

Context is everything.

LAB⁺
INVESTING IN
THE POWER OF LAB

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LABORATORY SCHOOLS
ANNUAL REPORT 2011



A great school is a great school. But a great school in the heart of a world-class university? Now that's something different altogether.

Over the decades, Lab's connections to the University of Chicago have shifted in any number of ways. The University no longer hosts a school of education. The University's board of precollegiate education gave way to the Laboratory Schools' independent board of parents, alumni, educators, and professionals. And Lab took over its own

finances, academic oversight, and fundraising responsibilities.

But those changes turn out to be details and have never affected the real connection the Schools have with the University. In ways large and small, planned and unplanned, Labbies share an enthusiasm for big questions that can be seen across the University in every discipline. At Lab, like

the rest of UChicago, there is a willingness to ask "what if?" and "how come?" and to pursue answers down any number of paths.

This intellectual curiosity, this passion for learning in all of its forms could only be born of a place where the spirit of inquiry is simply . . . everywhere.



When John Dewey began his experimental school in 1896 in a home on 57th Street, one of his stated purposes was to:

“create a cooperative society on a small scale so that children would be prepared to make future social relations worthy and fruitful.”

He intended for this school to become a leader in education and to prepare children to become meaningfully involved citizens in a democracy.

While we are no longer an experiment and our program is not a field test for educational researchers, we have not forsaken our Deweyan roots. We are still creating “new standards and ideals” and still leading and building community for our children. And we have the privilege of doing this in one of the world’s greatest incubators of intellectualism, the University of Chicago. What an amazing combination.

It is why complacency will not survive here. It is why values drive our goals. And none of this happens without respect for, and among, the many members of our community: students, parents, alumni, faculty, and administrators.

We cannot thank you enough for helping us take unprecedented steps to transform our schools in preparation for our next 100 years of teaching. As we do so, we remain cognizant of maintaining—and strengthening—our sense of community. Isn’t that central to Dewey’s ideal for an academic institution? Here are several of the most significant activities that we feel reflect a community working together to make the Lab experience better for all:

Planning for reconfigured, smaller divisions

The Doctors’ Hospital has been razed, ground has been broken for Earl Shapiro Hall, and we are two years away from moving all of our nursery and primary programs into a state-of-the-art facility located on its own early childhood campus. Next year, the fifth grade will be returned to the Lower School. In and of themselves, the five smaller divisions will help foster closer connections. And starting even now, we will be working to make sure that the transitions are seamless and our sense of community stays intact throughout construction.

Leveraging parents’ talent and energy

Formally, through the Parents’ Association (with strong leadership and many, many volunteers) and on a class-by-class and grade-by-grade level, our parents have helped connect families in any number of ways. There has been special attention to welcoming and offering “mentors” to new families, opportunities to bring parents together socially, and programs aimed at helping families share ideas and concerns about child-rearing with experts, administrators, and other parents.

Emphasizing professional growth

Last spring, as part of a new four-year collective bargaining agreement, the Faculty Association engaged in a very serious and

thoughtful dialogue with the administration regarding professional growth.

Together we have recognized that quality is everyone’s responsibility, and we have accepted the challenge to address performance and professional growth in ways that we have never attempted to do before.

Increasing alumni engagement

Alumni are extremely important and visible members of successful independent schools, and we continue to work to better connect them to Lab and U-High. This year, we hired a full-time director of alumni relations, an active alumni association is up and running, and our last five graduating classes have contributed more than \$250,000 to endowed class scholarships to benefit

future students with financial aid. Much more is planned, and alumni are responding enthusiastically.

Again, as we move into this next year, we cannot overstate that it is through the support of individuals like you that we are able to continue to be the best-in-class institution that is the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools.

David W. Magill
David W. Magill, EdD
Director

John W. Rogers, Jr.
John W. Rogers, Jr., '76
Chair, Board of Directors

None of this happens without respect for, and among, the many members of our community: students, parents, alumni, faculty, and administrators.

