

THE LAB SCHOOL LINK

SUMMER

'21



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Our Magnificent
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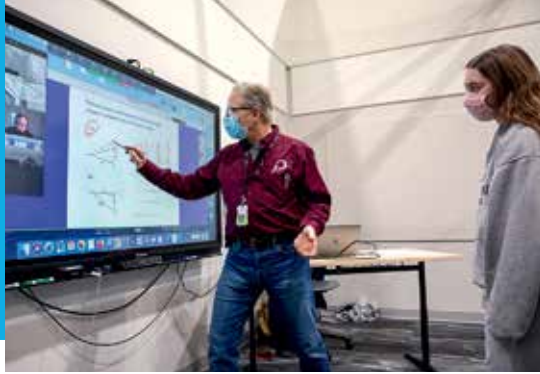
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Flexing the Brain

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Keep Calm and
Slime On

LEARNING WITH ALL THE SENSES



ANGLE MANIA. *Though at first, learning some math concepts may feel like Sisyphus does, pushing his boulder up the hill each day, Junior High Geometry students enjoyed their unit on right-angle trigonometry and have discovered that no one need ever ask “When would anyone ever use this in real life?” about trig.*



BRIDGE BUILDING. *Members of Intermediate’s Industrialists Club learn the aesthetics, math, and engineering of bridge building. Innovative industrialists create a free-standing cantilever bridge using only Keva planks.*

AND THE WORLD GOES ‘ROUND.

“I’m throwing it to Poseidon, God of the Sea who controls earthquakes.” Elementary’s Gods and Goddesses Academic Club students play a “name and attributes” game as a way to familiarize them with the roles they are playing and to enjoy social time together with their peers.



DEPICTING CURRENT EVENTS. *One High School Studio Art student works on a painting depicting the forest fires in Australia and the terrible impact they have had on animals. Students in the class were tasked with creating an art piece around a current event, like Covid-19 or the recent election, that occurred in the local or world news within 2020–21.*



SUMMER 2021

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The Lab School of Washington is an innovative learning community fostering scholarship and creativity in students with language-based learning differences. In an environment of inquiry and hands-on exploration, Lab School students learn to advocate for themselves as they become engaged and compassionate members of a global society.



The Lab School of Washington

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The Lab School Introduces Its New Global Division

A CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION AND VIRTUAL PROGRAMS AMY OSWALT

When traditional schools told Lab School Founder **Sally L. Smith** that they could not teach her son to learn, she poo-pooed them. Believing that “everyone can learn,” Ms. Smith created her own school, becoming a pioneer in designing teaching approaches that used art in all its forms as a gateway for teaching academic skills to students with language-based learning differences. Her school—The Lab School of Washington—founded for her son and other students like him who simply learn differently, has forged a deeper path in its role as a thought leader in the field of learning differences education.



With this same innovative and entrepreneurial spirit, The Lab School has launched its new Global Division.

We sat down with **Amy Oswalt**, head of Elementary and the new program’s director of Innovation and Virtual Programs to learn more about Lab’s latest ground-breaking initiative.



To learn more, go to:
www.labschool.org/global-division



Q What is the new Global Division?

A The Global Division is a way to provide The Lab School's core academic experience to students in grades three through six with language-based learning differences who live outside the DC metropolitan area. We are incredibly excited to launch this pilot program for the 2021–2022 school year, and grow and develop it based on feedback from our first enrolled families.

The program includes a half day of virtual classes in reading, mathematics, and writing provided by experienced online teachers with expertise in learning differences. Just like at the brick-and-mortar Lab, the classes will be small. We are forming cohorts of three–five students to allow for Lab's signature individualized instruction. We'll focus on helping our students develop a toolbox of skills and self-advocacy strategies to enhance success in any educational setting.

Q What students are the best fit for this program?

A We recognize that there are children in many places or situations who don't have access to the high-quality, research-based education that Lab provides. The program was designed not only for students who do not live in the DC metro area and cannot attend The Lab School, but also for those who are home-schooled, whose parents may be in the military or the foreign service and need to travel and/or relocate for work, whose current school does not offer specialized teaching for learning differences, and for students who learn more effectively from the quiet of their home.

We are thrilled to announce that we have our first full cohort of students on the East Coast, and are close to finalizing another in California. We are looking for ways for cohort students and families to participate in some shared experiences before the school year begins like meeting for a picnic or enjoying a day exploring nature. We are working in partnership with the families to see what works best for the students to start to get to know each other.

Q What was the impetus behind creating this new division at The Lab School?

A The Lab School itself was founded because Sally Smith looked around and could not find what she needed for her own son to succeed in school. Such a school did not exist and there was a great need. We learned during the pandemic when we had to teach fully virtually that we have the technology, the skills and expertise, and the ingenuity to offer a virtual program like this. Again, we are aiming to fill a need.

Q What is the schedule like and how does it fit with the rest of a student's educational day?

A As mentioned above, the program includes a half day of instruction on school days. Depending on the students, the rest of their day may include home-school instruction or classes at a local school. What we are offering is Lab's research-based reading, math, and writing curriculum for students with language-based learning differences who are not getting what they need to succeed through their current academic program.

Each half day includes three one-hour classes in reading, writing, and math. Our teachers will be with their students 100 percent of the time that students are in class online—all classes are synchronous—so students get the assistance, feedback, and encouragement they need to be successful.

Q Talk about individualizing learning for the specific needs of each student.

A Relationships that develop among teachers and classmates have always been a hallmark of what makes The Lab School, Lab. We have a tight-knit community where faculty and staff get to know each student as a person—their passions, strengths, challenges, and dreams. This will be no different in the Global Division. Because we will have small cohorts, we will ensure that these relationships are an integral part of the learning experience.

Q In what ways is The Lab School best equipped to offer a program like this?

A The Lab community learned a great deal last spring when everyone had to suddenly pivot to full virtual learning—and virtual living. There was a steep learning curve, lots of new technology to master, the sense of collective loss from not being together, but also some significant silver linings.

Our amazing faculty and staff adapted 21st century communication technology to deliver Lab's signature teaching methodology, exploring many sources for sharing information and generating curiosity. When something didn't work, we came up with new solutions. It seems that Lab's treasure chest of best practices continues to expand—and now we are using what we learned during the pandemic to launch our Global Division pilot.

Above all else, we are equipped to offer this new program for the same reason we are equipped to offer what we do at our

brick-and-mortar campus. Our mission remains the same in person and virtually.

Q How is the program different from tutoring?

A First of all, tutoring is usually one-on-one. It does not include the social aspect of being in a small group learning together. Also, our focus with the Global Division is not on maintaining skills, but helping our students grow as learners so they can successfully move forward grade by grade.

Also, students thrive at Lab because they don't feel alone, they don't feel as if they are the only person with learning challenges. They become part of a tribe, and feel a great sense of belonging. The Global Division allows students to be "dual enrolled" in both Lab and the public or independent school they were previously attending. Sure, the Global Division is virtual, but our students will still feel part of a tribe.

Q A lot of online programs seem to miss the mark when it comes to the personal touch. How will students feel supported and families connected as if they were in a brick-and-mortar school?

A Because we have designed the program around having small cohorts of students with one master teacher and an assistant teacher, as needed, there will be lots of opportunities for students to participate and actively engage in class. Often that means asking the students what projects and ideas they are interested in pursuing. Maybe they are reading a story and instead of writing about it, maybe make comic books to reflect their knowledge. We want them to feel ownership of what they are learning, and how. Also, helping them better understand how their own brain works allows them to adopt tools and strategies that work best for them.

Q Since its inception, The Lab School has pioneered the integration of arts and academics. We know the arts have been found to be a pathway to deeper learning as they engage the child's procedural memory, strengthen attention and stamina, deepen perspective and empathy, and allow learning to truly "stick." How will the Global Division include hands-on, arts-centered, experiential learning?

A As we learned during virtual learning during the pandemic, working on projects virtually can be as fulfilling and creative as doing so together in person. Maybe students will create a scene out of clay to depict a sci-fi story they are reading in class. On another day, while studying fractals in nature, they will draw a landscape using various mathematical shapes to demonstrate their knowledge. At Lab, we are experts on teaching kids using the arts.

Q Will all this screen time be detrimental?

A Not all screen time is equal. Looking at types of engagement is what is important when considering screen time. And just like at in-person school, we will make sure we have lots of intentional movement breaks. We all need to move no matter where we are teaching and learning!

Q How will you measure the progress of each student?

A We will do this as we always have; being virtual will be no different. Using the same tools for regular assessments and progress measurement, we will meet and communicate regularly with parents so we are all working toward the success of our individual students—academically, socially, and emotionally. And we will always be a phone call away if anything unexpected arises.

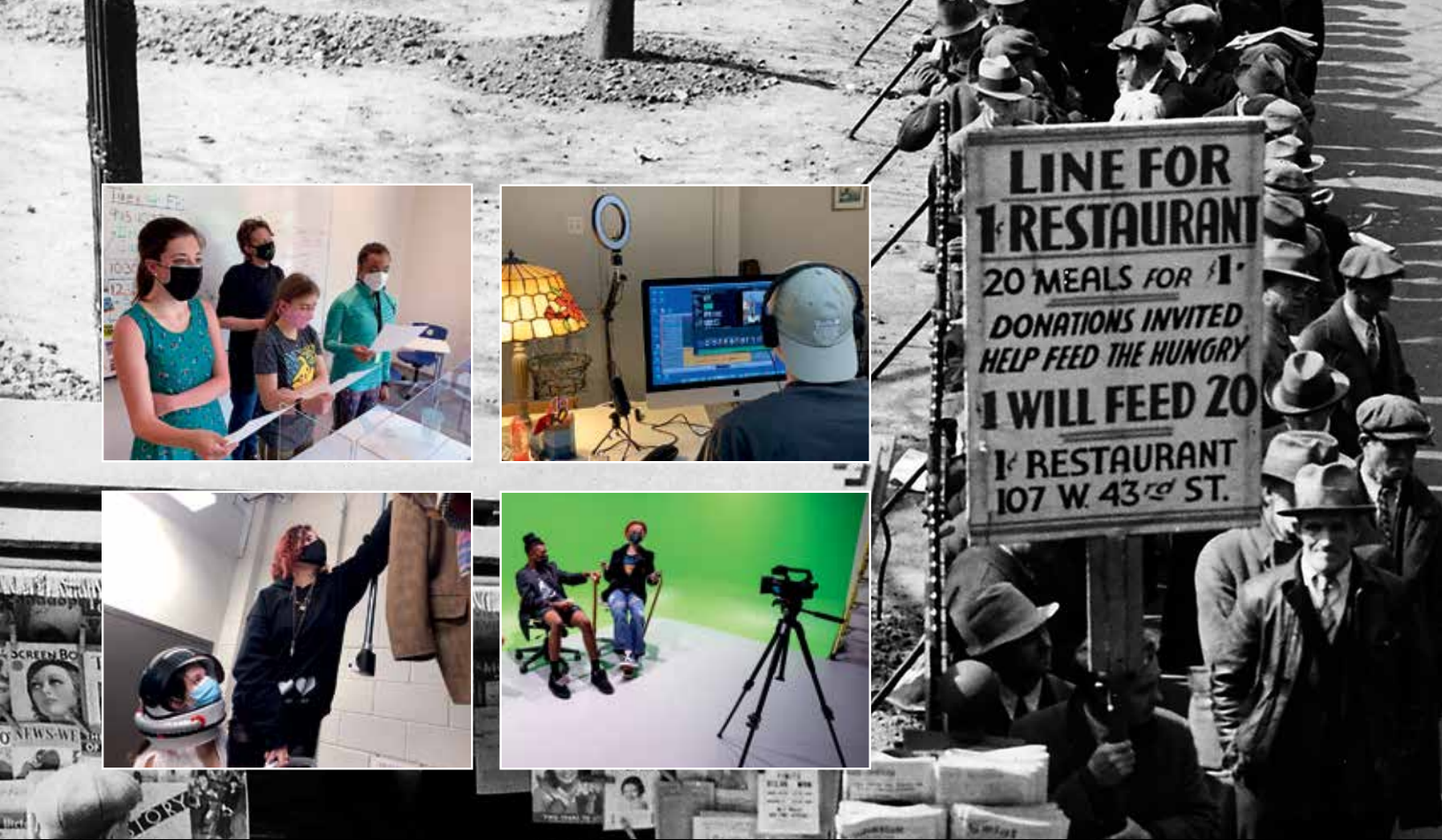
Q What are your goals for the first year of the Global Division?

A With the pilot, we are starting small this year with the goal of learning as much as we can about what our students and families need and what works best. Going from there, we can position ourselves to offer the outstanding core academic experience that Lab is known for, but virtually.

Q What are you most excited about as Lab launches this new, 21st century division?

A I'm an adventurer at heart, someone who likes an innovative and entrepreneurial challenge. With that explorer spirit, the Global Division will be trying something totally new. We haven't been able to offer a program like this before in the K12 setting, in particular for students in grades three through six with learning differences, so that's incredibly exciting.





A COLLAGE-LIKE TAKE ON THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Lab's 20th annual student/faculty production goes virtual

The most effective and compelling way to deeply understand a period in history is often through stories portrayed via the arts. This year's student/faculty production did just that—opening a window into the difficult and multi-layered years of the Great Depression—through songs and music, poems and readings, monologues, and scenes.

"Faced with the prospect of not having a student/faculty play this year, I was inspired by junior **Isabella Cabrol**'s suggestion that we could produce a sort of 'living newspaper.' The Drama Club discussed this and we decided to proceed with a student/faculty project centered on the Great Depression," explains Director of Performing Arts, Teaching Artist **Shaun Miskell**. Isabella '22 and friend and classmate **Cris Bocock** '22 served as the show's innovative and indispensable student directors.

