

Undergraduate Spotlight

As a campus laboratory school, the Children's School offers research and observation opportunities to many undergraduate and graduate students from different departments across campus. In addition to these opportunities, we offer undergraduates a chance to work in the classrooms on a regular basis, either as student employees, interns, or volunteers. In the **Undergraduate Spotlight**, we will be featuring each of our undergraduate assistants so that parents can learn about the students who work in the classrooms with their children. Photos are posted on the Family Communication bulletin board across from our new library.



Child Development Interns

- Emily Kim is a junior Psychology major exploring education and research while interning in the AM 4's class.



- Lailonny Morris (pictured right) is a senior Psychology major with a Health concentration. She is interning in the AM 4's to gain experience in education.



- Lisa Murphy (pictured left) is a sophomore Psychology major interning in the Kindergarten class. She hopes to pursue a career in special education or clinical psychology.

- Allaina Ray is a junior Psychology major interning in the AM 3's to further her interest in a career working with children.

Senior Student Teachers from Pitt's CASE Program

Jennifer Young and Kayla Kirschenmann are seniors in the University of Pittsburgh's Combined Accelerated Studies in Education (CASE) Program, a five-year undergraduate and masters program that includes a BS in Applied Developmental Psychology and a Masters of Education in early childhood and special education. Miss Young (pictured right) is teaching in the Kindergarten this semester and Miss Kirschenmann (pictured below) is working with the Morning 4's and Extended Morning Program.



- Jennifer Young says, "*I am from the small town of Drums, PA. I worked in a preschool classroom with JumpStart Pittsburgh for the past four years. I love reading in my spare time and love finding new books for the classroom. I also enjoy exploring*



Pittsburgh's different neighborhoods, playing softball, and being outdoors. I look forward to spending the semester in the Kindergarten classroom."

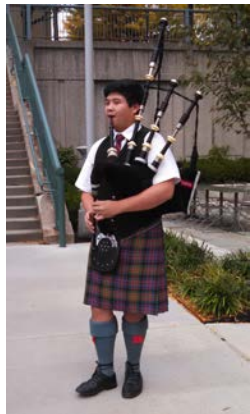
- Kayla Kirschenmann says, "*I am from Plymouth Meeting, PA which is right next to Philadelphia. I am an only child. I have a dog and a cat. I am a huge Pittsburgh sports fan. I currently work at the Falk Laboratory School After-School program. In my free time, I love to bake and do arts and crafts. I am the President of Future Educators of America at Pitt. This semester I look forward to getting to know the students and creating great memories."*

Undergraduate Spotlight

From Stanton Man: When going to Carnegie Mellon, most students will be stressed, pull all-nighters, or even be unhappy about their grades. Students here look at extra-curriculars to get their minds off the inevitable stress. For me, there are two stress relievers - music and the Children's School.

I am currently a junior in the Dietrich College of Humanities & Social Sciences studying Decision Science, with minors in Music Performance & Business Administration. When looking into my music minor, it is something that I love doing and will be with me for the rest of my life. The Children's School is one form of stress relief that comes once in a lifetime. There's something extremely special about this school that I can't seem to put my finger on. I'm not sure if it's the passion from the teachers, or the happiness of the friends, but the atmosphere puts me at ease.

I originally heard about this job from a bagpipe performance I did for the children. After I performed, the feedback from the school was incredible. I felt a sense of ease and friendship from the friends and teachers, so I knew that I wanted to work here. I still remember my first day well. I was nervous, but also really excited. Once I started working, everyone was so accepting and friendly. It really was a breath of fresh air from my daily work schedule at the university. When I leave at 2 pm on Monday / Wednesday or 5:30 pm on Tuesday / Thursday, I always feel the same no matter how I entered the school feeling. There's a sense of accomplishment, as well as joy and tranquility, after every day. Although this is my first semester, I'm eager to be working here for the rest of my CMU career.



