Learning Lab

As a teacher and career-educator, my favorite moments in the classroom have always been when teaching comes full circle; when the person with the lesson plan has the opportunity to become the student.

With this idea in mind, I began my tenure here with the goal of connecting with a broad array of people from our school community so that I might “learn Lab.” Over the past few months, I have completed interviews with many teachers, parents, Board members, and students, including a wonderful group interview with the U-High student council. In fact, this process has been so successful that I’ve extended the project to accommodate the many who have welcomed my invitation to meet and be “interviewed” by me.

Some very clear themes have unfolded about which you may hear more in the future:

- A proposal that will allow Lab students to benefit from the University’s new Marine Biological Laboratories in Woods Hole, MA, has been fully funded by the President’s office. New programs will be incorporated into the Middle and High science curricula, including opportunities for High School students to participate in marine research at MBL.

- Lab’s Extended Day program is teaming with PinkThink, an educational startup (formed by a UChicago Law Professor Emily Buss and also an NSF and Polsky grant winner) that creates academically-oriented mobile games that make learning fun. Already it is starting to happen.

- Connections, Lab’s annual gala fundraiser, will be on March 7.

- We fully anticipate opening Gordon Parks Arts Hall in the fall and welcoming everyone to a celebration in early October (details to come).

As we begin this new year, I wish you all the best. I look forward to sharing news of more things that are happening at Lab.

Warm regards,

Robin Appleby

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Rooftop gardens ground learning in a Dewey-developed activity

Three stories above the ground, on the roof of Earl Shapiro Hall, children are digesting in the dirt, planting lettuce, and collecting bugs. Last spring, the Organic Gardener, a company specializing in gardens that grow organic produce, installed six planted modules on UV-stabilized polypropylene, and every week over the fall, two of their gardeners visited ESH to plant, water, or harvest produce with students—continuing a practice that has been in place at Lab since John Dewey walked the halls.

In the spring gardens showed the students how to dig holes and plant seedlings. The students got to dig around among kale, romaine, radishes, turnips, basil, thyme, oregano, and pansies (pansies are edible and add bold color). This fall the students reaped the benefits of their labor, taking home a vegetable or two and sampling flavors right from the plant.

The garden offers an opportunity for the students to try foods they might not otherwise, says second-grade teacher Ms. Marinho. “They might be more likely to try new things. They say, ‘Oh, this came out of dirt, and now I can eat it.’”

With the plants installed next to playgrounds, the students can keep an eye on the plants, even on days when the Organic Gardener team isn’t there. “We’ve playing on the roof every day,” says Ms. Marinho. “They can see the changes. Oh, this has a hole in it,” or, “This is three inches bigger.”

Witnessing such changes reinforces an understanding of lifecycles, and teachers connect the lessons to other classroom activities in age-appropriate ways.

“|I think they’re understanding that food doesn’t just pop up in the grocery store,” says Ms. Marinho. “A farmer is planting, harvesting, and washing it. It’s not an easy process; there’s someone behind the scenes doing a lot of work.”

In addition to assisting with learning, the gardens also foster interesting paths in child-directed learning. One day the children found a number of caterpillars eating holes in the kale leaves, so they collected them—and fed them to a class snake. Another afternoon, the students collected more than 100 ladybugs (and later let them go). “I’m from California,” Ms. Marinho says. “I’ve never seen so many ladybugs in my life. Without the plants, the kids wouldn’t have seen that.”

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Knitting You Can Count On

Every day after lunch, Eli Johnson’s first- and second-graders have a choice: they can play with blocks, Legos, or stuffed animals. They can read or draw. Or... they can knit. Ms. Johnson’s been teaching her students to knit ever since she took lessons four years ago. Of her 25 students this year, there are 15 or 14 knitters, and some knit every day during choice time.

She works individually with the children, instructing them using thick yarn and large-gauge needles. After learning the basic knit stitch, some students become skilled enough to help others with dropped or added stitches. Occasionally, parents come by to work along with their children.

As a way to acknowledge accomplishment, students get to show finished work to Principal Susan Devetski.

U-High History Electives Expand Student Opportunities

Several years ago, knowing that overall enrollment at Lab would be growing in the coming years, Principal Scott Fech and the U-High Curriculum Committee began to explore how the School might expand academic opportunities in the High School.

“We worked to develop a meaningful process that would incorporate many voices,” says Mr. Fech. “We had conversations with college counselors to see how these courses would impact students, and spoke with other departments regarding opportunities for collaboration.”

This year, a series of new electives are being taught with the plan to rotate the choices on a yearly basis “to give students more opportunities,” says Ms. Devetski. “It’s all about student interest in learning about.”

The projects are simple: blankets for stuffed animals, scarves, and “pulse warmers,” or wristbands. In addition to the knit stitch, the students learn more complex techniques, like making tassels and casting off (finishing a piece by tying it off from the needles so that it doesn’t unravel). Near the end of the school year, Ms. Johnson teaches some second-graders how to purl—a more difficult stitch—as a sort of “graduation.”

Sometimes the students get excited and skip steps. “They want to just knit, knit, knit. They’d rather have a big gaping hole in a scarf than go back and rip it out.” Their enthusiasm extends beyond the classroom. Last year, when an advanced knitter finished a project, Ms. Johnson encouraged her to go down to Primary School Principal Susan Devetski and show it to her.

“It’s a special way to acknowledge this accomplishment,” says Ms. Johnson. “As students finish, they show Ms. Devetski their scarf or wristband, receiving accolades along the way from the greater Lab community.

One girl was so proud of her “neck gator,” a single-looped circular scarf, “that she wore it despite the 80-degree temperature that day.” Being a knitter is sort of an identifier,” says Ms. Johnson. “You’re looked at as having this special talent. You’re going into learning feeling special.”

