

# Carnegie Mellon University Children's School November 2021 Family Newsletter

## Gift of a Pumpkin Patch

A HUGE thank-you to CMU's Facilities Management and Campus Services (FMCS) for donating 100 pumpkins to the Children's School and to FMS volunteers Rachel, Sandy, and Sean for turning our playground into a Pumpkin Patch!! The children had a marvelous time picking their perfect pumpkin!



The Kindergartners later used the pumpkins for Pumpkin Exploration Day. They measured the pumpkins in various ways, experimented with sink/float and rolling, drew their pumpkins, and counted the seeds inside to test their predictions.



### November / December 2021 Dates

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter: Monday, November 1<sup>st</sup> through Friday, December 17<sup>th</sup>

Children's School Virtual Book Fair: November 1<sup>st</sup> through 14<sup>th</sup>  
<https://www.childrensbookstore.com/welcome/?ref=6fere9w>

CMU's Virtual Food Drive: November 1<sup>st</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup>  
<https://secure.qgiv.com/event/cmu2affdsbsc/team/888142/donate/>

Zoom Conversation re: School Choices: Tuesday, November 16 from Noon to 1pm  
(Watch for an email with the Zoom Link.)

Parent / Teacher Conferences (Chose In-Person or Zoom)  
Afternoon of November 19<sup>th</sup> or All Day December 3<sup>rd</sup> (No School)



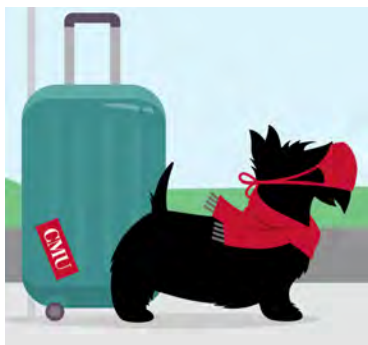
## Pandemic Guidance re: Return to School

While COVID-19 cases in Allegheny County continue at high levels and the fall holidays are on the horizon, we must all remain vigilant to minimize the introduction of COVID-19 to our school community and prevent its spread here. While our children remain unvaccinated, it is especially important that we all contribute to the identification of COVID-19 and support its containment. For those reasons, we are clarifying our guidance for when children can safely return to school after illness, close contact with COVID-19, and travel. Brief summaries are here, but the full policies are attached to this newsletter and have been emailed to all families.



A note from a medical professional OR a negative COVID-19 test (PCR or Antigen) is required for children to **return to school for any absence due to illness**. Individuals must also be fever-free for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medication), any other symptoms must have improved (without medication), and they must be able to comfortably participate in usual program activities. If any household member (parent, sibling, etc.) is symptomatic, unvaccinated children should remain at home. Once the symptomatic person has received a negative COVID-19 test result or an alternate diagnosis (strep, flu, etc.) from a medical professional, asymptomatic children may return to school.

Children who had **close contact** with someone who has a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis should quarantine at home for 10 days after their last exposure. Per the Allegheny County Health Department, quarantine may be ended after 7 days if the person does not develop symptoms with careful daily monitoring and tests negative for the virus. The test should be performed on the fifth day after the exposure or later.



The “*CDC recommends delaying travel until you are able to get fully vaccinated. If you are traveling with children who cannot get vaccinated at this time, follow recommendations for people who are not fully vaccinated and choose the safer travel options*” described in “[Safer Travel Tips for Families with Unvaccinated Children](#)”

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-risk.html>). If you decide to **travel with unvaccinated children**, please follow all the [Tartan Responsibility](#) (<https://www.cmu.edu/coronavirus/students/tartans-responsibility.html>) guidelines and choose the lowest risk options related to [CMU’s Travel Risk Definitions](#) (<https://www.cmu.edu/coronavirus/travel-protocol/travel-risk.html>).

Upon return from high-risk travel, families should follow CDC guidelines for testing and quarantine as well as monitor closely for symptoms of COVID-19. In addition to following CDC guidance, anyone who exhibits COVID-like symptoms upon return from any travel, should stay home and contact their health care provider to determine if they should be tested for COVID-19.

Finally, CMU has introduced a **new “attestation” requirement** for campus program participants, including parents/guardians who visit the Children’s School for longer than bringing their children to or from school. Beginning November 1<sup>st</sup>, any parents/guardians who wish to schedule an in-person conference or a birthday celebration in their child’s class will need to attest that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or had a negative PCR test within 72 hours of the event.

Remember that the CMU and Children’s School learning communities are depending on everyone taking appropriate steps to keep ourselves and each other safe and healthy throughout the remainder of this pandemic and beyond.

## Children's Bookstore Fundraising Page



Did you know we have our own web page at Children's Bookstore that raises funds for The Children's School through book purchases? It's true! By choosing to shop for books at the link below, you support our school all year long! Please feel free to share this link with friends and family anywhere in the U.S. You can also post information about our book fair on Facebook or Twitter.

**We earn 15% of book purchases made at this link every day.**

**During our virtual book fairs, we earn 25% of every purchase!**

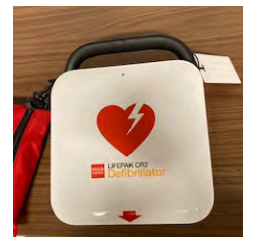
**Our upcoming book fair is November 1<sup>st</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>!**

Shop at this link: <https://www.childrensbookstore.com/welcome/?ref=6fere9w>

**Happy Reading!**

## Safety Enhancement

We are pleased to announce that CMU'S Environmental Health and Safety team will be installing a new Automated External Defibrillator (AED) in the Main Hallway at the Children's School. An AED is used to help an individual experiencing a cardiac arrest. This new device has a specific option to transition the device for use on a child or infant. Thank you, EH&S for helping to keep our community safe!



## CMU Community Food Drive

Carnegie Mellon University's 28th Annual Staff Council Food Drive is being held from November 1<sup>st</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup>. We have created our own fundraising team for The Children's School. Interested families can donate money virtually or bring non-perishable items from the attached list of most needed items to the Children's School. We will be discussing issues of hunger in our community with the children in developmentally appropriate ways, and the children will be involved in sorting and counting the donated items.

If you would like to make a monetary donation, you can do so through The Children's School's Fundraising Page here:

<https://secure.qgiv.com/event/cmu2affdsbsc/team/888142/donate/>

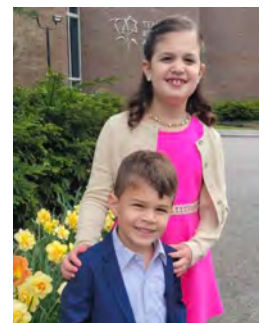
Please join fellow members of the campus community in helping to fight hunger in Pittsburgh!



## Family Spotlight: A Fortuitous Adventure

Ten years ago, Jeff and I were recruited to Pittsburgh. Jeff was approached by Pitt Plastic Surgery to perform body contouring and reconstructive plastic surgery procedures. In addition, we were together offered an opportunity to pioneer research on autologous fat grafting to the feet. I was a podiatric surgeon and owned a private practice with my father in Rochester, NY, so the move was bittersweet for me, but Jeff and I were newlyweds, and it was a special way to begin our life together. In January 2012, Jeff and I began our fortuitous adventure to Pittsburgh. In 2013, we were blessed with our spunky daughter Ellen. As fate would have it, a colleague of Jeff's mentioned that Ellen should get on a wait list to attend the CMU Children's School. Little did we realize, this advice would be the catalyst for the most special friendships and a comprehensive and stimulating educational foundation for our children, promoting kindness, creativity, and confidence.

Ellen began in 2016 and thrived in the Red Room. Not only did Ellen form strong bonds with fellow classmates, but she built friendships with student teachers from other countries (with whom she continues to stay in touch). She has so many special memories and endearing shenanigans with all the staff at the Children's School. Having no extended family in Pittsburgh, the Children's School provided our family with the warm embrace we were craving. CMU Children's School aka, "our Pittsburgh family", secured for me that the decision to move to Pittsburgh was serendipitous.



Due to Ellen's genuine love of the Children's School educators, she attempted to "caution" them about her brother Jason. Prior to Jason's arrival, Ellen forewarned the school that Jason was "trouble". In 2019, however, the magic of the Red Room intermingled perfectly with Jason's charm, ultimately dispelling Ellen's cautionary counsel. Over several years, the Children's School has provided Jason with warmth, confidence, and skills to explore his own identity and passions. He has formed strong bonds with his peers and teachers. The Children's School anchored both our children with strong roots to approach their future with open eyes, loving hearts, and creative energy.