Unlike most plays that have a beginning, middle, and end with a strong story arc, this year's production evolved into more of a collage, each piece on the theatrical tapestry created and produced independently by an individual or small collaborative group, then pulled together into one virtual piece à la Mr. Miskell.

"This year's production was a totally different ballgame, to say the least, but we had great turnout," says Mr. Miskell. "I was impressed by what some students and staff brought to the production, but I have to add that all of us are greatly looking forward to returning to a live event next year."

What were some of the pieces of the collage? There was a scene created around the domino effect of the failing banks (performed by **Chloe Ferber** '25, **Sophie Moore** '25, and

Gabriel Shacter-Wheeler '25 in Junior High Teaching Artist, Video **Adam Toal**'s class); an hilarious duo "explaining" the scientific causes of the Dust Bowl (featuring Junior High Science Teacher **Alessandra Chiotti** and **Reisa Blum** '24); a monologue of a farm girl heading to Los Angeles to become an actress and the sobering reality that follows (starring **Olivia Steffe** '22); a scene featuring President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (performed by **Knox West** '23); a portrayal and performance of American contralto Marian Anderson singing "America, the Beautiful" in 1939 on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial (performed by Head of Intermediate **Kim Brown**, accompanied on piano by Head of Junior High **Jessica Lux**); and a reading from letters sent to then-First Lady **Eleanor Roosevelt** (read and performed by College Advisor **Trudy Fleisher**). These are just some of the amazing contributions from students, faculty, and staff.

"Not for the first time, I am overwhelmed by the talent, passion, and generosity of spirit of my colleagues and our students," says Mr. Miskell. "Special props to Cris and Isabella, without whose hard work and dedication this show would not have been possible!"

Once again, The Lab School proved that with creativity, ingenuity, and a lot of elbow grease, anything is possible, even virtually. That said, we are all overflowing with anticipation at the prospect of gathering once again in person and putting our hands together after many a live performance in The Shaun Miskell Theater. *To watch the production, go to: www.labschool.org/production2021*



ASKING THE EXPECTED AND UNE

“The opposite of talking isn’t listening. The opposite of talking is waiting,” says American Author Fran Lebowitz. This is good advice for anyone conducting an interview. Sometimes the best stories, the nuggets that surprise not only the interviewer but also the person being interviewed, often emerge from the silence between questions.

For more than 10 years, students in Junior High English Teacher **Susie Wolk**’s class have undertaken the project of researching, conducting, and presenting a video interview of impact. Originally, students were tasked with interviewing a family member or friend

about their experiences in World War II—overseas or on the home front, but over the years, the list has expanded to interviews about any war, 9.11, the Civil Rights movement, or immigration. “The key is that the subject matter needs to be affecting,” says Ms. Wolk. “It’s not easy to ask a family member to bring up experiences and memories that might be difficult, but through the process of researching their topic, drafting questions, and editing the video piece, students learn the nuances of conducting a thoughtful and empathetic interview.”

This year, students’ topics included interviews with a mother’s friend who

served in the Israeli Army, a mother who was teaching at a school near the Pentagon during 9/11, a grandfather who was born in East Prussia and who went to East Berlin to live with grandparents and cousins after both his parents were killed, a grandfather who fought in the Pacific campaign, grandparents who emigrated from Iran, and a family friend who identifies as LGBTQ+ who emigrated from Brazil.

Before setting up their cameras, students learn that research is key to the success of their interview, and in fact, the better they understand the events around their interviewee’s experience,



EXPECTED QUESTIONS

the more nuanced the interview will be. And from good research comes good questions. That said, students also learned that once they got talking, they often didn't even need to refer to their questions . . . they could let go of the controls and ride the tributaries of the conversation.

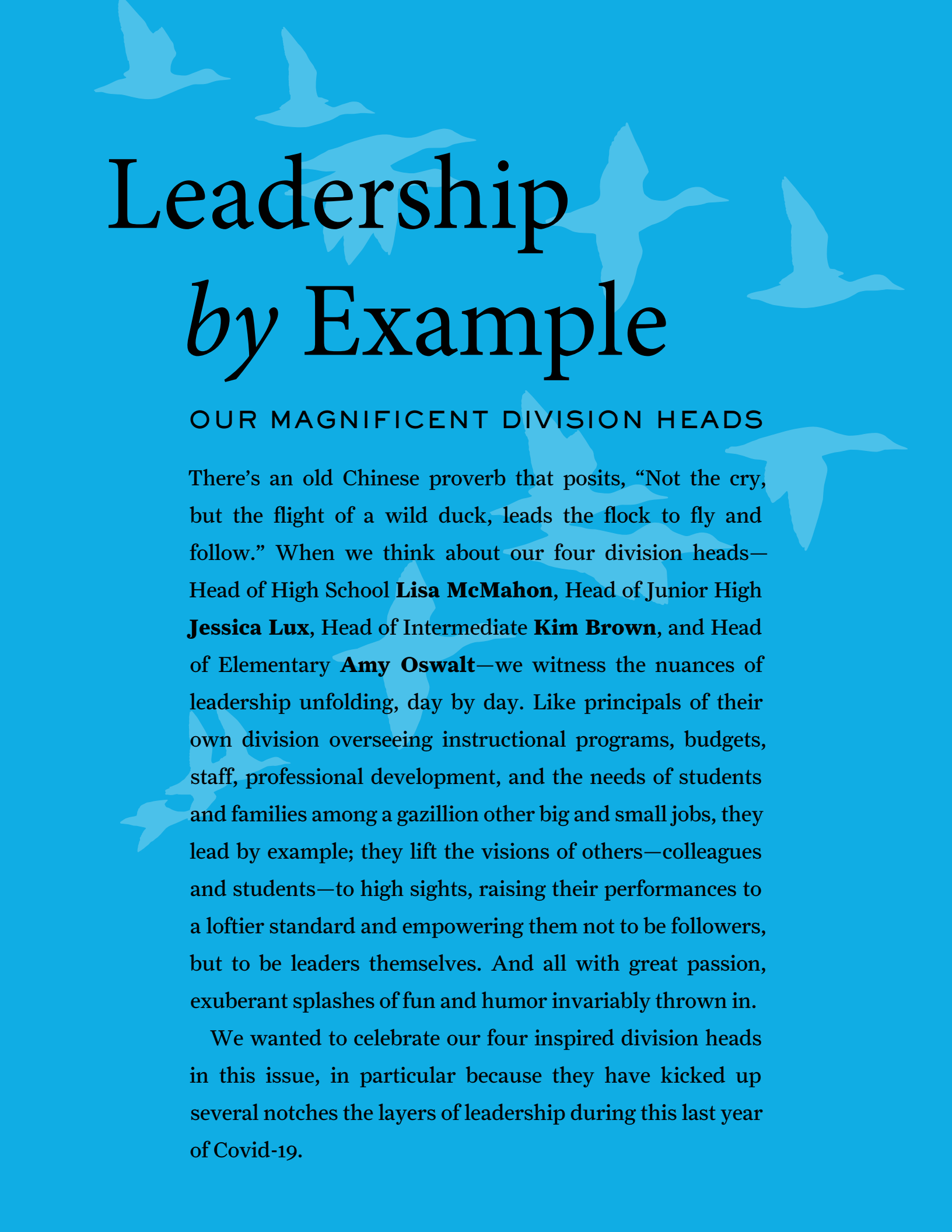
One former student interviewed a family friend about growing up in Beirut during the Lebanese Civil War. "Michel shared many stories with me, some definitely harder for him to tell than others. He told me about the day he and his cousin were out playing soccer by a church. He

had gotten hungry and run home for a sandwich. When he came back outside, he saw that the church had been hit by a rocket and his cousin killed by rocks and shrapnel," he wrote in his post-interview reflection essay. "Michel also shared a lot about his mother who had recently died. He told me that it felt good to share what his mother had done to take care of her family, working hard for three years to get them out of Beirut—even standing up to a group of soldiers who insisted she give them a ride by telling them to unload their guns and throw them in the trunk or else they would have

to kill her. He said she was a warrior, and sharing her story was like telling her story for her. The interview was meaningful to both of us."

Once all the videos are finished, the students share them with the class and also talk and later write about what they thought about the entire process—from how they felt before, during, and after the interview and what details from the interviewee's story most resonated with them to changes in their thoughts, post-interview, about the topic or person.

"My deep intent with the project has always been for students to learn and understand events through personal anecdotes and to connect with others," says Ms. Wolk. "When it's a family member being interviewed, it is not only an opportunity for that person to truly share life experiences, it is a gift for the child to have and to hold. I know most students enjoy the experience, but I believe when they are older, they will truly appreciate having done it. Recently, Ms. Wolk received a handwritten note from a former student that read, 'Dear Ms. Wolk, I will always remember our WWII project. I was able to interview my great aunt's dad before he died. Thank you for giving me that experience.'"



Leadership *by* Example

OUR MAGNIFICENT DIVISION HEADS

There's an old Chinese proverb that posits, "Not the cry, but the flight of a wild duck, leads the flock to fly and follow." When we think about our four division heads—Head of High School **Lisa McMahon**, Head of Junior High **Jessica Lux**, Head of Intermediate **Kim Brown**, and Head of Elementary **Amy Oswalt**—we witness the nuances of leadership unfolding, day by day. Like principals of their own division overseeing instructional programs, budgets, staff, professional development, and the needs of students and families among a gazillion other big and small jobs, they lead by example; they lift the visions of others—colleagues and students—to high sights, raising their performances to a loftier standard and empowering them not to be followers, but to be leaders themselves. And all with great passion, exuberant splashes of fun and humor invariably thrown in.

We wanted to celebrate our four inspired division heads in this issue, in particular because they have kicked up several notches the layers of leadership during this last year of Covid-19.



LISA MCMAHON HEAD OF HIGH SCHOOL

"I remember quite vividly what it was like to be a teenager . . . all the emotions and feelings, all the friendships and drama," says Mrs. McMahon. "No matter how much the world changes with technology and whatever trend is trending, being a teenager can be incredibly difficult while simultaneously full of joy and discovery. I appreciate what our kids are going through—and I love being a part of their high school years."

Her 24th year at Lab, Mrs. McMahon taught High School English for 11 years before becoming division head in 2008. "I don't think leadership needs to come with a title or an administrative role," she says. "Teachers are leaders. I am very trusting of what they are doing in their classrooms—though I do like to know everything that is going on—and I appreciate their serving as Club and Affinity Group advisors or presenting new ways of making staff meetings or professional development more engaging and effective. Above all else, what makes a strong team is owning the common goal of doing what is best for each student. With openness and trust, everything we do is through the lens of this shared goal."

Mrs. McMahon says working with students at the high school level has always been her focus. "The four years of high school fly by, but it's a time when kids find their voices and passions and discover what kind of person they want to become," she says. "We want our students to know inherently that we support them not only as learners but also as humans with full and complex sets of emotions, values, and beliefs."

Some of the programs of which Mrs. McMahon is most proud of cultivating during the last 13 years include the transition to block scheduling, which following two years of research, exploration, and two brief pilots, provides more time for students to see the arc of a lesson and engage in deeper inquiry and creativity. The international travel program also extends learning beyond the classroom with the goal of fostering independence and global citizenship. And though still developing and growing, the Affinity Groups program has expanded and become incredibly important for the entire High School community.

"Above all else, what makes a strong team is owning the common goal of doing what is best for each student. With openness and trust, everything we do is through the lens of this shared goal." — Lisa McMahon

"Probably more than any other division by virtue of their age, High School students are part of the team. We believe that the more agency and autonomy they are given, the more they will grow academically, socially, and emotionally. With the help of teachers, administration, college and internship advising, and related services—and always returning to our shared goal of doing what is best for each of these young adults—students are paving their own future paths."

Of late, Mrs. McMahon says she has been spending her off time on two very different activities: reading Isabel Wilkerson's brilliant and heady book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent* and laughing at the television show "Ted Lasso" with her husband and two Bullmastiffs, Avery and Seamus.

JESSICA LUX HEAD OF JUNIOR HIGH

As an Environmental Studies and Religious Studies double major at Yale University, Ms. Lux has brought her long-time interest in the interconnectedness of our world to her passion to help students discover and synch all parts of who they are. "The Junior High students are at a fun age to work with. I get to see these amazing kids, in just two years during seventh and eighth grades, move from babies to young adults," she says. "It's a time

of tremendous growth for them, physically, emotionally, and socially. They learn what matters to them, what kind of friends they want to have and what kind of friend they want to be, what fascinates them—and doesn't!—and what opportunities they want to grab by the horns now and going forward.”

After building and running the High School at the former Kingsbury Center for nine years and working in special education before that, Ms. Lux came to Lab as Junior High's division head in 2012, particularly drawn to the passion and dedication of the whole Lab School community to help each student overcome challenges and thrive in and beyond the classroom. “Stylistically, I am a team-oriented leader,” she says. “We fill our classrooms and offices with people who are passionate about their areas of expertise, who simultaneously push and support our students toward success, and who encourage and model kindness, respect, and the honoring

of each person's authentic self.”

Building on Lab's philosophy of arts-centered, hands-on, experiential learning to target skills and challenges, Ms. Lux has focused on introducing and further building several programs in the Junior High that zero in on the academic and social growth of the age group. “The Junior High kids are in a transitional space where they have a foundation

of knowledge from the Academic Clubs of Elementary and Intermediate and are preparing for the rigors of High School,” she says. “We complement what we teach in the classroom with programs that blend knowledge acquisition and experiential learning with social and emotional development.” There's Teton week at Grand Teton National Park where students participate in seven days of science learning with the Teton Science School. There are curricular, hands-on projects like STEAM Day in 2019—science, technology, engineering, art, and math—where, based on the theme “flight” and using only recycled materials, students collaborated on creative and innovation projects, including building and launching water rockets, learning about the aerodynamics of birds, and making kites, windsocks, and comic books. And there is CREW (think members who work as a team on a boat) where in the academic setting, “. . . we can help our students develop more skills for navigating complex social issues, consider what it means to be part of a community, and contemplate who they are and want to be. It's a safe place to bring forth ideas, concerns, and thoughts,” explains Ms. Lux. These are just a few examples.

