

Dear Friends:



The success of Lab+ will depend on all of us.



We are considered an independent school, but what gives us greater value is our connection with the University of Chicago.

FROM THE BOARD

Today the Laboratory Schools are at the beginning of what may be the most important chapter in their history since their founding more than a century ago. Thanks to the efforts of many people in the Lab community—parents, alumni, faculty, administrators, and friends—we have begun to transform into reality a vision for the future of Lab.

Lab+—our name for this campaign for the future of the Laboratory Schools—will enhance every aspect of life at Lab. Most visibly, Lab+ will improve our historic buildings and create a new state-of-the-art center for early childhood education, a great setting for the magic that our teachers work with children every day.

Less conspicuous, but every bit as important, Lab+ will directly benefit Lab's most valuable assets—our teachers and students. The campaign will maintain the diversity and excellence of Lab's student body by providing

more space, more financial aid scholarship money, and better facilities. And it will ensure that Lab's great faculty have more resources for professional development and better spaces for teaching, planning, and collaborating.

Our campaign is already well underway. The University, whose support has been extraordinary and indispensable, has formally approved planning the building project and begun the process of selecting an architect. Among many very generous donors, the Earl Shapiro family has made a truly remarkable gift of \$10 million. This gift is the largest in the history of the Laboratory Schools, and it, like the other gifts we have received, is wonderful testimony to the promise of the Schools.

This year, we will begin planning for construction, and we will undertake a fundraising plan so that we will have the resources we

need. A project of this magnitude and importance requires exceptional effort and exceptional leadership. Lab has been very fortunate in the leaders who have already given their time, talent, and resources—from the Board, the Development Committee, the Parent Campaign Committee, the Alumni Leadership Committee, and elsewhere. I know that I speak for the entire Lab community when I express the warmest thanks to all of these people. But ultimately, of course, the success of Lab+ will depend on all of us. My colleagues on the Board and I look forward to embarking on this exciting and important journey with you.

With warm regards,



David A. Straus
Chair, Board of Directors
Harry N. Wyatt Professor of Law,
University of Chicago Law School

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Effectively educating children requires seemingly simple needs: great teachers who have the tools they need for each child, a safe environment where decency reigns so that children can focus on learning, and families that support their children's intellectual endeavors.

A community that cares
I have the privilege of ensuring that a Laboratory Schools' education remains one of the best the country has to offer. This past year brought many accomplishments, including initiatives to support our educational program for children with learning differences, the addition of Kenneth James as our new director of Student Services, and a self-evaluation in every grade and department for the Independent Schools Association of the Central State's re-accreditation.

We also enhanced our communication with families and alumni. The Office of Development and Alumni Relations embarked upon a series of new initiatives, including alumni events across the country, our first Grandparents and Grandfriends Day, a reception for families associated with the

University's Biological and Physical Sciences divisions, and enhanced communication through *E-news* and *LabLife*.

The Lab+ Campaign: investing in the power of Lab

All of these activities flow into what may be the most significant challenge for us since the Schools' founding. This year we prepared to launch the Lab+ Campaign, an effort to bring new resources to every aspect of the Lab experience. Transformative investments in our historic campus, an innovative early childhood center, student financial aid, and professional development will address essential programmatic needs while reinforcing the Schools' commitments to diversity and inspired teaching. This campaign will ensure that each student—now and for generations to come—will experience the challenge and excitement of a Lab education.

A mutually beneficial relationship with the University

University of Chicago President Robert Zimmer has stated that Lab and the University complement each other in powerful ways. We are considered an independent school, but this connection with the

University brings us great value. It goes beyond access to libraries, museums, and expert faculty to the sense of intellectual curiosity—paired with healthy skepticism—that infects all of our children, regardless of University affiliation.

Capitalizing on this transformative opportunity would not be possible without the University's support: they have worked with us to project future enrollment with the goal of maintaining Lab's balance, assisted with the search for an architect, and made a significant financial commitment that will allow us to realize our vision.

