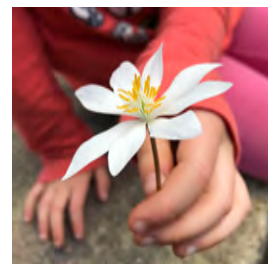


Carnegie Mellon University Children's School May 2020 Family Newsletter

Nature's Role in Healing and Learning

As the coronavirus pandemic spreads and our weeks of social distancing become months, the stress is taking its toll on our physical and mental health. Though we are not yet free to gather in groups for social support, the improving weather gives us the chance to venture outdoors to commune with nature. As naturalist Rachel Carson said in her book, *A Sense of Wonder*, "There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrain of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter."



Experiencing a close, personal connection with nature also provides engaging opportunities for children's self-initiated discovery that blossoms into interests that children are motivated to pursue, both on their own and with the guidance of adults who are prepared to involve them in more systematic inquiry and deeper learning from books, experts, and other sources. Scaffolding with the prompts, "I notice ____, I wonder ____, I think ____, and I learned ____" supports children's use of the inquiry process. During nature investigations, children have opportunities to progress in all developmental domains. Even without a formal curriculum, nature explorations can help children gain confidence in their skills and foster initiative (Self-esteem & Independence), encourage peers to support each other's ideas and negotiate plans (Interaction & Cooperation), provide rich topics of conversation and contexts for recording observations (Communication), provoke inquiry with diverse opportunities to compare, sort, and quantify (Discovery & Exploration), build skills for controlled movement and use of tools while managing risks (Physical Capabilities / Health & Safety), and inspire children to both perceive and create beauty (Artistic Expression & Appreciation). Remember, exploration is more about noticing, wondering, and predicting than about knowing all the answers. So, relax and venture outdoors with your family. You'll be amazed at what you can discover together!



May / June Dates:

Though the Children's School campus is closed, remote learning continues!

May 11th to 15th Last Week of Spring Semester 2020 – Watch for Slideshow Viewing Party Invitations

May 14th to 17th Pittsburgh's Virtual Children's Theater Festival

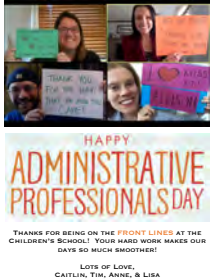
May 18th to 29th Professional Development for Educators

June 1st to 26th Free Remote "Bugs" Camp – Watch for Daily Suggestions



Celebrating Administrative Professionals

Allison



Wednesday, April 22nd was Administrative Professionals Day, a time dedicated to recognizing “the professionals who keep an office running smoothly every day.” Though not working together in a physical office this year, our administrative team has capably shifted gears to manage all of their regular management tasks, as well as providing technical support for educators working remotely and emotional support for educators, parents, researchers, and undergraduates whose routines were significantly and abruptly disrupted. We are grateful beyond measure to Miss Drash, Miss Hancock, Mrs. Myers, and Mrs. Rosenblum. You are THE BEST!!

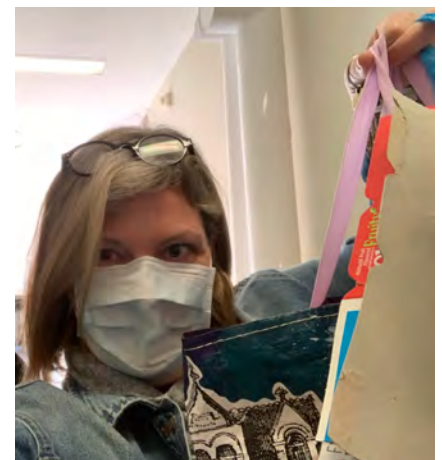
Teacher Appreciation

Thanks to the Preschool 3's Families and Miss Drash for creating such a moving Teacher Appreciation video for the Children's School educators. They were so touched by the children's simple expressions of gratitude and loved hearing so many of their voices!