Ms. Lux has also been deeply invested in issues of alignment

across all divisions, including using academic approaches like The Writing Revolution and Orton-Gillingham reading instruction in the classroom, emphasizing the development of note-taking skills and the use of primary sources, and being intentional at looking at the full curriculum through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In college, Ms. Lux participated in a few three-month research projects in remote outdoor locations—from working to relocate Mexican wolves to conducting forest studies on a secluded lake in British Columbia. “I believe that to be your best self, you have to be in synch, authentically, with all parts of yourself,” she says. “I also believe that when people are in synch with their environment, they thrive. That is my hope for each Junior High student as well as each of my colleagues.”

KIM BROWN, HEAD OF INTERMEDIATE

“I believe deeply that leadership is very different from management,” says Ms. Brown. “As a leader, I want to inspire people to believe in the mission of the school and go to the ends of the earth to achieve it, owning and enjoying their part in all that we do along the way.”

During her nine years as head of Intermediate, Ms. Brown has worked diligently to establish a professional learning community. “When we put our collective brains together, we invariably get a better result,” she says. “How we interact and treat one another is crucial for the health of our team as well as what we model for our students.” Ms. Brown said she had to adapt her style of heading up meetings when she got to Lab. The meetings became less linear and more creative. “Sometimes we get huge pieces of paper and a pile of colored Sharpies and write our goals and plans. Every teacher and staff member is part of how we make our division be the best it can be; I have a dream team.”

Having been an Elementary school principal with Fairfax County Public Schools for almost her entire career before Lab, Ms. Brown knows that when students feel heard, supported, and understood, they thrive. “Sometimes when students arrive at Lab, they have had some bad experiences at school. We work to understand all parts of each student—academically, socially, emotionally, behaviorally—and figure out how best to meet their individual needs,” she says. “It is incredibly gratifying to see these kids emerge from a cocoon and blossom . . . becoming self-advocates, pursuing their interests, and developing friendships with both their peers and teachers.”



“I believe deeply that leadership is very different from management. As a leader, I want to inspire people to believe in the mission of the school and go to the ends of the earth to achieve it, owning and enjoying their part in all that we do along the way.” — Kim Brown

As for Intermediate’s programs, Ms. Brown tailored many facets of the curriculum around health and human development and diversity, equity, and inclusion. For the literacy program, she built up classroom libraries to include a wide variety of genres, reading levels, and stories with diverse characters. She aligned the assessment process, and along with professional development for her staff, created a robust resource library for everyone’s use. She also created the “New Colleagues Series,” complete with regular meetings and a huge binder of “Lab Vocab” so new faculty and staff can easily learn the ropes.

Ms. Brown—who loves acting and singing and even met her husband in the Gospel choir in which they still sing—says participating each year in the Student/Faculty plays has been a wonderful way to reconnect with former students. “I enjoy having a different, special relationship with my students who have become high schoolers!” She knows firsthand how important it is, as a student, to feel special, to feel included and valued. Ms. Brown was one of the first Black students to attend an integrated elementary school in the Virginia area where she grew up, having only attended segregated schools before fifth grade. “As you can imagine, I have strong feelings about kids being treated fairly, and the importance of students’ knowing that adults have high expectations for them,” she says.

And every year, Ms. Brown outdoes herself hosting legendary themed holiday celebrations to ensure her staff feels appreciated, complete with decorations and beloved recipes cooked by Ms. Brown herself. “We work hard and I believe fun is crucial to our success. That’s how we roll in Intermediate . . .” After an illustrious career, Ms. Brown retired at the end of the school year. (See related story, page 28.) Associate Head of Intermediate **Katie Douglas** will become Interim Head of Intermediate.

AMY OSWALT, HEAD OF ELEMENTARY

Having worked at and lead schools on three continents, Ms. Oswalt has always been fascinated not only by teaching students to read but also the processes of *how* best to teach reading, especially to students with learning differences. With degrees in Linguistics, Special Education, and Education Administration, she was thrilled, three years ago, to take on the post of Elementary division head because of Lab’s specialized mission and the fact that the curriculum is arts-based. “I love that as an educator at Lab you can let your freak flag fly and not have to conform to antiquated rules or standardized test mandates,” she says. “When I learned about the job, I came to understand what a top school Lab is in the field of learning differences education. I wanted to be the cinnamon,” she laughs, explaining. “Say Lab is a famous recipe for brownies, which

everyone loves, but then you think, how about adding a pinch of cinnamon and, pop, the brownies are that much better!”

When Ms. Oswalt talks about how to lead a division of happy, curious, and motivated learners as well as an engaged and fulfilled team of faculty and staff, she homes in on ownership. “Everyone has to have a deep sense of agency at school whether that’s students feeling like active participants in what they are learning rather than passive vessels being filled with information or teachers knowing that their relationship with their administrators, colleagues, and students is based above all else on trust,” she says. “The more trust you have, the more diversity of thought exists, and from there passion and enthusiasm expand. And, I believe vehemently that joy and laughter while doing the serious work of learning and teaching should prevail.”

Ms. Oswalt says she invariably gets a kick out of the “hilarious, playful, and astute words and actions” that come from the Elementary kids during work and play. “Over the years, I have learned that kids cannot really learn until they see themselves as a reader, a scientist, an athlete, a watercolorist . . . When they *are* that learner, they are no longer waiting to *become* that learner. And from there, well, that’s when the joy and laughter, curiosity and creativity kick in.”

As head of Elementary, Ms. Oswalt—who doggedly claims to loathe paper—is proud to have pushed for more technology during the last few years. “We adopted more shared technologies and introduced many effective digital tools in the classroom, which frankly helped greatly when we all had to flip to teaching and learning from home due to the pandemic.”

This love of technology and finding inventive and effective methods to teach students on campus or online has led to her additional post as director of Innovation and Virtual Programs, a new global division she will head starting in the 2021–2022 school year. We all look forward to seeing what ingredients, along with cinnamon, Ms. Oswalt brings to Lab’s exciting new endeavor. (See related story, page 2.)



GRADUATION 2021

AND THE MORTARBOARDS TAKE FLIGHT . . .

For the first time ever, The Lab School graduation was held outside. The Weather Gods seemed to have received the memo as it was a glorious June day, cooler than most with a proud morning sun. Socially distanced, the class of 19 seniors along with family, friends, and much of the faculty and staff were honored for their amazing achievements, especially in light of the challenges of the last year and a half due to COVID-19.

Ring in a new tradition inspired by Head of School **Kim Wargo**, Internship Coordinator **Christopher Edmonds**—chosen by the Class of 2021—read American Poet and Activist Amanda Gorman’s poem “Miracle of Morning,” which lyrically and thought-provokingly acknowledges the promise of healing as the world emerges from a post-pandemic world.

And in addition to remarks highlighting the accomplishments of each of our graduates by Head of High School **Lisa McMahon**, the ceremony also included welcome and closing remarks by Ms. Wargo, a commencement address by Political Analyst, National Editor- “The Cook Political Report” and Lab parent **Amy Walter**, a gorgeous rendition of “America the Beautiful” by a group of Lab’s faculty and staff, and astute remarks by Senior Class Speaker **Delano Ballenger** who spoke on behalf his class.

The day also indicated the eve of Juneteenth—the holiday commemorating the end of slavery by marking the day enslaved people in Texas learned they were free—now, as of June 2021, a federal holiday.

COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES: CLASS OF 2021

Adelphi University
Allegheny College
American University
University of Arizona
Bowie State University
The Catholic University of America
College of Charleston

Coppin State University
Davis & Elkins College (2)
Dean College
Dean College Musical Theater
Eckerd College
Elon University (2)
Fairleigh Dickinson University
George Mason University



If ever there were a time for compassionate leaders, innovators, pathfinders to emerge, the time is now . . . we have the opportunity to reevaluate our habits, our frameworks, our assumptions. It's time to put your Lab education to practice in the real world."

—AMY WALTER
POLITICAL ANALYST, NATIONAL EDITOR-“THE COOK
POLITICAL REPORT,” AND LAB SCHOOL PARENT

“When this ends, we’ll
smile sweetly, finally
seeing/In testing times, we
became the best of beings.”

—INTERNSHIP
COORDINATOR
CHRISTOPHER EDMONDS,
READING GORMAN’S
POEM



“There are two days that
are very important in life:
the day you are born and
the day you find out why.
Everyone on this earth is
here for a reason.”

—DELANO BALLENGER ’21



George Washington University
Goucher College
Guilford College
High Point University
James Madison University
Longwood University
University of Lynchburg
Lynn University

**University of Maine
Farmington**
University of Southern Maine
Manhattanville College
University of Maryland College
Park
McDaniel College (3)
Old Dominion University

St. Mary’s College of Maryland
Savannah College of Art and
Design
Shepherd University
College of Southern Maryland
Susquehanna University
University of Tennessee
Union College

University of Utah
Virginia Commonwealth
University
**Northern Virginia Community
College Annandale**
Westminster College

Bold text denotes matriculation



First row, left to right:

Iris Mikeska, Mackenzie Jones,
Delano Ballenger, Gabby Nairn

Second row, left to right:

Jake Rosen, Kate Cassidy,
Reese Baldwin, Landon Plummer,
Alex Korman

Third row, left to right:

Alex Appleby, Noah Jacobs,
Quentin Akridge, Sydney Imredy

Fourth row, top, left to right:

Matthew Madsen, Mia Young,
Calix Baptiste, Jack Costello,
Joshua Kam

Missing from photo: Ari Hovis-
Afflerbach



LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

Lab's Head of School Reflects on The Lab School and the Pandemic

Head of School Kim Wargo answers questions about the past year, the challenges of and lessons learned from the pandemic, and on what we are focusing as we move forward.

How do you think The Lab School managed COVID-19 this past year?

K.W. I am proud and awed by the resilience of this community, and that includes every student, their families, and every member of our faculty and staff. You never know what you are actually ready for—and capable of—until an unthinkable challenge arrives, uninvited. The spread of the coronavirus forced us all to test our mettle. The Lab School, as it turns out, was more than ready to take on the challenge of virtual

learning, and, in some ways, Lab has “outLabbed” itself.

Our two primary goals were—and will remain—to protect the health and safety of our community and continue to deliver the top-notch education that Lab is known for. I think we have done very well on both those scores.

Our community has been very conscientious about health and safety protocols. Many new systems were put in place on our campuses such as upgraded HVAC systems, expanded cleaning protocols, de-

densified classrooms and spaces as well as protocols for masking, social distancing, hygiene . . . you name it. We implemented a daily online health tracker, and tested all students and faculty/staff who were working on campus twice monthly. Although we did have a few positive cases of COVID during the spring semester, there was no spread within our community. In addition, the majority of our faculty and staff were able to get vaccinated by mid-April, and now a large number of our older students are vaccinated

as well. We will continue to encourage vaccination of all who are eligible, and will require it when it receives full authorization from the FDA.

Regarding the goal of delivering an excellent Lab School education, we have received strong feedback from families and faculty. We've seen how our amazing faculty and staff adapted to deliver Lab's signature teaching methodology, exploring many sources for sharing information and generating curiosity. When something didn't work, well, we came up with new solutions. It seems that Lab's treasure chest of best practices continues to expand.

Our Clinical Services providers found secure platforms to continue the delivery of Speech and Language, Occupational Therapy, and Psychological services and offered expanded options for online support to parents, students, faculty and staff, and graduates and alumni.

All of this came with losses, too—live music, theater, and movement performances, the use of our brand new Shaun Miskell Theater, athletics, and other school-wide in-person gatherings and traditions. And of course, the whole community missed the day-to-day engagement of being together in our tight-knit learning environment.

It goes without saying that this past year has been exhausting for everyone, especially for students. We are constantly astonished by their

resilience, insight, and humor in the face of challenges.

We also need to be clear that the last year has not only been about COVID. We've also been immersed in the efforts to acknowledge, understand, and work to end systemic racism and racist violence, and what the implications of these are for The Lab School. These are enormous challenges we have all had to face.

How did the school community react to the juggling of virtual and hybrid learning during the 2020–2021 school year?

K.W. We had to be flexible and switch plans when necessary based on COVID numbers in the DMV and reports about risk management from the CDC. Our most important responsibility was and still is the health and safety of our community. We recognize that some among us are at higher risk of adverse impacts from this COVID-19 due to pre-existing health-related conditions for themselves or immediate family members, and that these factors play into individual decisions about mitigating risk, including returning to in-person classroom experiences.

In the early fall 2020, we first introduced virtual plus opportunities to have small groups of students on campus to promote connection, social-emotional well-being, and learning; then

we built on those successes to introduce hybrid learning—a combination of in-person and remote teaching and learning. The hybrid pilot allowed us to test processes, recognize limitations, and figure out how best to design and navigate a safe campus so as to bring more of the community back in person, which we were doing each month this spring especially as more of the community became fully vaccinated and returned to campus. Our youngest students were able to be on campus four days a week since January, and we built up to that across the school by the end of the school year.

How did the pandemic affect the finances of the school?

K.W. There were significant challenges financially. The school had to expend resources to increase staff for smaller cohorts and provide classroom facilitators for teachers who continued to teach virtually. We spent a significant amount of money on risk mitigation, and we built new temporary classrooms in the gym for our Junior High. All of this came at a cost. However, we also saw the generosity of our community. Lab School supporters really stepped up philanthropically to support the Lab School Fund and the Gala. And these resources, as well as a PPP loan, helped to defray some of the additional costs.



How has The Lab School supported students/families in need this year beyond what it we normally do?