Jeff and I continue to perform our foot fat grafting procedures and are developing an "all in one" fat grafting device and an immediately customizable foot offloading device that will enhance our procedure but also have many other medical and healing applications. Ellen and Jason are paramount in helping us brainstorm our future company logos and jingles. We are excited to see how our Pittsburgh adventures unfold as Ellen and Jason advance in elementary school and we begin a business. We will be forever grateful for our Children's School origins. You welcomed us, nurtured us, stimulated us, and confirmed that our move to Pittsburgh was truly "meant to be". You will forever be "Our Pittsburgh Family".



Love, Beth, Jason, Ellen & Jason Gusenoff

## Fall Parent / Teacher Conferences

The fall conferences are great opportunities for parents and teachers to discuss their views of each child's development. Watch for an email inviting you to schedule your parent-teacher conference for November 19<sup>th</sup> or December 3<sup>rd</sup>, as well as to choose whether to meet via Zoom or in person. Vaccination or negative COVID-19 test are pre-conditions for in-person conferences, masks are required, and each conference space will have an air purifier running. Whatever the venue, the educators look forward to meeting with parents to review the child's progress and plan strategies for further partnership in their education.

At the Children's School, our conferences are structured by the developmental objectives that are the focus of our program design.

- **Self-Esteem and Independence**
- **Interaction and Cooperation**
- **Communication**
- **Physical Capabilities / Health & Safety**
- **Discovery and Exploration**
- **Artistic Expression and Appreciation**



Teachers will highlight the progress they have seen in each area at school. We encourage parents to prepare for their child(ren)'s conference(s) by considering the progress they have noted at home, particularly in the context of family discussions of the daily classroom blog updates. One strategy is to identify one adjective to describe your child in each of the areas that will be discussed. Another is to recall one prototypical anecdote for each category. A third is to consider the school activities and events related to each area that your child has discussed with you. Finally, you might specify one goal related to each domain that you would like to see your child achieve during the next six months.

Sharing your views with your child(ren)'s teacher(s) facilitates productive dialogue about how your child is progressing in home and school environments. It's always interesting to see the parallels that exist between the two contexts, as well as the differences that are often evident. Parents and teachers will also dialogue about strategies they each can use to support children's growth.

## So Many School Choices

For the older children, the conference dialogue will help parents to choose the next school for their child so that its program will best match the child and family. When considering schools, be sure to note the birthday cutoff because many children with fall birthdays will need to do a pre-kindergarten year prior to traditional kindergarten. Attached to this newsletter is a helpful handout on Elementary School Options. In addition to this handout and the conference opportunity, Dr. Carver will host a Zoom conversation with interested families about School Choices on Tuesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> from noon to 1pm. We will start with questions submitted by families on our recent survey and then questions from the participants. We are privileged that you have entrusted your children to us and look forward to our continued partnership in their education.

## Recommendations for Elementary Schools

Many families are working on elementary school applications. If any require a recommendation from the Children's School, please obtain a Request for Release of Student Records form from Miss Hancock ([lh37@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:lh37@andrew.cmu.edu)). Send your request and the completed form via email to Miss Hancock. In December, she will send your child's conference report to the school(s) of your choice.

# Scholarship Funding Opportunities

## Educational Improvement Tax Credit Scholarship Organization (EITC) Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program (OSTC)

The Children's School participates in the state's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program, as well as the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) program.

Through EITC (see graphic at right), eligible Pennsylvania businesses can earn tax credits while providing financial assistance for children to attend preschool as well as grades K-12. Through OSTC, eligible Pennsylvania businesses

can earn tax credits for contributing funds to provide tuition assistance in the form of scholarships to eligible K-12th grade students residing within the boundaries of a low-achieving school so they can attend another public school outside of their district or a nonpublic school.



<https://dced.pa.gov/programs/educational-improvement-tax-credit-program-eitc/>

In 2020-21, The Children's School provided the following funding:

### 2020-21 Pre-K Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (PKEITC)

- 13 children received funding to attend Pre-K programs at 3 approved Preschools in Allegheny County.
  - 1 child attended Pittsburgh Urban Christian School.
  - 2 children attended Angel's Place.
  - 10 children attended the Children's School.
- \$6,615 was the average amount of scholarship awarded.
- The total amount of scholarship provided was \$86,000.
- Due to the Pandemic and smaller class sizes at the Children's School for 2020-21, the number of students receiving PKEITC funding was far less than usual while the scholarship awards were higher.

### 2020-21 Educational Improvement Tax Credit Scholarship Organization (EITCSO)

- 2 children received funding to attend our full day, licensed, and NAEYC accredited Kindergarten.
- \$5,500 was the average amount of scholarship awarded.
- The total amount of scholarship provided was \$11,000.

### 2020-21 Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program (OSTC)

- 39 children received funding to attend 14 different schools:
  - 38 children in Allegheny County
  - 1 child in Fayette County
- \$3,610 was the average amount of scholarship awarded.
- The total amount of scholarship provided was \$140,800.

Businesses that donate to eligible EITC & OSTC organizations can receive tax credits that can equal 75% - 100% of their contribution.

If you would like more information or can help us to build a list of prospective businesses, please contact Miss Hancock ([lh37@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:lh37@andrew.cmu.edu)).

## #GivingTuesday – November 30, 2021

November 30th is the seventh annual Giving CMU Day, a day to bring together everyone in the Tartan community to support the areas of CMU that mean the most to them. By making a gift to CMU this #givingCMUday, you directly impact students and their educational experience. #givingCMUday will be a great opportunity to support the Children's School and the CMU community!



Please consider a gift to the Children's School to ensure that our teaching and learning is sustainable well into the future! Watch your email for more information on this event.

## Scholarship Fund Options

### Ann Baldwin Taylor Scholarship Fund

In 2015, the Children's School established *The Ann Baldwin Taylor Early Childhood Scholarship Fund* to provide assistance for children to attend the Children's School when families demonstrate financial need. The fund is named for our founding director who led the school from 1968 to 1993. In 2020-21, two children received scholarships from this fund.

If you would like to contribute, please visit our website's Giving page and select *The Ann Baldwin Taylor Early Childhood Scholarship Fund* under the Online menu:

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

### Central PA Scholarship Fund

In addition to the above-mentioned programs, individuals or corporations can work with the Central PA Scholarship Fund (CPSF) to designate scholarship funding to the Children's School. 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](mailto:lh37@andrew.cmu.edu) or CPSF directly via Tami Clark at 814-942-4406/814-682-9035 or [tami@cpsfcharity.org](mailto:tami@cpsfcharity.org).

## Hispanic Heritage Month

Hispanic Heritage month was September 15<sup>th</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup>. Here at school, the classes each recognized this month in ways that fit their students and their themes. From students sharing important aspects of their family's cultural heritage, to reading books in both Spanish and English, to locating Hispanic and Latin American countries on the globe, The Children's School enjoyed learning about Latin American and Hispanic culture.



Below are some highlights from the month:

In the Preschool 3's class, The Blue Room friends had a special guest live via Zoom. Cesar Simon's mom read Nosotros Means Us by Paloma Valdivia in Spanish to the class, and Mrs. Johnson read it in English. The next day, the Red Room friends were able to listen to Cesar's mom's story in Spanish via video recording (with Mrs. Belau reading it in English).



In the Preschool 4's class, Savannah Quintanilla brought a traditional Nicaraguan folk skirt to show the class. The friends admired the bright and beautiful colors. They also explored the work of Pedro Linares, a renowned Mexican Folk Artist, as part of their Art & Artists unit.

The Kindergarten class read the book All The Colors We Are (Todos Los Colores De Nuestra Piel) by Katie Kissinger for Journal Time on October 4th. Mrs. Sweet read the English words and the key sentences in Spanish. She also emphasized vocabulary in Spanish (skin = la piel, sun = el sol, melanin = la melanina, freckles = las pecas, ancestors = los antepasados). From Mrs. Sweet: "I chose that book because we always draw self-portraits on the front cover of our journals at the first of each month, and the book encourages children to examine their skin. Kindergartners have different shades of skin, so I thought it was very appropriate to highlight how we are all different shades of brown...and beautiful! Given that it was Hispanic History month, and the book included Spanish, it was also a great time to expose the children to a new language."





