessica has been on the LEAP Board for several years and is now the LEAP President and we are LEAP sponsors through our business.

We are writing to let you know that we fully support Principal Laura Shain's statement to the Board that recommends unifying the District's two elementary programs. We ask you to please vote **YES for this unification on Friday** to demonstrate fiscal responsibility and support for what Laura, the **majority of teachers** and the **majority of current parents** want.

We look forward to being involved in this transition in any way that is helpful and are committed to supporting our administration and teachers in implementing a **unified school that upholds the best parts of both our elementary programs**.

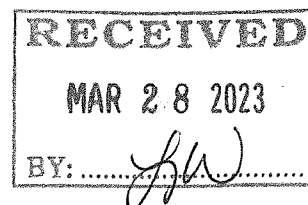
Throughout the years we have been confused and dismayed by the division that exists in our school community because of the separate elementary programs. As LEAP president, Jessica has seen first hand how precious resources and limited funds have to be divided among too many programs. Over the past several years, we have sadly witnessed the steady decline in elementary enrollment. At the same time, we've seen the Middle School get better and better. And we want to point out that the Middle School (a joint program) is now the most thriving program with an amazing, dedicated set of teachers, sports teams, an arts program, civil rights field trips, and more. With **all the Middle School teachers supporting the combining of the elementary programs**, we are frankly worried about their morale should you not cast a YES vote on Friday.

We respect the pillars of Open classroom (as well as its history) and would also like to reiterate the key values of the Montessori parent community, which we would like to see demonstrated in a unified program. Let's combine the best of both!

- **Engaged and collaborative community**, that promotes unity and active participation in the classroom, the broader community and the wider world
- **Foundational Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**, including conflict resolution, a commitment to diversity and inclusion and community building
- **Multi-faceted enrichment**, including the arts, music, garden, Spanish, physical education and nature
- **Strong academics**, promoting literacy and strength in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM)
- **An environment that supports learning** by providing structure and peacefulness, while allowing for focus and movement, group work and individual work, and indoor and outdoor opportunities

We urge you to vote **YES** for this unification, in the spirit of bringing the community together in one vibrant elementary program.

Thank you,  
Jessica + Craig O'Connell



March 28th 2023

Dear Lagunitas School District Board of Trustees,

My name is Shayna Kreps and I have 2 children, Walker in 2nd grade at Montessori and Arrow who will begin Kindergarten this fall. **I support Principal and Superintendent Laura Shain's** statement to the Board that recommends unifying the District's two elementary programs. I ask the Board to vote **YES** for this unification, demonstrating fiscal responsibility and support for what our Superintendent and Principal and the majority of both current elementary parents and Lagunitas teachers have expressed.

- **I trust and value our teachers and administration and want to see the decision-makers of this district show they do as well.**
- **I believe that the voices of current and future parents, teachers and administration should be prioritized in this conversation.**

Program choice no longer makes sense for our community. Parents are forced to leave our district to find other schools with sufficient peer groups, and more resources, to have their needs met. This is our local, public school and the current parents and students deserve to have our needs met here. We no longer want to waste resources with overstaffing in an effort to protect an individual program.

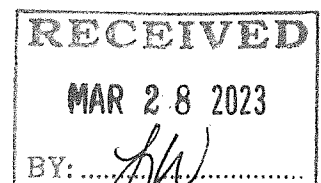
In our small community, an attitude of otherness perpetuated by long-standing community members and teachers who strongly support separate programs should not be tolerated. As a parent to an incoming kindergartener, I look forward to Arrow's teacher being invested in the unification of the values of both programs, and who works collaboratively with our administration and entire teaching staff. A teacher who willfully prioritizes the needs of all students in the district over their personal beliefs about a specific program.

I want my kids to go to school in a peaceful community. I want our local school to be healthy and thriving. Maintaining two programs has, for long enough, caused conflict between neighbors of our small community. It is now clearly the root cause of the deficits in our district. We need this to end. We need to move on and focus on healing and building. Please vote **YES** to unify the Lagunitas School District Elementary School.

We are Stronger Together!

Go Bobcats!

**Shayna Kreps**  
**Walker 2nd**  
**Arrow incoming K**



March 28, 2023

Dear Lagunitas School District Board of Trustees,

Thank you for your commitment to the District and your service on the Board. I (Michelle) have been to a number of Board meetings over the past year and have appreciated the opportunity to meet you and be active in the conversations about the school. Thank you for that opportunity.

We have three children. Eloise is in 2nd grade in Montessori, Calvin is at West Marin Montessori and will be in kindergarten next year, and our baby Ricco will be in TK in 2027. Needless to say, our journey at Lagunitas is just beginning. We take pride in having the opportunity to help shape the future of the District.

We wholeheartedly support the recommendation that Laura Shain has made to the Board for upholding the values of Open and Montessori into the unification of our elementary programs, and admire her leadership in doing so. Not only does this demonstrate fiscal responsibility, it is supportive of what the majority of our teachers desire, and will promote one of the most important ideals of both parent groups - community.

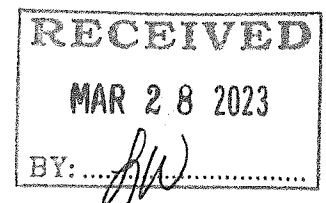
Over our past three years at Lagunitas, we have seen the ups and downs the school has endured. Through it all, it is abundantly clear that unifying to a single elementary program is advantageous. Below are points we feel strongly about, in addition to what is conveyed in the Montessori Parent Group correspondence:

- **Community:** Today, parents are short on resources - namely their time and money - for participation in the classroom, volunteering, fundraising efforts, and community events. It would be incredible if we could pool our resources together for the benefit of our children into one parent group community. Also, the choice that incoming families are forced to make in selecting a program feels divisive and discourages togetherness that is vital in a small district.
- **Equity:** Each child deserves equal opportunities in terms of curriculum, class size, access to classroom aides, exposure to art, music, garden, and other enrichment programs. Dividing our children by program opens the door for inequities.
- **Sustainability:** Frequent teacher turn-over breeds uncertainty within the community and feel disruptive to our children. There are teacher shortages nationwide, and to attract and retain talent, teachers should be supported by their colleagues. Let them collaborate on one great program. Bringing teachers out of retirement for single-year contracts is not a sustainable strategy to build upon a foundation for a strong teaching staff.
- **Inclusivity:** In our small community, an attitude of otherness perpetuated by long-standing community members and teachers who strongly support separate programs should not be tolerated. As parents to an incoming kindergartener, we look forward to Calvin's teacher being invested in the unification of the values of both programs, and to working collaboratively with the administration.
- **Strong Academics:** We have seen our oldest two children thrive when provided opportunities for learning, and see there is true joy for them in the process. We believe there is value in offering challenging academics alongside social and emotional learning.

We are hopeful the Board will support the administration in structuring a school that maintains the traditions of the past while planning thoughtfully and responsibly for the future. When you are given the opportunity, we urge you to cast a **YES** vote for unification at the March 31st meeting. This is the first step towards a more vibrant, inclusive, and dynamic future for our District.

