

## Lane named Blue Ribbon school



Blue Ribbon Award signs hang on Addison Street light poles.

By Diana Castro

U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, will recognize Lane as a 2012 National Blue Ribbon School in Washington, D.C. this month. Lane is one of eight schools in the state to win the award.

The National Blue Ribbon Program recognizes great schools nationwide. This year, 269 schools will receive the award. Most of the schools awarded this year were elementary schools.

"The Blue Ribbon Award is next to impossible for a school to win," said Head Principal Dr. Dignam. "Almost no one is making AYP [adequate yearly progress] anymore because the criteria is so difficult."

Dignam says that schools are "almost invited to apply" because the program selects winning schools according to their growth, number of students with free or reduced lunch, and the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state expectations. Special needs students must also meet the criteria.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program looks at the percentages of students graduating, the percentage of student taking A.P. courses, and the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards, using criteria like the ACT scores. Schools that demonstrate AYP are chosen from each state. The program has been restructured to be in line with No Child Left Behind, strongly emphasizing state assessment data and requiring schools to demonstrate high academic success.

Lane and Jones College Prep are the only CPS schools to receive the Blue Ribbon Award for 2012. Lane plans to celebrate the award with an assembly for the students and community on Nov. 30.

"We have the full offering [at Lane]," Dignam said. "We need to acknowledge our students. I don't think [Lane] is student centered enough."

The school will invite local and state officials to celebrate the award with a ceremony in the auditorium. Dignam hopes to have student speeches and performances from

clubs and the music department at the ceremony.

"Whoever comes here should say 'Wow, this is a pretty cool school. There is nothing else like [Lane]," Dignam said.

This is the first time Lane has won the Blue Ribbon Award in the program's 30-year history. Dignam, a Lane alum and former teacher at Lane, said that he wished the school was this good when he was a student.

"It's a better school now than it was then, and it was a great school then," Dignam said.

Dignam and English teacher Mr. Johnson, who was randomly selected from a list of teacher applicants to accompany Dignam, will represent Lane at the National Blue Ribbon School award ceremony in Washington, DC, on Nov. 12-13.

Lane will receive an engraved plaque and program flag with the official seal, which signifies its status and the year of the award. Blue Ribbon banners have already been put up along the lamp posts along Addison and Western.

## Technology upgrades added to classrooms over summer

By Kevin Morales

With students gone on break over the summer, Lane's hallways were full of old desks, chairs, and dumpsters full of debris.

In early August, a major remodeling project kicked off in order to incorporate modern learning environments at Lane. This new "wing," as it has been referred to, would house new classrooms and labs featuring state of the art technology.

Recently appointed assistant principal Mr. Ara was put in charge by Dr. Dignam to oversee the renovations. A total of eight rooms were either completely remodeled or modified into new learning environments. Several of the rooms were old shop rooms that had not been in use for a while.

"We wanted to make a modern wing of Lane Tech. Everything in there is new: new paints, new lights, new floors, new computers, etc. Everything that was in there before went out," Ara said.

The Lane Tech Century Foundation, the Alumni Association, and PTSO all have assisted in covering the cost of the massive project.

Four of the rooms have been solely dedicated to Lane's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) program. These rooms are 122, 124, 128, and 232. In order to physically connect the rooms, they all share a similar color scheme.

Room 122 will serve as a classroom with a SMART board and workstations for students.

Room 232 which was used as a multi-purpose room has been converted into an Apple lab featuring Mac products.

The most noticeable of these changes is in 128. The previous Student Council room has now been converted into an Aquaponics lab. Aquaponics is a self-sustaining environment by means of fish and vegetation depending off of each other.

Much of the equipment used to make the Aquaponics lab possible was custom made for Lane, adding to the uniqueness of the department. The lab will have five stations containing tilapia fish, which will provide recycled water to a large variety of vegetation.

The columns in the room are also going to be utilized as "living walls." Similar to a totem pole, the columns are to be covered with a variety of plants growing up and around them.

As students pass by in the hallway, they will be able to look through newly installed windows to see what is going on inside the Aquaponics lab.

Ara said it is possible that food grown in the Aquaponics stations could be sold to restaurants or even at a farmer's market at Lane.

The room next door, 124, is also a classroom with study stations for the Aquaponics students. Computers have been set up in the upper loft so students can log on and view the Aquaponics tanks via web cams if they are not directly in the lab.

In past years, Lane had promoted STEM through programs such as GEMS (Girls in Engineering, Math, and Science) or other related electives. However, Ms. Lain, the STEM program coordinator and LTAC coordinator, explained there was more need for students in those subjects.



