

# Carnegie Mellon University Children's School December 2020 Family Newsletter

## Gratitude for Carnegie Mellon

The Thanksgiving holiday affords the opportunity for us to pause from our busy schedules to focus our attention on being grateful for the many blessings in our lives. At the Children's School, our greatest gift is the amazing educators whose passion, enthusiasm, creativity, diligence, and patience contribute so much to our children's developmentally appropriate experiences each and every day. During the pandemic, their commitment to supporting colleagues, children and families has been inspiring, both when working to safely navigate in-person education and when adapting remote technologies for young children's learning. Our efforts have been supported by MANY Carnegie Mellon colleagues, but we recognize here four whose excellence was acknowledged during CMU's recent Andy Awards: Steve Guenther, who supports our facilities improvements, won for "Innovative and Creative Contributions". Melanie Lucht and Mo Dasey-Morales, this year's Community Champions, guided our return to work plan development. Jim Hawthorne, our computer guru, was also recognized for his 30 years of service. Congratulations and deep appreciation to them all!



Steve Guenther

Facilities Management and  
Campus Services



Melanie Lucht

Enterprise Risk Management  
(ERM) Services



Maureen Dasey-  
Morales

Office of the Dean of Students



Walter Hawthorne  
CMU Children's School

### December 2020 / January 2021 Dates

Children's School Virtual Book Fair: November 23<sup>rd</sup> through December 6<sup>th</sup>  
<https://www.childrensbookstore.com/welcome/cmu-childrens-school/?ref=6FERE9W>

Parent / Teacher Zoom Conferences: Continuing through Friday, December 11<sup>th</sup>

Friday, December 18<sup>th</sup> – Last Day of the Second Quarter

No School for Children – December 19<sup>th</sup> through January 18<sup>th</sup>

***Have a Wonderful Winter Break!!***

January 11<sup>th</sup> through January 15<sup>th</sup> – Professional Development Week for Educators

Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup> – Children Return to School for 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter

All of these dates are posted on our web calendar  
<https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs/>



## 27<sup>th</sup> Annual CMU Food Drive

Thank you for your contributions to the annual CMU Food Drive benefitting the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank! This year, the University collected:

- Total dollars raised: \$81,436.27
- Total pounds: 2,419 (including can openers)
- Can Openers: 285 (donated to our CMU Food Pantry)



Using the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank's formula to convert dollars to pounds and adding that figure to the cash total, the grand total raised this year is an incredible \$84,460.02. The financial support alone will help provide 407,181 meals to our neighbors in need this holiday season. This drive was the most successful in CMU history. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this worthy cause.

## #givingCMUday – December 1, 2020

December 1<sup>st</sup> is the sixth 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. This year, the program is changing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the intent of the program is the same. 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 beyond these difficult times, and well into the future with the expectation of better days ahead!

To make a donation, please visit:

<https://givingcmuday.cmu.edu/campaigns/cmu-childrens-school>.

Watch your email for more information on this event.

## Scholarship Funding Updates

As you know, 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. We recently received funding from The Buncher Company.

Through EITC, 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 students K-12th grade residing within the boundaries of a low-achieving school to attend another public school outside of their district or a nonpublic school. In 2019-20, The Children's School's EITC and OSTC Programs funded 75 students, pre-Kindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> grade, in 17 different schools throughout Allegheny and Westmoreland counties.

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

## Children's Bookstore Online Book Fair

This year, our annual book fair will be held through Children's Bookstore and will be totally online. The Children's School will receive 30% of the purchase price of every book purchased by our families between November 23<sup>rd</sup> and December 6<sup>th</sup>. This money will be used to buy new books for our library. During the book fair, a list of recommended books will be available for you, and our teachers will provide wish lists of books that can be directly purchased for the school. To access our book fair on the Children's Bookstore website, please follow this link:

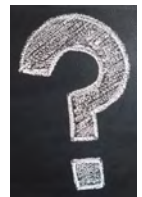
<https://www.childrensbookstore.com/welcome/?ref=6FERE9W>

Please note that if you purchase books either before or after the book fair dates, the Children's School will still receive 15% of the purchase price.



If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at [rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu).