Undergraduate Research

Dr. Anna Fisher and Graduate Student Lucy Erickson's **Developmental Research Methods** students are preparing their final projects for the semester. They are beginning to pilot test their projects on the topics listed below. Families whose children participate will receive fuller parent descriptions via the child's backpack, and there are some samples on the next few pages. Everyone can read the study descriptions on the Research Bulletin Board across from the new library cabinets. Notice the interesting range of important topics in early childhood development!

- **The impact of fine or gross motor exercise on creativity** (The Copy Cat Game, K)
- **The impact of encouragement on balancing ability** (The Balancing Game, PM 4's and K)
- **Gender effects in the ability to recognize emotions** (The Faces Game, AM 3's and K)
- **The impact of reward distance on delay of gratification capability** (The Puzzle Game, AM 3's)
- **Familiarity effects on memory game performance** (The Matching Game, AM 4's)
- **The impact of feature appeal & sibling status on sharing** (The Playdough Game, PM 3's & 4's)

Undergraduate Spotlight

Rachel McKinney has always enjoyed working with children, which is why she is so excited to be a part of the undergraduate support staff at the Children's School! As a classroom assistant in the PM 3's class, she has enjoyed getting to know the children through various playground activities. She says, "Interacting with the children through play is an incredible experience because you get to see them learn while also having a ton of fun. At this age, they learn so much through exploring their environment, and they also intuitively apply the concepts and skills taught in the classroom in a way that is unparalleled outside of childhood."



Rachel is a freshman psychology major following the pre-med track, and she aspires to someday work in developmental pediatrics or child psychiatry. Before coming to the Children's School, she discovered her passion for working with children in a similar role as a Big Helper in her high school's Early Childhood Development class. She writes, "Working with preschool-age children on a daily basis was an incredibly rewarding experience, and I learned so much about not only the children, but also about myself through that class. I am thrilled to have this opportunity once more as a classroom assistant in the Children's School!"

Student Teacher Reflections

Kayla Kirschenmann and Jennifer Young are seniors in U. Pitt's Combined Accelerated Studies in Education (CASE) Program, a five-year undergrad and masters program that includes a BS in Applied Developmental Psychology and a M.Ed. in early childhood and special education.

- Kayla Kirschenmann (AM Older 4's with Mrs. Bird)



It is hard to believe that my time here at the Children's School is coming to a close. The staff and children have been so welcoming. I have enjoyed seeing the students' smiling faces everyday. The best part of my day was talking with the children and hearing their stories. I have learned so much from the students while working with them. They welcomed me into their classroom and let me try different activities with them. My time here has been one of the best experiences I have had. I have learned so many valuable things that I will take with me in my other teaching experiences. The team of teachers I worked with taught me so much about collaborating and sharing ideas. Learning from Mrs. Bird was a joy. She has taught me so much about how to be the best teacher possible. Watching her interact with the children inspired me everyday to do better. I am truly grateful for being able to work at the Children's School.



Student Teacher Reflections, continued ...

• Jennifer Young (Kindergarten with Mrs. Perovich)

This past semester has been amazing and I can't thank the staff and my fabulous kindergartners enough for making my time at Children's School such a great experience. This program truly exemplifies how important a high quality early childhood program is for children. I have really enjoyed working with such a knowledgeable and helpful staff this past semester. The smiles on the children's faces when they joined me at the rotunda each morning made my day. One of my favorite parts of this experience has been the freedom to plan and implement my own lessons. There are so many wonderful resources available at the Children's School, which helped me stretch my creativity to give the children the best experience possible. Mrs. Perovich, Mrs. Armbruster, and Mrs. Blizman have been so welcoming and open to my ideas throughout the term, and I love the way we were able to merge our different personalities in the Kindergarten classroom. Next semester, I will be teaching in a life skills classroom; and although I am sad to leave the Children's School, I am very excited to see what this new student teaching experience has in store for me. I know that all of the tools I have gained this past semester will be extremely useful in my future teaching.