Sharing Our Food Stores

On Tuesday April 21st, Miss Drash headed to the Children's School wearing her mask and gloves. She went to pack all the leftover canned and dry goods from the kitchen to donate to our friends at 412 Food Rescue! As luck would have it, there was also a 5-gallon tub of ice cream! To thank our wonderful mail carrier friends who are still on campus each day, she packed lots of fun ice cream toppings to deliver with the ice cream to the CMU post office. She left the box so that each person could safely make their own custom sundae! It brightened their day and also brightened her day to help others!



Virtual “Bugs” Camp – Free for All Families

As of this writing, we have no news of CMU’s plans for re-opening the campus, and Allegheny County remains in Pennsylvania’s “Red Phase” for re-opening. Even if the county shifts to the “Yellow Phase” by June, the cleaning protocols, temperature screening, staggered schedule, group size and social distancing requirements, increased hand-washing frequency, use of masks and other personal protective equipment, etc. would significantly impact our ability to offer our June Summer “Bugs” Camp in a way that is safe, effective, and enjoyable for all. For that reason, we are canceling the camp and refunding 100% of any camp tuition that has already been paid. Several of the camp educators will continue working in June, so they will provide daily suggestions for learning about “Bugs” at home, much in the way that our educators have been doing for the past two months.

Year End Slideshow Virtual Viewing Parties

We will also postpone our traditional year-end celebrations until it is safe to return to school for large gatherings. We hope you will watch for announcements about **Celebration Picnics** later this summer on our playground. Meanwhile, each class is planning a virtual viewing party to share a slideshow they have created to highlight the wonderful learning we have done together this year. Details for each class event will come via email, and each slideshow will be available in a private Google folder for you to download during a specified period of time after the party.

Tuition Refunds & Donation Receipts

Families have already been contacted regarding the electronic payment process for their partial tuition refunds, and the university will process them as soon as possible after receipt of each family’s bank transfer information. We have also submitted a list of the more than \$35,000 in donated refunds from more than 30 families so that CMU can provide gift receipts for your 2020 income taxes. We appreciate your patience with the processing of both refunds and receipts while all of the university staff members are working remotely.

PA Private Academic School License

Good News! Our PA Private Academic School license renewal has just been approved through April of 2021 based on our annual report.



PA Continuity of Education Plan

As a licensed Pennsylvania Private Academic School, we were required to prepare a “continuity of education plan” to share with the state board of education and the public. You can access the written plan on our home page at <https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs/>. To gather perspectives from Children’s School families on your experience during this emergency remote teaching and learning situation, we are shifting our annual **Family Survey** to focus on gathering your input. The survey will launch during the first full week of May and remain open for 10 days. Your honest feedback will help us reflect on the work that we have done to support you and your children during this unprecedented challenge.

Remote Work for Early Childhood Educators

Shifting to remote work has been challenging for educators used to the hustle and bustle of colleagues and children learning together in the Margaret Morrison building at CMU. In case you are wondering, here's a glimpse of the workspaces we have created for ourselves at home.



Dietrich College Diaries

Dietrich College offers a forum to share our “experiences, reflections and tips as we all navigate the coronavirus pandemic.” Check <https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/news/dietrich-diaries/index.html> to read submissions from faculty, staff, students and alumni who are helping us stay closely connected as a community while separated by distance. Thanks to the six Children's School educators who have already shared their reflections.

April 27, 2020



One Day at a Time

I have learned to live life one day at a time. So often, we long for the next opportunity, but now, I've been forced to focus just on the day in front of me. In each moment, I ask myself: How can I be the best parent to my two young children? How can I support my husband? How can I work remotely in the best way possible? Connect with family and friends? Stay healthy?

Each day, I wake up to these thoughts shuffling around in my head. I want to be the best person I can be each day - Not looking ahead into the future, but at the moment right now. Each morning, my husband and I try to work out a plan for the day. It's been fun to see our kids engage in new imaginative play. Like creating cardboard computers to have their own Zoom meetings. They are adjusting to the new normal just as we as adults are too. One day at a time....

-Leslie Johnson, Educational Support

Children & Families Learning at Home

We appreciate all of the ways our families have stayed connected with us during Pennsylvania's Stay-at-Home order for the past seven weeks, and we hope you will continue to do so. You have invited us into your homes via Zoom, shared photos and video clips of your learning adventures, and used email and parent-teacher conferences to dialogue in deeper ways. This newsletter contains many glimpses of the creative and constructive ways learning can happen at home. Thank you for sharing yourselves with us!



