



Dr. Eric Jackman

Institute of Child Study

Alumni ECHO NEWS

THE LABORATORY SCHOOL • ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL • WINDY RIDGE

The Art of Dorothy Medhurst

By Julie Comay

On December 29, 2010, a legendary figure in our history died peacefully at the age of 96. Dorothy Medhurst was a visionary educator of rare gifts. Inspired as an adolescent in the 1930s by Arthur Lismer's art classes at the AGO, she went on to a career as a renowned art educator at the Institute of Child Study, where she taught for two decades during the 1960s and 1970s and at The Mabin School, from 1980 until her retirement in 1991. Throughout her life, Dorothy's driving passion for the natural world was deeply bound to her commitment to the world of children and their art.

As a child, I vividly remember my awed amazement at encountering a teacher with such passion for observing and understanding the outside world. Although children profoundly interested her in their perceptions, perspectives and questions, her emphasis was always on the world beyond ourselves, on reading the natural landscape, on seeing this world anew. Dorothy taught us that the world was full of wonders, but that to access them you had to look closely and analytically at particulars – at everything from the way paint layered upon paint to the mottling of a rock, or the eccentric alighting of a bird.

For Dorothy, art provided a powerful and unique form of access to any subject, extending far beyond the walls of the art room. Former student Margaret Polanyi recalls "There was a dilapidated van parked outside the school, waiting to whisk us away on a field trip. I remember the first time I saw the wooden chairs precariously placed in the back for extra seating on the journey. But we always reached our destination safely – usually a trail or open field where Miss Medhurst let us loose to explore and wade into riverbeds. The wider world was our canvas, and the frog jumping out of my bucket was art too."

Many of the Lab School's longstanding and cherished principles echo ideas and approaches that were so deeply engrained in Dorothy's very being as a teacher that she would no doubt, with characteristic lightness of touch, shrug off as mere verbiage. For Dorothy, teaching was always a delicate dance between intervention and restraint, as much suggestion as instruction, a complex interplay of the indirect and the explicit. "She would make you notice things in a very offhand way . . ."

says Paola Cohen, an adult student of Dorothy's in the mid-1970s who went on to become a fellow art teacher at the Mabin School.

Margaret Polanyi recalls "Miss Medhurst, always in motion, peering over shoulders, supplying the right brush. She never minded when we missed the canvas and slopped onto our smocks, the table, the chairs, the floor. To her, we were all Picassos, not to be held back." As children, we mastered hammer, saw, and chisel as we created large-scale, immersive environments—jungles,

caves, Japanese temples—that developed slowly over very long periods. We also recall the precision and detail of intensely fine-grained work on a very small scale. Every project was memorable in an ongoing cycle of looking, making, reflecting, and reworking which, for all its fundamental seriousness of purpose, was filled with a joyful sense of fun, autonomy and accomplishment.

Dorothy had high expectations of everyone, and I will never forget grueling hikes in which interest and delight competed with exhaustion, and an all-pervasive anxiety about keeping up. Yet, though she made what could feel like scant accom-

modation to childish needs, I believe that for Dorothy, in her boundless curiosity, children provided a fresh lens through which to view and imagine a world. In return, she offered an extraordinary quality of attentiveness, of hearing beyond what you said and seeing beyond what you described.

"This rare, mutual respect between teacher and student could be utterly inspirational for a child."

Paola Cohen reflects that Medhurst "Empowered children – it was all about problem-solving, using materials to solve problems. What Dorothy demanded was attention, not skill. What she gave back was her own attention, as she talked with kids and guided them through questioning – *What about this space? What were you thinking here? What would happen if . . . ?*"



Dorothy Medhurst in conversation with young students

Remembering Diana Rankin 1957 – 2006



Diana Rankin with her children, Matthew ('02), Emma ('08) and Graham ('05) Muncaster.