Research Spotlight

The Let's Balance Game

One of the Research Methods groups tested the impact of encouragement on gross motor skill performance. Encouragement is particularly interesting because it is free and widely available. According to current research, it has the power to motivate and increase children's attention. In the Let's Balance game, researchers used verbal ("Good job!") and physical (high-fives) forms of encouragement to investigate their effects on balancing task performance. Children did five simple balancing tasks to see how long they could sustain each task (up to 20 seconds each). The tasks included balancing on each foot, tiptoeing, and yoga tree poses on each foot. Children in one group received encouragement after performing each gross motor task, and those in the other group received the verbal encouragement and high-fives only after all the tasks were completed. Randomly assigning children to one of the two conditions allowed the students to test whether the timing of encouragement would cause a significant change in balancing task performance, which might then help parents and educators make decisions about the timing of their encouragement as children attempt challenging tasks.



Undergraduate Spotlight

From Liz Dolinar: I have really enjoyed my first few months working here at the Children's School! My favorite part of work is the opportunity to see children grow and develop in the classroom. Watching our friends learn more English words, develop fine motor skills, learn to listen better, and learn to follow instructions is more and more encouraging every week. It's so great to see a friend who has been a bit antsy learn to settle down and listen attentively or participate in



circle time or different classroom activities. Getting to experience children maturing and becoming more comfortable with the teachers and their classmates is also very rewarding. I have experience with being a counselor/leader at several summer day camps at home, but I have never had the opportunity to spend as long a time with a group of children as I have here watching them grow every day. I also love listening to their stories when we're coloring or baking Play-Doh cakes, and watching their imaginative minds at work is so much fun! The questions that all of the children ask and their curiosity about everything is incredible. It's been a wonderful semester and I look forward to the rest of my time at the Children's School!

Appreciation for Mentoring

In December, we received this letter of appreciation from a graduating senior:

I can't believe it's already time for me to leave you. I'm not normally one for mushy goodbyes, but this place is something special that deserves the mushiest and most heartfelt of farewells. It has always been a joy coming to work with you, and over these three short years I've been with the Children's School, this place has come to feel like a home away from home. My experience working with you all at the Children's School has been absolutely unlike any other. Not only is the Children's School a nurturing place for young minds, it is also a nurturing place for us big college kids too! The hands on experience I gained in the classroom was absolutely irreplaceable. Each day at the Children's School put a smile on my face and taught me something new. Working with such intelligent, creative, positive and driven people was truly inspiring and a complete joy! I thank you for including me as much as you did in being "part of the team" despite my only being a college work study. You all are amazing and I hope at least a little bit of the wonderful way you handle things has rubbed off on me! I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to work with you all! My time at the Children's School has reinforced my passion for working with children and has helped me finalize my decision to begin on my own journey to becoming a teacher. I feel like my time with you all has prepared me more than I could have ever asked for going forward on that journey, however it may play out. Thank you so much for all the you have taught me and I hope that one day I'll find a position in an environment that is as engaging, encouraging, and enjoyable as the one I've found at the Children's School. I will always look back fondly on my time with the Children's School as an irreplaceable part of my time at CMU. I'm sure that I'll be humming Row, Row, Row Your Boat every time I wash my hands for years to come! It's difficult to put into words the amount of love and gratitude I have for you all, but I believe this at least comes close. I wouldn't trade this experience for anything in the world! I'll miss you all very, very much! Don't make me leave; I don't want to go! I can put off graduating for a couple years and stay, right? Ha ha ha. Thank you from the very bottom of my heart! Always your "friend", Marisa Wiltsie

Undergraduate Appreciation

On Reading Day during exam week each semester, we provide lunch for our undergraduate students in appreciation for their hard work at the Children's School and in support of their other academic endeavors. Students come any time between 11am and 1pm to dine with their mentors. This semester's lunch was prepared by Five Points Artisan Bakery, which is a new bakery on Wilkins Avenue owned and operated by Geof Comings (father of Owen, AM 4's).



