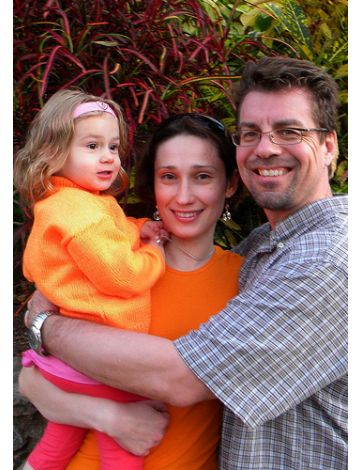


Family Spotlight:

Why I am Excited about the Children's School

My name is Anna Fisher and I am the mom of Sasha (Morning 3's). In addition to being Sasha's mom, I am also an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department. I am one of several researchers who conduct studies at the Children's School. In fact, if you are a parent of a 4- or a 5-year-old, you may even remember seeing my name at the bottom of the parent letters that briefly describe the purpose of the study in which your child participated. Though my perspective on the Children's School is admittedly unique, I'd like to share two of the many reasons why I am excited that Sasha is starting Children's School.



First, while closely collaborating with the Children's School since January 2006, I have come to believe that its teachers are doing a great job of ***promoting the development of executive function in children.***

Executive function includes such important processes as planning, delay of gratification, and self-regulation. Years of research show that deficits in executive functioning during the preschool years are associated with adverse outcomes, such as drug abuse and academic problems, later in life. Although the causal relationship has not been demonstrated, recent research shows that executive function is trainable, both in the lab, when a child is engaged in a series of executive function exercises and in the context of daily routines at a preschool program. I believe that Children's School teachers are very effective in fostering development of executive functioning through gentle but consistent setting of expectations ("We are going to clean up for circle time in three minutes.") and use of routines ("When you hear your name, you may line up to go to the Discovery area."). I've been trying to promote development of executive functioning in Sasha through my parenting, and I am excited to have found a school that values and fosters this important set of skills.

Articles on Executive Function that may be of interest to you:

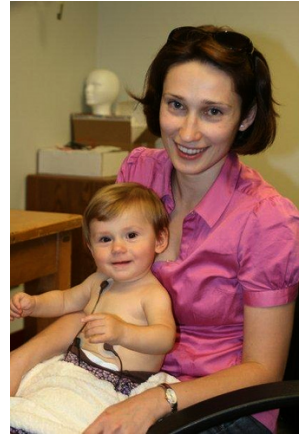
- Rueda, M.R., Rothbart, M.K., McCandliss, B.D., Saccomanno, L., & Posner, M.I. (2005). Training, Maturation and Genetic Influences on the Development of Executive Attention. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 102, 4931–4936. <http://www.pnas.org/content/102/41/14931.full>
- Diamond, A., Barnett, S., Thomas, J., & Munro, S. (2007). Preschool Program Improves Cognitive Control. *Science*, 318, 1387–1388. <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/reprint/318/5855/1387.pdf>

The second reason I am excited about enrolling Sasha is her ***participation in research projects.*** The school's policies give parents the peace of mind that the research sessions will be brief (no longer than 20 minutes), voluntary (a child can decline to participate for any reason), and safe (all researchers are trained and have child abuse clearances; all projects have been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at CMU and Dr. Carver). When participating in these projects, Sasha will tackle a variety of problems, questions, and tasks that I could never dream up on my own! In studies of Dr. Siegler, Sasha may be presented with numerical reasoning problems. In studies of Dr. Klahr, Sasha may participate in scientific reasoning tasks. In my own studies, she may

Continued ...

Family Spotlight continued ...

be presented with executive function tasks and relational reasoning problems. And who knows what tasks Sasha will do for research projects conducted by CMU psychology students! I often teach "Research Methods in Developmental Psychology" and my students study diverse topics, such as moral reasoning, gender roles, mental rotation, pro-social behavior, understanding of emotions, and effects of different types of praise. I find it fascinating that Sasha will be challenged with new kinds of questions (of course, only if she chooses to participate!). At the very minimum, I think it will expand the topics of our dinner conversations. However, I hope that it will do much more than that – I hope that participating in research will enrich her thinking in ways I cannot even imagine!



9-month-old Sasha participating in a heart-rate study in the laboratory of my PhD advisor, Vladimir Sloutsky, at the Ohio State University.