The new Aquaponics lab sits in the old Student Council office.

"Those are areas where there's a lot of need for jobs and there's a push for students to get a better background in those subjects. Now we're taking it up to the next level with this STEM wing," Lain said.

Lane administrators are excited about the upcoming program which will be available to all grade levels.

"No other (CPS) school has (STEM)," Ara said. "We're going to be one of the first schools to offer this program."

According to Ara, Loyola University is currently building its STEM program, but Lane can expect to have its program fully up and running before Loyola's is complete.

The remodeling project didn't stop with the STEM rooms though.

Rooms such as the old Budget and Admissions offices have all been converted into classrooms. These departments along with the programming office, Student Council and Academic Decathlon have been moved to room 118. The room previously served as a PE gym. The room was gutted, and a new floor and separate offices were built to house the different departments.

The Discipline Office which was located in room 210 has been relocated to a new classroom for students.

The old auto shop has undergone remodeling as well, converted into a "suite" for Mr. Sweet. He now teaches his guitar classes and jazz band sessions there.

The administration is looking forward to seeing how these updates will catch Lane up to other schools in terms of technology.



Room 122 features one of the new SMART boards installed in several Lane classrooms this year.



# Dignam adjusts to new position, brings changes to Lane

By Claudia Maj

As I walk into Dr. Dignam's office, I catch him with two phones in his hands. Stacks of papers surround him on his desk. He puts one of the phones down and signals for me to wait a minute. As he hangs up the second phone, he lets out a sigh of relief.

When Dignam found out a couple months ago that he was going to be Lane's new principal, he couldn't wait to share the news.

"The first thing I did was call my family, I have twin daughters in 4th grade, and they were all very happy to hear the news," he said.

Then the hard work began. Over the summer, began major overhauls to Lane in an attempt to "bring the school into the 21st Century."

Dignam hired four new Assistant Principals to help in the work. (See story below). The technological upgrades, however, would be costly.

SMART boards were installed in 27 classrooms, a new Apple computer lab was built, and Ipads were bought and issued to core-subject teachers.

Money for these projects came largely from a campaign spearheaded by Lane's PTSSO called "Shoot for the Stars." The campaign has raised over \$100,000 all from generous donations, but the goal is to reach \$750,000.

Dignam, who was once a student at Lane himself, wants Lane to be more competitive with other schools.

"When you walk into the classrooms at Whitney Young, they all have SMART boards installed, and our students deserve better too," he said. "This will be a multi-year process, but we will continue installing SMART boards into our classrooms."

A variety of new courses have also been added this year and 31 new teachers, many with specialized skills to teach them, have joined Lane. Though these changes have required cutting other classes and teaching posi-



Dr. Dignam works in his office.

tions, Dignam is resolute in his conviction that Lane and its curriculum must evolve to better prepare students for the requirements of today's workforce.

Not all changes are happening within classrooms. Lane might soon have a rowing team, taking advantage of the school's proximity to the north branch of the Chicago River. This, along with flag football and field hockey clubs, will expand Lane's already huge Athletic department.

With a very busy and hectic start of the school year,

Dr. Dignam has not yet found the time to completely settle down in his office.

"I work out of the office daily but I have still not had enough time to sort things out and make it "my own," he said. "I may have time to do that during the winter break."

In between emails, meetings, and phone calls, Dignam has found time to display on his desk his name plate and a photo of his two daughters. Both serve as reminders of his great responsibilities.

## Teachers transition to assistant principal positions

By Almasa Pecanin & Isaac Ceh

Once classroom teachers, some familiar faces at Lane are now helping run the school as assistant principals.

Ms. Beck is one of the four new assistant principals at Lane this year. She is not a stranger to the process of changing positions at Lane. Beck began her experience at Lane as a student teacher, was hired as a biology and genetics teacher, and taught for four years. Last year, she was hired as the Lane Tech Academic Center coordinator before moving into her newest position.

"I still miss the classroom. I absolutely love seeing the students so engaged in their classes," Beck said. "When I went to observe two physics classes on Sept. 26th, I kind of felt a little jealous of the teachers."

Still, Beck says the transition into her new position was very smooth. She now oversees the Alpha program, which is similar to what she did as a teacher – teach Alpha students. She also oversees the AP program and the LTAC.

"Going into any position, you want to look at the way programs are currently run, and what things you may be able to add to it," she said.