Early Childhood Practicum Students

From January 17th through February 1st, we will host four early childhood practicum students from Duksung Women's University (Seoul, South Korea) for an International Practicum Program. The Campus School at Carlow University, the Falk School at the University of Pittsburgh, and the University Child Development Center will each also host students, with the total group including 9 undergraduates and 3 graduate students. We look forward to learning more about the initiatives our South Korean colleagues are leading in early childhood and in reflecting with them about the cross-cultural similarities and differences in our values and approaches related to educating young children.



Thanks to the Landau-Comings (Owen 4's) and Aronson (Ruby K) families for offering housing to these visiting students. There are still opportunities to help by preparing welcome bags for the students, offering to provide lunch for them at the school one day, providing transportation to cultural attractions, etc. If you are interested in helping, please contact Dr. Carver at sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu to discuss options.

You Jin Chong

Senior

Young 3's / PM 3's

Aronson



So Jin Kim

Junior

Older 3's / Ext AM

Landau/Comings



Eun Seo Ko

Junior

Young 4's / PM 4's

Landau/Comings



Yeonsoo Kim

Junior

Kindergarten

Aronson



Undergraduate Spotlight

Freshmen design major, Lily Kim, joined the Children's School as a classroom assistant last fall. Lily, who wants to work with children in the future, enjoys being in our creative atmosphere. Whether it is working hands on with the students or in the office, she thinks every week at the Children's School brings new learning opportunities. When she observes the students'



imaginations and the ways in which the teachers try to encourage their curiosity, she feels inspired to think and see things in different ways. Before coming to Carnegie Mellon, Lily interned at her elementary school back at home as an art teacher's assistant. She has worked in both accelerated learner programs and special needs programs during her time there and loves the fact that she can continue furthering her experiences by working with children at college as well.

Winter Break Interns

When Carnegie Mellon students leave for winter break, we hire recent student teachers and students who are pursuing psychology or education degrees at other universities. In January, Renee Tillman and Amy Cascardo supported our teaching team for the first week of the semester. Renee was a preschool intern here during high school, and she is now a freshman psychology major at Penn State. Amy is a senior early childhood and special education major at the University of Hartford. We appreciate these talented students sharing themselves with us!



4th International Practicum Experience

For the past two weeks, we hosted four early childhood education students from **Duksung Women's University in Seoul, South Korea**. Eight other students engaged in practicum experiences at the Carlow University Campus School, the Falk School, or the University Child Development Center. In addition to touring Pittsburgh, visiting diverse centers, planning with our educators, and teaching in our classrooms, the students joined us for our Martin Luther King, Jr.



celebration, talked with a parent and an undergrad with South Korean roots, explored the Children's Museum, visited the Fred Rogers Center, learned about professionalism at PAEYC, attended Dr. Carver's Child Development class, observed a parent seminar, heard a research talk, etc. They bravely practiced their English and boldly faced the challenge of our cold, snowy weather. They also enjoyed the comfort and companionship of their hosts – the Aronson family and the Landau-Comings family. Thanks to everyone who helped make their Pittsburgh experience so positive, productive, and memorable! We also appreciate the ways that the Duksung students' involvement with our educators and Carnegie Mellon students enriched our learning experiences in January!