Celebrating NAEYC's Week of the Young Child

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) designated the week of April 13th to 17th as the Week of the Young Child to create broad visibility and support for the importance of the early years. Thank you to all who celebrated *Music Monday, Tasty Tuesday, Work Together Wednesday, Artsy Thursday and Family Friday* with us for the Week of the Young Child 2020. Also, thank you to those who submitted pictures of your explorations at home. If you would like a link to the slideshow, please email ewmyers@andrew.cmu.edu.

Music Monday



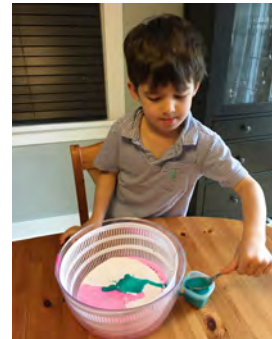
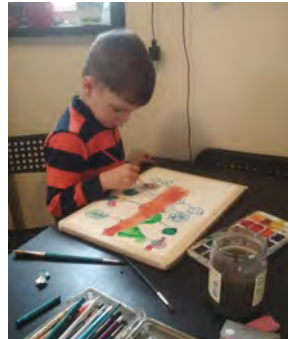
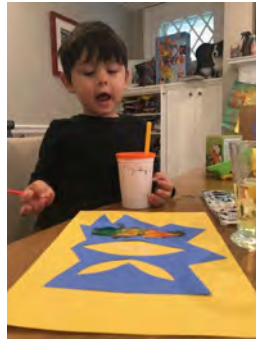
Tasty Tuesday



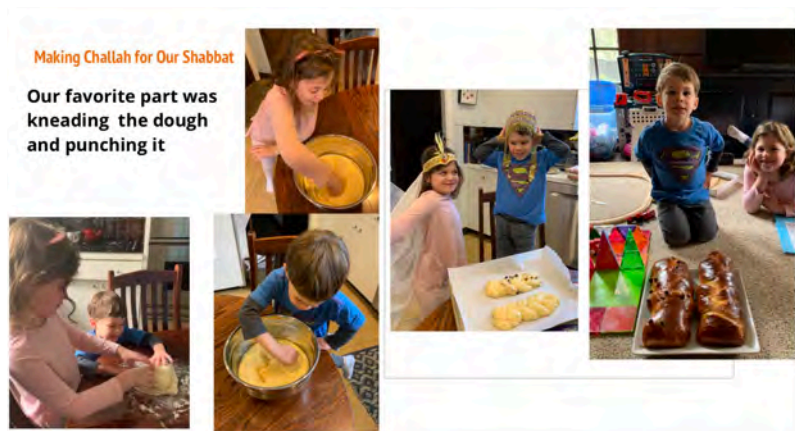
Work Together Wednesday



Artsy Thursday



Family Friday



Enjoy Pittsburgh's Children's Theater Festival

Since all of Pittsburgh's Cultural Trust activities are canceled through mid-June, there are virtual learning and activities from the Children's Theater Festival partners in the community. From May 14th – 17th, families have opportunities to engage with featured performing artists, watch special performances from local performers, and participate in the Frog Stop Scavenger Hunt @ Home, with suggestions for virtual activities that involve making, watching, learning, moving, helping, and reading.

<https://pghkids.trustarts.org/kids/plan-your-visit/frog-stop-scavenger-hunt>



Celebrating Earth Week

After exploring Planet Earth as our whole school theme this year, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day for a whole week. Here are some of the ways our children and families explored the earth by reducing, reusing, and recycling, as well as by taking the time to observe and appreciate nature.



Our Mental Health During Challenging Times

During these strange days, when so much of what we are reading or seeing on television begins with “in these unprecedented times...” we can become saturated with information and sometimes overwhelmed by related emotions. Currently, many healthcare professionals are recommending some basic strategies for regaining or maintaining positive emotional and mental health. Here is a quick reminder: 1) Take a break from the news; stay informed, but give your mind and body a respite from the constant flow of information, 2) Continue to care for your mind and body - for parents, yes that means time just for you! 3) Stay in touch with friends and family as much as you are able, and 4) Nurture your sense of humor, smile, laugh, and celebrate fun & silliness!