# Native American Heritage Month



November is Native American Heritage Month, or as it is sometimes called, American Indian and Alaskan Native Heritage Month. This month serves as a time to celebrate the rich cultures, contributions, and traditions of Native peoples. Below are some ways to celebrate and recognize this special month with your families:

## **Read Books by and about Native People**

- Reading together is one of the best ways to learn about different cultures. ReadBrightly.com, (<https://www.readbrightly.com>), a literary website for children birth-teen, has collected a fantastic list of children's books by and about Native Americans. You can access a great list at <https://www.readbrightly.com/native-american-history-experience-kids-teens/>.
- <https://coloursofus.com> is a website focused on celebrating multicultural children's literature, has put together a wonderful list of 75 Native American children's books sorted by age. Review their selections at <https://coloursofus.com/32-native-american-childrens-books/>.
- The website <https://www.embracerace.org> shared a thoughtful and interesting dialogue with Dr. Debbie Reese, a Native American author and scholar about how to select high quality children's books by and about Native Peoples ([https://www.embracerace.org/resources/choosing-excellent-childrens-books-by-and-about-american-indians?gclid=Cj0KCQjwtrSLBhCLARIsACh6RmiFlkjmvnsOPrTLNgOx9WncrQfWSmRILt-DD8qJKRf8eS9gS1O66xYaAs8fEALw\\_wcB](https://www.embracerace.org/resources/choosing-excellent-childrens-books-by-and-about-american-indians?gclid=Cj0KCQjwtrSLBhCLARIsACh6RmiFlkjmvnsOPrTLNgOx9WncrQfWSmRILt-DD8qJKRf8eS9gS1O66xYaAs8fEALw_wcB)).

## **Learn About Our Region**

No matter where you live in America, Indigenous People lived on the land where you are now. Native Land has an interactive map at <https://native-land.ca> where you can enter your address and learn about the Native People and tribes who used to live in the place you now call home.

## **Celebrate Locally**

- November is a great time to visit The Carnegie Museum of Natural History. The Alcoa Foundation Hall (<https://carnegiemnh.org/explore/alcoa-foundation-hall-of-american-indians/>) is an in-depth exhibit that focuses on the Indigenous People living in the Northwest Coast, the Southwest, The Plains, and The Northeast.
- Plan a visit to Meadowcroft Rock Shelter and Historic Village. Meadowcroft has recreated a prehistoric Monongahela Indian Village. Here, families can experience what life was like for 16<sup>th</sup> century American Indians living in our region (<https://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/meadowcroft/>).
- The University of Pittsburgh Library System is sponsoring an author visit with Joseph Bruchac. Mr. Bruchac (<https://www.josephbruchac.com>) has been creating music and literature that reflect and celebrate his indigenous heritage and traditions for over forty years. To learn more about this event and to register click [https://calendar.pitt.edu/event/joseph\\_bruchac#.YXmKXi1h3OS](https://calendar.pitt.edu/event/joseph_bruchac#.YXmKXi1h3OS).

## **Celebrate Virtually**

- Visit <https://nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov> from The Library of Congress for great ways to celebrate Native American Heritage Month virtually. This Web portal is a collaborative project of the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Discover Native American history and culture there.
- The Jennie King Mellon Library at Chatham University has compiled digital resources for learning about Native American and Indigenous Heritage (<https://library.chatham.edu/c.php?g=1075052&p=7829677>).

## **Get Cooking!**

First Nations Development Institute is sharing recipes from Native American tribes and organizations (<https://www.firstnations.org/knowledge-center/recipes/>). Preparing some of these dishes is a meaningful way to bring some Native American culture into your home.

## Week for Campus Children

The National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers (N4C) launched a week to **Celebrate Campus Children** to raise awareness of the quality early childhood programs operating on college campuses across the country.

The Preschool 3's team created a poster after tracing the children's arms. They hung the poster under the stadium on the way to the Tartan Testing site and included a QR code, which was a direct link to the Children's School website.



The Preschool 4's friends painted flags and made pom poms to use while marching over to the hill to play. Officer Moran stopped to say hello, and we also chatted with undergraduates relaxing there.



The Kindergarten friends painted and decorated rocks, which they then hid around campus to spread smiles and kindness. Each rock was labeled with a QR code that linked to The Children's School website. They also cooperatively painted two murals to hang in the college hallway of our building. Our hope was to make a connection between the children that college students see each day on their way to class and the presence of The Children's School in the building.



## Undergraduate Spotlight



The changes caused by the pandemic have been felt by all in our community in a myriad of ways. A few of our undergraduate employees had the unique experience of working at The Children's School before, during, and after the events of 2020. They went from regularly interacting with children and teachers to working behind the scenes with no classroom interaction. This year, all our student employees have returned to the classrooms with the children. We asked a few of them to reflect on how the pandemic has impacted their experience at The Children's School.

Stewart Harrison is a junior majoring in Directing and Social & Political History.



*I started working at the Children's School in the fall of 2019. Having to leave school due to the pandemic in March was really hard for me as I had grown to love working at the Children's School and interacting with the children. Over the 2020-2021 school year, I had to work after the school had closed. It was interesting seeing what the classes were doing from the artwork displayed, but it was not the same never getting to see the children. This year has been much better being able to interact with the children again and talking with them makes my job much more fun.*

Enza Potter is a senior majoring in developmental psychology.



*I have had the pleasure of working at the Children's School since Fall 2018, my first semester at Carnegie Mellon. The Children's School has been and is quite simply my favorite part of my CMU career. For my freshman and ¾ of my sophomore year, I worked in the Blue, Red, and Green Room, as well as the Kindergarten. I assisted teachers in supervising friends who enjoy art, games, pretend play, and more. However, during Spring 2020, due to Covid-19, school closed for everyone to limit transmission. For the duration of my Junior year, I was overjoyed with being able to return to campus, but my job was definitely different. Instead of getting to hear the laughter of children and observe their development, I was stuck sanitizing toys and sorting student work. I know the friends and teachers were also struggling with this transition, but the student workers were also impacted because our safe haven from the stressful Carnegie Mellon culture disappeared. Since September 2021, I have been back in the classroom with the teachers and friends again, and I feel like I got my home-away-from-home back. Teaching and helping children is my passion, and I am so excited to finish my senior year along with the graduating Kindergarten class.*



Summer Abraham is a junior majoring in Psychology and Decision Science. with a minor in Design for Learning.

*The Children's School is one of the main reasons I came to Carnegie Mellon, and I was excited to start working there in the fall of my freshman year. I enjoyed getting to know the friends and learning more about the school. When we got sent home because of COVID-19, the Children's School is one of the things I missed most about Pittsburgh. During the 2020-2021 school year, I was able to work here preparing activities and other behind-the-scenes work where I got to observe the administrative side of schools. I am so excited to finally be back in the classroom this semester, working with the Green Room friends as a work-study, and working with the Red and Blue Room friends as part of the Child Development Practicum. Working at the Children's School is one of the best parts of my week, and I'm enjoying playing on the playground, reading stories, playing make-believe games, and even going to watch a building being knocked down. I'm looking forward to a great rest of the year!*

# Research Spotlight

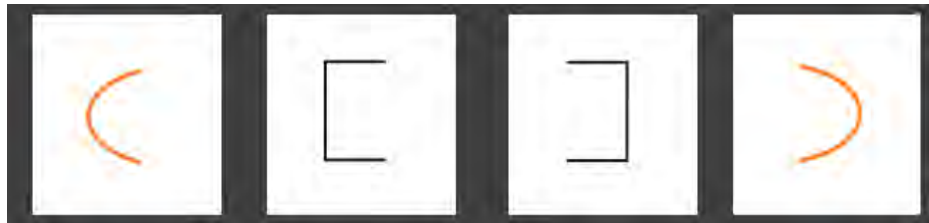
## The Picture Game

Dr. Jessica Cantlon, Nour al-Zaghloul, and Abhishek Dedhe are investigating **how children use simple logical rules to process complex visual patterns**. This game happens over several sessions.

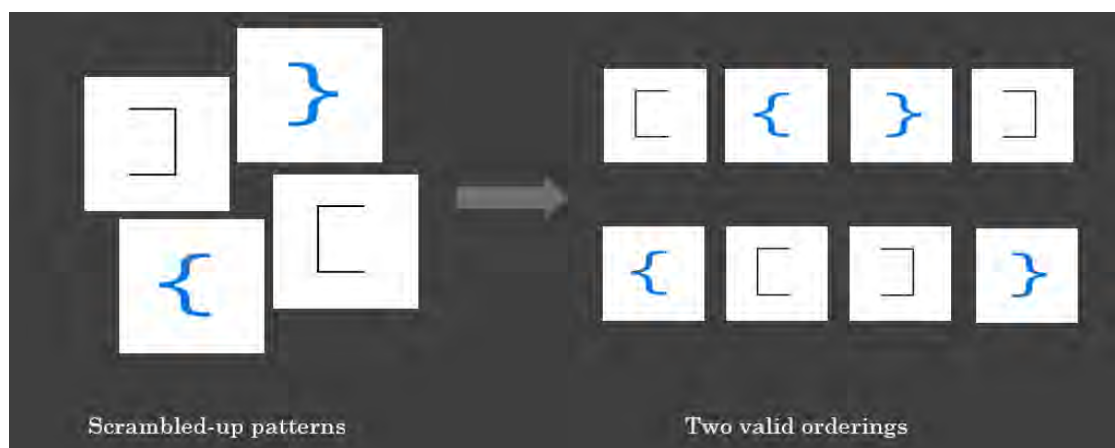
Researchers teach the child to complete two tasks involving visual patterns: shapes and brackets. Both tasks rely on logical rules about repetition, hierarchies, and symmetry. By having the child perform these challenging tasks, researchers can examine how the child's understanding of these logical rules improves. A visualization of the bracket task is included at the bottom of this page. The shape task looks very similar, except that it has unknown shapes that look like keyboard characters (@, !, #) instead of brackets.