Thank you for reading. In gratitude for your service and support,

Matthew and Michelle Granelli





March 28, 2023

To Lagunitas School Board Members,

In our fast-paced culture letter writing gives us time to pause and reflect on what is in our hearts, souls, and minds. Slower paced and sometimes lengthier than an email we use words to try to make a statement, get our point across and change minds. I hope you will slow down and take my words in and also pause and reflect deeply on this point in time, how we got here and the unique role you have being in a position to move us forward. **Today I write this letter in support of Laura's recommendation to unify the programs upholding the best of both programs.**

You are a wise and educated group. I don't need to rehash the similarities and uniqueness of each program. You are well aware of the creativity and thoughtfulness all of our teachers bring to our students. You have also heard loud and clear from a majority of parents and teachers that we want change.

I'm listening to Adam Grant's book right now, "The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know." The opening about firefighters who died trying to escape a fire because it didn't occur to them to put their heavy gear down to move faster feels relatable to our situation. If we can't recognize our limits and blind spots we can't expand in to new ways of thinking, ideas and inventions. He says, "Questioning ourselves makes the world more unpredictable. It requires us to admit that the facts may have changed, that what was once right may now be wrong. Reconsidering something we believe deeply can threaten our identities, making it feel as if we're losing part of ourselves." Our district of choice structure served us well for years. There will need to be time to honor and grieve the end of both programs. This should not hold us back from envisioning a school for today's Valley families.

As I write this, I am not practicing times tables with my daughter, helping my husband make dinner, or doing a myriad of other tasks that I would like to spend my time on. I will spend Friday night at a board meeting hoping for a progressive, positive and forward-thinking path ahead. I have spent long hours at meetings concerned the Waldorf Inspired, a program that was once a choice at Lagunitas, would take over the Open Classroom library space. Other times we were upset about the inequality of the Waldorf Inspired parents paying for their own teacher. I have been on LEAP more than once now, working to solve a fair and transparent allocation model across programs. I could list many more examples that all came from feelings of divisiveness, scarcity and fear for one group or another instead of one parent group able to uplift each other. I am eager that in the months and years to come myself and many other parents won't have to spend their time on these matters. I am hopeful that we can turn our focus to building a healthy and thriving school community.

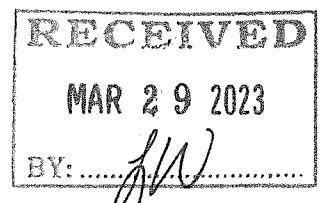
Over and over again parents say, "We need leadership." I see Laura Shain, our Principal/Superintendent, working tirelessly to lead but limited by the authority of the Board. Please support Laura and set her and our district up for success by voting to support her recommendation.

Thank you,

Helen Ferlino

Open Classroom Parent 2005-2011, 2019-2022

Montessori Parent 2022-2023



March 29, 2023

Dear Lagunitas School Board,

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to our school and community. Our little Valley faces a BIG and historical decision that has been ticking away like a time bomb for many years. This Friday you have an essential role to play in saying YES to helping support our school to thrive, YES to building a healthy school community, and YES to being proud of voting on a decision that is forward-thinking and accounts for all current and future generations of school children.

We are parents of three children in our district, one in 3rd, one in 1st and an incoming TK in 2024. Our eldest attended the Open Classroom for 3 years. We enjoyed co-oping, how the teachers collectively thought about our son, and soaked in the beautiful elements of community that thrive in Open, such as camping trips and annual traditions. However, over time in Open, our eldest was falling behind in academics and unable to focus in the loud, movement-filled rooms; all this was impacting him in negative ways. Last winter, we moved him to Montessori, where he has thrived. Today, both our sons enjoy the rhythm and support of their teachers and the sweet Montessori community. Our sons have loved the small group centers and the multi-pronged education, and we have been happy with their education.

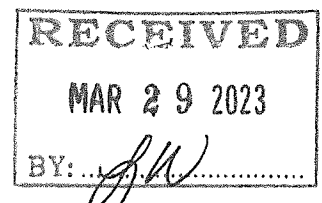
We received a gift in attending both programs: we were able to see the positives of what each program can offer. **From this vantage point it is our firm belief that we must unify on equal footing, blending the best of both programs to develop one thriving local school, but not have one program merge "into Open".** Among other things, this unified school will allow our children to have a wider group of peers and fellow learners, addressing the loss and stress we have faced when yet another family leaves the district.

While tensions are high in this moment, there *is* clarity beyond the fog: **the principal and superintendent, the majority of teachers and the majority of parents are all in support of having one school that blends the best of both programs.**

We strongly urge you to vote YES to unifying our school and demonstrating fiscal responsibility. Vote YES to a sustainable path for families now and for the years to come. We believe in our district, our administration and our teachers.

Sincerely,

David Guendelman & Carolina Balazs (Current Montessori Parents)



To the Lagunitas School Board,

The Lagunitas school board has speculated why our previously thriving school has experienced a dramatic decline in attendance. They have given many reasons ranging from Covid, to competing schools, to cost of living increases barring families from living in the valley. We, as the families who chose to take their children out of Lagunitas, would like to tell you, clearly and plainly, why we left.

We left because of weak and frustrating leadership. We left because we felt unheard, uninformed, and unsupported by Laura Shain, John Carol and the school board.

We feel that the district's hiring and firing practices have significantly weakened Lagunitas and created unnecessary instability for our children. Quality staff was not supported and not retained. When we voiced our concerns, we were not listened to. Decisions were made in a vacuum and without transparency. We feel John Carol, Laura Shain and the school board are not being held accountable for their leadership choices. John and Laura have even been elevated in their positions while our school has been weakened under their leadership.

For many, the decision to leave the school was a painful one. We would love our kids to be in school in our beautiful community. The last resort we could take was to move our kids to a school outside of our valley and away from our sweet campus. However, we felt we could no longer stay in a school where new teachers, parents and ultimately, our children, are not supported.

The numerous decisions that have been made have sown confusion, resentment and frustration. Our school has developed a negative reputation to potential staff and families. This reputation has already negatively impacted our hiring and enrollment prospects. Many parents and teachers chose to avoid the drama and instability at Lagunitas and seek out more supportive environments.

In these challenging times we need a strong leader to bring us together. We need clear communication and openness. The current administration has not yet shown us it is capable of these things. Under this leadership, we have gone from a thriving community of three full programs down to the situation we are in now. The resulting low enrollment in the two programs have put us in a position where we have to combine. This effort is now being led by parents in the absence of a leader. While we understand there are many factors that have gone into this evolution, we want it acknowledged that we need and deserve stronger leadership, better communication, transparency and for the voices of parents to be listened to.

Our Valley children are scattered to the wind and over the hill. With every family that leaves, the Lagunitas school district, and our community, are further destabilized both emotionally and financially; motivating more families to leave. Our teachers, our parents and our children deserve better.

Sincerely,

The families that have left Lagunitas School.