Beck hopes to make sure all students in the Alpha program truly have a passion for science and wants to provide them with more opportunities.

This year, Dr. Dignam implemented the rule that every student now has to take at least one AP class. A change Ms. Beck is hoping to make is the addition of an AP night for parents so they have an idea what AP classes are like.

"Because we're having every student take them, I think we have to provide parents and students with a better idea of how much work they actually require," she said.

Another former teacher who has become an assistant principal and is hoping to expand the college experience at the school and prepare students more for when they leave Lane is Mr. Ara.

Ara has been contacting UIC to add some college level courses to Lane. These classes would not be considered AP,

but would be taught on the college level and students would be able to receive college credit for them.

Mr. Ara is also looking to expand the Arts, Music, Tech, and Athletics departments. Although he misses teaching classes, Ara believes he can accomplish way more for the Art department as an administrator than he did as a teacher.

Ara worked as an art teacher at Lane for the past seven years and also worked in the Computer department his first two years. One of the changes Ara hopes to make is to feature more art in Lane's hallways.

This began with the re-painting of the hallways on the fourth floor by staircase M. Ara wants to make the art done by Lane students more visible on the fourth floor, second floor, and in front of the main office.

Ara has already made changes within the Music department.

"One of the things I was able to do for the Music department was to get the band a chance to practice in the Lane stadium," Ara said.

With good comes the bad, though. There can be many difficult tasks as an assistant principal.

A big transition Ara had to make was working longer hours after school. Each member of the administrative staff has to work one late night per week, staying until about 7pm.

The demands on his time now are much greater than when he was an Art teacher.

"When I was an art teacher, I didn't have a lot to bring home other than prep work and grading," Ara said.

He said another one of the difficulties is that he now has to make the divide between how he treats his friends in and out of work.

Many of Ara's former students were upset to see he is not teaching anymore. However, because he was a well-liked teacher many believe he will be a great assistant principal.

"I think he was able to, in some way, relate to the students because he was a teacher," said Mia Isberto, Div. 364. "He was always welcoming. He was really easy to talk to and he has a youthful spirit."

A temporary addition to the administration is Ms. Hanly, who previously taught in the English Department.

Hanly is not new to the administrative life, since she spent half a year as an administrator at a different school. She is hoping with her new job that she can help teachers at Lane work to their highest potential. She is also

hoping to find a way to interact with students through this job, since she doesn't have the full one-on-one experience like she did as a teacher.

"I definitely don't miss the grading, though," she said. "It's nice to finally have a Sunday to myself."

Many of Hanly's former students, including Andy Kajcsaracz, Div. 376, believe her teaching skills will help her with her new role as assistant principal.

"Class never got out of control and she always managed completing everything as a teacher, such as grading all the essays and tests," Kajcsaracz said. "I believe she will have no problem managing her job as assistant principal."

Being a part of a great team of administrators is what Hanly says is her favorite part about being an assistant principal.

"We work really well together," she said. "I'm not sure I would have that same bond with another team."

Hanly says she and the other administrators know each other very well and pointed out that their personalities blended very well together.

"We can be serious and get work done, but we also know how to laugh at the end of the day and goof around with each other," she said.

As for a typical day in the life of an assistant principal, the four administrators all agreed that a "typical" school day did not exist.

"Every single day is unique," Beck said. "There are a lot of meetings that just pop up last minute."

Mrs. Hart said she has not had two similar days since she began working as an assistant principal.

"Every day is wonderful and an adventure," she said. "Just like the students, I'm learning something new every day."

Although there are many perks of being an assistant principal, Hart didn't hesitate for a second when she

said her favorite part was the interaction with the faculty in the building.

"I feel like I work with the best staff in the city," she said. "I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."



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Ms. Beck



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# Lane offers 21st Century classes new this year

By Claudia Maj  
& Gabrielle Onyema

As she walks into her 6th period class, Shanice Hilliard, Div. 358, sets down her book bag and walks over to her robot.

Mr. Durham gives the class instructions and the students break away into their groups. There are six groups containing four or five people in each group, and every group shares one robot. After everyone knows what their role is, they begin to do their jobs. Certain students prefer to work with their headphones on, while others socialize with their partners while working. Together, Hilliard's group continues building their little robot, which they named "Durham Bot."

"Durham Bot is about the size of a small shoebox, he can't carry too much," Hilliard said. "The bigger the robot, the more weight it can carry."

The students are building the robots to learn how they work and how different programs make the robot move in different directions when they give it commands.

