

University of Chicago Laboratory Schools
Parents' Association Meeting
May 5, 2014

Lynn Sasamoto opened the meeting at 7:20 pm after a preceding and well attended reception of wine and cheese in honor of Director David Magill.

Lisa Curci, announced results of the PA Board election: Treasurer: Matthew Miller; Secretary: Mariana Ingersoll; Communications-Coordinator Elect: Patty Jones; Earl Shapiro Hall Council Members: Monica Hughson, Shrunali Rai, Katie Williams; Lower School Council Members: Lena Jensen, Tracey Quinn, Claudia Roeder-Luez; Middle School Council: Tracy Coe, Cindy Pietraszek; High School Council: Sheila Noorain, Neetu Sharma

Lynn and Tracy congratulated all the new Board members and made a lovely introduction paying tribute to David Magill, his background, and some of his activities and accomplishments during his eleven years at the Laboratory Schools. In his honor the PA will be making a contribution to the David W. Magill Scholarship Fund.

(Tracy and Lynn's remarks are attached)

Dave Magill then took the podium to talk about his tenure at Lab.

Mr. Magill stated that since he was first introduced by President of the PA, Kate Collins, when he came to Lab 11 years ago, he has enjoyed every single day at Lab. After 11 years here, and 32 preceding years in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, he feels he is somewhat of an authority on what's occurring in education. And he is seeing what is currently occurring at at Lab, everyday.

First, he spoke about what he's seen and done, and then recommended future possibilities for Lab directions.

The climate in which learning occurs is important. That is influenced by the strength of community and Lab's is strong and unique, and it begins with the University of Chicago. Mr. Magill mentioned how individuals develop personal relationships with other professionals that they have met through Lab School. Collaborative efforts have been initiated through potluck dinners. He then went on to lay out some of the values of Lab School: scholarship, creativity, confidence building, among other values that say experiential education, kindness and diversity are very, very important. It is the amazing combination of people that make this school unique and strong.

Mr. Magill continued to lay out some of the foundations of community building that begins in early childhood: story-telling, lobby sings, and middle school camps where lifelong friendships are established. He stressed the need for assuring those traditions continue so that students can enjoy the rigor, feel safe to express themselves and being kind to one another. He stressed that the Lab way works, particularly for motivated children.

He continued with other things that work at Lab: experiential learning begun by Dewey, Socratic teaching in high school; expressing opinions and allowing others to express with opposing points of view; debating with reason rather than emotion, helping children form conclusions, having students lead discussions with teachers at their side, harkness tables in Middle School. These all add depth and connections to learning in an interdisciplinary way.

During Mr. Magill's tenure, Lab has built supports for kids with learning differences. Many students who once may have been counseled out are doing well in school. Work done at home is also important and different for every child. Some things maybe Lab could do differently, like a flipped classroom where a student takes home a digitally recorded lesson, watches at his/her own speed, and then has discussion by teacher afterward. This allows the child to work at his/her own pace and has lots of value. Mr. Magill would like to see more experimentation in areas such as learning to deal with stress and taking responsibility for one's own learning. One thing that works is Lab's ability to have children writing frequently. Writing short pieces with quick turnaround works. What works is writing frequently, in short paragraphs, lots of practice, quick turnaround and feedback. By the time students are seniors, most kids write pretty well at Lab. The other thing we do particularly well here at Lab is make kids feel free to focus on a hobby or interest and show that interest to other kids without embarrassment.

Mr. Magill offered some other suggestions on what Lab might consider in order to continue to get better: 1) hire well by hiring lifelong learners passionate about subject matters and the age range of students. If it doesn't work, do something about it; 2) we must expect professional growth. We want teachers to grow and share. They need to find out what works, and mentor others so they learn the Lab way. It makes a difference; 3) We must pay attention to physical condition of our schools. The Lab Plus campaign expenses go half to infrastructure, leaky windows, electrical updates, roofs. The budget must cover ongoing maintenance; and 4) We need to pay more attention to financial support and solicit more support. Tuition alone cannot carry independent schools. They need philanthropic support.

Finally, Mr. Magill laid out 5 areas for the future that the incoming director may want to consider.

1) Stay on top technological innovation. Do what works best for the child. We must embrace the digital age, teach children to solve by algorithms, and coding. Coding needs to be done. One example is the use of film: children have the ability to film in their pockets. They can do it much better than us. They should utilize it. How film is being used for Ted talks, blogs, etc, may provide much deeper learning. Maybe discerning fact from fiction is one role of schools.