Allison Arnold and Greg Arnold (1)

Katelyn Johnson and Jeremy Gaunt (2)

Sophie List (2)

Melissa Flick and Andy Flick (3)

Heather Bates (2)

Travis Meinolf (1)

Simone Scott (1)

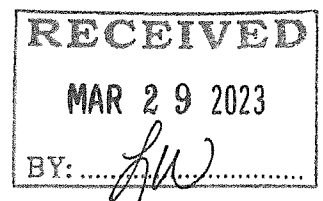
Cheryl Juliano (2)

Eric Facas (2)

Serene Martinez and Dan Martinez (1)

Stephanie Smith & David Sokolosky (1) - *We no longer live in the Valley, but the state of the school and Laura's poor leadership were the major factor in our decision to move*

*\* The numbers listed with names are the number of students that were pulled from the school as a result of these aforementioned issues. This number is larger than some classes that are left at the school.*



## **For Board Packet - Nason Family Letter regarding this Friday's Board Meeting**

Dear Board of Trustees for the Lagunitas School District,

Thank you for your dedication to our school and our community. Many of you have put your blood, sweat, and tears into this school (in addition to countless hours at Board Meetings). I understand for some of you, the vote ahead may seem daunting. However, my name is Katie Nason and with my husband Levin Nason, we are writing to ask you to **please vote YES this Friday to the unification of the elementary programs into a unified school, in line with Principal Laura's Expected Recommendation.**

Our son Miles Nason is a current student at Lagunitas (we also have a preschool aged son Everett Nason who will be eligible for TK next year). Miles has had an amazing Kindergarten year in the Montessori program. His teacher Pauline has him thriving academically; he can read well and is advancing in math. School staff support him in ways I would not have expected, such as art teacher Julie giving him and his friends space for an "art club" during lunch. And Principal Laura and her office's staff know him well. From our son's eyes, school is amazing.

From the eyes of a parent, the school outlook has been cloudy. A number of Miles' classmates have left in the span of the year due to peer group issues, causing heartache among us. When teachers Pauline and Alex P announced that they were leaving, this was fuel to the fire. When teachers Alex C and Anita C teamed up to say that they could envision a unified elementary school, it created a shred of hope. And luckily the positive momentum has built steadily from there amongst the Montessori parent community and beyond (see signed **Statement from 95% of Current Montessori Families** and additional community members shared with you by Shayna Kreps).

We fully support a unified elementary school model, consistent with the majority of current parents, teachers, staff, and Principal Laura. **Because we have enjoyed the pillars and values of Montessori, we do not think it would be equitable (given the large Montessori community - see signed Statement) to leverage the Open program as the foundation for the unified school. Instead, we support teachers Alex C and Anita C, along with Laura and the administration/staff to come up with a unified school plan balancing the best parts of both the Montessori and Open programs.**

As for the open position for the TK/K/1 teacher, as parents of entering 1st and entering TK, we look forward to welcoming a teacher who works collaboratively with other

teachers/administration/parents and is able to hold space for academics, SEL, arts/enrichment, and community in the classroom.

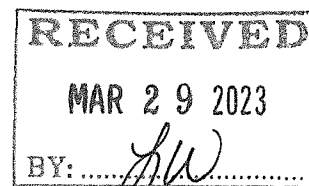
We believe that the decision to combine the elementary programs into a unified school is one that demonstrates fiscal responsibility and paves the path towards a sustainable and thriving Lagunitas School District. We owe this to the Valley, to breed a true sense of community and foster a thriving space for our young ones. And the time is now. In that vein, **please vote YES this Friday and do not delay.**

Thank you very much for your time, your leadership, and your continued service to our District. Together, we can do this.

Sincerely,

Katie Nason & Levin Nason

Students: Miles Nason (K) and Everett Nason (entering TK for 2023-2024)



March 29, 2023

Lagunitas School Board  
One Lagunitas School Road  
San Geronimo, CA 94963

*Submitted via email: amichelson@lagunitas.org, srebscher@lagunitas.org, jsanders@lagunitas.org, dbohman@lagunitas.org, r.sloan@comcast.net, lshain@lagunitas.org, lwickersham@lagunitas.org*

Hello everyone,

We, as Open parents, want to clear the air. We have had some time to digest all of this information and want to share a statement from our hearts to your hearts.

We can see a shared future, for our community and our kids and it's awesome. We understand it is best for our district and our community to come together as one elementary school.

We believe Anita and Alex, and our dedicated teachers will help lead us on this journey and make sure all of our children are held, seen, thriving, and loving learning. We can do this. We want everyone to love their school like we love Open. We want all the children of the valley to experience this magic.

Taking from the meeting and all of the positive things that came from it, we believe that all parents can stand behind the Open Pillars (social emotional learning is as important as academic learning, multi-age classrooms, parent participation, choice and free play.)

We believe in what is happening at Open and feel that we can build a united program together on the upper campus using our program as a foundation. We have a strong framework where our parents work together to make decisions with our teachers. We think it would be amazing to have more voices and more hands to work together to evolve. The Open Program has been, and strives to be, stable but not stagnant. Imagine what we can do together!

We would like to ask the board for the following as we move forward:

- Utilize the existing and stable structure of Open to build the future together.
- A planning committee formed with all stakeholders - including 3 current parents from each program.
- A shared goal to provide clear and transparent data and information that is made available to all parents in an equitable manner that also outlines roles and responsibilities, so we can build a strong and thriving school community together.
- Timelines given and clearly communicated to the full parent body.
- Welcome back Marlene and/or Larry to the TK/K/1 classroom. We understand having both may not be possible, but we are open to creative solutions, perhaps in a part-time capacity as a support to a new full-time teacher. We think it is vital to have mentoring support in the coming together and future of the school. We are creating so much change, and keeping consistency for the students is important. Our kids need us to be strong and stable at this time.

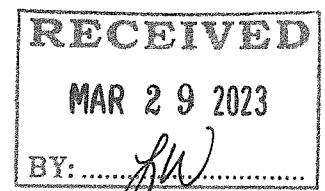
We want to invite Montessori parents and their kids to spend the day, or anytime possible, in the Open Classroom. We find it hard to put words to the magic and would like you to experience it first-hand.

Starting with the foundation of the Open Classroom format is the way forward to a school that will serve our valley children where they are. As we discussed in our joint meeting, together, we can creatively overcome any issues that we may perceive as obstacles in our children's learning.

Let's focus on what we have; our gorgeous campus, our caring and committed parents, our knowledgeable staff, our relationship with our community center, the beautiful valley we live in, and the kids we love. We can do this together.

Kindest Regards,

Allison Arnold  
Greg Arnold  
Morgan and Wayne Patton  
Eddy Scafani  
Sam Harris  
Erika Obedzinski  
Stephen Scafani  
Greg Reis  
Ashley Griffin  
Michelle May  
Jake Morse  
Lily and Matt Krauss  
Irene and Ian Stone  
Kelly Sylvester  
Duncan Sylvester  
Sandra Williams  
Christina and Adam Goodwin  
Rubia and Joshua Krauss  
Catherine Carlson  
Pippin Cavagnaro  
Anne Malcolm-Webb & Levi Webb  
Laura Pucci  
Jordana Lerios  
Frank Milliron  
Breeze and Ashley Kinsey





March 26, 2023

Dear Lagunitas School Board Members:

We, the Montessori Parent Community, support Principal Laura Shain's statement to the Board that recommends unifying the District's two elementary programs. We ask the Board to vote **YES** for this unification, demonstrating fiscal responsibility and support for what our Principal and the majority of both current elementary parents and Lagunitas teachers have expressed.

