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

# **Gratitude for Early Childhood Educators**

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. Sincere thanks to Miss Hancock, Dr. Carver, Miss Drash, Mrs. Rosenblum, Mrs. Yetter, Mrs. Roman, Mrs. Belau, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Loomis, Mr. Allen, Mrs. Cherin,



Mrs. Bird, Ms. O'Neill, Mrs. Sweet, Mrs. Blizman, Mrs. Opferman, and Mrs. Perovich, for your commitment and contributions to the CMU Children's School family! We are also grateful for our substitute educator, Mrs. Mack, who supports us on Thursdays, and to our computer support guru, Jim Hawthorne, who keeps all of our technology running smoothly. Our efforts have been supported by MANY Carnegie Mellon colleagues, including our cleaning team and groundskeepers. Gracias!!









#### December 2021 / January 2022 Dates

Parent / Teacher Conferences: Continuing on Friday, December 3rd

Friday, December 17<sup>th</sup> – Last Day of the Second Quarter

No School for Children – December 18th through January 3rd

#### Have a Wonderful Winter Break!!

January 3<sup>rd</sup> – Professional Development Day for Educators
Tuesday, January 4<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/



## **Action Needed: Family Information Review**

As we near the end of the second quarter, please log in to the FACTS Family Portal to review your family demographic information including the Student Demographic Form, Student Medical Form, Custodial Parent Form(s), Emergency Contacts, and Transportation Form.

To access the Family Portal:

- Please go to https://cmu-pa.client.renweb.com/pwr/
- Type in your username and password. If you have forgotten your username or password, please click on the link provided.

Alternately, you can access the **Family Portal** from the Children's School Website: <a href="https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs/index.html">https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs/index.html</a>

When you log in to the **Family Portal**, you arrive at the **School Home Screen**. In the left side Menu select **Family**. You will be directed to the **Family Home** screen.

Once you arrive at the **Family Home** screen, please select the **Family Demographic Form** in the **Online Filing Cabinet**. You will be directed to a page with all of the above-mentioned forms to review. If you make a change to any of these forms, please notify the Administrative Team via email at <a href="mailto:cmuchsch@andrew.cmu.edu">cmuchsch@andrew.cmu.edu</a>.

### **Upcoming Screenings: Eyes & Ears**

This coming year, Rehabilitation Specialists, Inc. will be conducting speech and hearing screenings from January 18<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup>. If you are interested in having your child screened, please return the permission slip that has been sent home in your child's backpack and include the \$15.00 service charge. This payment can be made by cash, check (made out to "Rehabilitation Specialists, Inc."), or credit card (please call the phone number on the permission slip to use this method).

Vision screenings will be conducted on January 25th by the Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh. If you wish to have your child's vision checked, please return the permission slip that has also been sent home in your child's backpack. There is no charge for this service.

## **Children's Bookstore Fundraising Page**

Special thanks to everyone who made a purchase during our virtual fall book fair at Children's



Bookstore online. Thanks to your orders, we were able to raise \$388 dollars to spend on new children's books for our school library! Several families also donated books directly to the classroom.

If you didn't get a chance to shop during the book fair, it's not too late! You can shop at the link below all year long, and 15% of your purchase will go towards future book orders for The Children's School.

Shop at this link:

https://www.childrensbookstore.com/welcome/?ref=6fere9w

**Happy Reading!** 

## **CMU Community Food Drive**

Thank you to everyone who helped to make the Children's School contribution to the annual CMU Food and Fund Drive a huge success! The classes spent time talking about food insecurity in developmentally appropriate ways so the children could connect and understand. They read several children's books on the topic of food pantries and hunger. We tracked the contributed items on our hallway food tracker and were excited to see the number go up each day! Together, we collected and donated 485 canned goods and non-perishable items! In addition, we raised \$884 to donate to the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. Thanks so much for your support of this great cause!







November 3





#### **Children's School Coat Drive**

We are holding a coat drive at The Children's School. Let's help families in our community who need help to stay warm over the winter season. You can make a monetary donation online or donate your new and gently used coats, mittens, scarves, and gloves. We will be accepting both adult and children's coats. Coats and winter gear can be sent to school any time throughout the month of Docember. All coats will be denoted to a local women.



