

Carnegie Mellon University Children's School May 2021 Family Newsletter

Ocean Lessons Supported by Museum Loans

Patrick McShea from the Carnegie Museum of Natural History recently wrote an article about the ways that our Whole School Oceans Unit was enhanced by the materials we borrowed from the Educator Loan Collection (see <https://carnegiemnh.org/ocean-lessons/>). Despite the pandemic safety protocols limiting the set of materials we could borrow, we were “able to borrow encased



taxidermy mounts of several saltwater fish, plastic scale models of six different whale species, and a sea turtle shell, but not touchable examples of sea stars, sponges, sea fans, and delicate corals.” When interviewed for the article, Mrs. Perovich noted the links our youngest children made between the live classroom aquariums she developed for each class and the taxidermy mount cases. We appreciate the CMNH’s contributions to our children’s learning.

CMU’s Arbor Day Tree Planting

On Wednesday, April 28th, our Preschool 4’s and PreKindergarten friends got to watch CMU’s Arbor Day Tree Planting as a visible sign of our commitment to care for the environment. The Facilities Management & Campus Services team planted a Cooper Beech tree. Mary’s grandmother is the environmental coordinator for Carnegie Mellon’s FMCS, so they had a surprise visit at the event.



May 2021 Dates

Thursday, May 20th - Last Regular Day for ALL Programs

Friday, May 21st - Kindergarten Graduation at 10:00am

In the Reflection Garden (Immediate Families Only)

Monday, May 24th to Thursday, May 27th – Professional Development Days

Monday, June 7th – First Day of “Plants & Dirt” Camp

All of these dates are posted on our web calendar!

<https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs/>



Year End Celebrations

Carnegie Mellon's Chief of Staff, Daryl Weinert, has approved our request for each Children's School class to host a brief year-end celebration outdoors in May. Based on our class sizes and available outdoor space, these gatherings will be limited to children's immediate families only (i.e., parents and siblings) and will not involve eating together, so that everyone except infants can wear masks at all times.



- PreKindergarten Celebration: Friday, May 7th from 10:30-11:45am on the Playground
Rain Date Friday, May 14 (Playground 8:30-9:30am)
- Preschool 4's Celebration: Friday, May 14th from 11:30am-12:15pm on the Playground
Rain Date Thursday, May 13 (Playground 12:30-1:15pm)
- Remote Learning Group Celebration: Saturday, May 15th from 10:00-11:00am on the Playground
- Preschool 3's Celebration: Monday, May 17th from 12:30-1:15pm on the Playground
Rain Date Tuesday, May 18 (Playground 12:30-1:15pm)
- Kindergarten Graduation: Friday, May 21st at 10:00am in the Reflection Garden,
Rain Date Thursday, May 20 (Reflection Garden 12:30pm)

Please note that some of the Rain Dates are actually prior to the Celebration Date. Please reserve both dates on your calendars. We will watch the weather and let you know as soon as possible if we need to switch from our first-choice date to our rain date. We look forward to celebrating with you and hope that the connections you make with other families will help you engage your child with peers during the summer months before our next school year begins.

Teacher Appreciation Week (May 3rd to 7th)



In so many ways, this school year has been like no other. At the same time, like any year, the key to our success is the educators who collaborate with their team to prepare a warm and welcoming environment, design a developmentally appropriate curriculum, engage directly with our children and families, and in so many other ways dedicate themselves to the early care and education of our children. We are grateful for your commitment to sharing yourselves and your expertise with us.

Please be sure to tell your child's teachers what a difference they made for your family this year!

End of Year Gift Giving

As the school year comes to an end, please consider donating to the Children's School. Your generosity impacts children's lives. Gifts to the Children's School can be designated to support our general fund, our professional development fund, or our scholarship fund. Please visit <https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs/giving/index.html> or contact Miss Hancock at 412-268-2198 for more information.