We will support our Administration and teachers in implementing a unified school that upholds the best parts of both our elementary programs.

The key values of the Montessori parent community are:

- **Engaged and collaborative community**, that promotes unity and active participation in the classroom, the broader community and the wider world
- **Foundational Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**, including conflict resolution, a commitment to diversity and inclusion and community building
- **Multi-faceted enrichment**, including the arts, music, garden, Spanish, physical education and nature
- **Strong academics**, promoting literacy and strength in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM)
- **An environment that supports learning** by providing structure and peacefulness, while allowing for focus and movement, group work and individual work, and indoor and outdoor opportunities

We understand the importance of honoring past traditions, while being forward-thinking about shaping the future of our District. We believe that unified as one school we will be stronger and benefit from our collective talents and resources.

**Esteemed Board members, you are the respected decision-makers of the school for current and future families. We ask you to vote YES in support of Laura's proposal.** Your YES will support a plan that leads to a more vibrant and sustainable future for our District.

Thank you,  
The Montessori Parent Community

*Current and Incoming Montessori Families: 73 total 36 of the 38 currently enrolled families*

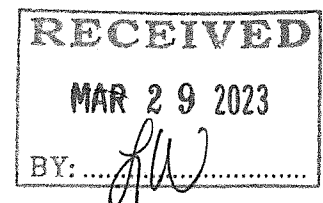
Parent Name	Grade of Children (including incoming)
Shayna Kreps	2nd, incoming Kindergarten in 2023
Andrew Kreps	2nd, incoming Kindergarten in 2023
Katie Nason	K, incoming TK in 2023
Jessica O'Connell	2nd, 6th

Craig O'Connell	2nd, 6th
Carolina Balazs	1st, 3rd, incoming 2025
David Guendelman	1st, 3rd, incoming 2025
Michelle Olsen	5th, 7th
Russell Olsen	5th, 7th
Michelle Granelli	2nd, incoming K in 2023, incoming TK in 2027
Matthew Granelli	2nd, incoming K in 2023, incoming TK in 2027
Anna Schell	K
Joseph Schell	K
Alex Bernstein	2nd
Julie Benjamin	2nd
Amber Charne	K, incoming TK 2024
Isaiah Fliessbach	K, incoming TK 2024
Lindsey Crawford	3rd grade, incoming TK in 2027
Sean Crawford	3rd grade, incoming TK in 2027
Emily Gerken	TK, 1st
Kylee Ortiz	2nd, possibly incoming K
David Ortiz	2nd, possibly incoming K
Levin Nason	K, incoming TK in 2023
Ross MacKenzie	2nd, incoming TK in 2023
Mischka Gerken	TK, 1st
Charlotte A.B. Troy	K
Lori Ramirez	2nd and 5th
Emma-Louise Anderson	5th
Minerva Tottie	5th, possibly incoming 5th
Craig Tottie	5th, possibly incoming 5th
Sarah Wilhelm	2nd and 8th

Alex Wilhelm	2nd and 8th
Sara Stieg	3rd
Brandon Stieg	3rd
Lela Michel	2nd and 7th
Germain Michel	2nd and 7th
Jessica Hill	2nd and 7th
Mike Anderson	2nd and 7th
Rachel Felder	1st, 7th and 8th
John Felder	1st, 7th and 8th
Heather MacKenzie	2nd grade and incoming Kindergartener
Patricia Benito-Vicincio	5th
Cecilio Trinidad	5th
Gregoria Romero-Vasquez	K, 2nd
Mario Vicente	K, 2nd
Helen Ferlino	3rd
Phil Ferlino	3rd
Kim Clarke	5th, 3rd
Aline Wachsmuth	2nd
Alex Ketley	2nd
Lesly Deslauliniers	3rd, 6th
Dug Winningham	3rd, 6th
Dawn Wronski	1st, TK and Incoming TK
David Wronski	1st, TK and incoming TK
Stacy Miller	2nd
anna corral	2nd(lsd) 5th (rvc) and a pre k
Rodrigo corral	2nd(lsd) 5th (rvc) and a pre k
Kiersten Kotaka	4th, 7th and 10th

Jaimee Chapin	2nd
Geoff Chapin	2nd
Sara Seider	TK incoming 2023 and 2026
Corrigan Neralich	TK incoming 2023 and 2026
Adam jepson	4th
Rachel Thompson	3rd
Melanie Walker	3rd, 7th
Mary and Zen Sawyer	2nd, TK incoming
Michela Rizzo McCurdy	incoming TK
Corrigan Neralich	TK incoming 2023 and 2026
Bruce McCurdy	incoming TK
Felicia Evans	incoming K in 2024, TK in 2026
Nathan Evans	incoming K in 2024, TK in 2026
Paige Pires de Almeida	Incoming TK 2024 + 2026
Pablo Pires de Almeida	Incoming TK 2024 + 2026
<i>*Additional Parent + Community Signatures</i>	
<b>Parent Name</b>	<b>Grade of Children (including incoming or name of school)</b>
Rachel Bruno	Possible Incoming 5th grader
Anne Mannes	7th
Noelle Marquis and David White	7th
Dana Russ	Grade 7 (+ graduate at Archie)
Willow Regnery	4th & 7th - Open
Dr. Jared and Tiffany Greenholz	3rd, 4th - Open
Brett Martino	2nd (Nicasio via Lagunitas Inter-district transfer)

Sophia Baxley	1st, 7th, 7th
Justin Baxley	1st, 7th, 7th
Liz Wickersham	
Amy Nestler	
Alyssa Gleason	2 alumni of Montessori and LSD MS
Lhasa Yudice	2 alumni of Montessori and LSD MS



3/29/23

To The Lagunitas School Board of Trustees,

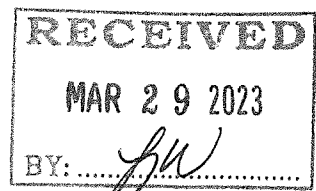
**Parent to Parent Meeting 3/22/23**

~Summary from parent meeting organizers~

Given the chance for community dialogue, it is clear that our differences are not as great as our shared desire for the well-being of our children. Most parents were open to the idea of a united elementary program and when given the opportunity to engage in direct conversation about their desires, needs, and concerns, they were able to listen to each other and explore creative solutions. Parents were also inspired to see our strength as a community and the collective amazingness we have together.

Parent meeting organizers

Julie Benjamin	Sasha Gulish
Shayna Kreps	Breeze Kinsey



To our fellow parents,

First of all, THANK YOU! We are in this together and we believe this meeting is going to be a place for us to grow and talk about our children's school experience, love of learning and possibilities of enrichment.

Hopefully you read Laura's email with the update on the Board Meeting and the Parent-to-Parent meeting on this coming Wednesday March 22, 2023. As she stated, "the purpose is to share and list answers to this question: What could a future with Montessori joining Open look like?" **We are not being asked to vote or to make a decision at this meeting** and there will not be any teachers or administrators at this meeting.