One Warm Coat®

the month of December. All coats will be donated to a local women's and children's shelter.

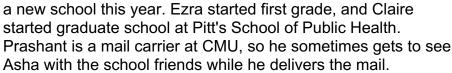
https://onewarmcoat.salsalabs.org/schoolyouthcoatdrive/p/thechildrensschoolcoatdrivefundraisingpage

### Family Spotlight: New Schools Abound

Hello! We are the Lama family--Prashant, Claire, Ezra (6), and Asha (3). We are so happy to have Asha in the Blue Room this year. Our oldest, Ezra, also attended the Children's School. When we would bring him into school (pre-COVID), toddler Asha used to try to stay and join the class. This year, she was very excited to be able to become a Children's School friend herself.



Asha wasn't the only one to start



The Children's School

While we have always enjoyed being outside, we took to the woods when the pandemic hit Pittsburgh and started hiking,

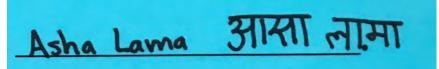
camping, and adventuring. Our favorite camping trip this year was to Cook Forest, where we loved visiting the ancient hemlocks.



We knew that we would love the Children's School from the very first visit when Asha was a tiny babe in arms, but this year, especially, we are grateful for the safety and love of the Children's School family that has allowed Asha to thrive.

# Please Label Your Child's Clothing

Please help us keep your child's personal items together with them. We suggest that you use permanent marker on clothing labels, as well as lunch bags, food containers and water bottles. It is



not unusual for personal items to get shuffled during the day as we support children's independence. Clear labeling by first name (or initials & last name) means our staff can reconnect misplaced items with their owners.

#### **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 <u>labeled hats and mittens</u> to school <u>every day</u>. On snowy days, please also send <u>labeled snow pants and boots</u>. 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 classes 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 between visits (as did the paper hug that came in the mail last Thanksgiving). 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).

## **Greeting & Dismissal Car Seat Safety**

Pennsylvania law requires that all children under the age of 8 years must be restrained in an appropriate car seat or booster seat in the back seat of the vehicle. For more information on child passenger safety, please visit the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation website:

https://www.penndot.gov/TravelInPA/Safety/TrafficSafetyAndDriverTopics/Pages/Child-Passenger-Safety.aspx.

As the weather turns colder, special consideration must be given to the use of winter coats as the coat can impact the effectiveness of a harness-style car seat. As a result, Children's School educators will remove a child's coat prior to buckling the child into a harness-style car seat at dismissal time. During greeting, teachers will also help children to put on coats after removing them from their car seats. As always, Children's School educators are not

permitted to violate the laws set forth by the state.

Therefore, they cannot place a child in the front seat of

After Coat

Correct

Incorrect

After Coat Compression

a car or into a car without a car seat or booster seat. While waiting in the greeting and dismissal lines, it is important that everyone in the vehicle – *children AND adults* - remain buckled into their seat. Please only unbuckle once the vehicle is in park in the unloading area.

**Special note to families who are greeted at the Rotunda:** Please be sure that your child can easily exit and enter the vehicle on the passenger side of the car directly onto the sidewalk. It is a safety hazard to the adults and children to be in the street, especially during winter months when the roads can be icy.

## **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 and NexTier Bank.

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 2020-21, The Children's School's EITC and OSTC Programs funded 51 students, pre-Kindergarten – 12th grade, in 17 different schools throughout Allegheny and Fayette counties.



If you would like more information or can help us to build a list of prospective businesses, please contact the main office.

## In Memoriam: Judy Smalley

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing of retired Children's School educator, Judy Smalley, on November 13, 2021. Judy served as the Older 3's Preschool Teacher from the mid 80's to 2000. At the Children's School, she was the caring first teacher for many young children and their parents, the trusted colleague for educators across a wide age spectrum, and the encouraging mentor for novice pre-service teachers and undergraduate employees. In fact, Mrs. Smalley was a mentor to both Miss Hancock and Mrs. Bird when they were student teachers at the Children's School. She was the wife of Joel Smalley and is also survived by her children, Michael and Leslie, and three grandsons. Per her family's request, memorial contributions may be made to the Children's School.









