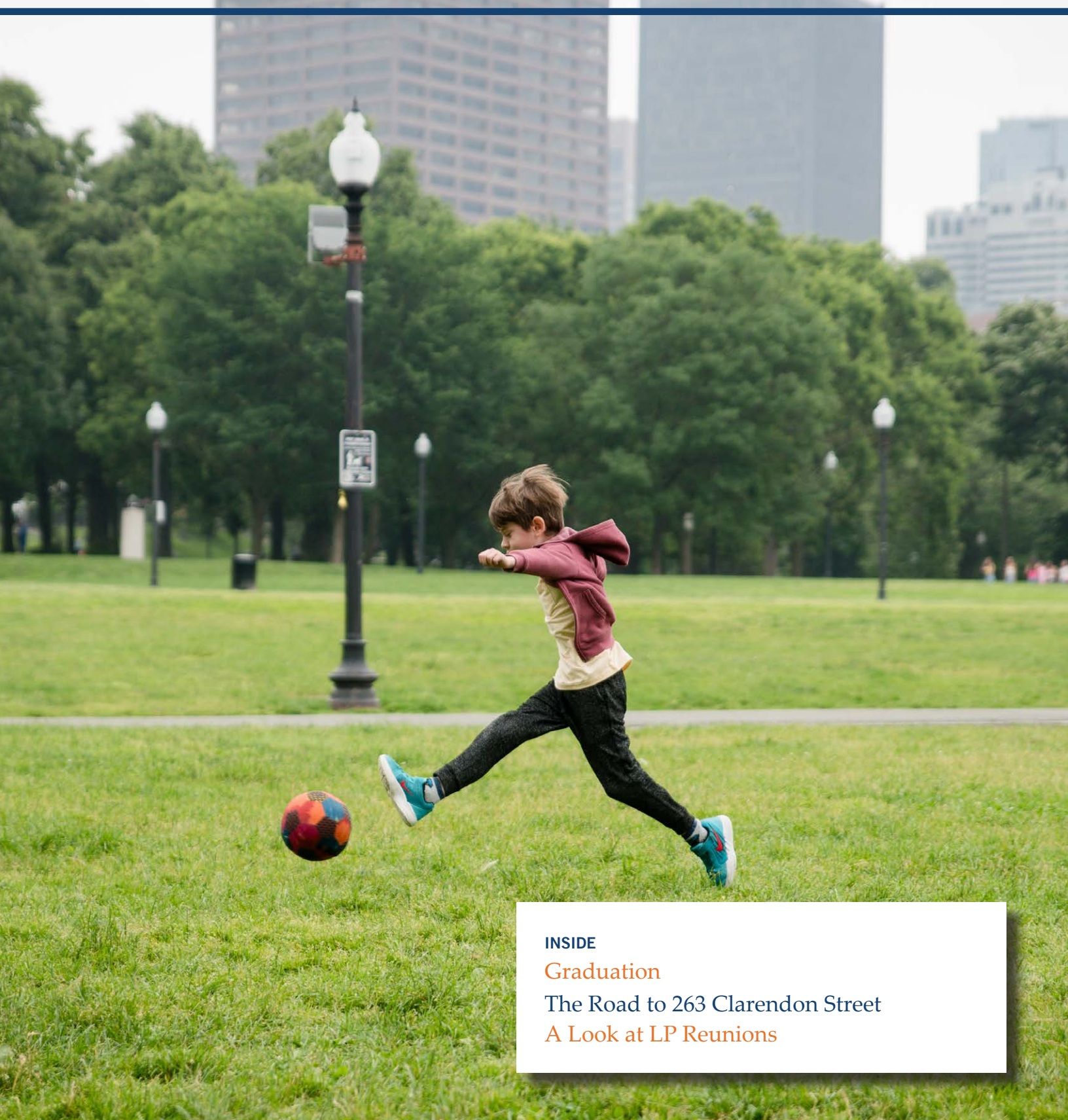


The LAMP POST

Magazine of The Learning Project Elementary School

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COVER PHOTO:
A student enjoys the Olympics on the Common this past spring.

INSIDE COVER PHOTO:
Justin Hajj greets children on their way into the McCord Building on a beautiful spring morning.

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107 Marlborough St.
Boston, MA 02116-1901

tel: 617.266.8427
email: tlp@learningproject.org

EDITORS
Justin Hajj
Jamie Hayhurst
Tara Vuono
Sasha Zuflacht

CONTRIBUTORS
Dempsey Gibbons
Justin Hajj
Jamie Hayhurst
Kristin Levitas
Louis Tompros

**PHOTOGRAPHY
CONTRIBUTORS**
J. Hayhurst Photography

DESIGN
Emily Eder,
emilyeder.com

At the Heart of Challenge

from JUSTIN HAJJ

Those who have applied to The Learning Project over the past ten years or anybody who has explored the school's website or curriculum guides have likely heard the phrase, "Just Right Levels," articulated repeatedly. But what does this really mean in the context of our Learning Project program, and why is it so core to what we do?

Several years ago, LP founder and former Head, Michael McCord, came upon a book written by David Streight, psychologist and longtime Executive Director of the Center for Spiritual and Ethical Education, entitled, "Breaking Into the Heart of Character: Self-Determined Moral Action and Academic Motivation." A powerful and pithy book about the research and importance of developing intrinsic motivation in children, Streight's work would become foundational to our academic model that focuses on building students' autonomy, relatedness (or sense of belonging), and competence.

It is this third leg of the stool, competence, that relates directly to what we call teaching at each child's Just Right Level. In his book, Streight describes competence as "an individual's sense of being able to meet the challenges of life successfully." He goes on to say, "Like relatedness and autonomy, competence is more than just a good idea; it is a basic human need. People who do not perceive themselves as competent are frequently reluctant – often resistant – to try new things or to put themselves in situations where others might notice their inadequacies. When the competence need is not filled, the psychological, social, and academic consequences range from unfortunate to disastrous." Is there anything more worthy of an elementary school's attention than this, as we prepare students for the future?

Feeling competent means truly believing in ourselves, and knowing that we have the knowledge and skills to make sense of novel situations and handle challenges effectively. Over the course of our lives, we build this sense of competence by taking on difficult tasks, trying new things, learning from them, and succeeding.

This concept has immense implications when it comes to educating young children. Surely, at some point in your lifetime, you have had the experience of sitting in a classroom and either already knowing the material and being exceedingly bored in the moment or, conversely, feeling as though what was being presented to you was far over your head and trying to tackle the upcoming task would feel, or actually be, impossible. These are the scenarios that we strive to avoid at The Learning Project by implementing Just Right Levels – finding each child's cutting edge of challenge to ensure that what students are learning and doing is not so easy that they are bored, or so difficult that they are overwhelmed with stress and frustration. It is a fine line to walk, and LP teachers do it quite well.