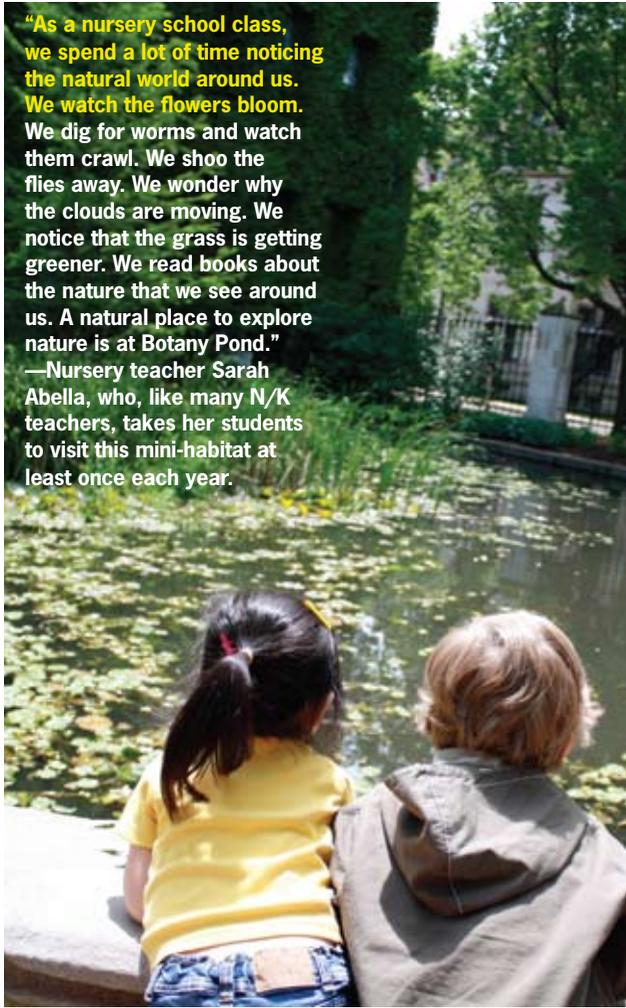
We cannot thank you enough for helping us take unprecedented steps to transform our schools in preparation for our next 100 years of teaching.



Spatial relations.



More than one alum has recounted being startled to arrive at college only to realize that not every institution of higher learning has a Regenstein-quality library. (“You mean this is the library?!”) Good thing that forever more they will have visiting privileges at UChicago’s. Starting as Middle Schoolers, Labbies have borrowing privileges, and many U-High teachers assign work that requires students to navigate the complexities of this world-class collection. The new Mansueto Library alone houses 3.5 million volumes. UChicago’s is the only top research library in North America acting to keep its entire collection on campus for the next 20 years—it is a passion for books that the Laboratory Schools share.



“As a nursery school class, we spend a lot of time noticing the natural world around us. We watch the flowers bloom. We dig for worms and watch them crawl. We shoo the flies away. We wonder why the clouds are moving. We notice that the grass is getting greener. We read books about the nature that we see around us. A natural place to explore nature is at Botany Pond.”
—Nursery teacher Sarah Abella, who, like many N/K teachers, takes her students to visit this mini-habitat at least once each year.



Because it is that spectacular, many of U-High’s swimming competitions take place in home water—the Myers-McLoraine Swimming Pool at the University’s Ratner Athletics Center. The team not only gets to host meets here, but it also gets to practice here at least once a week. And once they graduate? Like all Lab alums, the swimmers are offered Ratner membership opportunities.

One year, High Schoolers witnessed open-heart surgery in a UChicago Hospitals surgical suite. Another year, fourth graders crossed a few blocks to visit a University chemistry hall. There they watched a professor work with liquid nitrogen, polymer slime, and imploding tin cans—materials and procedures too costly or (thrillingly) dangerous for a Lower School classroom. Access to UChicago science labs, libraries, sports facilities, and more expand the Laboratory Schools experience exponentially. (How many kids have lunch under a Henry Moore sculpture and over the historic location of the first splitting of an atom—and take it for granted?)

Like everyone on campus, Lab students hear the daily ringing of Rockefeller Chapel’s carillon. How auspicious it is that Lab’s annual Martin Luther King Day assembly and the High School graduation take place in this very same space where PhDs are awarded. Rockefeller certainly is an artistic statement unto itself, but also a venue for arts exhibitions to which Lab students are invited. This year—the meticulous creation of a sand mandala by Buddhist monks. Last year—a multimedia gargoyles exhibit.