#### **NAEYC Conference**

Mrs. Rosenblum and Mrs. Yetter explored the virtual National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conference in November and extended their learning by accessing some of the "on-demand" sessions that remained available throughout November. They shared highlights with the rest of the educators, including:

- Promoting resilient families: supporting the social and emotional health of children and their families
- Developing approaches and materials for supporting neurodiverse learners with varying abilities
- Cultivating social and emotional learning with movement: planning intentionally with trauma, equity, and each child in mind
- Mindfulness Strategies to Support and Empower Early Childhood Educators Experiencing the Challenges of Emotional Labor

During 2022, we will be working toward our NAEYC Accreditation Renewal, so it's important for us to keep current with the research and practice innovations they are sharing.



## **Undergraduate Spotlight**

Now that we are able to have undergraduates working in the school with children again, we are thrilled to have recruited some first-year students to join our team.

Jeremy Li is a first-year student in Dietrich College studying Statistics and Machine Learning.





I'm Jeremy, and I'm from Brooklyn, New York. As an assistant at the Children's School

in the Preschool 3s, interacting with the children is the highlight of my day. While waking up at eight is not always so exciting for me, kicking off my day with the children at the Children's School energizes me for

the rest of the day. Although my task at the Children's School is relatively manageable: just communicating with the students and getting them to talk more, it is super fulfilling knowing that I was a reason for their early verbal and neural development. During my time here, I have found it interesting how the children interact with one another and their environment, so I hope to take these observations to any possible research opportunities.



Ellie Durr is a first-year student from Grinnell, Iowa, majoring in Music Performance.



At The Children's School I work with the kindergarten classroom during their morning circle times. I wanted to work at The Children's School because I adore working with children, and I would love to become a music educator for younger children in my career after college. My favorite part of working with the kindergarten classroom is watching the children complete the weekly "challenge," because I like watching them solve puzzles and see how accomplished they feel

when they figure it out! Outside of The Children's School, I enjoy playing my instrument, listening to non-classical music, and eating Millie's ice cream with my friends.



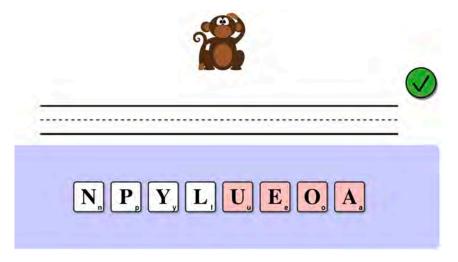


### **Research Spotlight**

#### The Creative Spelling Game

Graduate students Patience Stevens (Psychology) and Danny Weitekamp (Human Computer Interaction) from the Program in Interdisciplinary Education Research are collaborating to design and test

an app that gives children practice generating the spellings of words. As children learn to read and spell, they are often encouraged to try spelling words based on how they sound. This practice can lead to "invented spellings" like CHEZ for "cheese" and MAPO for "maple". Trying invented spellings proves to be very helpful for improving children's ability to spell and learn new words, but only if they are given feedback on their spellings. Patience and Danny are developing an app to give automatic feedback on children's invented spellings. In the spring, once the app has been fully developed, they will be investigating whether using it improves children's literacy skills as they predict. Currently, they are interested in determining whether the app is easy and fun for kindergarten-aged children. They are also pilot testing the tasks they designed to measure literacy skills, to make sure they are quick to administer and informative as evidence of children's literacy skills.



#### The Video Call Games

Emily Keebler, a sixth-year graduate student working with Dr. Anna Fisher, is studying how children learn to manage waiting patiently and controlling impulses. Earlier this year, children participated in her series of Pay Attention Games (October 2021 Newsletter), that were designed to test sustained attention, inhibition, and how these are developing in young children. The Video Call Games are an opportunity for Emily's team of researchers to hone skills in conducting research over Zoom video conferencing technology. A researcher onsite at the Children's School provides supervision and support to the child while a separate researcher (in a different location) engages the child in the Pay Attention Games via Zoom. Once the researchers refine skills in computer-mediated research, they will be able to invite families across the country to participate in the Pay Attention Games from their homes. Our children are an important part of the research preparations to engage more families and to extend our research findings to a much broader sample! For the children, doing some of these research tasks again offers the opportunity to build mastery, which results in pride and confidence. They also build flexible thinking by participating in familiar research games in a new medium.

