THE PLAY’S THE THING:
THE PEDAGOGY OF LAB’S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE
UNKNOWN, OBSCURE, YET OH SO LAB:
A LOOK AT HIDDEN LAB
IN THE HALLS:
THE TOP TEN WAYS YOU KNOW YOU ARE A LABBIE
LAB NOTES:
CLASS NOTES & ALUMNI NEWS
Dear Friends,

The day after school let out for the summer, I had the pleasure of informing our families that on June 8 the Laboratory Schools’ Faculty Association ratified a four-year collective bargaining agreement with the University of Chicago. The message was short, but in my opinion this is the most significant labor agreement ever negotiated in our 40-year history of collective bargaining.

The contract sets forth not just working conditions and a compensation agreement but places a “professional growth plan” front and center. Just another way our faculty—working closely with the administration—will develop a plan that focuses on the quality of teaching throughout the Schools. Across the nation and in both public and independent schools, instructional efficacy is receiving more attention than I have ever seen in my decades working in pre-collegiate education. In recent years and in many public schools, a faculty is measured by the achievement of the students. At Lab, where our students are already achieving at high levels, analyzing teacher success is much more complex. During the 2011-2012 school year, we will finish developing a system of measurement that aligns well with our unique environment.

The process used to arrive at this agreement was time consuming and arduous, but it was deeply respectful and always focused on the one thing we all care about: ensuring that Lab stays true to its commitment to providing a best-in-class education to a best-in-class student body. Helping make this process so successful was an approach used for the first time this year. Using “Modified Traditional Bargaining,” we worked with two federal mediators from the beginning to the moment when a tentative agreement was reached.

The new agreement prescribes regular meetings between the Faculty Association and the administration, and I am very pleased that we are both committed to productive and meaningful discussions throughout the next four years. This commitment will be especially useful as details of the planned changes for our campus occur, while construction is completed, and as our population grows.

Welcome back—we have much to which we can look forward!

David W. Magill, EdD
Director

Note: from the Schools homepage at www.ucls.uchicago.edu, the Lab+ link will take you to detailed information about the Lab+ Campaign, including goals, plans, and the history behind the effort.

Steward Phillip IV, the Merchant John, Rosalinda the Squire, Mary Ryan (Lord James’ First Daughter), and the many other members of Diane Bloom’s fifth grade medieval “castle” are reading for an interaction with a neighboring fiefdom.

Each child carried a prop that indicated stature and role in castle life—a toy bird (a.k.a., a falcon), a stuffed pony, a baker’s spatula, and more than a few bows, arrows, and swords.

“...We are going to need to communicate clearly as we meet with the opposing castle,” explains Ms. Bloom. “You’ll need to quickly figure out everyone’s station in life and see if we are friend or foe,” she warns.

Just friend, hopefully, as the other fiefdom is only Kristin Frank’s fifth grade class, also studying Middle Age feudal systems. The two teachers recognized an overlap in curriculum and collaborated to make a meeting of the lords and ladies happen.

This day is one in a months-long project centered on medieval life and the Middle Ages. It has been an experiment in historical understanding and research with children accessing online databases, gathering facts from the dozens of books collected from both Blaine and Rowley libraries (as well as students’ home shelves). These young Middle Schoolers are learning to take notes that they will turn into written reports and presentations.

“We have done so much studying,” says Ms. Bloom, “that wanted to give the children an opportunity to put it all into action—to live it and to feel it.”

“Becoming a character was one way to give life to the lesson, but so was inviting real life aviarist and federally licensed falconer Mark Booth (who knew?) to show off his bird. Mr. Booth arrived in a period costume and told stories to the entire fifth grade.

Ms. Bloom’s class transformed into the castle right after she assigned small groups of students to research a specific part of a castle and then, in some way, bring this part to life in the classroom—maybe a picture or a model. Some used Legos, Playmobil pieces, others egg cartons and tape, and the resulting castle elements decorate the room. Coats of arms and a jircon made later in the effort adorn the walls.

And then they came to life. Each child carried a prop that indicated stature and role in castle life—a toy bird (a.k.a., a falcon), a stuffed pony, a baker’s spatula, and more than a few bows, arrows, and swords.

On more than one occasion Ms. Bloom made sure that the conversation was bridging school and home. “Whether it is the story of Sanny the Squire, Amelia the Falconer’s Apprentice, definitions of ‘hag’ and ‘cocket’ (which have their roots in falconry), or some other aspect of medieval weaponry, I hope that your children have something to share,” she emailed home.

Huzzah!
She posted a lie about me online! ...
... He bumped into me on purpose! They won’t let me sit at their table in the cafeteria!

Middle school is a time when conflicts can surface and adults aren’t always around to mediate. At Lab, teachers called the curriculum called “Owning Up” to help students manage conflict. Developed by educator Rosalind Wiseman, who wrote the bestseller *Queen Bees and Wannabes* and visited Lab in 2009. Around the country, Ms. Wiseman helps parents, educators, and young people navigate the social challenges of young adulthood. Even at Lab, where community and civility are central values, bullying and social cruelty can occur. Owning Up gives kids “a common language and skill set” for facing interpersonal issues, says Allison Jones, Middle School assistant principal and dean of students. In sixth through eighth grade advisories, students learn to follow the SEAL steps in conflicts with peers: stop and define the problem; explain what they feel and need; affirm each person’s rights and role; and lock into an agreement about whether to stay friends, take a break, or end the relationship.

Ms. Jones says students regularly come to her office to request a private room or to discuss problems using the approach. “Resolving conflict is an important life skill. They see and recognize that.”

The city of Chicago’s first artist-in-residence, Mr. Laslo is also the former artistic director of Redmoon Theater and a veteran set designer. He cut and assembled the wood pieces for the house and the kids painted and decorated the structure with colorful sweets, cheerful curtains, and lofty “smoke” puffing from the chimney.

