

Carnegie Mellon University Children's School January 2021 Family Newsletter

Happy New Year, Everyone!

We hope you had a restful and restorative winter break and that your whole family is energized for learning in 2021. Though “Future Graduate” Karis (sister of Madelyn, K) is too young to enroll at the Children’s School, it **IS** time to ensure that we have applications on file for all our infant and toddler siblings. It’s also time to plan for the 2021/2022 School Year! Please see the information on the next page.



Welcome, Danelle BeLau

Please join the Children’s School in welcoming educator Danelle BeLau to our team. Mrs. BeLau (pronounced bee-law) earned her BS in Early Childhood and Elementary Education at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, where part of her training involved work in their campus laboratory school. She taught in public PreKindergarten for 4 years and Kindergarten for 1 year before relocating to Pittsburgh. For the past 18 months, she has been teaching HeadStart for the Allegheny Intermediate Unit.



Mrs. BeLau will be serving as a “Floater” who can join any of our pods to cover the extended absence of another educator. Until that becomes necessary, Danelle will become familiar with our program by spending 2 weeks in each pod, beginning with the Preschool 3’s.

January 2021 Dates

No School for Children – December 19th through January 18th

Have a Wonderful Winter Break!!

January 11th through January 15th – Professional Development for Educators

Tuesday, January 19th – Children Return to School for 3rd Quarter

Thursday, January 21st – Virtual Prospective Parent Open House at 4:00pm

Tuesday, January 26th & Saturday, January 30th – Continuing Parent/Educator Dialogues re: Race and Racism

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



2021/2022 School Year Information

Preschool/Kindergarten Enrollment and Re-Enrollment: The Children's School is transitioning our enrollment and admission procedures to be fully online through a system developed by FACTS Management. As a result, we will be contacting currently enrolled 3's and 4's families and the families of potential new 3's by email to confirm admission status by the end of January. Please note that if your child is a currently enrolled 3-year-old or 4-year-old, you are guaranteed a space in our 2021/2022 classes. Actual enrollment documents will not be forwarded until the transition process is complete – probably sometime in February or March. At that time, you will be asked to provide a \$700 deposit to reserve your child's place. The Kindergarten Program will run from 8:30am until 2:30pm Monday through Thursday and 8:30am until 12 noon on Fridays. The 3's and 4's families will have a choice between an 8:30am start and a 1:00pm or 2:30pm dismissal Monday through Thursday. The 4's will dismiss at 12 noon on Fridays. The 3's do not attend school on Fridays. Further information will be coming this month. Please contact Maggie Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu with any questions.

Kindergarten Enrollment: We coordinate our Kindergarten re-enrollment with the private and charter school timeline, so you will not be required to confirm an interest in our Kindergarten Program until after your family has heard from other schools to which you have applied. Please contact Linda Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu with any questions that you may have.

Open House for Potential New Children's School Parents

A virtual Open House for potential new parents will be held on January 21st at 4:00pm. Dr. Carver will make a presentation and show video clips of this past year's classes. Current Children's School parents are also welcome to attend.

Typical Screenings Unavailable



In past years, we have scheduled optional vision screenings through the Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services and also speech and hearing screenings through Easter Seals. This year, due to the pandemic, we are postponing the vision screening until sometime in April, provided that we will be able to do so safely. Unfortunately, Easter Seals has eliminated their school screening program, so we will not be able to provide this service at all. If you have any concerns about your child's speech or hearing, please consult your pediatrician.

School Photos

Additionally, in past years, VanDyke Studios has taken our school photos during the first week of February. Again, due to the pandemic, we are postponing the photo sessions until April 12th and 13th, 2021. We will work closely with the photographers to plan a safe way to conduct the photo sessions.



Book Fair Results



Our virtual book fair held through Children's Bookstore was a great success! Through your purchases, we made over \$657.00 to be used to buy books for our library. In addition, many books on our teachers' wish lists were purchased as gifts to be added to our classroom book collections. If you missed the book fair, you can still follow the link below to buy books at any time during the year. The Children's School will receive 15% of the purchase price all year long!

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

If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu.

#givingCMUday Thank You

On December 1st, thirty-eight supporters contributed \$14,900 to the Children's School as part of the 2020 Day of Giving. Your generosity overwhelms us!! Thank you for donating in this critical time to help sustain the Children's School now and for future generations of friends.