Block by Block

Young cartographers pound the pavement

What makes for a good neighborhood: A school? A hospital? A grocery store? What about a toy store? These are a few of the questions and answers Linda Weide’s third-graders say a community needs to examine this idea of community—from the students’ school to their city—they’re making maps.

Their first map-making adventure took them to a block near Lab to Kenwood to 56th. Using grid paper, the students mapped major landmarks—like houses, apartments, stores, and restaurants—by marking them using a key they’d created. Banks were demarcated with dollar signs. Hair salons appeared as squares with scissors in them. “It’s like fieldwork,” Ms. Weide says. “You’re researching by going out and looking.

After plotting the area around Lab, they were tasked with creating maps of their home neighborhoods. With both of these communities in mind, the students came up with a list of buildings, services, and spaces they thought a good neighborhood needed. The list included a police station, a post office, a library, a dentist, an optometrist, restaurants, a movie theater, a park, places of worship, a dry cleaner, and a pet care store.

“We’re trying to understand what community is,” Ms. Weide says. “We have a dictionary definition, but we’re looking at what it is in a physical way.”

The final piece of their map-making unit included mapping areas on the UChicago campus and in Hyde Park around 53rd and 55th Streets, seeing if they could find all of the must-haves on their list.

The mapping assignment instills a greater sense of responsibility over the students’ classroom community, says Ms. Weide. “We have some taking up chores like managing the library and laundering the class tablecloths. This deeper understanding of community feeds into a subsequent unit on government, wherein the class is divided into wards and holds mayoral and aldermanic elections. Perhaps after such lessons in community and democracy, the people will feel empowered to petition for that toy store.
The Joy of Baking

On Friday afternoons, the hallways outside Diane Bloom’s fifth-grade classroom fill with the aroma of freshly baked bread. Sometimes people will walk down the third-floor corridors sniffing. “It reminds me of cartoons when people walk along on a smell,” says Ms. Bloom.

At 8:20 a.m., the students measure ingredients, filling four bread machines with flour, water, yeast, salt, and whatever that week’s particular recipe requires. Sometimes they add cinnamon or raisins. Sometimes they add chocolate chips, which demands an added level of care; add them at the wrong time and the result is chocolate—not chocolate chip—bread.

The exercise incorporates math skills and attention to detail, but also, Ms. Bloom says, how to “sense things,” as baking is both an art and a science. She also incorporates social studies, assigning each student a country to research, including its local staples.

In addition to bread, Ms. Bloom, who grew up in Jamaica on a dairy farm, teaches the students to make butter by shaking cream in jam jars. “Kids learn a lot by doing,” she says, and making butter and bread, even using a machine, teaches life skills—“doing things yourself, living off the land to a degree.” City children don’t have much opportunity to learn such skills, so “doing something tangible and having that integrated into their modern lives is important.”

The bread curriculum, which Ms. Bloom has been leading for three years, is a “vehicle to capture the kids’ interest and helps them socially and emotionally,” teaching them how to work together. “Giving kids ownership of a project means they’ll usually buy in,” says Ms. Bloom, especially if they get to eat it.

Bread-making also helps the students connect with people beyond their classroom. Every Friday the class makes more bread than they need, so “we started thinking about giving back.” The children considered donating to charity, but bread’s short shelf life made that idea unrealistic. Ms. Bloom suggested thinking closer to home: they now share with other teachers, students, and staff.

Around 1 p.m., the loaves are baked, and the class gathers to literally and figuratively break bread. They gather at the back of the room, pass around slices of bread, and share “highlights”—good parts of their week—and “lowlights”—parts of the week that didn’t go so well. “And sometimes the highlight is bread,” says Ms. Bloom.

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Digital Development

New technology lab is a catalyst for student music production

Five years ago, four students joined Francisco Dean’s digital music class. Now enrollment has surged, and with the opening of Gordon Parks Arts Hall, at least 20 students will be able to participate and make use of a dedicated music technology lab, complete with new computers and digital music keyboards. “To go with the new space and equipment, Mr. Dean decided it was time to update his knowledge of digital music—essentially music written, created, produced, mixed, and performed electronically.” “I’ve really been immersing myself,” he says of his year-long professional development work. He’s been taking classes, being tutored privately by both a digital music producer and a recording engineer, and shadowing recording sessions. The result of his professional development, Mr. Dean says, is that he is “more in tune with what the kids are able to do and can find ways to help them find their creative voice. I’m in a good place to prepare for the new facility.” And he is already evolving his curriculum to help students better understand the foundations they must build before they can write digital songs. With his updated knowledge, Mr. Dean can help both new and experienced students learn to digitally create melodies, work with samples, record live audio, and participate in live electronic jam sessions. “We’re in a nice groove where we’re able to serve each ability simultaneously.”

Students and Faculty Receive Honors

> Senior Rajan Aggarwal and Justin Whitehouse made the semifinals of the Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology, a top high school science research competition. Both students participated last summer in Lab’s Summer Link Program. Rajan worked on his topic, “High-Accuracy, Low-Cost Alternative Approach to Time-of-Flight Laser Ranging,” with Cheng Chin, UChicago professor in physics, the Enrico Fermi Institute, and the James Franck Institute. Justin worked with Laurens Mers, UChicago associate professor, molecular genetics and cell biology on his topic: “Discovery of Activity of the Undocumented Phosphomevalonate Decarboxylase in Methanotrophs: A Possible Renewable Source of Isobutene Production.”

> The fall 2014 issue of the Conundrum Review included a paper on cotton gin-inventor Eli Whitney, written by Jennifer Xue, ‘14, (with support from teacher Charles Branham). The Review is the only quarterly journal to publish the academic work of secondary school students.