To do so, it requires both preassessments and regular formative assessments of student learning; flexibility in instruction to tailor curriculum to each child's current levels of understanding; knowing deeply each child's strengths and areas for growth, as well as their emotional and cognitive skillsets; and explicitly teaching children that struggle and challenge are not to be avoided...they are actually required for brain development!



JUSTIN HAJJ

Michael W. McCord Head of School

Back in 2023, I published a blog post entitled, 'Climbing Toward Resilience.' This article can still be found on the school's website for those who are curious, but the following is an excerpt:

...Taking on novel challenges and making mistakes causes the synapses in our brains to fire, charting new connections, and when we learn from mistakes, we're creating new, durable learnings that restructure the brain and better prepare us for the next challenge ahead. That is, through experience – what we do and what we do not do – we rewire our brains, and through time and practice, those new wirings settle into enduring memory. In this way, when we learn through struggle, we are physically, mentally and emotionally growing.

As famed mathematician, author and Stanford Professor, Jo Boaler, writes, "Neuroscientists have found that mistakes are helpful for brain growth and connectivity, and if we are not struggling, we are not learning. Not only is struggle good for our brains, but people who know about the value of struggle improve their learning potential." She continues to say of adults, "We are culturally trained to feel bad, and to rush in and help, when this is probably the last thing we should do." Instead, Boaler advocates that adults foster a growth mindset in children that focuses on effort, the benefits of practice, and the knowledge that we can grow in anything that we dedicate ourselves to. At The LP, we strive to find each students' "Just Right Level," taking Boaler's advice to heart as we develop, nurture and appropriately challenge each learner.

In this way, challenge and struggle are directly connected to our practice of teaching students at their Just Right Levels. At The Learning Project, those visiting during a math lesson would see not just one lesson being taught to the entire class, but multiple lessons in any given academic period. Teachers work with students in small groups of similar levels, providing extra difficulty to those students ready for it, along with scaffolds and supports for those students who require that to be successful. Always at The LP, students are assessed to find their proximal levels of understanding, and then are progressing through the curriculum at their own pace.

In reading, those observing a lesson would see each child diving into a book that is tailored just for them. Students develop reading skills at varied rates so, rather than reading one story or novel classwide, each child selects a book that fits with their assessed level of development – what we call their independent reading level. When direct instruction is required for students needing similar skills or lessons, teachers pull small groups to work with or implement Book Clubs or Literature Circles, ensuring that shared experiences also incorporate those Just Right Levels. As such, competence grows, along with, more often than not, a love of reading. As such, The LP connects academic development, student engagement and joy at a foundational level.

At The LP, we strive to find each students' "Just Right Level," taking Boaler's advice to heart as we develop, nurture and appropriately challenge each learner.

Finding and teaching to each child's Just Right Level also has innumerable ancillary benefits, including the development of critical thinking habits, of self-advocacy skills, of emotional regulation and of embracing a growth and learning mindset. Just as important is that, throughout the course of an LP education, students develop and understand who they are as learners, preparing them to tackle and adapt to future challenges. As Glenn Whitman and Ian Kelleher, authors of acclaimed book, *Neuroteach: Brain Science and the Future of Education*, state, "It has been suggested that today's students will have up to seven different career changes in their lifetimes. Whether or not this number is accurate, it is certain that many of the careers today's precollegiate students will occupy have not been invented yet. For each of these jobs, they will need to learn new skills that they do not yet know. If students understand themselves as learners as well as their current yet evolving strengths and weaknesses, and have a growth mindset, they will be able to learn what is new to them as well as apply what is old to new situations."

In other words, by ensuring an elementary school program focused on developing each child's competence through appropriate challenge, and explicitly teaching the skills necessary to navigate struggle, we are building students' tool kits for future success. We are also ensuring that a basic human need is being fulfilled, and that a core component to the development of intrinsic motivation is fostered. All of this is directly connected to The Learning Project Mission Statement, which says:

The acquisition of academic skills is critical; so, too, is the development in children of a sense of purpose and of motivation. We strive to enable children to become increasingly self-directed, engaged, and independent learners and to develop the skills and the confidence they need to pursue their own intellectual interests. The child who knows how to learn and who loves to learn is well prepared for the future.

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GRADUATION



compiled by JAMIE HAYHURST

The Learning Project is an institution rich in tradition, with Graduation standing out as one of the most rewarding and beloved events. For many, this event represents the culmination of years of dedication and effort. It is a moment when hard work and commitment are recognized, and a time when cherished memories and experiences coalesce, marking the conclusion of the elementary school journey and the start of new adventures. Below are remarks given by LP staff and Board members, past and present, as they bid farewell to the Class of 2025.

An abbreviated version of Justin Hajj's remarks:

To our Class of 2025, welcome to the final steps in your elementary school journey. In a short while, your name will be called, you'll walk across this stage, receive your diplomas and, at that moment, you'll officially become 7th graders. But before that moment, we take time to celebrate you – all that you've accomplished, the friendships you've made, and the legacy that you leave behind.

Today, I'm going to do two things: I'm going to, first, make sure we celebrate the individuality of each of you, while also, secondly, taking note of and celebrating your class as a collective unit. For, when you came to us, you were each your own, and now as you depart, you are intricately connected – to us, to your neighborhood and to our city, and, most importantly, to each other. And to start, we're going to talk about beliefs.

For those of you who don't know, it is an LP tradition that sixth graders each write what's called a "This I Believe" essay and share it with our community through a live, online radio broadcast. Originating in the 1950's as part of a National Public Radio series, "This I Believe" engages people from all walks of life in writing, sharing, and discussing core values that guide their daily lives. As original host, Edward Murrow once said, the goal of the program is to, "Point to the common meeting grounds of beliefs, which is the essence of brotherhood and the floor of our civilization."