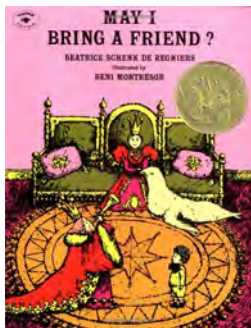
## Big Questions for Young Minds



### Questions to Ask During Mealtimes

Family mealtimes are great opportunities to engage your child(ren) in meaningful conversations. Here are some samples of questions you can use to encourage higher level thinking:

- If you were the family chef, what would you make for breakfast (lunch, dinner)?
- What are some words you would use to describe tonight's chicken (tofu, rice, etc.)?
- Let's think of words we can use to describe how our food feels, tastes, smells, sounds when we chew it!
- What can you find on the table that is blue? Red? Green? What can you find on the table that is smaller than a penny? Larger than your hand?



You can also support memory development by asking questions about past meals and probe for details (e.g., special meals with family, who was present, what was eaten, etc.). Fiction books related to meals offer ideas too!

Foster emotional development by discussing feelings related to cooking, meals, foods, etc. Considering fantasy thinking can broaden the range of both positive and negative emotions, as well as encouraging creativity. Pretend you are planning a meal for a famous person, a unicorn, a dinosaur, etc., and brainstorm ideas for the foods, utensils, guests, décor, and so on.

If your preschooler is your youngest child, you might enjoy creating a conversation jar to enrich your family time during meals (<https://www.anxioustoddlers.com/family-dinner/#.X8G5SC1h3OQ>).

Happy Dining!!!

## Ventilation as COVID Risk Mitigation

Since the beginning of the school year, we have been spending as much time as possible outdoors as one way of mitigating the spread of COVID-19. We will continue that practice into the winter months, so please review the "Winter Wear" suggestions on the next page to ensure that you send your child with proper clothing for our outdoor activities and excursions.



To enhance indoor ventilation, CMU also installed screens on all of the Children's School and Yellow Room (MMC 121) windows that open, as well as on the Kindergarten door to the Reflection Garden. We have kept those windows open through November, and we will continue to do so on any warm days throughout the winter. We also have to ensure that the educators and children are comfortable indoors and that we do not waste energy by needing to overheat our rooms.

Fortunately, Carnegie Mellon also installed enhanced technology on the old HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) system for the Children's School spaces to improve indoor environmental quality. This **bipolar needlepoint ionization** system further improves the filtration and has been proven to deactivate the virus. With this enhancement on the HVAC system serving the Children's School, the windows can be closed.

A brief video explaining how needlepoint bipolar ionization works is available here:

<https://globalplasmasolutions.com/how-it-works>.

This CMU article also explains the system and includes a shorter video about the technology:

<https://www.cmu.edu/news/stories/archives/2020/august/enhanced-hvac-covid.html>.

The ventilation for the Yellow Room upstairs is from a modern system that provides ventilation on a continuous basis while heat is provided by radiators in the space.

Thanks to Carnegie Mellon's Facilities Management and Campus Services (FMCS) team for helping us all stay healthy!

## Evolving Travel & Visitor Guidance



A quarantine of 14 days is recommended whenever a staff member or child engages in "high-risk" travel or when their family is hosting guests who have engaged in "high risk" travel. Guidance from late July is included at the link below, but the specifics are continually evolving.

<https://www.cmu.edu/coronavirus/assets/documents/guidance-for-travelers.pdf>

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, because of increasing COVID-19 cases nationwide, Pennsylvania released new guidance related to any out of state travel. Please consult the web site below as you are making your holiday plans:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Travelers.aspx>.

We encourage you to contact Dr. Carver to discuss your particular circumstances so that we can partner in assessing the risks and recommending whether quarantine is advisable.

## Winter Health Pointers

**WINTER WEAR:** As the chilly winter weather approaches, please replenish your child's extra clothes container with apparel appropriate for the season, as well as clothes to accommodate their physical growth. Layering your child's clothing for school days is helpful. While the temperature in our building is fairly constant and comfortable, some children may feel too warm or too cold on any given day. Wearing a t-shirt under a sweater allows the child to adjust to a personal level of comfort. Even in pre-pandemic times, we go outside daily in the winter, except in very extreme weather conditions. Please send labeled hats and mittens to school every day. On snowy days, please also send labeled snow pants and boots. Feel free to provide a set of outdoor clothes to be kept in your child's locker. If you have outdoor clothes to share, please send them to the office; if you need outdoor clothes for your child, please contact a member of the administrative team for assistance.



