Our Community, Our Commitment through Generations
FOREWORD

Parker thrives because of its people, its ideals and its promise to make each individual student’s experience one of meaning, purpose and commitment.

For more than a century, Parker people have upheld our mission to educate students to be creative, empathic citizens, capable of collaborating in a diverse community with generosity and gratitude.

Beginning in 1901, Colonel Francis Wayland Parker, Anita McCormick Blaine and Flora J. Cooke, and their generation of teachers, students and parents, founded and sustained our vision of progressive education during its early decades.

The generation of parents, educators, students and alumni who built our mid-century building allowed Parker to grow in profound ways during a critical point in our school’s history.

And now, our generation of administrative and trustee leaders, joined by parents, alumni, faculty, staff, grandparents and friends, is delivering on its promise to found Parker’s second century.

Together, through our educational renaissance, we are empowering our students and alumni—as they grow in values, talent, knowledge and confidence—to be citizens engaged in making this a more just, beautiful and interesting world.

Through our shared commitment, our generation has advanced Parker’s local and national profile, beautified and expanded our campus and provided a growing financial endowment to strengthen Parker’s optimistic future.

Parker is more than a school. Parker is the promise we have all made to uphold our great word—responsibility—to self and society, to seek unity through diversity, to learn through perseverance and to grow through relationships, understanding and love.

Parker is indeed a work of art made possible by creative, pragmatic and ambitious people. And for that, and for all the generosity that has allowed Parker to be the vigorous and spirited school it is, I am in awe and immensely grateful.

Thank you.

Daniel B. Frank, ’74, Ph.D.
Principal
"Who is the great man? He who, among the multitude of feet passing on the highway, ready to follow where it goes, ready to be led, whithersoever, is willing to break into the unbroken, to seek the light, in order to find a better way for the passing feet—a shorter, surer road to the dawn; he who would rather fail seeking that better way than succeed on the road he does not believe in—surely he is the great man."

—Anita McCormick Blaine

Left: Colonel Francis Wayland Parker, c. 1890
Right: Parker School's first parcel of land, donated by Anita McCormick Blaine

FOUNDING FRANCIS W. PARKER SCHOOL
“Seldom in history has there been a confluence of factors such that one individual could change the course of history.”

—The Progressive Legacy: Chicago Francis W. Parker School (1901–2001), Marie Ketcham Stone

ANITA McCORMICK BLAINE 1866–1954

Anita McCormick Blaine, Parker’s founding benefactor, established Francis W. Parker School when she contributed more than $3 million to cover the financial needs of the school for its first 30 years from 1901 to 1931. Blaine also strategically served on Parker’s Board of Trustees offering her time, vision and unwavering support of progressive education.
“If I should tell the secret of my life, it is the intense desire I have to see growth and improvement in all things, and most of all in human beings.”

—Colonel Francis Wayland Parker

COLONEL FRANCIS WAYLAND PARKER 1837–1902

Called “the father of the Progressive Education Movement” by John Dewey, Colonel Parker was motivated all his life by an intense passion for education. He set out on his own at age 13 and taught his first pupils at age 16. Following his service in the Civil War, the Colonel went on to study in Europe and returned stateside to institute his revolutionary educational ideas in Ohio, New Hampshire and, most famously, in Quincy, Massachusetts.

In 1883, Colonel Parker came to Englewood, Illinois to teach at The Normal School, where Flora J. Cooke was among the faculty and Anita McCormick Blaine was a parent.

In 1898, Colonel Parker partnered with Anita McCormick Blaine to start a school based on his radical, progressive educational philosophy. Sadly, he passed away in 1902, just one year after Francis W. Parker School opened.

Colonel Parker (second from the right) with Flora J. Cooke (far left)
The greatest thing I learned from Colonel Parker was the impossibility of ever again losing faith in any child.

~Flora J. Cooke, Founding Principal, 1901–1934

FLORA J. COOKE 1864–1953

As a teacher in Youngstown, Ohio, Flora J. Cooke taught alongside a protégé of Francis Parker, who persuaded Parker to invite Ms. Cooke to train at the Cook County Normal School. A fierce proponent of the Colonel’s theories, Ms. Cooke traveled to 28 states and the territory of Hawaii to lecture on progressive education.

Ms. Cooke was the school’s founding principal and served until her retirement in 1934. She remained on the Board of Trustees until her death. In addition to her invaluable work at Parker, she served on a number of local, national and international committees, championing not only issues of education, but also those of peace and civil rights.

“The greatest thing I learned from Colonel Parker was the impossibility of ever again losing faith in any child.”