2) See more about what the rest of world is doing. Not just language, culture, etc. We need these exchanges with deep dialogue to solve deep issues of the day. Students may be in a position to help solve problems that adults are unable to. We need a global perspective. The new director will come from a background that may enable her to address this better.

3) Instead of just giving opportunity to students, we need to give them the opportunity to develop leadership. We need to cultivate leadership. There are things you can do to learn cause and effect. Make them better leaders... as captain of volleyball team, for example, and guide them as to what kind of opportunities they had in that position? These are wonderful opportunities that we're not taking enough advantage of.

4) Have active lab arts every day. Children could have works in gallery close by and have things ready to be displayed for our children and others on the south side of Chicago. That has real meaning. An education piece should take place. John Dewey's passion was art. The Barnes Museum in Philadelphia has some of the best impressionistic art in world. John Dewey was the first curator of the Barnes museum.

5) Know what works. We don't necessarily have to have research data to prove it. Lots is happening in urban education. What works in urban schools? We know what works in Lab Schools but we don't have replication of data in order to be able to use it other places. Mr. Magill would love to have a researcher take each of his points, and why not write a chapter on each. We need research that backs up that this place is working.

Mr. Magill then took questions.

He closed with a few comments: What should parents do to support Lab? This is a conversation that is important for parents to have. Robin (Appleby) deserves an opportunity to be successful and create priorities for what needs to be done.

One of the most meaningful things for Mr. Magill was reconnecting alums with what is happening in our school today. Things are not so different from what they did. He felt he has set up the place so that he can depart. He's set up support for children with Learning Differences, improved facilities, brought the teaching of Chinese, a whole host of things that are important. Now that habit is established, there is accounting for hires we make. That makes a difference, to be part of every hire at the teacher or administrator level. When someone is not overlooking it all at the top, bad things happen. We fail the kids when we're not hiring the best. By connecting the past, we're preparing for the future.

What is the challenge for the future? We need to make sure every deserving kid can attend. We need to have an endowment with money for financial aid and needs blind enrollment. We need to have an endowment that can help with operating expenses, and allow us to keep tuition reasonable at rate of inflation. We are about human capital. We need to have negotiations that lead to what we believe is a fair system of education.

Susan L. Ataman
Secretary, UCLS PA

Lynn Sasamoto and Tracy Coe, Parents' Association Co-Presidents
PA Meeting, May 5, 2014, Earl Shapiro Hall, [7 pm](#)
Remarks: Thank You and Farewell to Dave and Judy Magill

Thank you Lisa and congratulations to our newly elected 2014-2015 Parents' Association Board members. Tracy and me have had such comfort in knowing that the PA Board officers and Council members representing each school division have had tremendous support in getting

things done all year. You have all been uber organized and on top of the details in ways that have made things easier for Tracy and me, while also providing a voice and leadership to all of our lab families; so a big thank you to our PA board. Truly, it is such a comfort to know that the dedication and spirit of our veteran Board members along with an impressive group of newly elected Board members will ably carry on next year under Cheryl Rudbeck, as incoming PA President.

But now, let us turn to what really brings all of you here [tonight](#) and that is to spend our PA meeting time with Dave Magill.

The Parents' Association is delighted that you could join us in celebration of Dave Magill's leadership of the laboratory schools for the past 11 years. Who can believe that 11 years have come and gone? Lab has been a busy but we hope Dave would say it has been a rewarding and special place to be.

We must admit doing some digging into the Lab archives was fun as Tracy and I tried to think what in the world we would say about Dave Magill. Well, let's start with a vision of Dave some 44 years ago when he was a brand new teacher, only 22 years old (and yes, we also did the age math too) and embarking on his first teaching job in the Kensington section of Philadelphia; and just married one month to his beautiful bride, Judy! Fast forward to 2014 here at Lab School; my, how the time has truly flown by! And Dave, could you ever have imagined that this day would come; ah, the thought that you can now sleep in late on any weekday, well, because you can, and how exciting that must feel!

How many people can spend their entire career doing something they have passion for and love what they do day in and day out for more than 4 decades? Dave, you are that person; someone who has tirelessly dedicated his entire career to a profession that touches on what brings ALL of us here to the Laboratory Schools: educating our children! Wow, let's talk about staying power and how admirable that is.

