Week of the Young Child

NAEYC (The National Association for the Education of Young Children) designates the week of April 8th to 12th as the Week of the Young Child. NAEYC encourages early childhood communities to organize projects and events that create broad visibility and support for the importance of the early years as a way of sharing the responsibility of ensuring the well-being of diverse children and families. As a laboratory school affiliated with a Psychology Department, we contribute to the success of all young children by facilitating high quality research, offering a model program that serves as an example for practitioners and as a field placement site for pre-service teachers, and offering seminars and workshops as professional development for our colleagues.

To honor young learners on campus during April, the Children’s School will be celebrating with the Cyert Center, the Reggio-Emilia inspired full day early learning center at CMU. This year, the Children’s School classes will be visiting our friends at the Cyert Center: Morewood Avenue Site on April 16th (rain date: April 18th). The educators of both schools will offer collaborative activities to reflect Mindfulness and Wellness, which has been a focus this year for both programs. The AM preschoolers and kindergartners will be participating during their regular school day, and we will invite the PM preschool families to bring their children earlier so they can join the Cyert friends on their playground for ½ hour before beginning their regular school day. Please contact Maggie Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu with any questions.

Enrollment Updates

2019-2020 School Year: We currently have 20 children registered for the Kindergarten (and are working our way through a waiting list of 7 children), 26 children registered in the Morning 4’s, 25 children registered in the Morning 3’s and 10 children in the Afternoon Mixed-age Preschool. We also have 36 enrolled in our Morning Extended Program. Thank you for your referrals to family and friends! Mrs. Rosenblum and Mrs. Myers are happy to conduct tours for more prospective families!

Summer Camp Enrollment: There are still spaces remaining in our June Summer Camp. This year’s camp theme is Water and will be taught by Children’s School educators. You can register your child for one, two, three or four weeks, and the hours are 8:45 am until 1 pm, Monday through Friday. Please contact Maggie Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu if you would like to enroll your child. We’re looking forward to learning about ponds, oceans, rivers, and lakes!

April Dates:
Friday, March 29th – NO SCHOOL for children/Conference Prep Day for Educators
Friday, April 12th – NO SCHOOL for children
Parent / Teacher Conferences in the Afternoon
Enjoy CMU’s Spring Carnival “Planet Earth” April 11th to 13th
Friday, April 26th – Parent / Teacher Conferences – NO SCHOOL for children
Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day

On April 25th, the Children’s School will be participating in Carnegie Mellon University’s “Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day”. Over 200 children are hosted on campus annually, as they shadow their parents and take part in various campus-sponsored events and activities. We will be hosting a group of 15 children on the afternoon of April 25th. They will be participating in activities with our afternoon preschoolers related to our theme of “Bugs”.

Year End Celebration

The annual Year-End Celebration Picnic for all Children’s School families will be held after the Kindergarten Graduation Ceremony on Friday, May 17th. The Children’s School will be providing the main course, and we need volunteers to provide paper products, beverages, salads and desserts, as well as to help with the set up and clean up. Committee meetings to plan this event will be held on Tuesday, April 2nd at 9 am and 12:45 pm. Please join us if you can! Even if you cannot join us on that date, there will be volunteer opportunities for this event, so watch for an email about using a Google.doc to indicate how you can help. Please contact Maggie Rosenblum if you have any questions (rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu).

Community Service Project – Soles 4 Souls

Thank you to everyone who cleaned out their closets to support our shoe drive for Soles4Souls! It was a great success! We collected well over 100 pairs of shoes. That's over 100 pairs of shoes that will be kept out of landfills and 100 pairs of shoes that will help create opportunities for people in need around the globe.

Thank you!

Scholarship Funding Update

We recently received additional contributions to our Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs. Through the EITC and OSTC, eligible Pennsylvania businesses can earn tax credits while providing financial assistance for children to attend preschool or an approved K-12 school. In addition to the donations mentioned in previous newsletters, we have also received contributions from ANA Advisors, Inc., FCC Asset Management, Inc., and Five Points Artisan Bakeshop.

