



A Wonderful Challenge:

A look into the architecture at Lab

We would like to acknowledge our faculty advisor, Mr. Janus, all of our interviewees, and of course our parents.

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THE BEGINNING: FIRST THOUGHTS, AN INTRODUCTION

Around the end of the 2015-16 school year, a year before our book is being written, we became interested in architecture. Over the summer we began to formulate a plan for how to study architecture and coordinate with an independent study supervisor. Eventually we found Mr. Janus. He helped to shape our project from a general desire to learn about architecture into a more focused study. We decided to study Lab.

The Lab schools have been expanding, and in a plan that was formulated back in 2007, two new buildings were commissioned. Earl Shapiro Hall, an early childhood center for nursery through second grade, was built on Stony Island, and Gordon Parks Arts Hall, one of the largest and best equipped high school arts wings in the world, has been added to the main campus. With these two new buildings came changes to the school as a whole. The older buildings had to be brought up to code, Judd hall was completely redone and Belfield Hall was destroyed. The majority of the lower school moved over to Earl Shapiro Hall, separating them from the main campus, something that had never been done before. Lab had always been a one campus school, but now the two communities function separately. With this extra space the rest of the school has taken on more students, and shifted around the way that they use the spaces. All of this change has affected every corner of the high school, whether positively or negatively.

We realized that by studying the effects of

these changes we could learn about architecture from a different perspective. Instead of studying the traditional facets of architecture, different styles and approaches, we would learn by taking advantage of what is around us. By studying the people and community from the perspective of the building we would see architecture in a different way. It would allow us to see the functionality first and the beauty second, because that is the true purpose of architecture. Architecture is an art form when done right, but the functionality is still more important than the beauty.

In order to learn more about these buildings we decided to do a comprehensive study on them and write a book compiling all that we learned. We interviewed students, faculty, administration, alumni, experts, and the architects of the buildings. In these interviews we gathered what each person was hoping for out of the buildings and what they feel they got. We talked to them about the affects on their day to day lives and their overall experience of the school as both a physical space and a community. Each person has their bias, including us, and we had to try get around the bias in each interview and tried to be honest in our findings.

We hope that this hasn't only taught us about architecture, but is also able to function as a resource. During the course of our project we discovered that no post mortem has been done for the project other than ours, so we hope that this is helpful for the school and anyone who wishes to learn about it.



A Beautiful Destination:
Earl Shapiro Hall

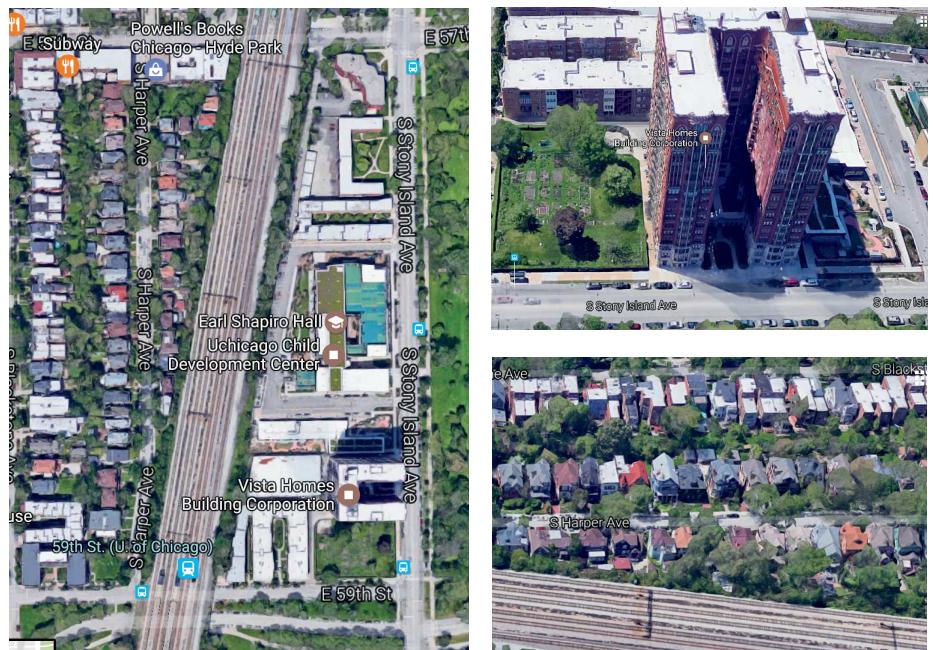
Earl Shapiro Hall:

Earl Shapiro Hall is a monumental accomplishment for the younger members of the University of Chicago's community. At roughly 130,000 square feet, this building on Stony Island Avenue is dedicated to the Lab School's nursery through 2nd grade programs. As the university eloquently states, the architects Valerio Dewalt Train Associates and FGM kept the "ethos of early education in mind as they exercise an open floor plans to open minds. Specifically, doors from every nursery classroom directly open to the outdoors, rooftop playgrounds on the second and third floors, bird's-eye views of inner courtyards, and two glass-walled 'learning labs', are meant to accommodate projects outside the scope of the regular classroom. The Lab School's new early education center in Shapiro Hall is the kind of space that not only aids in teaching but also encourages students to teach themselves."

THE PROCESS: BEFORE

Space on Stony: what existed before

Before the construction of ESH, a 95-year-old hospital sat at 5800 S. Stony Island Ave. Originally called the Illinois Central Hospital, the building more commonly known as the Doctors Hospital closed in April 2000 due to multiple scandals. The hospital, overlooking Jackson park, opened in 1916 and provided active medical care for 84 years before sitting vacant for 11 more. It originally opened in order to provide a free medical facility for all Illinois Central Railroad employees as well as a public hospital. In 1973, the railroad handed ownership over to the city, creating the Hyde Park Community Hospital. After only nineteen years, the hospital fell into bankruptcy which inspired Dr. James Desnick to save it, buying it for 2.4 million dollars in 1992. Ironically, after bailing it out in 1992, the hospital's savior plummeted it into debt yet again, accumulating a \$60 million deficit in only eight years. In 2011, the University of Chicago bought the property and the Lab Schools gave it a new purpose. The university originally hoped that Lab would be able to use the foundation and structure of the hospital for the new childhood development center, but teachers, architects, and administration alike agreed that this would not work. FGM architects, MEET with neighbors and surrounding offices before demonstrating that it would be necessary to tear the old building down in order to achieve the goals that Lab wished to achieve. The original frame would not support the ideals of Reggio Emilia or of the Lab school. The Doctors Hospital was destroyed in order for Lab to start anew.