As Director of the Lab Schools, it hasn't always been an easy job though it's certainly been a busy one; never a dull moment, from beginning to plan for the Laboratory Schools expansion to take us well into the future and for generations of Labbies to come, planning which began back in 2005, for which we now have our beautiful Earl Shapiro Hall to the time-honored major renovation and restoration of Blaine Hall, and still yet to come, the new Gordon Parks Arts Hall that is well under construction.

But let us not stop there, there was still so much work to be done; many at Lab were involved in implementing a new high school schedule, there was reconfiguring school divisions in preparation for Earl Shapiro Hall, to working through union negotiations, there was a major rollout of re-engaging and connecting Alumni back to lab, there was data from parent surveys to be analyzed, to spending lots of thoughtful time on a new Schools mission statement, oh, and let us not forget there was hiring of 7 principals for the Schools too!

And all this Dave, to name but just a few things that happened under your leadership at Lab.

During your tenure with us, we also personally witnessed how you and Judy became such integral members of our Lab community; truly one of us; from attending any number of High School sporting events, to a middle school play, attending Rites of May, Bizaarnival or even participation in lobby sing with our lower school, primary school and nursery and kindergarten children

Oh yes, and that brings us to your lovely wife; what about our dear friend Judy? We invited Judy to join us this evening as well, because we felt [tonight](#) was more than just a farewell to Dave it is also a farewell to Judy too.

Judy is someone who knows as much about what goes on at this school or with teachers, students, and parents because she has always made it a point to be among us.

Earlier last week, and in Judy's presence along with some of you, I was able to share some of my fondest thoughts about Judy. I touched on Judy's heartfelt and genuine love of nurturing our Lab community, and felt that it made every sense to share some of my sentiments again among all of you this evening.

I was remembering when I first spent time with Judy which was December 2009 at the invitation to attend her annual holiday breakfast as a new N3 parent to Katie; and despite the fact that I am a Lab alum, I had never been invited to the Director's home for anything!

Admittedly, I was a little nervous and somewhat intimidated and yes I had a brief "yikes" moment after I responded yes to Judy's invitation. But after walking into the warmth of the Magill home to be greeted by Judy whose smile made you feel immediately at ease, I knew I liked this woman.

As I am sure you will all agree, Judy is so very warm, and gracious; of the sort that makes you feel very comfortable; it is such a gift but one that Judy shows to everyone of us, all the time.

Judy, as you know, the word tradition is coveted here at Lab and in our community. Who knew, that no one understood this more than you, when you began hosting your new parent breakfasts to welcome the newest families into our community every year. What a delight these breakfasts have been; every one of them, because you do know that these events became the talk amongst us, whether we were there or not. But without fail and with every breakfast at your home we have heard over and over from parents what a lovely host you have been to all of us over many years!

So thank you Judy, for embracing tradition at Lab in wonderful and lovely ways. We will miss your breakfasts (and I will miss your homemade quiche and sticky buns), but more importantly,

we will truly miss you as well. Thank you for being such an exceptional member of our Lab community!

So with that, to both Dave and Judy and on behalf of the Parents' Association, it is our great, great pleasure to be among the first to make a contribution to the David W. Magill Financial Aid Fund being established at the Laboratory Schools in your honor. How appropriate that even with your departure your dedication to educational excellence will live on with this financial aid fund that will make a lab education possible for deserving students in the years to come.

So in closing, we share one more thought. Dave, with Kay Kirkpatrick's help we uncovered some opening remarks that you made at Lab School back in September, 2003 when you first joined as Director. You said, and we quote' "As you can imagine, I was presented with numerous agendas when I arrived....I was surprised by the size of the jigsaw puzzle that was waiting for me." You went on to say Dave, that, "You know that it is not productive to try to put together a jigsaw puzzle alone." Well, that jigsaw puzzle was a great big one and quite a challenge over the years, but here we are together able to put that last jigsaw puzzle piece in place to complete our picture, at least for now.

So we end with similar words that Dave, you have used previously, as Tracy and I say to both you and Judy; "let it be an exciting, and rewarding next chapter in your lives after the Laboratory Schools and know how grateful and thankful we all are that you spent the last 11 years with us. Let it be? Yes, let it be!"

Thank you so much from the Parents' Association.

And now, may we introduce Dave Magill....