Scholarship Funding Update

We recently received notification from the Central Pennsylvania Scholarship Fund (CPSF) that we have been selected to receive scholarship funds. Our donors are Kevin & Katrina Heher, Dr. Stacy Lane, and Andrew Fisher. CPSF is a Special Purpose Entity (SPE), which is a pass-through partnership that exists solely for the purpose of earning Educational Improvement (or Opportunity Scholarship) Tax Credits. The Central PA Scholarship Fund is a non-profit that administers various SPEs at no cost to the school.

Who Qualifies?

Any individual or any corporation who pays PA income tax is eligible. There are also options available to individuals who work for non-profits and retirees. CPSF acts as an intermediary, providing individuals and companies who would ordinarily have trouble giving to EITC and OSTC an option to utilize these worthwhile programs. The minimum donation to join the SPE is \$3,500.

How does it work?

Donors complete a Joinder Agreement (simple one-page document) that acts as a reservation for the amount of credits for which you wish to apply. You will need to estimate your 2020 or 2021 tax liability for your planned donation. The reservations are taken on a first come, first served basis.

Additional Questions?

Contact Linda Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu or CPSF directly via Tami Clark at 814-942-4406/814-682-9035 or tami@cpsfcharity.org.



We are sending our children to the MOON!!

Well... their names anyway. Moonshot, a CMU Crowdfunding initiative, is raising funds to support Iris "the world's first nano, non-governmental, self-determined, self-funded, university-initiated, and student-developed rover that will operate beyond planet Earth. 'Iris' is the size of a shoebox and will weigh only a pound in the Moon's light gravity."

The logo for the Iris Lunar Rover is set against a red square background. The word 'IRIS' is written in a large, white, stylized font. Below it, the words 'LUNAR ROVER' are written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

Because the Children's School is donating to this campaign, the first names of our educators and students will be added to a list that will be aboard Iris at launch.

Visit this site for more information:

<https://crowdfunding.cmu.edu/campaigns/moonshot#/>



PA Private Academic School License

Because of the pandemic, the PA Private Academic School license renewal review process at the state level has been delayed. We submitted our annual report early, but our renewal is still pending.



Opportunity for Input via our Family Survey

During the 2021-2022 school year, we will be preparing documentation for our accreditation renewal through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). To gather perspectives from Children's School families on our work during this pandemic school year, we are conducting a **Family Survey** to gather your input. The survey will launch during the first full week of May and remain open for 10 days. Your honest feedback will help us reflect on the work that we have done this year so that we can best prepare for the "near normal" year ahead.

Adopt the Garden

During July and August, our garden will continue to grow but needs some friends to help with watering and weeding. CMU COVID19 protocols will apply for anyone coming to campus. If your family would be interested in adopting our garden for a week in July or August, please contact Miss Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu.



Classroom Pictures

Families are always welcome to download the photos and videos from the classroom web sites for their own personal use. For your convenience, your child's teachers will collect all of the year's photos into a Google folder that families can download all at once. Watch your classroom blog during the last week of school for directions and the Google folder link. Please remember that during the enrollment process, all parents & guardians signed an agreement that you will not post photographs of other people's children or of adults besides yourselves on the web or in social media venues. You can find more detail on our social media recommendations in your Family Handbook. Review the year's photos with your child so that together you can affirm how much they have grown this year!

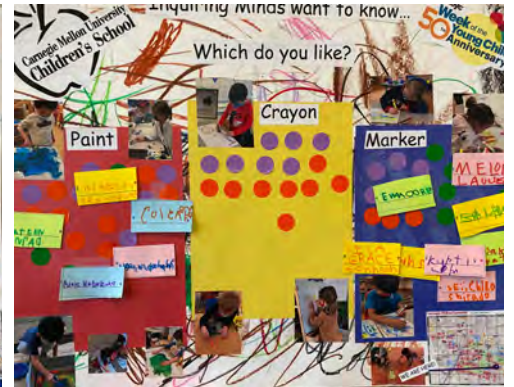
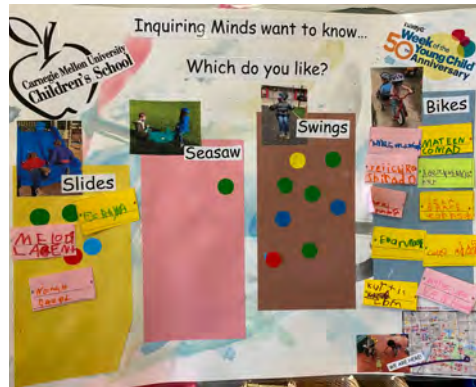
Enjoy Pittsburgh's Children's Theater Festival



