

April 13, 2007

Re: Laboratory Schools Diversity Task Force

Dear Fellow Parents:

We are pleased to inform you of our appointment by Lab Schools' Board Chair David Strauss to co-chair the school's new Diversity Task Force. This Task Force will work with the entire school community on matters of diversity and will report to the Schools' Board of Directors. Since long before the concept of "diversity" entered the mainstream as a desirable goal, Lab has prided itself on the rich and varied racial, ethnic, religious, and economic make-up of its student body. Lab's commitment to diversity was formalized in its Mission Statement in 2001. Various curricular and extra-curricular activities throughout the school year confirm the ongoing importance of diversity at Lab. We must recognize, however, that maintaining a truly diverse institution cannot be guaranteed through passive reliance upon our traditions. The Task Force will ensure that the Schools' dedication to diversity remains active and comprehensive.

A very important component of Lab's diversity has been its longstanding relationship with Chicago's African American community. Historically, Lab has sought to be a school welcoming to children of color. Due in large part to its location on Chicago's South Side, enrollment of black students at Lab has traditionally far exceeded that at other independent schools in Chicago. We believe it is vital to preserve these traditions. While the mission of the Task Force extends to all aspects of diversity at Lab, we will initially focus on several issues of immediate and significant concern to the Schools' African American community. These include: (1) exploring options to help Lab attract and retain African American students; (2) making sure that we are pursuing all reasonable avenues to locate and recruit qualified black faculty members; and (3) ensuring that our programs and environment are welcoming to and supportive of all of our students and faculty members.

In appointing members to the Task Force, we face the twin yet competing goals of making sure that the Task Force represents a wide variety of perspectives, while keeping it small enough to be both manageable and conducive to candid, genial discussion. In addition to ourselves, the Task Force will be comprised of:

- The Director
- Four faculty members
- Six parents
- Two members of the school's staff and/or administration
- Two High School students
- Two alumni
- A representative from the University

April 13, 2007

Page 2

Given our knowledge of the Lab Schools community, we fully expect that far more parents will be eager to serve on the Task Force than space permits. We know we will have to make some difficult choices, and we ask in advance for your understanding if you are interested in being on the Task Force but are not appointed. While the Task Force will provide leadership to the school on diversity matters, membership on the Task Force is only one of many ways that interested parties can become engaged in and support the school's efforts to maintain a diverse and inclusive atmosphere. Indeed, one of the first things the Task Force will do is to establish processes and opportunities to ensure that all members of the school community can participate in diversity-related discussions.

If you are interested in serving on the Task Force, please send us an e-mail by Friday, April 20, 2007. Please explain the reasons for your interest in serving, and describe any unique perspective you believe you can bring to bear on the Task Force's work. We recognize that the concept of diversity means many things to many people, and we are expressly seeking to create a body that will reflect a wide variety of views and attitudes. Also, please let us know if you have had any relevant experience in working on diversity issues at other institutions. If you are not interested in serving but wish to recommend another parent, please feel free to do so.

In thinking about whether you wish to join this group, you should be aware that there will be an initial mandatory meeting of the Task Force on Saturday, May 12, 2007, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. We look forward to leading this important effort. Please feel free to contact either or both of us if you have questions or comments regarding the above.

Sincerely,

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