

Carnegie Mellon University Children's School February 2022 Family Newsletter

Invitation to Explore Rainforests

We invite you to join us from now until spring break as we explore the rainforests that are essential to life on Earth. "Not only do they provide air, water, medicine, food, and shelter to a multitude of living beings, they are also one of our best natural defenses against climate change because of their capacity to absorb greenhouse gasses from the atmosphere"

(<https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/everyday-actions/9-rainforest-facts-everyone-should-know/>).

We will begin by learning what rainforests are and where they are located on earth. Then we will investigate the types of rainforests and layers of plant life, as well as who lives where in the rainforest. We will explore ways animals are well adapted to rainforest life, as well as creative ways people both adapt and innovate. We will learn about scientists who study the rainforest, why it is so important for us, and ways we can support rainforest conservation.



We will celebrate our learning with a Virtual Family Rainforest Adventure in the early evening on Thursday, March 3rd. See the March newsletter for additional details. The photos here are from prior studies of the rainforest in the preschool and kindergarten.

We hope you will plan to join us in elevating our learning about the biological and cultural diversity of the world's rainforests, as well as the role rainforests play in climate stability (<https://livingrainforest.org>).

June 2022 Summer Camp – In Person!!

The Children's School June Camp will take place June 6th to July 1st. Camp hours are 9AM-1PM Monday-Friday. Watch for more information about June Camp registration in the March 2022 newsletter. Note that families can register for 1, 2, 3, or 4 weeks of camp.

February 2022 Dates

Friday, February 18th – Enrollment Deadline for 2022-23 School Year
Monday, February 21st - Presidents' Day Holiday (NO SCHOOL)
Tuesday, February 22nd – Vision Screening

LOOKING AHEAD: Thursday, March 3rd, 6:00 PM
Virtual Family Rainforest Adventure



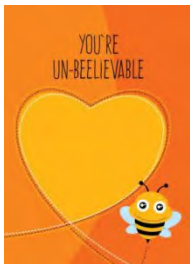
All of these dates are posted on our web calendar <https://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/psychology/cs/>.

February is Children's Dental Health Month

The American Dental Association (ADA) sponsors National Children's Dental Health Month to raise awareness about the importance of oral health. Developing good habits at an early age and scheduling regular dental visits helps children start a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums. The ADA states that the most important concepts for preschool children to know are (1) our teeth are important, (2) we need to take good care of them, and (3) the dentist is a friendly doctor who helps you take good care of your teeth. Teeth are meant to last a lifetime. A balanced diet, limited snacks, brushing and flossing each day, and a regular check-up are the keys to healthy teeth and gums.

For programs where children are older than one year and receive two or more meals, NAEYC (5A.23) promotes good dental hygiene by requiring the staff to provide an opportunity for tooth brushing and gum cleaning to remove food and plaque. At the Children's School, since our children are not here for two or more meals, we talk about brushing our teeth and good dental hygiene. We also encourage children to rinse their mouths with water after eating. However, just as you encourage hand washing when your children come home from school, you should also encourage them to brush their teeth.

Please note that, in compliance with Caring for Our Children 9.2.3.14, we require contact information for your family dentist on your child's re-enrollment information update.



Valentine's Day

February is also the month when some families celebrate Valentine's Day. Each class may plan a simple celebration, read a related story, play games about friendship, etc. Please watch the daily emails for specific information from your child's teachers. As always, children will have access to card making materials in the writing centers for use if they are interested in sending greetings to family and friends.

Please do not send candy or any other food items for distribution to your child's classmates.

School Photo Days Postponed

The school photos by VanDyke Studio that were originally scheduled for January 31st and February 1st have been postponed until April 11th and 12th. Ordering will be done on-line through their website. Please contact Maggie Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu with any questions.

Sensory Screenings Rescheduled

Vision screenings have been postponed until February 22nd. We are still waiting to hear about rescheduled dates for the Speech and Hearing Screening. Please contact Maggie Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu if you would like to register for either of these screenings and you have not yet submitted a permission slip. Permission slips may be accessed through the FACTS Family Portal Resource Documents.

Appreciation for the Day of Giving



#givingCMUday

As part of the 2021 Day of Giving on November 30th, the Children's School received 82 gifts for a total of \$5,941. 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.

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 the contributing businesses mentioned in the December 2021 Children's School Family Newsletter, we received funding from UPMC Diversified Services, an affiliate of UPMC.

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 Linda Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu.