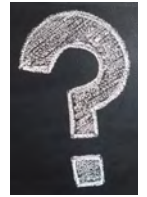
The Pittsburgh Children's Theater Festival is running from May 1st to 16th, with (see <https://pghkids.trustarts.org>). This year's festival features virtual performances, story readings, activities, workshops with artists, a Frog Stop Scavenger Hunt and much more from local and international artists and organizations for kids and teens of all ages. Some of the events require tickets but others are free, such as live animal encounters with the animal ambassadors from the Carnegie Museum of Natural History on Saturday, May 8th at 11am.

Week of the Young Child

April 10th through 16th was the 50th Anniversary of NAEYC's Week of the Young Child so we took the opportunity to revisit childhood in the 1970's. We advertised our presence on Carnegie Mellon's campus by conducting a few poster surveys, spreading cheer by offering pet rocks at the Tartan Testing site, and distributing freeze pops from the Yellow Room window to passersby. We benefit greatly from the support of our campus community, so the Week of the Young Child is one opportunity for us to show our appreciation. This year, we are especially grateful to CMU's Design Department for the loan of the Yellow Room for our PreKindergarten class. They have loved learning in that new space!



Big Questions for Young Minds



Be a Good Listener

Whether your family goes to the beach, the mountains or just hangs around the neighborhood this summer – take advantage of this time to support your youngest critical thinkers. Remember to ask open-ended questions and to ask for your child's opinion. Start questions with "I wonder..." or "What do you notice..." And remember – children know when adults are truly interested in what they are saying. Here are a few characteristics of good listeners:

- Makes eye contact
- Is patient and doesn't interrupt
- Uses a pleasant tone when asking questions
- Responds both verbally and non-verbally
- Focuses attention on the speaker
- Follows up with another question or comment.

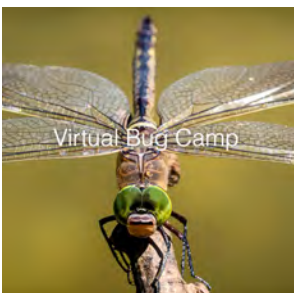


During June, try exploring **Plants & Dirt** with your children, whether or not they are participating in our in-person and remote summer camp. There is still space in Mrs. Blizman's Remote Camp group, and everyone can access her posted learning materials at the Remote Learning web site:

<https://cmukindergarten.weebly.com/remote-learning.html>.

The Children's School is also offering a free virtual July Camp on **Light, Shadow, Air & Wind** so families can explore Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM). Discover and explore while having fun with these concepts. Each day begins with a book (or online reading of the book) introducing the concept. Easy science demonstrations and experiments that tie into the concept are presented. Art activities, games, and songs are sprinkled throughout the month.

You will receive an email at the end of June with a .pdf document that has background information for the adults in your family and a day by day plan for the four-week unit. All the STEAM activities require minimal materials and have easy directions that include links or photos to help with set up. The great advantage to STEAM is that there is no right way to do things! We would love to hear if you generated another idea!



Lastly, if you'd like ideas for August, try utilizing the **Virtual Bug Camp** that we offered last June. All the materials are still posted at <https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs/resources/for-families/bug-camp/index.html>. Even if you did the activities last summer, try them again so that your child can build on what they learned with the skills from their last year of cognitive development. They will also be more confident and independent, have better motor skills, and be more ready to draw what they see!

Enjoy your summertime family explorations! We'd love to see your favorite photos!