If you would like more information or can help us to build a list of prospective businesses, please contact the Main Office.
Family Social Organization Fun in March

• On March 8, 2019, the Children’s School FSO had a special experience at The Senator John Heinz History Center. Our tour began with exploring some vintage toys like Etch and Sketch, Mr. Potato Head, and Ants in the Pants. Our tour continued to the Mr. Rogers original stage set where we enjoyed seeing Mr. Rogers’ original puppets. We were introduced to how Mr. Rogers used puppets to tell a story and we were able to create our own puppets. Our morning finished in the innovation area, where we played brain games and frolicked with large foam blocks and Legos. We kicked off spring break with smiles and laughter at the Heinz History Center!

• Kickball Fun!! It was a wonderful morning on the 17th of March as friends of the school came back from spring break to play kickball together. Warm hugs and pleasant smiles were exchanged. The children enjoyed taking turns kicking the ball, but the joy of running between the bases was both visible and audible!

FSO Opportunity in April

Please join the FSO on Monday, April 29th from 3-4 PM at the Squirrel Hill Food Pantry. Families will pack snack bags and take a tour of the pantry. In the week leading up to the event, families will be able to send snack donations to the school. This event is limited to 10 children, so if you have attended in the past, please allow for others to have an opportunity. Please contact Alexis Tuckfelt (Ruthie K) at alexiscoupe@aol.com to reserve your spot. Hope to see you there!

If you have an idea for an event that you'd like to see organized, send it to Sarah Hummel at shummel1010@gmail.com.
Join Us for Garden Tending

Weather permitting, we will need some adult volunteers to help with garden clean-up and to prep our garden beds for planting. Tasks include:

- garden clean-up such as removing leaf debris
- pruning plants on the hillside
- prepping garden boxes on the wall for planting by the children later in May

If you are available to help in the garden on April 30th (rain date: May 1st), please contact Miss Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu.

Adopt our Garden for a Summer Week

During July and August, our garden will continue to grow but needs some friends to help with watering and weeding.

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 or 412-268-2198.

Learning About Play Priorities in China

Dr. Linhui Li, a visiting professor from Shanghai Normal University in China, has been observing our classrooms weekly as part of her sabbatical work to understand American early childhood education. In Shanghai, she teaches a course on play to help pre-service teachers understand its value and support developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor play. During our March professional development day, Dr. Li shared her perspective, along with photos and videos of public early childhood environments with our educators to spark discussion comparing and contrasting our approaches. The Chinese government has made the decision to invest heavily in early childhood environments and to prioritize life skills, exercise, learning of varied subjects and spontaneous play equally. They provide funding so that young children are guaranteed the space, time, and materials to engage in dramatic play, constructive play, sand & water play, sports play, etc., with the support of caring, responsive adults. We were inspired by such clear focus on positive and productive play!
Family Spotlight: The Lama Family

Hello! We are the Lama Family. We are so excited that we have joined the CMU Children's School family this year with Ezra in the Blue Room.

I (Claire) grew up here in Pittsburgh, and Prashant grew up in a farming village in the foothills of the Himalayas in Nepal. We met when I was in Nepal for three years doing nutrition and agriculture development work. I moved back here in 2012 to be close to family. Prashant joined me in 2013 and we got married a few months later. Ezra was born in 2015, and we welcomed our daughter, Asha, in 2018.

Prashant works at Aldi and I am a childbirth educator and lactation consultant at Squirrel Hill Health Center. I primarily work with newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers. Outside of work and school, we enjoy playing in Frick Park, cooking and going on adventures around the city. We hope to move back to Nepal someday, but for now we are grateful to be here in Pittsburgh.

Ezra says that his favorite part of the Children's School is "learning about all of the things and the playground." Our favorite part is knowing that Ezra is loved and nurtured by wonderful teachers and staff.

Caring Office Scene

Mr. Bear fell off the chair and bumped his head. Kiley (AM 3’s) bandaged him and gave him a “prescription” of one story a day to get better.

Box Tops for Education Update

Thank you to everyone who collected and submitted Box Tops for Education. In this collection period (October - March), we received 453 Box Tops for a total of $45.30. Our next Box Top Submission Deadline is in the Fall of 2019.
“Healthy Mind & Body” Family Festival

On Thursday, March 7th, about 210 Children’s School family members from 56 of our 76 families celebrated our whole school unit at our **Healthy Mind & Body** family festival. Families enjoyed exploring their senses of sight, touch, smell, and hearing in the Blue Room, while others exercised on our creatively modified “stationary tricycles”. In the Red Room, people of all ages practiced yoga to both relax and strengthen their bodies.