Undergraduate Spotlight

Marie Avilez is a senior in the Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences majoring in Ethics, History and Public Policy, with a minor in Psychology. Marie says, "My love for The Children's School started Freshman year when I took Dr. Carver's Introduction to Child Development class. I loved seeing the interactions between the teachers and the children during my observations for that class. In the spring of 2014, I took the Practicum in Child Development class, and began as an intern at the Children's School. It didn't take me long to fall head over heels in love with the school, the teachers, and most of all the children. I am naturally an introvert, so at the beginning it was hard for me to get right in there with the children, but the Children's School really made me feel comfortable and confident so that I could do that. The Children's School is a place where I am always comfortable, but I also always have the opportunity to grow. I love that every day I walk into the Children's School and know that I will be challenged, supported, and ultimately learn something new. All of my family lives in Arizona and being across the country from them can be hard, but the Children's School has become a home away from home for me. It is so rare to find a place in this world where you can walk in the door and immediately feel all of the love, care and respect around you. The Children's School is that place for me, and I love every second that I'm here." After graduation, Marie plans to return to Arizona, where she wants to pursue a Masters degree to prepare her to work with children who have special needs. She is currently considering occupational therapy and hopes to work in a school context.



Undergraduate Researchers in Training

Students in Dr. Anna Fisher's **Developmental Research Methods** class are preparing their final projects for the semester. Though the research protocols are still being developed, the students are planning to study many educationally relevant early childhood tasks.

- One group is studying the effect of music tempo on the speed and accuracy of children's tracing of simple figures to see whether the music alters the typical tradeoff between speed and accuracy that affects individuals of all ages on a variety of tasks.
- Another group is investigating whether physically holding a doll will help young children better imagine the doll's perspective in a story, a task that is usually quite difficult for 3 and 4 year olds.
- The third group is exploring the impact of advertising on children's toy preferences by contrasting the choices they make among gender-neutral toys when the toys are shown with a girl, a boy or no child playing with them.

Families whose children participate will receive fuller parent descriptions via the child's backpack. Everyone can read the study descriptions on the Research Bulletin Board across from the Children's School library. What an interesting set of developmental psychology topics!

Undergraduate Spotlight

Senior Ashley Taylor reflects, "As I'm nearing the end of my time at Carnegie Mellon, I feel incredibly fortunate to have had the opportunity to work at the Children's School. Over the years, I've worn many hats here. My Children's School experience began before freshman year, in fact. When visiting the campus, I toured the Children's School, as it was one of my primary motivations for attending CMU. I immediately fell in love with the energy of the school. Unfortunately, during my freshman year, my interactions with the Children's School were limited; I only observed in the classrooms for my Child Development class, but I knew that I wanted to come back in some other capacity.



During my sophomore year, I joined one of CMU's psychology labs, so I shifted from observer to researcher. My next transition came during my junior year, when I interned in the Kindergarten classroom as part of Dr. Carver's Practicum in Child Development class. I loved being in the classroom and interacting with the children on a daily basis, so this year I added another position to my list: classroom aide.



Additionally, I'm completing a senior honors thesis by conducting a study with children in the 4's and K's classes (see Research Spotlight). Sometimes it feels like I *live* at the Children's School, but there's no other place I'd rather be. Though I'm excited to graduate, I'll miss the Children's School immensely, and I consider myself blessed to be a member of the Children's School family!

Spring Science Spree on April 25th

CMU students from the Mortar Board Senior Honor Society are planning a family event on the Children's School playground for Saturday, April 25th from 10am to Noon. Please join us for science experiments and demonstrations organized by seniors who are striving to integrate their scholarship with leadership and service. Dr. Carver is the Mortar Board faculty advisor, and Ashley Taylor, featured above, is the webmaster. You can learn more about the organization at <http://carnegiemellonmortarboard.weebly.com>. Watch for more information and a chance to RSVP via email.