Robotics is one of many classes that has been added at Lane this year. Other classes include Arabic, Mixed Media, Organic Chemistry, Aquaponics, AP Chinese, Foundations of Engineering, and AP Latin.

Mixed Media is a class taught by Ms.



The new aquaponics classroom features contraptions that create a symbiotic relationship between fish and plants.

McMeans. The class focuses on introducing students to various two-dimensional media and how to use these materials in combination with one another.

"I started the class based on my own interests in utilizing multiple materials," she said. "Lane has a wonderful art program and I saw it as an addition to the course offerings to appeal to the students who were interested in combining craft processes like embroidery [for instance] with traditional art processes like paint-

ing and drawing."

In science, Lane is now offering Organic Chemistry for students.

"[Organic Chemistry] can be hard, so no one should be ashamed if they are a little bit behind. But this is also the only high school level organic chemistry class in Chicago," said Troi Valles, Div. 358.

Another new 'organic' class introduced at Lane this year is Aquaponics. A new classroom has been built for this class with glass windows on the wall al-

lowing students in the hallways to have a peek inside and see what the students are working on.

"Aquaponics is the combination of aquaculture and hydroponics. So basically you raise fish, break down their waste, and use it as a fertilizer for the plants," said Brian Watkins, construction manager for the Aquaponics room.

The class will be taught by several different Lane science teachers.

"It's the kind of class that answers the

questions like, 'what's the connection between the ketchup bottle and the tomato on the vine?'," said Watkins.

Walking inside of the room, a student can smell earthy scents, hear the splashing of running water, and see several different plants sprouting up from rock beds and growing on the walls.

"It's a great way to see the different ways you can use technology. You can grow your own food even in a non-traditional way," said Andrew Fernitz, also one of the room's constructors.

Arabic has also been added to the list of many language classes offered at Lane. It is taught by two new teachers: Mr. Danja and Ms. Daifallah.

"I want my students to love Arabic. We don't want to drill them because the language shouldn't be memorized off a notecard. It should flow," Daifallah said.

Salim Omar, Div. 465, said his choice of taking Arabic has turned out to be a good one.

"When I walk in class, it feels like I'll have a lot of fun. The teacher is funny and his jokes help the class pay more attention," Omar said.

The class has also changed his opinion of the language.

"I expected it to be really harsh, but the teachers know what they're doing," said Omar. "I think people should know that Arabic is not an ugly language. It's actually very beautiful."

## Texting now allowed in halls

By Karina Maya

When Dr. Dignam announced that cell phones could be used in the hallways, the auditorium erupted into cheers. Students would not have to worry about being caught in the hallways and being sent to the discipline office.

Allowing cell phone usage was just one of a few rules that have been changed. In addition to texting in the hallways, during passing periods and the lunchroom, students can also listen to their iPods and boys are allowed to wear earrings.

"The cell phone policy has been outdated for years," Dignam said. "It's unrealistic and hypocritical, students were constantly getting in trouble for simply looking at their cell-phones in the hallway."

Students can also listen to their iPods during passing periods.

"If I was a student, I would probably want to listen to music with the longer 5 minute passing period," Dignam said.

However, students need to be responsible in order for the new policy changes to stay intact. They need to keep in mind

that electronics are not to be used in the classrooms and while texting is now allowed in the hallways, making calls is only allowed in the lunch room.

Another rule that changed is that previously boys were not allowed to wear earrings but now they are. The reason for the rule was that earrings could signify a gang affiliation. Dignam did not think this realistic.

"Boy's learning isn't going to be affected by whether or not they wear earrings," he said. "Since girls can wear earrings so can boys. Just like how guys can't wear hats and neither can girls. The same rules should apply to everyone."

Some of the students found out about the new rules even before the teachers. Dignam didn't want to say anything before the rules meeting.

"Everytime something happens or something is said, 20 rumors fly around," Dignam

joked.

While new policies are being implemented, some agree with them and some dislike them.

"No matter what I say or do, there's always going to be someone that is angry," Dignam said.

***"The cell phone policy has been outdated for years."***  
-Dr. Dignam

## New policy requires IDs be worn on Lane lanyards

By Aubrey Caraballo

School officials have made wearing IDs with lanyards mandatory this year. Students who have been at Lane longer find the new custom hard to adjust to.

"I am a senior now and it is not what I'm used to," said Lizzie Green, Div. 378.

Green does not wear her ID all the time. She puts it on whenever she is asked to.

"If I know I am going to come in contact with a security guard, it is necessary to wear it," she said.