In the same vein, 6th graders each write an essay in which they use a personal story, or stories, to explore one of their own core values. And, 6th graders, while we can see your delightful differences in any number of instances, today I have chosen to highlight the topics of your "This I Believe" essays because I feel that they not only articulate your individuality quite well, but also, when taken together, reflect the collective spirit of your class and, as Murrow describes, of your shared 'meeting ground' of values. Here are the essay topics for the Class of 2025, as written by its members:

- *I Believe That We Should Give Others the Benefit of the Doubt*
- *I Believe That We Should Celebrate and Appreciate Differences*
- *I Believe That We Should Follow Our Dreams and Never Listen to Our Doubters*
- *I Believe That We Need to Develop and Encourage Young Athletes*
- *I Believe In the Power of Human Connection, of Unplugging From Screens and Devices, and The Importance of Nature, Play, and Friendship*
- *I Believe That We Need to Care for Our Environment*
- *I Believe That There Is Joy and Value in Going Away to Summer Camp*
- *I Believe That We Can't Let Our Disappointments Win*
- *I Believe That There Are Many Benefits to the Learning and Playing of Chess*
- *I Believe That We Need to Speak Our Minds*
- *I Believe That Musicians Should Be Paid Fairly and Equitably for Their Artistry and Work*
- *I Believe That Hard Work Pays Off*



What a perfect array of topics that sum up your graduating class – everything from hard work and kindness to athletics and chess. And while your individuality shines through in the unique topics selected, we can also see a collective commitment to LP values that are so important to you as a group: empathy, grit, responsibility, courage, and kindness. That is, you have a bedrock of values that you share, and that foundation forms with time, with relationship building and shared experiences. While most of you came to us as reticent strangers at the mere age of 5 or 6, during your LP journey together, you have coalesced quite nicely, and enthusiastically, through humor, through birthday parties and playdates, through milestones and school traditions.

Those who have spent any amount of time with your class this year knows just how close you have become. You know each other's strengths, and each other's vulnerabilities. You know what makes each of you laugh, and what doesn't. You know which of you snores at night and which of you don't. You know each others' favorite teams and hobbies, and activities outside of school. In short, you have truly grown together as one.

As I watched the group of you on stage last week performing Shakespeare, as I watched you gather and wander as a pack at the school picnic, or the frequency this year with which a quiet classroom activity can erode quite quickly, beginning with a note of infectious laughter from just one of you that quickly spreads to the rest in seemingly the blink of an eye, it warms my heart to see how you all have united at the end of your Learning Project journey.

When I began writing this speech, I wondered where to begin. My mind wandered, as did my eyes, and in the corner of my room, I spotted an indoor plant – the very one that I placed here today for you to see. The scientific name for this plant is the 'pachira aquatica,' but the common name is a 'money tree,' as it is often seen as a symbol of wealth and good fortune. However, it's not the name that caught my attention – it was the braided trunk.

See, a tree like this one actually starts as multiple seeds, each sprouting its own, separate stem. And then, if those seeds happen to be close enough, and those early stems get a little help by gently crossing those separate stalks together and securing them in that way, in time the stems will begin to grow together as one, connected trunk.

And as I sat staring at this tree, it felt more and more that, while a historic and cultural symbol of wealth and good fortune, it is also quite a fitting image for *you* – Class of 2025. Starting out separately, and then, over time, coming together tightly as one.

And what I love most about this symbol is that those young seedlings don't merge naturally. It's not by some force of magic or act of nature that they begin to twist together and grow in an interconnected way. It takes work. It takes support and it takes care and guidance from the outside, which is exactly how we think about community here at The Learning Project.

The very last line of our parent handbook says the following:





This sense of community which we all so highly value is not created magically by some external force, it is formed and nurtured by each of us. And we are fortunate to be part of a school family that invites us to participate in the critical task of community building. No edifice is more worthy of our time and effort.

So, community takes effort. In many ways, it's easier to simply carry on in our own way, without doing what it takes to forge, nourish, and build relationships. It's not easy. But our Class of 2025 has done that work, and we have had a front row seat to seeing that work in action, and the rewards that each of you has reaped from that important work. And we, in turn, have been rewarded by witnessing and being part of your journey.

This is your legacy that you leave behind, 6th grade, and while your class' connection will serve as a model for others at the school for many years to come, we at The LP also wanted to gift each of *you* with a reminder of your time here at the school, and of one another.

And while it would be nice if it brought you wealth and good fortune in the future, my true hope is that it will be a reminder to you to always plant your seeds close to others, to reach out to those around you, to be open to support and a guiding hand, to put in the effort and care needed to build and strengthen your relationships, and to make your next community a better place, just as you have done here with us.

Congratulations, Class of 2025. May you continue to share your beliefs with others, and continue to grow, and to thrive.

I end today with the same words that have been recited at the conclusion of each Learning Project Head's Address – words that remind us of the bittersweet nature of this moment:

Ending we begin. Every break hurts. But that which holds and keeps us together goes on.

As is tradition at The LP, the Class of 2025 met with Board Chair, Louis Tompros, over pizza the week prior to Graduation. The following is part of his reflection on that afternoon spent together:

The Class of 2025 was kind enough to share some of their thoughts about their time at The LP with me. Here is some of what they had to say:

What is your very first memory of the LP? "When Ms. Faubert was reading a story and I was crying because I missed my parents," and, "One of my first memories at the LP was when we were about to leave the classroom to go to our first Performance Fest and one of my classmates was nervous. At Performance Fest he was going to hold a stuffed animal and say its name. I went up to him and comforted him and I also told him I had the same stuffed animal."

I then asked what their favorite choice time activity was in Kindergarten, the 6th graders answered with many enthusiastic comments for dress up and Legos (one response with even nine exclamation points for dress up!).

When asked what art project are you most proud of, there was a range of answers - from their 5th grade abstract art project, to the Zentanlge made in second grade, to LeBron art, their 6th grade stop motion, clay Football, color wheel Mona Lisa and more. And as for their favorite Lunch Week food? There was some





dispute between English muffin pizza and tacos. There was one response from a sixth grader who I'm not sure read the question quite right: This year was the best lunch week because we hosted it.

Finally, what piece of advice would you give to the kindergarteners about how to have the best experience at The LP? Their answers feel worth highlighting in their own words:

- Make good friends with a lot of people.
- Don't take the little moments for granted.
- Stay positive.
- Think for yourself.
- Keep your eyes on graduation.
- Listen to your teachers and have fun.
- Embrace these moments, and friends, because you will be with them for the next seven years of your life.
- Have patience with your classmates and teachers.
- Always try your hardest and never let anyone tell you what to do.
- Try and make so many memories because your time here goes by really fast.

During the ceremony, The LP presented its annual Honorary Diploma to Joanne Chang, Chef and Restaurateur. Alicia Towns Franken, P '14, '17, and former member of the Board of Trustees, introduced our Honorary Diploma recipient and shared the following remarks:

I'm the proud parent of two Learning Project alums, Lukas, Class of 2014, and Pia, Class of 2017. This school has played a profound role in shaping my family, and it's a joy to be back in this community that holds so much heart and purpose.

Since 2001, The Learning Project has taken a moment at each graduation to recognize someone who has led a life of meaningful service to others, and someone whose work reflects the values we hold dear: curiosity, kindness, perseverance, and equity. It is my absolute honor to introduce this year's Honorary Degree recipient — an extraordinary talent, a devoted mentor, a quiet trailblazer, and a dear friend of my family: Joanne Chang.