We understand there is a lot of confusion surrounding this conversation. One thing all parents have voiced is we need clear communication, information and to have our questions answered. We strongly believe in the power of information and equal access. In order to prepare for this gathering, we have put together this document so you can review it yourself. Please read it over, we believe it will be helpful to get an understanding of the full picture, beyond programs and looking at the School District as a whole.

- *Lagunitas District Numbers*
- *Answers to our questions both Open and Montessori from Administration*
- *Letter from Majority of Teachers to the board*
- *Letter from Jason Coale (open 2/3 teacher)*
- *Summary of Montessori Parent Meeting Recap*
- *Summary of Open Meeting Recap*

After reviewing this information, ***we can come together for a fresh conversation from an informed place where we can talk about what we want for our kids.*** We have expressed to the board and administration we all feel tired, busy and want to spend more time with our kids and less time at these meetings, so we want to make this one meaningful.

We hope at least one or both parents from your family will join us. We will have childcare and some fun activities for the kids. There will also be yummy food for both kids and adults. Warm tea and drinks too.

The meeting will be on zoom, but we highly recommend meeting in person, as this format will be different for the zoom attendees.

#### **MEETING DETAILS:**

Wednesday March 22, 2023 at 530pm (come at 5pm to eat and settle in)  
Multi Purpose Room at Lower Campus (Childcare begins at 530pm at the Loft)

Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85760922388?pwd=eFEwTzhGQmIIMXJIM2IXRIJLaUJ0Zz09>

Meeting ID: 857 6092 2388

Passcode: 205563

If anyone has any questions, please feel free to reach out to any of us or Laura.

Thank you again, we look forward to seeing you soon.

Breeze, Shayna, Sasha and Julie

# **INFO THAT MAY BE HELPFUL TO REVIEW BEFORE THE MEETING**

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3. Letter from Majority of Teachers to the board
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5. Summary of Montessori Parent Meeting Recap
6. Summary of Open Meeting Recap



## **ANSWERS TO PERTINENT QUESTIONS - FROM ADMINISTRATION**

Answers in green from Laura

### **QUESTIONS FROM THE OPEN MEETING:**

#### **1. What will Open staffing and a joined program look like next year?\***

*Class structure and personnel are determined by teachers and Laura, based on enrollment and children's needs.*

*With current projected enrollment, the following is an option.*

*TK/K/1 – teacher not determined*

*2/3 – Jason Coale*

*2/3 or 3/4 – Anita Collison or Alex Cusick*

*4/5 – Alex Cusick or Anita Collison*

*PE – Jenelle Ferhart*

*Special Ed – Jon Moyer*

*Aides continuing: Kristy Arroyo, Maile Marino, Kendra Cuevas, Kirsten Polsky, Gabi Friedrich*

*Special Ed Aides – Alison Double, Harmony Ramos, Tracy Signor*

*Specialists continuing: Kristy Arroyo, Moira Pucci, Terry Shea, Michelle Myers, Juliet Schiller*

#### **2. How many students are enrolled in TK/K for 2023/24?**

*6 kindergarten students (need to confirm and update with secretary)*

#### **3. Will we be able to keep multi-age classes?**

*Yes.*

#### **4. Can we share the campus and keep 2 programs?**

*Yes, but this idea has benefits and drawbacks.*

*(Benefits include: shared yard and playground, proximity to one another for easier collaboration with students and staff, can use Montessori wing for other purposes. Drawbacks include: loss of amenities in modernized Montessori classrooms – this wing was not updated with last bond measure as all other classrooms were, difficulty when one program has students outdoors during the morning and the other does not, displace 3 spaces – preschool, aftercare, and special education.)*

#### **5. Is this decision forever?**

*No.*

#### **6. Can we poll current parents on this to get concrete data?**

*Yes – but need clarity on what “this” refers to.*

**7. How big would the class size be if we all were one school, with projected enrollment?**

**ALL LSD ELEMENTARY STUDENTS BY CLASS:**

TK/K/1 – 11+ total (TK ? / K 4 / 1<sup>st</sup> 7) (Depends on incoming TK/K)

2/3 – 18 total (2<sup>nd</sup> 7 / 3<sup>rd</sup> 11)

2/3 – 18 total (2<sup>nd</sup> 7 / 3<sup>rd</sup> 11)

4/5 – 22 total (4<sup>th</sup> 14 / 5<sup>th</sup> 8)

**ALL LSD ELEMENTARY STUDENTS BY GRADE**

TK: ?

K: 4

1st: 7

2nd: 14

3rd: 22

4th: 14

5th 8

**8. Do we have enough funding at this point for two programs?**

*Yes, but teacher and staff raises are impacted by over-staffing.*

**9. Does the decision to all be together change having a 6th grade in Open?**

*It doesn't have to.*

**10. Is the timeline set? That Montessori outlined in the letter?**

*No.*

**11. Could Open stay as-is and Montessori only have 2 classes?**

*Yes, but Montessori is larger than Open so we'd consider each program just having 2 classes if one were made to just have 2 when the enrollment is bigger in that program.*

**12. Would all teachers "teach" Open?**

*That has meant different styles to each teacher I've seen here. All teachers would teach in the Open Classroom framework.*

**13. What type of academic tracking ("tracking" has another definition in schools – I'd use "assessment and articulation instead") currently exists within each program?**

*We assess reading levels 2 – 3 times per year in elementary with the Fountas & Pinnell assessment. The standardized tests (English Language Arts and Math called CAASPP) are*

every spring in 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Standardized science (called CAST) are in 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in the spring. Other assessments are by individual teachers. (Students receiving intervention or in special education have other assessments.) We have a standardized physical fitness test we give for 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade every spring. We also assess our English learners (ELPAC test) once per year in English proficiency.

**B. What is required/what is optional?**

*The only assessment required is the standardized tests in 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade every spring. (see above – English Language Arts, Math, PE, Science and English proficiency for English Learners)*

**C. Who determines the type of assessments (e.g. standardized tests; report cards; what teachers report on in parent-teacher meetings)?**

*Standardized tests are required by the State (see above). The School Board could require a type of assessment such as a report card, but they have let individual programs determine how they report assessment to families. Parent-teacher conference information is determined by teachers.*

**14. How is it more fiscally responsible and efficient to have one elementary school vs. two?**

*With one elementary program we would only need 4 teachers next year instead of 6 (3 in each program). While we would need to budget for a possible increase as enrollment increases, we would have flexibility to consider additional staff and salary increases. Additional staff could be reading specialists, other specialists or coaches, enrichment, and anything the District general fund pays for (basically anything since it's not restricted.)*

*If one program creates a stronger overall program, we would probably attract and keep more students therefore we would save money due to the cost of students attending Ross Valley Charter (~\$10,000 per student).*

**15. Concern with the noise levels and the open classroom set up.**

*There is a lot of flexibility in the San Geronimo building. The sliding doors can remain closed as agreed upon by the teachers, the walking pathway can be outside if needed, areas for quiet space can be determined. The center of the pod, for instance, can be designed for quiet working. There are also other rooms, such as the library, the small room off Anita's room, the room where lunch is served that can be used as needed. Acoustics can also be looked at.*

## **LAGUNITAS DISTRICT NUMBERS**

### **Lagunitas District Numbers**

#### **Current Outlook**

**Open:** 38 Students / 32 Families

**Montessori:** 44 students / 38 Families

**Total:** 82 students

At ~20/24 students per class should have 4 teachers, we currently have 6.