Family Spotlight: Home Away From Home

My name is Liz Farley, and I have two children enrolled at The Children's School. My daughter Charlotte is in the Green Room, and my son Ryder is in the Kindergarten. This fall we have the task of finding a new school for Ryder for next year. It's an exciting new adventure. But visiting the new schools has made me realize that the Children's School has become like a second home for our family. We have all grown so much since we first arrived at the Children's School three years ago. It's very hard to think of moving on.



I am an Architect and Interior Designer. I believe functioning within a well-designed space builds self-confidence and reinforces self-esteem. My first impression of the Children's School was how nice looking the classrooms were. That's very important to me. A bright, clean environment can foster bright, clean thoughts. The sunlight pours in through the big windows. When the students sing, "*What's the Weather*," they can actually observe the day's weather. The Discovery Area creates a public space for all the classes to interact and have small group experiences - like a town square. At the same time, it accommodates different levels of understanding and cognitive ability. It's a place where you want to spend time exploring. I know that Ryder and Charlotte had the same reaction that I did; they just wanted to spend time there.

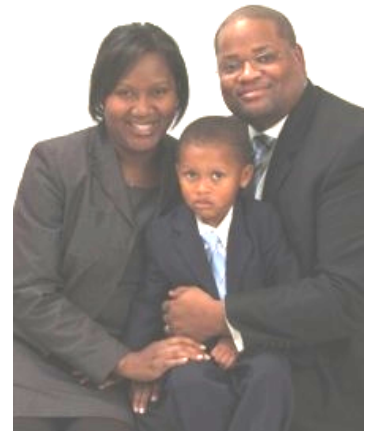


Ryder loved being a "Blue Room Friend" from the minute he walked through the door. He was engaged and challenged, while having so much fun that he couldn't wait to return on Monday mornings. That first year, Charlotte visited the school many times. She felt like a student long before actually becoming one. Our first year breezed by without a hitch. But then when Charlotte started in the Red Room, it was a surprisingly hard transition for her. This challenging time was when my relationship with the school grew far beyond visual appreciation to one of real respect. I was so impressed by the interest the educators showed in making Charlotte comfortable. Everyone took special care to engage her. For example, Miss Mangan downloaded songs she knew Charlotte liked on her personal iPod so they could listen to them together. Every teacher showed me, in some way, that the school values each student as a person and individual. It was incredibly comforting in a very distressing time. Now Charlotte is completely adjusted and loves coming to school.

Moving on is really sad for us. But I know that the Children's School has laid an amazing foundation for Ryder. It has given him the basic belief that learning is fun and school is a great place to go. I know Ryder will move on to his new school with a positive attitude and a solid knowledge base. I must admit, though, that I have had to promise Ryder that he only has to attend a new school for a few years, and then he can return to CMU for college with all of his Children's School Friends!

Family Spotlight: Making Pittsburgh Home

It has been a little over a year since our family made the decision to leave our home in Graham, North Carolina, to take on a new city – Pittsburgh. It was a tough decision, as our son, Elias, was getting ready to start preschool. So the first week we were in Pennsylvania, we decided to check some of the schools that we began researching a month before. When we visited the Children's School, we knew that we were in the right place. Plus, Elias told us that "this is going to be my new school, yay!" And, the rest is history. The three-year-old program was fantastic! After a couple of weeks, Elias would run around the house dropping everything, just to explain to us how gravity worked! We are now in our second year at the Children's School, and it is still the best choice for us.



It seems as if it took us no time to adjust to our new state. We quickly became regular attendees of the Pittsburgh Zoo, the Carnegie Science Center, and the Museum of Natural History. However, the biggest thrill for our entire family has been major league baseball. Elias has become such a Pirates enthusiast that he has even named one of his stuffed animals Elias Andrew McCutchen Garrett Jones. Elias loves that he and Garrett have the same last name.

The greatest challenge of moving has been adjusting to the weather. We were here to witness the worst winter on record, with massive amounts of snow. However, once we were able to dig out our car, it was pretty cool! We still miss our friends and family down South, but the most rewarding part of this journey is seeing our son grow into an independent little boy who continues to thrive in a new community and make "best buddies" at the Children's School.

Marlon, Keava & Elias Jones

Winter Health Pointers



WINTER WEAR: As the chilly winter weather approaches, please replenish your child's extra clothes bag 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 the winter, we go outside daily 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.