~Flora J. Cooke, Founding Principal, 1901–1934
“On October 7, 1901, the progressive experiment of the Francis W. Parker School began when 144 students from different economic levels, nationalities, and religions; a corps of thirteen experienced teachers and Principal Flora Cooke, all trained at the Cook County Normal School under Francis Parker; a generous benefactor, Anita McCormick Blaine; and the educational visionary Francis Wayland Parker walked through the door of the new two-story building…”

—The Progressive Legacy: Chicago’s Francis W. Parker School (1901–2001), Marie Kirchner Stone
Above Original school catalogue, 1901–1902

Left: Francis W. Parker faculty and administration, 1902
“The spontaneous tendencies of the child are the records of inborn divinity; we are here, my fellow teachers, for one purpose, and that purpose is to understand these tendencies and continue them in all these directions, following nature.”

~Talks On Pedagogics: An Outline of the Theory of Concentration And Other Writings (1894), Francis Wayland Parker
Left: Children with medieval shields, 1934
Above: Science activity, c. 1920
Left: Students working in Parker's toy shop

For 44 years, from Thanksgiving to Christmas, the entire Parker community worked together to restore toys for children in all of the settlement houses in Chicago.

Above: Students mixing dyes in art class
Parker student-athletes, 1910 and 1919
Above: Biology class, c. 1920
Right: Students standing on student-made bridge, c. 1910
AT THE CROSSROADS: PARKER BEGINS TO FUNDRAISE 1934–1954
From Parker’s founding through 1934, Anita McCormick Blaine solely subsidized 50 percent of the cost of student education and fully funded faculty pensions.

In September 1933, recognizing that this model was unsustainable, John Holabird, Sr. appointed a committee of parents to assess and make recommendations for a sustainable school funding model.

The committee’s findings, published in February 1934, were put into action the following school year, 1934–35. As a result, Parker parents, alumni and friends would formally begin supporting the school. Fundraising efforts focused specifically on providing financial aid for students and planning for expansion.

“The increase in tuition necessary to make the school self-supporting may deprive the school of some of the most desirable children. This means that until a permanent Scholarship Fund can be established, only one thing can maintain the democratic principle in Parker School,—scholarship supported by outside sources.”

—C.M. Nelson, Chairman, Scholarship Committee
In 1941, amidst the backdrop of World War II, Parker faced mounting economic challenges and an increasingly outgrown physical plant. Thus, the school developed its first call for general funds.

This campaign had two main components: a capital campaign, to support construction of a modern school building to house the kindergarten and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades, and a scholarship campaign, to assure, for a three-year period, “the school’s continued operation on a basis of representation from all groups in the community through paid tuition and partial to full scholarships.”

Through this new call for support, Parker sought to cement its financial future by becoming completely self-sustaining through a combination of tuition revenue and financial contributions.

“At the Crossroads,” a marketing booklet to inform the community and potential supporters about Parker’s educational model and principles, 1941
"It is our hope that the present work of [Parker's] school will be equally significant for the future. For we represent not only the old pioneer but the new as well."

"...students are expected to remember the rights of others. They are called upon to recognize their social responsibilities in all work and play."
“Self-centered ideas are gradually displaced by awareness of the needs of others—first in the classroom, then in the school, finally in the world-at-large.”

“In many ways Parker students are taught to help each other. Self-centered ideas are gradually displaced by awareness of the needs of others—first in the classroom, then in the school, finally in the world-at-large. Every year the entire school joins in making toys for its Christmas Toy Shop and in distributing them to the less fortunate. The lesson in unselfishness is invaluable.

“Parker classes are teacher guided, but rarely teacher-dominated.”

“Parker classes are teacher-guided, but rarely teacher-dominated. Children are expected, for instance, to learn scientific laws by making the first discoveries themselves. It is an accepted fact that children (and adults) remember what they have learned in proportion to the amount of original thought they themselves have given to the study.”
As important as habits of expression, at Parker, are habits of attention—how to observe closely, listen intently and read thoroughly.

It is clearly understood by the school that a complete education depends upon cooperation between parents and teachers.
Students at Parker are given every chance to speak before audiences—in class, on the speaker’s platform, during plays, at meetings. The morning exercises at Parker are famous. It is here that the grades meet together for the common purpose of giving or hearing a class report, a lecture, a concert, or a news discussion; here every student takes part, either as speaker or audience.

"The morning exercises at Parker are famous... here every student takes part, either as speaker or audience."

"Through an adjusted tuition plan, children of little means are admitted, and the school is accordingly a common meeting-ground of many economic levels, races and creeds."

"The inestimable glory of the common school is that it contains all the necessary factors of an embryonic democracy."