Donations to the Children's School are ALWAYS welcome via our Giving web site.

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

You can designate your gift to our general fund or to the Ann Baldwin Taylor Early Childhood Scholarship Fund or the Sharon McCoy Carver Early Childhood Professional Development Fund.

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. In addition to

Pennsylvania
WORK SMART. LIVE HAPPY.

the contributing businesses mentioned in the December 2020 Children's School Family Newsletter, we received funding from Comcast Corporation, GMACJML, LLC, NexTier Bank, and UPMC Diversified Services in December 2020.

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 nonpublic school. In 2019-20, The Children's School's EITC and OSTC Programs funded 75 students, pre-Kindergarten – 12th grade, in 17 different schools throughout Allegheny and Westmoreland counties.

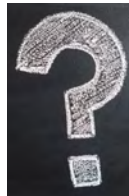
If you would like more information or can help us to build a list of prospective businesses, please contact the Linda Hancock (lh37@andrew.cmu.edu).

Benefits of Outdoor Play in the Winter

Thanks to alumni parent, Natalie Greene, for suggesting a wonderful article on the benefits of outdoor play in the winter, summarized in the associated graphic below. You can read the brief article, entitled “**Bundle Up and Get Outside: Why Kids Should Play Outdoors in Winter**” at <https://www.fix.com/blog/keep-kids-playing-outdoors-in-winter/>. The article was written by Caileigh Flannigan, “a Clinical Child Therapist and play practitioner who uses forms of play as a way to promote children’s development and emotional healing. She aims to spread the word about how important free play in natural environments is on childhood development, through her research in outdoor play and loose parts.”



Big Questions for Young Minds



Questions to Ask While Exploring Outdoors

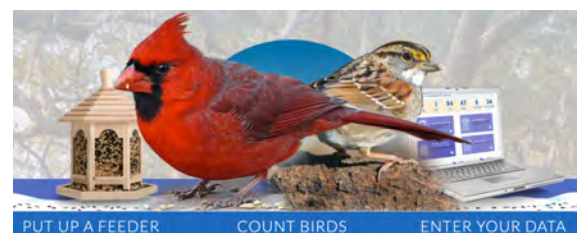
Even during the cold winter months, it is important to support your child’s explorations outside. You can bundle up and take walks through your neighborhood, or in local parks, or even just in your backyard. If it is literally too cold to actually go outside, you can encourage your child to engage in the outdoors by hanging a birdfeeder or making a weather station. You can bring snow inside in buckets or examine a collection of previously gathered nuts and pinecones. Just looking out the window with your child and sharing observations can be a valuable educational experience. Some questions to support your child’s critical thinking:

- What animals do you see? What are they doing? Why do you think they are acting that way? How do you think they stay warm? Where do they live? Why is it important to put birdfeed in the feeders every day? What do you think animals eat in the winter?
- What do you notice about the trees (bushes, plants)? How do they look different than they do in the spring? Summer? Fall? Which do you think is the oldest/strongest/most beautiful tree? If there could only be one kind of tree or plant in our neighborhood, which would you choose? Why?

Use literature to support your outside explorations. For example, you and your child can recreate Peter’s adventures from the classic book *A Snowy Day*, by Ezra Jack Keats. Other good “outside” books include: “Tell Me, Tree: All About Trees for Kids” by Gail Gibbons; “Everybody Needs a Rock” by Byrd Baylor; “My Steps” by Sally Derby; “Outside Your Window: A First Book of Nature” by Nicola Davies.

If birdwatching sparks an interest in your family, you can contribute to science by joining Project FeederWatch (<https://feederwatch.org>).

Enjoy your mutual explorations!



Stay Safe in Your Winter Wonderland!

For children, winter is not the end of outdoor fun. When properly prepared, children can enjoy safe and fun outdoor activities. "The inviting snow draws children to ice-covered lakes and ski slopes each winter, regardless of the frigid temperatures and the risks," says Heather Paul, Ph.D., executive director of the National SAFE KIDS Campaign. "Parents should watch their children closely, limit their outdoor playtime and make sure that they are dressed appropriately for the weather."