Many of you know Joanne as the visionary behind Flour Bakery + Café and Myers + Chang, a James Beard Award-winning force whose pastries, dumplings, and devotion to excellence have left an indelible mark on Boston's culinary scene. But for my family, and for so many families here, Joanne represents something even more powerful: generosity, humility, and a commitment to doing things with heart. She has quietly and consistently shown up for this city, using her platforms not only to feed us but to lift up others — through mentorship, job creation, and unwavering support for equity and education. Her work reminds us that excellence and kindness are not mutually exclusive; that you can lead with integrity and still make room for joy, curiosity, and care. Joanne shows us what it means to build something lasting and good. She reminds us that leadership is not about being the loudest voice in the room — it's about lifting others up as you rise.

And so, at a school that nurtures children to be not only smart but kind, not only driven but grounded, I can think of no one more deserving of this recognition. I have witnessed firsthand the way Joanne carries herself: with grace, with purpose, and with the kind of authenticity that makes everyone around her feel seen. It is only fitting that today, at a school rooted in character and community, we honor someone who embodies both.



TRIBUTE TO RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS

by LOUIS TOMPROS

At the final Board meeting of the 2024-2025 school year, Louis Tompros, Board Chair, paid tribute to departing members of the Board. Please note this tribute was written in May of 2025 and some information may be outdated. Below is an excerpt from Louis's tribute:



PAUL GAMBLE, P '17, '18,

the parent of Bryan and Paige, has served as a Trustee since 2021. His work in support of the school, however, long predates his service on the Board. Among many, many other contributions, Paul co-chaired the Annual Fund in the 2016-2017 school year. And in his time on the Board, he has served in a variety of key roles, including as a member of the Finance, Strategic Planning, Long Term Planning, and Head's Review Committees, and as Chair of the Personnel Committee. Paul brought to all of these roles a deep dedication to the values of The LP, along with unmatched care, empathy, and kindness. Thank you, Paul, for your many years of service to The LP.



KATE GULLIVER, P'27,

joined the Board in 2023. She has contributed her considerable management and financial expertise to the Board in numerous ways, including service on the Strategic, Long Term Planning, and Finance Committees. Kate's thoughtful questions have helped the Board to think deeply about strategic and financial decisions, and her perspectives have inspired us to think deeply about all constituents impacted by key decisions. Thank you, Kate, for your dedication in service of The LP.



SCOTT SAVITZ, P '14, '16,

joined the Board in 2022. Scott is the parent of LP alums Sam, '14, and Maddy, '16. In his three years on the Board, Scott has served on the Real Estate and Facilities and Finance Committees, and we are all very grateful in particular for his financial and strategic insights. Thank you, Scott, for always sharing your enthusiasm for The LP and your perspectives with us. Your presence will be missed.



EMMA TURNER, '07,

returned to 107 Marlborough Street to join The Learning Project Board in 2022, fifteen years after she walked out of the doors of 107 Marlborough Street as a graduating member of The LP Class of 2007. Emma's service on The LP Board was a testament to why it is we have alumni seats: she brought a perspective as a non-parent who nonetheless is deeply tied to the school, coupled with exceptional dedication and energy for the work of the Board. Over the last three years, she served as a member of the Outreach and Advancement and Finance Committees, and this past year she brought her real estate finance knowledge to bear as a critical member of the Real Estate and Facilities Committee, as well as the Expansion Task Force overseeing plans for 263 Clarendon Street. Emma, we thank you for your service, and wish you well on this, your second LP "graduation."

WELCOME TO THE NEW TRUSTEES

by JAMIE HAYHURST



LUKE BOELITZ, '02, is excited to join the Board and continue his family's long involvement with The LP. His sister Jessica Robinson, '79, was among the first students at the school, and both he and his sister Kris, '06, attended. His mother Nancy

O'Malley, P '02, '06, served on the Board in the 2000's. The Learning Project's emphasis on shared values, small class sizes and challenging academics were formative for Luke as a student and he hopes to do his part in creating this same experience for generations of LP students to come.

Luke and his wife, Maxine, recently moved to Dorchester, where he grew up, after over a decade in New York City. He is the owner of Outboard Films, a production company that helps mission-driven organizations share their stories through the voices of employees, students, alumni, and supporters. Past clients include the Courageous Sailing Center and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, as well as Patagonia, REI, Meta, and Google. Previously, he was a staff producer at Reel Peak Films, where he served as Associate Producer on the company's feature documentary, *Trophy* (2017), and worked with TIME Magazine on the Webby and Emmy award-winning documentary series, *A Year In Space*.



KRISTIN BRIEF, P '24, '26, is thrilled to be joining The LP Board this year. Kristin and her husband, Todd Herrington, are longtime Boston residents of over 20 years, and they are so grateful to be part of The LP community. In particular,

they appreciate every day the positive impact it has had on their family and the strong education it provides during such formative years.

Kristin is currently the CEO and Director of Terragia, a venture capital-backed startup commercializing biotechnology to make low-carbon intensity fuels from plants humans don't eat. Kristin has a degree in economics from Dartmouth College and has served in executive roles at energy and technology companies throughout her career. She was a Trustee and Treasurer of Beacon Hill Nursery School, where her kids attended prior to The LP.

In her free time, Kristin enjoys skiing, urban hikes, New York Times games, and spending time with friends and family.



JOHN CONFORTI, P '10, '13, '16, and his wife, Alexandra Cook, are parents of LP alums David, '10, Christina, '13, and Dylan, '16. Before retiring, John worked in real estate as a broker, a regional manager and a developer. Most recently, he worked renovating and managing property in the

Boston area. In addition to real estate, John was part owner of a successful restaurant in Davis Square in Somerville for 18 years.

John was also involved with the Chappaquiddick Beach Club as a Board member for 6 years, Head of Facilities for 3 years, and on the Membership Committee for 10 years. He was also a part of the Edgartown Yacht Club House committee and a member of the BAA and a competitive marathon runner for over 20 years with a PR of 2:21.

Currently retired and splitting time between Boston, Chappaquiddick, and Delray Beach, FL, John is excited to join the Board and connect with the current LP community.