Once finished, the house became a favorite hideaway. Small groups of kids served each other make-believe meals inside, pulling the curtains shut for privacy. Gingerbread literary studies continued: By Passover, the class was reading *The Mazeltov Man*, a Jewish retelling of the fairy tale. “Our goal originally was to teach kids that there are different versions of the same story,” says Ms. Stowe-Grant. “But with the house project, we ended up tapping into their creativity and imagination.”

School Awards For Service, Citizenship, Academic Achievement

Senior Service Award for outstanding service in the community over their entire high school career: Ben Boothman-Jarvis

U-High Service Award to individuals who have contributed the most to the current school year: Erik Gustafson, Alice Improvement

President’s Award for exceptional improvement in music, literature, and science: Maya Baroody, Alexa Green Initiatives Group

Justin Algee, Adrian Aldana, Selig, Cory Stern Cuneo-Grant, Amir Hay, Association

Jolisha Johnson, Association

Anna Rosenzweig, Anastassia Ovtcharova, Natalia Ginsburg, Spectrum

Phillip Healy, Jonathan Freshmen

Maio, Sam Sentongo

Sarah Curci, Michele De

Nabila Reem Khondakar, Grace Brody, Ary Hansen, Juniors

Neal, Martin Alex Nesbitt, David Chung, Samuel Seniors

for other individuals who have made considerable progress during the past year:

Henry Bergman, Freshmen

Maricarmen Pachicano, Emanuela Frankel, Sophomores

McKenzie, Shrija Sriram

Charles Jiang, Aneesh

Victoria Bills, Matt Soble, Briana Watson

Anna Rosenzweig, Aleksandra Karapetrova, Seniors

for contributions to school life during the past year:

School Awards For Other Individuals

Citizenship Award for exemplary concern for the welfare of the school community and school spirit:

Harrison MacRae Freshmen

Henry Bergman, Middle School assistant principal and Middle school adviser, says “Owning Up” encourages adolescents to “own up” to their actions, and take responsibility—as perpetrators, victims, bystanders, or—for unethical behavior. It also gives them practical tools to resolve squabbles on their own.

Middle School teachers embraced the curriculum after attending workshops with Ms. Wiseman, who wrote the bestseller *Queen Bees and Wannabes* and visited Lab in 2009. Around the country, Ms. Wiseman helps parents, educators, and young people navigate the social challenges of young adulthood. Even at Lab, where community and civility are central values, bullying and social cruelty can occur. Owning Up gives kids “a common language and skill set” for facing interpersonal issues, says Allison Jones, Middle School assistant principal and dean of students. In sixth through eighth grade advisories, students learn to follow the SEAL steps in conflicts with peers: stop and define the problem; explain what they feel and need; affirm each person’s rights and role; and lock into an agreement about whether to stay friends, take a break, or end the relationship.

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TEACHERS CREATE VERTICAL MATH COMMITTEE

What would you do if the person sitting next to you on a plane wouldn’t stop talking about math? Well, luckily for enthusiastic Lab math teachers Rosa McCulligan and Donna McFarlane, they had each other.

Flying to and from a math teachers’ conference, “We talked about how great it would be to form a math group composed of teachers from each grade level, from the Lower School to U-High,” Ms. McFarlane says. “The objective would not be to make any changes, but just to open the lines of communication across all grade levels.”

And so the Vertical Math Committee was born. The committee meets once a month to discuss the curriculum and goals of each grade level, to talk about transitions from one grade to another, and to just generally get geeked out about math. “We strive to understand what is going on in all math classrooms at Lab, and to bridge language gaps across grade levels,” Ms. McCulligan says. “For example, in the Lower School, ‘A 3 x 4 = 6’ is called a ‘solving problem’ in elementary and an ‘evaluating problem.’ Understanding these small differences will help us help our students.”

“We’re not there as watchdogs; we don’t have an agenda,” says Julia Ellis, who joined the group as Middle School rep. “We are just there to talk about math, and to think about the ways students learn math.”

Says Ms. McFarlane, “It’s certainly had an impact on my teaching. It’s been great to meet with other teachers who share my passion for math. And for math at the end of the day, our common goal is to understand what is going on in all math classrooms at Lab, and to bridge language gaps across grade levels.”
There are many advantages in puppets," Decar-Wilde wrote in the essay Puppets and Actors. "They never argue. They have no crude views about art. They have no private lives."

Not necessarily true—at least not for the puppets created by the first graders in Ilia Mazurek’s art class. Monstrio, for example, may seem "admiringly docile" as he hangs in the hallway outside Ms. Mazurek’s classroom. But according to his first-grade creator, Monstrio robbed a bank, was arrested, and managed to talk his way out of it.

The puppets are the result of a five-month collaboration between Ms. Mazurek and her first-grade homeroom teachers. The project began in January with a field trip to see “Jim Henson’s The Science and Industry.” Back at school, students watched video clips of the puppets, as well as examples of puppetry from Vietnam, China, and Indonesia.

The children’s first puppet was simple, created by cutting out a drawing and pasting it to a stick. Then they began to do sketches for a 3-D hand puppet. "The puppet project was really about giving children the opportunity to immerse themselves in a variety of creative processes, imagining, making, and writing, all working together to generate ideas and to develop a variety of art-making and writing skills," says Ms. Mazurek. "For the body, students decorated muslin fabric. In some homeroom classes, children wrote descriptions or poems about their puppet characters. In Nefatiti Rochester’s class, they wrote stories. Ms. Rochester asked her students to think about “what kinds of things their character would do,” she says, “where they would live, who their friends would be, what problem they had, and how they might solve or not solve the problem.” Hence Monstrio’s back-story.

"There is a Cooper’s Hawk that preys the garden. The Cooper’s Hawk may not be the rarest but any top predator is not common."

And this particular Cooper’s Hawk has been seen carrying off an odd pigeon or two.