Here are a few other winter tips to keep in mind:

- Parents and caregivers should inspect equipment and the environment for possible hazards before children engage in winter activities, such as sledding, ice skating and skiing.
- Be aware that the increased use of hot tubs and whirlpools, as well as the danger of hidden bodies of water or weak ice, makes winter drowning a risk.
- If a child complains of numbness or pain in the fingers, toes, nose, cheeks or ears while playing in the snow, or if the skin is blistered, hard to the touch or glossy, be alert to the possibility of frostbite. Tell the child to wiggle the affected body part(s) to increase blood supply to that area. Warm the frozen part(s) against the body. Immerse frozen part(s) in warm, not hot, water. Frozen tissue is fragile and can be damaged easily. Avoid warming with high heat from radiators, fireplaces or stoves, and avoid rubbing or breaking blisters.
- Slippery driveways and sidewalks can be particularly hazardous in the winter. Keep them well shoveled and apply materials such as rock salt or sand to improve traction.
- Make sure children wear appropriate boots and brightly colored (not white) clothing while walking and playing in snowy conditions. Use reflective stickers on clothing for maximum protection, especially at dawn and dusk.



A Winter Reminder

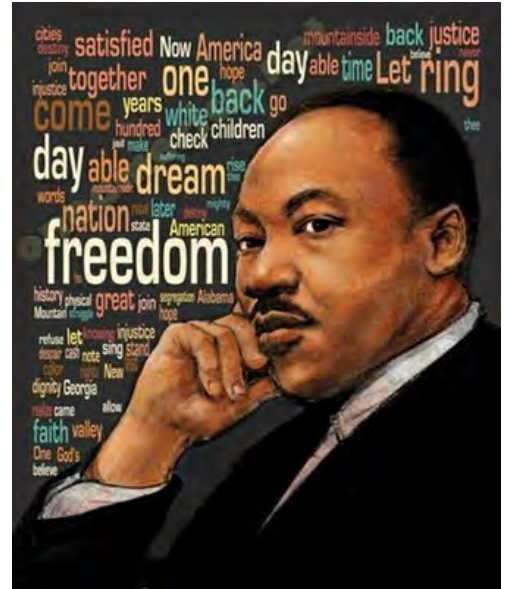
On days when snow or ice may affect driving conditions, please listen to the radio or the television. If the Children's School should close due to the weather, we announce our school closing on WPXI (<https://www.wpxi.com/weather/school-closings/>), WTAE (<https://www.wtae.com/weather/closings#>), and KDKA (<https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/school-closings/>). They also offer a text service if you register on their web site. Because Children's School educators and families live in diverse areas in and around the city, we cannot factor travel conditions from every location into our decision about whether to delay or close school. Between 5:30 and 6:00 AM, we listen to the news, determine what other schools in the city are doing, and make our best judgment on whether to have a delay or close school that day. In all cases when school is in session, we encourage parents to use their best judgment about whether the roads in your area are safe to bring your child to school.

Depending on the road conditions, we will choose from three options:

- **One Hour Delay**: During a one-hour delay, we will greet the PreKindergarten and Kindergarten Classes at 9:15am and the Preschool Classes at 9:45. Dismissal will be at the normal times.
- **Two Hour Delay**: During a two-hour delay, we will greet the PreKindergarten and Kindergarten Classes at 10:15am and the Preschool Classes at 10:45. Dismissal will be at the normal times. These first two options enable us to conduct the classes while giving our educators and families time for the road conditions to improve.
- **School Closure for all Programs**

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Though we do not have school on the national Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, our focus at the Children's School is always on cooperation, acceptance, peace and caring for all people. If you want to talk about Martin Luther King, Jr. at home, some educators recommend starting with a discussion of heroes as people who are brave enough to make the world better. Preschool Plan-It (<http://www.preschool-plan-it.com/martin-luther-king.html>) suggests that you explain that Martin Luther King, Jr. was a hero. "He worked hard for peace--ALL people getting along and being treated the same." Sometimes people are treated badly because they do not have the same color skin. Dr. King wanted to change that, and he shared his dream "that someday, ALL people would get along no matter what color their skin was." Depending on your family experience, you can then talk about how to help make his dream come true. Jelani Memory's book "A Kids Book About Racism" may help you think about words to use in conversation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnaltG5N8nE&app=desktop>).