Family Spotlight: Teachers & Love of Learning

Heloise said in the Yellow Room, "I want to be a teacher and make robots." That's probably because her mom is a professor at Toulouse University in France, and a visiting researcher at CMU, and her father a roboticist.

Heloise was born in France and moved to Pittsburgh when she was 2.5 years old. She spoke French first and learnt English while in Pittsburgh. Heloise started in the Green Room and is now in Kindergarten, and she already corrects her mother's English! Being foreigners, we valued that the Children's School had so many multilingual children. The teachers are used to interacting with non-native speakers. What we were looking for was a school that Heloise would love attending and that gave her the love of learning. The CMU Children's School exceeded our expectations! She loves her teachers and jumps out of the car every morning to join her friends.



We have enjoyed making new friends among the Children's School families. We also love watching Heloise learn about the oceans, ancient Egypt, and so much more, by doing super creative projects.

A big thank you to the teachers of Green Room, Yellow Room, Remote Learning, Kindergarten, and to Dr. Carver for starting her learning journey on such a strong footing.

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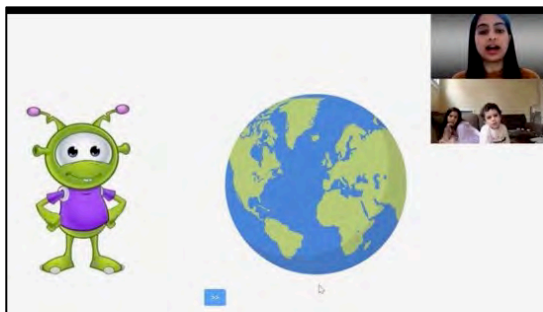
Research Spotlight

The Matching Game

Emma Gurchiek, a research associate working with Dr. Catarina Vales and Dr. Anna Fisher, is conducting a remote study to examine how children's knowledge in the domain of animals supports their ability to make inferences in that domain. In this study, researchers ask children to complete two games: In the first game, children help a bear sort cards with different plants and animals (e.g., peas, gorillas, etc.) and arrange the cards on their computer screen based on what they think goes together. Researchers use the spatial distance between items to infer which items a child thinks are more strongly related. In the second game, children help an Alien learn about the plants and animals on Earth by indicating which animals are more likely to share properties. Children will be told that an animal (e.g., a gorilla) is hiding behind a tree and has a fictional property (e.g., 'hydracan eyes'). Then children decide which of two other things may also share that property (e.g., a hippo or lettuce). Using these two games, researchers can examine how children's knowledge of animals underlies their guesses about unobservable properties of animals. The results of this study will help researchers better understand the way that children use their existing knowledge to learn new information.



The Teach Poko Words Game



Tania Dhaliwal, a research associate working with Dr. Anna Fisher and Dr. Bonnie Nozari, is conducting a remote study of word comprehension. When we speak, our ability to produce the correct word is affected by the words we produced previously, and by the relations among these words. In this study, researchers examine how word comprehension in children is affected when words presented together share features (for example, *dog* and *cat* that are both animals, are furry, have four legs, etc.), or

when words presented together share a similar context (for example, *dog* and *leash* that have no shared features but are likely to occur together in the world), or when words are unrelated to each other (for example, *dog* and *fork*).

The researcher introduces children to a picture of a friendly alien named Poko who is visiting Earth to learn some new words in English. Poko needs to practice and needs the children's help to remember the words he learned, so children are asked to tell

Poko if the names he says for pictures shown on the screen are correct, and to reply as fast as they can. Children will hear audio of an English word and then immediately see a picture, and children respond with 'yes' or 'no' as fast as possible to tell Poko whether the word they heard matched the picture or not. The results of this experiment can help us better understand the development of knowledge organization in the brain and how it is linked to language.