Parker adopts as its most solemn purpose the training of children for democratic living. Through an adjusted tuition plan, children of little means are admitted, and the school is accordingly a common meeting-ground of many economic levels, races and creeds. The tolerance and understanding which result are invaluable for all concerned.
With the Board’s foresight and planning and the generous support of the community, Parker’s first campaign proved a success.
At the urging of the community, the school petitioned to have Grant Place, a street running parallel to and through school grounds, closed permanently on the east side of Clark Street, enabling Parker to further expand its footprint.

In the first 50 years of its history, the school constructed makeshift and “temporary” additions on and around the school’s original building. A two-story building predating the Great Chicago Fire became a cafeteria and library. Students built a series of World War I army barracks on the school yard to accommodate more classrooms. A gymnasium was added, as well as the “Little School” for the lower grades. The school’s auditorium, designed for 180 at Parker’s founding, could no longer hold the full student body, which had expanded to more than 600. The school community had no place on campus to meet as a complete group at one time, not even for Morning Exercises.
In 1955, Parker embarked on a $2 million capital campaign with the goal of replacing the original structures on Parker’s campus with one state-of-the-art building able to house all 14 grades.
Principal Cleveland Thomas calls for a public relations push to help launch the capital campaign.

Dear Mr. Smith,

At the Francis W. Parker School, we are setting up our public relations and development process. As we look into the year immediately ahead, there is a great deal of planned publicity. Included in the needed information are biographies and 4×5 photographs of key people for public relations purposes. Your biography and picture will be needed and we hope that you will be so kind as to send them to us.

The biographical statement need not be long, and should consist of a description of the important events, activities, and positions in your life. The full biography should be a glossy print.

We truly thank you for your cooperation. I know you will give.

Sincerely yours,

Cleveland A. Thomas
Principal

Dr. Perry Dunlap Smith
455 Linzim
Elmhurst, Illinois

Several members of the Board of Trustees, 1958

Perry Dunlap Smith
Helen Ross
Elden George Lindberg
Jack N. Pritzker
Herbert W. Smith
Edward E. Voynow
Elliot Dunlap Smith
Sidney R. Yates
John Holabird, architect, Principal Cleveland Thomas and others looking at a proposed model of the new school building.

Perspective sketch of revised Francis W. Parker School by Holabird & Root

Final sketch of the new school building published in the December 1960 Development Council Bulletin

Rendering of the new school building

Opposite page (L–R): Architect John Holabird ’38, Principal Cleveland Thomas and others looking at a proposed model of the new school building.
“Some 2,000 persons watched ‘a dream becoming reality’ Wednesday as 14 shovels bit into the sod of a onetime baseball diamond beside the Francis W. Parker School.

“There on the old north field of the school at 330 W. Webster, the gathering included the student body of 530, the faculty, former teachers, alumni and friends.

“The shovels in the hands of 14 youngsters representing the school’s 14 classes scooped up the earth in symbolic ground-breaking for a new $2,000,000 school building.”

—Chicago Sun-Times, September 29, 1960
The new building, near completion, adjacent to the old school building, 1962.
The class of 1961 was the last class to graduate from the old school building while the class of 1962 was the first class to graduate from the new school. These messages were written for the yearbook by members of each senior class, honoring both the old and new school buildings.
“You have here a great legacy: a school with a history, a school with a soul. There are marvelous traditions to be carried forward: Morning Ex, County Fair, Class Day, Big Brothers and Sisters...if these traditions are given life in this beautiful new addition, then past and future will be harmonized.”

—Richard C. Levin, President of Yale University and spouse of Jane Aries Levin ’64
After a successful capital campaign for state-of-the-art facilities in the early sixties, Parker fundraising dropped off considerably, and in the early 1970s, the need for a sustainable source of regular funding became apparent. Thus, for the 75th anniversary of the school’s founding, Parker’s Alumni Association launched an endowment campaign.

“As time passed, establishing an Endowment, necessarily of long-range benefit during its germination stage, always took second priority behind solving short-range financial problems.

“As Parker gave so much to each of us when it was important, it is now essential that each of us give something in return. As the School contributed to our futures, we must now contribute to its future, to perpetuate its existence.”

~Alumni News, June 1973

“We recognize that Parker must raise substantial funds for a reserve that can grow against inflation and that can provide more income flexibility so that the high degree of creative, innovative demonstrative programming, which is such an integral part of the school’s purpose, can be vigorously pursued in the years ahead.”

~Dr. Whitney W. Addington, 1974
BUILDING FOR PARKER’S FUTURE: THE CAMPAIGN FOR PARKER 1995–2000
By the mid-'90s, Parker’s student body had grown to nearly 800 students, and leadership was once again confronted by the limitations of the school's facility. Driven by this challenge and the need to improve and expand programming, as well as enhance the technology infrastructure of the school, the Board of Trustees launched The Campaign for Parker.