K.W. We increased our financial assistance budget as an acknowledgement of the fact that families were impacted by the pandemic. This additional financial assistance allowed us to meet emergency needs of families to ensure that we could keep our community together. We also sought to provide connection points for parents, hosting regular virtual coffees and town halls with the goal of keeping our community informed and connected. I wrote regularly to our community, and to provide as much detail and transparency as possible about the decisions we were making. Our Psychological Services team provided various support opportunities for parents, teachers, and students to help with the emotional toll of the pandemic. All in all, we tried to anticipate the needs of the community and provide ways to address those needs.



How did fundraising efforts fare during the last year and a half?

K.W. We reduced our goals and expectations somewhat to be sensitive to the financial situations of many families due to the pandemic, but we exceeded these reduced goals. Our community truly stepped up; we were able to meet our goal for the Lab School Fund and the Gala. This important milestone should not be taken for granted given the year that we've all had!

Let's talk about the fall. Will we be back to "normal"?

K.W. Every step of the way since we all had to batten down the hatches in March 2020, I have talked to experts in science and medicine to understand the different perspectives on the issues of COVID and then make decisions from there. I have also been in constant touch with the leadership of other local schools as well as the DC government. This is what has and continues to guide our decision making.

I believe the number of people getting vaccinations gives us all hope, and the plan is for an in-person, on-campus educational experience five days a week for all divisions. While we know there will be some need for continued risk mitigation, we are hopeful that 2021-22 will look and feel much closer to "normal" than anything we've experienced since March 2020.

I know that for me, I am greatly looking forward to getting to know everyone better in person instead of on a screen . . . sharing more fist bumps and high fives, hosting community-building events, meeting more parents, and just hanging out in classrooms. Above all else, I will strive to be clear, transparent, and honest with our community. And hopeful!

There are still cases of COVID-19 in the area, rising and falling depending on the week, especially for younger people, and the variants remain a serious threat. Does any of that give you pause about the fall?

K.W. I know we're in a race to get as many people vaccinated in the country and the world, and now that young people aged 12 and up can get vaccinated, we can cover even more ground. We're making great progress on that front, and I hope that Lab can lead the way in this regard. We've seen very little vaccine hesitancy in our community, and wonderful compliance from all community members to our risk-mitigation efforts. Despite the variants, the good news is that the effectiveness of these vaccines is very high, so I am hopeful. And, as always, we will keep the health and safety of our whole community our top priority and make changes as needed.

So, how do you see 2021–2022 school year playing out?

K.W. I think it will feel pretty close to “normal” for students and families, faculty and staff. We may have to maintain certain standards for masking in classrooms, and continue to monitor the size of classes and other spaces and activities with health and safety in mind, but I think we can expect to be back to an almost normal school year.

How will the school handle vaccination? Will it be required or recommended? Any thoughts about the plans for continued COVID testing?

K.W. Right now, we are strongly encouraging all eligible members of our community to get the vaccine. We hosted a vaccine clinic at Foxhall in mid-June, and will repeat that again later in the fall. Once the vaccine is fully authorized by the FDA, we will require it for all community members. We will continue to require testing for students and staff who are not fully vaccinated. I can’t underscore enough how important the vaccine is for us to be as close to a normal school year as possible!

Looking ahead, are you at all concerned as we get into the fall and the weather limits outside time? What about Thanksgiving and winter holiday breaks?

K.W. I’m happy to say that I am not. I don’t see the same issues this year because most everyone will be vaccinated. That said, we will of course monitor the case rates in our community and implement any safety measures that seem warranted.

Will The Lab School resume any of its traditional in-person events?

K.W. Yes! Stay tuned! We’ll likely start slowly in this area, but ramp up as the school year progresses. We will have some “COVID keepers,” i.e., things we did by necessity during the pandemic that we will keep in the post-COVID world because they actually worked better. Virtual parent-teacher conferences are one example. We received a lot of feedback that these conferences were easier for parents and that we lost very little, if any, of their effectiveness by using a virtual platform. Those are the kinds of things we’ll evaluate as we begin a return to in-person events.

How is the work around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) going, and how do you see it continuing next year?

K.W. We are going to be working on this for a long time to come, but I think we have made some marked headway this past year. First and foremost, our new Director of DEI **Anthony Perry, PhD** started in the fall and he has been working in every corner of the school with all constituents to have courageous conversations and expand knowledge around systemic racism, white privilege, and ongoing racism against peoples of color that we all, heartbreakingly, read and hear about on a daily basis. Dr. Perry and I started at the same time and have been working in partnership along with the newly appointed DEI coordinators in each division.

Especially during this year of COVID when all of our bandwidths have been stretched, I am proud and humbled by how seriously our students, faculty, and staff have been engaging in this work to help us establish a plan and, as a community, continue to seek answers and establish blueprints around everything related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Our main work involves providing training and education to our entire community—faculty, staff, students,





families, and trustees—to understand better the history, context, and lived experience of our communities of color and those with racial and ethnic identities that are not white, as well as those people who identify as LGBTQ+, and then to change the behaviors, practices, and policies across the board.

Part of this work involves developing an honest and raw understanding of our own history as a school and community with respect to race. As I said, we are going to be doing this work for a long time.

With the challenges students and teachers faced having to switch to virtual learning in March 2020 and then balancing virtual and hybrid learning, are you at all worried that students have fallen behind?

K.W. Not one bit! I don't have adequate words to express just how diligent, innovative, creative, and supportive our faculty and staff have been for our students in and beyond the classroom. Sure, there were some hiccups when we first pivoted to virtual learning and then to hybrid learning, but when something

didn't work, something new and different—and sometimes surprising—did!

That said, we are and will continue to pay close attention to our students' skills and levels of preparedness. And if any families or students, themselves, believe greater attention in a subject or area is needed, we are here to listen and jump right in.

There is no doubt that students—globally—have faced challenges this year. Lab is no exception. There are likely areas for our students where we haven't covered as much ground as we might have without a pandemic. But I have the utmost confidence that our teachers are best positioned to assess where students are and to make up that ground through our individualized and strengths-based approaches.

I believe the hardest part for all of us, in particular our students, was missing the daily interactions of in-person engagement. Our faculty and staff, including our clinical services staff in Speech-Language Pathology, Occupational Therapy, and Social Work and Psychology, are well aware of the toll this past year has had on all of us and are planning for next year accordingly.

I am happy to say that as more and more members of the community returned for in-person learning this spring, we were able to enjoy more of that soul-warming and healing in-person interaction.

Winston Churchill said, "Never let a good crisis go to waste." Are there new programs, initiatives, or priorities that will change because of what we learned during the pandemic?

K.W. One big one I can share is the launch of our new Global Division for students in grades three through six with language-based learning differences who live outside of the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The program will offer half days of virtual classes in reading, mathematics, and writing provided by experienced online teachers with expertise in learning differences.

We are very excited as we shape this new program. It definitely arose from what we learned during hybrid learning . . . that we are uniquely qualified to offer what we do best—help students turn their



differences into advantages—to students in any state, country, or learning situation. (See related story, page 2.)

What about you? You took on the role of head of school at a very difficult time. How has this experience changed the way you look at the world or how you look at your job leading The Lab School?

K.W. I think starting as head at a new school during this crisis underscored what I believe to be fundamental about leadership: it is ultimately about relationships. I hope that, in spite of the limitations, I've been able to build some credibility with all of our constituencies—students, teachers, parents, board members. I hope to build on those initial experiences next year, in what I'm declaring "Year 1: Part 2." I still feel what I felt back in October of 2019 when I was first appointed to be Lab's new Head of School—supremely fortunate to be a part of this community! I am even more confident about our school, and excited about all of the work that is ahead of us as we build on our strengths to become

an even better place for students with language-based learning differences.

Were there any silver linings?

K.W. I do feel that along with all the challenges we have had to face, there is now a bright light at the end of the tunnel, and we can think more thoughtfully about how to apply lessons learned going forward. It would be a missed opportunity to simply revert back to everything as it was pre-COVID. Perhaps we think about our spaces differently, shift priorities around the balance of social, emotional, and academic growth, or build into our curriculum more outdoor learning opportunities. And with a longer lens, we look into opportunities like our new Global Division to offer Lab's successful distance learning model to the greater national and international population of people with learning differences.

And this summer, our three clinical services teams in Occupational Therapy, Speech-Language Pathology, and Psychological Services are joining forces under the collective umbrella

of The Reservoir Group. In a nutshell, The Reservoir Group—a one-stop shop—specializes in understanding and working with children and adults with language, learning, motor, speech, and social-emotional needs. (See related story, page 20.)

What are you most excited about for post-pandemic Lab School?

K.W. Being together . . . mapping out a course for how we become a place of belonging for every member of this community . . . ensuring that we are on a financially sustainable footing. This is all truly good and important work, and I can't wait to get into it.

And personally, what are you most excited about, post-pandemic, in your own life?

K.W. Being able to travel again! That is probably the thing I missed most—and that's related, of course, to being able to see family and friends regularly. This new world that is ahead of us is quite exciting!

[INTRODUCING]

The Reservoir Group



For as long as the doors of The Lab School have been open, our faculty and staff have focused on educating and supporting the whole child—academically, physically, socially, and emotionally. At Lab, our teams in Occupational Therapy, Speech-Language Pathology, and Psychological Services play an integral part of helping our students with language-based learning differences succeed in and beyond the classroom.

This summer, the three clinical services divisions are joining forces under the collective umbrella of The Reservoir Group. In a nutshell, The Reservoir Group—a one-stop shop—specializes in understanding and working with children and adults with language, learning, motor, speech, and social-emotional needs.

As the individual services have in the past, The Reservoir Group offers families of current students streamlined access to interdisciplinary services both as an integrated part of the classroom and curriculum and on an individual basis. The Reservoir Group also provides a range of diagnostic and clinical services on an outpatient basis for children and adults in the greater community.





“Each of our disciplines brings unique skills and perspectives to our work with Lab students. The Reservoir Group is one more way for expert clinicians at Lab to come together, and benefit from one another’s perspective. It capitalizes on what The Lab School already does so well—foster collaboration. This new partnership will allow us to find new ways to work together, so that we can better support our students—and those in the greater community seeking services,” says Director of Reservoir Psychology Group **Doug Fagen, PhD**.

The group’s team of clinicians has a deep understanding of the interplay between a child’s neurodevelopmental profile and school requirements and expectations. Through evaluations and in-person and tele-therapy, they work with clients and families to build skills and strategies for success. “Our daily experience in classroom settings allows The Reservoir Group’s clinicians to have a unique perspective on how to help students generalize skills and strategies into their academic and social encounters in the classroom and beyond,” says Director of Speech-Language and Literacy Services and Executive Director of The Reservoir Group, **Melissa Wood**.

Lab’s clinicians can streamline their services more efficiently, offering a menu of options. And with one point of contact, families can more easily find what they need.

Director of Occupational Therapy and Director of Integrated Movement **Courtney Heldman** adds, “Each of our teams has so much expertise. The Reservoir Group enables us to combine this expertise while still maintaining the uniqueness of our specialties, and the magic that is Lab. I am so excited about the opportunities to support more students and families in the future through The Reservoir Group.”

DYSLEXIA STORYTELLING

THOUGHT IN MY HEAD



SAYING IT OUT LOUD



adhddd.com

@danidonovan

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FLEXING THE BRAIN

BUILDING MUSCLE MASS

For something that only weighs three pounds, there's a lot going on in there. The human brain contains approximately one hundred billion neurons, the same as the number of stars in the Milky Way. And, scientists have found that the brain grows more when you learn something new, and less when you practice things you already know. The more you learn, the easier it gets to learn new things . . . because your brain "muscles" grow stronger.

This year, two new classes were added to the High School curriculum, giving students two more opportunities to build brain muscles: The History of People of Color, taught by Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion **Anthony Perry, PhD**, and Robotics, taught by Director of Educational Technology **Daniel Hartmann**. Both classes were designed to fill a need, and complement the High School curriculum.

HISTORY OF PEOPLE OF COLOR

Dr. Perry designed a thorough curriculum for his class, but in many ways, sadly, all he and his students have to do is open the newspaper or watch the news on any given day and there is more than enough to ponder the interplay of history and current events.

Right before this school year kicked off, when Dr. Perry arrived at Lab to take on the role of director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, he was also asked to teach this newly developed class. "At the end of the 2019–2020 school year, there were a number of parents and students who wanted to have a High School course where the current social turbulence surrounding the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others might provide an academic outlet that had touched both the intellectual and emotional nerves of so many," says High School History Teacher **James Bullock** who spearhead the new History of People of Color class. "Anthony organized the class to explore not only the historical perspective of racism but also the current and prevalent aspects of systemic racism. He added the component of social media, music, and modern fads and fashions from which I believe the students have greatly benefited. Recently, I heard one of his students say, 'Everyone should take this class!' To me, this is no longer 'history' but instead the history of where we are right now in regard to our nation's future as studied and analyzed from its past. I believe that the role of the citizen in combatting and ending this curse of systemic racism is paramount to our nation's survival."

Starting with the history of Indigenous peoples of America then moving to the history of Black peoples in America and Asian peoples of America, Dr. Perry's classes prevail with heady discussions. "We may be talking about how current events like the approved construction of the Dakota Pipeline echo the way Indigenous peoples have been treated in the past or viewing television episodes of 'Watchmen' and 'Love Craft County' to delve into the Tulsa Massacre of 1921 and how the

THE 10% MYTH

Contrary to common knowledge, humans actually use all of their brain, not just 10 percent. In fact, we use more than 10 percent when we sleep. Like energy, knowledge begets knowledge, and insight. These two new classes are examples of how The Lab School commits itself to supporting and pushing its students to stretch their brains and souls.

media represented and continues to represent people of color in general, and Black people in specific,” says Dr. Perry who notes that in his 15 years in the classroom, this class includes the most students of color. “As you can imagine, many of the topics of the class can be particularly emotional, and we make sure that, no matter what, students can show up as their authentic selves and enter the space to engage with their own identity, ideas, and experiences as well as those of their peers.”