Remote Learning vs. Snow Days



As we all know too well, the coronavirus pandemic has acquainted us with extended school closures and shifts to remote learning that involve some synchronous time with educators via Zoom, as well as suggestions for asynchronous learning activities for parents or other guardians to facilitate with their children at home. The Omicron variant has already resulted in closures of both Preschool classes with shifts to remote learning, as well as a closure for the not "fully vaccinated" children in the Kindergarten. Though we hope such closures are behind us, we will continue these practices as needed.

At the same time, we may also call traditional "snow days" based on road conditions in the city. On these days, there will be no synchronous connections with educators or emails with asynchronous learning activities. We hope that both educators and families will use these days as gifts for extra rest, snuggling, reading, imaginative play, snow fun, and hot chocolate. See ideas on the next page!

Let it Snow!

Outdoor Ideas for Family Fun

- Shovel Away! Have everyone help clear the snow from walks, cars, etc. If you have extra time and energy, help a neighbor!
- Go sledding, snow tubing, ice skating, skiing, etc.
- Make snow angels.
- Have a snowball battle.
- Make a snow family or other snow sculptures.
- Fill spray bottles with food color and water to paint now.



Indoor Ideas for Family Fun

- Enjoy hot cocoa after your outdoor snow fun.
- Fill your bathtub with snow and do snow play with gloves inside. Add some sturdy plastic bowls and cups so you can make snow castles.
- Make snowflakes from coffee filters. Simply fold in half several times and then cut basic shapes on the folds. Unfold the coffee filter to see your design.
- Make pretend snowballs by stuffing & rolling white socks. Then arrange buckets or baskets as targets and toss away!



Heather Riggleman

<http://herviewfromhome.com/36-snow-day-activities-and-ideas-for-your-kids/>

Family Spotlight: Family with Sciences in Sight

Hello, Children's School Family! We are Brian and Alysia McCray, parents of Julian and Amelia McCray. Julian was a new addition to the Kindergarten program this year, and Amelia will be attending the Preschool 3's program in September.

Brian is a Pittsburgh native and grew up in Highland Park, while Alysia spent the majority of her childhood in a small town with a population of about 2000 called Belleville, PA. Alysia currently conducts undergraduate research focusing on chronic pain and attends Duquesne University to complete her bachelor's degree. After graduating from Duquesne, Alysia's future goal is to attend medical school and become a neurosurgeon. Brian is a mechanic by trade, with plans of opening his own shop once Alysia has completed medical school.



This is our family's first year at the Children's School, and we are so happy to be here. Most of all, Julian has been incredibly pleased with himself when he tells his family members that he goes to a "college school". Prior to the Children's School, Julian did not attend daycare and, due to COVID, was only able to complete PreK 3 in person. Over the past few months, Julian has shown tremendous progress in many ways, which we attribute to the Children's School. At this time, Julian hopes to become an astronaut when he gets older and said he wants to attend college at CMU. Even though Julian will be moving on next semester, we are very excited to have Amelia start preschool in the fall. This will be Amelia's first time in an educational institution, and she is very excited to start. Every day she tells us how she wishes she could go to school as well. At this time, Amelia wants to be a veterinarian when she gets older.

Some of our family's favorite Pittsburgh activities include the Carnegie Science Center, the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium, Schenley Park Ice Skating, and the Gateway Clipper themed boat rides.

Our family is looking forward to watching our little Amelia grow over the next few years in the amazing learning environment at the Children's School.



Artist in Residence Opportunity

Many friends and family members of educator Judy Smalley made memorial contributions to the children's school in late 2021, with the total over \$5,000. In Judy's honor, the Children's School educators are launching an Artist in Residence program with a pilot project this spring.



Sculpture artist, Isla Hansen, an Assistant Professor of Art at Carnegie Mellon (<http://www.art.cmu.edu/people/isla-hansen/>) will collaborate with our educators and children in a variety of ways. Her spring 2022 sculpture course for upper level students focuses on the Objects of Play.

"Objects of Play is a project-based studio / lab course that explores the concepts, fabrication techniques, and history behind the creation of play objects. Supported by the CMU Center for the Arts in Society Borderlines initiative, this course will explore play as a lens and mechanism for seeing, thinking, and engaging across cultural borderlines. In this class, students will learn about, discuss, and research cultures of play as revealed through the history and contemporary life of a broad range of physical examples, such as toys, play spaces, playgrounds, games, and the people who both make them and play them. Students in this course will come to define their own area of interest related to course materials and embark on a series of projects to make play objects of their own design."