In the **Picture Game**, the child completes two tasks. Since each child progresses at their own speed, they might need more than one session to complete them. First, researchers teach the child the correct order of a sequence of four shapes or brackets. These four shapes or brackets are shown scrambled on the screen, and the child touches them in the correct order. Our robot friend Rajah helps the child know if they're on the right track. Once researchers establish that the child has understood the task, they are shown sets of scrambled shapes or brackets and asked to select them in the correct order. However, this time Rajah does not tell them whether they are right or wrong.

### Bracket task:



For example, in one bracket task, the child is told that these four brackets occur in the shown order (first - second - third - fourth). They are then shown the following four scrambled brackets and asked to touch them in the correct order. In this case, there are two equally correct orders.



## Research Spotlight, continued

### The Additional Picture Games

Researchers play additional games with the children to determine whether their **Picture Game** performance is related to any other cognitive processes, such as working memory, motor skills, and language comprehension. They assess working memory because the more a child can remember the visual patterns in their heads, the easier the game should be. They are also checking whether the child can utilize these simple logical rules based on repetition, hierarchies, and symmetry in domains unrelated to vision. These domains include language and movement. All these tasks provide researchers with context when they examine results from the **Picture Game**. This context allows them to be more confident about the meaning of their research findings. It might even reveal some connections they might not have expected!

- In the **Zoo Locations Game**, researchers have zoos with different amounts of exhibits, each with different animals. After viewing the zoo's arrangement, children are given an empty zoo and asked to place each animal where they belong. This task checks children's working memory.
- In the **Picture Memory Game**, children see a picture of several common objects (like an apple or a kite) and then another picture with those same objects mixed with others. Researchers then ask them to point to the objects they saw on the prior page. This task also examines working memory, but in a slightly different way. Using both games together provides a clearer measure of children's working memory ability.
- In the **Number Game**, researchers ask the child to listen to a list of numbers and then repeat them both in forward and backward order. This task also taps working memory, but unlike the zoo location and picture memory games which measure visual working memory, this game measures verbal working memory.
- In the **Language Comprehension Game**, researchers show the child a picture of several coloured shapes and ask them to point to specific objects they see (such as "the second small green circle"). This task allows us to examine general language comprehension (does the child know the meaning of "green" or "circle"?), as well as examining how the child combines different words to grasp the overall meaning (such as the difference between a "small circle", a "green circle", and a "small green circle").
- In the **Tower of Hanoi Game**, the child uses a classic toy consisting of movable disks that can be slid onto wooden poles. Researchers ask the child to move the disks from one pole to another according to certain rules (such as "you cannot put a bigger disk on a smaller disk"). This task examines whether your child can plan their future moves so that they satisfy specific conditions.



- In the **Corsi Block-Tapping Game**, children are shown a screen display of up to nine identical spatially separated blocks. A researcher will tap on the blocks in a particular sequence and the child's task is to tap them in the same order. The sequence starts simple, usually with only two blocks, but it becomes progressively more complex. This task assesses the child's visuo-spatial short-term working memory.



## Director's Corner: Relationships Matter



Striving for high quality early education while mitigating COVID-19 risk by covering our faces and physically distancing ourselves highlights the importance of NAEYC's accreditation standards that identify relationships as a foundation for quality early care and education. Standard #1 is actually called "Relationships" and includes criteria about promoting positive relationships between educators and families, between educators and children, and between children and peers. Standard #7 is called "Families", but the emphasis of all the related criteria is on establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships with the diverse families we serve so that together we can support each individual child's development. Because our laboratory school is thoroughly integrated into the university community, we cultivate an even broader view of relationships that includes all the learners involved in our educational system.

- We begin with the belief that all our interactions and communication should focus on building a consistently warm, respectful, and positive emotional climate for our entire school community, so we aim to set that tone in our routines and conversations from greeting through dismissal, with children, families, undergraduates, and facilities workers, within the school and elsewhere on campus. Celebrating Campus Children's Centers week helped the children see this connection.
- From our web site design and our initial application questions to our newsletters and emails with enrolled families, we attempt to clearly communicate a broad welcome to diverse families and children and a deep interest in getting to know and understand the family structure, cultural background, child-rearing practices, etc. so that we can foster strong reciprocal relationships.
- With families, we emphasize close home – school connections through a variety of communication mechanisms so that we can support each child's growth in the self-regulation and social skills that will help with functioning comfortably and building friendships in a classroom community that feels secure and is responsive to everyone's needs.
- Though the pandemic precludes our typical "open door" policy, large events, and most in-person interaction, educators and administrators aim to connect with families virtually through the classroom blogs, whole school newsletter, virtual visits, et cetera. Based on a recent survey of families with older 4's and kindergartners, we are offering a Zoom school choice discussion in mid-November.
- For all families, we discuss their children's development in detail and provide resources for community involvement and school transitions. When needed, we can arrange for language translation and help families connect with services related to unique challenges regarding physical and mental health, individual learning support or counseling, etc.
- When conflicts arise, we seek to utilize direct, honest, and sensitive communication to help us develop an effective solution. We listen carefully and reflect frequently so that we can discern assumptions that may be biasing our perspectives and work toward solutions that counter discrimination and collaboratively address persistent challenges. For example, feedback from families early in the year helped us develop a new handwashing routine for children who eat their snack on the playground, and input from families is continuing to shape our new policies for return to school after illness, close contact, or travel.

In all these ways, we seek to develop close partnerships with children and families to create the best learning opportunities for everyone in our busy laboratory school while prioritizing physical and mental health during the ongoing pandemic. We invite your input and involvement as together we strive for excellence.

# November

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
<p>3's: Farm &amp; Harvest 4's: Building, Making &amp; Creating K: Geology/ 7 Natural Wonders of the World</p> <p>Native American Heritage Month</p>	<p><b>1</b> 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Begins</p> <p>Online Book Fair through Nov. 14th Visit: <a href="http://childrensbookstore.com">childrensbookstore.com</a></p> <p>CMU Food Drive Nov. 1-15</p>	<p><b>2</b> Election Day</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>4</b> Music w/ Mrs. Hraber</p>	<p><b>5</b> NO SCHOOL Conference Preparation Day</p>	<p><b>6</b> NAEYC Virtual Conference for Educators →</p>
<p><b>7</b></p> <p>Daylight Saving Time Ends - Turn Clocks Back 1 Hour</p>	<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>11</b> Veterans Day</p>	<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>13</b></p>
<p><b>14</b></p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>Nov. Safety Week</p>	<p><b>16</b> 12:00PM School Choice Discussion via Zoom</p>	<p><b>17</b></p>	<p><b>18</b> Music w/ Mrs. Hraber</p>	<p><b>19</b> 1:00PM Parent Teacher Conferences</p>	<p><b>20</b></p>
<p><b>21</b></p>	<p><b>22</b></p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>24</b></p>	<p><b>25</b> Thanksgiving Holiday NO SCHOOL</p>	<p><b>26</b> Native American Heritage Day</p>	<p><b>27</b></p>
<p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>29</b></p>	<p><b>30</b></p>				



## Children's School

[CMUChSch@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:CMUChSch@andrew.cmu.edu) [www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs](http://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs)

412-268-2199

# 2021

Carnegie Mellon University Children's School

**Policy re: Return to School After Illness or Close Contact During Coronavirus Pandemic**

October 22, 2021

**Illness**

**Please report any absence to the Main Office at 412-268-2199.**

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, should stay home and contact their health care provider to determine if they should be tested for COVID-19.

Symptoms include:

- chills
- congestion/running nose--not related to seasonal allergies
- cough (for students with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline)
- fever of 100.4°F or higher, or a sense of having a fever
- headache
- muscle or body aches
- nausea/vomiting/diarrhea
- new loss of taste or smell
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- sore throat
- unusual fatigue--not related to known sleep disturbance

A note from a medical professional OR a negative COVID-19 test (PCR or Antigen) is required to return to school for any absence due to illness. At home tests are not accepted. This documentation can be emailed to [cmuchs@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:cmuchs@andrew.cmu.edu).