He adds, “The class has been marvelous. Not only do I think my students are learning a great deal about each other and themselves but as director of DEI, teaching this class has been the best inroads into how the school functions and informs me in my DEI work with the school.”



ROBOTICS

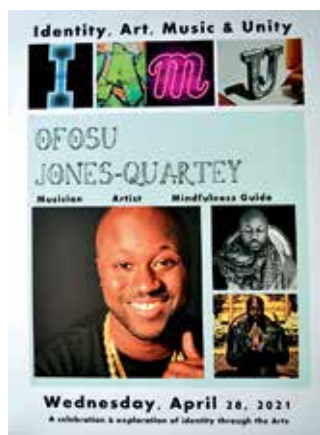
“We have a lot of students at Lab who are tinkerers. The visual or performing arts and sports may not be their thing, rather they want to put their creativity and energy into building, writing code, exploring systems in engineering, and putting around with how things work,” says Mr. Hartmann. Building on the High School Principles of Engineering class, which Mr. Hartmann started teaching in 2020, this year’s new Robotics class culminated in the participation in the FIRST Technology Challenge where public and independent school teams nationwide (up to 15 team members, grades 7–12) design, program, and build a robot starting with a standard kit of parts and a strict set of parameters. Although this year the competition was virtual—submitting a video of your robot in action instead of competing robot against robot with other school teams—Mr. Hartmann’s Robotics students worked individually and collaboratively to design and build a robot that could take on the challenges of this year’s competition.

“I am thrilled that we can offer our students both Engineering and Robotics this year,” says Mr. Hartmann. “Ms. Brinza [Junior High Math and Engineering Teacher **Maria Brinza**] has a strong Engineering and Robotics program for Junior High students and we wanted next-level opportunities for students in the High School. In addition to what our students are learning about Engineering and Robotics like coding and designing, they are also developing the skills needed to effectively work in engineering team environments such as risk taking, collaboration, communication, perspective taking, compromise, and reflection.”

Mr. Hartmann adds that as someone who has been a part of the High School for many years, he loves seeing his Robotics students owning their own learning. “These kids are taking the initiative for the FIRST Tech Challenge,” he adds. “I see them trucking down to do extra work on the robot in their off time. They tinker on their own, or discuss how best to tackle the latest design or coding problem with a classmate. *What if we did this so that its arm moved that way? If we changed this one thing, maybe it could spin at a better angle . . .* Overhearing these conversations, seeing them channel their passions into a project that will help them develop skills for real-world application is what makes the heart of a teacher pump.”

I AM U

CELEBRATING IDENTITY, ARTS,



“Aaron would be so proud of this! He saw the greatness in all of you—students and staff. Thank you.”

—TRACEE BLAIR
Aaron’s mother

Our friend and former colleague, the late **Aaron Boose**, left a huge imprint on our hearts and minds.

One of his legacies is the Identity, Arts, Music & Unity (I AM U) event, which he passionately organized and spearheaded. It took place for the first time in late February 2020. “Mr. Aaron,” as he was affectionately known, wished that this event would become an annual opportunity for the entire Lab community to come together and feel celebrated and seen for our differences and commonalities.

This year, though virtual—and led exquisitely by Director of Visual Arts, Grades 1–8, Academic Club Teacher, Teaching Artist **Sara Hawkins** and Academic Club Teacher **Liora Valero**—the second annual event captured the excitement that Mr. Boose brought to the entire community last year.

The event kicked off with a video and photographic montage reflecting how members of our community see themselves, what’s important to them, their passions and talents, and their place in the world.

Then each division was honored to welcome a visiting artist or organization: Visual Artist, Activist, and Illustrator **Trap Bob**; Artist **Nicole Bourgea**; District Community Playback; and Musician, Artist, Mindfulness Guide **Ofosu Jones-Quartey**. Students,

faculty, and staff enjoyed these dynamic presentations, sharing their thoughts and asking lots of questions along the way.

And building on the tradition, faculty and staff as well as some Lab alumni facilitated workshops ranging from activities in visual arts, performance, music, and cooking to writing, building, videography and more. These workshops were based on the facilitators’ unique interests, skills, and backgrounds through which our students could explore their own identities and learn about those of others in a meaningful way.

Workshop groups created self-portraits, sculptural glasses made from found objects, zines, and power shields, wrote poems and self-reflections, participated in some improv, hip hop and other music—and lots more.

To round out the event, students, faculty, and staff unified by gathering virtually to share their experiences and thoughts.

We were honored to have Mr. Boose’s mother attend the virtual event as well as alumni workshop presenters **Tim Danos ’06**, **Katie Freeze ’07**, **Kristop Rosario ’15**, and **Maren Rosenberg ’04**.

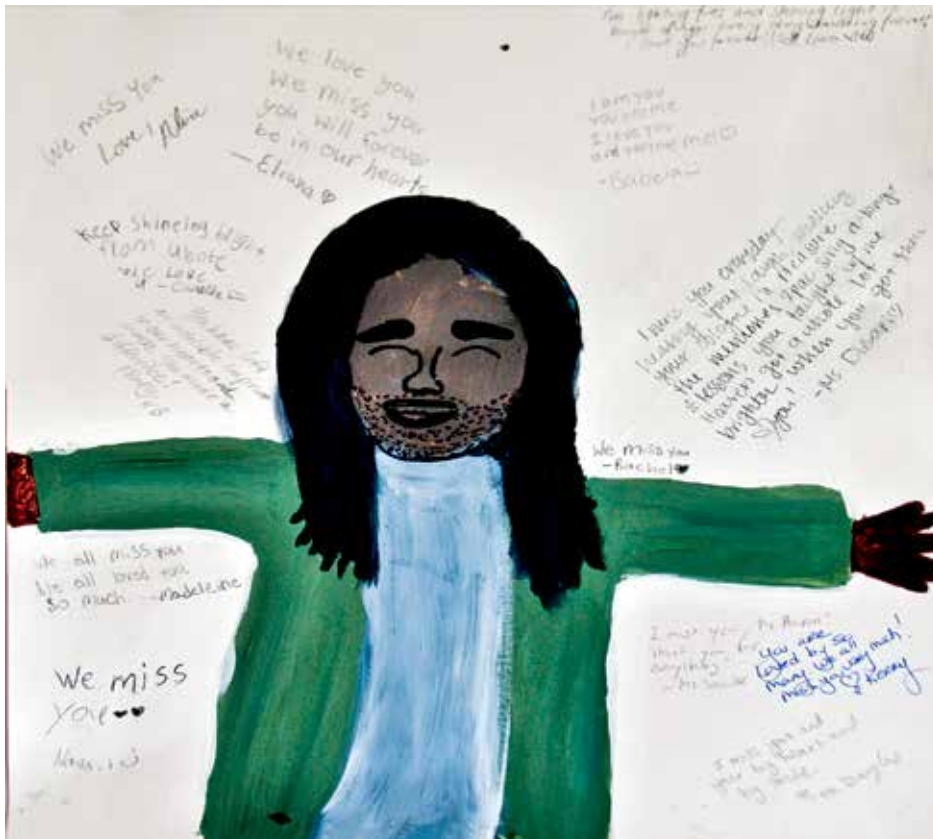
Beyond all, we wish Mr. Boose were here, leading his event. But clearly he was with us in spirit during the second annual I AM U event.



"This was a wonderful event to share our truths and talents. I think Mr. Aaron would be really proud of all of you; he believed that showing and embracing our differences brings us all together."

—MS. VALERO

MUSIC & UNITY 2021



"I hope we can celebrate I AM U next year in person and feel the energy in the room together. Thank you for sharing what makes you, you!" —MS. HAWKINS



"This is a night of hope and inspiration . . . and just like our honorees, our children can also amount to greatness with the techniques and skills they are taught at Lab. This school is unmasking brilliance in our children every day."

—Gala Co-Chairs Lori and Ben Soto

"The ways this community has risen to the challenges of the pandemic are not surprising to me at all . . . because this community—this school—is all about creativity, imagination, and vision."

—Head of School Kim Wargo



THE LAB SCHOOL'S VIRTUAL 36TH ANNUAL GALA

Unmasks

The Lab School can do virtually anything, it seems . . . pun intended! And who knew a virtual event could be such fun? Although we all missed being together at the National Building Museum as we have done in past Novembers, this year, the Gala took place in the spring and was virtual due to the pandemic.

Lab honored Outstanding Achiever Poet and Advocate **LeDerick Horne** and Outstanding Alumna Founder of the Color of Music Collective **Mia Van Allen '16**.

AFTERNOON GALA ASSEMBLY

In the early afternoon, students, faculty, and staff welcomed Mr. Horne at an all-school virtual assembly. He kicked off his talk with his poem "New Beginnings," which among other topics spoke of his life-long love of "word magic" and "poetic acrobatics." He also shared his own story from a struggling grade school kid who couldn't read or spell to finding his voice as a well-known spoken word poet, author, and advocate for people with learning and other differences.

During the assembly, Lab students asked Mr. Horne some thoughtful and astute questions—from "Were you scared to read your poems out loud in front of people?" to "Why did you want to be a poet?" In answer to the latter, he said, "I don't have a choice. It's part of who I am. I always loved words and language. In fact, as a kid, I walked around with a tape recorder and would tape conversations, snippets of dialogue from TV shows, raps from the mouths of my friends. And when I got to college, I learned how to edit what I was writing, which was the real game changer."

EVENING GALA CELEBRATION

And despite—or maybe because of—the fact that no one had to dress up, battle traffic, hire babysitters, or juggle schedules to make it on time to a live event, Lab's Gala drew big

Brilliance

crowds from houses all over the country—and world.

Emceed by award-winning Anchor from NBC4 **Eun Yang**, the event included words of inspiration and gratitude from Head of School **Kim Wargo** and Gala Co-Chairs **Lori and Ben Soto**. Their remarks united the community and also underscored the importance of financial aid, to which the proceeds of the Gala will be given. In fact, because the event cost significantly less due to its being virtual, almost every dollar is designated to financial aid. And Mr. Horne and Ms. Van Allen spoke from the heart about their journeys as learners with differences and how the way they learn and see the world has helped make them who they are. Mr. Horne performed his best-known poem “Dare to Dream.” Wow.

And Lab wouldn’t be Lab without gobs of creativity. The event included an incredible music video by a group of students and staff, spearheaded by High School Music Teacher **Sean Rozsics** and produced by former parent and Producer **Hugh Drescher**. Music invariably brings people together, especially during difficult times like this last year, and this video certainly did that! There were also heartfelt remarks from parents talking about their child’s—and their whole family’s—experience at Lab. Interspersed were photos from the year and some light-hearted Q&As with students asking Ms. Wargo questions like “What’s your favorite French Fry?” “If you could change one thing in the world what would it be?” and “How many pairs of shoes do you have?” Suffice it to say, Ms. Wargo amused us with her wonderful, spontaneous answers.

The theme of the night was “Unmasking Brilliance.” We do that every day in and beyond the classroom, but once a year, it is great fun to come together to celebrate not only outstanding achievers like Mr. Horne and Alumna Ms. Allen, but the entire community.



“Inside, I didn’t feel as if I was smart even though as an artist, captain of the cross-country team, and well-spoken, I came across as confident and intelligent. But something changed when I was 17. I had a sort of breakthrough moment when I decided the world was wrong. I was going to create my own future into which I would be remarkable.”

—Outstanding Achiever
LeDerick Horne



“Thank you to Lab for letting me express myself, meeting me where I was, and helping me to build critical confidence in myself. This is a gratitude I will carry my whole life.”

—Outstanding Alumna
Mia Van Allen ’16



Retirements

We will miss you something fierce!



JUDITH BELKIN

One of **Judith Belkin**'s favorite memories of her 22 years as an Occupational Therapist (OT) at The Lab School was collaborating with the classroom Speech and Language pathologist (SLP) and teacher on an "archeological dig." They created a pretend site in a huge box and students used tweezers, magnifying glasses, brushes, and baggies to unearth treasures, record them with names and details through a step-by-step process, and bag them for posterity. So enchanted, the young archeologists didn't realize they were actually honing their fine-motor, handwriting, executive functioning, and language comprehension skills.

"Being able to meaningfully join forces with my colleagues—fellow therapists, teachers, admin, and other support staff—has brought me back year after year," she says. "The fact that we are all committed to making the lives of our students better and more successful both in and outside the classroom creates a very special bond."

Ms. Belkin has worked primarily in the Intermediate division and has especially enjoyed working with Academic Club, Arts, Science, and other teachers to creatively weave OT into the classroom curriculum. "It's in the DNA of the school for faculty and staff to build on each other's ideas and knowledge to offer the best teaching opportunities for

students," she says.

Although Ms. Belkin will continue to work on an as-needed basis with the new Reservoir Group conducting evaluations and screenings, she has big plans for her retirement. After she recovers from her mid-June hip replacement surgery, she's excited to return to her love of dance, including folk, square, and line dancing, as well as rekindle some artistic endeavors. Also top on her list is to catalogue and continue to grow her husband's and her expansive mineral collection. "We have hundreds. They are beautiful—like nature doing art," she says. She's also looking forward to spending more time with her six grandchildren in Ohio.



KIM BROWN

In 2010, **Kim Brown** retired for the first time. She missed the intellectual stimulation her long-time role as Elementary school principal with Fairfax County Public Schools afforded her, so two years later, when an advertisement popped up for an administration job at The Lab School, she took it as a "divine occurrence."