> Middle School librarian Tad Andracki has been appointed chair of the American Library Association’s Rainbow Project Committee, which is charged with compiling the Rainbow Book List, an annual bibliography of newly published, recommended fiction and nonfiction that reflect LGBTQ experiences for young people. This is a prestigious committee in the field and the list is used by librarians, teachers, and book sellers nationwide to select a diverse collection.

> For the 49th consecutive year, the U-High Midway received an All American rating from the National Scholastic Press Association.

> The Illinois Track and Cross Country Coaches Association announced the election of Bud James to their Hall of Fame. Coach James has led U-High’s track and cross country teams to multiple regional, sectional, and state championships. In addition to his accomplishments at U-High, he has coached national- and international-level athletes, including more than 20 USA Olympic marathon and track qualifiers, and served as head US coach for international competitions and at the Chicago Marathon as an elite athlete expert advising international media.

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From the Syllabi

Created and funded in honor of Zena Sutherland—a former UChicago faculty member and still considered among the world’s most influential selectors of young people’s literature—Lab’s Zena Sutherland Award for Children’s Literature is one of the only child-selected book awards in the United States. Says Lower School librarian Irene Frenzwald, “Zena Sutherland had great faith in the ability of children to make informed critical determinations about literature. That certainty is the bedrock of the Sutherland Awards, where children are empowered to closely examine and discuss books and to award excellence in literature.”

The 2013 and 2014 candidates:

The King of Little Things
Mr. Tiger Goes Wild
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Building Musical Lives

At the beginning of each school year, teachers Rozalyn Torto and Michelle Morales Miles have their ninth-grade orchestra students put down their violins and cellos and think about what music means to them.

“We’re not asking them to write about the music they’re listening to or learning to play right then,” says Ms. Torto. “But then they talk about it at home and see their parents get excited and dust off their old Beatles records. That’s when they really see how important music can be in people’s lives.”

To help the students connect to the music they play, the orchestra’s repertoire draws on both classical and more contemporary artists like Green Day and Adele. And since Jimi Hendrix’s mammoth sound never seems to lose its appeal, they sometimes turn the volume up—way up—by plugging in a guitar and adding drums to the ensemble.

This fall, U-High students also got a lesson on how to make a life in music, attending an open rehearsal of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The field trip was about more than just hearing a world-class orchestra get in tune. For the students, it was a chance to see real musicians going about their everyday lives: wearing jeans, scribbling on their scores, joking with their colleagues, making mistakes. “During the Q and A,” Ms. Miles says, “the questions weren’t only about the music. The students were just as interested in hearing about the musicians’ schedules and their family lives.”

Nothing beats taking your instrument out into the real world. So throughout the year Middle School and U-High ensembles perform in the community, including annual dinner recitals for families staying at the Hyde Park Ronald McDonald House. And High School students get a chance to perform for—and teach—Lab’s youngest students at Earl Shapiro Hall. The student musicians give presentations that will help each group of little listeners appreciate the music even more.

“It’s like a real gig,” Ms. Miles says. In fact, she says, playing in an orchestra is great training for any career. “The conductor is the CEO. You have the violin department, the cello department. They have to do well on their own, but they have the common goal of playing together.”

Of course, the teachers are always on the lookout for students who have the talent and the desire to pursue music as a calling. “When we see that spark, we try to nurture it,” Ms. Torto says. “But the real goal is to show the students how music can always be a part of their lives, whether that’s playing for fun with a group of people or being an advocate for the arts.”

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in the halls

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how to cross quicksand

In Adventure Education, Middle Schoolers cross quicksand, avoid hazardous materials, and learn about teamwork

There are two islands, separated by quicksand. The only way to cross from one island to the other is to use “stilts,” two long planks connected by ropes. Four to six kids can fit on the stilts at the same time. How do you get 24 kids from one island to the other?

“They fail at first,” says physical education teacher Dan Dyra. After a while, the students figure out that they need to synchronize their movements on the stilts: “One, two, three, lift,” says Mr. Dyra. “It won’t work if they move individually. They have to do it as a team.”

In the sixth and seventh grades, Lab students spend a week in Adventure Ed: nontraditional PE activities that target trust building, communication skills, and leadership. In high school, students go through a six-week unit.

The creative activities allow quieter students to shine, says PE teacher Joyce Grotthuss. Less athletic kids—who usually hang back in team sports, but who have strong problem-solving skills—often emerge as leaders. “They blossom,” she says.

At the same time, the activities teach kids the value of teamwork. A naturally athletic kid who does well in more traditional team sports by being “a ball hog,” says Mr. Dyra, soon discovers that that approach won’t work. In Adventure Ed, all of the team members have to participate equally. “It’s not about your skill level,” says Ms. Grotthuss. “It’s about working together as a class.”

Another Adventure Ed scenario requires pairs of students to make their way through an obstacle course of hazardous materials: i.e. cones, balls, and rubber chickens. One partner is blindfolded, the other serves as a classmate. “It’s about working together as a class,” says Ayaan.

That’s where the teachable moments come. After the obstacle course scenario, Mr. Dyra asks students, “Who’s guiding you in your life?” Over the years, he says, students have shared some deeply personal answers to that question.

The activities may look silly and fun, but the lessons about teamwork and communication are significant. “It transfers to life,” says Ms. Grotthuss. “That’s what we like about it.”

Caught in a web of curiosity

As her first-grade students increasingly noticed and commented on the spiders and their webs in the monks and cressets outside Earl Shapiro Hall and seen through the giant picture windows around the building, Eileen Wagner got an idea: “If the kids discover something of interest to them,” says Ms. Wagner, “then we develop a curriculum around the topic.”

With the opportunity to cross quicksand, avoid hazardous materials, and learn about teamwork

Students set goals for themselves, learned about the day-to-day life of a high schooler, and contemplated the new liberties (like free periods or homework that teachers don’t always collect) that come with entering ninth grade.