**HANDWASHING:** We are diligent in teaching Children's School adults and children to wash their hands using the procedures recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): Rub soapy hands vigorously for at least **20 seconds**, including back of hands, wrists, areas between fingers, around nail beds, and under fingernails and jewelry. The children are taught a much more detailed version which is included in your Family Handbook.

**PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL DAY:** Our school day is filled with active and interesting projects that are planned in advance to ensure appropriate adult supervision. To that end, we ask that children come to school only if they can fully participate in the day's activities, including outdoor play. If your child is not well enough to fully take part in the day, please keep the child at home because our classroom pods have to stay separate from each other, and we do not have staff members available to supervise children indoors while the rest of the class is outdoors.

## Generous Givers & Gracious Receivers

During the year, we seek to help the learners at the Children's School become generous givers and gracious receivers. Whether giving and receiving affirmation, help, or actual items, we aim to emphasize respect and gratitude. We also emphasize the importance of expressing gratitude verbally or by drawing or writing. During the holiday season, involving your whole family in helping provides opportunities that go well beyond donation drives in ways that build relationships. Even while maintaining physical distance, a



child's smile, song, or drawing can brighten a neighbor's day. I know that the photos and videos I receive from my granddaughters help me feel close to them during this time when we cannot visit. Once children have learned skills by helping in their own homes and yards, they can share those skills with their elderly relatives and neighbors. Families can also share from their abundance when they cook or bake together, when flowers bloom or vegetables ripen, or when they have time to place a call to offer some social connection. Even during the pandemic, there are ways for children and families to volunteer their service and offer kindness to others. See "*Doing Good Together's Coronavirus Response*" for more ideas about showing compassion and making a difference (<https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/covid19-response>).

## Dialogue on Discussing Race and Racism

At this juncture in American history, educating young children about race and racism is a vital step in equipping them for personal action to promote equity and justice in our society. Mrs. Rosenblum is partnering with Children's School parent and Equity & Inclusion Consultant Liz Foster-Shaner to host virtual dialogue sessions to share experiences and strategies for supporting our children's learning about these important topics. We had our first dialogue on Tuesday morning, November 17<sup>th</sup> with six parents and four educators, and that group is planning to meet again on Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup>.



There is another opportunity for dialogue on Saturday morning, December 5<sup>th</sup> at 10am. You can register using the Google sheet below and Zoom links will be provided to attendees soon.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1LHWFHtu1MQwCk24MvG8PBilDgsoCiFe-HITrieU92Bk/edit?usp=sharing>

We suggest that before attending, participants view <https://info.theellisschool.org/discussing-race>. This is one-hour talk was given by Denise LaRosa, the Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at the Ellis School.

Additionally, here is a link to a YouTube video of the author, Jelani Memory, reading his book "A Kids Book About Racism": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnaltG5N8nE&app=desktop>.

Please do not hesitate to contact Maggie Rosenblum with any questions concerning these events.

## EQT Children's Theater Festival @ Home November 19<sup>th</sup> through December 31, 2020

Traditionally, the EQT Children's Theater Festival happens for 4 days in May in Downtown Pittsburgh's Cultural District, bringing extraordinary and unique experiences to young people and continuing the tradition of theater for your children. Due to the pandemic, the EQT Children's Theater Festival, originally scheduled for May 14-17, shifted to a virtual platform - the EQT Children's Theater Festival @ Home.

This year, the EQT Children's Theater Festival @ Home is available from November 19 - December 31, 2020 to give families another chance to engage with the arts and spend time together in a safe way. You can enjoy full-length performance streams, workshops with artists, a Frog Stop Scavenger Hunt and more! New content will be released each week. Follow along to maximize the fun! Visit <https://pghkids.trustarts.org/>.