KRISTIN LEVITAS, '94, is an alumna of The Learning Project Class of 1994 and proud to start her tenure on the Board given her long-standing connection to the school. For close to 40 years, she has maintained a strong bond with former LP classmates, and is grateful for

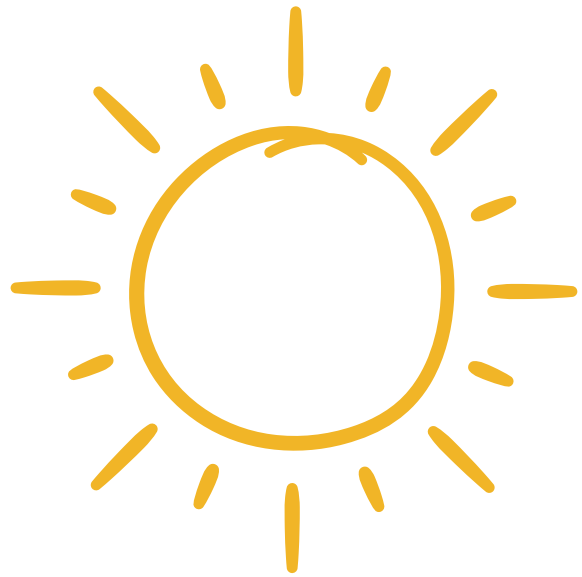
the close-knit community that the McCords have nurtured and sustained over decades of dedication to the school and all its members. She looks forward to continuing to cultivate a similar sense of belonging and connection for new families and alumni alike that has been so fundamental to her upbringing and life.

Kristin began her career in advertising before pivoting into management consulting. She currently leads the Strategic Consulting Practice at Enterprise Knowledge. At Enterprise Knowledge she works with companies to identify solutions for managing business and operational information. This work includes helping organizations to harness knowledge, information, and data management practices to leverage AI for enhanced decision-making, efficiency, and scalability; capturing and preserving institutional knowledge during staff and leadership transitions to maintain operational continuity; and helping to instill a culture of knowledge sharing in organizations while setting up the processes and technologies to leverage it to enable innovation.

She lives in Jamaica Plain with her husband, Si, their young daughter, and Australian Shepherd. In her free time, she also serves on the board of her daughter's daycare and enjoys family time with her parents, who are also lifelong supporters of The LP.

Wellness and Wellbeing at The LP

by DEMPSEY GIBBONS



Since The Learning Project was founded in 1973, character education has been a pillar of what we do. A commitment to the development of the whole child is core to our ability to produce graduates who are prepared for an ever-changing world. Supporting students' social and emotional health goes well beyond the walls of the School Counselor's office. Wellness and wellbeing at The LP is more than just programming - it is infused into everything we do, every single day. The school's original "Habits of the Head, Heart, and Hand" (now called "Powers") provided a jumping off point to develop even more explicit character education - which today is seen in our programming: Community Wellbeing, Physical Education, Little All School Meeting, and Social-Emotional Learning classes. The result is a vibrant, compassionate learning environment in which every student is encouraged to grow not only as a learner but as a kind, self-aware, and engaged community member.

Community Wellbeing is a weekly, school-wide effort that invites teachers and students to engage in thoughtful conversations and hands-on activities centered around wellness, equity, and both justice and injustice. These aren't just isolated lessons, but rather proactive and continuous dialogues that help students understand themselves, appreciate diverse perspectives, and identify injustice in the world around them. The strength of Community Wellbeing lies in its intentionality: by carving out regular time for these conversations, we normalize emotional expression, critical thinking, and empathy in the classroom. It empowers students to take care of their own mental and emotional health, while also recognizing the importance of being allies and advocates for others — in our school community, Boston community, and beyond.

Physical Education (PE) class occurs three times a week for the majority of our students, with one small group and two large group classes. As our PE teacher Treyvon Clegg, (affectionately referred to as Coach Trey) explains: "Every

PE class is a chance for students to move, collaborate, and grow—physically, socially, and emotionally. We design our program to support the whole child through engaging, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate experiences." While physical movement is healthy for students' bodies and brains, it is also a crucial setting for the development and growth of their interpersonal skills. He continues—"PE is about more than just physical skills—it's where students learn to be teammates, communicate, lead, and celebrate each other's successes. These social-emotional skills are just as important as the games we play."



Since The Learning Project was founded in 1973, character education has been a pillar of what we do. A commitment to the development of the whole child is core to our ability to produce graduates who are prepared for an ever-changing world.

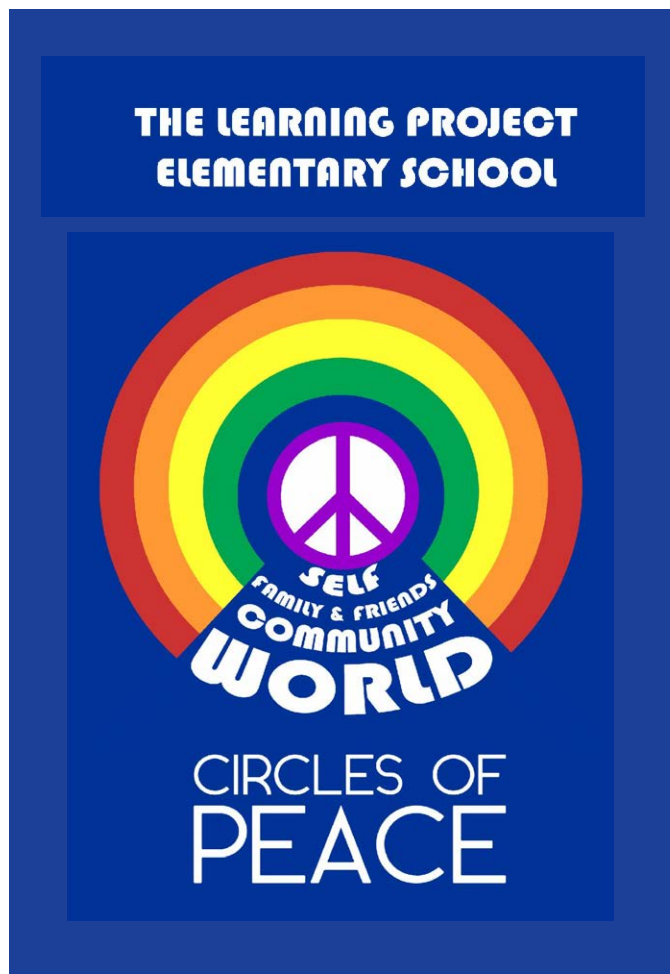


Another cornerstone of our wellbeing programming is our **Peace and Non-Violence Curriculum**, which is integrated into our **Little All School Meetings**. These meetings provide an opportunity for cross-grade learning and mentorship, as older and younger students come together in small groups to explore the idea of peace. Our four yearly meetings focus on peace within ourselves, peace within our family and friends, peace within community, and peace within the world. Through storytelling, reflection, and creative activities, our students continually develop their understanding of peace, both as a global concept but also as something deeply personal. Our goal is to help students internalize the values of empathy and nonviolence in developmentally appropriate ways.