#### **Outgoing Students**

##### **Ross Valley Charter**

~25 Lagunitas District kids are currently at Ross Valley Charter (\*current number provided by RVC)

Cost to District: ~\$9,700 PER Student ~242,787.5 TOTAL

<b>Grade Span</b>	<b>ADA</b>	<b>Cost Per ADA</b>
TK-3	10.43	\$10,119
4-6	8.36	\$9,304

#### **Total Number of Students that have RETURNED from RVC to Lagunitas this year:**

1 student to Open

2 students to Montessori

#### **Heartwood Charter School**

~10 Lagunitas District Students

#### **InterDistrict Transfers out of Lagunitas District**

4 elementary students

#### **Estimated Total of Lagunitas Students NOT attending Lagunitas: ~45 - 50 students**

(size of one of our programs)

#### **Next Year's Outlook**

- 14 5th graders from both programs most likely moving to Middle School

- 6 TK/K (4 current TKs that will be Ks and 2 NEW students signed up)

**Total:** ~75 students

At ~20/24 students per class should have 4 teachers

#### **Teacher Retention and Raises**

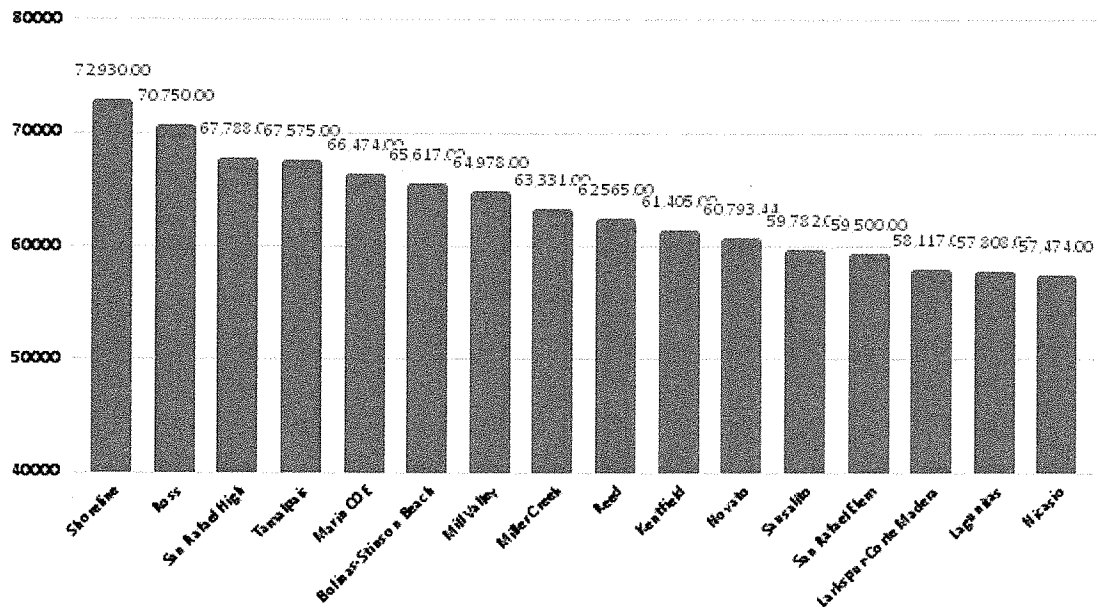
Lagunitas Beginner Teacher Salary: \$57,808

2nd lowest in the County compared to other Marin district

## Teacher Salaries in Marin County

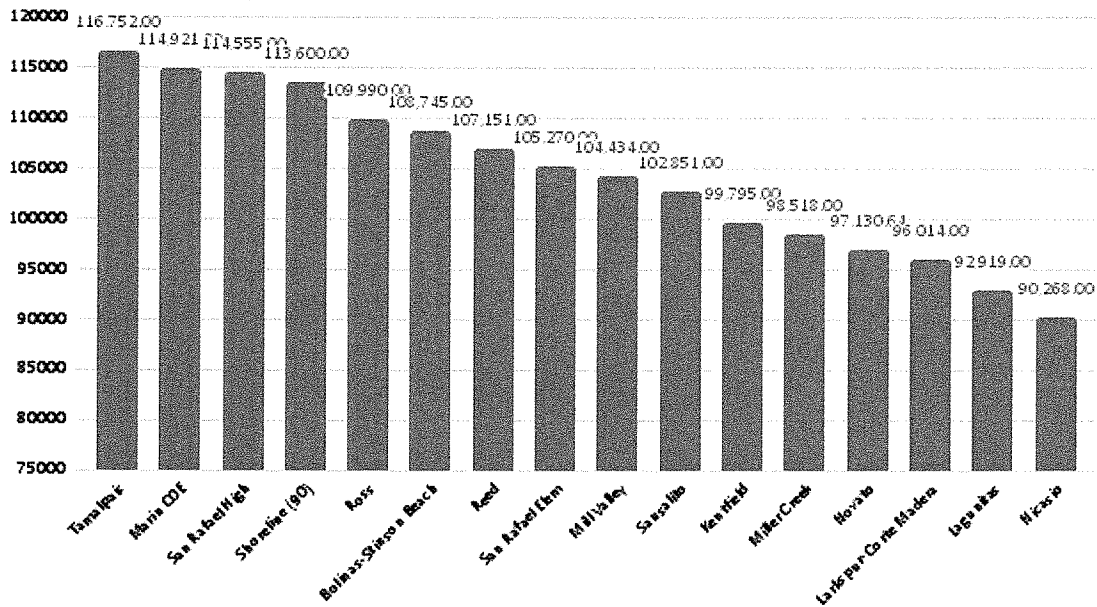
### First Year Teachers

BA+30 Step 1



### Senior Teachers

BA+75 Step 12



## **LETTER FROM MAJORITY OF TEACHERS AT LSD TO THE BOARD**

March 9, 2023

Dear Members of the Lagunitas School Board,

We are writing to you as the majority of the teachers at the Lagunitas School. We are so disappointed that we find ourselves again spending the month of March consumed with infighting and tension. We are writing to you to ask that you not allow the voices of a loud minority invested in preserving the status quo drown out the voices of the many who have asked for change. There are 20 families who have left our district because they are not having their needs met. There are many other families who have voiced concerns and written letters asking for unity.

Now, we are writing as teachers to ask that you take action and allow our school to move towards a positive future as one unified school. This school we envision welcomes all students and families, it includes the pillars and traditions of Open Classroom and the values and teachings of the Montessori program. It recognizes that the purpose of a community school is not to create division or competition and take sides but instead to foster an ideal of collaboration and cooperation. The current configuration of our school and our staff is counter to these goals. Staff members have said openly that they would not welcome families to their program and that they are not willing to work collaboratively towards a healthier future. This can no longer be tolerated, it is damaging to us all.

