

Live Oak budget cuts

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"Looking at programs around the country (without coordinators)," she said, "they are lucky to keep their gardens going. ... This is not designed to be just a garden for pleasure, but a garden to teach science."

Some 350 parents signed a petition in support of Binder.

Although the board stuck by the recommendation to cut Binder's position from the general fund category, it found a way to fund it from other sources.

It agreed to transfer some \$43,000 in state supplemental grants to the site councils — comprising parents and teachers — at the Live Oak and Green Acres elementary schools, letting each body decide

how it wanted to spend the money. As for the cuts:

- Bus service to the Del Mar Middle School will be cut entirely, and pupils at the district's two elementary schools will pay a daily 50 cents each way to ride the bus. Two of the district's five bus-driving positions will be cut.

The district hopes to raise some \$20,000 to \$30,000 in fares each year, but will bank that money for next year, said District Superintendent Rudy Carino.

- Bilingual education at the school will be restructured radically. Currently, non-English speaking students are pulled from their regular classrooms and taught by bilingual teachers.

To accommodate a \$62,000 cut, however, those students will now

stay in their classrooms. The district's bilingual teachers will be given jobs as regular classroom teachers.

By Thursday, both councils had agreed to fund Binder's position for next year.

Life Lab director Binder said Thursday she hasn't decided whether she'll stay on with the program, which uses a garden setting to teach science.

Since Life Lab started at the school in 1978, its fame has spread nationally and even internationally. It has served as a model for other schools wanting a hands-on way to get youngsters excited about science.

Binder has been with Life Lab since 1979, and its director since 1982. For the last year, though, she said she's known that the position

was coming to an end, and had planned to take an opening as a third-grade teacher at Live Oak Elementary School.

This week's events, however, have thrown that decision into question, she said.

"It affects a lot of people," she said. "(And) I'm just kind of enamored that the community has come out in such a strong position of support. There were an awful lot of nice things said about me."

On the other hand, she said, since the position has been transferred from the school district's general fund, it will be called into question again during next year's budget hearings.

"Obviously, I'm very committed to the program," she said. "(The decision) will be very tough."