New classmates interact. “The retreat also did a fantastic job of showing me the complex personalities of each person within the grade,” Ayaan says, “and how they made up a piece of the puzzle.”

How to Cross Quicksand

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Expanding the freshman year helps ease the transition

Whether a student is already a “lifer” or brand new to Lab, transitioning into U-High is a big step for any incoming freshman. This year’s freshman retreat, a revamped program now spanning two days, has been at Lab since kindergarten, was pleasantly surprised by how much she enjoyed the retreat. “I was expecting team-building experiences which can feel forced,” Maya says. “But we really came together as a community. We got to goof off and talk, and that helped me get to know some of the new kids.”

One of the “new kids,” Ayan Ashtana, agrees. The freshman, who came to Lab from the Avery Coonley School in Downers Grove, appreciated the free time the students had to socialize. He particularly enjoyed the walks to and from the cabins between activities because he could meet other students and watch his

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“Some words of advice.”
in the halls

Mark Plotkin, ’54, sponsors new series in honor of his mother

When Steven S. Dunham, ’62, won Lab’s Monsanto Medal (for sponsorship at U-High) he learned a lesson in selflessness that has stayed with him a lifetime. As he tells it, Mr. Dunham thought the medal would go to his best friend, basketball teammate, and sort-of-nephew. But it didn’t. Mr. Dunham describes feeling stunned, happy to have won, and yet disappointed—his receiving the honor seemed unfair. As he walked back to his seat, that same friend was the first to congratulate Mr. Dunham, leaping from his seat to greet him in the aisle. As Mr. Dunham explains, right then and there, he learned the definition of selfless.

This was just one of the stories Mr. Dunham told during the talk he gave as the inaugural presenter in the new Mark Plotkin | Muriel Rosenthal Alumni Speaker Series—a speech that left adults teary-eyed and students moved.

 Says classmate Mark Plotkin, ’54, whose gift made the series possible, “Steve deserves high praise. He was just the ideal choice and I thought there was something that he craved in the room that was palpable.”

Mr. Dunham went on to graduate Princeton and Yale Law and is now vice president and general counsel at Pennsylvania State University. Along the way he held leadership roles at other universities and also at the law firm of Morrison & Foerster. But he thinks back on a very full life, his Lab connections still resonate. He urged the teenagers in the room to look around and take note: some of the people in the room will remain your closest friends and some may go on to be the most impressive you will ever know.

Mr. Dunham’s sentiment of respect (and even awe) proved quite in keeping with Mr. Plotkin’s goal for the speaker series: “to inspire students, and teach them to value what Lab is making a difference in their lives, by hearing from alumni who know it to be true.”

But Mr. Dunham’s tone also proved in keeping with Mr. Plotkin’s motivation in creating the series. “I did this to honor my mother, Muriel Rosenthal Plotkin, because she insisted that I go to U-High,” says Mr. Plotkin. “She felt that it would make me not only a more educated person but to her, most important, a better person. I think it succeeded.”

New Alumni Speaker Series

President Zimmer previously announced five new members of Lab’s Board:

Derek Douglas, the UChicago vice president for civic engagement, leads the University’s local, national, and international urban development and civic engagement efforts. His two children attend Lab at Earl Shapiro Hall. Previously, he served as special assistant to President Obama on the White House Domestic Policy Council.

Melina Hale, PhD ’98, is a University of Chicago professor of organical biology and anatomy and a member of the Committees on Neurobiology and Computational Neuroscience. Her research integrates biometrics and neurobiology. She has three children at Lab.

Neil Shubin is the parent of two Lab students. He is the Robert R. Bensley Professor, Organizational Biology and Anatomy and associate dean for academic strategy at the University of Chicago, and has authored two popular science books, The Universe Within, and the best-selling Your Inner Fish. He regularly brings his skills into Lab classrooms.

Andrea Wishom is an executive vice president at Harpo Studios, where she has also served as executive producer of Oprah’s Next Chapter at OWN and as a supervising producer for over two decades of the Oprah Winfrey Show. She is the parent of three Lab students.

Amanda Woodward, the UChicago William S. Gray Professor of Psychology, has a student at Lab. She serves on the boards of the Cognitive Development Society and International Society on Infant Studies. Her work has been funded by, among others, the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and NSF.

Lab’s partnership with High Jump Program to Expand

Lab is a “fundamentally aspirational” school for High Jump students, says High Jump Executive Director Lee Hart. Its location on the South Side is ideal for reaching the program’s target students and hosting classes they can consistently attend.

High Jump serves students from Chicago’s public, charter, and parochial schools, unifying students and faculty from different backgrounds “around a commitment to academic excellence and to empowering students regardless of their economic means,” says Ms. Hart. In addition to the summer sessions, during the school year participants attend Saturday classes twice a month, taught by High Jump teachers.

When Lab parents Mariana and Ingrid Ingersoll attended a High Jump info session in 2012, they “were blown away” by its success record, says Ms. Ingersoll, who joined the organization’s board last year. The Ingersolls are continually impressed by the High Jump alumni they meet—like the twins who graduated from UChicago Pritzker School of Medicine. “You see that kind of impact and it leaves an impression on you,” says Mr. Ingersoll.

Through Lab’s service learning program, U-High volunteer tutors work with High Jump students. “These interactions promote mutual growth,” Ms. Appley says. As the students work together, “they’re learning from each other at the same time.”

The immersion in the Lab experience is essential to High Jump’s success, says Ms. Hart. “It makes a real difference in how kids think about what’s possible.”