So this year, Mr. Jones, science teachers Daniel Calleri and Jeff Mahaney, and homeroom coordinator Scott Griffin are taking birds in hand, so to speak. Instead of farming the job to an outside company or the city, the four are taking an ecological and safety-driven approach to relocating the brood of nine ducklings and their morn. Most importantly, they were capturing the mother first, then the babies, before safely delivering the intact family to the nearby, water-filled Wooded Isle.

The success of the eighth-graders, says math teacher Chris Freeman, reflects the kids’ strong commitment to each other. For example, only four members of the MATHCOUNTS team can compete at the state level, but, “the trophy belongs to all 30 members. Everyone benefited from the practice, and the fact that each person was there made someone else work a little harder.”

Middle School math teams = success

A like number of students took the Illinois Math League’s test. Lab’s eighth-graders placed first in state and the sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade teams each placed first in the city.

In the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics contest, Lab’s eighth-grade team placed first and the sixth graders tied for third. In the MATHCOUNTS’ competition—which has written and oral rounds—Lab placed first in Chicago and fourth in the state.

Sixth-grader Adam Fine hit a perfect score on the AMC 8. He is a tie for first place in Illinois, and Adam, Rojan Aggarwal, Elbert Du, and Jonathan Marck all received recognition or top scores on the high school level AMC 10 and/or AMC 12 tests.

The “mother will pretend to have a broken wing and drag herself away from the ducklings as a distraction. Once she sees that it isn’t going to work it gets a bit toughier,” says Mr. Jones. “Hopefully, if we do this a few years running, she’ll start to see us as predators and choose a better location for her nest.”

Puppets on Parade

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Dan Jones loves bugs

Now Even Undergrads Are Researching Insect Breathing Habits

Middle School science teacher Dan Jones loves most insects, but for years he stemmed clear of cockroaches. He used to live in Florida and remembers how the large, often foul-smelling bugs would fly into his home when he opened the door. “I did my part to try to kill them all,” he says.

Eventually, he had a change of heart: “I decided that if cockroaches could cause that kind of response in me, I needed to know more about them.” Mr. Jones arrived at Lab in 2006 and three years later seized an opportunity to acquire six Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches (Gromphadorhina portentosa) from the Field Museum, which had more than they needed in their collection. “I love the bugs,” he jokes. “I’d love to have an entomology master’s program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.” But some cockroach species seem to be able to do just that, holding their breath for up to 200 hours. “It seems to happen most often to species that live in an environment that can become hypoxic, where there’s a lack of oxygen—but, for example, in U-High’s ‘cockroach corner,’ Mr. Jones and two students who are assisting him for course credit, Jonathan Jos, ‘12, and junior Maddy Campion, are collecting baseline data for the study last summer. They worked first with the Orange Headed Cockroach, or Eublaberus posticus, a strong, aggressive species inhabiting caves in Costa Rica, where it burrows into the mud substrate. The researchers set up three chambers, two experimental and one control, and attached the chambers to data acquisition devices. They then filled each chamber with five juvenile specimens from each group to conduct a comprehensive study on the insects’ discontinuous gas exchange—taking a deep breath and holding it for an extended period of time—and its relationship to their molting, a process triggered by hormones. “A lot of insects are capable of discontinuous gas exchange,” says Mr. Jones, who is enrolled in an entomology master’s program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. “But some cockroach species seem to be able to do it really well.”

In addition to individual and family meetings, a formal college preparation curriculum is paced (starting during junior year) to help ensure each student has the right information at the right time. The final college choices for the Class of 2011 are broad and options are increasing with each passing year. The final college choices for the Class of 2011—some of whom will be the first in their families to attend college—the college application environment was unprecedented, just like last year. And U-High’s college counselors expect it to stay that way for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Jones says, participating in his research is a great opportunity. “Last year, one of my students learned about them. “Mr. Jones arrived at Lab in 2006 and three years later seized an opportunity to acquire six Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches (Gromphadorhina portentosa) from the Field Museum, which had more than they needed in their collection. “I love the bugs,” he jokes. “I’d love to have an entomology master’s program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.” But some cockroach species seem to be able to do just that, holding their breath for up to 200 hours. “It seems to happen most often to species that live in an environment that can become hypoxic, where there’s a lack of oxygen—but, for example, in U-High’s ‘cockroach corner,’ Mr. Jones and two students who are assisting him for course credit, Jonathan Jos, ‘12, and junior Maddy Campion, are collecting baseline data for the study last summer. They worked first with the Orange Headed Cockroach, or Eublaberus posticus, a strong, aggressive species inhabiting caves in Costa Rica, where it burrows into the mud substrate. The researchers set up three chambers, two experimental and one control, and attached the chambers to data acquisition devices. They then filled each chamber with five juvenile specimens from each group to conduct a comprehensive study on the insects’ discontinuous gas exchange—taking a deep breath and holding it for an extended period of time—and its relationship to their molting, a process triggered by hormones. “A lot of insects are capable of discontinuous gas exchange,” says Mr. Jones, who is enrolled in an entomology master’s program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. “But some cockroach species seem to be able to do it really well.”

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“Last year, one of my students learned gene sequencing to assist with a project involving stonechats. When she got to college, she was offered a lab position because she knew those techniques.”
U-High students are vying for a chance to compete against the world’s top science students as part of the International Science Olympiads in physics, biology, and chemistry. Students from around the world, ultimately selecting four-person national teams that compete for a world championship. Three students from Lab made the semifinals this year—an uncommon feat.

Graduating senior Charles Du was one of only four students to represent the United States as Team USA at the 2011 International Biology Olympiad in Taiwan this July, where he won third place worldwide. (Nearly 10,500 students participated in the USA portion, alone.) It was Charles’s second appearance at the Biology Olympiad: last year, he won a gold medal at the finals in Seoul, South Korea. Charles also advanced to the second round of the North American Computational Linguistics Olympiad and the USA Mathematics Olympiad exams this year. Also this year, senior Joseph Turner was a semifinalist for the US Physics Olympiad team, and senior Daniel Byun was a semifinalist for the US National Chemistry Olympiad team—Lab’s first.