Senior class vice president Mykee Hugh, Div. 377, said the lanyards are not the issue

"It is fine they make us wear them for our safety," he said. "It is not cool they forced us to pay for them."

The lanyards were mandatory to buy on the student fee sheet, but not every student received one. Everyone who did not buy a lanyard was given a debt.

"They should have just included them in the standard fee this year," Hugh said.

The Lane lanyards are the only ones

allowed to be worn inside the school.

"I do not see why it has to be a Lane lanyard," said Carina Coss, Div. 375. "If I have this one for free, why do I need a Lane Tech one?"

Coss also pointed out that it will be hard to make sure everyone wears their lanyard because the school has over 4000 students.

Some students do not like the lanyards, but others do not think they are a big deal.

"Just put the thing on!" said Wendy Franklin, Div. 451. "If everybody wears it then no one should be ashamed to."

Franklin said the lanyards are not too bad because they are not noticeable.

"It is not like it is affecting my wardrobe," she said. "It is just a little string with an ID on it."

Wearing lanyards prevents students from always going into their book bags to take their ID's out.

"It is always within sight around your neck," Franklin said. "The school does not always have to ask where it is."

Coss said it is weird to wear them because ever since she was a freshman they were considered lame.

"It was mostly freshmen who wore their IDs," she said. "Now you can't tell which class is which because everyone is wearing them."

Even though wearing lanyards is out of the ordinary for the upperclassmen, the younger students can create a new trend.

"The freshmen look up to us," Coss said. "If we wear our IDs then everybody else is going to wear them."

Kyle Miller-Davila, Div. 668, said he would wear his lanyard even if nobody else did.

"I adjusted to [the rules] and I do not like breaking [them]," he said.

Even though he wears his lanyard whenever he is in the hallway, sometimes he will take it off in class.

"It could get irritating when you wear it all the time," he said. "But you can take it off if you are in a class where the teacher won't mind."

## School Store now run by PTO

By Matthew Wettig

With a change in administration, many major changes were made around the school, one being the planned termination of the school store.

Luckily for students, the Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) took charge and began running the school store.

"He [Dr. Dignam] asked if we wanted run the school store, if we wouldn't have there wouldn't be a store right now," said Melissa Morales, Vice President of the PTSO.

The PTSO has been busy making changes to the store, from giving it a fresh coat of paint, to restocking it with several new items, ranging from

newly designed T-shirts to sweatshirts. The store is only open on Fridays, from 11am until 1pm.

Morales said that these would be the store's ideal hours, but with things still changing, nothing is official yet.

Currently, only cash is accepted, but Morales said that they are in the working towards accepting debit/credit cards.

The store is currently being run by eight PTSO volunteers, with the funds benefitting the "Shoot for the Stars" program, which attempts to equip all of Lane's 150 classrooms with state-of-the-art technology, including SMART board technology and instructor iPads.

Lane does not currently have an online store, but the PTSO has set their sights on reopening it.

## Wendy's serves up trays to help science department

By Priscilla Monsivais

During the strike, teachers yelled, held up posters, and marched up and down the street. While Mrs. Trine also did this, she was also cooking up an idea.

The Science Department needed a way to get trays. Five different classes all used one lab room, so teachers setting up their own materials for labs turned chaotic.

The science teachers knew there was a definite need for organization and trays were the answer. They could set up the materials for each student on a tray, and have it on the counter for their students to pick up. But the budget bought the more important materials first, and trays were not included.

"Why don't we ask local businesses around Lane to donate some?" Mrs. Trine said to herself.

So she and a couple chemistry teachers asked around. After trying several businesses they finally walked into Wendy's. The General Manager, Mary Gregory, was more than happy to donate trays. She talked to her boss, and they ordered

around 30-40 small and large trays.

Gregory said she did it because there are good people at Lane. The staff has always been nice to her and kept her informed of when Lane students had a day off, football games, Homecoming, so they could anticipate smaller or larger than normal crowds.

"Because the [kids] are the business, they take care of us," Gregory said.

She decided to show her appreciation for the teacher's kindness by giving them the trays.

Gregory was also sympathetic towards the teachers because she understood the feeling of being shut down by people.

During Halloween, Wendy's offers Jr. Frosty coupon treat books for only \$1. Ninety percent of the sales go to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. Gregory took it upon herself to take this offer to the streets and ask for donations. But like the teachers, she has been denied.

Gregory knew that it was not too much out of her way to get the trays, so she would do it.

"It was like, you look out for me and I'll look out for you," Gregory said.