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. In the fall, Mrs. Rosenblum partnered with Children's School parent and Equity & Inclusion Consultant Liz Foster-Shaner to host two virtual dialogue sessions to share experiences and strategies for supporting our children's learning about these important topics. Participants in both groups indicated interest in meeting again in January, so we have scheduled sessions for 10am on Tuesday morning, January 26th and Saturday morning, January 30th. You can register using the Google sheet below and Zoom links will be provided to attendees soon.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1LHWFHtu1MQwCk24MvG8PBiLdgs0CiFe-HITrieU92Bk/edit?usp=sharing>

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

EQT Children's Theater Festival @ Home



Due to the pandemic, the EQT Children's Theater Festival, originally scheduled for May 14-17, 2020, shifted to a virtual platform - the EQT Children's Theater Festival @ Home. Now, the EQT Children's Theater Festival @ Home has been extended through January 31, 2021 to give more families a 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! Visit <https://pghkids.trustarts.org/>.

Tartan COVID-19 Asymptomatic Testing

CMU's new Tartan COVID-19 Asymptomatic Testing Program uses a new, regulated on-campus laboratory to better detect and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our campus community. Leveraging signature scientific and research expertise, including the use of robotic technology, CMU has developed a high-volume Tartan COVID-19 Testing Laboratory to increase asymptomatic testing capacity by a factor of 10. For the spring 2021 semester, CMU will offer weekly tests to all Pittsburgh-based students, faculty and staff, providing timely test results in approximately 24-48 hours at no cost to individuals.

<https://www.cmu.edu/coronavirus/health-and-wellness/testing/tartan-testing.html>

Tartan Testing employs a COVID-19 asymptomatic test based on the SalivaDirect open-access protocol developed by the Yale School of Public Health. This test uses saliva samples to detect the presence of RNA from the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the cause of COVID-19, and is simpler to administer than nasal swab testing methods while providing comparable accuracy. CMU anticipates that Tartan Testing will be at full capacity by early February, and throughout the spring semester, all faculty, staff and students planning to be on campus are expected to complete one asymptomatic test each week through the Tartan Testing Program.

All Children's School employees, researchers, and undergraduate work studies who are asymptomatic and have not been diagnosed with COVID within the past 3 months will be participating in this testing program weekly. Anyone who experiences symptoms or has close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 will stay home and follow the protocols that we have been using since school started in September.

Tartan Testing is the latest element of CMU's ongoing strategy to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our community. Information from asymptomatic testing empowers individuals to modify their behavior as appropriate, and, in aggregate, informs the posture of services on the Pittsburgh campus. It is important to remember that any test only provides a snapshot of the moment at which the test is taken, so it is critical that we remain committed to our COVID mitigation behaviors. Please join our whole team in continuing to complete the daily health-assessment, wear a facial covering, and wash your hands frequently, etc. For the most up-to-date information about Tartan Testing and CMU's COVID-19 strategy, please see our COVID-19 website (<https://www.cmu.edu/coronavirus/index.html>).

"Becoming You" DocuSeries

During our January professional development, the Children's School educators watched and discussed the docuseries, "Becoming You" on Apple TV. We commend it as inspirational and informative for everyone who loves young children!

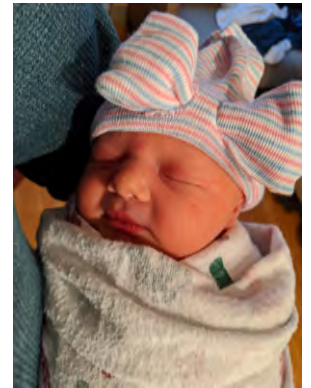
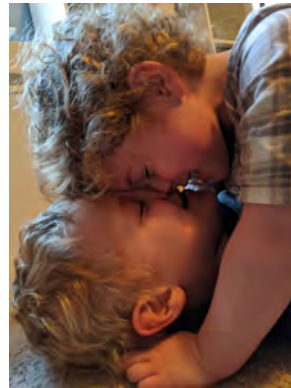


<https://tv.apple.com/us/show/becoming-you/umc.cmc.2eln6544k8wo99s3vrdl5amwf>

"Olivia Colman narrates 'Becoming You,' a global series about child development that explores how the first 2,000 days on Earth shape the rest of our lives. Told through the eyes of over 100 children across the world, from Nepal to Japan and Borneo, each episode offers a thought-provoking look at how children learn to think, speak and move, from birth to age 5. It underscores how different our journeys can be, but ultimately tells the story of our shared humanity and community when it comes to raising children."