Bird



Car



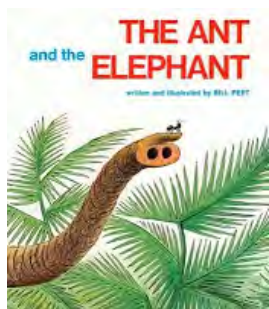
Kite

Director's Corner: Advances for All

The final practice advocated by Zander and Zander in *The Art of Possibility* is "Telling the WE Story". Instead of focusing on Us vs. Them, we envision a transformative possibility of connection and communication. "By telling the WE story, an individual becomes a conduit for the new inclusive entity, wearing its eyes and ears, feeling its heart, thinking its thoughts, inquiring into what is best for US" (p. 183). Notice that this story is not about compromise between opposing desires, but rather about being open to integrating a broader set of desires such that together we can "wish inclusively."



Even in well-functioning marriages, families, laboratory schools, and universities, our differences in values and perspectives yield many opportunities for conflict that can lead to negative interactions that then spiral relationships downward. Parents vs. children, educators vs. administrators, faculty vs. staff vs. students, educators vs. researchers, men vs. women, veterans vs. newcomers, and so it goes. At the Children's School, we begin to tell the WE story by the language that we use. We call the children "friends" to avoid the divisive labeling by gender that pervades most schools (e.g., "Listen, boys and girls ..."). While we do have a hierarchical staff structure to clarify the chain of responsibility, we most frequently function as "teams" (e.g., the 3's team, the administrative team, etc.). In our interactions, we seek ways for everyone to contribute to our collaborative endeavor positively and productively. In Zander and Zander's words, the goal is to invent stories "that will take us from an entrenched posture of hostility to one of enthusiasm and deep regard" (p. 182).



One story that clearly demonstrates both the potential for and value of taking the opportunity to contribute to a more harmonious community is "The Ant and the Elephant" by Bill Peet. Each character, beginning with a tiny ant, encounters problems during the day, but none are willing to help each other until the friendly elephant enters the scene. There's no reward for the elephant beyond a simple thank you from the ant, and there is much badgering and ungratefulness along the way. Nonetheless, the elephant chooses to pleasantly help each animal. His problem comes when he begins to brag that he is always the helper and will never need others to help him. The WE story begins to emerge when the elephant needs rescuing, and the grateful ant recruits an entire community of ants to strive beyond what any of them thought possible. The book's publicity material summarizes the story as, "many creatures are helped when two animals refuse to conform to the rules of the jungle."

As graduation approaches at CMU and at the Children's School, we reflect with gratitude on the innovative connections and collaborations that made our school year on campus possible, even though some needed to work and learn remotely. Our comfortable routines were not appropriate for the pandemic context, and the uncertainty and fear related to the Coronavirus threatened to derail our planning and drain our budget. The challenge we faced was to proactively engage our passions to consider new possibilities to create a desirable learning context for everyone involved. The CMU and Children's School leadership teams both chose to tell the WE story by continually asking, "What do WE want to happen? What's best for US? What's OUR next step? (p. 184)". We sincerely appreciate everyone who engaged in the dialogue, shared your spark, and became a contribution so that together we could envision the possibilities that became a creative and constructive school year. Let's use *The Art of Possibility* lessons as we approach a "near normal" for our 2021-2022 year.

May

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
3's: Birds 4's: Transportation PreK: Birds Remote/K: Oviparous Animals						1
2	3	4	5	6	7 10:30-11:45am PreK Celebration (Rain Date Friday, May 14 8:30-9:30am)	8
9	10	11	12	13	14 11:30am-12:15pm Preschool 4's Celebration (Rain Date Thursday, May 13 12:30-1:15pm)	15 10:00-11:00am Remote Friends Celebration on the Playground
16	17 12:30-1:15pm Preschool 3's Celebration (Rain Date Tuesday, May 18 12:30-1:15) May Safety Week	18	19	20 Last Day for All Programs	21 10am Kindergarten Graduation and Celebration (Rain Date Thursday, May 20)	22
23	24 Educator Professional Development	25	26	27	28 Children's School Closed through June 1st for Memorial Day Holiday	29
30	31 Memorial Day Office Closed					"PLANTS & DIRT" Camp begins Monday, June 7th!!



Children's School

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412-268-2199

2021