Lastly, in each grade, once per week, I have the immense privilege of teaching each of our students. The **Social-Emotional Learning** (SEL) curriculum has been thoughtfully designed to complement not only the other wellbeing work that we do, but to be developmentally appropriate for each grade. Where Kindergartners focus on emotion identification and skills like sharing, second graders spend more time doing identity work and finding confidence in who they are. In fourth grade, students dive into lessons that support their growing independence, with a special emphasis on building executive functioning skills. By sixth grade, they begin to look ahead with excitement as they reflect on how far they've come, strengthen their leadership, and step into the future with tenacity, knowing that their time at The LP has prepared them to thrive wherever they go next. All SEL classes also offer essential tools for conflict resolution and collaboration, helping students to navigate the social complexities of each community to which they belong.

What makes these wellness efforts so impactful at The Learning Project is how deeply interconnected they are. Rather than existing in silos, Community Wellbeing, the Peace and Non-Violence curriculum, and SEL classes reinforce and build upon one another. Together, they create a rich, supportive network that promotes student agency, self-reflection, and social responsibility. Students learn that caring for their mental and emotional health is not just a personal act—it's a communal one. In the

social work field, we not only think about the individual, but about the individual in their environment. For me, the commitment to the whole child, as well as the commitment to our community, was evident as soon as I stepped into the McCord Building. At The Learning Project, I feel deeply fortunate to be part of a school culture that believes prevention and proactive care are just as vital as intervention. By centering wellness and wellbeing in our school practices, we create an environment where students feel seen, heard, and supported from the inside out.



New Faces

by JAMIE HAYHURST



JANIE WYCKOFF, KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATE TEACHER:

Janie is thrilled to be joining The LP community as the Kindergarten Associate Teacher. She brings extensive experience working with children as a nanny, camp counselor, and most

recently as an Associate Teacher at the Croft School. Janie received her bachelor's degree in Childhood Education and Psychology from St. John Fisher University in New York. She can't wait to get to know her students and be part of their learning journey this year.



LAUREN MCFARLAND, FIRST GRADE ASSOCIATE TEACHER:

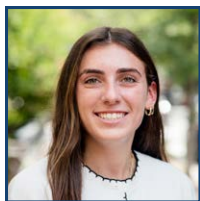
Hailing from the state of Michigan, Lauren grew up near the shores of the Great Lakes. She attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and graduated in 2024 with her Bachelor's in Elementary Education. She is currently pursuing

her M.A. in Elementary Math and Science Education through Michigan State University. Prior to moving to Boston, she worked at a variety of schools, where she spent most of her time in first, second, and fourth grade classrooms. She is ecstatic to have found her place on the east coast at The Learning Project!

Fellows



NORAH BRADY, '14, graduated from Bryn Mawr College with a bachelor's degree in Anthropology and minors in German and Creative Writing. She recently returned from completing a Fulbright grant in Germany, where she served as an English Teaching Assistant to students in grades 5-12. She's excited to return to The LP, where she was a student in the Class of 2014.



LAUREN FABERMAN brings a wealth of experience working with young children in a variety of educational settings. She began as a children's dance instructor and has since worked as a tutor, paraprofessional, and most recently, as a substitute teacher in elementary school classrooms. Lauren earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from George Washington University where

she also had the opportunity to teach middle school math in a D.C. school. She is now pursuing her Master's in Education and licensure in Elementary Education at Merrimack College. She is thrilled to be a part of The Learning Project community.



WEIJIA LIANG comes to The Learning Project with a background in psychology, education, and the arts. She recently completed her Master's in Human Development and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she focused on integrating mindfulness, aesthetics, and holistic growth into learning environments. Prior to graduate school, she

spent a year teaching in a preschool and several years working in practice-based research settings with children, with a particular focus on social-emotional learning and contemplative science. Weijia is excited to join The LP and bring her warmth and deep appreciation for each child's unique journey.



LEILAH SOARES has been working with children for ten years. Throughout high school she worked as a camp counselor and began volunteering in elementary schools. Prior

to joining The Learning Project, Leilah worked in fifth and sixth grade classrooms in Brookline and Newton public schools. Leilah received her bachelor's degree in Education and Public Health from Brown University in Providence, RI. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in Elementary Education and Special Education, Moderate Support Needs from Boston College.



HALEY SORKIN has held numerous positions in educational settings, including as a tutor, elementary classroom aide and preschool assistant teacher. She is

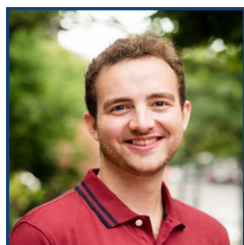
looking forward to returning to Boston after working last summer as a Teaching Assistant at Camp Baker, a summer treatment program for children facing attentional and behavioral challenges. Haley recently graduated from Kenyon College where she holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Spanish.

New Roles



ZOE CONTRUBIS, SECOND GRADE HEAD TEACHER:

Zoe recently completed The Learning Project's Teaching Fellowship and is excited to start in her new role as the Second Grade Head Teacher. She is thoroughly versed in The LP Way and is thrilled to build her own classroom community. Zoe holds a Bachelor's Degree in Education and Child Studies from Smith College. Outside of teaching, Zoe has enjoyed working with children in after-school and athletic settings.



RYAN DIMAIO, FELLOW:

Ryan spent the past year at The LP as our Building Substitute Teacher, and is excited to return this fall as the Sixth Grade Teaching Fellow. During his time in classrooms across all grade levels, he gained valuable experience supporting different teaching styles and classroom communities. He's passionate about creating an engaging and supportive classroom environment and is grateful for the opportunity to continue developing his career in education at The Learning Project.



JACOB IARUSSI, BUILDING SUBSTITUTE TEACHER:

After completing the two year Teaching Fellowship, Jacob Iarussi has assumed the role of Building Substitute. Jacob has worked with children in a variety of capacities for several years, initially as a summer camp counselor in college, and later as a rock climbing coach, an Associate Teacher at Brooklyn Charter School in Brooklyn, NY, and most recently as the Sixth Grade Teaching Fellow at The LP. He is very excited to step into his new role as the Building Substitute, as it will give him ample time to spend with all LP students.



HALEY SMITH, KINDERGARTEN HEAD TEACHER:

This fall, Haley will begin her eleventh year at The Learning Project. After serving as the Kindergarten Associate Teacher for ten years, she is excited to step into the role of Head Kindergarten Teacher. Haley looks forward to bringing her deep knowledge of the Kindergarten program, and the strong relationships she's built with students and families, into this next chapter. She earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Worcester State University and went on to complete a year long internship in first and second grade classrooms while pursuing her master's degree in Elementary Education from Lesley University. She is excited to bring everything she's learned over the past ten years into building a classroom that sparks joy, encourages curiosity, and supports her students' social, emotional, and academic growth.