Nonprofit provides academic enrichment to students of limited means

New Board Leadership and Members

University of Chicago President Robert J. Zimmer announced that David Kistenbraker will succeed John W. Rogers, Jr., ’76, (who has served on Lab’s Board for 17 years) as the next chairman of Lab’s Board of Directors starting at the end of this academic year. Mr. Kistenbraker, managing partner of Dechert LLP’s Chicago office and co-leader of the firm’s White Collar and Securities Litigation practice, is a Lab parent and has been a member of the Lab Board since 2011. He has served as chair of the Board’s Planning and Operations Committee for the past three years.

Mark Plotkin

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Lab’s partnership with High Jump, a not-for-profit that provides tuition-free academic enrichment to Chicago-area seventh and eighth graders of limited economic means, is expanding. During summer 2015, Lab will host 120 High Jump program students—double the 60 students involved last year, and well beyond the 30 who participated when the partnership began in 2010.

High Jump helps its students prepare to thrive in a demanding academic setting through hard work and solid learning strategies. Virtually every student goes on to attend rigorous private and public college preparatory high schools, and over 89 percent attend four-year colleges.

The High Jump partnership is an extension of Labs commitment to diversity, says Lab Director Robin Appley, who explains that diversity prepares students to live and lead in a complex world, with an inherent sense of inclusiveness and justice. “It creates a better experience for all Lab students,” Ms. Appley says.

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Fact or fiction? Rocks are a favorite find for young children—good textures, neat shapes, so many uses in everyday play. Teacher Marie Randazzo suggested that each of her kindergarteners find a rock on his/her travels (across the country or in the backyard). Along with each rock, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot’s The Essential Reading: Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn from Each Other home and school—of family and community—“treacherous” crossroads where the worlds of around these “essential conversations” at the and autobiographical narrative that swirl with complexity and contradictions, and experience and expertise. In the end, these conversations bring us full-circle back with teachers, we tie ourselves in anxious knots of the tangling, interplay, respectful of parents’ and teachers’ recognizing and appreciating the complexity with a fine 18-8 record (5-2 ISL) with a time of 3:48.63. Coach Kate Cronin was honored mention. The Maroons were awarded the ISL Sportsmanship Award. the State Series were: seniors Luis Libes and Ten Truitt, sophomores Alice Cartwright, Luisa Edwards-Levin, Elsa Ering, and Isabella Khan, Elsa and Isabella made All-Conf Sectional (top 10). Boys Cross Country Junior Jacob Meyer qualified for State for the third time, where he ran a 15:13—the second fastest time since Peter Muller won the 1996 State Championship with a 14:46. Jacob was ISL MVP and ISHA Regional Champion. Sophomore Charlie Sowerby also advanced to the State Championship and was All-ISH. The Maroons qualified to the 2A Sectional race with seniors Arthur Chang, Zach Emanuel, and Taylor Horfin, juniors David Hudgson and Max Seveller, and freshmen Nathan Blevins and Harrison Shapiro. recommended reading

As parents, we feel the pang in our stomach when the school number appears on our cell phone or light back tears when our child reports they were left out at recess. As teachers, we tie ourselves in anxious knots before meetings with parents. Yet, no matter our role, we all affirm the importance of positive cooperation between home and school, and we actively participate in the ritual of parent conferences as if these uneasy feelings did not accompany us into the meeting. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot bravely acknowledges that “parent-teacher encounters are rich with complexity and contradictions, and there is always potential for alliance and enmity, opportunity and casualty, love and hate.” She gently explores the layers of historical perspective, cultural experience, and autobiographical narrative that swirl around these “essential conversations” at the treacherous” crossroads where the worlds of home and school—at family and community—converge. She delicately explores the power and complexity of teachers’ and parents’ subjective experiences in these interactions, and sets those experiences in the context of a diverse, democratic society.

A book eminently suitable for both parents and educators, The Essential Conversation reveals the breadth and depth of feelings in our parent-teacher conversations. Lawrence-Lightfoot proposes a new point of entry: recognizing and appreciating the complexity in these conversations creates a dynamic interplay, respectful of parents’ and teachers’ experience and expertise. In the end, these conversations bring us full-circle back to what creating thoughtful school-home communication can and should be.

Sports Highlights

Boys Soccer
The Maroons finished 7-7-3 and second place in the ISL. Winning post-season honors: 1st Team All-ISHL and IHSSCA All-Sectional, seniors Michael Glick and Michael Horo; 2nd team ISL, juniors Alex Foster and Max Rochelet. Michael was Chicago Five All-Academic 1st Team.

Golf
The team qualified to compete at the IHSA Sectional Tournament because the team would finish in the U-High Regional. Team members at Sectional included junior Andrew Chizewer, sophomores Kyle Allidick, Andrew Bryant, Brian Brady, and Chris Kuceru, and freshman Jeremy Chizewer.

Girls Swimming
Placed fourth in the IHSA Sectional competition at UIC where runners set three meet records: Junior Maia Boussey broke a 24-year-old 100-yard backstroke record with a time of 1:01.59. The 200-yard medley relay team (junior Maia Boussey, sophomore Alexis Porter, and freshmen Amber Huo and Elizabeth Van H) set a new record time of 1:56.08, and the 400-yard freestyle relay team of senior Alex Thompson, sophomores Zoe Rebello, Zoe and Alexis Porter, and freshmen Amber Huo, set a new school record time of 3:48.63. Coach Kate Cronin was named Sectional Coach of the Year.

Boys Tennis
The team took second place in the ISL, with All-Conference honors going to senior Della Brown and junior Grace Anderson (first doubles); senior Francisco Almonacid and junior Monica Lewis (first doubles); and sophomore Delna Patel (second singles). In IHSA Sectional play, the Maroons finished second to Whitney Young, sending both doubles teams—Della/Grace and Monica/Fred—to the State Championship event.