Cultural exchange.



Nothing like having an inside track on some of the hottest tickets in town. *The Wall Street Journal* called UChicago's Court Theater "the most consistently excellent theater company in America." For Lab Middle and High School students, it is routinely part of humanities and English class curricula. U-High teacher Colin Rennert-May built an entire English elective around *Porgy and Bess* upon learning it would be the final play of this season. Exploring intersections of words and

music, he started the term with song and poetry and built up to *Porgy*. Says Mr. Rennert-May, "You can read the libretto and learn about the characters, but to answer a lot of questions about meaning and performance, you have to think about the music as well."



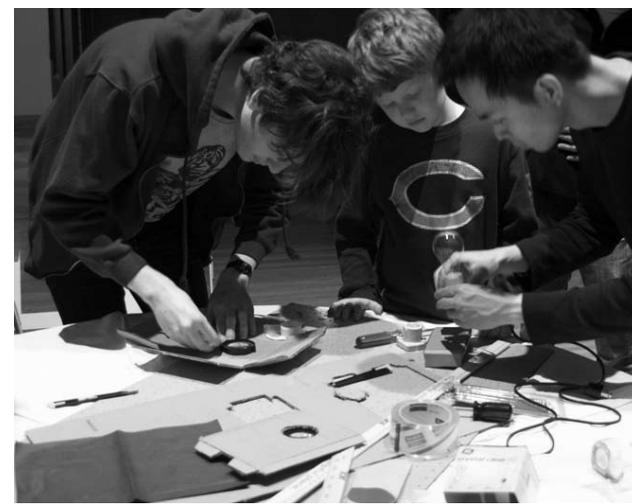
University museums like the Smart Museum of Art and the Oriental Institute (OI) routinely host Lab children of all ages. Sixth grade humanities students in Janice Moy's class visited the OI's Mesopotamia galleries before creating their own "Mesopotamian City" event during which they acted out, among other things, a criminal being brought before a city elder guided by the Code of Hammurabi, and a "demon" out to bring sickness upon an unwitting victim.



Beyond the museum collections, creative collaborations take place between Lab students and University folk in both planned and serendipitous ways. Middle School French students talk Surrealism and film with James Lastra, associate professor of English and Cinema & Media Studies. U-Highers discuss Shakespeare with David Bevington, a distinguished emeritus professor, widely recognized as one of the world's foremost Shakespearean scholars. It's all in a day's work.

It began when a child painted what she dubbed the "Lab School flag." Next thing, nursery teacher Carrie Collin and her students were immersed in the study of flags—each child researching and planning his own design. Ms. Collin was thrilled one morning to see, out the window, a group of UChicago students marching with a large, unique flag. The ensuing photo op turned into a "flag consultant" gig for an undergrad who visited Ms. Collin's class several

times to share his hobby. The three- and four-year olds loved having such a "big kid" interested in their work.



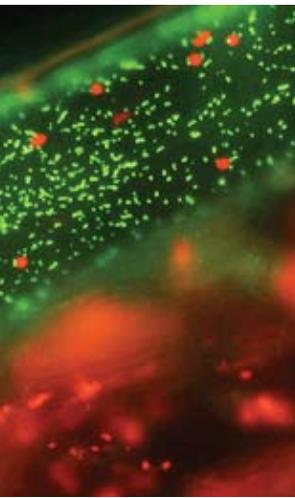
When the UChicago Center for East Asian Studies brought a Tokyo-based performance group to campus, they thought about Lab. Thus was born a Japanese lantern workshop. The 200-year-old art of Utsushi-e is an ancient form of animation using hand drawn slides and light box projection devices to create movement. Along with the artists, U-Highers helped first graders build light projectors out of cardboard and create animated slides.

Most obviously, U-Highers have the opportunity to take University classes, and about 20 do so each year—higher level math and science classes, but also language classes not offered at Lab, and history courses in specialized areas. Back on the Lab campus in every grade and virtually every academic area, University thinkers share their work with children in some way or another—doctors, a Sanskritist, chemists, law professors, experts in Asian studies, and organismal biologists, just to name a few.