This annual report expounds upon the qualities that make that education so powerful, so unique, and so deserving of our support. The Lab+ Campaign will require the active participation and enthusiasm of our entire community in order to succeed, and I look forward to sharing this journey with each of you.



David W. Magill
Director

The Power of Lab

Every day, in every corner at Lab, and sometimes in locations far from Hyde Park, the power of Lab unfolds. This doesn't happen with a big bang or in rare momentous occasions. Rather, it happens in small moments, individual conversations, playful interactions, quiet study.

The power of Lab lives in the way our teachers, our students, our parents, our alumni, and our ever-expanding community think about education. The Lab approach to teaching and inspiring children hinges upon the belief that to live is to learn.

The moments that unfold on these pages give a snapshot of life at Lab. Together, they show how minutes and days are transformed into the unparalleled experience that shapes how our graduates approach learning for their entire lives and that exemplifies the power of Lab.

The Power of Independence

ROWLEY LIBRARY, HIDDEN CORNER, 2:45 P.M. 

“Parents are sometimes surprised by the amount of independence we give our kids. We run an open campus. High Schoolers may have multiple free periods, and they can come and go as they please. But what you start to see is just how well these young people manage their own lives. They take their work seriously, and sure, they could just goof off during those down times, but more often than not, they help a friend study, start homework, or get a teacher’s help. A lot of other kids get to college and struggle with the freedom. They don’t know how to balance the social and academic sides of life. U-Highers have a head start, and that confidence makes a difference.”

—High School Principal Matthew Horvat



BLAINE HALL, FIRST FLOOR NURSERY CLASS, 8:20 A.M.



In an N/K class tables are smaller, sinks are lower, and there is a job chart on the wall. It’s not just about convenience—it’s about empowering kids to navigate their environment as independently as possible. Job charts use pictures so that even pre-readers know what they are assigned to do each day. The chores are an opportunity to be in charge (line leader), move about the school unsupervised (the wildly popular milk duty), or use math skills (remember the challenge of telling time or reading a thermometer?).

LOWER SCHOOL, CLASSROOM LIBRARY, 10:45 A.M.



To help students make appropriate, self-guided reading selections, one teacher created a classroom library using an alternative to the Dewey Decimal system. Boxes are color-coded by reading level, because it’s no fun to grab a book just to be daunted. And subject matter is determined by curriculum (the class is studying bugs), by students (we love pets), or by theme (Halloween is around the corner).

PRETTY LAKE, MATTAWAN, MICHIGAN



Each year, seventh graders head out on a trip during which they scale a rather tall tower, cooperatively navigate a high ropes course, and learn how to cook a meal over a campfire. The rustic location and the activities push kids out of their traditional comfort zones. With success comes a bit of self-discovery and, if all goes as planned, these young people see that their newly won sense of self-reliance and independence doesn’t come at the expense of trust or compassion.

BELFIELD HALL, MIDDLE SCHOOL LOCKERS, 11:15 A.M.



Look in a Middle Schooler’s locker and you’ll see a personality: Busy. Messy. Organized. Soccer player. Miley Cyrus fan. A locker is independence, and while it’s not quite a room of one’s own, it is an individual space that simultaneously provides a sense of belonging. Middle School is all about growth—intellectual, social, emotional. And each year the curriculum adds more opportunities

for that growth and independence. As fifth-grade homerooms and personal desks give way to sixth-grade advisories and subject-specific classrooms, the locker takes on even more importance. Social center. Home base. Impending maturity.

U-HIGH 202, AP COMPUTER SCIENCE, 10:50 A.M.



“Computer skills aren’t what most people think they are. In my view, they’re about understanding what kinds of problems machines can solve. We need to expose students to the hard problems of computing and provide the tools that allow them to ‘get their hands dirty’ trying to solve them. By ‘tools’ I mean we have to teach some amount of computer programming. This might sound scary and nerdy, but it’s not. Programming

is an extremely creative and fulfilling form of expression if framed the right way.

