

**Polly Wants an Answer**

Shaker parents may be hearing a lot about the new parrot at the Middle School. It's not a pet; it's a new way to keep students engaged and on track with assignments. ClassParrot is a computer-based messaging service that allows teachers to communicate interactively, using text messages sent to a student's or parent's cell phone.

Last spring, Spanish teacher Ellen Roberts tested the idea of texting with her students as a means of increasing their vocabulary. By texting a word a day to her students, she was able to increase their acquisition by 18 percent compared to students not receiving the texts. When she added an interactive component, by requiring the students to respond to her texts, she found that participating students acquired and retained new Spanish words at a 31 percent higher rate than those in her control group.

Roberts' findings were rewarded with a first-place win and cash prize from the Arminius Foundation, established by Shaker graduate, entrepreneur, and philanthropist Craig Stout ('66). The Arminius Prize challenges teachers to test how a specific technology tool might be effective in helping students learn. (For more information about the winning entries, visit [shaker.org](http://shaker.org).)

While texting proved to be an effective way to interact with her students, Roberts found it cumbersome to type the messages into her cell phone. Science teacher Jeremy Bishko provided the perfect solution by introducing her to ClassParrot, a product he learned about at an educational forum. The product allows teachers to create the message on a computer and to schedule the time they would like it to be delivered to students. Students and parents self-enroll, so the teachers don't actually have their cell phone numbers, and vice versa.

Texting lends itself to quick reminders and feedback. It's quick, portable, and low-cost. More important, it is the preferred mode of communication for teens. Says Bishko, "I use ClassParrot to let students know what we'll be doing in class the next day, or to send out a short quiz that requires a one- or two-word answer.

ClassParrot can graph out for me the percentage of students who answered correctly. This gives me feedback as to whether or not the students grasp the concept."

Roberts' and Bishko's results piqued the interest of Principal Danny Young and Assistant Superintendent Marla Robinson, who have since given the green light to any Middle School teachers who want to try the technology with their students.

"My only initial concern was whether enough students had access to text messaging for this to be useful," says Robinson. "What we're learning is that in just about every family, someone has a cell phone."

A growing number of Middle School teachers are now using ClassParrot to reach their students beyond the hours of the school day, to remind them of assignments, to assess learning, and even to request donations for the food drive at school.

Robinson speaks from experience when she says, "You have to be extremely creative to hook a middle school student's interest." As an educator and the parent of a daughter at the Middle School, she has heard the arguments for and against the use of technology for this age group. "Sometimes, educators are more focused on the negative impact of technology. Here, the approach is to take what kids love and use it to further their education."

**Getting Families Off to a Good Start**

Ouimet Smith and Glo Morris are often the first point of contact for new families in the Shaker Schools, whether they're coming from a neighboring district or from halfway around the world.

Smith, who assumed duties as registrar last summer, knows what it takes to get new students up to speed, having formerly served as assistant principal at Lomond and Woodbury elementary schools. Morris has been welcoming new families for 14 years, first as the Administration Building's receptionist and, for the past five years, as administrative assistant in the registration office. Here's what they have to say about getting new families off to a good start:

**How many students enroll in the Shaker Schools in a typical week? Where are they coming from?**

During the summer, which is our busiest time, we can register up to three families per hour, every day. Once school is in session, we typically register two or three families per day. We have families enrolling from Cleveland and all the surrounding suburbs as well as from across the

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Glo Morris and Ouimet Smith welcome new families with a comprehensive orientation.

country. And we have definitely seen an increase in international enrollment; we have students from Egypt, Libya, India, China, Latin America, Europe – it's truly a very international community here.

### **How do you help new students and their families feel welcome and get up to speed quickly?**

We now schedule registrations by appointment, so that we can devote the time and energy to each family that they deserve and reduce their waiting time. This allows us to learn more about their needs and interests. Often, we can match them up with another family with similar circumstances to help them get oriented.

For families who are new to the area, we provide a comprehensive orientation packet, which includes information about the area, the schools, academic guidelines, lunch menus, everything they need to get up to speed. We provide each school with a list of new families so that the staff and PTO can reach out to them and help them feel welcome.

Also, we now administer academic assessments here at the Administration Building for students in grades 5-12. During the registration appointment, while the parent completes paperwork, the student takes an online assessment that provides us with a snapshot of abilities to help guide his or her class placement.

### **How does the registrar's office accommodate international families?**

If English is not the family's first language, we have a list of staff members who speak other languages and can be called in to assist. We also put them in touch with one of the District's teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL). The District and the City co-manage a database of residents who speak other languages, so we can also put them in touch with another family that speaks their native language to help them feel comfortable here more quickly. And we make them aware of other community resources, such as adult ESL.

### **When should families with incoming kindergartners register?**

Mid-February is the best time to start registering for kindergarten. Sometimes families hold off on registering because their child has not yet received all of their immunizations. You don't have to wait – it's better to start the process now and you can bring us the immunization records when you get them. The best way to get started is to come to one of the open houses we offer beginning in February (see [shaker.org/kindergarten](http://shaker.org/kindergarten) for a schedule), or stop by the Administration Building to pick up a packet.

### **In addition to enrolling new students, what are some of the other functions of the registrar's office?**

Part of our job involves residency compliance. Occasionally, students who do not meet residency requirements attend Shaker Schools. There are some, but not many. Any time a suspicion is raised, we investigate diligently, using a variety of techniques. If a student is found to be enrolled improperly, he or she is withdrawn and the parents are billed. Our close relationships with the City housing inspectors, police, and landlords help us to keep on top of this issue.

