

## **University of Chicago Laboratory Schools**

### **Parents' Association**

#### **May 9, 2011 Meeting**

President Peri Altan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She invited each person in attendance to introduce himself or herself.

#### Security Update

Christopher Jones, Director of Business Affairs at the University of Chicago, and Dan Pascale, Sr. Director of Emergency Preparedness, Communications and Security at the University of Chicago, provided an update on the ongoing evaluation of Lab's security. The last update was provided in January 2010. Mr. Pascale led the discussion, noting the following recent actions:

- brought uniformed security presence to the gym complex at night and repaired lockers in response to a rash of thefts;
- brought on additional staff for evening activities, primarily fireman;
- reviewed the alarm security system;
- monitored emergency response time—now down to two minutes and 37 seconds;
- improving communications around security through e-news and talks with students; and
- coordinating crisis plan with that of the university.

Mr. Pascale noted that our building does not have cameras. Tony Wilson and his team are working on improving security presence. Firemen who help in the car line are now wearing high-visibility vests and identification. Mr. Pascale also noted that there is an effort underway to implement a new emergency communication system, including group e-mail, text and phone messages. The new system will be more sophisticated than the current system. Security at new Shapiro Hall is also being planned.

Mr. Pascale noted that the University of Chicago was not up to best practices with respect to security and emergency planning but that it has made a commitment to improve. He noted the importance of respecting the institution's culture. His efforts started with policy, standardization of equipment, access control and an alarm system. Next, he wants to standardize these and apply them to Lab and the rest of the University of Chicago. With respect to emergency preparedness, Lab School hazards have been separately considered. Emergency preparedness at the Lab School is a high priority for the University. Appropriate communications to children are also being considered.

Mr. Pascale noted that cameras have a deterrent value, but they are not all monitored due to staffing limitations. They do create a record if there is an incident. The plan is to install fixed

cameras at Lab. This is going on at other institutions, and we have an opportunity to embrace best practice. Mr. Pascale indicated that he understands the fears and concerns about having cameras at school. Most of the cameras will be at entrances and exits, not in classrooms.

In response to a question, Mr. Pascale indicated that the alert system is not available to Lab parents because adding more people slows down the response time and increases the cost, but faculty and staff at Lab will receive alerts in the event of an emergency. He also noted that strategic messages can be broadcast through the blue light phones on campus. He noted that the web site may be used to communicate but that they may take the web site down if there is a serious emergency. Bullhorns may also be used to communicate in an emergency. Mr. Pascale stated that there is a tremendous response capacity.

### Director and Principal Presentations

David Magill noted that the University of Chicago's Chief of Police has children at Lab. He mentioned that he is inspired by the PA Board for next year. The programs this year have been great. Collective bargaining is still taking place. He hopes to be done by year end. Seven more sessions with mediators have been scheduled. The mediators have been very helpful.

Matthew Horvat noted that AP tests are going on. He mentioned the Rites of May production and the fact that the students built the stage. The May Project for seniors takes place in the last four weeks of the year. One student chose to work at an auto shop because she wanted to understand how her car worked and to feel confident when dealing with auto maintenance issues in the future. Mr. Horvat mentioned that the projects would be on display on June 2 at 7:00 p.m. On June 6 at 9:00 a.m., there will be an awards ceremony at the International House. Exams are June 7-8. Graduation is June 9 at Rockefeller Chapel, where it has been held since the 1950's.

Mr. Horvat further explained that for the first time, there were no AP classes in science, history or art this year. He said that it worked out well. Some students still took AP tests but the focus was beyond the test. He mentioned that there have been some great new hires in the High School, including Mr. Dean, who took over for Mr. Piane. In response to a question from Ms. Altan as to what he learned this year, Mr. Horvat responded, "Have a good argument for whatever you're doing. Turn off the TV and computer and have kids read."

Amani Reed mentioned that a falconer has been teaching the fifth graders. They were also visited by a man in a full suit of armor, and they have been talking about gardening. Eighth grade graduation is on June 7 in Mandel Hall. It is an exciting time. Transition meetings, class trips and other culminating events are underway. Mr. Reed stated that the year has been marked by change—thinking about the new divisions and new high school schedules. He stated that the advising program has worked out well. He stated that he has enjoyed listening to stories about what Lab used to be. The pace—which is fast—is not going to change because it is set by the kids who ask "why" questions. His advice for summer is to get outside and take time to reflect.

Sylvie Anglin reflected on the events that have taken place in Judd 126 over the past year, including the third- and fourth graders folding cranes for Japan. Now is the time to slow down and relish what's happening. The kids are realizing what they can do. Ms. Anglin

mentioned the first grade puppet parade on June 9. She said that her new role as principal has given her new appreciation for the complex work in the classroom. She is excited for where we're headed. This year, she looked at the grade level chairs, who have brought renewed collaborative energy. She has looked at the math and language program. There will be training in reading workshop approach from Columbia University in June. She noted that the teachers are not getting paid for this. Ms. Anglin mentioned that Jennifer Adams, a second grade teacher, is leaving. She also noted that she will be attending a Leadership Conference sponsored by the National Conference of Independent Schools.

Carla Young thanked Ms. Altan and all parents for their work this year. She noted that her work day began with a call to remove dead mice from the Woodlawn school buildings. Her vision for the school is a culture of inquiry, and her focus is on how to energize the school. Ms. Young mentioned that she is happy to work with Ms. Anglin. There was a faculty meeting for N3-second grade teachers, the group that will move to Shapiro Hall when it is completed. One focus is how to keep faculty fresh and the importance of professional development. Ms. Young noted that she had attended a brain and learning conference with Ms. Anglin. She related some practical suggestions from the book "Choke" by Sian Beilock, an expert in performance and brain science. Ms. Young expressed appreciation for the funds for such professional development opportunities.

Jason Lopez responded to questions regarding the process for allocating funds for professional development. He noted that spending for professional development will be just under \$100,000 this summer. 118 teachers made proposals for 77 projects; most were funded.

#### Review of PA Activities for the Year

Lauren Polite reported that she had collected feedback from each of the councils on their activities relating to education, community-building, supporting classroom teachers and advocacy. She mentioned Connections, Rites of May, Bizaarnival, mentors for new families, the welcome back reception, middle school picnics, grade-level events, room parent events, graduations, the Chinese dragon performances and grants for teachers. She mentioned that Donna Macfarlane's class is building a rocket. They are also learning about different cultures by cooking and eating food. She mentioned teacher appreciation efforts and the performance by the American Boys Choir. The PA has also been involved in advocacy with respect to the high school schedule, ERB parent discussions and the MBS book buyback. Looking ahead, Ms. Polite mentioned Gradparents/Grandfriends Day and a parent group around diversity and LD@Lab coming under the Parents' Association. The PA also addressed issues with unattended children and began efforts to increase attendance at sporting events. The PA has also been involved in issues relating to the new ECC. She mentioned that focus group results indicate that parents want more interaction with parents in the same grade level.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Laethem Stern, Secretary