## **Director's Corner:** Teachers are the Key

Reviewing the daily classroom blog, viewing classroom photos on the classroom web sites, and participating in Parent / Teacher conferences all give parents an opportunity to witness the central role of teachers in their children's education. NAEYC recognizes the importance of high-quality teaching by dedicating two standards in the national accreditation system to teaching practices and teacher professional development. Standard #3 (Teaching) focuses on using effective



developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate teaching approaches. Standard #6 (Teachers) ensures that accredited programs build a teaching team that has the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development and to support families' diverse needs and interests. We are fortunate to be embedded in a university culture that continually strives for best practices in all aspects of the education process and also provides the human resources support for all campus employees. This context enhances our laboratory school's ability to both lead and innovate in the realm of early childhood teaching, especially while the pandemic continues to impact our practices.

- Naturally, we begin with recruitment and retention of effective educators who share our passion for building a caring learning community that is responsive to children's and adults' interests and needs, designing a rich learning environment, and promoting meaningful learning that helps everyone deepen their conceptual understanding of relevant topics and strengthen skills in all domains.
- The CMU human resources system helps us search broadly for educators with relevant college degrees and experience, provides excellent benefits and continuing education resources, and offers coaching for our administrators so that we can best integrate our staff as a team and support each individual's unique personal and professional growth.
- We have the freedom to plan our school calendar and schedules such that we can both fulfill our laboratory school responsibilities and design the best professional development for our staff. Both TIME and RESOURCES are essential. Having nearly two weeks at the beginning and end of each school year to focus on professional growth, plus weekly team planning and staff development time enables us to meet and exceed the accreditation requirements. We can provide the fundamentals for staff orientation, health and safety training, and seminars in ethics, child development, assessment, special needs, etc. In addition, we can effectively utilize opportunities to learn via active involvement in collaborative advancement projects. Though keeping up with changing guidance related to Covid-19 risk mitigation has taken much of our time and attention since the spring of 2020, our team chose issues of diversity and inclusion, as well as broadening our community engagement, as areas of collaborative emphasis this year so we have begun a series of heritage month recognitions and experimented with discussing difficult topics like food insecurity with our children.
- Our schedule and excellent staff/child ratio also afford opportunities for individuals, teams, and the whole staff to reflectively focus on continual quality improvement. We are privileged to share our educators as leaders in the field, serving on local and national boards, mentoring undergraduates, collaborating on research projects, speaking and writing for national audiences, etc. Of course, everything has shifted to virtual formats during the pandemic, but we hope to have an in-person lab school conference in 2022. By engaging in the field as leaders beyond our campus, we invest in the quality of our educators and strengthen the whole team's ability to foster the best possible learning experiences for everyone involved in our laboratory school.

Mon		Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Тие	1	2 Music w/ Mrs. Hraber	3 NO SCHOOL Parent Teacher	4
				Comerences	
6	7	8	9	10	11
13	14	15	16	17	18
Dec. Safety Week —			Last Day of the Quarter for 3's	Last Day of the Quarter for 4's & K	
20	21	22	23	24	25
27	28	29	30	31	
					HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!
E.					School on Tueso January 4, 202
	13 Dec. Safety Week — 20 27	6 7  13 14  Dec. Safety Week  20 21  27 28	6 7 8  13 14 15  Dec. Safety Week  20 21 22  27 28 29	6 7 8 9  13 14 15 16 Last Day of the Quarter for 3's  20 21 22 23  27 28 29 30	Parent Teacher Conferences

#### CHILDREN'S VISION SCREENING

A service of:



#### Dear Parent/Guardian:

One in twenty children has an undetected vision problem. The early detection and treatment of vision deficiencies are fundamental to future classroom learning and success.

To ensure that children starting at age 1 are seeing as well as they should. **Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services** offers a free *Children's Vision Screening* program for the children of Allegheny County.

