

Frequently Asked Questions from the LAEF 2024 Parent Survey

Thank you for your questions and comments. We hope these responses are helpful!

What is LAEF?

LAEF ([Los Altos Educational Foundation](#)) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit foundation led by parent volunteers, the Los Altos Educational Foundation raises funds from parents, the community, and corporate matching gifts to sustain and enrich Los Altos School District's (LASD) excellent educational programs beyond what public funding provides. LAEF helps ensure that students in LASD receive a well-rounded, high-quality education. Every school in LASD has parent representatives volunteering on the LAEF Board.

How does the LAEF Board decide to use our donations?

The [LAEF Board](#) uses our [annual parent survey](#) to gather input on program priorities and determine our anticipated fundraising capability. The LAEF Grantmaking committee works with LASD staff to discuss student needs. These components shape the final grant amount and the allocation for [funded programs](#) and related teachers. You can provide valuable feedback to LASD in setting the priorities and program allocation in many ways, for example: by attending LASD school board meetings, completing the LAEF annual survey, joining the LAEF Board, or participating as a community member on the LAEF Grantmaking committee.

Does LAEF play a role in determining the curriculum of LASD programs that LAEF funds?

No. Decisions about curriculum are made entirely by the Los Altos School District (LASD), not by LAEF. In addition, LAEF is not involved in personnel relations, hiring, or management of District employees. LAEF's purpose is to help fund staff and programs prioritized by LASD and parents. LASD would not be able to provide a well-rounded education without additional funding from LAEF. Each spring, LAEF surveys LASD parents to obtain feedback about all LAEF-funded programs. The survey results are presented to the District, informing their future curriculum decisions.





What does LAEF fund?

For the 2023-24 school year, LAEF is raising \$2.9M to fund teachers and staff for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), Wellness, Literacy, and Arts at all LASD schools. LAEF helps fill the gap in school funding from federal, state, and local sources and is the only way for parents to fund LASD teaching staff in our district. LAEF is also proud to co-sponsor the [MVLA Parent Education Speaker Series](#).

LAEF-funded programs sound great! How do I know if my student receives any benefit?

Your student, and every student in our seven elementary schools and two junior high schools, experience these programs every day.

You can learn about LAEF-funded programs from several sources:

- The [LAEF website](#) has an overview of [what LAEF funds](#) and in-depth information about recent student learning.
- Your school's weekly principal and teacher newsletters may have LAEF-funded program updates, such as recent Art Docent lessons.
- LASD and LAEF send periodic emails that share what happened recently in LAEF-funded programs at your student's school. (If you are not receiving "LAEF Program Highlight" emails and other information from LAEF, add admin@laefonline.org to your address book so our emails do not get sent to your spam or promotions folder, or contact LAEF to resolve this issue. Send us an email at admin@laefonline.org, and we'll help you out.)
- Follow LAEF on  [LAEF Instagram](#),  [LAEF Facebook](#),  [LAEF Twitter](#), or visit the  [LAEF website](#)

How do I access mental health counselor services?

A child can be referred to a therapist by a parent or staff member, if appropriate, to help the student succeed in the school environment. Many students received counseling this school year with positive results. Talk with your student's School Psychologist for more information. Learn more about [student wellness programs](#).

STEM is key in today's world. How is it being taught to our students?

LASD was one of the first districts to have a STEM program. The way STEM is taught has changed over the years, from having a dedicated STEM teacher at every elementary site to integrated and in-depth classroom curriculum, projects, and design challenges that every student can experience. There is a robust STEM experience at our junior high schools through electives and core class integration. The program has grown tremendously! This comprehensive program involves four components:

- **STEM in the Classroom:** Cutting-edge math and science curriculum ensure STEM is integrated into students' experiences every day. Rich math lessons, science inquiry, and engineering projects; and innovative junior high electives are hallmarks of LASD's STEM program.
- **Events and Activities:** STEM events are an important component of LASD's STEM program, providing a way for the community to come together to celebrate learning in the STEM fields. Some of our STEM traditions include design challenges, STEM Expos, and STEM Career Night.
- **Makerspaces:** All LASD schools have dedicated Makerspaces/STEM labs with equipment and materials for students to design, create, and iterate. The Makerspaces are available for teachers to reserve with other open lab times for students to create.
- **Computer Science and Robotics:** All students receive a comprehensive CS and robotics experience beginning in TK. Using the latest technologies and systems, instruction focuses on fundamental concepts of CS, generating excitement for computing and problem-solving and giving all students the skills and access to succeed in the digital world

LASD has expanded and improved STEM program offerings, focusing on consistency across schools and grade levels so that every student is building strong STEM mindsets.

Are TK-3rd grade students learning music since LAEF does not fund it?

Each elementary school offers a music/arts program to its TK-3 students. These programs, such as Starting Arts, are funded by the PTA at each school, so specific programming may vary.

My student would love to have more of the LAEF-funded programs, and I'd also like you to fund other new programs. Why can't you add programs?

Every year we solicit parent feedback through the survey and use this input to help determine [our](#)

[grant](#) to LASD and [funded programs](#). Unfortunately, LASD cannot implement all programs due to program cost and instructional time. We'll continue to consider introducing programs such as world languages and social/life skills, and increasing instruction in fine arts, wellness, and science/technology with future grants. Currently, there are no more available instructional minutes for new programs without extending the school day. Your active participation by voicing your feedback to the LASD board can make a difference.

How can I contribute to LAEF?

You can support LAEF by donating, volunteering, and being an advocate. Donations from parents and our community are needed to fund the well-rounded education we want for our students. We strive for 100% parent participation. Gifts of any amount are appreciated.

A variety of [donation options](#) are available to you, such as monthly installments and recurring payroll deductions. [Corporate matching](#) donations can increase the impact of your contribution if your employer has a giving program. Every donation is valued and appreciated. We encourage you to [volunteer](#) as an LAEF school representative to advocate for strong schools or as an LAEF committee member to help drive decisions.

Why are the PTAs and LAEF both raising money for the schools?

A key to LASD's success is the vibrant partnerships and financial support from the Los Altos Educational Foundation (LAEF) and each school's PTA. LASD is one of the top-ranked school districts in California. State and local taxes alone do not provide adequate funding for the excellent education we want for our students. LAEF and the school PTAs raise funds to help bridge the funding gap, giving LASD the additional resources they need to make all our elementary and junior high schools strong.

- LAEF funds teachers and staff for programs like STEM, Wellness, Literacy, and Arts at all LASD elementary and junior high schools. LAEF is the only way for parents to fund LASD teaching staff in our district.
- PTA funds equipment and supplies students need to learn, along with community enrichment.

LAEF and the PTAs are only possible with your financial support.

Where can I provide feedback about programs not funded by LAEF and other issues at school, such as the Universal School Meals Program?

Please follow up with your school's administration or PTA leadership for further information about programs not funded by LAEF, such as Starting Arts, Living Classroom, CSMA, after-school programming, etc. (see here for [LAEF-funded programs](#)). You can also provide feedback to LASD through their [website](#) and directly to the [board of trustees](#).

Comments collected from this year's LAEF survey regarding school lunch, facilities, curriculum, academics, and other subjects were shared with LASD.