During the semester, Isla's undergraduates will design play spaces, dolls or puppets, and construction toys. Observations of children playing at the Children's School will inspire their creative work, and children will have opportunities to "play test" their prototypes. Simultaneously, Isla will begin her Children's School residency by meeting the children, perhaps having children tour her campus studio, showing them her own work, and then inviting the children to engage in sculpture art themselves. Details are still being finalized, so watch the classroom blogs for more information as plans for each class develop.



As our collaboration grows, Children's School educators may also benefit from the guest lecture series Isla has organized and the partnership with the Children's Museum exhibits team that she has initiated. Our goal is to learn from this pilot residency experience so that we can develop a call for proposals for future Artists in Residence to honor the memory of Judy Smalley by deepening the arts experiences for future generations.

Black History Month

In February, we celebrate Black History Month, a time to recognize and honor the struggles and accomplishments of African Americans throughout US history.

At the Children's School, we will be recognizing Black History Month by sharing books with the children by and about Black Americans, as well as reflecting on the many contributions Black Americans have made to culture and society. We will also be making these books available for families to borrow. An email will be coming from Mrs. Yetter about what books are available and how you can borrow them to read at home with your family. Pictured here are just a few of the many books we have available. If you are looking for more ways to educate yourself and your children, the resources below offer a great starting point for celebrating Black History with your family.



<https://centerracialjustice.org/resources/black-history-month-resource-guide-for-educators-and-families/>

This Black History Month resource guide was created by the Center for Racial Justice in Education. Here you can find a tremendous number of resources about the importance of Black History in education. Towards the end of the page, there are several resources specifically designed to help parents engage with their families during Black History Month.

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/teaching-your-child-about-black-history-month>

In this PBS Kids article, author Cheryl Willis Hudson talks about how to get your kids interested and excited about African American history in February and all year long. Easy to implement tips are offered as well as a link to a list of Coretta Scott King Award winning picture books. The Coretta Scott King Book Awards are given annually to outstanding African American authors and illustrators of child and young adult books that demonstrate an appreciation of African American culture and universal human values.

<https://pittsburghpa.gov/events/black-history>

"In February, the City of Pittsburgh will celebrate Black History Month by showcasing the life and works of photographer Charles "Teenie" Harris, a Pittsburgh native whose four-decade career with The Pittsburgh Courier – one of the nation's most influential Black newspapers – created an unparalleled chronicle of Black American life, culture, and history during the mid-twentieth century. An online photo gallery and monthlong display in the City-County Building's grand lobby – entitled "TEENIE HARRIS: THE MAN BEHIND THE LENS" – will feature 50+ photographs, examples of Harris' prototype cameras, books, and other memorabilia to showcase Harris' life and work for the Pittsburgh region."

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-month>

Did you know that every year since 1976, every US President has designated February as Black History Month and endorsed a specific theme on which to focus? This year's theme is Black Health and Wellness. History.com offers details on this theme and on the origins of Black History month, as well as a link to 11 documentaries about Black History in America. These 45 – 90 minute documentaries can all be viewed by registering for a free trial to History.com.

Black History Month Resources Continued

In the “Netflix Bookmarks – Celebrating Black Voices” series, watch live-action portrayals of children’s books. There are 12 five-minute episodes. The books are read by Black celebrities, written by Black authors, and celebrate Black culture. Watch on YouTube at <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPpPHIzdSQO7PSjPy614dttjdSgCW9qW>. Watch now on Netflix or visit <https://www.netflixbookmarks.com/> for additional book recommendations (categorized into age groups 0-4, 4-8, and 8-12) and resources.

<https://blackhistoryintwominutes.com/>

This is a collection of over 60 two-minute videos about Black History in America. There are videos for all ages and education levels. The website describes this collection as “...fast, accurate U.S. history available in free video podcast recordings describing major historical events and introducing less well-known experiences involving Black Americans.” Not all videos are appropriate for all young children, so parental discretion is advised.

<https://parents-together.org/7-amazing-african-american-leaders-who-changed-the-way-our-children-are-educated/>

This article from “Parents Together” highlights seven African American authors who have had a significant impact on the American educational system.