For children ages 3-6, an important foundation for social and emotional growth is learning to first recognize and later begin to name **emotions**. Emotions can be BIG, little, **hard**, **soft**, uncomfortable and any other adjective a young child may use. The most important thing to remember is that **emotions are real**. **Emotions exist**. Here are a few of our favorite children's books about feelings, with links to videos of the stories being read aloud.

'In My Heart' by Jo Witek. Read by Mrs. Johnson at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YdLCIbVq4

'The Lemonade Hurricane: A Story of Mindfulness and Meditation' Licia Morelli.

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Olqt-Ghi-zo>

'When Sophie Gets Angry, Really Really Angry' by Molly Bang.

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Go6K1oKsOkQ>

'Visiting Feelings' by Lauren Rubenstein. Read aloud on

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3ZuNMOt4f0>

'Today I Feel Silly and Other Moods that Make My Day' by Jamie Lee Curtis. Read aloud on

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JofkgL7CY5A>



Even as adults, it is very important to practice recognizing and naming our emotions. For children, trusted adults can talk about and support children's coping with big emotions. When we need to, if feelings are too much, we look to our medical professionals for guidance. The American Academy of Pediatrics has an excellent website with up-to-date articles on parenting during these challenging times, getting outside, working and learning from home, and recommendations about children and masks. Visit the website at: <https://healthychildren.org/English/Pages/default.aspx>. If you are a Facebook user, Kids Plus Pediatrics (Pittsburgh) offers this excellent conversation and Q&A with Dr. Todd Wolynn (MD Pediatrics) and Early Childhood Specialist Diana Schwab (M.Ed., LCSW). They address current social distancing / quarantine concerns about young children. Because it is a long video, I found it helpful to scroll through the questions asked 'in real time', and fast forward to Diana's answers (<https://www.facebook.com/KidsPlusPediatrics/videos/214255373336922/>). Outside of the world of medicine, **Kidsburgh** (<https://www.kidsburgh.org/>) has an array of topics for children and families, including <https://www.kidsburgh.org/overwhelmed-6-ways-moms-and-dads-can-get-relief-from-coronavirus-anxiety/> on how to find relief from the stresses of being at home with young children during this time. Oftentimes, giving back to our communities by donating time and/ or resources is something that you **can** do, and it can help you feel connected to others. If you are looking for an opportunity to contribute as a family, visit this page: <https://www.kidsburgh.org/heres-how-to-be-a-coronavirus-hero-and-help-struggling-families-in-pittsburgh/>.

Prepared by Mrs. Myers

Undergraduate Spotlight

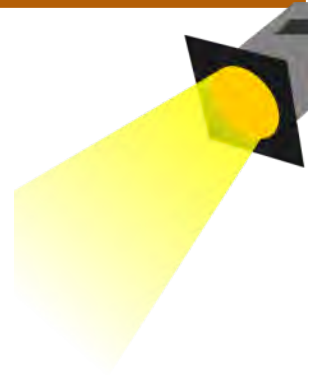
CMU's undergraduates are still all doing their coursework remotely. Enza is learning at home in California, missing everyone very much, and anxious to get back to campus. Camille is living in off-campus housing in Pittsburgh,



doing her on-line classes, and practicing social distancing. Peace is at home with her family; her mother is considered an essential worker, so the family is working particularly hard to keep her safe.

Thanks to Julia for the creative playdough making video!

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=al2Z3hUzQs>.



Research Spotlight

Though in-person research with child subjects is on hiatus at the Children's School during the coronavirus outbreak, the research teams are creatively developing ways to conduct studies remotely. The research team in Dr. Anna Fisher's lab has worked with CMU's Institutional Review Board to modify their human subjects' protocol to allow for research to be conducted via Zoom. Many of our children have been consistently and actively engaged in the Zoom class activities, so we plan to invite those who are most comfortable in that format to engage in pilot research projects this spring and summer if the parents are interested. Participation in this pilot work is totally optional.