Above: A drawing of the Illinois central hospital, the old building on the site of Earl Shapiro Hall; Bottom Left: Earl Shapiro Hall is adjacent to the Metra train tracks seen in this satelite map view; Middle Right: A satelite view of a nearby apartement complex. The apartement community was confronted during the building; Bottom Right: Another picture of the the train tracks and the housing nearby to Earl Shapiro Hall.

THE PROCESS: COMMUNITY



Defining the Community:

Lab school is a unique place where intelligence is valued over athleticism, and honest expression is valued over manners, despite the best efforts of administration. From a young age students are exposed to complicated concepts and challenged by teachers. This forces students to either find unique and out of the box routes to success, develop an incredible work ethic, or both. The community is flawed to be sure, but it has to be embraced for its successes. It

“The close knit nature of the community allows people to make unique connections and allows people who would normally get lost in the shuffle or forgotten at a New Trier or Loyola, to thrive.”

what it is. The close knit nature of the community allows people to make unique connections and allows people who would often get lost in the shuffle or forgotten at a New Trier or Loyola, thrive. This intimate nature can be off putting and alienating at times, but provides many

students with a better school experience than they might receive elsewhere. The Lab community is very competitive. Administration does make some

“The Lab school is a specific community that works for some and hurts others.”

person Valedictorian, prevent competition effort to limit competitiveness, not releasing statistics such as class rank or naming one person. The competitive nature of lab pushes each student to be better every day. This increased academic pressure from peers pushes some people to do great things, but others will fold under this increased pressure. The combination of the work and competition at lab makes it hard for students to enjoy their work and learning, but opportunities exist where students choose to find them. Teachers are supportive and helpful with any extra-curricular projects that students may want to do, and clubs can be found for just about any interest you may have. The Lab school is a specific community that works for some and hurts others, but the people that it produces are nearly always driven and successful.

Valerio DeWalt Train:

Valerio DeWalt Train spent a considerable amount of time immersed in the Lab School community in order to better understand the core values and physical necessities of the school. In their preparation for this project, they also wrote a book called *The Future of Education*, in which they interview prominent thinkers from around the United States about their thought regarding how education will develop over the years. These people included, Malcolm Gladwell, author of *Blink*, and *The Tipping Point*, and creator of the *Revisionist History* podcast, and Sir Ken Robinson, author of *Do Schools Kill Creativity*, and *Creative Schools: The Grassroots Revolution That's Transforming Education*, among many other individuals who are shaping and affecting education

According to Randy Mattheis of Valerio DeWalt Train, the ideals of community and flexibility were core principals in the design of the new buildings. They worked to create a powerful building that “encourages a sense of belonging and unity for all students.”

It is important to realize there are different communities within the Lab school, including clubs, classrooms, and grade levels. In the design, the architects aspired to create transparency between these communities. Both Valerio and FGM architects wanted to be able to look from one side of the building all the way out the other. This is meant to allow people to “look straight into the heart of the building, and inspire a feeling of closeness since you can see others even if you are not in the same area as them.”

INTENSIONS: THE HANDSHAKE



Reggio Emilia

The Reggio Emilia approach was developed after World War II by psychologist Loris Malaguzzi. He lived in Reggio Emilia, Italy, a small town where the community of parents believed that a new way of teaching children was long due. Led by Malaguzzi, they created a network system of preschool focused on fostering the “hundred languages through which children can express their ideas.” They aimed to teach students how to use art and other symbolic languages in their everyday lives. Some of the program’s key principles include, respect, responsibility, as well as well as exploration. The environment seeks to be supportive and allow students to follow their interests through a “self-guided curriculum.”

This philosophy resonates with the Lab School’s strong community and determination allowing students to follow their passions. The architects incorporated this philosophy in their design by recognizing and allowing for “differences between student’s learning styles and highlight the ways in which students learn best,

whether through art or math.” The space itself has designated areas such as the playgrounds or learning labs where large groups of students can be social, while also including areas for one or two students to break off and work on their own.

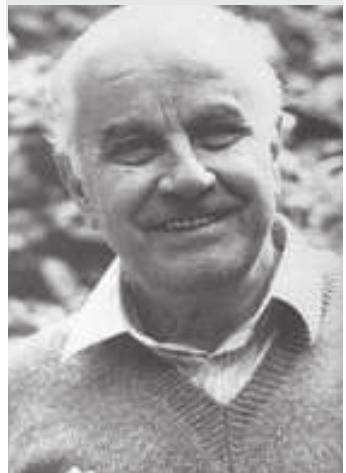
Sarah Abella, a nursery school teacher and founder of the Public School committee explains that the Reggio Emilia mindset is “Dewey to the next level.” The founding principles of this philosophy are in complete harmony with the ideas that the Lab school works hard to promote. One of the key aspects of both philosophies is creating a community that nurtures and fosters creativity and curiosity of the students. However, she felt that the architect’s vision of clean lines and neat walls did not make the ‘handshake of the building’ warm or friendly. She created the Public Space Committee, which adds student work and furniture to public spaces within the school, so that everyone entering the building would understand “our ideals regarding children and the fact that they are competent citizens of the world.”



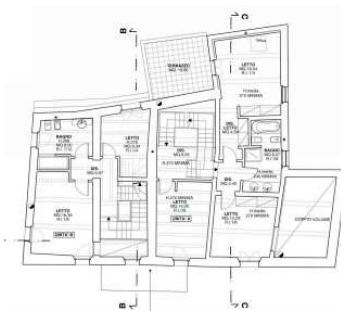
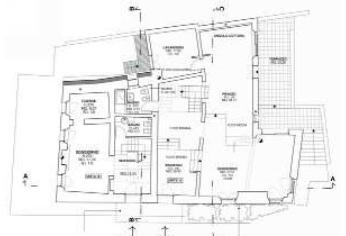


The Inspiration

Reggio Emilia



Real Examples:



These are some real examples of actual Reggio Emilia architecture. The school is based on the principles of respect, responsibility, and community. In the Reggio Emilia approach the architecture is fundamental to teaching, so much so that they label a student's environment their "third teacher". In order to use the building to reinforce their fundamental principles, they emphasize community space and nature within their school.