By Tracy Pryce

This year's fundraising gala in support of the Diana Rankin/Muncaster Family Tuition Support Fund was inspired by a woman with a remarkable spirit, who was a devoted mother, loving wife, community-builder and a good friend to many. Diana Rankin's family was part of the Lab School community for more than 10 years, when her three children Matthew ('02), Graham ('05) and Emma ('08) Muncaster attended the school.

Diana's husband, Bob Muncaster, remembers the pleasure that Diana found in the Jackman ICS philosophy. "We liked that children are taught that what they say is valued," he said.

When Diana died in 2006 from ovarian cancer, the family requested that donations be made to the school. The idea of a tuition support fund seemed natural. "She would have

wanted the remarkable experiences our children had to be made available to families who could not afford it otherwise," said Bob, "and that we attempt to give families with changed financial circumstances an opportunity to stay."

Diana's unyielding optimism often prevented her from letting go of an idea until it materialized. Krista Phillips, Sasha Rogers and Patricia Barford-Mann (close friends of Diana's, whose children attended JICS together) remember the lunch Diana planned for her friends just before she died. She invested enormous amounts of energy into it, with the intent of bringing together women from all parts of her life so they could meet one another. The friends laughingly remember Diana's relentless insistence on the motif of "fizzy drinks." Suitable for toasting, they were a must. It was to be a celebratory event. When Diana's illness progressed more quickly than anticipated, the lunch event had to be postponed until after she died, but remained true to her plans. "She never drew boundaries," Krista said. "Even in death, Diana pulled us together."

Bob sees the Lab School's tuition support fund as a way for his wife's spirit to endure. Without a doubt, it embodies Diana's inclusiveness and interest in diversity. "Some people accept diversity," says Sasha, "but Diana fostered it." It is important that we, as a school community, never forget Diana, for she inspired the conception of a fund that will continue to benefit the school and existing and future families for many years to come.



Diana with her horse, Faelan.

The Diana Rankin Fête held on April 16, 2012 raised over \$30,000 dollars for financial assistance to families that could not be able to consider the school without this help.

Dewey's Disciple System

By Peter Steen

When most people relate the name "Dewey" to education, they probably think of Melvil – the man who invented their library's decimal system.

However, for Jackman ICS alumni the more significant Dewey is John – the man whose educational views directly shaped their schooling.

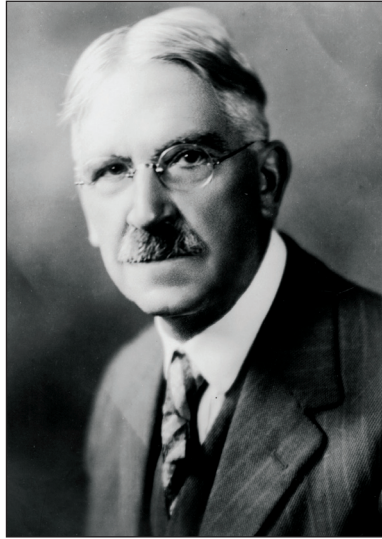
During his lifetime (1859-1952), John Dewey was an influential educational reformer, philosopher and psychologist. When it came to teaching, he espoused the unconventional notion that school-age kids were already critical thinkers.

"In his time, this represented a radical shift away from educational practice based on a foundation in which students were passive recipients of knowledge," says Janette Pelletier, JICS' director. "Dewey recognized, over a hundred years ago, that children are NOT empty vessels who come to school to be filled with knowledge," adds Richard Messina, vice-principal at JICS.

The Institute's own description of its foundation relates how Dewey's vision, of students "challenged to think independently and investigate the world around them," was coupled with the "emphasis on self-direction and progressive achievement" advocated by William Blatz, the school's first director.

Today, Pelletier believes Dewey's principles and philosophies resonate just as loudly. "Children's ideas, questions and theories matter and are at the centre of educational practice," she says. "Following Dewey's lead, we believe that the goal of education is deep understanding," Messina notes. "The traditional approach to schooling, which can be described as a superficial coverage of a shallow prescribed curriculum, is replaced with in-depth coverage of selected topics. At Jackman ICS, the teachers have the luxury to respond to the interest of the students in the classroom as the means, or 'pathway,' toward the big ideas/concepts in the curriculum."