The Road to 263 Clarendon Street

by JUSTIN HAJJ



The Learning Project's small size is foundational to our identity and mission. In many ways, it drives our strength as a school and as a community. At the same time, the school's physical space has, over the years, been a limiting factor in what we can offer to our students, staff and parents.

For this reason, back in 2015, when The Learning Project Board of Trustees began drafting the school's first long range strategic plan, a key component to that plan was the acquisition of real estate for the school's physical expansion. Given that Kindergarten is currently hosted in rented space — and having the school's main entry point subject to a lease is a significant vulnerability, the Board articulated the need for a permanent Kindergarten classroom owned by the school. The plan also called for much-needed office and meeting space, a way to relieve the school of the pressure put on the Ballroom, since music, PE, class plays, events and assemblies were competing for its use, and to provide additional after school space, among other needs. This would later form the foundation for a key component of the school's *Preserve the Vision ~ Build the Future* campaign. Incredibly, this campaign raised \$6 million to be dedicated to a new building when the right property came along.

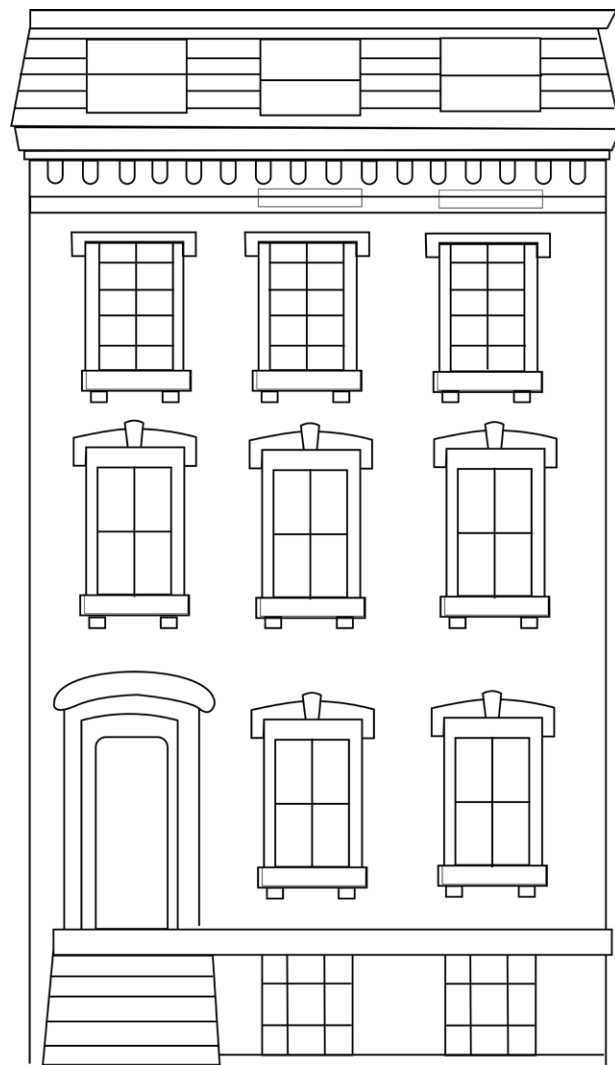
Much work has been done on this search by many dedicated people over the past 10 years. Staff and Board members toured countless properties, including commercial, institutional and residential buildings, but nothing quite worked perfectly, either because of the size, or the distance from our main building, or more often than not, due to the high price point. At long last, however, we came upon 263 Clarendon, and for the first time felt like we found what we had been waiting for — a building appropriately sized for our use, within our price range, and with such rare proximity to our home at 107 Marlborough Street and the Clarendon Street Playground that it was absolutely ideal. Not only would it help us to solve our current needs, but it would provide us with flexibility into the future.

The Board mobilized, securing the property for \$5.5 million in January 2023. Since then, The LP has continued to operate the building as apartment units, collecting rent as a quasi-endowment, as we planned for optimal use of the space and the zoning variance process required to transition the building from residential to school use.

This rezoning process, along with architectural changes in order to ensure compliance with code as a school, has been a journey unto itself. Over the past two years, we have worked closely with our architectural firm, completed a number of building studies and communicated and partnered with neighborhood groups, residents, and city officials in order to address any concerns or questions they may have related to our proposed project. Each step of the way, we received encouraging feedback from local officials and neighborhood groups as we worked proactively to ensure that The Learning Project's expansion would benefit the neighborhood and city as a whole while also addressing the school's operational needs. After securing support from the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay earlier this year, we overcame our final hurdle in the rezoning process, which was unanimous approval from Boston's Zoning Board of Appeal this past summer, paving the way for the school to formally move the project forward and begin the designing process of what will become our second official school building.

This is an incredibly exciting time for The Learning Project community. 263 Clarendon is a five floor building that totals approximately 6,000 square feet of usable space, which offers immense potential for our permanent Kindergarten classroom, office and meeting space, and additional classroom space for programming and school use. The 2025-2026 school year will surely be a marker in the history of the school as we plan for renovations, share details regarding how the space will ultimately be used, and engage the community in a new fundraising venture to help reimagine 263 Clarendon into a school building that both honors the history and culture of The LP while offering new and exciting opportunities for our families.

We hope you will join us for the ride on this next phase of the 'Road to 263,' and continue to support our special school as we fulfill the vision crafted 10 years ago to build an even brighter future for The Learning Project.



SCAN ME

Keep Up to Date!

Why I Attend: A Look at LP Reunions

by KRISTIN LEVITAS



I entered the first grade at The Learning Project in 1988. When I tell people I attend reunions and galas for my elementary school, their eyes widen. They're stunned by the fact that nearly 40 years later, I am still connected to an institution from my childhood. When I see and hear their amazement, it's not lost on me how special of a community The LP is and how lucky I am to be a part of it. I was talking with my dad the other day about what drew him and my mom to The Learning Project originally. He gave many reasons. He said that what set The LP apart from other schools was its deep sense of humanity — its dedication to openness, dialogue, diversity, connection, and compassion. He loved that it was a city school that set high scholastic standards. He was also drawn to Michael McCord's approach to elementary education and could tell that his heart and soul were in the right place. Above all, he said he simply had a gut feeling that this would be a supportive community.

Year after year, decade after decade, I have experienced firsthand how The LP community takes care of its families; standing by them to share and celebrate life milestones as well as navigate grief following the loss of loved ones. I



have found belonging in this community — a belonging that has only grown over time through the friendships I have sustained with my classmates and their families, and the new connections I have made with current families, faculty, and staff at reunion events. I believe a community is made stronger by what each individual commits to giving back to it.

Attending reunion events is my way of 'showing up' for a community that has shown up for me in countless ways. I love seeing familiar faces, getting to know new families, hearing about what LP traditions from the '90s are still present, and simply sharing an evening with good company.