Parent Navneet Bhasin, a molecular biologist and lecturer in the Biological Sciences division, was helping out in Jessica Palumbo's third grade class when a conversation about glowing jellyfish began. This led Ms. Bhasin to explain gene mutations and the 1960s discovery of "jumping genes" in corn. Coincidentally, Ms. Bhasin's colleagues were conducting an experiment that involved transferring into plants the very same protein that causes the jellyfish

to glow. Not a week later the kids crowded around a florescent microscope at the University to see that Green Florescent Protein inside a tobacco plant and visited the department's greenhouse.



Rising senior Molly Petchenik spent the summer studying gene function in *Chironomus riparius*: "I synthesize and inject RNA into flies, which causes their offspring to have a phenotype where the specific gene (hunchback) can't function. Then I take pictures to look at what happens when that gene is suppressed." Molly is working in the UChicago laboratory of Urs Schmidt-Ott, an associate professor of organismal biology and anatomy. Since 2008, U-Highers have

benefited from an expanding Summer Link program that places students in paid summer internships across the University, first in the Biological and Physical Sciences departments, then the Booth School and, most recently, in the Law School and Harris School of Public Policy.



Academics expanded.

Search for the word "dinosaur" in the Blaine Library catalogue and you'll find nearly 200 related titles. No wonder the classroom visits made by University paleontologists Paul Sereno and Neil Shubin make such a stir. Interest is high to begin with and these scientists—both Lab parents—have a knack for connecting with young minds. For several years running, students have visited Mr. Sereno's lab (and he their classrooms), and Mr.

Shubin has taught lessons on fossils. Sometimes he brings along a cast of the head of his most famous discovery, *Tiktaalik*.



Talked about for years after (the nicotine stained "black lung" looms large in the retelling), sixth graders get a startling look at the results of common drugs on human body parts. Each year, as part of the Adolescent Substance Abuse Program, UChicago Pritzker School medical students visit Lab toting real-life examples as they discuss anatomy and physiology.



Eliza and John Davey (far left), with daughters Monica and Kate and their families.

Being part of the University of Chicago has had a profound impact on the Lab community, and it offers opportunities to more than just our current students.

Resourceful alliances, deep community ties.

Ask John Davey, '56, AB'59, JD'62, why he's stayed in Hyde Park for his entire life and he'll tell you he doesn't know—he's never lived anywhere else. The truth? Hyde Park and the University environment keep on presenting opportunities for a deeply interesting life.

His father, John Davey, AM'35, came to UChicago for grad school, where he met and married Elizabeth Phelps Davey, AM'61. The elder John Davey taught at U-High and moved to the University faculty with the advent of the Hutchins College, which allowed U-Highers—including his son—to skip two years of high school and move right to the College.

The younger John Davey attended UChicago schools from age two-and-a-half through law school. John loved Lab—teachers, classes, friends, sports. He loved it so much, in fact, that he and his wife, Eliza, AB'58 (whom he met at the College), chose Lab for their daughters. Of Kate, '81 (who works at the UChicago Press), and Monica,

'82 (a Chicago-based writer for *The New York Times*), he says, "They liked Lab. It provided a good basis for them to go and do what they wanted to do. And it shows." He goes on to explain that, as of this fall, several Davey grandchildren will be Labbies, and all are currently Hyde Parkers.

John continues to be invested in the Schools. A passionate DePencier Society booster, John enthusiastically helps phone alumni for the Annual Fund. And he was

instrumental in the 2005 reinstatement of U-High's Monilaw Medal, recognizing sportsmanship and scholarship, of which he was a 1950s recipient. He also holds a variety of UChicago volunteer roles.