This begs the question as to how the Institute, which dates back to 1925, may have advanced 'Deweyism' over the decades.



John Dewey, 1859-1952.

Pelletier believes one way is through technology and cites Knowledge Forum in particular. "[It] allows communal discourse about questions, theories, findings and ideas that can then be recorded and serve as artifacts for ongoing knowledge building. Children engage in cognitive processes such as hypothesizing, researching, and deepening of understanding...but the technology can archive this growth in ways that Dewey might not have imagined."

Messina agrees. "SmartBoards, computers and Knowledge Forum mean the 'teacher' is no longer the sole director of the curriculum; a path towards curriculum expectations is co-created, taking into account the interests and questions of the students. For the classroom to move from a focus on tasks and activities to a focus on knowledge is a radical shift."

So how does this Dewey-based education manifest itself in alumni? Messina thinks it means a more reflective individual.

"According to Dewey, reflection is a specialized form of thinking that a learner applies, when confronted by a puzzling or curious situation, in order to make better sense of that situation. Dewey recognized that high-quality learning in schools did not occur in isolation and that teachers needed to create conditions that supported such learning...creating favourable learning conditions results from teachers being reflective and being reflective involves developing attitudes appropriate to supporting a reflective stance."

So while it's true that Melvil's decimal system has been part of everyone's learning, it has been John's ideas that have molded and defined the Institute—and its students — since inception. In fact, he is quoted as calling the school's practice, "the working out of what's possible in education."

Perhaps teachers, students, parents and alumni can reflect a little on that.

Nick Laidlaw's Legacy

By Christine Davidson

1916 was a year of extraordinary events in Canada – Nellie McClung advocated tirelessly for women's rights, our national parliament buildings burned to the ground and Robert Gordon Nicholas (Nick) Laidlaw came into this world, the second of four children to Robert Alexander Laidlaw and his wife, Julia.

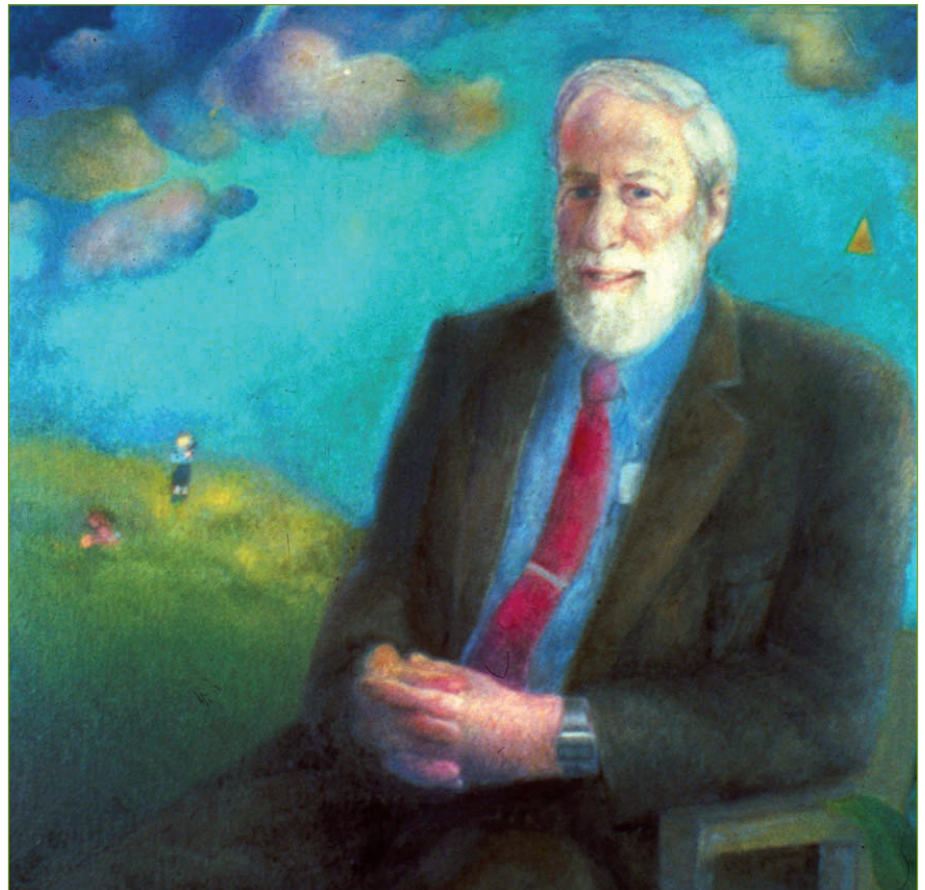
Descendants of James Laidlaw, who emigrated from Scotland in the early 1800s, the Laidlows were a close-knit clan. Nick grew up in mid-town Toronto with his sister and two younger brothers. His paternal grandparents, aunts and uncles all spent time with the children, and although his grandfather seemed a formidable man to young Nick, the children were indulged and cherished by their extended family. No doubt this early affection influenced Nick's generous nature and sense of responsibility to his family in later years.