Girls Cross Country
The team won the 2A Regional Championship, qualified through Sections, and finished 3rd in the IHSA Championship Race in Peoria. Leading the Maroons in
A Family Affair

History and philanthropy tie Ingersolls to Lab

Aside from parental influence, there is no doubt that for early training I shall be unendingly grateful for my ten years…at the University Elementary School. There, instincts of curiosity and perception were sharpened. … They were happy years of adjustment to the world I would live in.” —Carroll Mason Russell

The University of Chicago and Me, 1901–1962

For Paul and Mariana Ingersoll, the decision to send their three sons to Lab was a matter of family history. The decision to support Lab philanthropically, however, has everything to do with Lab’s present and future.

All three of their children—Paul, now in eighth grade; Sebastian, seventh; and Julian, sixth—came to Lab in 2007, when Julian started nursery school. It wasn’t easy to move the children from the public school they had attended. “For all our ties to the University of Chicago, leaving was a difficult decision,” says the elder Paul Ingersoll, MBA’06.

In the end, Mariana Ingersoll says, “The family history just won out.”

It is an extensive history. Although Paul attended Lab only through first grade, when his family moved to the suburbs, his mother, Ann Ingersoll, is a 1947 graduate. And his grandmother, Carroll Mason Russell, ’15, SB’19, was a member of Lab’s very first kindergarten class, which entered October 1, 1903. His great-grandfather—Carroll’s father, Arthur Mason—was a member of Lab’s very first group of students in 1902.

The Ingersoll connection to Lab spans four generations and started with Carroll Russell, whose 1914–15 memoir, The University of Chicago and Me, tells of her years at Lab and the College, and of her life with Paul “Pete” Russell, PhB’16, a former Maroon quarterback inducted into the University’s Athletic Hall of Fame in 2013. Pete Russell eventually became a University trustee; Paul Ingersoll is named for him.

The latest generation of Ingersolls has continued the UChicago tradition. Paul and Mariana’s children, having spent years at Lab, don’t know anything else, their father says. “It’s hard to explain to a middle-schooler how lucky he is,” he says. “But we’ve been very pleased by the experience. We’re definitely boosters.”

Lab’s close ties to the University and its “ridiculous amount of resources” have been strong academic benefits, Mariana says. “Whether it’s a parent who brings in a dissected sheep skull or a parent who’s a writer and talks about her writing process.” The Ingersolls also appreciate Lab teachers’ “free rein” to manage their classrooms and take lessons in different directions based on students’ interests.

Feeling so fortunate to have their family at Lab has driven the Ingersolls’ involvement in the Schools—and their desire to help expand access to Lab to a greater variety of students.

When their own children started school, Mariana and Paul came to understand the city’s deep educational inequities. “Growing up in Chicago, then spending all this time looking for schools, we’re well aware of the importance your neighborhood can play on the quality of your education,” Paul says. “Lab has wanted to broaden the base of students. Now with the addition of Earl Shapiro Hall, it can.”

Mariana serves as co-chair of Lab’s Connections fundraiser in 2011, which helped fund student aid and teacher development. The work led Mariana in particular to become more involved in philanthropy for financial aid and she has championed Lab’s expanding partnership with the nonprofit High Jump, which provides academic enrichment for area seventh and eighth graders of limited economic means.

“Whether you have kids attending a private school,” Mariana says, “you want their school to be a reflection of the city they live in.”

The Ingersolls support Lab philanthropically because they want to strengthen and diversify Lab’s community while providing opportunities to more students. Another reason for their involvement comes back, unsurprisingly, to family.

Paul and Mariana have tried to teach their children the importance of giving, and build awareness of how fortunate they are, from an early age. “As city kids, you see a lot of stuff,” Paul says, “and it prompts a lot of conversation.”

With a few years ahead before it’s time to decide on college, Paul, Sebastian, and Julian don’t know if they’ll follow in the footsteps of their great-grandparents and attend UChicago. But both Mariana and Pete Russell, PhB’16, who are Chicago-area natives: she emigrated from Mexico as a young child with her family and graduated from Lane Tech High School and UIC. He went to New Trier High School, known for its academic and extracurricular resources.

“At New Trier, when they did a version of Pippin, they would get the costumes from Broadway,” Paul says. “And then you hear about other schools where they don’t have money for music.”

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The Ingersolls support Lab
Originally it was an Elizabethan fair for U-High featuring a Shakespeare performance, a Maypole dance, and guests outfitted in period costumes. Nearly four decades later, Lab's longest-running annual tradition, Rites of May, has evolved into a school-wide, multicultural happening, celebrating the school's global reach through a weekend of cultural, culinary, and carnival events organized by dozens of parent and student volunteers. The activities reflect the incredible cultural diversity of the Lab community, where families report speaking more than 50 languages at home.

Over recent months, Lab parents, alumni, and friends connected in Chicago and across the country: Lab hosted alumni gatherings in Chicago, Boston, and Washington, DC. And in Chicago the Schools held an annual event welcoming new parents and thanked members of the Dewey and DePencier Societies at an annual wine and beer-tasting event.
Mr. Ward strives to write scripts that allow the films’ visual elements to shine—something he attributes to his background as a painter.

As he writes the script, other members of the team gather footage and archival images and conduct interviews, with Mr. Burns overseeing everything. “These two streams come together” to create the final product. “I think I’m the only person in the world who enjoys meetings,” Mr. Ward jokes. In his job, meetings are “a lot of little people in the room, all of whom are trying to make an already good thing even better.”

The team is united by a love of narrative history and the belief that it belongs on the screen. “There are a lot of filmmakers who have to be talked into doing history—people who don’t intrinsically believe that it’s interesting and filmable,” Mr. Ward explains. “Ken is not one of those. He figured out early on how to use old pictures to make you feel that somehow you’re watching the past as it’s actually happening.”