Family Spotlight: The Growing Moore Family

Happy New Year, Children's School families! We are Sarah and Alex Moore, with our children Ewan and Molly. Alex is a marketing analytics consultant from Canonsburg, and Sarah is a pediatric occupational therapist from Columbus, Ohio. We met while attending the University of Pittsburgh as undergraduates and have embraced Pittsburgh as our home since. We currently live in Regent Square and are expecting our 3rd baby soon -- by the time you read this, she will already be here! Indeed, Isla was born on December 20th.



We are so happy to be part of the Children's School community, with Ewan in the Kindergarten and Molly in the Preschool 3's. We are in our second year in the Children's School, and we could not imagine being anywhere else. The community here is so incredibly special. Our family enjoys traveling (normally) and exploring nature, and we hope to instill in our children an awareness of other places, a respect for all cultures, and an appreciation for the environment. Some of our family's most favorite and frequent Pittsburgh adventures include Phipps, the Zoo, the Carnegie Museums, and biking around the city. It has been so fun to watch our children make the connection that so many of these places are right next door to their everyday school experience. The School resonates so well with our family because its philosophy is rooted in a global perspective and values an openness to learning through play and a focus on exploration. The educators and culture of the school communicate such a clear respect for children's individual interests and ways of learning - something we know our children can feel!



In an otherwise crazy year, the Children's School has provided our children a nurturing and supportive environment that has helped them to grow as people. They've been able to learn and experience enrichment through the hard work and dedication of the teachers and administrators, who have exceeded our expectations at every opportunity. There is no better place in Pittsburgh for our children, and we are so fortunate to be a part of the Children's School!



Research Spotlight

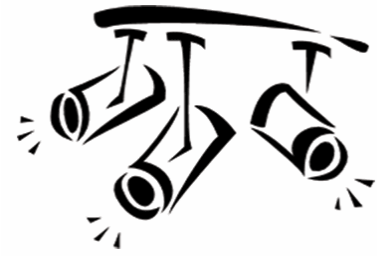
When Less is More in an Increasingly Busy World

Have you ever entered a Zoom meeting with the intention of fully focusing, only to find yourself answering emails, checking your calendar, or reading the news? Do you remember what you learned from that meeting? Neither do we. **When attention is divided between multiple tasks, learning decreases.** Living in a world full of distractions might make it especially difficult for students to focus, and the learning context plays a significant role.

The education market is saturated with storybook products, primarily targeting children. A common design of beginner reader (~Grades 1-2) storybooks often includes entertaining and fun looking pictures. However, nonessential pictures unrelated to the story text—also known as extraneous illustrations—might be counterproductive as they may distract a child from focusing on learning the content. To add a layer of complexity, attention skills are still developing during the time when children begin formal reading instruction.

Graduate student Cassie Eng and collaborators Dr. Karrie Godwin and Dr. Anna Fisher's examined whether extraneous illustrations in educational materials that are intended to engage a child's interest, might do so at the cost of disrupting their attention and learning (See their research study, which was pilot tested at the Children's School, [Keep it simple: streamlining book illustrations improves attention and comprehension in beginning readers](#)). Children in first and second grade read a commercial "Standard" book designed for beginner readers that intermixed extraneous with relevant illustrations (top right) and a "Streamlined" book presented without extraneous illustrations (bottom right). They measured children's eye gaze patterns with a portable eye tracker, and afterwards, asked the children some questions about the story. Children who read the Standard Commercial book learned less and were more easily distracted, as indicated by their eye-tracking patterns. This pattern was consistent across both 1st and 2nd graders and demonstrated how books designed like the Streamlined version might benefit beginner readers at different stages of development. Children's reading comprehension scores in the Standard condition were also associated with their attention allocation; the more children looked away from the text while reading, the lower their comprehension scores were.