The selection process for each Olympiad is intense. The student must pass first a local and then a national exam. From the hundreds of semifinalists taking the national exam, 20 are selected for an intensive preparation course. From that group, four competitors are chosen to represent the United States at the international competition for their field.

Computational thinking on Capitol Hill

A TEACHER AND AN ALUMNA TESTIFY BEFORE CONGRESS

In March, computer science teacher Baker Franke and alumna Aimee Lucido, ’09, spoke at a Congressional briefing on the importance of K-12 computer science education. Mr. Franke and Ms. Lucido had been invited to Capitol Hill by Computing in the Core, an advocacy group that supports the teaching of computer science in grades K-12.

Mr. Franke told the Congressional staffers and policymakers that without formal training in computer science, students miss out on “computational thinking,” which he defined as “a certain mode of thinking that remains relatively untapped in traditional education.”

As an example, Mr. Franke cited an assignment he set for his AP Computer Science class: A physics professor heard rumors that students were plagiarizing their lab reports by borrowing heavily from friends in other sections of the course. But with more than 800 lab reports to compare, how could the plagiarists be identified?

“Here’s what I like about this problem,” Mr. Franke said. “Obviously a computer must be used to solve it.” In the face of mountains of data, there is no way to eyeball it to figure it out. This is more than a ‘needle in a haystack’ problem. It’s thousands of haystacks, all made up of needles, and you have to find all the needles, and it takes a computer to do that.

To come up with a solution, students have to be creative, and think computationally. “Once my students have the computational thinking skills necessary to even approach a problem like this,” Mr. Franke told the audience, “they then delight in bringing all of their other expertise to bear— they’ve seen students use ideas from biology, statistics, linguistics, and the visual arts to catch plagiarists.”

Increasingly in the workplace, there are hundreds and thousands of problems requiring computational solutions…and there aren’t enough Americans with the education and training necessary to figure them out,” he said. “To get us there, we need computer science to be a part of every American’s education.

Because of the AP computer science class at Lab, Ms. Lucido told the group, she decided to major in computer science at Brown. She has won two national awards so far for her programming. She is a recipient of the National Center for Women & Information Technology Awards for Aspirations in Computing, and was selected to participate in Google FUSE, a networking program for talented students who are traditionally under-represented in the field.

Montaigne embraced the idea of suspending judgment and believed in constantly weighing ideas rather than blindly accepting them.
Ah, the mile run. Is there another Laboratory Schools physical education activity that garners more talk value and dramatic re-tellings among students of all ages? Says fitness coordinator Diane Taylor, “just ask the nurse how many students come to her office with nerves or ill on mile run day.” But stressing out the students is certainly not the goal. Teachers carefully emphasize that being able to run a mile is all about life-long health, with personal improvement as the finish line.

“We want the kids to do their best but we don’t want to see them pushing themselves beyond their limits in an unhealthy way,” says Ms. Taylor, who manages the database that tracks students’ performances on the various Presidential Challenge fitness measures, of which the mile run is just one.

Still it’s fun to see the results—Lab has some outstanding runners and most encouraging! Fourteen minutes was the slowest time for the kids in fourth through eighth grades. That’s pretty darn good.

As noted (and to remind many an adult to keep an eye on their fitness), we share the fastest times for the grades that do not often get a sports highlight:

**Mile markers:**********************

|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|

and recovery begins, just what do you do with 1,000 origami cranes? Once school ended, third-grader Yuya Shibata traveled to Japan with her parents, Katsue and Shuichi, and hand-delivered the cranes and messages to an elementary school in Sendai affected by the disaster.

A video of the project is available at www.vimeo.com/julialife/cranes. (Password: “cranes.”)
Monday, May 16, 8:35 a.m. As Dee Beaton’s fourth-graders arrive for class, lawyers are waiting for them in the classroom. Someone has stolen a bowl of candy, they’re told, and tenth-grader Duncan Weinstein is suspected. The class holds a hearing with one of the lawyers as the judge who determines there is enough evidence to try Weinstein.

So began the fourth-grade’s weeklong exploration of the justice system, culminating in a mock trial. It was the fifth time Ms. Beaton, who teaches a third/fourth-grade loop, had staged the event. The students had learned about the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and forensic science in the days leading up to the crime. Ms. Beaton says. The student lawyers carried out their arguments and examination of witnesses “almost independent of the adult team leaders.”

After deliberating for 30 minutes, the student jury found Weinstein guilty—which he was—after deliberating for 30 minutes. Ms. Beaton says. The student lawyers carried out their arguments and examination of witnesses “almost independent of the adult team leaders.”

Asra Ahmed steps into a new role
This summer, Asra Ahmed became U-High’s assistant principal, a role that had been vacant since Cathy Feldman retired in 2006. Ms. Ahmed has worked at Lab since 2004, first as a counselor, then as chair of the counseling department. In her new position, she serves as the High School’s chief academic officer, overseeing the advisory program and student course registration process. She will also work closely with faculty and Principal Matt Horvat in thinking about how the curriculum might evolve as U-High expands its enrollment over the next four years.

“We’re in a moment of significant change, with the new schedule and the increasing enrollment,” said Ms. Ahmed. “Our growth means that we are changing, not only in our numbers but also in our diversity of learners. I look forward to bringing my experiences working with Lab students to the faculty as they make decisions about how to shape their curriculum.”

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History channelled

On a hot June evening, with ceiling fans spinning and a djembe drum beating a rhythm, U-Highers transported their audience to Africa and the Middle East without ever leaving Blaine 214. Family, teachers, and friends packed the small auditorium to leave.