We are also concerned that maintaining two elementary programs is fiscally unwise. With money traveling over the hill to RVC and elementary classrooms with very few students, we are creating a situation where money continues to be tight, with our starting salary already the second lowest in the county. The question of teacher retention has come up repeatedly. Compensation is a significant component of retention, we are staffing for a school of the past, we are asking you to step back from your personal beliefs and biases and focus on the future. Staff for the numbers we have and allow that reduction to make funds available for increased staff compensation and student enrichment.

We are asking you as a school board to make it clear that all programs welcome all families and students. That we are a district committed to making teachers, administrators, support staff, families and most of all kids feel safe and supported. We are no longer a district known for our innovations and creativity but instead for our conflict and division. Please recognize that it is time for change.

Respectfully,

Alex Cusick, Jenelle Ferhart, Jon Moyer, Katherine Sanford, Tony Guerrero, Andrew Elson, Alex Perry,

## **LETTER FROM JASON COALE OPEN TEACHER, READ TO BOARD**

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and proposals regarding the future of our elementary program. I appreciate your commitment to unity and a sustainable school community.

I believe that our program embodies many of the values and practices that you hold dear, and I am excited about the possibility of working together to build an even stronger and more unified elementary program for all of our students.

To that end, I propose that the Montessori families join us in the Open Classroom. I understand that this may be a difficult decision for some families, and I welcome open and honest dialogue about how to best support a smooth transition for everyone involved.

I also propose that we work together to update our Open Classroom handbook to reflect the values and goals of today's parent body. Through this collaborative process, we can ensure that everyone's voice is heard, and that our program reflects the diverse perspectives and needs of our community.

I am committed to utilizing our existing systems of governance and change to ensure that this process is transparent and inclusive, and I look forward to collaborating with you to create a unified vision for our elementary program.

Jason Coale  
2nd & 3rd Open Teacher

# Summary of Montessori Parent Group Meeting, 2/28/23

## 1. Background:

This document summarizes the information shared by parents at the parents group meeting by taking all notes compiled on the evening of February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Parent thoughts were shared via in-person meeting and on Zoom and were added to physical post-it note sheets during the meeting. This document summarizes that information by consolidating/condensing common items/themes for ease of interpretation and reading. The aim of this consolidation was not to change information or shared opinions but rather to provide a more digested form of information that stays true to shared sentiments and comments. For raw information/notes, please look at original Post-It Notes

## 2. Overview of meeting (\*=items starred are summarized in Section 3):

- a. Agreements
- b. Meeting goals
- c. Laura Shain perspective on benefits/concerns from a high-level\*, see "Laura's Overview" below
- d. Parent go-round on Option 1\*-2 (focused on Option 1), see *Table 1* below
- e. Jenelle offering some feedback on concerns raised regarding Open
- f. Broader discussion leading to Option 3 presentation/discussion\*
  - i. Including "other/parking lot" items not captured in discussion of Options 1-3\*, See *Table 2* below.
- g. Temperature check on Option 1-3\*
- h. Small group work on what a proposed statement would be

## 3. Summary of Key Items noted above (\* in Item 2 above)

### A) Laura's Overview

- Coming together will yield benefits:
  - o Benefits for kids
  - o Teachers thrive
  - o Families feel more positive
  - o Shared finances allowing more \$ for art, garden, efficiencies in class size, can raise pay and attract more teachers, improve facilities
  - o Excitement
- There are real concerns:
  - o People aren't coming on tours/registering
  - o We're losing students
  - o Families are stressed
  - o Teachers have left (which provides an opportunity)

### B) **Table 1.** Summary[1] of benefits and concerns regarding Option 1: "Montessori Joining Open"[2]

Benefits	Concerns
----------	----------



Class size*****	Academics and standards***** -is there mandatory reading & math time? -are the academics measured?
Community & Cohesiveness***** -among students -joint parent group	Lack of structure/Abundance of choice ***** -can be detrimental for some kids -is generally not something some families want
Business/Financial/Resource benefit of pooling resources -example option for a librarian for Middle School	Aesthetics and physical layout of classrooms really matter***
Historical success of Open students -including in the Arts	Noise*** -children with hearing impairments and sensory need for quiet will not be able to concentrate -some kids need quieter learning environment
SEL	Will Open accept Montessori parent's needs**** -be welcoming & accepting -fold in the values/desires
Chance to rebrand	Transition to more "academic" schools (middle school, etc) can be hard**
Opportunity to create something new	Big class size isn't always a good thing
Playground & Farm	Don't want to lose the groundedness felt at Montessori -from the orderly rooms -the light -the aesthetics

**C) Jenelle's Thoughts**[CB2] [CB3]

- Jenelle shared that there are must dos/may dos at Open
- Academics matter, but it's not the only thing
- Staff meet each week each kid is talked about and met where they need to be met
- SEL happens

**D) Option 2: Reinvigorate Montessori**

- Wasn't filled out

**E) Option 3: "Join Together with Parent Groups"**

- Invite parent groups/both groups of parents

- Everyone is welcome, there's collaboration
- The collaboration leads to a combined model
- Develop the best of both worlds
- Welcome all kids in the district

F) **Table 2.** Summary of “other key thoughts, concerns, questions and requests”. These were captured as “other/parking lot” items during the meeting but provide important data to draw on. They have been organized in three areas: a) ideas, b) requests, c) concerns/questions.

	Requests/Needs	Concerns/Questions
We have a lot of similarities: Let's take the gem of the 2 programs	Who is going to make this decision: this needs to get clarified*** · Will the Board shoot this down · Concern the Board won't listen Current parents should be the ones to vote/chime in Can teachers+Laura make the decision? · We really want a leader We want to know who will have power to decide	Concern that Option 1 is a merge <u>into Open</u> versus something new: Montessori has a larger student body Why not the Lagunitas School?****  Why isn't an Option 3 on the list: Becoming a new thing
Rebranding is in order: We have so much here: nature, SEL, art, beautiful campus, Amazing teachers, teachers here love the kids Worry that if we present it as Open or Montessori some people might just not be interested	What's the timeframe for the decision and then implementing things***	Program name matters**
The Middle School is thriving a good model	Can teachers develop the program and/or provide information on how the physical layout would work, class-set ups, teaching teaching etc so parents don't have to do it	Divisiveness feels harmful

		<p>more information on what Open is and how it works:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· How does it provide structure</li> </ul>
		<p>There is competition from RVC and Heartwood</p>
		<p>At Open meets will it be current parents that decide? Can we request this</p>

**G) Initial Results of Temperature Check on 3 Options:**[CB4]

(FIRST GO ROUND)

Option 3: 25

(IF WE HAD TO CHOOSE A SECOND ALTERNATIVE)

Option 2: 24

Option 1: 1

Note: after much discussion, the group kept talking and developed more specific ideas around Option 1 & 3, and how to develop a sustainable collective vision.