We also process information about changes of address or phone number. If you move, we need to know about it! A lot of times residents forget to let us know, and it can impact the student's transportation route or cause the family to miss an important mailing. Residents need to provide proof of their new address.

Bottom line, we are here to be welcoming and helpful to our families, not just when they are new but throughout their time here.

### **What reasons do families share with you for choosing the Shaker schools?**

The number one reason that families tell us they chose Shaker is that our schools

provide a top-notch curriculum and great opportunities for their child. People also remark a lot on the beautiful housing and see the diversity of our community as a big plus.



### **What Families Need for Registration**

To register a student, families will need the following original documents:

- A certified copy of your child's birth certificate or passport.
- Complete immunization record.
- Three items as proof of residence within the Shaker Heights City School District.
- Withdrawal forms from previous school, if applicable.
- Divorce, custody or guardianship documents, if applicable.
- Parent or guardian's photo ID.
- Current special education records, if applicable.

Please note that one of the three required forms of proof of residence must be a certificate of occupancy for any two-family or single home rental, and/or a current signed lease, mortgage verification, or signed purchase agreement.

Additional proofs of residency may include a current utility bill, income or employment verification, tax correspondence, or other verification from a financial institution. Visit [shaker.org/registration](http://shaker.org/registration) for more information.

**Assessing Repairs and Improvements**

The School District has established an advisory committee to assess needs for repairs and improvements of the school buildings, grounds, and athletic fields. The group will make recommendations for both immediate and long-term repairs and improvements, as well as funding sources for capital needs.

Made up primarily of Shaker residents with expertise in the fields of engineering, architecture, and finance, the committee will be headed by John (Jack) Boyle III, the recently retired vice president for business and finance at Cleveland State University. Boyle is widely credited for leading the transformation of the CSU campus over the past decade.

"We have many needs and limited resources," Superintendent of Schools Mark Freeman told the group. "Therefore, high priority should be given to exploring all possible funding sources. Other priorities include emerging instructional needs, the conservation of energy and other resources, incorporation of 'green' principles, making our facilities accessible to all, preserving the architectural character of our buildings, and promoting student health and fitness."

Joining Boyle on the committee are:

- **Richard Bauschard**, architect and historic restoration expert.
- **R. Kevin Madison**, vice president of Robert P. Madison International, Inc., a Cleveland-based architectural, engineering, and planning firm.
- **Linda Rae**, an electrical engineer and president of Keithley Instruments, Inc.
- **Paul Repasy**, a science teacher at Shaker Heights Middle School.
- **Stephen J. Strnisha**, a strategist specializing in public-private financing for development projects.

- **Lee C. Weingart**, president of LNE Group, a firm specializing in strategic advocacy and lobbying.
- **Christopher Wynn**, director of design for Osports, a division of Osborn Engineering specializing in athletic and recreational facilities.



**Shaker's "Black-Tie Block Party" Turns 20**

Join your friends and neighbors to celebrate the 20th anniversary of A Night for the Red & White! This year's event is projected to bring the total funds raised to more than \$2 million for the educational enrichment of all Shaker students.

Since 1992, proceeds from the highly successful event have helped to enhance opportunities in the arts, technology, health, and fitness. Each year, the celebration brings together several hundred Shaker parents, faculty members, graduates, and community leaders for an evening of dining, dancing, silent auction, and student performances.

**Save the date:**

A Night for the Red & White  
 Saturday, March 10  
 The Executive Caterers at Landerhaven  
 Mayfield Heights  
 To register or donate, visit [shaker.org/redandwhite](http://shaker.org/redandwhite). Questions, call 216-295-4325.

**Alumni Update**

**Daniel G. Berick**, '80, was named as a corporate practice leader for the Cleveland law firm of Squire, Sanders & Dempsey. Berick will serve as regional practice coordinator for the Americas. His practice focuses on securities law, corporate fi-

nance, and corporate transaction matters. He counsels public and privately held companies, investment banking firms, and venture capital firms. Berick is routinely named an Ohio Super Lawyer by Thomson Reuters and was named Best Lawyers 2011 Cleveland Securities Lawyer of the Year.

**Daniel R. Elliott III**, '81, is serving as the fifth chairman of the Surface Transportation Board, the federal agency charged with resolving railroad rate and service disputes and with reviewing railroad mergers. He was nominated to the four-year term by President Obama in 2009. Elliott brings to the Board two decades of experience as an attorney, including 16 years of litigating in the transportation field. During his tenure, he has pushed for greater transparency by holding public oral arguments on major cases and by transforming the Board's website to provide easier public access to Board proceedings. Prior to holding this position, Elliott served as assistant general counsel to the United Transportation Union. He also worked in private practice in Cleveland and Washington, D.C.

**Jason Zone Fisher**, '02, has been enjoying some major "face time" of late. As a national spokesman for Gillette, he developed original content for his appearances at the Superbowl, the Major League All-Star Game, the ESPY Awards, and the Daytona 500, among other events. He is currently in the spotlight each week as the host of the Big Ten Network show Tailgate 48, which tells viewers "everything they need to do, everything they need to eat, and everyone they need to meet if they only had 48 hours leading up to the big game," says Fisher. The show airs on Thursdays at 7 pm on BTN. Viewers can also spot Fisher in a national television ad for Miller Lite beer and in the recent major film "Arena," starring Samuel L. Jackson. Fisher's previous credits include directing the documentary, "Swing State" in 2008.

*For the latest news and info about the Shaker schools, visit [shaker.org](http://shaker.org). To receive regular e-news updates, subscribe at [shaker.org/news](http://shaker.org/news). Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/ForShakerSchools](http://facebook.com/ForShakerSchools).*