Floor Plans



FLOOR 01

EARL SHAPIRO HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LAB SCHOOLS

SCALE: 1" = 40'-0"

- 1 Front Plaza
- 2 Main Lobby
- 3 Nursery / Kindergarten Admin
- 4 Preschool / Kindergarten Classroom
- 5 Breakout Room
- 6 Learning Lab
- 7 Courtyard
- 8 Outdoor Playspace
- 9 South Lobby
- 10 Drop-Off
- 11 Receiving / Loading



FLOOR 02

EARL SHAPIRO HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LAB SCHOOLS

SCALE: 1" = 40'-0"

- 1 First and Second Grade Admin
- 2 Faculty Lounge
- 3 Outdoor Playspace
- 4 Learning Lab
- 5 Art Classroom
- 6 Music Classroom
- 7 First and Second Grade Classroom
- 8 After School Programs
- 9 Learning Lab
- 10 Open to Below
- 11 South Lobby

FLOOR PLANS:

These floor plans clearly show the difference from the first floor, pictured above, and the second floor, upper right. Looking at the space between each classroom on the first floor, the bathrooms, shown as the smaller of the two rooms that alternate sides between every set of rooms, evidently jut into the classroom space, a problem that does not occur on the second floor where the older kids go to class. To make up for the lost space near the entrance to the classroom, space had to be taken from the shared break out rooms. This demonstrates the surprisingly large effect that the addition of the bathrooms on the first floor has on the day to day life of the students and teachers. It both makes the classroom smaller, and takes space away from their break out rooms. It is also very clear how every classroom on each floor is identical to the rest. They each have the same rectangular shape with a breakout room on one side. This conformity goes against what the Lab school wants to be. Teachers want to have spaces that are unique, so that each kid has his or her own unique experience. Looking to the third floor, pictured on right, the size of the outdoor rooftop space is very evident. During the warmer months this serves as a useful resource where children can have a large outdoor space to run and play.

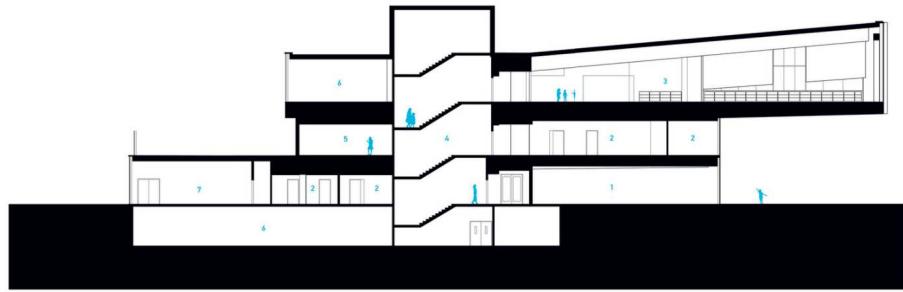


FLOOR 03

EARL SHAPIRO HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LAB SCHOOLS

SCALE: 1" = 40'-0"

- 1 Story Telling Room
- 2 Computer Lab
- 3 Library
- 4 Circulation Desk
- 5 Office / Reception Area
- 6 Gymnasium
- 7 Mechanical
- 8 Outdoor Playspace
- 9 Open to Below

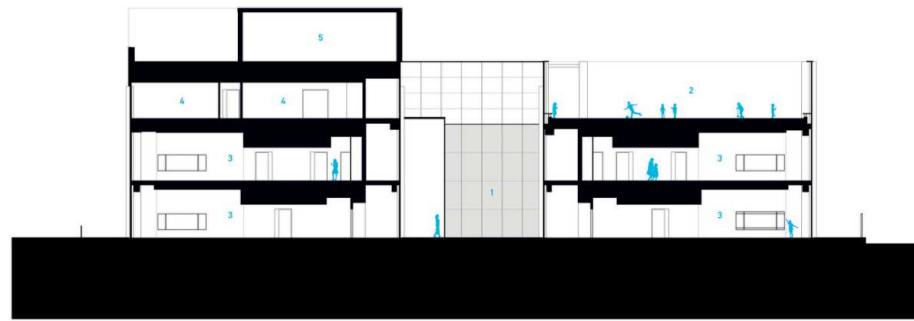


SECTION A

EARL SHAPIRO HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LAB SCHOOLS

SCALE: 1" = 40'-0"

- 1 Main Lobby
- 2 Administration / Office
- 3 Library
- 4 Learning Lab
- 5 Teacher Work Room
- 6 Storage
- 7 Loading

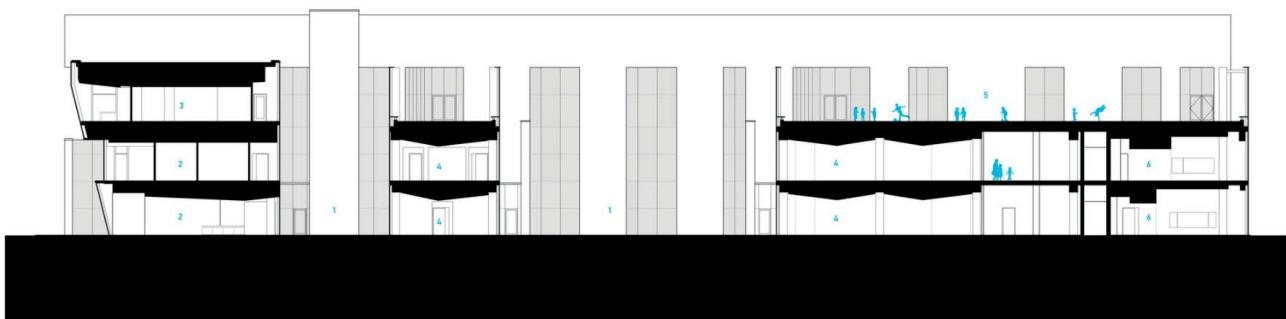


SECTION B

EARL SHAPIRO HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LAB SCHOOLS

SCALE: 1" = 40'-0"