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[1] This summary uses all specific comments noted and summarizes them into related comments by topic for ease of interpretation and reading

[2] \* indicates roughly how many individuals voiced this concern or seconded it

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# Summary of Open Meeting, 3/6/23

## RECAP OF MEETING:

On Monday March 6, 2023, Open Classroom had a special meeting from 6pm to 8:30pm (scheduled 6-8pm) to discuss the possibility of Montessori joining Open Classroom next school year. In attendance were 28 parents, 7 staff, 2 board members, 1 community member and 1 reporter (names listed at end of document). After some introductory remarks intended to lay out the facts of the situation, made by Kelly, Sasha, Breeze, Anita and Laura (as planned by the meeting facilitator), we discussed the following question: "What are the benefits and concerns of having Montessori join Open Classroom starting next school year." Copies of the Montessori parent letter were handed out for review. We went around the room and heard from each person who wanted to speak. Each person was allowed 1 minute. Responses were written on large boards visible to all.

We then discussed possible next steps. The first proposal suggested was to ask ourselves: "Do we want to continue Open Classroom philosophy as it is?" or, phrased as a statement, "We want our school to continue to be based on the Open Classroom philosophy." The consensus answer was "Yes." Then we attempted to make a statement to respond to the Montessori request to meet the week of March 13 "to have a collaborative discussion about values, standards and next steps." After many rewrites, we settled on the statement below. The proposal to share that statement passed with a consensus vote. That is what Breeze will present to the board, on behalf of our program.

## STATEMENT FROM OPEN:

"The Open Classroom Community remains committed to our current program, philosophy and pillars. We are not interested in creating a new school. We welcome families to join us in an open house and meeting soon to learn more about our program and see it in action. We continue to have open arms and doors to anyone who wishes to join us as we are."

## WHO WAS THERE: Meeting Facilitator: Kelly Sylvester

In attendance at school: Sam Harris, Irene Stone, Ian Stone, Jason Coale, Gabi Friedrich, Larry Nigro, Ashley Griffin, Jake Morse, Stephen Scafani, Eddy Scafani, Steve Rebscher, Amy Valens, Jordana Lerios, Marlene Maiello, Laura Pucci, Richard Sloan, Anna Schell, Allioson Arnold, Kristy Arroyo, Erika Obedzinski, Breeze Kinsey, Anita Collison, Sasha Gulish, Morgan Patton, Wayne Patton, Laura Shain, Alice Shaw, Lily Krauss, Duncan Sylvester, and a reporter from the Point Reyes Light who did not put his name on the attendance sheet.

In attendance by zoom: Michelle Zart, Sandra Williams, Greg Reis, Levi Webb, Suree Stinemates, Melissa Stanbro, Jessa Pederson-Bliss, Frank Williams

# BENEFITS/CONCERNS/QUESTIONS/OPTIONS

*Below is a record of the concerns, benefits and questions that arose at this meeting and were recorded on poster boards. A "\*\*\*" indicates the additional people noting the same thought.*

## BENEFITS:

1. Bigger class size
2. More social opportunities\*
3. Bring parent groups together\*\*
4. "Power together"
5. Diverse views and opinions
6. Know community and children better
7. Sharing resources
8. Meaningful opportunities for our kids
9. Addresses declining enrollment
10. Decision vs. ongoing uncertainty
11. Unity\*\*
12. More parents\*\*
13. Teacher raises
14. "Growth opportunity" - growing something new/beautiful\*
15. Support our community to thrive
16. Welcome community
17. Teacher collaboration
18. Guided academics combined with Open pillars/magic

## CONCERNS:

1. Moving into more of a hybrid model - moving further away from four pillars\*\*\*\*\*
2. Too restrictive around not including all community voices
3. Bigger class sizes and mixing of students in different grades\*\*\*\*
4. "Lead teacher" idea and moving further from Open teacher format
5. "Reasonable values and standards" - worried about losing SEL / academics balance
6. Conflict\*\*\*\*
7. Losing families who don't want to collaborate or join Open\*\*
8. Losing valuable teachers\*
9. Energy going into new program rather than strengthening Open\*\*
10. Infrastructure\*
11. Transition to choice-based model\*\*
12. Prospective parents given uncertainty\*
13. Not having "Open" arms if we don't embrace Montessori's request to just talk
14. Not knowing what to expect for next year\*\*\*
15. Culture of Open will not be preserved\*
16. Losing the choice of having 2 campuses and different programs
17. Not knowing what to expect with teachers + staff
18. Timeline in letter - feels too fast / big ask on parent group / admins, etc.\*

### **QUESTIONS THAT CAME UP:**

1. What will Open staffing and program look like next year?\*
2. How many students are enrolled in TK/K for 2023/24?
3. Will we be able to keep multi-age classes?
4. Can we share the campus and keep 2 programs?
5. Is this decision forever?
6. Can we poll current parents on this to get concrete data?
7. How big would the class size be if we all were one school, with projected enrollment?
8. Do we have enough funding at this point for two programs?
9. Does this change 6th grade in Open?
10. Is the timeline set? That Montessori outlines?
11. Could Open stay as-is and Montessori only have 2 classes?
12. Would all teachers "teach" Open?

### **SOME OPTIONS:**

1. Montessori joins Open with few or no changes.
2. Programs stay separate.
3. We collaborate to create something completely new and unified.
4. Moving Montessori to to the upper campus

# Memo

**To:** Board of Trustees

**From:** Laura Shain, Superintendent/Principal

**Date:** March 31, 2023

**Re:** Recommendation on Unifying our Elementary Student Programs

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## Recommendation:

My recommendation to the School Board on the topic of unifying our elementary students is the following:

I recommend the School Board vote to unify the two separate elementary programs into one program. I imagine this program will rely heavily on the values and traditions that have developed over time in the current Montessori and Open Classroom programs. I trust our school team and parents to determine how these values and traditions will inform the daily practices in and out of the classrooms. With this, I support continual renewal and evolution to reflect professional expertise and the desires of our current and future school families.

When our enrollment was much larger at Lagunitas, I appreciated our two separate programs because of their size. When we had 70-80 students in each program, the size worked. They weren't too big nor were they too small. This just-right size created a viable sense of community for our students and families. However, with our projected elementary school enrollment of just 30-40 students in each program, two separate programs no longer feel dynamic. Our classes are too small and our programs have lost the vibrancy that comes from a diverse group of students and learners. We can get this energy back by joining together.

I am excited to help re-imagine a united elementary school at Lagunitas. I came to Lagunitas to join a district that managed to hold on to its progressive values despite a world turning more formulaic and controlled. Joining together is not an end to the special qualities that have come from all the dedicated people who created our unique school district over the years. At Lagunitas, students are encouraged to express themselves, make choices that personalize their learning, move their bodies, and expand their social connections. Relationships at Lagunitas are important and children in all classrooms connect with adults and one another in responsible ways. They learn our expectations for conflict resolution, and they learn to be stewards of the surrounding community. Often, learning is seen as fun, and play is seen as learning. Our goal is to keep the love of learning while building the skills students need to be successful students and thrive in an increasingly complex society.

If the Board votes to unify the two programs, I recommend we form a transition team with a small group of teachers, staff, and parents to begin work this spring to develop community-building activities in and out of the classrooms, outline the general structure of the school day, and consider the many needs and opportunities a unified program can encompass. This team would continue into the new school year.

In addition, I recommend we form a Parent Advisory Council to serve as liaison and representative between the school administration and the parent group. The Council can support communication and provide input on district-wide goals.