My dad expressed that choosing The LP was "one of the easiest decisions we ever made" and I feel the same way about staying connected and giving back to this community.

Whether you are an alumni (21+), an alumni parent, or an alumni Board or staff member, I hope you will join me at our next Alumni Reunion scheduled on January 8, 2026, in Boston. I promise you, it's worth it.



SCAN ME

January 8, 2026:
RSVP Here



The 2025 Annual Report Summary

BREAKDOWN OF GIVING 2024-2025

Annual Fund:	\$443,258
Auction (gross):	\$128,582
The Caroline Schmidt Arts and Inspiration Fund:	\$1,457
Community Scholarship:	\$20,000
Emily Melia Travel Fund:	\$437
Fall Book Fair (net):	\$8,368
Read-a-thon (gross):	\$15,471
The Gary Hatton Mental Health and Wellness Fund:	\$10,897
McCord Mission Fund:	\$70,250*
The Prindle Scholarship Fund:	\$5,550

TOTAL: **\$704,270**

**Please note that the McCord Mission Fund line includes only new gifts to the endowment. It does not include gifts on pledges that were made in the previous fiscal year.*

CHARITABLE GIVING

Each year, The Learning Project sets aside \$500 for its Sixth Grade Charitable Foundation. This is intended to provide soon-to-be LP graduates the experience of philanthropy, and inspire them to develop a life-long habit of giving. In the spring, sixth graders research local, national, and international charities as part of their charitable giving project. The Class of 2025 elected to donate to:

Oceana \$300

LeBron James Family Foundation \$200

Read-a-thon Donations 2025:

Proceeds from Read-a-thon have traditionally been used to buy books for the school, to plant trees, and to support literacy programs in the city. Below are the organizations supported from Read-a-thon donations:

Boston Public Library

The Garden Club of Back Bay

Friends of the Public Garden (Henry Lee Fund)

THE TRADITIONS CONTINUE

CELEBRATION OF TRADITIONS



AUCTION

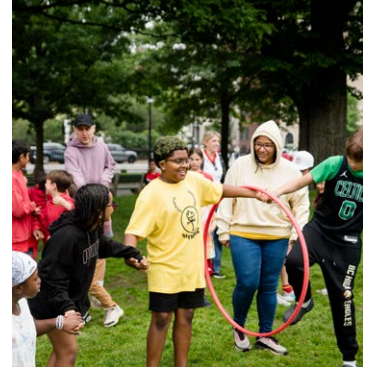


MAYFEST

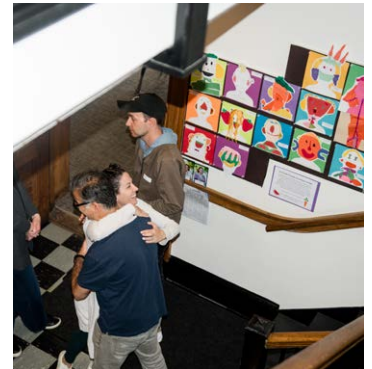
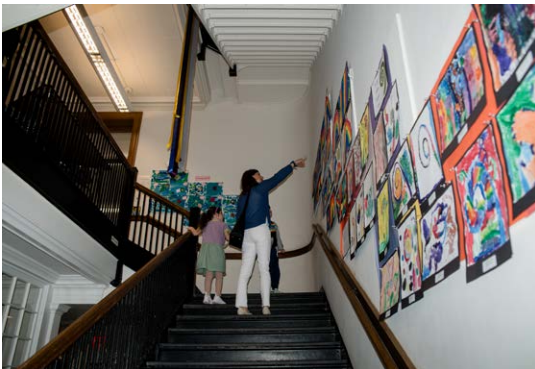


THE TRADITIONS CONTINUE

OLYMPICS



ART SHOW



PRIDE PARADE



ALUMNI

Adrian Hackney, '13, and **Laura Goodfield, '13,** celebrate May Day at a concert in Berlin, Germany.



Chris Fletcher, '16, will be graduating with a B.S. in Aerospace Engineering and a minor in Fire Protection Engineering from Worcester Polytechnic Institute this spring. He's been on the Dean's List for two years and was invited to join the academic fraternity of Sigma Gamma Tau, which is the National Aerospace Honor Society. He's also the captain of WPI's sailing team.



Pia Towns Franken, '17, stopped by the McCord Building for a visit and chatted with Mr. Hajj and Ms. Farbo.



Eleanor Allen, '19 and **Carina Fujimoto, '19,** reconnected with former Head of School, Michael McCord, at the graduation of Eleanor's sibling.



Madison Holman-Rodriguez, '23, and **Alenzia Homan, P '23,** visited this past spring. Maddie shared that she was recently accepted into the Junior Nationals Flag Football Team, and would be competing in California in June!



STAFF

Lizzie Barcay, former 3rd Grade Head Teacher, and her now-fiancée both said yes on a very rainy morning this past spring. Luckily for them, **Jamie Hayhurst, 'P '18, '22,** and **Advancement, Admissions and Publications Coordinator,** was willing to camp out on the Esplanade and capture the moment! Lizzie and Kristen walked by The LP on their first date — Ms. Barcay doesn't believe in coincidences and wholeheartedly does believe in the magic of 107 Marlborough Street.



STAFF

Mikah Farbo, Director of Academics, Faculty, and Inclusion, and spouse, Ashe Arbuckle, welcomed their child, Asa, into the world late this summer.

Nes Tam, former Coordinator of Programs and Technology, stopped by the McCord Building and posed for a photo with **Alyssa Mosso, After School and Front Office Support.**



Sasha Zuflacht, Assistant Head and Crawford Director of Community Relations, married Nick Gutierrez this past spring in an intimate ceremony in Boston's South End.



PARENTS

Stephen Chan, P '28, '31, senior advisor to Mayor Michelle Wu, was at the campaign reelection kickoff for Mayor Wu held at the Boston Center for the Arts Cyclorama in the South End.



IN MEMORIAM

Fritz Casselman, P '93, '95, former Board Member, husband of Susan Ashbrook and father of Ben, '93, and Peter, '95, died after a lengthy illness on Tuesday, September 16th, 2025, surrounded by the people he loved most. He was a leader in every community he was a part of, including The Learning Project community where he served as a Trustee, as well as the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay, the Esplanade Association, and the Citizen's Advisory Committee.



Address Service Requested



Class of 2025 Next Schools: Beaver Country Day School, Boston College High School (3), Buckingham Browne & Nichols School, Dedham Country Day School, Fontbonne Academy, Newton Country Day School, Thayer Academy (2), The Roxbury Latin School, The Winsor School

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