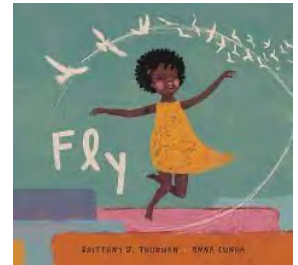
<https://www.himama.com/blog/black-early-childhood-leaders/>

This article, from an Early Childhood Educational Blog, highlights important Black leaders in the fields of Child Development and Early Education.

Meeting Author Brittany J. Thurman

On January 25th, CMU alumna and children’s author Brittany J. Thurman treated the Older Preschool 4’s and Kindergartners to a dramatic reading of her new book, “Fly”.

When Africa signs up for a double Dutch competition, her brother laughs- how can she be in a competition when she’s never double Dutched before? But Africa’s going to prove to the world what she’s made of. First, however, she’s going to get a little help from her friends. So what if they haven’t double Dutched either? Each has a skill they’ll gladly share, and soon, Africa’s confidence is soaring... high enough to fly.



Ms. Thurman told the children that she enjoyed drawing, taking photographs with an actual film camera, and writing stories when she was a child. While introducing the book, she helped children connect with their own abilities to dance, stomp, and clap. She talked about revising her words and working with the illustrator to tell the story with pictures. Ms. Thurman also spoke about her inspiration and writing process with the undergraduates in Dr. Carver’s new course, entitled “Development in Context: Applying Theory and Research to Support Thriving” as an example of how she used her knowledge of children and their development to craft her picture book.

Undergraduate Spotlight

During the spring 2022 semester, two undergraduate interns are taking Dr. Carver's Practicum in Child Development course. They support our children and educators in the classroom six hours per week, while also engaging in a seminar with Dr. Carver every Monday. Both of these interns are also Dr. Carver's Psychology advisees. All adults working in the Children's School this year have up-to-date vaccinations against Covid-19 and participate in weekly Tartan Testing.



• Intern Megan Matsko (Preschool 3's, T/R mornings)



Hello, my name is Megan Matsko, and I am from Baltimore, MD. I am a sophomore student-athlete studying psychology and decision science in Dietrich College and playing basketball for the CMU Tartans. Last semester, I worked at the Children's School as a work study helping with the 3's class and the kindergarten class. This semester I am an intern in Dr. Carver's practicum class, working primarily with the

3's. I am very excited to see first-hand the developmental growth the children undertake, and I love the joy and happiness they radiate every day. It is always one of my favorite parts of the day.



• Intern Susanna Hur (Kindergarten, M/W mornings)



My name is Susanna Hur and I am from Long Island, New York. I am currently a Senior at CMU, majoring in Learning and Developmental Psychology and minoring in Music. My passion for working with children and music led me to intern at the Children's School this year. Last semester, I worked directly with the Children School's music teacher, Lauren Hraber. Together, we planned and taught music lessons for each of the age groups. We created interactive musical activities that are parallel to their curriculum. On the days where music class was not held, I helped in the classroom and interacted with the



children. The best part about working at the Children's School is seeing how creative all the children are. No day with the children is the same, which makes my job so exciting and fun! After I graduate, I plan to go to graduate school for Education to continue pursuing my love for working with children. My goal is to focus on Special Education in Early Childhood.

Research Spotlight

Observations for Psychology Assignments:

Given the continued challenges of the pandemic, students from the Principles of Child Development class, taught this spring by Dr. Lauren Burakowski, will continue to conduct their observations using our remote observation system. For each assignment, they will observe specific differences between preschoolers and kindergartners in motor skills, social interactions, language, etc. This photo shows the way that our Kindergarten room looks during an activity time observation of fine and gross motor skill.



Research Methods Class Studies:

Dr. Burakowski is also teaching the annual Developmental Research Methods class, which will return to in person research this semester. All of the students have up-to-date COVID vaccinations, including the booster, and they are required to do weekly Tartan Testing unless they have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days. They will follow all of our protocols for facial coverings, handwashing, staying home if they experience symptoms, etc., and they spend very short times with any one child (maximum of 20 minutes but typically much less).