- 1 Courtyard
- 2 Outdoor Playspace
- 3 Classroom
- 4 Learning and Counseling
- 5 Mechanical



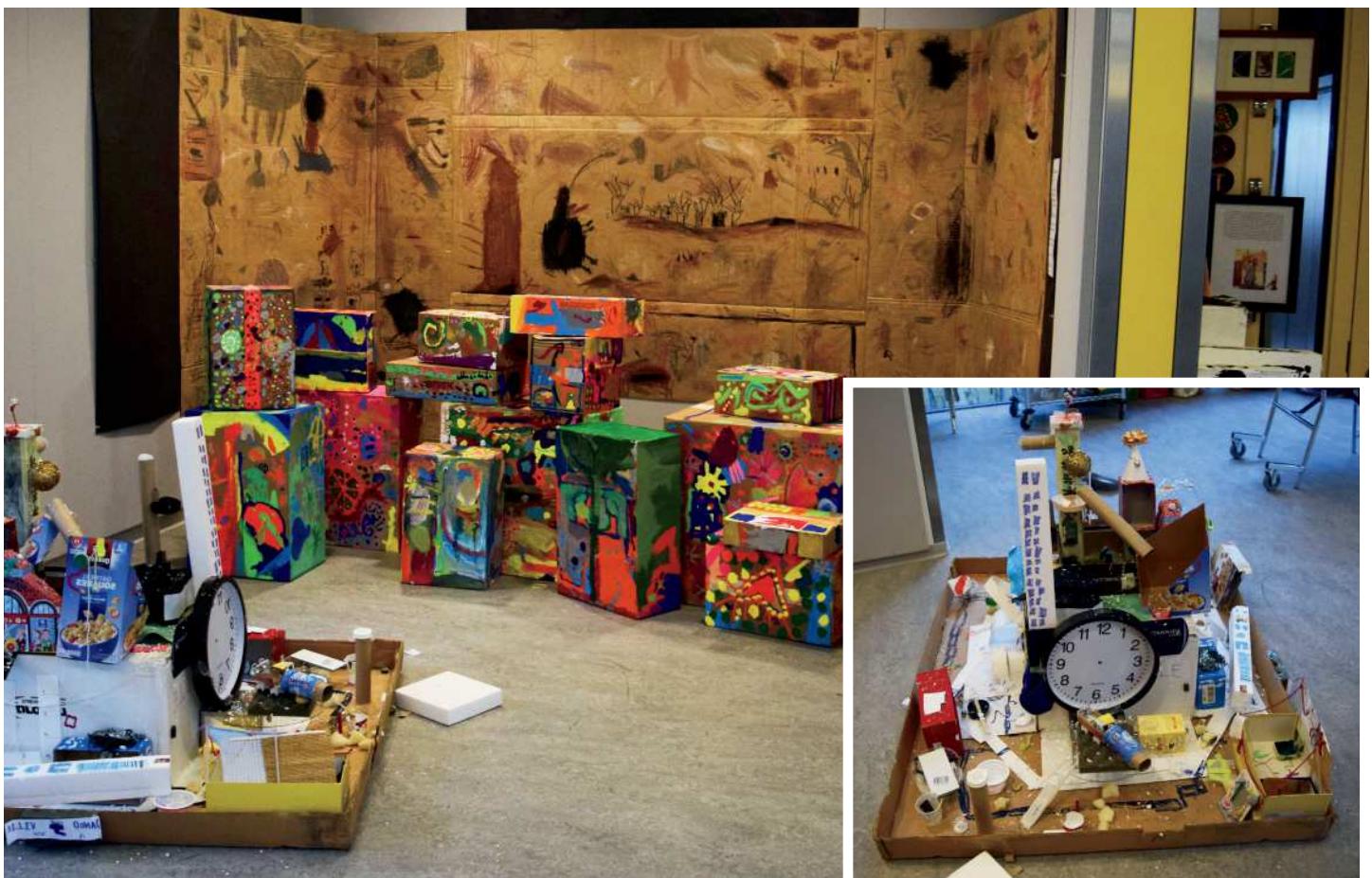
SECTION C

EARL SHAPIRO HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LAB SCHOOLS

SCALE: 1" = 40'-0"

- 1 Courtyard
- 2 Administration / Office
- 3 Library
- 4 Learning Lab
- 5 Outdoor Playspace
- 6 Classroom

CONTRIBUTIONS: THE TEACHER EFFECT



Public Spaces: Making a home

The Reggio Emilia approach dictates that there is common space in the center of the school which the entire community can use. Both Ms. Abella and Mr. Kaleta were particularly upset with the disregard of this value, claiming that there is very little shared space throughout the building, and people interact with one another very infrequently. They argue that the architecture does not foster the environment that they wanted. Ms. Abella said that if she has learned one thing from the new building, it

is that “teachers will make anything work”. Which she founded the Public Space Committee for Earl Shapiro Hall. It is a group of teachers who are invested in making the school a more active and united community through the improvement of their public spaces. They believe in the philosophy that the school building should represent what the community believes in. As the committee began their work, putting things up around the school, they were told by the architects through the administration that only certain designated areas could be manipulated. The architects preferred the display of art to

be more intentional. This has made the committee’s job harder, but despite the challenges they have faced, the Public Space Committee has been able to create a photocollage on the wall, and put a reptile cage in the first floor “little lobby”, amongst other accomplishments. The biggest thing that they have done is display student art installations in the second floor little lobby. After school programs create the installations that are then displayed the next quarter. Increasing community space has been one of the great successes instituted by the teachers.