The week before, in Mr. Janus’s class, students were presented with the opportunity to engage in a project that would transport their audience to Africa and the Middle East without ever leaving Blaine 214. This project was their final project for Advanced Topic: European History.

The final projects ended a year of learning with a "Hey kids, let’s put on a show!" approach. A little procrastination-induced panic fuels creativity, too. Students have leeway to determine the type of presentation they'll create, but are required to write a script based on research and common readings.

This year, students read The Jewel in the Crown, the first novel in Paul Scott’s Raj Quartet, to learn about European imperialism and its impact on colonial societies. To better understand nationalist movements in Africa, they relied on The Shadow of the Sun, a nonfiction account by Polish journalist Ryzard Kapuscinski.

Mr. Janus's class wrote a dramatic script featuring Kapuscinski as narrator and eyewitness to mid-twentieth century independence struggles in Ghana, Ethiopia, and Zanzibar. The play's second act jumped to the present day, when the journalist mentors a young American reporter covering prodemocracy movements in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. Many students directed and acted in the African play; some choreographed and performed dance and choral pieces. Others handled costumes, props, sound, and lighting—or helped to paint sets and a classroom mural depicting African history. Students prepared and served British, Indian, Polish, and Middle Eastern food after presenting their projects. “Everything associated with this is really a collective effort,” says Ms. Martorty.

Each class selected peers—sophomore Nadja Barlera, Nora Engel-Hall, and Anjira Sirisahatli, and junior Remy Lewis—directs its project. The students learned valuable lessons about leadership and were graded on the quality of the final production. “I tell them they’re captains,” says Mr. Janus, “and they go down with the ship.”

By the time students complete their projects, they haven’t just memorized names and dates but have made history come alive through newly acquired knowledge of politics, economics, art, literature, music, and dance.

The week before, students in Andrea Martorty’s class enacted a scene and screened a film they’d made on a hot June evening, with ceiling fans spinning and a djembe drum beating a rhythm. U-Highers transported their audience to Africa and the Middle East without ever leaving Blaine 214. Family, teachers, and friends packed the small auditorium to leave.

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This year, students read The Jewel in the Crown, the first novel in Paul Scott’s Raj Quartet, to learn about European imperialism and its impact on colonial societies. To better understand nationalist movements in Africa, they relied on The Shadow of the Sun, a nonfiction account by Polish journalist Ryzard Kapuscinski.

Mr. Janus’s class wrote a dramatic script featuring Kapuscinski as narrator and eyewitness to mid-twentieth century independence struggles in Ghana, Ethiopia, and Zanzibar. The play's second act jumped to the present day, when the journalist mentors a young American reporter covering prodemocracy movements in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. Many students directed and acted in the African play; some choreographed and performed dance and choral pieces. Others handled costumes, props, sound, and lighting—or helped to paint sets and a classroom mural depicting African history. Students prepared and served British, Indian, Polish, and Middle Eastern food after presenting their projects. “Everything associated with this is really a collective effort,” says Ms. Martorty.

Each class selected peers—sophomore Nadja Barlera, Nora Engel-Hall, and Anjira Sirisahatli, and junior Remy Lewis—to direct its project. The students learned valuable lessons about leadership and were graded on the quality of the final production. “I tell them they’re captains,” says Mr. Janus, “and they go down with the ship.”

By the time students complete their projects, they haven’t just memorized names and dates but have made history come alive through newly acquired knowledge of politics, economics, art, literature, music, and dance.

In the end, says Mr. Janus, students are “moved and touched” by historical events. “I’ve been trying to tell them that this is a drama. You have to feel in your own bones that what you’re trying to convey to the audience is significant.”

What I did this summer: start to understand “Lab-ness”

A chat with new Director of Alumni Relations and Giving Monica Barnes

Monica Barnes joined Lab toward the end of last school year, having served in a similar position for five years at her alma mater, the National Cathedral School, an all-girls independent school in Washington, DC. In her first months on the job, and in close partnership with the Alumni Leadership Committee (ALC), now called the Alumni Association Executive Board, she began to plan for the new alumni association. This is the next step in an unfolding series of efforts to bring a greater sense of connection between Lab’s nearly 9,000 alumni and the Schools.

Having had a chance to take in your new surroundings, what about Lab stands out for you?

It became clear right away that Lab and U-High alumni have a strong voice and that there really is a quirky smart “Lab-ness” to how they want to connect with the Schools and each other. Arriving at such a pivotal time in the Schools’ growth has been particularly exciting. It is a great time to become part of the community, and I’m excited to work with the vibrant alumni population that exists here.

What are your immediate priorities?

To see as many alumni face-to-face as I can! Only about 40 percent of Lab’s alumni live in or around Chicago and so we already have a series of Alumni on the road events planned. But we’ll also have more Chicago-based events. Really, my immediate priority is my only priority—to help our alumni (including those still in college) connect to each other and the school—through reunion, local events, and networking activities—and to feel connected enough that they want to help support the Schools by giving back philanthropically and as a volunteer.

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And they did. More than 500 alumni and friends, from as far away as Thailand and as close as 58th Street, gathered in Hyde Park for Alumni Weekend 2011.

Alumni (from as early as the Class of 1930 and as recently as last year’s graduating class) returned to campus to take part in the festivities. This expanded affair dovetailed with University functions but also included new U-High and Lab events, such as classroom visits (look the same to anyone?), a networking lunch (Labbies are doing pretty impressive stuff), and the Taste of Chicago Party (Harold’s de rigueur).

Ben W. Heineman, Jr., ’61, who was celebrating his 50th reunion, received the 2011 Distinguished Alumnus Award. On Sunday, U-High alums faced off on the basketball court against former rivals—alums from Parker, Latin, and Morgan Park Academy.

Look for even more programming at Alumni Weekend 2012.
It was with some unflattering private school stereotypes in mind that Bianca Carter, ‘11, arrived at her U-High orientation. “I had these clichéd ideas about cliques from the movies, and I knew a lot of the kids were Lab lifers. But all of the sudden there were people reaching out to me, introducing themselves to me, and getting with me. It was easy to connect,” she recalls.