## Family Spotlight: Generations at CMU

Hello to all! We are Elizabeth Deasy and Andrew Grossmann. We are thrilled for our son, Joaquin, to be attending the Preschool 3's program this year. Our personal and family histories are intertwined with CMU. Andrew's parents are of Spanish and Swiss-Mexican nationalities and moved to the US when Andrew's father, Ignacio, joined the Chemical Engineering faculty at CMU. Andrew's relationship with The Children's School began in the 1980's when he and his siblings attended The Children's School (see Andrew here with Mrs. Bird, though she may have been Miss Thompson then). The Children's School was the family's first point of contact with the wider English-speaking community in Pittsburgh, and Andrew remembers it as a place of discovery and nurturing.



Years later, Elizabeth and Andrew met as freshmen in the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon. Andrew often comments that his formal education both began and ended in the Margaret Morrison building where both The Children's School and the School of Design are located. During and after college, Elizabeth taught art to young children in Pittsburgh, including at an area early childhood program. As an educator there, she both hosted and attended a variety of professional development workshops. The one that stood out to her most, both then and now, was her visit to The Children's School, which exuded strong foundational principles via the school's joyous mood and energy, the rapport between children and between the children and their teachers, and the student work on the walls. She always had it in the back of her mind, even as life took her away from Pittsburgh.



Fast forward many years, and we are now a family. We live in Squirrel Hill and co-own a design and technology development business that focuses on web and mobile development and interaction design.

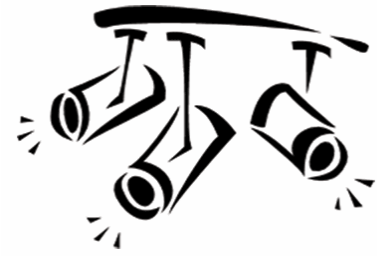
Elizabeth is a working artist. This fall, Joaquin is beginning his education in Margaret Morrison, just like his father,

and across campus from his grandfather. We are very grateful for this opportunity for our son and for our family to be part of this community. We look forward to meeting more of you throughout the year.



## Research Spotlight

### Grammar Learning Cues in Social Interaction (*The Dream Machine Game*)



First year doctoral student Megan Waller is studying the ways that children learn grammar from social interaction, with guidance from Professors Bonnie Nozari and Dan Yurovsky in CMU's Psychology department. Lessons in a classroom are not the only opportunity children have to learn correct grammar. Interactions with parents and other adults also provide opportunities for children to get feedback on their mistakes. While children rarely hear explicit corrections of their grammatical errors, they do get more subtle signals. For example, parents may reformulate their child's incorrect utterance, i.e., repeat it with corrected grammar (Hirsh-Pasek, Treiman & Schneiderman, 1984; Chouinard & Clark, 2003). For example, if a child says, "The dog runned!", a parent might answer, "Yes, the dog ran!" Another potential signal for children is a difference in how long it takes people to respond to them. The researchers' previous study shows that when children produce an incorrect past tense verb like "I runned!", adults are slower to respond than when they use the right past tense form ("I ran") because the incorrect form is surprising and more effortful for adults to understand. In the current study, they are investigating whether children can use a difference in response time to learn grammar.

During the study, which will be conducted remotely via Zoom, children play a game designed to examine whether adults' slower response times after erroneous utterances is a noticeable cue for children, and whether they can use this timing difference to learn from their mistakes. The ***Dream Machine Game*** involves using irregular plural nouns (e.g., geese and mice) that are difficult for children, and sometimes even adults. The experimenter explains that they've built a dream machine that replays the experimenter's dreams, and that the experimenter needs the child's help to finish fixing it. The child first is asked to name each of the possible images to verify they know the correct nouns. Then, when the trials begin, a beep signals the start of each trial, and the child is shown three sets of pictures like the image here. They are asked to identify the pictures in the dream cloud with a trail of bubbles by counting how many of each picture was in the experimenter's dream. In this example, the child would be expected to say, "one frog and two geese."



After children make their response on each round of the game, the experimenter reinforces the correct response; and for half of the children in the study, the experimenter takes longer to respond when the child makes an error, while for the other half, the experimenter takes the same amount of time no matter what the child says. All children are asked to produce each irregular plural twice, and the researchers will examine whether children who receive timing as a cue for error improve their performance compared to the control children. The researchers will save the audio recordings of each Zoom session to log whether the child produced a grammatical or ungrammatical utterance and to measure the response times of both the child and the experimenter during the 26 trials. The results of this experiment will help the researchers understand whether children are sensitive to this timing difference, and whether or not it is useful as they learn the complex rules of the grammar in their native language.