In the Green Room, children prepared their own “My Plate” diagrams to recall all the food groups and then enjoyed tasting nutritious snacks from each one. A group of Pitt Pediatric Dental Students, including CMU Alumna Myriam Bejjani, helped everyone recognize the amount of sugar in common snack foods and consider appropriate toothbrushing practices by using a large toothbrush on a stuffed dinosaur’s teeth.
More Strengthening Healthy Minds & Bodies

In the Kindergarten at the Family Festival, friends exercised their minds with a variety of games and puzzles, and also experimented with our “Glo Boxes” to see how well their handwashing eliminates germs. The Make Shop was a peaceful clay sculpting studio for families, and everyone could create decorative pinwheels in the office to use when practicing breathing and blowing strategies to calm themselves.
Role Changes for 2019-2020

While remaining Director of the Children’s School, beginning in July, Dr. Carver will spend ¼ of her time as an Associate Dean of the Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences, working closely with Dean Richard Scheines. Dr. Carver will reduce her Psychology teaching load and university committee work in order to devote time to supporting the Dietrich College innovations, particularly those related to the General Education curriculum that helps undergraduates from all majors build broad foundations in both humanities and social sciences, experience interdisciplinary approaches to society’s grand challenges, and engage in more holistic advising to strategically build on these foundational experiences throughout their four years at CMU. Please join us in congratulating Dr. Carver on this promotion to a college level leadership position!

The Kindergarten Team will have multiple transitions next year. Miss Zhao will be moving to California to further her education by pursuing a Montessori teaching certification. Mrs. Perovich is planning a staged retirement that would enable her to spend more time visiting her grandchildren in Virginia and Florida, while still supporting Children’s School educators with whole school projects and utilizing her many talents in ways that are yet to be finalized. To create the best possible teaching team for the Kindergarten next year and into the future, both Mrs. Opferman and Miss Dzina will join Mrs. Blizman on the Kindergarten team. Mrs. Perovich will be available in the fall to support the transition.

Meanwhile, the remaining Preschool 4’s Team of Mrs. Bird and Mrs. Cherin will be supplemented by the addition of Mrs. Yetter, who joined the Children’s School last fall as an Educational Support teacher to take the lead on our Whole School Healthy Mind & Body unit and substitute in all of our classes. We will also hire a new Associate Teacher to join the Preschool 4’s Team and possibly hire a new Educational Support professional as well. At this point, we do not anticipate any staffing changes in our Preschool 3’s Team (Mrs. Armbruster, Mrs. Loomis, Ms. O’Neill, and Mr. Salinetro), our PM Preschool Team (Mrs. Cherin and Ms. O’Neill), or our Administrative Team (Dr. Carver, Miss Drash, Miss Hancock, Mrs. Myers, and Mrs. Rosenblum).

If you know excellent educators who you think would be a positive addition to the Children’s School team, please let Dr. Carver know and suggest that your contacts visit the Careers@CarnegieMellon web site to officially apply for Job 2011961 (Associate Teacher) or Job 2011962 (Teacher). We appreciate your efforts to help us find the best possible candidates to join our talented team!
From March 19th to 22nd, Mrs. Bird, Dr. Carver, and Mrs. Myers attended the annual conference of the International Association of Laboratory Schools with about 50 educators from laboratory schools in the US and Canada. The conference was hosted by Texas Christian University with a theme of “Unlocking Potential / Changing Lives: Keys for Teaching Diverse Learners.” We toured TCU’s two laboratory schools, KinderFrogs: an early childhood program for children with Down Syndrome, and Starpoint: an elementary school for children with significant learning disabilities. We also visited the Alice Carlson Applied Learning Center, a progressive public elementary school using reading, writing and math workshop, project-based learning, and an emphasis on outdoor education.