We plan to begin the process by having Miss Drash contact families to determine their interest in participating and willingness to share one parent's email address with the researchers so that scheduling can be done directly with them. Invitations from the researchers for scheduling would include the research description that parents typically get AFTER the sessions. The descriptions will give parents a sense of the task(s) the child will do via Zoom.

When preparing for the session, we suggest telling the child that they are going to play a game with a grownup friend from the Children's School, just like they do at school. Please don't discuss the actual game with them. Also, it will be helpful to have the child seated in a fairly distraction free part of your home. Parents should stay behind the child to avoid influencing the child's responses. Feel free to use a virtual background if you would be more comfortable with that. The researchers will be recording the sessions for coding purposes, but also because Miss Drash and Dr. Carver will be checking sample recordings to ensure that we are comfortable with the way the sessions are being conducted. We do this type of checking in person when new studies start in the labs at school as well.



The first pilot will involve children making inferences about living things after being told two facts and asked to deduce whether a third fact is true or not true (thumbs up or thumbs down). The second pilot will engage children in a series of self-regulation games involving naming, matching, and movement. Both of these pilots will be run by veteran researchers who have worked well with our children in the past. Typically, children enjoy the extra attention and stimulation of these games; but as always, the children are free to stop participating at any time.

Director's Corner: Importance of Rest



When I started this series of articles on ways to foster children's development as innovators poised to improve life on earth for their own and future generations, I could not have even imagined how quickly lives across the globe would change nor how creatively diverse individuals would rise above the fear to make it better. Innovations in care and cures, business models and technologies, entertainment and philanthropy emerged as distinctions blurred between work and home, virtual and actual, essential and optional. But the pace of innovation has been staggering, and we are now experiencing the exhaustion and growing impatience of our community.

The abrupt loss of our comfortable routines afforded new choices, while the stay-at-home order resulted in much more available time. After an initially slow start, we have been blessed with incredible support from leaders in all sectors to help us both survive the pandemic's impact and manage our choices and time. Perhaps you remember that choice, time, and support were the first three ingredients in my recipe for fostering innovation. Now, the fatigue and irritation that many of us are experiencing signal the importance of the final ingredient: **Rest**. After months of near constant innovation within our own homes and families to invent new daily routines, convert living spaces into work and school spaces, devise do-it-yourself methods to replace services no longer available, etc., our brains and our bodies desperately need rest.

Significance of Sleep: Start with getting a good night's sleep, which research shows is necessary for physical healing, boosting the immune system, improving concentration, and consolidating memory. The National Sleep Foundation recommends that adults sleep a full one-third of each day and that young children need almost 12 hours of sleep per 24. In other words, sleep should be a big item on our daily To Do lists.

Separation from Screens: One factor in adult exhaustion during this season of working from home is the increased hours of screen time that have replaced face-to-face interactions and the decrease in breaks between meetings for the stretching, walking, and socializing that help invigorate us to concentrate on the next task. Sleep experts also recommend separating from our screens several hours before bedtime in order to allow our bodies to relax and fall asleep more easily. Though there is less research on this topic with young children, there is ample research showing the benefits of engagement in play, manipulations of tangible objects, and time outdoors.

Respect for Recreation: Purposely taking time for enjoying leisure activities is relaxing and refreshing for both mind and body. We may have to use a little more imagination than usual to create fun respites for ourselves and our children when many of our typical recreational facilities are closed, but here is where life with young children has its benefits. They find joy and humor in the simplest pleasures, and their laughs are contagious. Pause to be present in the moment with them, and feel free to let yourself go with their flow. Reading, playing board games, scavenger hunts, taking walks around the block, and even bath time can be done with creative twists, especially if we invite the children to suggest silly modifications and we are willing to play along.

Whatever our "new normal" may be for the summer and beyond, caring for ourselves and our children by ensuring adequate rest is essential. Prioritizing respite, and helping each other to make it practically possible, will help us most effectively capitalize on the choices we have, the time we are given and the support available to drive our personal and professional innovation to new frontiers.