Left page: Art installation second floor; Right Top: Main Lobby Art installation; Right Bottom: Main Lobby seating

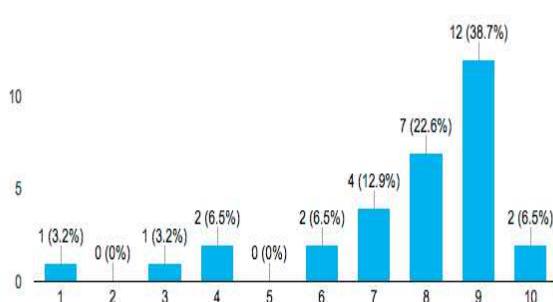
THE RESULT: STATISTICS

The following few pages consist of middle-school feedback on the Gordon Parks Arts Hall building, since it is a shared building with the two of the three parts of Lab school (middle and high school).

6th Grade

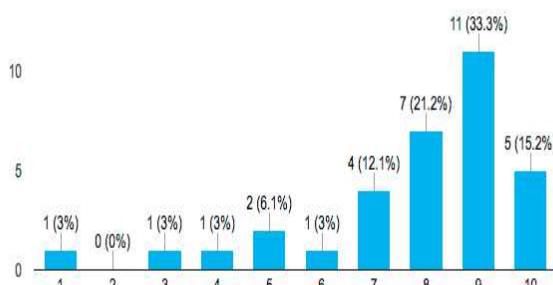
On a scale from one to ten how much do you like the new building?

31 responses



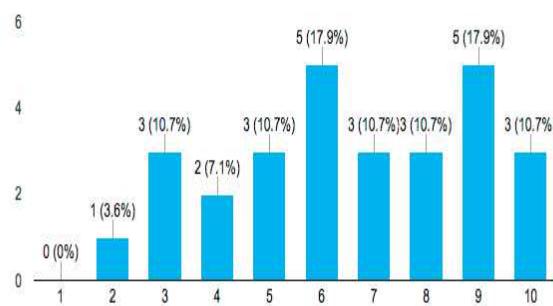
On a scale of one to ten how comfortable do you feel in the new building?

33 responses



On a scale of one to ten how comfortable did you feel in the old building?

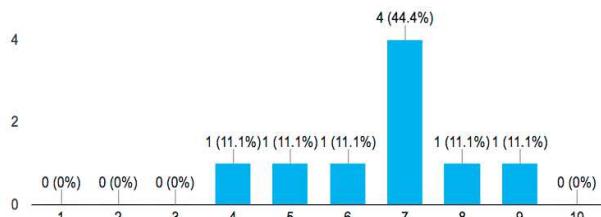
28 responses



7th Grade

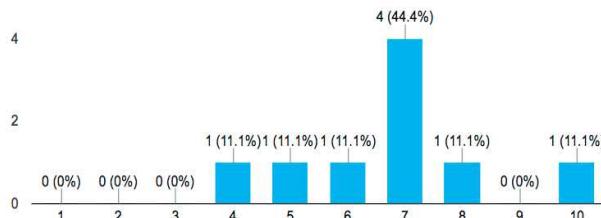
On a scale from one to ten how much do you like the new building?

9 responses



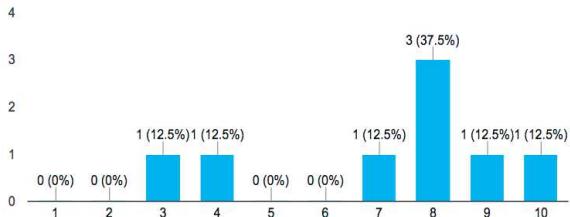
On a scale of one to ten how comfortable do you feel in the new building?

9 responses



On a scale of one to ten how comfortable did you feel in the old building?

8 responses



Do you like the new arts building better or worst than the old building? Why?

7 responses

I am not sure because I was rarely in the old Judd so I have little memory of it.

Worse for its like so white and sterile it's like a hospital and hospitals aren't the happiest places. It's also the new building.

I like the old building better. This is because it is more comfortable and natural.

I feel like it's better for learning music and the arts but it feels less welcoming

I guess I like it better but there is so much empty space

The new one is better because it looks nicer and feels nicer because there is more natural light.

Better, because it is easier to find your way around

ADAPTATIONS: Flexibility in Gordon Parks

Starting with the Future of Education study, the school has made an effort to ensure that the new buildings would be capable of living on into the future. A key aspect of future capability is flexibility. As Mr. Lienick, the director of technology at the school, said, "We have no idea what technology is going to look like in ten years." It is impossible to know exactly what the school will need, so the architects cannot put in place the necessary capabilities. They, however, can make the space more flexible, allowing the future inhabitants to make the changes that are necessary to keep up with the advances in technology. The architects were forward thinking and careful to do this. They made sure that each room had much more space for wires and power than they currently need. By putting electrical conduits in the floor in tech specific rooms, they increased the future capabilities of the room, hopefully eliminating need for future construction.

Flexibility does more than look to the future, it dictates how spaces can be used in the present. One of the biggest features of Gordon Parks is the Sherry Lansing black box theater. A black box theater is a dark theater which allows for experimentation through flexibility. Unfortunately, the Sherry Lansing theater is fundamentally



flawed. The seating is technically mobile, but it costs \$15,000 to deconstruct and move the seating arrangements. Ms. Ambrosini, the theatre teacher, said "I doubt it will ever be changed again."

An important feature in any arts wing is the ability to display art. The administration still does not allow anyone to put tape on the walls or pillars, which greatly restricts the ability of teachers and students to display artwork. However this creates an opportunity for further creativity. As Ms. Neater said, the barren walls and surfaces are a "blank canvas" for student's imagination. Students have consistently found innovative and beautiful places to present their artwork, such as the eye paintings hanging at the top of the assembly hall or the collages that were wrapped around the pillars using string. It has created both positive and negative effects for students, making it harder to display their artwork, but also inspiring them to come up with creative solutions. However, Elyse Agnello, a licensed architect from the Harvard Graduate School of Design, pointed out that it is an architect's job is to help the occupants of a building fulfill both the architect's artistic vision and the practical needs of the space. The design of Gordon Parks hinders rather than helps the showing of artwork.