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 and gym. If your child is not well enough to fully take part in the day, please keep the child at home because we do not have staff members available to supervise children indoors while the rest of the class is outdoors or at gym.

Family Social Organization (FSO) Play Date

The Family Social Organization organized some activities for the days off of school this semester. While the teachers were prepping for conferences in October, we had a chilly but fun visit to Reilly's Farm. About 20 families braved the cold to have a hayride, pick pumpkins, wander through a corn maze, and feed some farm animals. We also took advantage of gorgeous weather and a day off of school for teacher conferences in November to have a second playdate at Bartlett Park.



We are taking a break from activities for the rest of 2010, while everyone is busy with holiday activities. We have some fun things planned for the doldrums of winter, including an afternoon of music, a pajama party, and an indoor playdate.

Please contact Beth Lott at elisabeth.lott@gmail.com or 412-243-2626 with any questions.

A Veteran's Day Visitor from the Army

Todd Schultz (father of kindergartner Ashley and preschooler Hunter) talked with the kindergarten friends on Veteran's Day about his experience in the Army. He said, "I really had a great time visiting with the Kindergarten class on Veteran's Day! I am currently active duty Army, attending graduate school at CMU. Once I graduate in May, my family and I will leave Pittsburgh for West Point, NY, where I will teach Economics. I was so happy to get the opportunity to speak to the Kindergarten class. What a lively bunch they are! I was surprised to see how much they knew about a helicopter and how it worked. In addition to the helicopter, I was unsure of what else to talk about. Ashley gave me the clue to bring other props that her friends would enjoy seeing or using. It was fun to see the excitement when it came time to try the gear, such as the poncho, the goggles, and, of course, the glow sticks. All the friends were eager to share their stories about the toys they had at their houses, and it turned into a lively discussion to say the least. Lastly, I thank the kindergarten team for hosting me and the children for the thank you notes. They will be a keepsake for years to come."



Building Basics

"At one time used to transport prisoners from the Allegheny County Courthouse to the Jail, the Bridge of Sighs mimics the original in Venice, Italy. The distinctive Bridge of Sighs is just one of many architectural highlights of the building which Henry Hobson Richardson considers his best work, the Allegheny County Courthouse & Jail in downtown Pittsburgh. The Bridge of Sighs is one of 720 bridges within Pittsburgh city limits, and one of more than 1,700 bridges criss-crossing Allegheny County. Pittsburgh has more bridges than any city in the world except for Venice, Italy." In preparation for our Building Unit, take a family tour of Pittsburgh bridges, noticing their materials, the shapes & patterns in their structures, etc. (Excerpt quoted from http://pittsburgh.about.com/od/pictures/ig/architecture/bridge_of_sighs.htm.)



Family Spotlight: Family Focus Group Helps Researchers Develop Family Resources

Last spring, five Children's School parents participated in a focus group to help researchers from the Office of Child Development (including Milena Nigam, mother of kindergartner Simon) on a project entitled ***Something Worth Trying: Supporting a Growth Mindset at Home***. What follows are excerpts from a summary report the researchers provided to the school, and there is a formal published report enclosed with this newsletter.

"One of the most valuable life lessons a child can learn is to keep trying in the face of challenges and setbacks. When children understand that their progress and learning depend on their effort, and not on their innate intelligence and ability alone, they try harder, they are less anxious about their performance, they learn more, they perform better in the long run, and they are prouder of themselves for the right reasons. Believing that effort and persistence relate to learning potential is considered having a 'growth mindset.'"

"As identified during our parenting workshops last year, the Something Worth Trying project team believes the following messages embody a growth mindset and are important, applicable, and accessible in today's parenting of preschoolers and kindergartners:

- Effort is valuable for its own sake, regardless of its outcomes.
- Interest and willingness to *participate* in activities, learning experiences, and the world around us are capacities that will serve children well throughout life. "Getting in the game" and enjoying the experience of play is much more important than winning.
- Try and try again. Take risks. Embrace both attempts and mistakes.
- Take time to notice and honor the details of your children's experiences and attempts."

"In addition, the following practical considerations were raised during our discussions with parents last year on how to effectively communicate the Something Worth Trying messages:

- *Parents are busy*
- *The most effective learning experiences are interactive and are means to strengthen and/or build parent-child relationships.*
- *Storytelling trumps moralizing.*"

"Based on the Something Worth Trying messages and the practical considerations from parents, we envisioned two resources for parents and children:

- *The Trying Box*—a three-dimensional answer to scrapbooking to place mementos that symbolize things that the child has really tried at, or put effort into.
- *The Trying Box* book—a picture book for parents to read with young children to accompany the Trying Box, and instruct children and parents in its use."