Mr. Ward strives to write scripts that allow the films’ visual elements to shine—something he attributes to his background as a painter. "The picture is the topic sentence," he says. "Over the years, you remove the adverbs you should have removed when you started. It’s sort of like writing haiku. You get it down to what you need." To keep audiences engaged, he looks for characters “whom whom you can identify and whom you can follow from show to show.” In The Civil War, for instance, Mr. Ward did not focus solely on well-known generals but also on everyday soldiers, like the Northern soldier Eliza Hunt Rhodes and Confederate Sam Watkins, both of whom wrote wartime diaries that became essential sources and helped show what the war was like for soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

Mr. Ward—who lives in New York with his wife, writer Diane Ravns Roe—would no idea his collaborations with Mr. Burns would have such a monumental cultural impact. Their films have earned Mr. Ward seven Emmys and praise from critics like Tom Shales of the Washington Post, who called The Civil War “not just good television, nor even great television. This is historic television.” Mr. Burns’s signature technique of panning slowly over still photographs became known as the “Ken Burns effect” (now a feature available in Apple’s iMovie software).

The public’s enthusiasm for The Roosevelts carried over to The Civil War’s 45 million viewers. “You never know with these things,” Mr. Ward says. “I was surprised with the incredible reaction to The Roosevelts. It attracted an extraordinary number of viewers, especially in an era when there are hundreds of channels.” He’s grateful the films have reached so many people. “I think people should understand their country’s past,” he says. “We tend to see the problems we face as terrible and unprecedented. Our forebears dealt with problems every bit as daunting, and they felt worse, than we’re dealing with.”

Besides, Mr. Ward says, “History is a source of wonderful stories and extraordinary human beings that people should know about.”

In the end, that’s what brought Mr. Ward back to the Roosevelts—and FDR in particular. “FDR is a great story,” he says.
John Dewey believed that a great education would prepare children to contribute to and participate in democratic society. As technology has made the world feel smaller, the definition of “democratic society” has dramatically expanded. And Dewey’s philosophy becomes that much more important, says Lab Director Robin Appleby. “When the calendar ticked to 2000, educators started talking about 21st-century skills,” Mr. Appleby says. “The idea of 21st-century skills has begun to encompass global thinking, global opportunity. What technology gives us is much easier way to interact around the world.”

A look at Lab’s curriculum, and its community, will communicate to even the most casual observer that Lab is already a globally-inspired institution. And, in part with the arrival of Ms. Appleby, the Council of International Schools (CIS), a global membership organization that supports schools and universities focused on international education, has taken notice. Last spring CIS welcomed Lab as a member, after a rigorous application process, including a substantial qualitative application and a two-day visit to Lab by CIS.

The process began in late 2013, after Ms. Appleby—a member of the CIS board of directors—was appointed to succeed Lab’s outgoing director David Magill. CIS took interest, and Mr. Magill led the school through the application last year.

Says Ms. Appleby, “CIS is looking for an alignment between their mission—which is to support internationalism and global-mindedness in schools around the world—and the ethos and mission of the member schools.”

Further anchoring Lab’s reputation as a school with international stature, Lab joined the G20 Schools, an invitation-only association of schools across the globe that are committed to innovation and excellence. Only four schools are invited from any one country and Lab rounds out the US group with Exeter, Buckingham Browne & Nichols, and Harvard-Westlake.

Inherently international

“You don’t have to have the word ‘international’ in your name to make you an institution that teaches young people to be a global citizen,” explains Ms. Appleby. “At every grade, Lab teachers are already connecting students in their classrooms to the whole world in deeply substantive ways.” Some examples:

> Lab’s partnership with Beijing 84 High School has brought a teacher from Beijing to spend a year at Lab.
> Lab’s Student Forum on the Middle East brought in two University exchange students from Egypt to speak about the revolution in their country.
> Three- and four-year-olds researched dozens of Winter Olympic countries, examining globes, and poring over atlases.
> Model UN is one of U-High’s most popular (and intense) activities.
> Computer science teacher Marty Billingsley, ’77, will trade jobs—and homes—with an Australian teacher through the Fellowships Teacher Exchange Program.
> Fourth graders take the Global Reading Challenge, centered on books chosen to highlight themes that connect people despite cultural and global distance.
> U-High’s expanding World Language exchange program now includes China, Germany, France, and a rotating set of Spanish-speaking countries.

In partnership with Lab’s faculty and leadership, Ms. Appleby plans to more clearly articulate and share the ways Lab’s curriculum supports global thinking and citizenship. “I’d like to get everything our teachers and students are doing on paper so we can ask, ‘What more can we be doing?’” she says.

In many ways, Ms. Appleby sees Lab as a pioneer for American K-12 schools. Of the 603 CIS-affiliated K-12 schools, only 22 are in the United States, and most do, in fact, have the word “international” in their names.

Lab’s built-in advantage—being part of the University of Chicago—as a large part of what makes it a leader in international learning in the United States. (The University is one of America’s 306 CIS-affiliated universities.) But beyond the notes that Lab feels “very much like it’s an international school environment, even though it’s in American.”

As an expat in Dubai, Ms. Appleby could view American culture from a distance. All of the families at DAS were expats—from more than 100 different countries. Students and teachers regularly learned and discussed different ways of living in the world. Says Ms. Appleby, “The conversation about what it means to be an expat is really also a conversation about what it means to live as an international citizen.” This exchange of ideas and perspectives is very much part of the fabric of Lab, she says. “Because we’re a part of the diverse UChicago community, the Lab community is more international and internationally aware.”

Global schools, according to CIS, work to promote multicultural perspectives through diversity, communication, multilingualism, leadership, service, and an understanding of global issues and ethics from multiple points of view.