In her second year at Lab, Mario Gage, ‘10, spent his summer working as an intern for Ariel Investments, LLC, and is heading into his second year at the University of Chicago. He credits his success to his transformative four years at U-High: “My history teacher, Mr. Charles Bronvnam, said, ‘I’m not teaching you to teach you how to work harder, but how to work smarter.’ In my experience that really summed up what I was getting in all my classes. You have to use your time wisely. It really hit home.”

Beyond organizational skills, his experience at U-High helped Mario channel his intellectual life into his future: “Lab encourages independent thinking. You’re encouraged not just to go with the status quo, not be afraid to be the contrarian, not just use a scheme to look up the answer, but use things in a unique or new way and get to a different solution.”

Mario feels that he arrived at college with a distinct “Lab” advantage: “I’m used to the level of rigor, to taking on something that might seem overwhelming and then seeing that it is doable. UChicago has been challenging at times, but I think back to my experience at Lab and I know everything works out.”

Jim Torpy, ‘11, split his summer between the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute and Professor Paul Sereno’s fossil lab. Both are pretty good experiences for a guy considering an archeology major when he arrives at the College of Wooster this fall. And while both positions grew out of U-High-sponsored activities, Jim made them happen. “Lab helped me become a more dynamic person. You’re surrounded by a lot of capable and confident people, and it taught me the initiative to seek out opportunities,” he explains. As part of his sophomore service learning curriculum, Jim volunteered as a docent at the OI. Certainly he needed to memorize names and dates. But U-High classroom debates, he says, helped him hone important public speaking skills and his ability to put ideas together—helpful skills when telling an engaging historical story and answering questions. And experience ensuing from his role as a professor’s assistant, Jim拾 of the fossil lab, removing delicate bone fragments from surrounding rock, started as his senior May Project. He draws a connection between his Lab experience and his success with such exacting work: “Being able to concentrate and stick to it—that’s something challenging curriculum like Lab’s helps shape.”

Veronica Ramirez, ‘11, quickly learned to avail herself of a community that makes themselves available to each individual student. “At Lab I reached out to my teachers more. They were open and accessible. Lab was much more challenging (than my middle school) and I did not know what else to do besides ask questions and ask for help.”

Veronica recently returned from her orientation at Northeastern University in Boston, where she will enter the Bouve School of Health Sciences. Already, she sees how her U-High experience has better prepared her for college. As advisors lectured her incoming class about larger class sizes and the need to speak up, Veronica thought, “I’ve already learned to do that in my comfortable classroom asking for what I need. I have taken charge of what I know and what I don’t know.”

At U-High, she took advantage of leadership and academic challenges that she thinks would not be available to her elsewhere. She says, “I have no idea how my life would be without Lab. Latinos Unidos gave me the chance to be a leader, and I was able to do photojournalism for the paper and yearbook. I am not sure another school would have even offered that. Lab emphasizes skills you are not even aware you need in college. At another school, maybe some classes would have been challenging, but Lab all the classes are challenging.”

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THE PLAY’S THE THING

BY RICHARD MERTENS

How the very act of playing fits into Lab’s early childhood educational experience

It’s Monday morning and Maureen Ellis’s kindergartners are already hard at play. Four girls in shorts and summer dresses chatter over an elaborate meal of plastic fruit, buns, and chicken drumsticks. Across the room two boys set up a ten-foot row of magnetic tiles and knock them down, like dominoes, in a single clattering swoosh. >>>
There’s no ebb and flow, no crescendo and kindergartners work with fierce concentration. Whatever their task, the nearly two dozen alphabet, using what teachers call “inventive and Vince Race” and “The Fighter Man in school officials that early training in reading, writing, and math gives drivers and competitive, and the schoolwork that will one day loom large in kindergartners are already hard at play. Four children’s lives are so heavily structured outside is worked into the everyday business of the classrooms. Teachers also furnish and arrange their classrooms to offer opportunities for different kinds of play. Ms. Ellis’s room diminishing, just constant motion, like the of school. Children laying out the daily snack new first grade.”

It’s Monday morning and Maureen Ellis’s play enlarges the intellectual capacities of children. “They can actually do things at a higher level,” she says. “Their language can be highly complicated activity that is crucial to children’s development. Experts also claim that play helps children develop higher intellectual as understanding abstract functions—such as quantity and cause and effect. Even construction, it offers lessons. “When a child knocks a building down, she or he can notice where it falls, which parts fall, which stay together, and begin to understand some of the logical consequences of their actions, and make predictions about what will happen in the future,” says Ms. Ellis. 

In a sense, kindergartens on a Monday morning offers a snapshot of some of the complexity—and variety—of play at Lab. The girls chattering over their pretend meal, the boys building their tower, the children in the hall, and the girl sawing at the workbench are all trying out new ideas and figuring out alone or with others to carry them out. Imagination and experimentation, often in collaboration with others, abound. The boxes “pre-teaching” magnetic tiles, for example, are loaned to represent themselves, and so together they figure out new ways to do it. “There, two or three kids stack up the tiles once more. This time they ram the first tile with a toy Humvee, sending the row crashing down. “Whoa!” they cry in delight. Much of this play is the kind of pretending at which children excel. Carla written words that begin with a letter of the alphabet, using what teachers call “inventive spelling.” Three weeks before the end of the year, they have reached “U,” “told,” “find,” and “unask.”

The但 main business here is play. And to the children, at least, it’s serious business. Whatever their task, the nearly two dozen kindergartners work with fierce concentration. 

