

SEPTEMBER 2011



# The Park Parent

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## 21st Century Technology and Assessment

BY JERROLD I. KATZ, *Head of School*



**T**he 2011-12 academic year will feature a number of important initiatives designed to advance Park School education in the 21st century.

This article will focus on exciting work that is underway in the areas of technology and assessment. Later in the fall, I'll describe additional new initiatives in the areas of science, communication, and faculty leadership.

Park is on the cusp of a "great leap forward" in the use of technology to enhance and support classroom instruction. Last spring, we entered into an innovation planning partnership with November Learning, an internationally recognized educational technology consulting firm. November Learning conducted a multi-day site visit and a series of interviews to measure Park's current technology efforts against international benchmarks for

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## Teaching and Trains: A Year of Work and Play

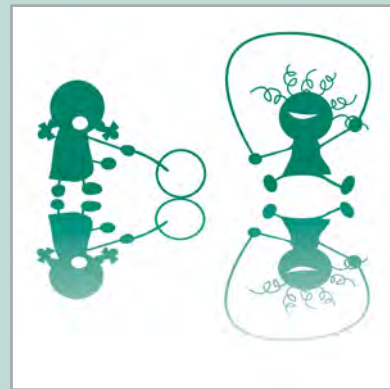
BY OLIVIA MOOREHEAD-SLAUGHTER, *Psychologist*

**I**t's that time again! Whether you are returning to Park or a newly admitted member of this community, welcome to another year of growing and learning. If we are lucky, 2011-12 will hold much that will fascinate and challenge each of us.

Alongside the children, we will stretch our thinking, ponder unexplored possibilities, and navigate a year of foreseeable as well as surprising "bumps and curves." A school year replete with work, work, and more wonderful work needs to be accompanied by a healthy dose of play. When I googled 'play as an antidote to stress in children' there were a whopping 2,400,000 results. Hmmm....

Whether your child is in Pre-K or Grade IX at Park School, s/he will have access to a curriculum that is drenched in age appropriate content and rigor across many subject areas. Park teachers continue to pursue

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educational “best practice.” Following are some of their key observations and recommendations:

- The School has done a very good job of providing teachers and students with the hardware needed for effective teaching and learning. (*Note:* Park owns a total of over 350 laptop computers. In addition, by the opening of school this fall, all Grades II-IX classrooms will be outfitted with a workstation connected to an LCD projector.)
- Park students have a basic knowledge of information literacy that stems both from experience outside of school and instruction within their classes and in the library. (*Note:* November Learning particularly praised our library for being well-positioned to become the hub of 21st century learning at The Park School.)
- The leadership and support of the administration, technology staff, and librarians is greatly appreciated by the Park faculty. Many teachers are eager for more ongoing coaching and professional development related to technology use. (*Note:* More than 30 Park faculty members have committed significant time this summer to technology learning and skill development.)
- Park parents appear eager to move forward toward more advanced/global use of technology, but they are concerned about addressing issues of safety and privacy.
- The administration should work with the school community to establish a common vision of how technology is going to support and enhance learning and student achievement at Park.

I'll be working with Ray Stewart, our new director of information technology, (see p. 6) to address this latter imperative. Park is determined to be both thoughtful and a “fast adapter” of tools and practices that can deepen and extend student learning. Following are several of the significant investigations and decisions we have to make regarding the instructional use of technology over the months ahead:

1. **How soon will we transition to ubiquitous student use of tablet and other hand-held computing devices?**
2. **How can we best support the rapid development of classroom web pages?**
3. **What new learning opportunities are associated with applications in “the cloud?”**

At the same time that we are re-visioning the use of technology to facilitate student development of 21st century skills, Park



Adam Young explains a math problem on a SmartBoard.

will also be participating in an ambitious national effort to become more effective in measuring essential skills that currently are not quantifiable. Through a partnership agreement with other leading independent schools around the United States and with ETS (Educational Testing Service) in Princeton, NJ, we will begin this fall to pilot in our Upper Division a standardized assessment of student development in each of the following areas:

- Creative thinking/Problem solving
- Teamwork/Collaboration
- Ethics
- Time Management
- Resilience (*i.e., perseverance when confronted with a challenge*)
- Love of learning



It should be very interesting to participate in and to follow the progress of this pilot project. While the Park faculty has a long-standing commitment to being intentional in teaching each of these skills, I believe that our ability to effectively demonstrate

the “21st century” value added by a Park School education will be more important than ever over the course of the years ahead.

Welcome to the beginning of another engaging, exciting, and forward-moving year at Park! ☁

*Jerry Katz*

Jerrold I. Katz, Head of School