January Web Artists

3's Friends: Grace C.-B., Madeleine P. & Gabrielle W.

4's Friends: Michael B., Andrew G., Julia G., Anna H., & William S.

Kindergarten Friends: Juliette G. & Annika V.



Family Spotlight: Growing Up Bilingual

My name is Dave Guillou, and I am the father of Juliette, who attends Kindergarten at the Children's School, and of Felix, who will attend the morning 3's next year. My wife Corinne and I were born and raised in Brittany, in north-western France, and our children were both born in Pittsburgh. Our parents, our siblings, and the other members of our extended families live in France, and few of them speak English. Despite the separation, we want to make sure that Juliette and Felix learn the language of their grandparents and their cousins, so we speak French at home, and we visit our families at least once a year. We spent 2½ weeks in France over the holidays, even though it meant that Juliette would miss school. Needless to say, we all enjoyed our vacation in Brittany, the children spoke French non-stop, broadened their vocabulary, practiced ever-more complicated sentence structures, and absorbed the culture as well.



Growing up bilingual, or learning a second language at school at a young age, benefits children much beyond enabling them to speak the language (and strengthening family ties, as it may be). In that spirit, Corinne visits with the Kindergarten friends for a 20-minute "French class" every Friday. The children sing French songs and learn basic words and expressions related to the monthly theme. Corinne has been volunteering since Juliette joined the pre-school. She is grateful for the Children's School teachers' warm welcome, and she looks forward to starting anew next year with the morning 3's. Our son Felix, who feels a bit anxious about joining "the big kids school" (as he puts it), is already looking forward to meeting his mommy for French class.



February Web Artists

3's Friends: Jacey D., Travis K., Giovanni M., and Andrew Y.

4's Friends: Nina C., Sebastian D., Mark H., and Simon M.

Kindergarten Friends: Charlotte B., Samuel R., and Etienne S.

**Staff Cheer for
AFC Champion
STEELERS in
Super Bowl XLV**



Family Spotlight: Zoom!

My name is Golan Levin, and I'm a professor in the School of Art at CMU. Our son Zen, who started the Morning 3s program in the Blue Room this year, is an enthusiastic scooter, and we are very excited that it's finally March, since warmer weather means we're finally able to start scooting to school again. Zen and I share the same commute, and given how fast he's been going lately, I'm definitely going to need a scooter of my own to keep up. My wife Andrea and I live in Oakland, just across the park from CMU.



Andrea's father taught in the architecture department here for thirty years, and Andrea grew up zooming around the halls of the College of Fine Arts just as Zen does now. Our daughter Roxy, who's just seven months old, is a bit young to be scooting yet, but she's already able to enjoy the walk through Schenley Park and the brighter sunshine that's been peeking through lately. Walking and scooting to school through the park is one of our favorite activities, even in the summer when we're doing it just for fun.

This winter has been a very busy one for me, as in addition to my teaching and my work as the director of the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, I've been preparing for an exhibit of my work at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts. My medium is primarily software – I write code the same way a painter uses paint, or a composer writes and scores music -- and my work is very much about the experience of interaction and play. Zen is an invaluable beta-tester, and has been helping me with debugging eye-tracking software and multi-touch gestural input devices since he was a baby. I enjoy learning from Zen about intuition and responsiveness, every time he plays with one of my pieces. He seems to enjoy playing with the work, too. The exhibit, which occupies half of the second floor galleries of the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, is on display until March 20.



Looking at Looking at Looking, Golan Levin

Through performances, digital artifacts, and virtual environments, Golan Levin's art applies creative twists to digital technologies, highlighting human connections with machines.

*PCA Galleries - the Marshall Building, 6300 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA
15232 (412-361-0873)*

*Tuesday-Saturday: 10am-5pm, Sunday: Noon-5pm
Open until 7pm on Thursdays!*

Family Spotlight: Educators and Parents

Beth and Jason Myers moved to Pittsburgh in 2001 and felt at home here from the start, enjoying the world-renowned architecture, the fascinating history and neighborhoods, the city parks, the libraries and museums. Beth completed a Masters of Arts in Education at the University of Pittsburgh and quickly found a home for her interests in experiential learning through informal environments at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh. As the Education Staff Developer at the Museum during the 2003-04 expansion, Beth worked hard to bring educational theory and practice to the Museum Educators on the floor who work so closely with children and families everyday.