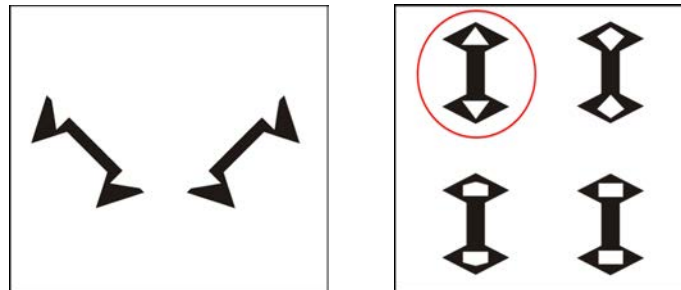
Research Spotlight

The Construction Game

Think of a letter (for instance, a capital "E"). If you were instructed to flip the letter upside down, or rotate it 90°, you would likely be able to visualize how the letter would change. Young children, on the other hand, often have difficulty with this task, as they are not yet skilled in using *mental rotation*. The ability to manipulate an image in one's head has been shown to correlate with success in fields such as math and science, so it stands to reason that children who master this skill early will be at an advantage in future learning.



The goal of Ashley Taylor's senior honors thesis, which she is conducting in collaboration with Dr. Sharon Carver, is to examine how working with a partner on a game that requires the use of mental rotation affects an individual child's ability to employ mental rotation in future tasks. Simply put, does working with a peer help to increase a child's ability to understand future mental rotation tasks? To examine this topic, Ashley has assigned children to work either *individually* or *with a friend* to complete tasks: either commercially-available games that require the use of mental rotation strategies (Trucky 3, Royal Rescue, and Castle Logix) or "building replication" tasks designed to employ the same building skills as the games, but without requiring mental rotation ability. Within these four conditions, 4's and Kindergartners participated in three brief, 15-minute sessions to practice their skills. Children's mental rotation abilities were assessed before and after these practice sessions using the Children's Mental Transformation Task (CMTT). During the CMTT, Ashley shows children an image of two shapes and asks which of the four answer options can be made by putting the two shapes together (See sample below).



"If you had two puzzle pieces just like these, which of these shapes could you make if you put them together?"
(Answer circled on right.)



Royal Rescue



Trucky 3



Castle Logix

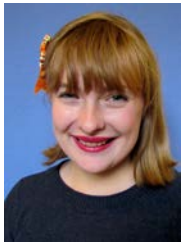
Undergraduate Spotlight: Farewell Seniors!



Sarah Anderson “My future plans thus far are to complete the necessary academic and experience pre-requisites for graduate school in occupational therapy. I plan to apply to programs in the fall and I hope to attend the Master of Occupational Therapy program at Pitt. Other than that, I am going to try to go on a birthright trip to Israel sometime in the near future.”



Marie Avilez “I will be returning to Arizona to work as an aide in a preschool and take prerequisite classes for graduate school. I am aiming for the Master of Arts in Teaching program at Arizona State University, a teacher in residency program.”



Jackie Mishol “I am excited to graduate with a unique degree. I received permission for a self-designed major in Transmedia Drama & Communications after returning from my internship semester with The Walt Disney Company. To kick things off post-graduation, I have been offered an opportunity to entertain children and their families as a professional actor with Six Flags Theme Parks and Six Flags Radio. I'm proud to have had the Children's School be part of my Tartan story, and I look forward to finding more opportunities to learn, play, and do good work as a CMU grad!”

Ashley Taylor “After graduation, I will be moving back home to Maryland. I'm planning to pursue a job in autism therapy, possibly within the school system. Regardless of where I end up, I hope to have a career working with children!”



Honor for Marie Avilez

“Ethics, History and Public Policy Major Marie Avilez Wins The Gretchen Lankford Prize



Marie Avilez (DC'15) did not realize how spending one semester abroad two years ago would influence the trajectory of her future plans. It was during Carnegie Mellon University's first **Social Change Semester** that Avilez, an ethics, history and public policy major with a minor in psychology, discovered her passion: teaching. Now, to recognize her academic distinction, demonstrated accomplishment and potential as a rising educator, she is the Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences' 2015 recipient of the **Gretchen Lankford Prize**. ‘Marie’s nomination stood out by the depth and genuine sincerity of her commitment to service through teaching, and also by how emphatically her nominators sang her praises. All agree that she will be an outstanding and high-impact educator, said Joseph E. Devine, associate dean of the Dietrich College.’”