We try to find problems for students to solve that *require* computational solutions. This might sound like a no-brainer, but there are not many well-known problems of this type that are appropriate for introductory students. Dreaming them up is difficult, yet essential. And it adds a level of urgency when students

are solving problems that can only be solved with a computer. One of my favorites is the problem I call ‘Catching Plagiarists.’ The problem is to determine if, within a large set (for instance, 1,000 or more text documents), any portions of text have been copied verbatim between any pair of documents. This problem is virtually unsolvable by a human; it must be done with a computer. So it is a perfect problem for our students.

It is easy to understand and you have to be really clever to design a solution that doesn’t take hours and hours to compute. Better still, this problem is definitively modern, requiring the processing of large amounts of data, and of the type we already see in many fields and will only see more of. This is the last assignment I give my AP computer science students, and they love it.”
—Baker Franke, AP computer science teacher

BLAINE HALL, SECOND GRADE CLASS, 10:45 A.M.



Making patterns is often something we associate with art class. But math? In math class kids learn multiplication tables and long division. Right? Right and wrong. Teaching mathematical concepts goes well beyond figures, and teachers will use all manner of “manipulatives” to help kids see and feel math before they even begin to explain a mathematical concept. For example, shape puzzles, or tessellations, allow children to play with geometry long before they even hear the word, as they physically see and create symmetry.



The Power of Expansive Thinking

BLAINE 181, DAY IN AND DAY OUT FOR A YEAR

Who knew that when a few of Amy Poynton’s kindergarteners sat down to play with plastic animals the class would end up spending the whole year on an unfolding, complex, amazing animal-based project. At Lab, kids can think big and teachers will follow. By listening and respecting children’s intelligence, adults empower them to lead learning. Just look at what unfolded as these students used group time to ideate, absorb new information, and plan:

- Plastic animals turned into paper creations
- Books about animals filled the classroom
- Kids researched and took action: Where would the animals live? A zoo? An animal habitat?
- What exactly is a “habitat”? Let’s make one. (And since we don’t want to create excess waste, let’s use materials from our “reusable” pile.)
- We care about endangered species. How can we help? Let’s sell lemonade to raise money. We’ll need some math skills for that.



The class finished the year having adopted a polar bear, planted a cork tree, and pulled in their fifth-grade buddies to help make mini-me’s to stroll through the habitat. Not bad for a year’s work.

The Power of Community

MIDDLE SCHOOL, FIFTH-GRADE HOMEROOM, 12:20 P.M.

On the surface, lunch is a time for kids to enjoy each other, but on a deeper level lunch strengthens relationships, builds a sense of shared meaning and community, and shapes intellect and social/emotional intelligence. The youngest children are developing emotional regulation—essentially learning to manage emotions and live productively with others (undoubtedly something we all strive for in our lives). Lunch is a great time to practice this skill, and it works best when children are in a familiar place. That’s why at Lab, lunch takes place not in a cafeteria but in the classroom all the way through fifth grade. There kids know the routines, the other children, and the adults. Lower School students might even invite a sibling for lunch (a motivating reason to practice writing a letter), and by fifth grade children can move more freely, lunching in other homerooms and staying connected to broader groups of friends.



HIGH SCHOOL, LOBBY, 3:35 P.M.



Every afternoon, right before High School classes let out, Dean of Students Larry McFarlane leaves what he is doing to stand right where students will start to gather as they head for home and other activities. It’s a strategic gesture, one that makes all the difference between being an adult in the school and being an adult who has *relationships* in the school. Dean McFarlane is available. Soon he is

surrounded, chatting and laughing with the students he may need to connect with in more formal situations down the road. His presence here will make those connections—particularly when a student seeks out his help—all the easier. Each afternoon, he models the respect between teacher and learner that is critical to the Lab experience.

NEW YORK, MIDTOWN EXECUTIVE CLUB, 7:20 P.M.