The much-needed overhaul would directly impact each division as well as faculty and staff. Parker’s leadership asked the community to help increase the number of classrooms by adding a fourth floor above the west wing of the existing structure. Plans included a new “Little School” space, along with a new gymnasium, a renovated library space and the addition of a multi-purpose meeting space for faculty, staff and parents.

Leading this more than $20 million effort were dedicated community members—parents, alumni and friends.
“It is exciting to watch the new High School wing under construction. As the frame takes shape, I can envision a number of wondrous things: teachers in classrooms that are fully ready to accommodate the most contemporary as well as the most traditional instruction, and teachers with space sufficient to not only offer assistance and enrichment to students, but to also create new learning activities.”

~Principal Don Monroe

(L–R) David Pritzker ’01, Nicholas Pritzker ’63, Margot Pritzker (parent emeritus), Don Monroe (former principal), Jay Pritzker ’38, Robert Pritzker ’44 and Bob Krupka (parent emeritus and former board president) at the groundbreaking ceremony, October 1996.
Construction of the multi-level, Upper School south wing

Executive Committee member Lori Kaufman with (L–R) Steve Kaufman, Executive Committee member John Levi and Nick Pritzker ’63 at the groundbreaking ceremony, 1996
With generous support from parents, faculty, staff, alumni and friends, by 2000, The Campaign for Parker significantly improved space availability on campus, impacting every student and vital programming.

- Remodeled and expanded the Middle School
- Added a fourth floor on the west side of the building for Upper School classrooms
- Built and dedicated the Harris Center
- Updated the cafeteria
- Created the new “Little School”
- Built a south wing stairwell and added a new elevator
- Created new classrooms, library facilities, a new gym and exercise room, computer labs and conference rooms
- Renovated the Lower School for 1st–5th graders and the Parker PM space
- Completed security updates and construction of a new front entrance
THE FOUNDING OUR SECOND CENTURY CAMPAIGN: OUR PATH FORWARD
A decade ago, the school established the *Founding Our Second Century* Campaign to raise funds for enhanced facilities as well as endowments dedicated to programming, financial aid and the school’s long-term financial stability. The Campaign not only allowed our community to pay tribute to Parker’s past, upholding our mission, educational philosophy and social ideals, but simultaneously laid the groundwork for Parker’s future.

“*Our students’ ability to move about the classroom for labs and other experiential moments makes for a better, more dynamic learning experience.*”

—Xiao Zhang, Upper School Science teacher and Department Co-Chair
THE DIANE AND DAVID B HELLER AUDITORIUM
4,995 minutes of Morning Ex each year

“The new auditorium is truly a community space and a practical learning tool for student performers and technicians alike.”

—Tommy Nolan, Theater and Technical Coordinator and Auditorium Manager

NORTH WING
a formal dance studio and professional recording studio and a dedicated space for a newly created band program

“...The renovations to the North Wing made possible many new curricular programs, like band, and our new office layout promotes constant collaboration with fellow faculty around curriculum and student programming.”

—Sunnie Hikawa, Music teacher and Department Co-Chair
FOURTH FLOOR ADDITION
three classrooms exclusively for visual arts and one studio space for performing arts

“Every room in the fourth floor addition was thoughtfully designed. The results are impressive, and it shows in our students’ ability to use the space in new and creative ways.”

—Chris Turner, Visual Arts teacher and Department Chair

THE FIELD
7,215 square yards of athletic turf and 1,073 hours of use by students each academic year

“The field renovation created a world of difference. It allowed us to focus less on the field and more on our student-athletes.”

—Dawn Wickstrom, former Director of Athletics
Our growing General Endowment contributes to the life of our school and ensures that future generations of Parker students, at every socio-economic level, are able to enjoy the unique educational experience that Parker provides.

How do we build, how do we make, how do we create for the world?

TIDES is integrating skills across disciplines while using technology and design thinking to solve meaningful problems with empathy.
SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT

One of the hallmarks of progressive education is an appreciation and development of student voice.

Endowed funds for financial aid continue to allow students from differing backgrounds to bring their perspectives and share their ideas in a community that values their unique voices.

“This through our shared commitment, our generation has advanced Parker’s local and national profile, beautified and expanded our campus and provided a growing financial endowment to strengthen Parker’s optimistic future.

“Thank you for being partners committed to enlivening Parker’s spirit, preserving its past and building its future.”

~Principal Daniel B. Frank, ’74, Ph.D.
“We want the House to stand as a symbol of what the school means to us and what we mean to the school. We want every little child to play in it and feel that it is his house. We want the big people to hold their club and class meetings there, knowing that the House was built for them. We want the high school pupils to think it is a pleasant place to spend their study periods, as the House was built for their enjoyment. We wish everybody to take pleasure in the House.”

~Parker student speech, 1911