THEATERS: Over the Years

Belfield Theater:

According to Mr. and Mrs. Ambrosini, the theatre teachers, the Belfield Theatre was quite well designed. Although it was a small space, “the architects worked with experts in the field and got every single last nugget out of it.” There was a shop which could be outside during the spring show, and inside the rest of the year allowing the crew to build the stage while enjoying the weather. The Theatre was in the main part of the building, which made them feel like an important part of the school. The costume, lights, sound and changing rooms were attached to the rehearsal and stage area which allowed the cast and crew to work together and cultivate a feeling of community within the theatre: “the cast worked on crew, the crew would play small roles if need be, everything was so connected that we all worked collectively to make an amazing show.” However, this space was rather small and overall did not allow for many different types of stages or lights.

Sherry Lansing Theater:

The new theatre in Gordon Parks Arts Hall, The Sherry Lansing Theatre, was designed to be a black box theatre. This is meant to be a performance space with plain black walls and a level floor with a flexible

new theatre is quite large, has enough space for a shop, costume, lights and dressing rooms as well as a stage with ample seating. However, according to the Mr. and Mrs. Ambrosini, it is simply not a black box theatre. There is no flexibility in the seating, since it costs so much to move, the walls are grey and the floor black which is the opposite of what it should be, inflexible lights, scattered costume/ dressing/ shop rooms, and no fly gallery. Although Mr. and Mrs. Ambrosini, the theatre teachers, are thankful for the amount of space dedicated to theatre, they strongly believe that the architects could have done a better job: “when we met with the architects, we made suggestions for what we wanted, what we knew we needed, and it seemed like none of that was taken into account.” In theatre, it is important to have one coherent unit working together, by placing the costume room and lights booth on the second floor and the rest of the theatre on the first, “we loose the connection between parts and no longer are as one.” This, along with the technical difficulties the Ambrosinis have encountered while making productions have been a challenge. They spend as much time “solving problems to make the space into a theatre space as solving problems with the production.” Overall, the space itself is beautiful and the Ambrosinis are grateful for this venue, but “if resources were allocated differently, or the design was better it could have been

STUDENT AND TEACHER CONTRIBUTIONS

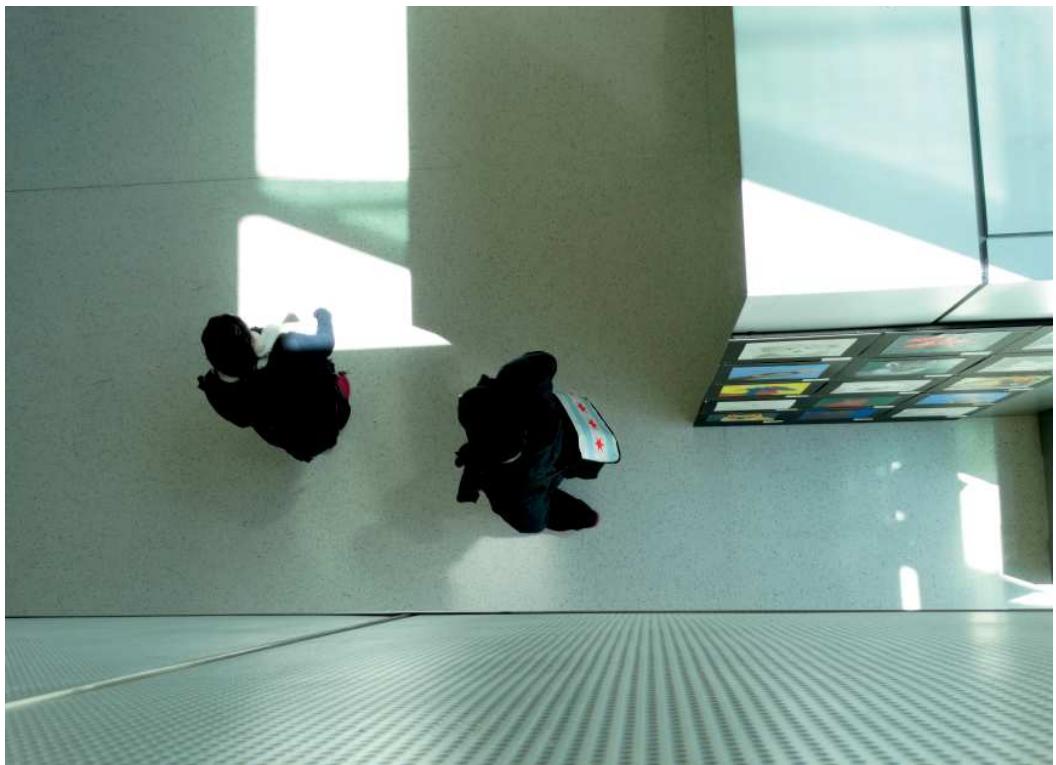
GORDON PARKS ART HALL:

Gordon Parks is influenced by the students, teachers, parents and administrators. In order to involve the community in the design, the architects built in an adjustment period. Students were able to help design parts of the shared spaces within the building. The Gordon Parks hall did not include any seating at the opening, in order to see where students would want to sit. By letting them choose “we were trying to really allow the kids to experiment with the space and we would adjust, make it feel comfortable once they had expressed where they preferred to be,” Mr. Magill said. This method is not a new one, and was used when designing the quad for the university of chicago. They let college students walk across the quad for two years, installing concrete paths once dirt ones had formed.

Throughout the rest of the building, the idea of collaborating with teacher in order to make adjustments was present. Some teachers, including Ms. Alecea, thought that the architects, by allowing teachers to choose their furniture and providing a space with ample light and space created a flexible space, that can fit each teacher’s needs. She did however mention that for the first year after moving in, there were many details that were unfinished and took quite a while to get fixed such as display cases, blinds inside the classroom, and a functioning sound system. All of these small things “made it harder to teach and display works of art.”

Within the music classes teachers converted their offices into individual practice rooms, allowing from more students to work in small groups. As Mrs. Sinclair said, “we thought the space would be more useful this way.”