- Individuals must also be fever-free for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medication), any other symptoms must have improved (without medication), and they must be able to comfortably participate in usual program activities.

- **COVID-19 Testing Sites**

Click [here](#) to be directed to a searchable map of Allegheny County COVID-19 testing locations.

If any household member (parent, sibling, etc.) is symptomatic, unvaccinated children should remain at home. Once the symptomatic person has received a negative COVID-19 test result or an alternate diagnosis (croup, strep, flu, etc.) from a medical professional, asymptomatic children may return to school.

**Close Contact** (Close contact is defined as within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.)

**Please report any close contacts to the Main Office at 412-268-2199.**

**Unvaccinated individuals**, such as children, who had close contact with someone who has a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis should quarantine at home for 10 days **after their last exposure** to that person. If the close contact is within the household (parent, sibling, etc.), the quarantine period begins on the final day of the affected person's isolation (i.e., their 10th day from the emergence of symptoms or positive COVID-19 diagnosis). Per the Allegheny County Health Department, quarantine may be ended early if the following conditions are met. Quarantine can end after 7 days if the person does not develop symptoms with careful daily monitoring and tests negative for the virus. The test should be performed on the fifth day after the exposure or later. Quarantine cannot end before day 7. The Health Department prefers that a PCR test be used to determine if a person can leave quarantine after 7 days.

**Fully vaccinated close contacts** who are asymptomatic do not need to quarantine but should get tested 3-5 days after exposure and wear a mask indoors for 10 days or until a negative test is received. Continue monitoring for symptoms for 10 days. If symptoms develop, they should isolate and get tested immediately.



Carnegie Mellon University Children’s School  
**Policy re: Travel During Coronavirus Pandemic**  
 October 22, 2021

The “*CDC recommends delaying travel until you are able to get fully vaccinated. If you are traveling with children who cannot get vaccinated at this time, follow recommendations for people who are not fully vaccinated and choose the safer travel options*” described in “[Safer Travel Tips for Families with Unvaccinated Children](#)”.

If you decide to travel with unvaccinated children, please follow all the [Tartan Responsibility](#) guidelines and choose the lowest risk options related to [CMU’s Travel Risk Definitions](#).

Category	Low Risk	High Risk
<b>Travel Behavior</b>	Contact with members of your household.  Contact with only <a href="#">fully vaccinated people</a> .	<a href="#">Close contact</a> with people who are not fully vaccinated who are not from your household.  Crowds, where vaccination status is unknown.
<b>Travel Type</b>	Short road trips with members of your household or fully vaccinated people with few stops along the way.  If you must fly, try to take flights with the fewest stops or layovers.	Longer trips by car or RV with many stops along the way.  Trips by car or RV with people who are not vaccinated or not from your household.  Flights with layovers.  Long-distance train or bus trips.  Traveling on a cruise ship or river boat.
<b>Accommodations</b>	Staying in a house or cabin (for example, a vacation rental) with people from your household or fully vaccinated people.  Visiting a <a href="#">fully vaccinated</a> family member’s or friend’s home.	Hotels or multi-unit guest lodgings with common areas (e.g., bed and breakfasts).  Visiting an unvaccinated family member’s or friend’s home.  Renting or staying in a house or cabin (for example, a vacation rental) with people who are not vaccinated or not in your household.
<b>Dining</b>	Bringing your own food and drinks.  Getting takeout.  Using drive-thru, delivery and curbside pick-up options, and wearing a mask when interacting with restaurant employees.	Eating inside restaurants that are poorly ventilated, where physical distancing is not possible, servers and staff do not wear masks, and diners do not wear masks when actively eating or drinking.  Self-service options that require extensive touching of surfaces, such as buffets.

If your travels and mitigation efforts do not comply with the CDC recommendations for minimizing the risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 while traveling ([CDC Travel Guidance](#)), please follow the CDC’s guidelines for quarantine after travel (below) and report your child’s absence as such.

- o [Domestic Travel](#)
- o [International Travel](#)

Upon return from high risk travel, families should follow CDC guidelines for testing and quarantine as well as monitor closely for symptoms of COVID-19. In addition to following CDC guidance, anyone who exhibits COVID-like symptoms upon return from any travel, should stay home and contact their health care provider to determine if they should be tested for COVID-19.

Remember that the CMU and Children’s School learning communities are depending on everyone taking appropriate steps to keep ourselves and each other safe and healthy throughout the remainder of this pandemic and beyond.

# Food changes everything.

## Most Needed Items



### Monetary Donation

(\$1 could provide 5 meals)



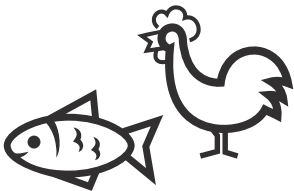
### Canned Fruits Packed in 100% Juice



### Low Sodium/ No Salt Added Canned Vegetables



### Low Sodium/ No Salt Added Canned Beans & Soup



### Canned Tuna or Chicken Packed in Water



### Whole-Grain Cereal, Oats & Pasta



### Peanut Butter



### Paper Products

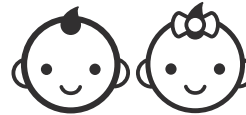


### Household Items



### Hygiene Items

Feminine Products, Razors



### Infants & Kids

Diapers, Wipes, Pedialyte, 100% Juice Fruit Cups, Granola Bars, Crackers, Juice Boxes, NO Baby Food



### Seniors

Nutritional Shakes & Drinks, Adult Hygiene Products

Pop Top Cans & Microwavable Cups Preferred  
Please, NO Glass Items

412.460.3663  
pittsburghfoodbank.org

Greater Pittsburgh  
**community  
food bank** 

# Food changes everything.

A well-balanced diet is fundamental to leading a happy, productive life. Unfortunately too many of our neighbors are making tough choices between food and other necessities.



Daniel has a wife and three kids. He worked for a newspaper for many years, but when they cut the amount of days they deliver, his hours and income were significantly cut.

“In addition to my paycheck decreasing drastically, I was diagnosed with skin cancer this year. It’s just been a bad year. I just never expected to be in this kind of situation—I really don’t know how else to put it.”

Daniel recently got a second job, but making the ends meet for a family of five is still challenging. “It feels like you just go through so much food, even when you’re being careful.”

By donating through a food & fund drive you can help ensure the one in seven people in our region like Daniel have the food they need. Every \$1 donated could provides enough food for five meals.

412.460.3663  
[pittsburghfoodbank.org](http://pittsburghfoodbank.org)

Greater Pittsburgh  
**community  
food bank** 



# **Navigating Elementary School Options:** Finding a Program That Works for Your Family

**Carnegie Mellon University**

Human Resources

# Table of Contents

Factors to Consider When Comparing Schools	3
Curriculum	3
Accountability and Assessment	4
Social and Emotional Learning	5
Logistical Planning	6
School Resources	6
Sample School Comparison Worksheet	8
Public School Districts in Allegheny County	9
Charter Schools in and Around Pittsburgh	13
Private Schools in Allegheny County	16

*“The future belongs to those  
who believe in the beauty of  
their dreams.”*

— Eleanor Roosevelt

# Factors to Consider When Comparing Schools

## Curriculum

*Does instruction support the type of learning you want?*

**Subject Matter** — Most schools focus instruction on four main content areas; English language arts, mathematics, science and history/social studies, along with a few electives, such as music, art and gym. Some schools, however, expand upon this model by providing additional subject areas, such as second language studies or technical skills. It is also important to note the emphasis schools place on each subject. Schools impacted by standardized test scores tend to focus a great deal of energy on English language arts and math, subjects for which they are held accountable. Schools not impacted by this testing may choose to focus their energy on other subjects. Charter schools in particular tend to have a unique focus for instruction, which forms the basis of their charter. It is important to consider whether a school's instructional focus aligns with your own priorities for your child's instruction.

**Rigor** — Rigor is a hotly debated topic which describes how challenging the subject matter is for students. Some feel that rigor, or productive struggle, is a valuable learning tool which can yield strong academic growth. Others feel it can be a source of unnecessary stress, especially for younger children or children with learning differences. Alternatively, some schools that focus more on social and emotional growth feel that children will each set an appropriate pace for themselves if provided with challenges that come from exploration of their environment or real life problems. It is important to consider where your own viewpoints land on this spectrum and to seek a school that aligns with your viewpoints.

**Instructional Methods** — There are a number of instructional methods and strategies which can be applied in a number of teaching situations. Most teachers will selectively apply different methods at times when they can be most beneficial for student learning. You will notice, however, that certain school environments do tend to encourage or favor certain forms of instruction. Parents may also develop strong preferences for certain instructional methods. Understanding a few key terms might help you determine what kind of instruction you are looking for, but it is also important to remember that balanced instruction can be extremely beneficial for students.