As the Laidlaw family's lumber business thrived throughout the early years of the 20th century, Nick forged a different path, attending the University of Toronto to study political science and economics. But the world was in chaos – the Second World War had reached Canada and like many young men of the day, Nick and his brother, Jeff, joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. Tragedy was to haunt the Laidlows: in 1942 Nick was taken as a prisoner in Germany and in 1944 Jeff was killed while stationed in Nigeria. The family would never overcome the horror of this terrible time.

After the war, Nick returned to the University of Toronto to earn a degree in psychology. He studied under influential scholars such as

Dr. William Blatz, and formed a deep, life-long association with what was then called the St. George's School of Child Study. In 1948, Nick married Marnie Grant and had four children – James, Julia, William and Melissa. He continued to be active in the family business, helping them to establish the Laidlaw Foundation,

respectful colleague. And he adored children. After his death in 1990, the Laidlaw Foundation pledged a \$1 million endowment to the University of Toronto, establishing the Dr. R.G. N. Laidlaw Centre at the recently re-named Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study.



Joyce Wieland's portrait of Nick Laidlaw.

which continues to play a significant philanthropic role today by investing in positive youth development and engagement.

Nick's career as a psychologist, lecturer and researcher was based at the Institute of Child Study. Here he nurtured his strong interest in child development and children's mental health. Nick was quite eccentric—he often wore two watches and used an old-fashioned ear horn—and was always a sympathetic listener and

On this 20th anniversary of the Centre's establishment, we honour Nick's legacy with a reproduction of his portrait painted by celebrated Canadian artist Joyce Wieland. This whimsical work portrays Nick sitting in the foreground, while behind him, in a meadow in rich hues of blues and greens, a young child is flying a kite. This charming painting is a fitting tribute to a man who loved all children and cared deeply about their health and well-being.

Dr. R.G.N. Laidlaw Centre celebrates 20 years of research

By Christine Davidson

On April 10, 1992, guests gathered to celebrate the establishment of the Dr. R.G.N. Laidlaw Centre named in honour of Dr. Nicholas Laidlaw – a scholar whose professional career was dedicated to the health and well-being of children. Exactly twenty years later, family, friends, faculty, staff and students gathered to celebrate two decades of the Centre's excellence in research, thanks to the generous endowment of the Laidlaw Foundation.

Establishing the Laidlaw Centre in the early 1990s provided the Institute with a permanent research infrastructure, helping to reinforce the Institute's vision of scholarship, graduate/professional education, teacher education and the care and education of children. The Centre's mission is to ensure that studies designed from various perspectives and disciplines remain in the forefront of research aimed at children.

The Laidlaw Centre has seen exponential growth in the number of research projects undertaken and administered through the years, with more than 100 research grants funded over the past ten years. Researchers today are engaged in three main areas: Learning processes and cognition, Educational Practices, and Family and Community Systems.