Isolation:

Before the construction of Gordon Parks Arts Hall, the arts were scattered all over the school. Music was in belfield tower, the theater was tucked away in belfield hall, and the art classrooms were spread throughout the rest of the school. This was both a positive and a negative for art teachers. Mr. Brickner stated that he feels far more isolated in the new building and explained that if he sat in his classroom with the door closed he wouldn't hear a sound. Mr. Dean, whose classroom is right next door, completely disagreed. He feels fully integrated in the school, at the center of student life. Mr. Wildeman provided an interesting middle ground between the two. He explained that being united in one area with the whole of the art department has been really nice for him, but he does feel more separated from the high school itself. Before moving, his classroom was surrounded by a variety of other subjects, so he would see students and teachers every day even if he was not required to interact with them. Now he can go weeks without seeing someone from another department.

Students who are not taking art classes almost never go into the building unless they are going to an assembly. That being said, while sitting in Mr. Jaffe's classroom for our interview, we were interrupted five or six times in less than an hour by students who were just checking in to talk or do a few minutes of work. This, along with a quote from Ms. Neater saying "I feel like I'm somewhat separated from the school beyond the art department, but I tend not to want to leave the studio that much. I think that that's allowed me to stay focused on art making with my students and allowed me to be available for students to make art in between class times." demonstrated that even if the building is separate, it is not terribly isolated. If students want to stop by, they can and will.

Lab Arts

Lab Arts is a school wide event in which students of all ages are able to share their art with one another. It has only been around for a few years, but is quickly becoming a popular Lab tradition. It was started by a group of passionate parents and the chair of the art department, Gina Alicea. It hasn't been easy to get going, but Cynthia Husing, Cheryl Rudbeck, and Tracy Coe have worked very hard in collaboration with Ms. Alicea. Unfortunately they have had to put together this event without any funding from the school. They were able to find someone to build and donate all of the displays in order to make the even run. Despite this, it has been exceedingly successful, and has grown in size and length every year up to a full week this year. It is now the only event that includes the lower, middle, and high school into one body of work and allows interaction between the schools. It appears that once again the Lab community had to overwhelm the negative impact of the administration's priorities in order to create the best school environment.





'bringing back the lilacs, and
only replanting a grass field, no
more.'

RACHEL SCHONBAUM'S VIEWS ON: Gordon Parks Art Hall

From the outside, Gordon Parks Art Hall is a true modern statement. Wide glass sheets cover the space where the Belfield wing once was and reflect back the colors of the sky. From inside, Gordon Parks Art Hall, also known as GPAH, takes a more industrial approach. Throughout the three stories, gray flooring, new lighting in the halls, and metal walls add to the sleek, modern-industrial look. The color scheme and the minimal art posted in the halls makes the building come off as cold. There seems to be endless storage space and an unfortunate amount of locked doors, which creates a sense of closedness and useless space, disagreeing with the mission of Lab. I believe the complexity of GPAH is unknown to some extent and often understated.

The design of Gordon Parks, although restrictive in some ways, has created unique opportunities to

display student artwork. By using the tall pillars that support the ceiling, the walls of the assembly hall and nooks within the staircases, the art made by students has added to the building and contributed to the Deweyan principles that Lab is built on.

GPAH is made up of three floors. The first floor consists of: the Sherry Lansing theater, the middle school Markovitz theater, the Gordon Parks assembly hall, the development offices, the loading dock, and the student art gallery. The assembly hall takes up an aggressive amount of space. Its walls were enhanced to improve acoustics and an overhead projector was installed from the ceiling. The assembly room has two levels and is filled with dark brown benches, able to fit 750 people.

The theaters are fully equipped with technology found in professional theaters across

the country. The development offices are hidden to the left of the entrance of GPAH and across from the assembly hall.

A student favorite is the Gordon Parks art gallery, which has a clear window, allowing passing students and teachers to look inside. The area itself embodies a level of professionalism that isn't seen in many high schools. It encourages students to push themselves, wanting to see their own artwork up there. The simplistic gallery truly allows for the artwork of students, teachers, and faculty to shine through.

The second floor of GPAH consists of mostly music rooms, as well as theater storage, the costume room, dressing rooms, another entrance to the second floor of the assembly hall, and a few offices. After construction, the music teachers realized throughout most of the day they stayed in their own



“While some may find the white, grey, and concrete of Gordon Parks cold, I find it inspiring. A bit of blank canvas for my imagination.”

-Sunny Neater



rooms, maybe partially because they are quite nice, and therefore didn't need this office space. Deciding to not let the space go to waste, it was transformed into much needed practice rooms. For students pursuing music whether it be, for an independent study, or for class, these rooms are well used and well equipped for the job. Practically identical to the other floors, the architecture of the second floor mimics the rest of GPAH. The industrial architecture of the second floor mimics the rest of GPAH, making it a coherent building.

On the third floor of GPAH, there are art rooms, offices, and some storage spaces. The art rooms are adapted to enhance the experience of middle and high school students. Large windows allow ample light and the large classrooms with high ceilings give students plenty of space to create. Teachers have adapted their rooms to be able to display art as

well as make it. For example, Mr. Wildeman has art hanging along the high ceilings in his classroom, making it feel more homey and creative.

Perhaps due to my natural resistance to change, I didn't see GPAH as a part of Lab. Although I had no qualms with the art rooms, spacing, and conceptual insights, there appeared to be little transition from the older parts of Lab, aside from the actual frame of GPAH. As a Lab lifer, the destruction of Scammons and Belfield meant taking something away that always seemed permanent. For me, these places cultivated Lab's ethos—although I'm sure for the future students, GPAH and other new parts of the building will feel equally fundamental. These are factors that have affected many students and teachers, particularly those who have been at Lab and around the campus for a long time. However, the balance between nostalgia and a clear vision of the future can be hard to find.