In defense of play Play is on the offensive in America. As education becomes more test-driven and competitive, and the pressure to get into good colleges intensifies, children are expected to learn more and to learn it faster and sooner. Kindergartners are now taught to read and to figure; many schools assign homework. Some of this new academic emphasis is a natural result of the shift from half- to full-day kindergartens. But it also springs from the belief among many school officials that early training in reading, writing, and math gives an advantage later on. As the Chicago Tribune observed in a headline last year: “Kindergarten: It’s your mind is more open to adaptive behavior,” says Lower School Principal Sylvie Anglin. 

What’s so important about play? Education experts like the psychologist Lev Vygotsky have long argued that play is a highly complicated activity that is crucial to children’s development. Experts also claim that play helps children develop higher intellectual capacities—and learn social rules. In play, children learn to use their hands, try out new ideas, and gain mastery over the physical world. They take on roles that challenge them to speak, act, and imagine in new ways. They also learn from each other. Play is the child’s schooling in becoming a member of society, where he or she learns how to make and observe rules, how to negotiate, how to follow and lead. Paradoxically, play in school may be even more important than it once was because children’s lives are so heavily structured outside of school. 

“Children can’t do that out, too,” she says. 

Play, of course, changes over time. Down the hall, four-year-old nursery schoolers dig with trowels and plastic yogurt containers in the hall, four-year-old nursery schoolers dig with trowels and plastic yogurt containers in the hall, and play continues to be part of school in the early grades beyond kindergarten, even as traditional academic lessons take on a larger role. “It’s incredibly important,” says Lower School Principal Sylvie Anglin. 

Young, the Nursery School and Kindergarten principal, says research shows that pretend play enlarges the intellectual capacities of children. “They can actually do things at a higher level,” she says. “Their language can be more complicated, they have more self control. Being in control, playing a role, helps them focus on what they’re doing. From that point of view, they are functioning at a higher level than if they passively had to follow a teacher’s direction.”

At the same time, the children’s elaborate experimentation is helping them acquire the practical knowledge and social skills that will be essential for later academic work. Their building and rebuiding are teaching them about storage, organization, balance, quantity, and cause and effect. Even destruction, it turns out, offers lessons. “When a child knocks a building down, she or he can notice where it falls, which parts fall, which stay together, and begin to understand some of the logical consequences of their actions, and make predictions about what will happen in the future,” says Ms. Ellis. 

And don’t forget, play is fun. It’s no small thing that play helps kids enjoy school and look forward to going there. Ms. Young says “You have to learn to strike a healthy balance, but it also is a lesson for others. As Ms. Ellis moves through the classroom, she often suggests that children show off what they’re working on at a group meeting later in the day. “When you share the results of play with others, it stimulates the other kids to try that out, too,” she says.

Play, of course, changes over time. Down the hall, four-year-old nursery schoolers dig with trowels and plastic yogurt containers in a big container of dirt. In kindergarten play becomes more complicated and more social. But it doesn’t end there. There’s still room for 

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in the nursey school for many years at Lab and is a strong defender of play in school. She has written 13 books on the subject and has won a MacArthur Fellowship for her work. Ms. Paley calls kindergarten “the master’s degree in creative play.” Kindergartners, she says, bring to play everything that three- and four-year olds have been trying out, but with the ability now to repackage their ideas and set their own goals. “To cut it off before the master’s degree is a shame,” she says.

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abounds with wooden and plastic blocks of different sizes, art supplies, play clothes, rocks, and much else. She’s positioned the toys cleverly. Wooden blocks the size of shoe bones are intentionally stored next to the housekeeping area, that way, when students are creating a pretend meal, they will use the blocks to build their table and chairs. 

Ms. Ellis and her kindergarten co-teacher, Delores Rita, also contribute to turn the morning’s play into a lesson for others. As Ms. Ellis moves through the classroom, she often suggests that children show off what they’re working on at a group meeting later in the day. “When you share the results of play with others, it stimulates the other kids to try that out, too,” she says. 

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LAB'S OWN SCULPTURE GARDEN Among the several sculptures now enshrined in the Japanese Garden is a piece by Dennis Kowalski, then a Chicago-based artist. During their senior year, the Class of 1979 sold hats and t-shirts to raise about $12,000 to make this artistic contribution to the Schools. Marcus Helman, then chair of the senior class gift committee, and class president Bob Solomon chose the piece. Mr. Solomon, who designed the sculpture, explains that the sculpture was originally installed in front of the High School cloister entrance: “It was put in place along with soil, which was an attempt to keep people from coming in the raised lawn in front of the school. It had nine large railroad ties on each side, so it was a real bunch as well. Apparently, though, we neglected to raise enough to keep the wood maintained, so that was jettisoned somewhere along the way.” Of possible greater interest is the t-shirt design silk-screened in classemate Andy Neal’s basement. Quite popular with the kids, let us with parents and faculty:

> A psychedelic t-shirt that simply read: U-High!
> Prophecy of the University High English Department
> And for the math crowd, 9+5+5=5.

The 70s. All that. Should be forgiven.

BREAKING THE MOLD in the Japanese Garden stands a tall bronze torso in memory of near-eminence Lower School teacher Esther Hermann. Sculptor in Metinence Camarata’s 1999 High School class created the life-size 8 foot, 4 inch bronze figure. The Schools Alumni Association Fund supported the casting and allowed students to visit the foundry to watch the process. A smaller bronze figure was made by art teacher Dennis Inglish Department. Ms. Camarata was an accomplished, well-known artist in her own right. 

HENRY DETHWILLER (’92) RECREATION The following information is from an article in the Chicago Tribune 1992 by a Lab alum; Chicago’s Department of Education’s professor of education in 1992, Pat ‘75, AM2 ‘77, PhD ’84, a Lab alum; Catherine Braendel, assistant professor, who designed the sculpture.