The Centre also supports scholarly and public outreach with the Robbie Case Memorial Lecture and the Leighton G. McCarthy Memorial Lecture, which bring together members from education and psychology (and interested others) to discuss issues that help us better understand child development and education. As well, we have recently received the outstanding collection of papers belonging to the late Dr. J. Fraser Mustard, a privilege which deepens the Centre's connection to the newly created Institute for Human Development at the University of Toronto. The papers are available in the Laidlaw Centre's library.

Our faculty and teacher-researchers are known around the world for their exemplary contributions to research supporting children, demonstrated in the amazing track record we have maintained through the Laidlaw Centre.

As we celebrate with those closest to Nick Laidlaw—his children (Jamie, Julie and William), the Foundation's Executive Director (Nathan Gilbert) and family friends—we are honoured to share the wealth of evidence confirming that Nick's bequest has advanced the Institute as a leader that advocates for and shapes the well-being of children and families.

**Here are two upcoming Jackman ICS events you might be interested in.
Call 416-934-4526 for more information.**

Friday, September 28—Robbie Case Memorial Lecture

Speaker—Robert Pianta, Dean of the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia and leading education expert. This is a special lecture as part of the symposium to launch the new Institute for Human Development (IHD), bringing together leaders in health, education and development.

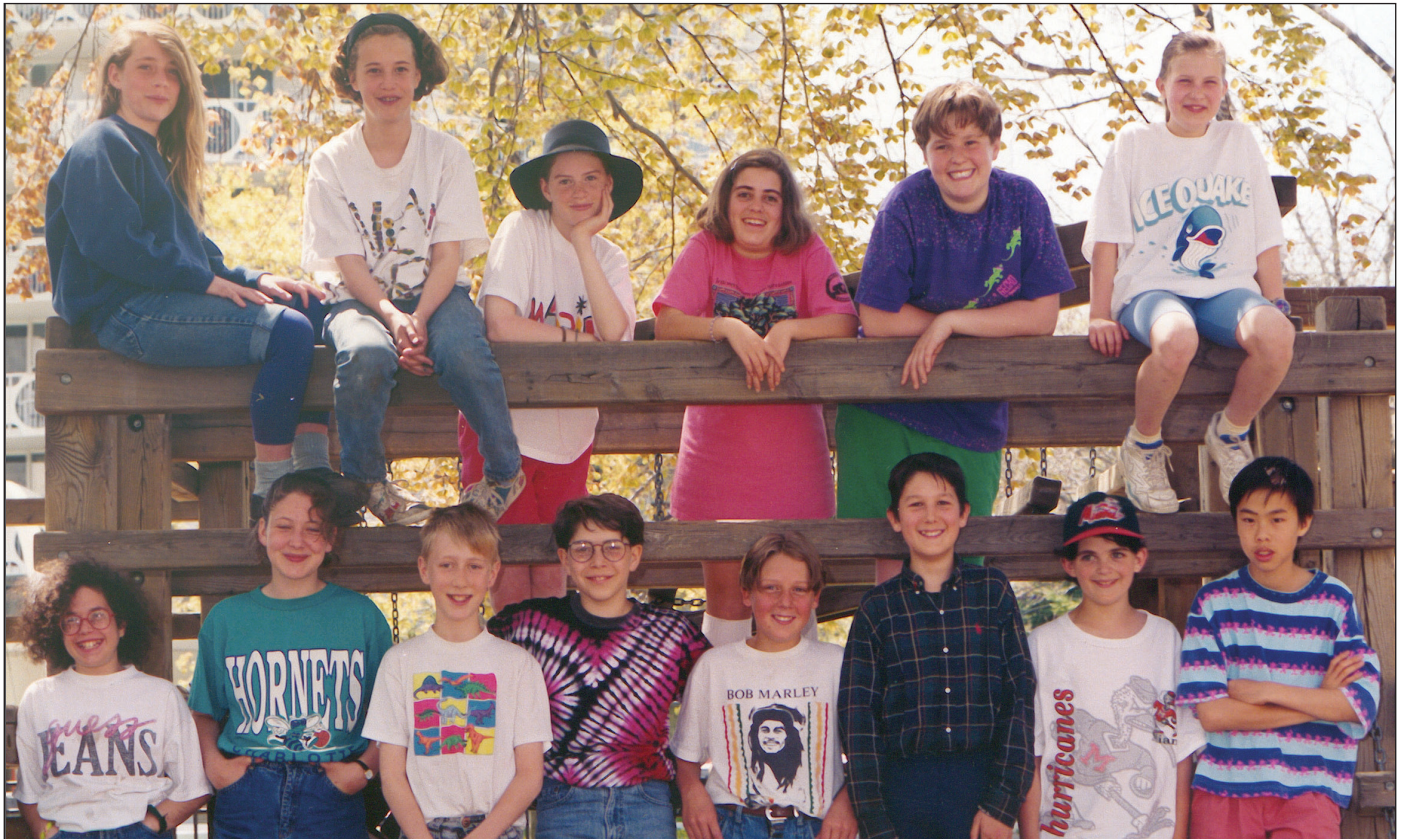
4:30 p.m. MaRS building, 101 College Street (at University)