For Ms. Brown, serving as head of Intermediate—an age group she adores—was like being a principal on so many levels. Best of all, she found great meaning in sharing a deep belief in the mission of the school where

students with learning differences can thrive through creativity, experiential learning, and with faculty and staff who have the freedom to meet each student's individual needs. She has also enjoyed being a part of a community of teaching artists. For much of her life, Ms. Brown has sung in a Gospel choir—and as a member of Lab's Faculty Chorus—and has reveled in dipping her toes, her whole enthusiastic self, into musical theater when the opportunity has arisen. She rarely missed the chance to participate in Lab's annual Student/Faculty play, and says she feels lucky that she got to perform on the proscenium stage of the Shaun Miskell Theater before the pandemic shut the school down in March 2020.

She will miss her staff and students more than she knows how to describe. "We have always enjoyed a very positive and wonderful culture in Intermediate," she says. "At the end of each of our WLAB news productions, students wrapping up their segments would say, 'Keep burning bright, Intermediate!' That has always been our mantra. We do burn brightly in Intermediate!"

Though she realizes she will miss being part of The Lab School community and heading up Intermediate with the expertise, innovation, and big heart she is known for, she is also rather giddy about all the opportunities out there in retirement. "I'm going to read a lot! I'm going to start a book club and take lots of classes," she says. Already an accomplished chef, she plans to take more cooking classes, train as an amateur sommelier, and try her hand at some flower arranging classes. Ms. Brown and her husband, who have three grown children who live in Maryland and Virginia, plan to do some traveling, starting this summer in Maine where they have never before visited. (*See related article, page 10.*)



DICK MELTZER

Dick Meltzer's career at The Lab School for the last 38 years looks like a collage of textures and colors. In chronological order, he served as Upper School Current Events /Crisis Management/ Physical Education teacher, High School English teacher and dean of students, Junior High coordinator, High School coordinator, head of The Baltimore Lab School, High School Rhetoric co-teacher with Director of Performing Arts, Teaching Artist **Shaun Miskell**, and finally for the last few years, High School Rhetoric and Debate teacher. Along the way, though he doesn't recall exactly which years, he also coached softball and soccer. "One thing just led to another," he says. "Pretty great all these opportunities, as it turns out."

Mr. Meltzer says he is proud of what he brought to each of his positions. He noted that he found great satisfaction growing the High School program as its coordinator and insuring that The Baltimore Lab School maintained the high standards of its namesake in DC. He also loved teaching Rhetoric and Debate. "I have always had an interest in words and how they matter. Being a part of stretching the minds of my students, in particular as they prepared for the annual Ethics Bowl at American University, was invariably a highlight."

The best parts of being part of The Lab School for so long? "The students . . . watching them develop and graduate, and making lifelong friends with so many of the faculty and staff," he says. And, of course, top on the list, meeting his wife, Associate Head of School **Diana Meltzer** in 1983. "She paid no

attention to me that first year," he laughs. "It was persistence and a fascination of this amazingly intricate timeline she had created in her History classroom that finally turned the tides."

He adds, "I learned so much from my time at Lab; I think I have grown immensely as a person. I know I was taught a great deal from [Founder] **Sally Smith**, [Former Interim Head of School] **Sally Seawright**, and [Former Head of School] **Katherine Schantz**. My one regret retiring now is that I won't be around long enough to learn more from our new head, **Kim Wargo**."

Excited to retire? "That's a good question," he paused, then paused some more. "Yes, I'm ready. I'll continue tutoring students, but whatever else it is I find, I want to make sure it keeps me motivated and busy."



MARK MOVERMAN

Although he wasn't looking for a teaching job, nor a permanent home at the time, 22 years ago, **Mark Moverman** has not only been able to bring his expertise as the High School Physics, Chemistry, and Calculus teacher to class after class of students, but he has also shared his creative passions as a singer and actor in the Faculty Chorus and Student/Faculty plays. "The chorus and the plays were definitely opportunities to get to know colleagues and students from all over the school," says Mr. Moverman who during his tenure coached basketball and golf as well as teaching in the Summer Program and in the Night School. "I have loved that synergy."

"I found that I really loved teaching, especially students with learning differences. I felt like I 'got' them," says Mr. Moverman who after leaving medical school in his third year went back to earn a Master's in Physics as well as a teaching certificate. "I'm a Physics guy but what I think I am most proud of from my years at Lab has been my work in Chemistry. When I started, there wasn't much out there in Chemistry for students with learning differences and not that many kids opted to take the course. But as I built up the rigor of curriculum with more experiential learning, more students joined and found great success."

Moving into the new High School building was a game changer for Mr. Moverman's classes. "Suddenly, we had top-notch lab spaces with Bunsen burners and gas jets," he says. "Most of the experiments previously could only be done qualitatively, but now we can add the numbers."

Mr. Moverman also introduced the Annual Physics Egg Drop, a highlight on much of the community's calendar, where students, after studying relevant physics concepts, build an apparatus made only of glue and toothpicks to protect an egg as it's dropped to the floor. "The level of study and competition definitely improved over the years, in particular the technology aspect," he says. "We always filmed the egg drops so we could study the details of collisions, air resistance, pressure, center of mass and torque, but with iPhones, now the students also film and edit their own videos."

Mr. Moverman says he is not retiring, per se, rather retiring from classroom teaching. He plans to get more connected to The Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins, continue tutoring, and maybe get into some consulting work. He has also joined a second choir group where he will sing and perform, and having always wanted to be in a basement band, he has joined a madrigal singing group, which for him, fits the bill.



DONNA PAVLUK

Having been at The Lab School for 25½ years, **Donna Pavluk** says she worked with students and colleagues in all four divisions as a Speech and Language therapist, in addition to serving as a co-teacher of reading and writing, a mentor to other Speech and Language pathologists (SLPs), a substitute therapist for colleagues on maternity leave, and for the last two years, a reading teacher in Elementary. She has had offices in the Castle, the Carriage House, the Reservoir classroom building, and the Foxhall campus. She was hired by **Sally L. Smith**, the original founder, and she has seen a gymnasium, high school, and theater built, and has worked for three subsequent heads of school. She has seen many of her students graduate from Lab, finish college, and with joy, she has welcomed several of them back as faculty and staff members.

“The best part of being at Lab, hands down, has been collaborating with teachers and other therapists. What a great group of colleagues! Of course, I am also crazy about the students here,” she says, “and the fact that we have small student-teacher ratios makes all the difference, not only in helping our students succeed, but also in having the luxury to get to know and appreciate each student, their challenges, joys, and passions.” Because of this, when she accepted a position at Lab, Ms. Pavluk turned down a more lucrative position, knowing her caseload at that school would be much larger, and she would not make the difference in the lives of her students that she could at Lab.

In addition to her therapy and

teaching, Ms. Pavluk also frequently testified on behalf of students and families involved in due process hearings. “Being able to advocate for students to get the education they needed and to support and connect with families was very meaningful,” she says.

Ms. Pavluk says she has loved receiving thank-you notes over the years from students and parents. One that stands out was from a mother who quoted her son as saying, years after he had worked with her while he was in 6th grade, “I’ll never forget how Ms. Pavluk helped me crack the spelling code! I finally got it!”

After her retirement, Ms. Pavluk will continue to run her private speech, language, and literacy practice in Arlington, VA. She is also looking forward to spending more time with her three granddaughters, hiking, biking, and traveling with her husband, taking advantage of singing opportunities, and visiting her 90-year-old mother, who lives in South Carolina.



TANYA RORIE-BRYAN

Associate Director of Athletics, Physical Education Teacher **Tanya Rorie-Bryan** has shared the joy of victory and the agony of defeat with countless student-athletes over the years. Coming to Lab from Residential Youth Services Inc., a treatment facility for abused and neglected adolescents in Fairfax, VA as the program coordinator and supervisor, Ms. Rorie-Bryan joined Lab’s High School administrative team as head of Student Services in

1995. She developed a peer mediation program and worked closely with other administrators to ensure that the needs of all students were met and that students thrived in all aspects of the High School program.

For more than 20 years, Ms. Rorie-Bryan, as head coach, led the girls varsity basketball team and, in 2010, led the team to the league championship. This was followed by two more championships in 2011 and 2012. Her enthusiasm for the sport and her strong belief in the ability of her players and her team were at the heart of her coaching. She always supported her players and stressed the balance of academics and athletics.

In 2010, Ms. Rorie-Bryan assumed the position of associate director of Athletics. She continued to coach basketball and also became the head coach for girls varsity volleyball. In this new administrative position, she championed the expansion of athletics for the Intermediate division and worked alongside Director of Athletics, Physical Education Teacher **Angelo Carmina** to make this a reality.

Students trusted Ms. Rorie-Bryan to support and advocate for them. She knew her young student-athletes well—their strengths, passions, and the best ways to support their learning, success, hopes, dreams, and achievements.



DEBBY WISE

There was never a question that **Debby Wise** would do anything but teach English. “I am a big fan of the classics. Wonderful stuff, and they remain

relevant year after year, decade after decade. Think Dickens. Talk about exploring issues of social justice!” she says. “One of my primary goals all these years has been to make my students aware of the classics. We’re not reading to see what happens rather to explore why the author makes decisions of how and what is written. Writers are artists.”

Ms. Wise came to Lab in 1986 as an intern in American University’s Master of Arts in Special Education: Learning Disabilities Program and the following year she joined the Junior High as an English teacher where, at the time, there were only 44 students. She never left. “Junior High is education’s best kept secret. The students are at this wonderful age where you can still treat them with authority but they are also young adults who make outrageous, funny, serious, heartfelt comments and connections. And when something clicks for them, well, that is what keeps you returning to the classroom. You can’t take those ‘clicks’ for granted; students are invariably in awe when they do come.”

Since its inception in 2011, Ms. Wise has been a part of the faculty of the Summer Project for Rising 7th, 8th, and 9th graders. Each year, the team collaborates on a theme and then teaches it from different directions including literature, math, engineering, science, art, and theater. “I think my favorite was the summer we did *A Tale of Two Cities*. It’s a classic, obviously, and great fun to teach, and I also taught French history,” she says. “The Summer Project is an opportunity to teach students differently from what we do during the school year, and the kids shine in new ways, in ways they never before imagined for themselves.”

Ms. Wise’s family has been incredibly generous to The Lab School for decades. **The Herbert and Edith Lehman Foundation** awards grants to several teachers each year to enhance their areas of study so that they can use their deepened knowledge and experiences to enrich what they teach in the classroom. The foundation also funded the Ceramics

Studio, and gave significantly to the old library and the High School building.

What has kept Ms. Wise at Lab all these years are “. . . the kids, the flexibility and support to create a curriculum and change it as the needed with each new class, and, of course, my colleagues. We have an unbelievably caring group in the Junior High.”

Ms. Wise is not sure what retirement will bring, but it will definitely afford her more time to visit her baby granddaughter in California, see friends, and read all the books on her list, including rereading some of her favorite classics.



SUSIE WOLK

In 1992, **Susie Wolk** had little idea the year her son **Danny Wolk '06** started at Lab at age 5 that she would spend the following almost three decades as part of the school. After working in Lab’s Tutor Training Program and then getting her degree from American University’s Master of Arts in Special Education: Learning Disabilities Program, Ms. Wolk taught Reading in the Junior High, which over the years became English then Language Arts. Her focus was always teaching students to discover a love of reading, develop their voices through writing, and master vocabulary, study skills, and comprehension.

“For 21 years, Lab has always been much more of a family than a place of work. Having had the freedom to create and nuance my curriculum based on my students’ needs and interests was great, but more than that were the people with

whom I’ve had the opportunity to work and call friends,” says Ms. Wolk who also loved participating each year in the Student/Faculty plays. “Coming to Lab was probably the best career move I ever made. I thank Danny for introducing me to Lab and my older son, Adam, for convincing me I should get over my fears and teach.”

Ms. Wolk introduced a variety of books and genres in her class—from Shakespearian plays and Agatha Christie mysteries to science fiction short stories and books that reflect current events like *The Outsiders*, *Monster*, and *Under a Worn Torn Sky*. “I believe a mixture of literature is what gets students into reading. Take Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express*, for example. It’s easy for readers to predict, to guess ahead, and while doing that, they are swept up into the characters, setting, and story. Ms. Wolk invariably used “role reading” in her classes—reading books out loud like plays, an approach she presented with Lab School Founder **Sally L. Smith** at various conferences. “Acting as a character, even if they are only reading a few sentences, pulls the kids into the story. When they get to become a character, their level of comprehension rises exponentially,” she says. She also underscored the importance of empathizing with another person’s story through her annual Interview unit where students research, conduct, and present a video interview of impact with a family member or friend (see related article page 6).

What next? Ms. Wolk plans to continue to tutor students in reading and writing and deepen her love of photography—she certainly captured countless moments, faces, and scenes at Lab. And as a Spanish and French speaker, she may polish her Italian with some classes, or learn Portuguese from scratch.

Faculty Awards

THE LEHMAN FOUNDATION'S AARON BOOSE MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP AWARDS

For 11 years, the **Lehman Fellowship** has provided faculty grants through the generosity of The Edith and Herbert Lehman Foundation. The foundation's mission is to support children in learning, the arts, and character development. These faculty grants support professional development and learning opportunities through travel, classes, and hands-on experiences.

This year, the fellowship was re-named the **Aaron Boose Memorial Fellowship**. Faculty and staff were invited to propose an initiative for Lab exemplifying Aaron's values, passions, and commitment. Working closely with Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion **Anthony Perry, PhD**, fellowship recipients will have the summer months to research and develop their initiatives, honing their projects in order to begin integrating them into the curriculum during the fall of 2021 with the goal of full integration by January 2022. This year's recipients are:

JONATHAN ALEXIS



In his proposal, High School Science Teacher **Jonathan Alexis** noted that "the recent uprisings of civil unrest and social justice demonstrations,

the systemically established racial disparities within STEM professions [had] come to the forefront of [his] conversations [. . .] with fellow science educators." These conversations, and his own research, led him to ask what he could do in his current practices to address these disparities. To that end, Mr. Alexis will spearhead a year-long extracurricular cross-divisional Science Technology Engineering Art and Mathematics [STEAM] curriculum for a select cohort of Lab School 7th, 8th, 9th, or 10th grade students from racially diverse backgrounds. Through a series of workshops, created and facilitated by Lab faculty and staff, students will " . . . be better equipped with not only confidence in some of their STEM skills, but also a tentative educational pathway they can follow in order to achieve their STEM career aspirations."