The keynote speaker was Michael Remus, a veteran educator, administrator, consultant, and advocate for changing special education systems to make fully inclusive opportunities for all children available. Mrs. Bird and Mrs. Myers led an interactive session called, “Partnership and Advocacy for Developmental Differences in an Early Childhood Lab School.” In addition to attending informative presentations, our favorite part of the conference was networking with teachers and administrators to share strategies for supporting diverse children and families in laboratory school contexts, particularly when they are experiencing learning, behavior, and personal challenges.

In the few hours before and after the conference, we enjoyed exploring Fort Worth’s Water Gardens, Stockyards, and Botanical Garden, where a special lantern festival recently opened. Thanks to our colleagues at Texas Christian University and to their children for their hospitality and inspiration throughout the conference!
Children’s School April 2019

Undergraduate Spotlight

• Emma Barake

Hello! My name is Emma Barake and I am a freshman in the College of Engineering at Carnegie Mellon University. I am originally from just outside of Boston, Massachusetts. In addition to working at the Children’s School, I am involved with the Carnegie Mellon Ballroom Dancing Club.

Last semester, I learned the ropes to working at the Children’s School while playing and interacting with the Red Room friends and learning each and every child’s own unique personality, likes and dislikes. Currently, I work behind the scenes to make sure the children have a safe and clean environment, and I also help prepare art projects to support the children’s learning.

I was fortunate enough to discover the job listing for the Children's School by chance and applied immediately because I have worked with children in the past, and I have always loved it. During my senior year in high school, I tutored students ages 10 to 18 on math topics ranging from basic arithmetic and beginner equations to integral calculus. Every time a student understood a problem and was able to apply the same concept to another problem, I felt so proud of the students and what they had accomplished - no matter how small, and this feeling of pride and admiration for my students translates directly to the children at the Children’s School. Every time I witness a friend learning something new or helping another friend, I cannot help but smile because they are learning about the world and how to interact kindly with those around them. There was one week where I came back after a short break, and I saw the friends in the Red Room doing the coat “flip” where they flipped their jackets over their heads to put it on correctly. I was amazed because just a week before, I had helped them put on their jackets one sleeve at a time, but now they could do it on their own. I could only image how much they practiced, and I was incredibly proud of what they accomplished. In my future semesters working at the Children’s School, I look forward to seeing how every friend at the Children’s School grows and learns about what they can accomplish.

Undergrads Support Spring Carnival

On Friday and Saturday, April 12 and 13, from 8am to Noon, the CMU Alumni Association will sponsor a KidZone Area in a tent on Frew Street with a balloon artist, face painting, coloring, allergy-friendly snacks, and the opportunity for children to build and race their own LEGO® buggy on a custom-built track. The Midway rides open at 11am on Friday and Saturday, with most rides costing between $.50 and $2.00. For a full carnival schedule, see https://www.cmu.edu/engage/alumni/events/campus/spring-carnival/schedule/index.html.

Undergrad Lauren Pugeda is working with the Tri Delta sorority on a Pompeii-themed booth and Intern Hannah Fernandes is working on the Great Barrier Reef booth with the Delta Gamma sorority. Deborah Blank is pushing buggy for Apex, a uniquely collaborative team.
Research Spotlight

Undergraduate Research Methods Class

The undergraduates in Ron Ziai and Patience Stevens’ Developmental Research Methods class are working in small groups to conduct their final projects for the semester. Though the research protocols are still being finalized based on pilot testing, the students are planning to study many educationally relevant early childhood tasks. Discovering the impact of the variables studied on children’s learning can help adults better choose approaches for supporting their progress. Here are a few examples:

• The Animal Matching Game – Exploring whether Preschoolers and Kindergartners will do better on a challenging memory matching game after singing familiar songs with the researchers, after practicing mindful relaxation and breathing techniques, or after playing an “I Spy” game. The students will compare the number of matches the child was able to make and how long it took the child to complete the matching. By trying to understand how well children perform after the three different types of preparatory activity, this study aims to provide useful information to teachers and parents to improve executive function in 3, 4, and 5-year old children.