In mid-February, the student researchers will be collecting data for a class project on response inhibition (**The Matching Pictures Game**). Response inhibition refers to our ability to refrain from making a response that was correct previously but is no longer adaptive or accurate. Typically, a 2-year-old who learns how to play a game by one rule is not able to adapt their response once the rules have changed, while a 5-year-old can often inhibit the prepotent response to the first rule and play by the new rule. Students in the Research Methods class will investigate age-related changes in children's response inhibition. Specifically, children see a target picture on a touchscreen and then scan several pictures shown below the target and tap the matching picture. To build a prepotent response, the match appears on the same side of the screen for a few trials, but then it switches to the opposite side. The researchers will measure the child's reaction time and accuracy to see if inhibiting the tendency to tap pictures on the initial side of the screen causes errors or slower reaction times when the side switches. Based on existing evidence, they expect 3-year-olds to make more errors and show a bigger delay in responding and compared to 5-year-olds. This game taps underlying mechanisms that are similar to the "Simon Says" game, which you can play at home!

As a bonus, Dr. Burakowski is collaborating with Dr. Jessica Cantlon, who is doing response inhibition work with monkeys. Prior research predicts that the monkeys will demonstrate a similar response pattern to 3-year-olds. Findings consistent with this pattern will increase our understanding of cognitive abilities of our evolutionarily close neighbors and how functions in the brain evolved. Later in the semester, the students will work in small groups to conduct a similar comparative study of their own design, which will be approved both by their instructor and by Dr. Carver. Watch for their research questions an upcoming newsletter!

Director's Corner: Curriculum



NAEYC's standard for **Curriculum** provides a broad overview listing the essential components of a quality early childhood program. The standard does NOT require centers to adopt a packaged curriculum, nor does it recommend one specific educational approach, so centers are free to design their programs based on diverse philosophies, as long as their purposeful design fits the NAEYC criteria. This balance of a structured curriculum framework with the flexibility for intellectual freedom fits well with Carnegie Mellon's unifying motto of "My heart is in the work" and sets the stage for a laboratory school community in which all learners can engage in and contribute to meaningful learning.

- Our curriculum framework is based on **six sets of learning objectives** that cover the full range of development and are based on early childhood development theories. You can download these objectives for Self-Esteem & Independence, Interaction & Cooperation, Communication, Discovery & Exploration, Physical Capabilities, Health & Safety, and Artistic Expression & Appreciation from our web site in the "Program" section under "Six Basic Learning Goals".
- **Every aspect of our program** is intentionally designed to foster children's development relative to our listed objectives, including our classroom arrangement, choice of materials, schedules and routines, teaching strategies, etc. In addition, our choice of **interdisciplinary thematic curriculum** allows us to facilitate broad skill building across all domains while also promoting deep exploration of relevant, real-world topics, such as our upcoming whole school study of *Rainforest* or other recent whole school units on *Planet Earth*, *Healthy Mind & Body*, or *Theatre Arts*. We choose topics to both deepen conceptual development of the specific topic and to broaden children's exposure to the world (e.g., studying Celebrations Around the World in the Preschool 3's or the Seven Natural Wonders of the World in the Kindergarten).
- Using the framework of developmental objectives in the context of thematic studies makes our curriculum **adaptable** to a range of children's ability levels and **responsive** to diverse child and family experiences, interests, and values. Choosing the themes for the year in advance allows educators to locate quality resources and **proactively plan** to incorporate the wealth of campus and community assets into the unit, while leaving significant openness in the unit design to **integrate children's ideas and emerging interests** as the unit progresses. When planning the specific activities within a unit, we balance both the **grouping of children** – including individual, small group and large group activities – and the **style of guidance** – including child-guided play, inquiry, and creative expression, as well as teacher-guided lessons and activities.
- In all these ways, we are laying **essential cognitive foundations** for the literacy, math, science, social studies, and arts that will be more formally taught in elementary school and beyond. We directly teach and then repeatedly practice the use of **essential tools for learning**, beginning with basic gross and fine motor skills and cognitive methods for problem solving and inquiry and then gradually introducing physical tools and technologies (e.g., simple machines, cooking utensils, woodworking tools, digital media, etc.), all with proactive attention to appropriate health and safety issues. In non-pandemic times, being affiliated with Carnegie Mellon and active in the Pittsburgh early education community provides our educators with a **rich network of experts** willing to support our children's learning by contributing their time and resources to our thematic studies, all with the goal of designing the most authentic experiences possible for young children in innovative ways that we can share with other educators as part of our laboratory school outreach.

February

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
Whole School Theme: RAINFOREST Black History Month		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10 Music w/ Mrs. Hraber	11	12
13	14 February Safety Week	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 NO SCHOOL Presidents' Day	22 Vision Screening	23	24 Music w/ Mrs. Hraber	25	26
27	28					



Children's School

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

412-268-2199

2022