Direct Instruction — a teacher directed teaching method where information is presented directly from the teacher to the students.

Inquiry-based Learning — a form of active learning which allows students to pose questions and seek answers to those questions through personal discovery, experimentation or research.

Differentiated Instruction — tailoring instruction to meet the needs of different students in the classroom. Teachers can differentiate content, process, products, the learning environment and even assessment.

Kinesthetic Learning — kinesthetic or tactile learning encourages learning through the process of physical activities, rather than listening to a lecture or watching demonstrations.

Flipped Classroom — a strategy that allows students to do research or readings on their own before engaging in problem solving or discussion in a class setting.

Independent Study — allowing students to follow their own interests and utilize and grow skills of their choosing as they research or problem solve independent of the class.

Project-based Learning — an approach that attempts a deep connection to subject matter and engagement by allowing students to learn through active exploration of real life challenges.

# Factors to Consider When Comparing Schools

## Accountability and Assessment

*How will your child's learning be measured and how will teachers be held accountable for ensuring that students meet desired outcomes?*

**State Standards** — Most public schools are governed by state instructional standards which inform teachers about learning that should be taking place in their classrooms at each grade level. In Pennsylvania, public schools must adhere to a **Standards Aligned System** of instruction developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. These standards set expectations across 12 subject areas and provide benchmark measures that define what students should know and be able to do at specified grade levels. These benchmark measures are also used in statewide assessment testing which seeks to measure whether students are meeting the goals set for them by the state.

**Standardized Tests** — Standardized tests are a topic of constant debate. School district funding and autonomy can be impacted by low test scores, which can indicate levels of proficiency in students. This, in turn, increases the pressure for districts to teach “to the test” instead of providing a rounded curriculum. These tests also do not take into consideration various types of learning or the role socioeconomic factors may play in lower test scores. From another viewpoint, these tests provide a measurable and consistent way to hold districts and teachers accountable for the outcomes of their instruction. They also provide parents a window into the overall achievement of students in each school, which many factor into their choice to enroll their children. Any school that accepts public funding is subject to these tests, which include public, charter and a small number of private schools. The results are public record.

**Non-standardized Assessment** — Within each classroom, teachers have a variety of assessment options available to help them decide if their instruction has been effective for students. Typically, teachers will draw on different forms of assessment as they deem them to be appropriate, but school philosophies can also greatly impact how student learning is assessed. As a parent, you may also have a preference for how learning is assessed. Understanding the following terms can help you determine if a school's approach is right for you.

**Diagnostic Testing** — These assessments are intended to measure all current knowledge or misconceptions about a particular topic and are usually implemented at the beginning of a school year to help teachers understand the work that needs to be done, or at the end of the year to demonstrate growth. MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) testing in reading and math and DIBELS testing in ELA are both examples of this.

**Formative Assessment** — This type of assessment can be described as a kind of short, regular check-in to ensure students are on track and that a lesson was successful. These can be both formal, such as quizzes, homework, or presentations; or informal, such as observations, pair and shares, and student reflections.

**Summative Assessment** — This type of assessment measures mastery of a specific topic, usually after a long period of instruction has been completed. These can be formal, such as unit tests, essays or capstone projects; or less formal, such as portfolios or performances.

# Factors to Consider When Comparing Schools

## Social and Emotional Learning

*How will the school support the growth of the whole child, not just academic needs?*

**Impact of Emotional Learning** — Helping our children understand their emotions and how to form connections with others can help them regulate their behavior, form lasting relationships and improve academic performance. As parents, there are a number of ways we can support this aspect of development, and success in this domain can look very different for each family. Finding a school that supports the social and emotional growth you are looking to foster in your child can be extremely beneficial. Below we have listed a number of topics which may come up in a discussion about social and emotional learning in schools. Understanding these topics can help you navigate these discussions and find a program that matches your preferences.

Contribution vs. Competition — Different schools will provide different environments which can either promote competition aimed at personal achievement, or focus more on each child's contributions to the learning community as a whole.

Growth Mindset — A growth mindset embraces the belief that one's knowledge, skills and abilities can increase. This stands in contrast to a fixed mindset, which holds that one's abilities cannot change. A growth mindset can encourage persistence, progress over time and a positive disposition towards learning. Most schools have begun to implement some version of this, but how this mindset plays a role in daily instruction will differ for each program.

Compassion and Empathy — These concepts relate to the capacity to support, care for and express concern for others. In schools, this may manifest in a number of ways, such as the language educators use, systems and practices for encouraging positive behaviors, how challenging social interactions are managed, and having opportunities to collaborate and connect with others.

Self-regulation — Self-regulation refers to the ability to manage disruptive emotions and impulses, usually as the result of a greater awareness of the consequences for one's actions. All children need to learn self-regulation, and schools can help them. This is a good place for a discussion about how the school handles disruptive behavior and discipline. Some schools operate on a zero tolerance policy while others take advantage of opportunities to help children understand the impact of their behavior.

Self Awareness and Metacognition — Children are constantly learning about themselves as they grow; their likes and dislikes, talents and challenges, and what makes them unique. Additionally, they can learn to organize and evaluate their thinking as it relates to learning and problem-solving. Schools can support this introspective process in a number of ways. Some examples include providing opportunities for students to name their needs and feelings; reflect on their values, preferences and identities; and express opinions. They can also provide time for students to reflect on how they arrived at solutions to problems and compare their thinking with other students.

Family and Community — Schools may find different ways to partner with families and the larger community, to acknowledge many people and places that influence students' environments and illustrate how groups of people live and work together. Schools may do this by inviting families to participate in committees, events or special instructional topics; or engage with the larger community by having lessons on community helpers, planning field trips or doing various service projects.



# Factors to Consider When Comparing Schools

## Logistical Planning

*Does the school fit within our budget? Can we secure safe, reliable transportation?  
Are there after care options that work for our family? How long will we wait for a spot?*

**Hours of Operation:** Most schools are open for a period roughly between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. each day. Since this is shorter than a typical work day, parents may need to consider before and after school options for each school. Some schools provide their own after care programs. Others, particularly public schools, may provide transportation to local child care centers that can provide this service. This service almost always comes at a cost, so it is important to factor that into your decision making as well. It is also worth noting that some kindergartens are only open for a half day, which makes the after care an even greater need for this age group.

**School Closures:** Most schools will provide a calendar for the year detailing their planned closures. While these closures often coincide with major holidays, there are also days off for other reasons. Schools are also typically closed during the summer months, often creating the need for summer camps. Some schools may provide summer camp programming; others may not. Typically, there is a cost for summer camps, and they are usually more expensive than after care rates. Summer camps can be provided by child care centers but also by places that do not normally provide child care, like museums or the zoo. There are a lot of options for school aged children in the summer months, but be sure to register early, because spaces do fill up.

**Transportation:** Most, but not all, public school districts provide free busing to their students. They often provide free busing to students attending private or charter schools as well. These arrangements are typically only upon request. Some school districts are walking-only districts, so it is important to factor this in when selecting a district or school.

**Lunches:** Free and reduced price lunches are available at most school districts to students who meet certain income requirements. For those who do not meet these requirements, lunches are provided for a small fee. Different schools handle the quality and nutrition of their lunch programs in different ways. Charter and private schools may also participate in the free and reduced lunch programs, and parents can [submit an application online](#) if their schools do not provide a designated way to do this.

## School Resources

*Does the school provide the resources we are looking for?*

Well maintained facility

Ample classroom supplies

Welcoming classroom environment

Access to a Library

Special services for gifted or special education

Cafeteria and healthy food options

Access to a gym

Access to an auditorium

Access to a playground and outdoor space

Extracurricular activities

Family activities and events

Access to a nurse

# Factors to Consider When Comparing Schools

On the previous pages, we discussed several factors you might want to consider when comparing different schools. Part of the process of finding a school that works best for your family is understanding where your preferences lie and what is most important to you. While we provided a lot of information, ultimately, you will need to decide which direction your family should take when choosing from the available options.

On subsequent pages, we list a number of school options available to families in our region. Each of these schools should provide information sessions you can attend or have enrollment personnel who can answer your questions. There is no need to be shy about asking for information you think is important for the education of your child. As their parent and primary advocate, there is nobody else who will be more invested in their future.

Below, we have provided space for you to write notes on topics that stood out to you as important. Feel free to do further research or explore these topics more. On the next page, we provided a sample worksheet you can use when comparing schools. We highly suggest you create one customized to what you are looking for in a school, but feel free to use this one if it works for you. We also hope you will reach out to HR Family Care with any questions or for support. We are always happy to help you navigate this process.