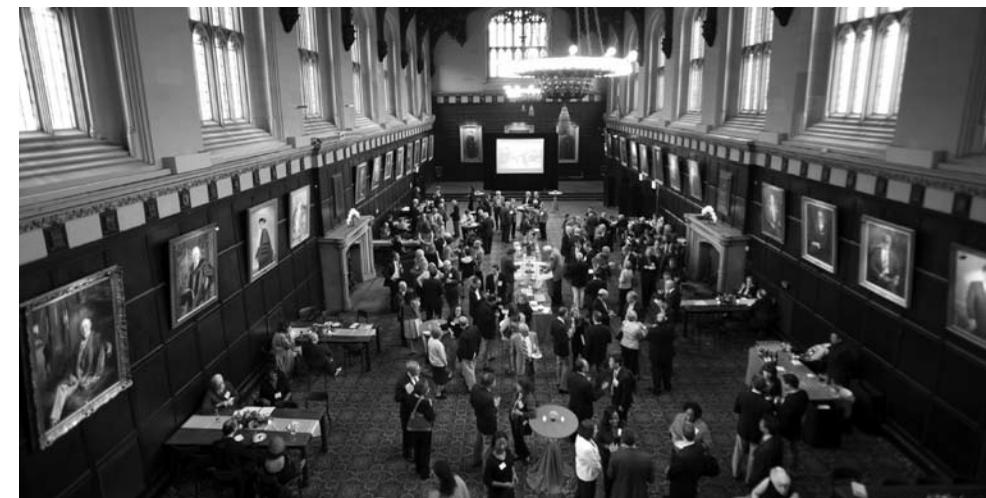
"It's a bit selfish," he says of his commitment to the institution. "I enjoy it." When he goes on to say it's really because of all of the people, one can't help but think—people like him.



When the University made the Stony Island site available to the Laboratory Schools for the new Early Childhood Campus, it was not just 119,000 square feet of outstanding real estate. The University has provided Lab with project management expertise that is allowing the Schools to proceed with this complex process as efficiently as possible.



Edward H. Levi Distinguished Service Professor Geoffrey R. Stone (also a Lab parent, grandparent, and guest-lecturer) spoke at Lab's spring professional development day. Through the years, as UChicago provost and Law School dean, he's kept teaching as a primary focus. Says Lab Associate Director Jason Lopez, "He spoke about why people become teachers: the amazing influence that a good teacher has on his students and on the future," weaving in UChicago history along the way.



Lab alumni and donors are also University alumni and donors with access to UChicago libraries and gyms. Members of Lab's Dewey Society automatically become members of the University's Chicago Society and are invited to special receptions and lectures.

I am proud of what the Parents' Association (PA) accomplished in 2010–11 to meet its mission of building community, educating parents, providing volunteer support to Lab's faculty, and representing parent perspectives at Lab.

Embracing new and extended families has become a central activity for the PA. This year we helped welcome more than 120 new families with receptions, mentoring, and orientation programs. On a division level, volunteers made it possible for families to reconnect (or meet for the first time) at any one of many dinners, family barbeques, and parent-only activities. These events—combined with Bizaarnaval, Connections, and Rites of May—bring families together school-wide to enjoy our common connection to Lab.

Additionally, the PA sponsored educational forums about important age-specific issues. Our programming included speakers and/or panels which addressed topics such as raising emotionally intelligent kids, coping with learning issues, speaking to kids about race and diversity, and parenting in the age of the “Tiger Mom.” The PA also

hosted a screening of “Race to Nowhere,” our most well attended educational event ever, and sponsored small group discussions with principals quarterly. We continue to work to improve communication among parents and provide helpful information through our website (www.uclspa.org), Lab E-News, and other means.

Finally, the PA helped represent parent perspectives in joint committees with the Schools' administration. These groups addressed the subjects of security, the search for a permanent Lower School principal, and how teachers and administrators approach learning differences. None of this happens without the scores of parents who take time to lend their leadership, effort, and talent to our work. On behalf of the PA governing board, I thank all volunteers for your participation and for your contributions to the Laboratory Schools. I encourage you to be involved wherever possible, letting us know how we can best serve our parent community.

Peri Altan
Parents' Association President

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from left:

Kelley Audrain, '84, at the Markovitz Challenge launch at the Ritz Carlton.

Maria de la Torre and Pradeep Chintagunta at the Markovitz Challenge launch at the Ritz Carlton.

Charles Siegel and Carol Soble Siegel, '64, at the Taste of Chicago Party during Alumni Weekend.



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