You might wonder how researchers decided which illustrations were extraneous. They conducted a calibration study with adults who were presented with the Standard Commercial book and given instructions to outline the illustrations they believed were relevant to the story. When 90% or more of the adult readers agreed the illustrations were relevant to the story, those illustrations were retained in the Streamlined condition, while the remaining ones were deemed as extraneous. This study provides insight into optimal book design for beginner readers, which may help enhance young children's reading experiences and improve their learning. Remote learning during the pandemic has accelerated the necessity for children to become autonomous readers, so a greater understanding of book design practices is needed to accommodate this demand.



Director's Corner: Lead from Within



When we begin to anticipate the ways that we and others can “Be a Contribution”, then *The Art of Possibility*'s fifth practice, “Leading from Any Chair”, is a natural extension. As with many of the book's anecdotes, this practice's signature phrase originated in an experience the second author, Benjamin Zander, had while conducting an orchestra. In this case, Zander's insight came from his recognition that the “silent conductor”, who makes none of the symphony's beautiful music, is truly powerful only by “his ability to make other people powerful” (p. 69). He then reflected on ways to create conditions that would encourage “the greatest possible attentiveness and participation of all the players” (p. 73). He gradually discovered that by intentionally seeking and then actively utilizing the input of the musicians, including occasionally asking them to conduct, that he could more effectively partner with the orchestra to offer the best performance possible.

At the Children's School, we try to create such synergy by going beyond valuing each individual's contributions to actually inviting leadership from within the organization. As Zander explains, “A leader does not need a podium; she can be sitting quietly on the edge of any chair, listening passionately and with commitment, fully prepared to take up the baton (p. 76).” I recall a shift in the Children's School staff culture when educators stopped bringing problems for me to solve and started coming instead with descriptions of challenges, ideas about courses of action, and a suggestion about which to pursue. In similar ways, the teachers aim to balance proactive planning of daily learning activities with flexibly responding to the children's initiative. Fostering that culture within a school, or indeed within a family, requires that those in the official leadership positions prepare themselves and those they lead by offering diverse opportunities to explore varied roles.

During our recent and upcoming units on Storytelling (PreS 4's, PreK & K) or Mo Willems Author Studies (PreS 3's, PreK & K), the children re-enact stories in the role of different characters, take turns as the narrator, compare and contrast versions of stories, become authors and illustrators of their own stories, etc. Similarly, when block-building, they can practice collaborating and contributing their ideas about what will make their constructions stable, functional, and aesthetically interesting. Regardless of the unit topics or classroom activities, our educators facilitate children's effective interactions in social situations. During the pandemic, there has been conversation about how we all contribute to keeping each other safe from the virus. Watching the violence in the U.S. Capitol reminds us to begin early talking with our children about how to lead positively from within a group. For the natural leaders, we help children practice being inclusive rather than bossy; whereas, for others, we support them to stand up for their own and others' rights among peers. One of the books we have used in the past is called “One” by Kathryn Otoshi. In the story, “BLUE is a quiet color. RED is a hot head. RED likes to pick on BLUE. YELLOW, GREEN, PURPLE, and ORANGE don't like what they see, but what can they do? When no one takes a stand, things get out of hand. Until ONE comes along and shows all the colors how to stand up and COUNT.” This book is also relevant for families, especially when parents wonder how to help their children navigate the common power struggles among siblings and peers, as well as how to respond when they witness injustices in the world around them. As we begin a new year with such tension surrounding the nation's leadership transition, let's commit to dialogue and partnership so that together we can help all of our children gain confidence in their ability to lead from within their families, their classrooms, and their communities.



January

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>3's: Mo Willems</p> <p>4's: Animals in Winter</p> <p>PreK/K: Healthy Mind & Body</p>	<p>Winter Break No School</p>				<p>1 HAPPY NEW YEAR 2021!!!</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>3 Winter Break No School</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>10 Winter Break No School</p>	<p>11 Professional Development for Educators</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>
<p>17</p>	<p>18 NO SCHOOL: Martin Luther King Day</p>	<p>19 3rd Quarter Begins</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 4:00PM Virtual Prospective Parent Open House</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>
<p>24</p>	<p>25 10:00AM Dialogue re: Discussing Race & Racism</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30 10:00AM Dialogue re: Discussing Race & Racism</p>
<p>31</p>	<p>Jan. Safety Week</p>					



Children's School

CMUChSch@andrew.cmu.edu www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs/index.html

412-268-2199

2021