## Notes

# Sample School Comparison Worksheet

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

## Logistics

Hours of Operation:

Location:

Transportation:

Price:

Aftercare/summer camp options:

## Program Features

Philosophy:

Staff credentials:

Admissions criteria:

Specialized programming:

Curricular features:

## Enrollment Procedures

Applications due:

Enrollment process (lottery, etc):

Youngest age served (best time to enroll):

Priority for siblings?:

Start of the program year:

# Public School Districts in Allegheny County

Public schools are regulated and funded through local government authorities and provide free schooling to all children within a district population. In Pennsylvania, schooling is compulsory at age 6. If you choose not to attend the public school options available, you will need to arrange another option for your children.

Generally, families are assigned to a neighborhood school based on the location of their home. However, some districts may allow you to choose which school to attend within the district. Depending on the size of the district, there may also be magnet school options for you to consider. Enrollment for magnet schools is typically by lottery system, meaning there is no guarantee your child will get a spot.

Typically, most public school systems start with kindergarten. Enrollment usually opens at age 5, but each district has its own age requirements for attendance. Most districts also require documentation such as proof of residency, your child's birth certificate, immunization records, etc.

While most districts will accept children on a rolling basis, it is recommended to enroll them prior to the start of the school year, which generally starts around September. Applications for magnet schools may be due far in advance of this. School districts also run on an academic calendar, with planned closures throughout the year and no school during the summer months. The typical school day is also shorter than the average work day, with most schools in session from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. each day. Some districts will provide after care and summer camps, while others will partner with local providers and bus children to centers that offer these services.

If you live within the City of Pittsburgh, your school district is [Pittsburgh Public Schools](#). There are many neighborhood schools as well as a variety of magnet schools provided within this district. To find your neighborhood school, use the [Discover PPS tool](#). If you live near the city, find your district from the list below.

## Find Your School District

[Allegheny Valley School District](#) — Cheswick Borough, Springdale Boroughs, Harmar Township, Springdale Township

[Avonworth School District](#) — Ben Avon Borough, Ben Avon Heights Borough, Emsworth Borough, Kilbuck Township, Ohio Township

[Baldwin-Whitehall School District](#) — Baldwin Borough, Whitehall Borough, Baldwin Township

[Bethel Park School District](#) — Municipality of Bethel Park

[Brentwood Borough School District](#) — Brentwood Borough

[Carlynton School District](#) — Boroughs of Carnegie, Crafton, Rosslyn Farms

[Chartiers Valley School District](#) — Bridgeville Borough, Heidelberg Boroughs, Collier Township, Scott Township

[Clairton City School District](#) — City of Clairton

[Cornell School District](#) — Coraopolis Borough, Neville Township

[Deer Lakes School District](#) — Townships of East Deer, Frazer, West Deer

[Duquesne City School District](#) — City of Duquesne

[East Allegheny School District](#) — East McKeesport Borough, Wall Borough, Wilmerding Borough, North Versailles Township

[Elizabeth Forward School District](#) — Elizabeth Borough, Elizabeth Township, Forward Township

# Public School Districts in Allegheny County

**Fox Chapel Area School District** — Aspinwall Borough, Blawnox Borough, Fox Chapel Borough, Sharpsburg Borough, Indiana Township, O'Hara Township

**Gateway School District** — Monroeville Borough, Pitcairn Borough

**Hampton Township School District** — Hampton Township

**Highlands School District** — Tarentum Borough, Brackenridge Borough, Fawn Township, Harrison Township

**Keystone Oaks School District** — Boroughs of Dormont, Castle Shannon, Green Tree

**McKeesport Area School District** — City of McKeesport, Municipalities of Versailles, South Versailles, Dravosburg, White Oak

**Montour School District** — Kennedy Township, Robinson Township, Ingram, Thornburg and Pennsbury Village

**Moon Area School District** — Crescent Township, Moon Township

**Mt. Lebanon School District** — Township of Mt. Lebanon

**North Allegheny School District** — Marshall Township, McCandless Township, Wexford, Bradford Woods Borough, Franklin Park Borough

**North Hills School District** — Ross Township, West View

**Northgate School District** — Bellevue Borough, Avalon Borough

**Penn Hills School District** — Penn Hills Township

**Pine-Richland School District** — Pine Township, Richland Township

**Plum Borough School District** — Plum Borough

**Quaker Valley School District** — Boroughs of Sewickley, Leetsdale, Edgeworth, Glen Osborne, Sewickley Hills, Sewickley Heights, Bell Acres, Haysville, Glenfield; Leet Township, Aleppo Township

**Riverview School District** — Oakmont Borough, Verona Borough

**Shaler Area School District** — Etna Borough, Millvale Borough, Reserve Township, Shaler Township

**South Allegheny School District** — Boroughs of Port Vue, Liberty, Glassport, Lincoln

**South Fayette Township School District** — South Fayette Township

**South Park School District** — South Park Township

**Steel Valley School District** — Boroughs of Homestead, Munhall, and West Homestead

**Sto-Rox School District** — Borough of McKees Rocks and Stowe Township

**Upper St. Clair School District** — Upper St. Clair Township

**West Allegheny School District** — Findlay Township, North Fayette Township, Oakdale Borough

**West Jefferson Hills School District** — Boroughs of Jefferson Hills, West Elizabeth, Pleasant Hills

**West Mifflin Area School District** — Boroughs of West Mifflin and Whitaker

**Wilkesburg Borough School District** — Wilkesburg Borough

**Woodland Hills School District** — Municipalities of Braddock, Braddock Hills, Chalfant, Churchill, East Pittsburgh, Edgewood, Forest Hills, North Braddock, Rankin, Swissvale, Turtle Creek; Wilkins Township

# Charter Schools in and Around Pittsburgh

Charter Schools are independently operated, publicly funded schools with fewer regulations guiding their approach to instruction. All charter schools operate under a contract with a charter school authorizer that holds them accountable to the standards outlined in their charter. These schools are part of the public school system, and are provided free of charge, but are not operated by the school district.

You must apply to charter schools to be considered for admission, and most do enrollment through a lottery system. Some charter schools accept students from outside of their public school district.

There are two primary types of charter schools: 1) “brick-and-mortar” charter schools, which offer in-person instruction and are located within the boundaries of the school district that granted the charter; and 2) cyber charter schools, which use technology as the primary means of instruction and may have limited, if any, physical facilities or in-person instruction.

Charter schools generally run on similar academic calendars as public schools and have schedules that run shorter than a typical workday. Some charter schools offer summer camps or before or after care programming, or partner with local providers to bus children to and from these programs. However, as transportation is not always provided by charter schools, external programs can be more challenging.

Below, we have listed [charter schools in the City of Pittsburgh](#) and [surrounding regions](#). We encourage you to read the descriptions and learn more about programs that seem to align with your preferences.

## Charter Schools in the City of Pittsburgh

[Catalyst Academy Charter School](#) — Three important core values guide us in pursuit of our mission: Belong. Grow. Achieve. Our educational philosophy is that a child’s education should seek mastery along three dimensions: college readiness, career readiness, life readiness. Our model features high expectations, academic rigor, quality teaching, strong relationships, innovation and personalization, and holistic development.

[City Charter High School](#) — A technology infused charter school whose mission is to graduate students who are academically, technologically, personally and socially prepared to succeed in post-secondary education, training or employment. Our six core beliefs are connections to the real world, continuous challenge, individual responsibility for learning, personal academic connections, safe and caring environment, collaboration.

[Environmental Charter School at Frick Park](#) — Combines academic rigor with a multi-disciplinary, “out-the-door” learning approach rooted in real-world problems that build active, engaged and empathetic citizens. We think differently. We approach school differently. We believe that it is our responsibility to build an active, engaged and thoughtful citizenry — not just graduate students. We strongly commit to building systems thinkers, and use the platform of environment and ecology to explore complexity, diverse perspectives and various disciplinary ways to engage or explore a problem.

[Manchester Academic Charter School](#) — Committed to providing a superior education to children from all backgrounds in preparation for success in high school, college and beyond. We foster the dreams of all children by providing an outstanding and dynamic education in a nurturing environment. We will continue to be an educational center of excellence and become a community pillar of support where students excel, families are engaged, teachers are empowered and alumni flourish.

# Charter Schools in and Around Pittsburgh

**Passport Academy Charter School (Hill House)** — PACS serves high school students who are at least 17 but under age 21 who reside in Pennsylvania. We are a blended school that combines online learning with in-person teaching. Our tuition-free public school allows each student the opportunity to succeed using his or her own individualized way of learning. Students have the option to take a full array of online courses coupled with onsite teacher support in a school building during regular school hours, Monday through Friday.