Wednesday, November 14—Leighton G. McCarthy Memorial Lecture

Speaker—Paul Tough, author, editor, Lab School graduate and son of former Grade 1 teacher Anne Tough. His latest book on education, *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*, will be published in September 2012 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

7:00 p.m. OISE Ground Floor Library, 252 Bloor Street West

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? ICS class of 1992



From back row - left to right: Kate Strasberg, Amelia Bruce, Elizabeth Jordan, Daphne Lowinsky, Noel Semple, Zoe Mackenzie
Lower row: Brooke Hechter, Liza James, Graham Armstrong, Alex Hundert, Chasen Paul, Matthew Edmunds, Matthew Levine, Samuel Hui

Here's who we could track down:

Eli Fidler completed his BA in Engineering Science, and his MA in Computer Engineering at the University of Toronto. He currently works for Research In Motion on the Web Platform team, and is responsible for the architecture of WebKit on BlackBerry platforms.

Samantha Flatman currently resides in British Columbia, and is the founder of Sustainability Made Simple. Her company offers simple, affordable, practical solutions to help others embrace sustainability in the home and workplace.

Alex Hundert works with a community-based radical direct action group in Kitchener-Waterloo, which he helped initiate at Wilfrid Laurier University. Alex is also an indigenous solidarity activist and environmentalist, who supported the Grassy Narrows blockage and was credited with raising awareness of the issue to non-natives.

Liza James—now Liza Pachov— is still living in Toronto and has been working in staffing solutions for the past ten years, providing and managing contingent labour to the finance industry. She married the love of her life in 2004 and last November they welcomed their first child, James. Liza is currently on maternity leave and loving being a Mom!

Brooke Hecter—now Brooke Yasskin—is living in Toronto with her husband Michael and their two young children- Bridget, age 3 and new baby Asher, age 3 months.

Noel Semple lives in the west end of Toronto with his wife Angeliq Moss and his four year old daughter Madeleine. He holds a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, where he is affiliated with the Centre for the Legal Profession. Noel completed his Ph.D at Osgoode Hall Law School (York University) in 2011, after having received an LL.M degree in 2009. Noel was called to the Ontario bar in 2008 after completing articles at Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, in Toronto. In 2007, he received his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Toronto Faculty of Law.

Kate Strasbourg is currently living in the Annex with her husband and 2-year-old daughter Ella (who hopefully might eventually go to JICS). Kate is a physician doing her residency specialization in psychiatry at the University of Toronto.

Amelia Bruce finished high school, and completed her undergrad degree at the University of Toronto. For a time she worked at a law firm and then eventually as a junior policy analyst with the provincial government. She did all this while living with a kidney disorder called Henoch-Schoenlein purpura, which led her to two kidney transplants, and eventually claimed her life on April 5, 2008. Amelia is remembered by her friends and family as “one of the bravest people we had ever met. And that she was, in the words of her dad, ‘the most insanely positive person I’ll ever know.’”