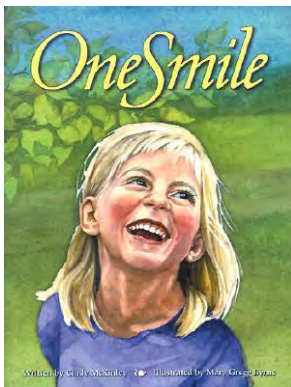
## Director's Corner: Imagine the Ripples



There's nothing like a pandemic to demonstrate the ripple effect of simple choices made by individuals, such as consistently wearing a mask or not, which can make the difference between safe social interactions and super-spreader events. Effectively explaining these choices to young children focuses on the ways that our choices can impact ourselves and others. Developmental Psychologist Richard Lerner (Tufts University) highlights the importance of personal contribution for children's development. "Nothing may matter more for the healthy development of young people than a belief that they matter: that they are valued by others and that they can make meaningful contributions to their world."


The fourth practice in learning *The Art of Possibility* (Zander and Zander, 2000) emphasizes "Being a Contribution". The authors suggest replacing the typical "success/failure" game that promotes competition in a measurement universe with the "contribution" game. "In the game of contribution, you wake up each day and bask in the notion that you are a gift to others (p. 58) ... [such that you] throw yourself into life as someone who makes a difference, accepting that you may not understand how or why (p. 59)." The authors suggest starting by reflecting on the ways you have "contributed" over the past week – in any aspect of life. The next task is to simply notice the contributions as the week progresses. The third is to cast yourself "as a contribution into the week ahead, like a pebble into a pond, and imagine that everything [you] do sends ripples out beyond the horizon (p. 62)."

As laboratory school educators, we have the privilege of serving diverse constituents by facilitating researchers' studies, supporting university students' coursework, offering children the best possible preschool and kindergarten programs, collaborating with families to nurture their children and handle challenges that arise, organizing professional development experiences for practicing educators, and mentoring students pursuing careers in early childhood. Sometimes we are fortunate to see the ripples spread, as our mentees become mentors themselves, or the children we teach return years later with their own children. Most times, however, we never know the impact of our words and actions, and the greatest impact may not be from the parts of our job listed on our mission statement or even on the individuals it is our job to serve. For example, the way we treat the professional who cleans our school on the night shift or the construction crew that modifies our windows or playground for pandemic safety may have more impact than anything else we do in a given day, particularly as we acknowledge the important contributions they make so that we can do our work here well.



As educators and parents nurturing young children, we have daily opportunities to make contributions in big and small ways. More importantly, however, we can help our children understand the valuable contributions they make to our families, school community, and beyond. Because of the pandemic, we may have to be more creative to contribute from a distance or virtually, but the impact can still be significant. It can be as simple as "One Smile", as beautifully told in the book by Cindy McKinley. In the story, Katie's spontaneous smile encourages a young man to keep looking for a job, his willingness to help a stranded motorist on the way prompts her to leave a big tip for the waitress who then treats her children to some special food that they then decide to share with a new family in town. And so it goes. It's a wonderful example for the whole family, especially during this season of thanksgiving and celebration!

# December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>3's: Children Around the World</p> <p>4's: Storytelling/Theater</p> <p>PreK/K: Storytelling</p>	<p>Virtual Parent Teacher Conferences through Dec. 4</p> <p>Online Book Fair Visit: <a href="http://childrensbookstore.com">childrensbookstore.com</a></p>	<p>1</p>  <p>#givingCMUday</p> <p><a href="http://givingcmuday.cmu.edu/campaigns/cmu-childrens-school">givingcmuday.cmu.edu/campaigns/cmu-childrens-school</a></p>	2	3	4	<p>5</p> <p>10:00AM Dialogue re: Discussing Race &amp; Racism</p>
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<p>Book Fair Ends</p>	<p>Dec. Safety Week</p>					
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
		<p>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Enrollment Decision Due</p>			<p>Second Quarter Ends</p>	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
<p>NO SCHOOL Winter Break</p>						
27	28	29	30	31		
<p>NO SCHOOL Winter Break</p>						<p>HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!</p> <p>Children return to school on Tuesday, January 19, 2021</p>



## Children's School

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

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# 2020