• The Shapes Game – Testing whether perceptual salience of bright color vs. grayscale impacts children’s memory for shapes. Prior studies found memory for natural scenes was 8-10% better when they were presented in color vs. in grayscale. This study involves asking children to remember a set of 5 shapes that are presented one at a time for five seconds each. After a distraction task, the children are given a picture with simple black outlines of 10 shapes and asked to point to the five that they saw previously. Each child does the task twice, once with a set of bright shapes and once with a set of grayscale shapes to see which task is easier for 3, 4, and 5-year old children.

• The Ant & Grasshopper Game – Investigating how presenting visuals of story characters can impact children’s story comprehension. It is common that educators use 2D or 3D presentations of characters to engage children in storytelling (e.g., felt boards or puppets). Prior research has provided solid evidence that having full illustrations of the story will result in better comprehension, especially for older children. In this study, all children hear the same narration of the Ant & Grasshopper story, some with only visuals of the Ant, some with only visuals of the Grasshopper, and others with visuals of both characters. After an intervening delay task, children are asked to answer comprehension questions about the characters and events in the story to see which condition works the best for 3, 4, and 5-year old children.

Families whose children participate will receive fuller parent descriptions via the child’s backpack. Everyone can read the full set of study descriptions on the Research Bulletin Board to the left of the Children’s School office. What interesting developmental psychology topics!
Director’s Corner: Taking on Challenges

Taking on challenges is the sixth of “seven essential life skills every child needs” according to Ellen Galinsky in *Mind in the Making*. Galinsky describes the essence of this skill as, “being proactive rather than reactive when difficulties arise” (p. 283). Once again, such a stance requires one to utilize the previously discussed five skills of focus and self-control, making connections, perspective taking, communication, and critical thinking. In addition, taking on challenges requires us to manage novel situations that are on the edge of our capacity to handle; that’s how we learn, stretch, excel – basically “rise to the challenge”. Children’s temperament biases them to be more reserved or more relaxed in new situations and to respond with high or low intensity, which means that they will take more or less time and need more or less support in order to effectively regulate their responses to manage the situation and return to their calm, comfortable state. The key for everyone is to be able to manage the stress of novel challenges both individually and with the support of caring others.

The skill of taking on challenges is evident in many aspects of the Children’s School developmental objectives, primarily because there are challenges in personal, social, cognitive, and physical development. We intentionally promote children’s ability to regulate their emotions, to persist with a task, and to ask for help when they need it (i.e., rather than quitting, whining, crying, etc.). With respect to social challenges, we emphasize ways for children to appropriately stand up for their rights, deal with hurt feelings, manage winning and losing respectfully, etc. With respect to cognitive and physical challenges, we help the children practice learning from their mistakes, seeking multiple solutions, and applying solutions that they know from prior challenges to new situations – all while taking initiative and appropriate risks within the safe boundaries that we set for them.

During our recent Healthy Mind & Body unit, we talked explicitly with the children about ways to cope with challenging circumstances, including stress, anger, etc. We have noticed the children relaxing effectively by doing yoga, making creative patterns in the Zen gardens, and choosing calming activities (such as manipulating playdough or clay, breathing deeply, etc.). As adults, we are often tempted to shield children from challenges and stressors, but, in the long run, we serve them better by helping them learn to cope effectively in ways that fit their dispositions.

To help in that process, both parents and educators can purposefully model ways to take on challenges, while articulating our process in developmentally appropriate ways. “Wow, this task is harder than I thought … I’m going to have to try again … I’m getting frustrated, so I’m going to take a break for a minute … then I’ll try it a different way or ask so and so to help me … Look, I finally got it … I’m glad I kept trying … I love a challenge.” Galinsky reports research demonstrating that children fare best in challenging situations when adults take a calm and positive approach with only as much guidance as absolutely necessary. It’s also important to reinforce the value of children’s efforts so that they develop a “growth mindset”, rather than emphasizing their talents or intelligence. In studies where adults commented that children’s success meant that they were smart vs. that it meant that they had worked really hard, those given “intelligence” feedback subsequently chose easier tasks than those given “effort” feedback. They were also more likely to lie about their performance when asked to share their scores with others. Included with this newsletter is an article about a project that involved Children’s School parents pilot testing workshops to help them promote a growth mindset in their children. I look forward to hearing about your efforts to implement these ideas!