My transition from Jackman ICS

By Kieran Kreidié-Akazaki (Class of 2011)



Kieran on his Grade 6 graduation day, June 16, 2011

Just one year ago, I was a JICSer for whom a whole lot was still uncertain. Sure, I knew where I would be going to school the following year: UTS.

Sure, I had been told much about what to expect at my new school. Sure, I knew a number of people who would also be going to UTS this year. But, despite all these factors, I was still unsure of how things would work out after I walked out of the gates for the last time as a JICSer.

I found the transition was not nearly as hard as people had me believe it would be. In fact, the transition from JICS to UTS was wonderfully smooth. By the end of the first week, I had completely adjusted to the new atmosphere. The workload was far from unmanageable. However, at UTS, nobody would admit it if they thought otherwise! And I continue to see some of my JICS friends regularly, even those who don't attend UTS.

Now, it would not do to conclude this article without mentioning how

much my years at JICS prepared me for the transition to a new school. This was especially the case in Grade 5/6. In those years, in particular, you are encouraged to build on your strengths and the homework and projects assigned certainly helped prepare me for what was to come when I moved to UTS. But, beyond that, JICS helped give me the courage to stand up and say, "Okay, er, this is what I think", without being worried about being wrong. It seems like a profound statement, but the most profound part is that it's true.

If any JICS Grade 6s who graduated recently are reading this and are worried about the transition to their next schools, fear not! The transition out of JICS will probably be much less difficult than you think it will be!

Congratulations to the Class of 2012!



Many thanks also to the families of the class of 2012 for their generous Leaving Gift to the Diana Rankin/Muncaster Family Fund (p. 2).

Thank you Robin!



As Advancement and Capital Campaign Director at Jackman ICS, Robin Farb established a culture of giving that had not existed inside or outside our walls before her arrival. During Robin's time at the Institute, she secured the largest private donations in Canada for child development and early education.

Her efforts have paved the way for our dreams of an expanded future facility and outreach to become a reality. Robin was also an editor of the Alumni Echo newsletter. We congratulate Robin on her outstanding accomplishments and will remember her contributions always.

The Jackman ICS Capital Campaign and renewal efforts will see the Margaret and Wallace McCain Pavilion built behind and adjoining 45 Walmer Road. The properties behind the original building have been purchased to create space and opportunity for expansion including a Theatre Arts Auditorium/Gymnasium and classrooms for the Lab School and MA program. Our beloved McCarthy House at 45 Walmer will also be renovated.

Calling Lab School grads

Are you interested in hearing more about supporting the Lab School by serving as an alumni representative on the Dean's Advisory Board? Find out more information from Elizabeth Morley (elizabeth.morley@utoronto.ca)

Letter from Elizabeth Morley

Jackman ICS Capital Campaign Success!

We have the best of news! I am delighted to let you know that the Jackman Institute of Child Study Capital Campaign is now successfully at completion. When we began nine years ago looking for our alumni, donors and generous supporters of our vision for expanded space, we knew we could depend on you to help us reach our very ambitious goal. Now, we have been able to close the campaign, with just a few gifts pending.



The Campaign helped Jackman ICS secure the largest private donations in Canada for child development and early education, including \$12 million for the Jackman ICS Building Campaign and over \$1 million for public education outreach programs led by the Institute. Robin Farb, our brilliant, gracious and enormously effective Advancement and Capital Campaign Director, established a culture of giving to Jackman ICS that had not existed inside or outside our walls before her arrival. Her efforts have paved the way for the expanded future facility and outreach.

The Campaign has given all of us a chance to tell our ICS story, bringing home a special group of people to help us – generous donors who want Jackman ICS to have a strong voice and a secure future for generations to come. We congratulate Robin on her outstanding accomplishments for the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study, and we thank every donor and friend of the campaign.

Stay tuned for more about the building phase!

Elizabeth

Visit the Jackman ICS Website regularly for upcoming events and news:
www.oise.utoronto.ca/ics