We have been involved with The Children's School since 2003 when Jason joined the Green Room Team as a teacher for the older 4's. With 5 years of experience working in Early Childhood centers in Chicago and Seattle, Jason had recently completed his PA teaching certification and was continuing at Pitt to complete his Masters of Science in Education in Early Childhood. He found the Children's School an amazing home for progressive early childhood philosophies, where theory and practice come together with great care and intent. We dared to dream that our children would go to this school!



In the summer of 2004, our son Wil was born, and The Children's School was there to celebrate. Wil was followed by Cora, now in the 4's with Ms. McGillen. Wil spent 3 years at The Children's School, one year overlapping with Cora while she enjoyed the Blue Room experience. Our grand finale, Lorelei, was born in the fall of 2009, so we are looking forward to her joining the 3's in the fall of 2012.



As a family, we try to walk together everyday, practicing our tricycle/bike/scooter skills or just meandering to Frick Park to see what we can see. We love to play outdoors and have recently been excited by all the signs of spring around us. If Wil, Cora and Lorelei are not running around outside or digging in the backyard, all three love to dance to music in what Cora has dubbed 'Dance Party!' Bubbles, music and a trampoline are a magic combination for the three siblings.

Family Social Organization (FSO) Play Date

Celebrate spring and join us for a play date at **Bartlett Park on Friday April 15th** at 10:30am. The playground is located in Schenley Park at the intersection of Panther Hollow Road, Greenfield Road, Bartlett Street, and Hobart Street. Siblings and friends are most welcome to attend.

In case of rain, we will meet at My Little Outback at 1936 Murray Avenue in Squirrel Hill. Cost of admission is \$8 per child, and there are often coupons in the Clipper Magazine. Socks are required for play.

Contact Beth Lott at 412-849-0327 with any questions.

Family Spotlight: A Year Already?

I can't believe this is the last newsletter of the school year. How did that happen so quickly? It seems like it was only last week that I was learning the Byzantine intricacies of the drop-off and pick-up routines, trying not to embarrass myself in front of the veterans. Now I'm a seasoned pro and know exactly how late I need to be to get a spot at the back of the line, thereby eking out a few extra minutes of Fresh Air on the radio.

I used to work on campus at the School of Computer Science and occasionally I would hear the sounds of the Children's School friends playing outside as I walked across The Cut to get lunch. I never imagined back then that one day my daughter would be one of those little noise-making hooligans playing by the tennis courts, or that I would even have a daughter, but there you have it! She is, and I do, and we feel very fortunate.

I left the School of Computer Science to stay home with Grace, and I have to say I've never had so much fun working so hard. The changes, the different developmental stages, they come fast and furious, and it's all I can do to keep up most days. Grace started the school year learning to ride a bike, tearing around on the playgrounds, and hiking in Frick Park with her dads, Eric and Devin. (I'm Dad, Devin is Pop.) Then we entered the seemingly endless indoor months, and it was all about fairies and princesses and books, books, books! Grace is learning to read and is getting quite good at it. I gave her one of my old Calvin and Hobbes books a few weeks ago, thinking she might enjoy the illustrations. One morning before school she rewarded my lapse in judgment by asking me at breakfast, "Is that your face, or did a possum get stuck in your collar?" I tried not to take it personally.



Grace's Pop is a French and Russian teacher for Pittsburgh Public Schools, and he's always teaching her new words in both of those languages. As parents, we both believe that learning other languages and exploring other cultures is an important part of being a well-rounded individual. Also, I believe Devin is teaching Grace how to speak French so that I can't understand what they're saying. But that's just me.

Now it's spring, the sun is shining (kind of, sometimes), and we're picking up where we left off when school started. The princesses and fairies are spending more time alone, "watching TV" in the dollhouse, and Grace is back outside riding her bike, tearing around the playground, and hiking with her dads. There have been changes, of course. She rides her bike a little faster this year and has taken to bombing down steep hills, much to the dismay of her parents. And this year, it is Grace who is patiently waiting for us to catch up on the hikes through Frick Park.