“Global thinking and celebrating global diversity is more than what people call the three ‘Fs’: food, festivals, and flags,” Ms. Appleby says. “It’s actually understanding and engaging in other cultures.”

With CIS membership, Lab’s teachers will have expanded opportunities to grow their global outlook—a significant benefit, says Ms. Appleby. “It allows us into a group of internationally-minded schools worldwide. It gives us access to conferences and provides opportunities to recruit more international teachers. Our faculty members could become trained to join accreditation teams at schools around the world and to observe other international schools.” And bring back to Lab the best educational practices and new techniques.

“We’ve learned that the more people leave their own cultures or communities,” says CIS director Jane Larson, “the more people reflect on where they come from. They don’t really grow without leaving their own cultures or communities,” says CIS director Jane Larson, “the more people reflect on where they come from. They don’t really grow without leaving their own cultures or communities,” says CIS director Jane Larson, “the more people reflect on where they come from. They don’t really grow without leaving their own cultures or communities,” says CIS director Jane Larson, “the more people reflect on where they come from. They don’t really grow without leaving their own cultures or communities.” and bring back to Lab the best educational practices and new techniques.

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Renovation Breeds Collaboration: Welcome to the New Blaine Hall

For the first time in its history, Blaine Hall is devoted entirely to use by the Lower School (grades three through five) and, says Principal Sylvie Anglin, “As the students and teachers settle in, the more the spaces look like the people living and working there.” Each teacher used the renovation and classroom moves as an opportunity to reimagine how the learning spaces could help children engage with their work. Many teachers chose to create multiple levels for learning. Mobile bookcases are arranged to create study nooks on the floor. Curved desks turn students toward one another to stimulate interaction. For kids who need to get above the fray to see things from a different perspective, there are tall tables, standing desks, and stools.

“Wonderfully, the space is an old space and a new space at the same time,” says Ms. Anglin of the oldest building on Lab’s Historic Campus. (Blaine opened in 1903).

To the casual observer, the newly restored and renovated Blaine Hall might seem, well, still Blaine Hall. But, for the educators working there, it’s an invitation to explore a host of possibilities for innovation and collaboration.
“Wonderfully, the space is an old space and a new space at the same time,” says Principal Sylvie Anglin of the oldest building on Lab’s Historic Campus (Blaine opened in 1903).
“So much can happen by having the entire Lower School in one space,” she explains. The Lower School World Language teachers have their own classrooms for the first time ever, students spend less time transitioning between classes, and recessed lockers help open up and brighten the hallways, which serve as great collaborative spaces. In the newly outfitted science labs, highly accessible ledges are filled with living creatures and line the window wall, connecting the natural world outside with the classroom. All of the Lower School science rooms are connected, fostering new potential for collaboration among teachers, and among students.

The library, newly named the Knes Family Library, has a significantly larger footprint, including classroom space so that students can access the stacks all during the school day. Moveable furniture invites readers to linger, and they do.

The Schools and the architects worked to preserve quintessentially Blaine elements—the lobby retains its historic beauty (with better lighting), the original Katharine Martin water fountain is still on the first floor, and you will find two original stone staircases and wood display cases.

Says Ms. Anglin, “No one wanted Blaine to feel like anything other than Blaine. We wanted to make sure that our spaces truly supported our program. I think we all feel like we are home.”

In the newly outfitted science labs, highly accessible ledges are filled with living creatures and line the window wall, connecting the natural world outside with the classroom.
Students and parents, counselors and colleges offer their perspectives

By Julian Lark, Grace Anderson and Mirabella Bacchus-Jeho

From the Midway

Just as colleges strive to fully evaluate college freshmen boils down to fit. - school’s newspaper. This is all real and of interest from just talking to alumni have learned the most about my schools interests, students reflect on everything. -school that isn't a Historically Black Col "She told me that being black at any school that isn't a Historically Black Col..." "I know one thing that I've bonded with..." "I know one thing that I've bonded with..." "I've talked about how the lack of support for students of color made their experiences really negative. At one of the schools I..." "I've talked about how the lack of support for students of color made their experiences really negative. At one of the schools I..." "I've talked about how the lack of support for students of color made their experiences really negative. At one of the schools I..." "I know one thing that I've bonded with..." "I thought that it is a positive experience, it is preparation for adult life," Dr. Gundeti said. "Particularly how you have to work, and focus on different things at the same time." Apoorva is fortunate in seeing how her older siblings took on work. In comparison to my experience, this is much more than I did for myself in the higher education process. In India, you basically just fulfilled the curriculum, did well, and went to the corresponding school. Here, the student is looked at from 360 degrees. I think this makes them into quite more mature individuals. Making sure she takes the right course and decisions on time proved crucial to having a good application process, according to Marissa Page, Class of 2014, currently an incoming freshman at Northwestern University. During her senior year, the Common App, created in 1975 to help simplify the application process, crashed, leaving many seniors with early applications on the lurch. "As early as the end of sophomore year, I knew I could be happy there. I basically won't get the mortgage." "Let's say I want to go buy a house," explained Ms. Kovacs. "First, I need to decide what I value. Do I want a single-family home? A condo? An apartment? When I've determined that, I want a number of bathrooms and this particular type of kitchen, I can find the house that matches my criteria. But once I find it, I expect to negotiate, and the mortality of negotiating is significant in the buying process."
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Tuesday, May 5

Palo Alto Alumni Gathering
Thursday, May 7

San Francisco Alumni Gathering
Friday, May 8

Chicago North Shore Alumni Gathering
Spring

Gordon Parks Arts Hall Opening Celebration
Saturday, October 3

Alumni Weekend 2015
October 16–17

For details and to RSVP to any event, contact the Office of Alumni Relations and Development at 773-702-0578 or alumni@ucls.uchicago.edu

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