AMANDA PALMER AND LIORA VALERO



Junior High English Teacher **Amanda Palmer** and Intermediate Academic Club Leader **Liora Valero** will spend



six weeks combing through Lab's policy and curriculum, using the information they gather to create arts-centered curricular resources that specifically address Lab's identified needs. As

stated in their proposal, ". . . with the path trail blazed by our dear friend and colleague, Aaron, we want to formally address those blind spots and holes with a targeted, goal-oriented approach that keeps the arts at its center."

Ms. Palmer and Ms. Valero will focus on supporting LGBTQIA+ students, especially those who identify as members of the Black and Queer communities. By centering the work on the experience of Lab's most marginalized students, and targeting support from both policy and practice/curriculum perspectives, they will be able to outline actionable ways for Lab faculty and staff to continue its work towards students' safety, inclusion, belonging, representation, validation, and empowerment.

THE 2021 STEVE WOLFE TEACHING INNOVATION AWARD



▲ SARA HAWKINS

Director of Visual Arts 1-8, Teaching Artist and Intermediate Academic Club Leader **Sara Hawkins** received the **Steve Wolfe Teaching Innovation Fund**, which recognizes and provides an award to outstanding teachers who take extraordinary efforts to engage Lab School students through innovative teaching. Former parents **Evan and Sondra Wolff** and **Tige and Elizabeth Savage** established the fund to support creative teaching at The Lab School.

During her six years at Lab, Ms. Hawkins has invariably wowed the community with her creativity, innovation, and inspiration. This year, during the pandemic, for example, she turned the culminating exhibit from the Museum Academic Club's study of world religions—usually in-person and hosted by the club student docents—into a fascinating interactive virtual exhibit of images, artwork, and text. By nature of being virtual, it allowed many more visitors to grasp the history, traditions, rituals and holidays, and beliefs of each religion, and the process pushed her students—and her—to think not just outside, but far outside the proverbial box. This is just one of countless examples of Ms. Hawkins' work.

"It is an honor to even be considered for the award among this group of intensely innovative and inspiring staff and faculty," she says. "I must also credit the students. They are the spark to my flame."

STUDENT PROFILE

MIA YOUNG '21



"I'm in love with physics and math," says **Mia Young '21** emphatically. Not your average comment from a High School senior, but in her extended family where more members than not are mechanical or civil engineers, mathematicians, and statisticians, it seems she does not fall too far from the proverbial tree. "Right now, science, math, art, dogs [she has four!], and cosplay define my life—and sports, too, before Covid," she adds.

Mia says she "self-diagnosed" herself with dyslexia when she was about 10. "I was watching a Disney show about the actress Bella Thorne who has dyslexia. It was if every mysterious puzzle piece found its place in the big picture . . . *That's what I have! This is great! I'm not stupid . . . there is a real reason why I can't read!*" she says. The following year, she was officially diagnosed. During a day spent at Lab's High School Summer Project, she says she fell in love with everything about the school. "The teachers and kids were awesome. I could sit and make art while I listened if I wanted to, which I did. I know that if I had not gone to Lab, I would have been swept under the carpet."

To say that Mia has thrived at Lab would be a gross understatement. "I like to figure things out. And I think because of my dyslexia, I see solutions really easily, at least in ways that other people don't seem to. In fact, my mom is always saying, 'Mia, I can't figure out this, or that. Can you come fix it?'" she laughs. Mia has lots of tools and workarounds that help her thrive. Her digital textbooks have been a life saver because, she says, if she listens, she can instantly retain the information, and reading is slow going for her. She is also a true believer in all things color coded, a strategy she gleefully shares with High School History Teacher **Jewell Watson-Hellkamp**. "I excel when there are correlations, causes and effects, not just straight facts in what I am learning," she explains. "I think that's why science and math make so much sense to me."

Mia has also combined her love of science and math with art. In fact, during her Junior Year Internship with the architecture firm, *cox graae + spack*, she discovered that she could parlay those interests and skills into architecture. "Working with Cox, my plans for college changed," says Mia who was one of two winners of the 2021 Physics Egg Drop—a scientific and architectural challenge—and who built an entire electric guitar

in Physical Science her freshman year. "I had been planning to be a mechanical engineer, but after really getting into architectural drawing and all the math and science that goes with that, I'm now planning to double major in Civil Engineering and Architecture." She will pursue these goals at Catholic University in the fall.

Mia enjoys spending time creating. She and her father built a giant ceiling-to-floor paper roller on which, recently, she drew a life-sized image of an anime character from "Haikyū!!" For High School Director of Visual Arts, Teaching Artist **Rebecca Albert's** Drawing, Painting, and Sculpture Intensive, she painted, in oils, a still life of not apples in a bowl, but an installation, in and of itself, made from her brother's old light saber, a lava lamp, and other found items. "I enjoyed building the subject as much as painting it," she says.

Mia also relishes creating costumes and engaging in cosplay—the practice of dressing up as a character from a movie, book, or video game. "For me, it's meditative to choose fabrics, design and sew a costume, and then try it on for the first time . . . talk about a rush of serotonin!" she says. Her senior thesis project, "Therapeutic Benefits of Cosplay and Fandom," burgeoned from her love of cosplay.

"I feel like when I was younger, none of my original plans came to be like which school I was supposed to attend," she says. "But I think that's really lucky. I am a planner, definitely, but like transforming things into something totally different for my own use and fun, I have learned that cool stuff can happen when you least expect it."



THE ALCHEMY OF SCIENCE AND VIDEOGRAPHY

From nothing, fire, then charred shapes emerged. Okay, it wasn't from nothing, but on a cool early spring hybrid learning day on the Reservoir campus, fire did seem to emerge from a tin plate as if from some mysterious alchemy.

Using sugar and baking soda, eighth-grade students in Junior High Science Teacher **Christopher Coogan's** class teamed up with Teaching Artist, Video **Adam Toal's** Videography class in creating a dehydration reaction, observing the transfer of energy within exothermic and endothermic reactions. Once the small flame started, it began to transform the sugar and baking soda into charred shapes.

As part of the project, students also explored the concepts of mixtures and compounds and the rearrangement of atoms to form new properties, while discussing the law of conservation of matter and energy.

Because the chemical reaction that is created is produced slowly, in this case by the fire from the sugar and baking soda, Mr. Toal's Videography class filmed a time-lapse sequence of footage to use later to teach editing techniques to students who take both Science and Videography. "One student got so into

it that he is assembling the video with music for fun and for extra editing practice," says Mr. Toal who in his online signature includes the words of Leonardo da Vinci: "Study the science of art. Study the art of science. Develop your senses—especially learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else."

Like scientific elements, teachers at Lab collaborate across the curriculum, mixing and morphing what they are teaching, so as to build on each other's lessons and expand the minds of their students. ■



KEEP CALM AND SLIME ON

Like good bread or brownies, homemade is key. The same goes for slime.

As part of the class' investigation into non-Newtonian fluids during their "states of matter" unit, students in Intermediate Science Teacher **Jordan Stoleru's** class made homemade slime by combining Elmer's glue, saline solution, baking soda, white vinegar, and two contrasting colors of liquid food coloring. But if a slime day was not enough . . . they upped the ante, transforming their pedestrian slime into exploding slime. By adding more baking soda then mixing in vinegar, the slime erupts then congeals.

During the states of matter unit, students also learned about the physical and chemical properties of solids, liquids, and gasses, and they even created dances based on how atoms are arranged in various solids, liquids, and gasses.

"Making slime is a blast! As a Science teacher, there isn't a surer thing in life kids love more than making slime. Also, slime is an excellent way to engage in

hands-on learning," says Mr. Stoleru who enjoyed pretending to be a mad scientist along with his students. "When your slime-covered hands are busy pulling the goo into strings or making weird shapes, suddenly lots of related and unrelated Science questions arise. Mixing, making, and experimenting are just some of the basic joys of being a budding scientist." ■

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES . . . WITH MUSIC

As the Elementary Silk Road Club crossed Mongolia and the great Gobi desert, club members, headed up by Elementary Academic Club Teacher **Azure Lea** built small models of the nomadic peoples' yurts and learned about their amazing horsemanship and eagle hunting.

Along the way, they were introduced to throat singing and to the morin khuur—also known as the Mongolian horsehead fiddle. Venetian explorer Marco Polo had encountered many string instruments in Medieval Europe but none quite like these two-string instruments. “Legend has it that a Mongolian man had a treasured horse who died, and to honor his horse he used its body parts to build a musical instrument,” says Ms. Lea. “As you can imagine, the kids were fascinated by that story.”

Exploring how sound vibrations are

produced and how pitch is changed by the length and thickness of the strings, students designed their own string instruments from small boxes, cardboard tubes, papier-mâché, and rubber bands either choosing the mandolin, balalaika, ukulele, guitar, violin, zither, a morin khurr, or designing their own, original instrument.

“Students at this age are delightfully curious,” says Ms. Lea. “I love that the busier their hands become, creating a project like a papier-mâché instrument, the more their minds work, coming up with theories and questions and making connections between history and present day.”

To celebrate the coming of summer, the Silk Road Club performed together on their instruments for the Great Kublai Khan as they “stayed” at his summer palace of Kandu. ■



THE INTRICACIES OF METALSMITHING

You never know in what ways an art piece will move you. It could be an arresting flash of color, the juxtaposition of textures and ideas, or a statue's devastating tilt of a head.

In High School Director of Visual Arts, Teaching Artist **Rebecca Alberts'** Metalsmithing class, students are focusing on the details, the intricacies they can create. One of the techniques that students are undertaking is lost-wax casting, the process by which a duplicate metal, in this case, a silver piece is cast from an original sculpture. More specifically, the piece is first formed out of wax, then set in a plaster material. Once the plaster investment (plaster with additives that allow it to withstand heat) is set, the piece is placed in a kiln and cooked for approximately five hours at varying temperatures, insuring that

the wax has fully melted—leaving its negative space—and making the plaster investment sturdy enough to take the pressure of the centrifugal spinner.

Before setting the piece in the plaster investment, the student weighs the wax model, then computes the amount of silver that would displace the space of the wax. Then, the silver is weighed, cut into small pieces—to make the melting quicker—and cleaned.

When everything is ready and the plaster mold has been cooled to about 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit, it is placed in the centrifugal spinner, and when the



silver is fully melted, the spinner spins and sends the melted silver into the plaster mold.

“You might ask, why go through this lengthy process?” says Ms. Alberts. “Besides it being a cool process, casting allows the artisan to make more three-dimensional pieces, and plaster is very good at picking up every detail, so types of details can be added that would not be the case when working in other techniques.” ■

FROM WHERE I SIT

“I LOVE THAT THE SCHOOL CONTINUES TO PUSH AND STRIVE TO BE BETTER. THE WORK IS CONSTANTLY ENGAGING, AND THERE ARE ALWAYS NEW CHALLENGES. I GET TO CONTINUE INNOVATING BECAUSE LAB CONTINUES TO BE AN INNOVATOR.” — *Daniel Hartman*



Daniel Hartmann

Director of Educational Technology, High School Engineering and Robotics Teacher

For someone who loves educational technology and teaching, there is little better for Director of Educational Technology, High School Engineering and Robotics Teacher **Daniel Hartmann** than witnessing his students laugh and high-five as their collaborative quadcopter delivers a small package from the first to the second floor of the High School or seeing each student, school-wide, with a designated Chromebook.

Sixteen years ago, Mr. Hartmann arrived on The Lab School campus as an intern. The following year, he applied for the American University's Master

WHY I TEACH

Jewell Watson-Hellkamp
High School History Teacher

High School History teacher **Jewell Watson-Hellkamp** is a doer. Although she claims to be an introvert by nature, her enthusiasm and zeal for teaching, activism, and well, life, seem inexhaustible. Two days before starting at Lab, Ms. Watson-Hellkamp got married and within a month was not only rocking it in the classroom, teaching Ancient World History to her ninth grade classes, but suddenly, she was also appointed advisor for the High School's Diversity Club. Clearly, she is a juggler as well.

While Ms. Watson-Hellkamp was earning her Bachelor of Arts in History at the University of Maryland, she took a job in data entry at The Art Gallery,



one of the college's four art galleries, that specialized in contemporary art. Within two years, she became assistant director at the gallery and discovered her favorite part of the position involved the weekly educational program she led on topics such as Surrealism and Neoclassical Art at local public and private schools located in the DMV area. "Originally, I was not a fan of Contemporary Art, but

working with students gave me a new appreciation for it," she says. "I would develop projects and presentations that tied contemporary art to concepts I cared about and suddenly found doing so more fulfilling than developing and promoting exhibitions or supervising gallery staff."

After graduation, she said she needed to make a decision between a career in the art world or in education. She chose the latter. For one year, she taught 27 kindergartens with learning differences with one co-teacher. "One year was enough! I realized 5-year-olds were going to kill me, so I set my sights on teaching older kids next," she says. "My next position was a blessing in disguise. Sure, it was difficult, but any job that followed would seem easy!" Ms. Watson-Hellkamp taught ninth through twelfth graders for three years at an alternative

of Arts in Special Education: Learning Disabilities Program and from there he became a permanent sub, teaching High School Astronomy (his classroom had Lab's inaugural Promethean board) then History (he's always loved history!), then in 2012, he transitioned from the classroom to a new position, director of Educational Technology, created by then Head of School **Katherine Schantz**, to create and fulfill a strategic plan to integrate more technology into the classroom. Mr. Hartmann had been working toward his doctorate of Education in Learning Technologies at George Mason University so the timing of this opportunity was perfect.