**Propel Charter School — Hazelwood** — Designated as a community school, we encourage a truly unique breed of scholars by supporting their passions and encouraging their dreams. Our mission is to inspire achievement through critical thinking, evidence-based understanding and innovation. We accomplish this through a meaningful, collaborative, academically rigorous intellectual community. Our scholars will graduate with increased college and career readiness empowered with critical thinking skills, effective communication abilities and an appreciation for the arts needed to be successful life-long learners.

**Propel Charter School — Northside** — Designated as a community school, our mission is to create and sustain a culture focused on academic excellence, continuous growth and a positive school environment. We prioritize building and strengthening community ties so we can remove barriers to learning and improve our broader community.

**Provident Charter School** — Designed for educating students with language-based learning differences such as dyslexia. The overall structure of Provident Charter School is different than traditional schools as it offers an environment tailored for supporting students who are struggling to read.

**The New Academy Charter School** — Established to serve a specific type of student, one whose previous academic performance was the direct result of poor attendance, behavior problems and academic deficiencies. To help these students begin to redirect their lives, New Academy Charter School pioneered a ground-breaking new school environment designed to change the very foundations of how these young people — and even their parents and their communities — view academic success.

**Urban Academy of Pittsburgh Charter School** — The school's twenty year mission has been to provide a superior education that will develop our students' academic excellence, leadership skills and social values to enable them to ultimately become positive contributors to the community in which they live, and society as a whole. We work daily to deliver instructional and school-based activities that reinforce our students' perception of skill, self-esteem and self-sufficiency. We have high expectations for our students, and as such we make sure our students have access to the tools, resources and support needed to succeed in an environment of high expectations, academic standards and familiar cultural context.

**Urban Pathways 6-12 Charter School** — A tuition-free public charter school that focuses on giving every student the chance to find their pathway to success in the classroom and beyond. Our staff works to form meaningful relationships and uplift our students by providing individualized attention through smaller class sizes, lower student-to-teacher ratios (12:1), and supervised after-school activities.

**Urban Pathways K-5 College Charter School** — We are a free charter school located in downtown Pittsburgh. Since opening our doors in August 2011, we have created a learning environment where students thrive. We are the only school in Pennsylvania to fully implement the Core Knowledge Curriculum. Using rigorous educational standards, and connecting learning with experiences in the Pittsburgh Cultural District and City of Pittsburgh, we help students achieve their full potential.

# Charter Schools in and Around Pittsburgh

## Charter Schools in Nearby Regions

### Northeast of Pittsburgh

[Penn Hills Charter School of Entrepreneurship](#)

[Spectrum Charter School Inc.](#)

[LIFE Male STEAM Academy](#)

### Northwest of Pittsburgh

[Propel Montour High School](#)

[Propel Montour Elementary](#)

### Southeast of Pittsburgh

[Young Scholars of McKeesport Charter School](#)

[Propel Andrew Street](#)

[Propel Braddock Hills Elementary School](#)

[Propel Braddock Hills Middle School](#)

[Propel Braddock Hills High School](#)

[Propel East](#)

[Propel McKeesport](#)

[Propel Pitcarin](#)

### Southwest of Pittsburgh

[Young Scholars of Western PA Charter School](#)

### Statewide Cyber Charter Schools

[21st Century Cyber Charter School](#)

[Achievement House Cyber Charter School](#)

[Agora Cyber Charter School](#)

[ASPIRA Bilingual Cyber Charter School](#)

[Central PA Digital Learning Foundation Charter School](#)

[Commonwealth Charter Academy](#)

[Esperanza Cyber Charter School](#)

[Insight PA Cyber Charter School](#)

[PA Distance Learning Charter School](#)

[PA Virtual Charter School](#)

[Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School](#)

[Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School](#)

[Reach Charter Cyber School](#)

[SusQ-Cyber Charter School](#)



# Private Schools in Allegheny County

Private, or independent, schools are privately owned and funded by nongovernmental agencies. Private schools typically do enrollment via an admissions process which may include an assessment, teacher recommendations, and/or an interview. Students are charged tuition to attend private schools, though certain schools may have scholarships or offer financial assistance.

Private schools tend to have enrollment periods every year where potential students can apply to join the school. Applying does not mean you will be accepted. Many of these schools can be competitive and some may be difficult to get into. Generally, it is best to start trying to enroll your child at the youngest age they offer, as this will afford you the most spaces available. There are typically application fees, so it can be costly to apply to several at once.

Private schools may be affiliated with an outside organization, such as a university or religious institution. In Pennsylvania, there is a State Board of Private Academic Schools, which licenses and regulates private schools with regulations that are similar to those for public schools. Not all private schools are licensed; some may be considered “nonpublic nonlicensed schools” or “accredited schools” instead.

Private schools are similar to charter and public schools in terms of running during the academic year, having scheduled closures, and having a schedule that runs shorter than the typical workday. Some charter schools may offer summer camps or before or after care school programming at the school itself.

You can learn more on private schools through the [Department of Education website](#) or [search for a private school](#) based on location, type, affiliation or other criteria.

## Private Schools

### **University Affiliation**

[The Campus Laboratory School of Carlow University](#) — Oakland

[Children’s School](#) — Oakland

[The Cyert Center](#) — Oakland

[Falk Laboratory School](#) — Oakland

### **Learning Differences and Special Needs**

[ACLD Tilotson School](#) — Whitehall

[DePaul School for Hearing and Speech](#) — Shadyside

[Hope Academy](#) — Multiple Locations

[New Story Schools](#) — Monroeville

[PACE School](#) — Churchill

[Pittsburgh New Church School](#) — Point Breeze

[PLEA](#) — Wilkinsburg

[Pressley Ridge](#) — North Side

[St. Anthony School Programs](#) — Wexford

[The Day School at The Children’s Institute](#) —

Squirrel Hill

[Watson Institute Social Center for Academic Achievement](#) — Sharpsburg

[Watson Institute Friendship Academy](#) — Friendship

[Wesley K-8](#) — Upper St. Clair

[Wesley High School](#) — Castle Shannon

[Western PA School for Blind Children](#) — Oakland

[Western PA School for the Deaf](#) — Edgewood

# Private Schools in Allegheny County

## **Religious Affiliation**

[Ave Maria Academy](#) — Mt. Lebanon  
[Bishop Canevin High School](#) — Carnegie  
[Central Catholic High School](#) — Oakland  
[Community Day School](#) — Squirrel Hill  
[Eden Christian Academy](#) — Multiple Locations  
[Hillel Academy](#) — Pittsburgh  
[Hillcrest Christian Academy](#) — Bethel Park  
[Holy Cross Academy](#) — North Hills  
[Holy Family Catholic School](#) — Plum  
[Nazareth Prep](#) — North Hills  
[Mary of Nazareth Catholic School](#) — White Oak  
[Northside Catholic School](#) — Northside  
[Oakland Catholic High School](#) — Oakland  
[Our Lady of Sacred Heart High School](#) — Coraopolis  
[Pittsburgh Urban Christian School](#) — Wilkinsburg, PA  
[Praise Christian Academy](#) — North Versailles  
[Providence Heights Alpha School](#) — Allison Park  
[Redeemer Lutheran School](#) — Verona  
[Rhema Christian School](#) — Coraopolis  
[Serra Catholic High School](#) — McKeesport  
[Seton LeSalle High School](#) — Mt. Lebanon  
[Sister Thea Bowman Catholic Academy](#) — Wilkinsburg  
[St. Benedict the Moor School](#) — Hill District  
[St. Edmund's](#) — Squirrel Hill  
[St. Elizabeth of Hungary Elementary School](#) — Baldwin

[St. Gabriel the Sorrowful](#) — Whiteall  
[St. James Elementary](#) — Sewickley  
[St. Joseph High School](#) — Natrona Heights  
[St. Louise de Marillac](#) — Upper St. Clair  
[St. Philip School](#) — Crafton  
[St. Therese](#) — Munhall  
[Trinity Christian School](#) — Forest Hills  
[Universal Academy of Pittsburgh](#) — Swissvale  
[Walnut Grove Christian School](#) — West Mifflin  
[Yeshiva Schools](#) — Squirrel Hill

## **Unaffiliated**

[Ellis School](#) — Oakland  
[Euro Academy](#) — Wexford  
[Montessori School for Creative Learning](#) — Moon Township  
[Montessori Center Academy](#) — Glenshaw  
[Mt Lebanon Montessori School](#) — Mt. Lebanon  
[Sewickley Academy](#) — Sewickley  
[Shady Side Academy](#) — Fox Chapel  
[Shady Side Academy Junior School](#) — Point Breeze  
[The Glen Montessori School](#) — Ross  
[The Neighborhood Academy](#) — Highland Park  
[The University School](#) — Shadyside  
[Three Rivers Village School](#) — Hazelwood  
[The Waldorf School of Pittsburgh](#) — Bloomfield  
[Winchester Thurston](#) — Oakland