While Lab students are home sitting down to dinner or doing homework, alumni are gathering in New York to catch up with old friends, visit with staff and beloved teachers like journalism instructor Wayne Brasler, and hear updates on their alma mater from Director David Magill. The Schools know that graduates often count fellow Labbies as friends for life, and are making a concerted effort to reconnect alumni with each

other and with Lab. Reunion activities have been expanded—a record crowd of nearly 800 alumni and families returned for the June reunion. Connections, Lab’s major fundraising event, included alumni for the first time, and many used it as an excuse to create mini-reunions. And Lab went on the road to New York and Boston and is planning similar trips in the coming years.

COCOA EXPO CENTER, FL, HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL TEAM, SPRING BREAK



It’s still a truism that playing competitive sports teaches trust, leadership, fairness, hard work, and strategy. But at Lab it also teaches respect and kindness. Lab has a no-cut policy—everyone who wants to may join a team. Not everyone may get to be a starting player, but each student can work to their

potential, have fun, and share in the camaraderie that comes from being on the field, in the bus, and at practice with teammates each day.

The Power of Creativity



U-HIGH 211, CHEMISTRY, 1:25 P.M.



Scientific lore says that two things entice people to the field of chemistry: the anticipation of a good explosion or the colors. For chemistry teacher Dan McDonald, it was definitely the colors. After all, he comes from a family of artists, is married to an orchestra conductor, and is a professional musician himself. Mr. McDonald has a lot to say about the connections between the arts, creativity, and science. (Outside of Lab, he teaches music, performs, arranges, and coaches the string section and directs the intermediate orchestra of the Hyde Park Youth Orchestra.)

Chemistry, he explains, is inherently creative because you can't see what's happening at the molecular level—you simply have to imagine it. When an experiment doesn't deliver the expected result, it's one of the moments in science when creativity is most obvious: "You have to figure out why. You create a vision of the alternatives and come up with new models. It's a paradigm shift."

Making a connection that others might not, he credits the Middle School music program with helping prepare strong High School chemistry students. "They require music students to perform for four years," he says. "To do that, you need a fair level of proficiency, and that means practice. In all of the arts and in chemistry there is a certain amount of discipline. What makes us good at one thing makes us good at the other."

JUDD HALL, SECOND FLOOR KITCHEN, 4:05 P.M.



Sometimes cooking is not just cooking, because the chef knows to take her time with measuring. Ideas about fractions and weights and volume can sneak their way into any baking project. And lickety-split, Lab After School makes cookies and culinary sciences do double duty.

BELFIELD HALL, ART ALLEY, 1 P.M.



Giving children access to all forms of expression is one way Lab helps educate the whole child, right brain and left. Art is integrated into the classroom from the earliest grades, and as children develop intellectually, they study specific forms with greater focus: music, drama, painting, photography, and more.

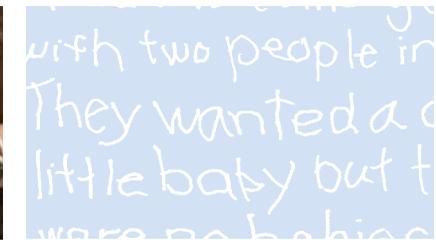
BLAINE HALL, SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY, 9:15 A.M.



"Once upon a time there was a village with two people inside it. They wanted a cute little baby but there were no babies. They were all used up." We don't make this stuff up. Lower Schoolers do. And every week around the school, parent volunteers will sit outside classrooms with kids patiently writing down the stories children dictate and that the class will later act out. It is a technique



pioneered by Lab teacher, author, and MacArthur "genius" award winner Vivian Paley. "Story telling is like imaginary play. It strengthens language development and creativity, and children become familiar with "story grammar," the kinds of patterns found in stories. It helps children prepare for abstract thinking because they can play with ideas and with language. By adding the acting out



of the stories, Vivian introduced a very important piece. Students who would not otherwise participate find it easier to do so with clearly set roles. Children—especially those who have a harder time being part of the group—feel included when they are a part of someone's story. And what a good way to get insight into others." —Carla Young, N/K principal