**A REMINDER:** This is a screening. It is **not** a complete eye exam

If you have questions regarding the program, please contact Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services at 412-368-4400 ext. 2213.

Sincerely,

Wathina Lewkowicz Children's Vision Screening Coordinator

#### Preschool Vision Screening is free!

Your tax-deductible donation to **Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services** will allow this valuable prevention of blindness program to continue. Donations can be attached to this permission slip.

#### THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Please return to teacher by	
PERMISSION FOR VISION SCREENING	
School	<del> </del>
Child's Name	<del> </del>
Age: Birth date:/ Sex: M	F
Parent/Guardian (Print Clearly)	
Name	
Address	
City & Zip Code	
Phone (H) (C)	
E-Mail	
How would you prefer to be contacted for follow-ups? Phone or	E-mail
Has child ever been under the care of an eye specialist?	N
Is child currently under the care of an eye specialist? Y  Does child wear glasses? Y	N N
GLASSES MUST BE WORN ON THE DAY OF THE SCREE	NING.
Parent/Guardian Signature Date	
My signature grants permission for the vision screening and for release of results to the facility's professional staff. You will be of the screening results in the form of a Parent Letter.	e notified
FOR STAFF USE ONLY:	
Pass Refer	<b>5</b> *)
Color	

**Undetectable** 

**Unable: Unwilling** 

Kathleen Dames, M.S. CCC-SLP

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The staff at Rehabilitation Specialists, a Pittsburgh-area speech therapy company, will be coming to your child's preschool to perform speech, language, and hearing screenings.

This isn't a test for your child--In fact, most children have fun and see our questions and hearing 'game' as a positive experience. Your child may have had similar testing performed in the past at their doctor's office or by other professionals, but yearly screenings are recommended to ensure no problems with hearing or communication are overlooked.

35 North Balph Avenue Bellevue, PA 15202 PH 412.761.6062 FX 412.761.7336

info@rehabspecialists.net

www.RehabSpecialists.net

Written results will be sent home with every child screened to give specific recommendations on any suggested follow-ups from the screening.

Date of Screening:	Fee: \$15 Cash or check written out to "Rehabilitation Specialists, Inc." or credit card by phone	Please Indicate your payment method:  □ Cash □ Check # □ Credit card by phone Date of payment	
Name of School:	Teacher's Name:	Class/Room #:	
Child's Name:	Date of Birth:	Gender:	
Name of Parent/Guardian:	Address:	City, State, Zip Code:	
Home Phone:	Cell Phone:	Email Address:	

During the speech and language portion of the screening, your child will be asked to follow directions, repeat and make sentences, name common items, and answer questions.

Our speech therapists will be listening to make sure your child is making age-appropriate speech sounds, has an appropriate voice quality, and that their speech fluency is within typical limits.

During the hearing portion, both the middle ear (ear drum function) and inner ear (hearing organs) are working appropriately. The whole screening takes about 15 minutes to complete and is non-invasive.

Please answer the questions and sign the back of this form to give permission for this highly-recommended screening for your preschooler.

Please sign on the line below the following statement and date to give permission for your child to participate in the speech, language, and hearing screening program at their preschool:

My child has permission to participate in the Rehabilitation Specialists, Inc. speech, language, and hearing screening program. My signature also grants permission for the Rehabilitation Specialists, Inc. Speech-Language Pathologist to discuss my child's results with the director and teacher at their school site. I understand that I will receive written results concerning my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature		Date	
Please screen	answer the questions below to help us giing:	ive the best recommendations for yo	our child following the
1.	Do you have any concerns about you lf yes, please explain:	ur child's speech and language?	
2.	Is your child currently receiving spee If yes, for how long and what	ech-language services?	□ No
3.	Does your child have tubes in their e		
4.	Is your child currently on medication  Yes No If yes, how often		
5.	Does your child understand or speak ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, what is the	c a language other than English in	n their home?
	e use the space below to indicate anything wabout your child concerning the speech	•	the speech therapist

**Thank you!** We look forward to meeting your child and giving you personalized recommendations based on screening results. Payment must be made in full on the day of the screening.