"At the time, there was only a small number of devices on campus for student use, and no designated funding for educational technologies," says Mr. Hartmann. "It took several years to get the school up to speed. Over the last decade, we integrated educational technologies into every aspect of the school, especially the new High School building; provided a device for every student starting in 2012 and assistive technologies like voice-to-text and text-

to-voice; designed our new videography studio; and we have consistently worked with faculty and staff on professional development so as to integrate technologies into all of our classrooms and curricular goals."

And then, COVID hit. Part of Mr. Hartmann's doctoral work involved creating virtual programs so he was poised to take the driver's seat when suddenly school was taking place from home. "The pandemic served as an accelerant," says Mr. Hartmann. "In addition to quickly putting a workable structure into place for virtual learning and getting everyone up and running on video conferencing and other necessary platforms, I think it is fair to say everyone also packed about five years' worth of personal digital skill development into the last year."

He adds, "We were in a unique position at Lab when the pandemic hit because all of our students already had their own devices, and we had already been using many web-based tools in the classroom. We definitely learned a few things. First and foremost—we can do this! Second, and maybe most

importantly, we as teachers learned to empower our students even more by allowing them more ownership of the learning process at home."

For the last two years, Mr. Hartmann has also taught High School Principles of Engineering, adding a class in Robotics this year. (*See related story, page 22.*)

"There is a bright future for this program as we continue to expand on what kids are learning in Junior High with Ms. Brinza [Math and Engineering Teacher **Maria Brinza**]. We have a lot of students who are tinkers, who gravitate to building systems, experimenting with processes, fiddling around with how things work and fit together."

Aside from believing deeply in Lab's mission, Mr. Hartmann says he continues to come back year after year because there is "nothing boring" about his job. "I love that the school continues to push and strive to be better. The work is constantly engaging, and there are always new challenges. I get to continue innovating because Lab continues to be an innovator."

Last year, he and his wife adopted Ranger, a Great Pyrenees, from Big Fluffy Dog Rescue.

school in Prince George's County that focused primarily on students with behavioral and learning differences.

Ms. Watson-Hellkamp loves Ancient World History. "It's my jam," she says. "I love emphasizing the voices that have been traditionally marginalized. The issue is that kids are so far removed from Ancient World History. I love finding ways to relate modern day events with ancient ones. When my students start to take off their modern lens, well, we have a lot of ah-ah moments in class."

Her interest in Ancient World History definitely overlaps with her passion and commitment around issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The school's first Diversity Club grew into the Council of Equity and Social Justice, which combines other clubs she either founded or advised over the

years, such as Let's Support Women (LSW) and the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA). In addition to being a co-advisor for the Council, she also serves as the High School's DEI coordinator, which includes running the division's Affinity Groups. "I am incredibly proud of being invested in supporting Lab with its growing DEI programming. Quite honestly, it feels like there's a conscious pivot away from the 'White ally-ship' model in favor of 'White co-conspiratorship' [White people who are willing to put their own safety on the line to support and center Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color and other historically marginalized groups] instead. I have amazing and genuine conversations with many of my White colleagues. Although we still have a lot of work to do, I feel encouraged that

the school, as a whole, is truly working toward making The Lab School a more equitable community with a curriculum that reflects the experiences and histories of all people"

What does Ms. Watson-Hellkamp—who also co-teaches Freshman Seminar—enjoy most about working at Lab? "The students, the content, and the relationships with my colleagues," she says. "I have incredible 'work wives', 'work brothers' and veteran teachers and staff members that I simply adore. We've laughed, collaborated, shared our ups and downs, as well as our challenges and passions. They're more than just friends at this point and will always be more like family."

Alumni News

ALUM PROFILES



MANUEL JOLLIFFE-MAHONEY '16

Manuel Jolliffe-Mahoney '16 found another home at Columbia College Chicago—a college right smack in the Midwest city that specializes in arts and media. Graduating in 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in Audio Design and Production, he says he reveled in studying music recording, sound design for games, and live sound and audio for visual media. “Being in college surrounded by all these other creative and innovative people involved in dance, workmanship, and every kind of visual and performing art you can imagine was incredibly exciting,” he says. “Every day you got to see what others were creating, and how they were learning to bring their ideas into something tangible or performable.”

Despite surviving the “arctic blast” of 2017—colder weather than he had ever before experienced—Manny says in

many ways college reminded him a great deal of Lab. “The tools and strategies I learned at Lab like organization and note taking definitely helped me graduate from college in four years. And all the arts in the classrooms and theater I did at Lab definitely helped me thrive in my studies in college,” he says. Some of his favorite college classes and projects involved learning how to produce and record music as well as create any and everything audio-visual for short films and games.

In October 2020, Manny joined a family-run audio-visual company in Baltimore where he works as a service technician. “I spend a lot of my time amidst big, tall towers of equipment,” he laughs. At government and non-government sites, he helps do everything related to audio-visual technology—from controlling lighting and fixing



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massive projector screens to making sure employees and visitors alike can enter any room, plug in their laptop, and access every detail to which they need to connect and present.

“I am learning a lot on the job and hope to use my experience here to pursue more creative work down the road,” says Manny who has interned at Bias Studios in Springfield, Virginia, assisting with the recording of several artists, and in local theatres, including Adventure Theatre, Theatre Lab, and Levine School of Music at Arena Stage. “I want to do anything live, like theater productions, concerts, and outdoor events. I love live events; each is unique, which keeps you on your toes. Working in audio-visual technology will definitely keep my life and career very interesting, I think.”

In some instances, alumni graduated from a high school other than The Lab School. They are listed by their high school graduation year.



AMERICORPSI REINFORCED FOR ME THAT I HAD A PASSION FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT, WHO MAY STRUGGLE IN WAYS MOST PEOPLE DON'T, AND HOW EVEN ONE GOOD TEACHER CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN A STUDENT'S LIFE."

DAVID WALTERS '14

"You've got this!" At St. Coletta of Greater Washington—a school for children and adults with intellectual differences—positive affirmations are a key part of every day. "We find that the better our students feel about themselves, the more open they are to learning," says **David Walters '14** who for the last year has been a teacher's assistant for students ages 18–22 at St. Coletta.

"The master teacher I work with is one of the most creative people I have ever met, and she brings so much wisdom and kindness to our students. I learn from her every day," he says. Recently, the two of them proposed the launch of a theater class as part of the curriculum. "There is no theater curriculum at St. Coletta but we know our students would greatly benefit from one. Our plan is to start with acting—having students role play and take on characters who are experiencing certain emotions or reactions—then go from there. We're hoping we can use the acting lesson as a jumping off place to then get them involved in music, dance, and set and costume design."

After graduating from Ursinus College in 2018 with a double major

in English and Theater and a minor in Education, David joined City Year AmeriCorps where members serve in schools all day, every day, preparing students with the social, emotional, and academic skills and mindsets to succeed in school and in life. "The experience was tough but really good," says David who worked as an assistant teacher and co-led an after-school program in Manhattan. "It reinforced for me that I had a passion for people who are different, who may struggle in ways most people don't, and how even one good teacher can make a huge difference in a student's life." He adds that his career choice of teaching also stemmed from his Junior Year Internship at Lab where he worked at the National Child Research Center (NCRC).

Teaching virtually, then through a hybrid model, and now back in person certainly had its challenges, but also its surprising rewards. "One of the best things about my students is that, because of who they are, they are pretty game to try anything. Like at Lab, the students are surrounded by others who struggle, too, so they are not afraid to fail or to try new things," he explains. "One day



during virtual teaching, I had a student who made such clear strides reading out loud that I had to turn off my camera for a moment to hide my tears."

When David thinks back about his six years at Lab, he most cherishes his time in the theater. "I really liked math and English, but theater was my thing," he says. "I was in every show, and I am still in touch with Mr. Miskell [Director of Performing Arts, Teaching Artist **Shaun Miskell**]. He's become a friend and a mentor. And I bring a great deal of what he taught me to my classroom at St. Coletta."

CLASS NOTES

CLASS OF 2004

Constance Griggs graduated from University of Maryland with a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education/Special Education. College Advisor



Trudy Fleisher was honored to attend the graduation and said, “Constance is a shining example of the sincere belief of Lab’s former Head of School **Katherine Schantz** that ‘...we all take different paths to get where we want to be.’”

CLASS OF 2006

In December 2020, **Nick Clemente** officially announced his candidacy for the Virginia 10th House of Delegates for the 2021 election. Nick attended The Lab School from 6th through 10th grade, then graduated from the McLean School of Maryland. In 2011, he received a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Wittenberg University and, in 2014, a master’s degree in Social Entrepreneurship from George Mason University. After working in politics and in various government affairs positions, he became a member of the Potomac Valley Officiating Association in 2017, primarily working youth basketball and softball games. He has also served as the membership director for the Virginia Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors since 2018. In this role, he

has helped many small businesses find ways to thrive in a struggling economy. In addition, Nick currently serves on the Town of Leesburg Planning Commission.

CLASS OF 2009

Julia Tuvin is a social worker at Children’s National Medical Center and loves it.

CLASS OF 2012

Jesse Dreyer recently had an article published in the “The Activist”—a publication by and for members of the Young Democratic Socialists of America, edited by members of YDSA’s National Political Education Committee and featuring the chapter reports and political commentary from YDSA activists from chapters across the country. Jesse is a YDSA member at Portland State.

Alexander Lipow recently started a new job as a legal intern at the US Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy in Washington, DC.

CLASS OF 2013

At Guilford College, **Ansley Sink** double majored in Psychology and Education with a focus in Special Education and a minor in Ceramics. Her sister, **Whitley Sink**, who also attended Guilford, majored in Ceramics with a minor in Education. Currently, Ansley and Whitley are both working as homeschool teachers for a small group of students.

CLASS OF 2014

Sean Phillips graduated from Salisbury University in December 2020. He recently started an internship at PEARL—Patuxent Environmental & Aquatic Research Laboratory in St Leonard, Maryland, working on an

experiment that will track the effects of storms and sediment on oysters in the Chesapeake Bay. To set up the experiment, the team had to climb inside large tanks to add mud that they collected from the Patuxent River. In August, he will go Florida to work with the Sea Turtle Rescue & Rehabilitation Program at the Mote Laboratory & Aquarium in Sarasota. “I was told that one of the main reasons I was selected for this program was that I had previous experience in taking care of sea turtles [thanks, Lab!]. I can’t wait to get to Florida and get back to helping the sea turtles,” he writes.

CLASS OF 2016

Madeline Boundy, a graduate of New York University’s class of 2020, started a Master’s in Urban Education at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education in July. During her freshman year of college, Maddy did a lot of volunteer work in downtown Baltimore schools, which sparked her interest in urban education.

CLASS OF 2017

This spring, **June Durkee** graduated with honors from Mercyhurst University with a major in Hospitality Management. At Mercyhurst, June took advantage of all the services offered for her learning differences because The Lab



School faculty and staff emphasized the importance of hard work coupled with support. Throughout her four years at college, she continued to advocate for herself—a valuable life skill, which she learned and sharpened at Lab.

Travon Gray is studying at the University North Carolina at Greensboro, completing a degree in Interior Architecture. He says he is “a world enthusiast who loves to create eclectic experiences in spaces inspired by all of my travels and surroundings.”

CLASS OF 2018

Baxter Nichols is currently interning at The International Child Art Foundation in Washington, DC where this summer he worked to promote their 6th World Children’s Festival, held on the National Mall across from the US Capitol. The event was part of a public celebration of “Creativity, Diversity, and Unity.”

CLASS OF 2019

E. Emerson Kabati [formerly Ethan] is at Butler University in Indianapolis, where he’s majoring in Business Entrepreneurship and Innovation.



During the school year, he was part of a campus band called Blue Dog that performed four concerts on the green, and he continues to make original music under the name Kabati, which can be heard on Apple Music, Spotify, and

other streaming services. Emerson also joined the car club and volunteered on two campaign teams for student government candidates. Between his senior year at Lab and his freshman year at Butler, Emerson took a gap year to travel—destinations included Egypt, Japan, South America, Antarctica, New Zealand, and Australia—and reached his goal of seeing all seven continents before he turned 20.

Yosias Zelalem, who took a gap year after graduating from Lab, wrapped up his second semester at Allegheny College this spring. He is majoring in Environmental Science, which recently took him on a scientific survey. He and



his team installed camera traps around the campus to collect data on how urbanization is affecting local wildlife. Outside of class, he is having fun with new friends and exploring nature through the birding club.

IN MEMORIAM



Paul Daniel Maddox '03, an important member of The Lab School community, died suddenly and unexpectedly from a fall on June 19, 2021.

Head of High School **Lisa McMahon** remembers his joyful connection with a classmate on the Disney trip, being the first to proudly use a cellphone that took photos, and his sly smile.

While at The Lab School during high school years, **Paul Daniel Maddox '03** worked for a computer fix-it shop, where he was trained to build or repair computers at a master’s degree level of knowledge. Paul absorbed everything he was taught and later was able to fix and build computers from scratch. He once built a full-functioning computer that would fit in an Altoids tin box. He loved tinkering.

He attended Prince George’s Community College, where he obtained a Theatre Entertainment Technology certificate.

Paul is survived by his parents, Eugene and Mary Maddox, and his older brother, Scott. He will be greatly missed.

THE LAB SCHOOL

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Laughs and Fist Bumps

Masks and social distancing are still a given these days, but that did not stop Head of School Kim Wargo from sharing some laughs, playing a couple of quick games, or reveling in some group fist bumps with students on both campuses.