In 1992 a Lab alum made a life-size bronze sculpture. The sculpture was dedicated on September 23, 1992, in the offices of the Chicago Department of Education. After the dedication, it was moved to the back of the school’s playground. The sculpture was created by Mr. Herman, who was the head of the School’s Fine Arts Department. Mr. Herman chose the sculpture as an appropriate gift to the Schools for their 50th anniversary. Mr. Herman explained that the sculpture was chosen because it represented the Schools’ commitment to education and the community. The sculpture was made by Mr. Herman and his students, and it was unveiled at a ceremony in the School’s playground. The sculpture was dedicated by Mr. Herman and his students, and it was unveiled at a ceremony in the School’s playground. The sculpture was later moved to the School’s front lawn, where it stands today. It is a reminder of the Schools’ commitment to education and the community.
Mr. Buben still lives.

Ms. Bennett completed a master’s degree in English. She eventually had twin daughters; Ms. Bennett completed a firm specializing in logistics, married and moved to Chicago. The two soon became friends, and even went on a few dates. The relationship was serious, but “I think there was always a little kernel of something,” Mr. Buben says. “And she’s still pretty. That never changed.”

Chuck Buben says. “And she’s still pretty. That never changed.”

The bond deepened after both lost their long-term partners to illness. Ms. Bennett wrote Mr. Buben a letter after her wife passed away, offering her support and condolences. “I know how people are when you’ve lost someone. No one pays attention much,” she says.

They met for lunch at Maggiano’s and “fell right back in,” Ms. Bennett remembers. They were united not just by their memories of high school, but also by the shared experience of caring for and losing a loved one. “We know what it tells you about a person who really sticks by someone. The circumstances were different, but the dedication was an important characteristic,” Mr. Buben says.

Four pairs of U-High grads—Paul and Kelley Audrain, Chuck Buben and Renee Bennett, Paul and Ann Sagan, and Derek West and Eve White-West—didn’t have to look far from home to find their special someone. Whether they began dating at Lab or after, all believe their Labbie roots have helped them in their marriage. Ann and Paul say their Lab experiences gave them a shared worldview. Kelley and Paul feel they’ve grown up together. Eve’s Lab connections encouraged her to give Derek a chance. And 40 years after graduation, Chuck and Renee were able to pick right up where they left off. Their stories—filled with evenings at Lillie House, basketball games, snowball fights, and one very memorable trip up Lake Shore Drive—couldn’t have begun anywhere else.

The course of true love may not run smooth, but for some, it runs right through the Laboratory Schools.
For Derek West and Eve White-West, the fifth time was the charm.

Over the years, they met at numerous social functions and occasionally saw each other around town. Ms. White-West caught Mr. West’s eye, and he asked for her number several times but never followed through.

When Mr. West finally called, she was skeptical. After all, “for ten years, he took my number four times,” she says. She turned him down.

“Mr. West was not so easily deterred. ‘He hit me up all over again. He asked for my number, and I couldn’t turn him down,’ Ms. White-West says.

“When I first met him, there were parents who remembered him in fourth grade, and said, ‘Oh, I remember he was such a sweet kid.’ I had people who would give me the truth. I knew he was for real,” she says.

If Ms. White-West had any doubts about Mr. West being “for real,” they were eliminated when he proposed to her at Avenues, a Chicago restaurant. Surprised and overwhelmed, Ms. White-West looked at the ring and exclaimed “No!” out of shock.

“When she realized Mr. West thought she was someone she could trust. ‘When I first met him, there were parents who remembered him in fourth grade, and said, ‘Oh, I remember he was such a sweet kid.’ I had people who would give me the truth. I knew he was for real,’” she says.

Throughout college, they dined or flew to see each other as often as they could, sometimes meeting in the middle.

“Learning to meet each other halfway has been an important skill for the Audrains, who now run an architecture and interior design firm together. At first, it was a challenge not to let their business interfere with their relationship. But they’ve grown to love working together. Among other perks, it allows them to spend more time with their two children, both of whom attend Lab.

Most people who learn the Audrains have been together since high school are impressed. Their kids are their customers.

“When people realize we’ve been dating that long, and say, ‘that’s so cute,’ the kids eye roll as quickly and they might roll their eyes.

Paul says, their 15-year-old daughter may roll her eyes, but she isn’t much younger than her parents were when they met. ‘She might go out on a date [with someone] and be stuck with the guy for the rest of her life,’ Paul muses.

If her parents are any indication, that might not be so bad.
THE LAB ANNUAL FUND

“WHY I GIVE,” JOSH LEVINE, ’02, ANNUAL FUND CO-CHAIR

“I give back to Lab every year because I appreciate the transformative impact of a Lab and U-High education. I cherish the many learning experiences I had at Lab, and remain connected to Lab’s community. Ten years after high school graduation, my best friends are still Labbies.

“Alumni support has a significant impact on the education that Lab can offer its students, and I want to be counted among the alumni that care deeply for the school.”

A GIFT TO THE ANNUAL FUND—NO MATTER THE SIZE—PROVIDES CURRENT USE, IMMEDIATE IMPACT DOLLARS THAT SUPPORT:

> Student aid
> Professional development
> Day-to-day need and long-term strategic initiatives

We ask that every alum, and every family associated with Lab, contribute to the extent that they are able.

Make your gift to the Annual Fund online at www.ucls.uchicago.edu/support-lab or by calling 773-702-0578.

Groundbreaking for Earl Shapiro Hall
September 17, 2–5 p.m.
Stony Island site
The entire Lab community is invited to celebrate and inaugurate the site with a carnival and fun for all ages.

Alumni vs. Parker Alumni Soccer Game
September 25, 11 a.m.
Francis Parker Field, 330 West Webster Avenue

Alumni on the Road—Washington, D.C.
November 3
Details to come

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Grandparents/Grandfriends Day
November 22
Grandparents and special “grandfriends” of students in grades N–4 are invited for this special morning of activities.

Young Alumni Post-Thanksgiving Gathering—Chicago
November 25
Details to come

College-age Alumni Gathering—Chicago
December 28
Details to come

Connections, Lab’s annual gala
March 3, 2012
Grand ballroom at Navy Pier

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