STATISTICS:

750 seat assembly hall

4 art studios

1 state-of-the-art electronic music studio

250 seats Sherry Lansing Theatre

94,000 square feet

1 student run art gallery

7 years of development

25,000,000 dollars donated by George Lucas

PULSE OF THE PARTS MAKING UP THE ASSEMBLY HALL



Building the assembly hall, which is central to Gordon Parks, was a huge step for the Lab School. The school had never had a formal meeting space that could fit the whole school before the opening of Gordon Parks. The assembly hall provides a clear space for the lab community to gather, which is appreciated by teachers, students, and administration alike. According to David Magill, building this space was one of the main goals of the project. The hall is also equipped with state of the art technology, including audio and video capabilities as well as catwalks along the ceiling and an advanced lighting booth as well as much more. Due to its size and modern technology the assembly hall has become a point of pride within the Lab administration, and is rented out to the University and other private

businesses. When the space is rented out it provides money for the school as well as a connection to the University. This is not to say that the assembly hall is without flaws. The room was designed to have video capability and therefore it must have generally consistent lighting, but the architects put a large floor to ceiling window in. The school then had to add a shade to cover the window and allow videos to be seen clearly. The shade has never been up since it was installed. Teachers have argued that this was a selfish decision by the architects in order to win an award for the longest continual window. Mr. Mattheis denied this, but it seems to be either a selfish or unconsidered installation.

Sharing the Space

The Assembly Hall can be rented out for events or by the university throughout the year. This makes the school money and begins to pay back some of the money spent on creating the building. Unfortunately it also takes away the sense of privacy and home cultured in the lab community. Ms. Truscello, an orchestra teacher, said “sometimes, with very little warning, they use our room for an event. This means that everything in the room is pushed to one corner, and means we have to be ready to get everything out of the way at all times.” However, using classrooms is a last resort, and according to Mr. Galvin happens very infrequently.

Quaker Inspired

Inspired by the Quaker town hall format, the benches together form a rectangle, with the stage as the fourth side. In the Quaker society the benches all face one another in order to bring attention onto the community rather than one main speaker or performance. While in principle bringing attention to the community is positive, and a sentiment that is much needed in Gordon Parks, it seems poorly placed. The point of a Lab school assembly is to bring attention to a designated speaker or performer who is on the front stage, so putting a focus on the community goes against the purpose of the hall. When Robert Hannah was asked of this, he said, “When I’m on the sides I spend more time looking at my friends across the way than the speaker.” The assembly hall is a very well built space, but the concepts behind certain pieces of it are not well considered.

Future Technologies

Mr. Lieneck, director of informational technology, says that technology moves very fast and new products replace old ones every six to eight months. Since the decisions taken during this project are “literally set in stone, we all worked to create the most flexible space possible,” Mr. Lieneck said. They wanted to account for all the changes that would happen over the years, so they created ample space for new circuits and wiring throughout the assembly hall as well as the rest of the building. The assembly hall has great sound and visual systems, but the control rack with all of the equipment for the assembly hall is in the theatre. Mr. Lieneck says this is something he wishes he could fix because it was poorly designed, and “it makes it harder for assemblies or events to run smoothly in the hall.”



QUOTES

“Joe [Valerio] went into great depth, contacting futurists and educators,” says the school’s director emeritus David W. Magill. The result was a six-volume 2009 report called “Future of Education: Research.” The “Lab+” master plan positions GPAH as the principal new structure on the school’s two-city-block campus, coming for probably **“**

“Last year, the George Lucas Family Foundation pledged \$25 million to the Laboratory Schools to finance the creation of the Arts Hall. The grant was the culmination of the Lab+ Campaign, which raised more than double its original \$40 million goal in support of the Laboratory Schools. **”**

“Good architecture comes from having a series of people that are passionate (teachers, Magill, some had clear ideas about what was important and prepared to be engaged in the dialogue). **”**

“It’s designed to function well but as a whole it feels piecemeal growing up thinking that a falsity to the entire university neoclassical this moment that’s not really real for the moment it’s built for. [...] I’m glad [my children] have really happy memories that equate my memories. The room number is really important, you’re part of something, and I didn’t understand this, but that memory is forever. For [my children], they know the places, and the architecture has been able to contain the same experience. **”**





THE END: FINAL CONCLUSIONS

While conducting this study, we learned about each step required to make these buildings. We learned about the ideas behind the buildings, the inspirations, and the design and which evolved over many years. We realized the restrictions of the space and budget and how that factors into what the architects are capable of doing. We witnessed the diverging opinions of teachers, administration, and the university regarding what was best for the school. We also took a step back and worked to understand how this expansion has affected the Lab community. With this knowledge which we have presented in this book, we now have a more complete picture of the architectural changes themselves and their consequences.

While interviewing various members of the community, we discovered that most people's views on the buildings were dependant on their previous experiences at Lab. Teachers and Students who were new to the Lab community were generally far more optimistic about the new projects. They were able to come into the buildings with an unbiased perspective and see the school for what it is: an incredible institution. Gordon Parks Arts Hall according to Ms. Alicea, is "unlike any other in the country." This was echoed by other teachers, pointing out that it might be the best equipped high school arts facility in the world. They likewise walk into Earl Shapiro Hall and see it as a beautiful building. If they never really lived or worked in the old campus, they don't miss the connection that the lower school had with the middle and high school. They are able to see the positives honestly, but they also can't see the negative.

Lab lifers, resistant to change and filled with memories of the students and teachers in the old buildings, seemed to be more cynical regarding the adaptations which they have had to endure. The changes in the resources have been positive, but areas such as Scammon's or the Theatre's flexibility have impacted students and faculty in a negative way. The main complaint regarding the new buildings was the lack of community feeling which was present before. Students and teachers who grew up at Lab see a shift happening. As Ms. Ahmed, both the high school assistant principal and a Lab mom, pointed out, "Earl Shapiro Hall doesn't seem like a part of the same school." The Historic Campus and GPAH function completely separately from ESH. In nearly all ways besides name, they are no more than sister schools. Teachers no longer communicate with one another, and when ESH kids go to the main campus, they call it a field trip. The community is turning from that of an intimate Pre-K-12 school into a large school with independently working departments. People who grew up in the tight knit community miss it, and blame the new buildings for its loss, which is unfounded. The buildings themselves are pieces of art. They are not to be blamed for the changes in the community, these are the changes that come with any expansion.

Both the lifers and new students are right. The new buildings, and the changes to the old ones are incredible. They improve the school in a lot of ways, and help it remain an elite college preparatory institution. On the other hand, this expansion challenges the relationship that existed within the community before. It marks the movement of Lab from an intimate school which offers an exceptional education to a school of professionalism and achievement, that still offers an incredible education.