



# Children's School

FAMILY NEWSLETTER

December 2002

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## NAEYC Accreditation Update

As part of our process of continual quality improvement, the Children's School has been working toward being accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC operates a national, voluntary accreditation system for any public or private school serving children from birth through kindergarten and/or school-age child care. The accreditation process identifies high-quality early childhood programs and schools.

During the last school year, we completed the self-study component of the accreditation process, which involved gathering information through classroom observations, family surveys, and teaching staff surveys. We then summarized the results and compiled the program description. Our program description was mailed to the NAEYC Academy in February '02.

The next step is a validation visit. The purpose of the validation visit is to verify that the program description is an accurate description of the program's daily operations. The validators will do this through classroom observations, checking documents, and talking with us. After this visit, the validator will mail the program description to the Academy for their review to determine accreditation. Our validation visit will be on **Monday, December 9**. We are fortunate to have a quality staff, supportive parents, a wonderful facility and your children! We look forward to having our validator see our school!



### Please Remember

Please remember to use the security door code not only when you enter the school, **but** also when you leave the school. The two main corridor doors are fire exits, so people can exit without using the security code. But, **the alarm will ring if you do not use the code.** To avoid the alarm ringing unnecessarily - please remember to press the "door" button and then the security code **each time** you leave the school.

Last Day before Winter Vacation

Friday, December 20, 2002

## Scholastic Book Sale

The Scholastic Book Sale on November 5 & 6 was a great success, providing exciting books for our children and raising \$956.00 for the Children's School. More than 150 parents, family members and university members visited the fair. Our classroom library received over 20 donated books! Along with **Joanna Patterson and Shelley Ross** who organized this event, we want to thank Tessa Nicholson, Irene Hils, Lynn Farber, Lara Cosentino, Cynthia Smith, Mary Hagan, Kathy Horne, Ellen Missry, Penny Williams, Mary Beth Leech, Deb Zuroski, and Nancy Knowles who helped during those two days. Plans are already under way for the next Book Fair during November 2003. If you want to be a part of this wonderful event, please call Jean Simpson at the Children's School.

## Food Bank

Thank you for all the food items donated for the Greater Pittsburgh Area Food Bank. Our families have always been so generous!



## Safety Corner



Tips for both parents and children to help avoid winter colds and injuries:

- Wash your hands frequently. Colds are spread most often from hand to hand contact.
- Eat well. Eat five servings of fruit and vegetables a day to fight off germs!
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Wear snow boots on snowy days to avoid falls.
- Wear mittens, scarves and hats (cover all exposed skin well) to avoid frostbite. Children are more susceptible to frostbite since they have smaller fingers and toes. Plus, children can get so involved playing in the snow that they don't notice the symptoms.

## Staff/Parent Brown Bag

Art Explorations for Home and School  
Friday, December 13, 2002  
12:00 to 1:30 PM

Presenters:

Mrs. Grabowski and Mrs. Solomon

Come with your lunch for a discussion and hands-on exploration of the many ways that adults can support children's artistic expression by providing space, opportunity, and simple, interesting materials. Get ideas for winter break fun and practical tips for easy preparation and cleanup!

Once again, child care will be provided. Please complete the enclosed flyer with the number of children and their ages and return to the office by Wednesday, December 5. Parking in our lot is limited. A suggestion is to park in the parking garage on Forbes Avenue, which has meter parking on the first floor.



## Spring 2003 Tuition Invoices

You will soon be receiving the spring tuition invoice. To avoid paying the late fee, please have your tuition payment to the Carnegie Mellon Accounting Office by January 7, 2003.

### Web Art Gallery

*This months' Web Artists are: Zoe S., C. J. K., Emma P., Timmy G., Paige M., Sophia Scott, Bailey Y., Sophia C., Swata A., Luca T., Peter W., Sofia d., Rafaela C., and Meg W.*

### Birthday Books



A big thank you to Maya Frankovitch, Thomas Cosentino and Emma Reis who donated books to the Children's School Library in honor of their birthdays.

## A Winter Reminder

On days when snow or ice may affect driving conditions, please listen to the radio or the television. If the Children's School should close due to the weather, we announce our school closing on both WTAE and KDKA. Again this school year, WTAE will also announce school closings on their web page – [wtaetv.com](http://wtaetv.com).



## Look for New School Spirit Items

In December, you will receive order forms with new school spirit items! We will have long sleeve t-shirts and crew neck sweatshirts for children and adults, along with new colors and a **new design**! All clothing items will be available before the winter vacation!



## Holiday Time at the Children's School



At the Children's School, holidays are seen as educational opportunities and they give us the chance to learn about our own diverse population. As part of our emphasis on family identity and respect for diversity, we do encourage children to talk about their family traditions, and we share stories related to the meaning of holidays. We plan age-appropriate activities to involve the children in preparing for school celebrations and to help them contribute to family events (e.g., basic cooking, making gifts, and so forth). We limit our school celebrations to very brief spans of time (typically one day), attempt to maintain our regular school routine, and, as always, are ready to provide extra attention and comfort as needed. Because the children often prepare their own special snack related to holidays and because many children have dietary restrictions (especially related to candy and other sweets), please do not send any food as gifts for children. In all of these ways, we can create meaningful celebrations with the young children in our educational context.

### Holiday Gift Ideas

If you would like to show your appreciation for any of the Children's School staff at the holiday time, we suggest a simple gift, a donation to one of the foundations recommended by our teachers (see below), or a donation to the Children's School. A gift for the classroom (books, train pieces, etc.) is another great option. Involving your child in the decision and/or in the creation of a card or gift focuses the activity on the joy of giving rather than on the gift.

#### **Make a Wish Foundation of Western PA**

Westin William Penn Hotel, Suite 417, 530 William Penn Place, Pittsburgh, PA  
15219-1817 (471-9474)

#### **Ronald McDonald House**

500 Shady Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206 (362-3400)

#### **Beginning with Books**

7101 Hamilton Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15208 (731-1717)

#### **Family Hospice**

1910 Cochran Rd. Pittsburgh, PA 15220 (572-8800)

#### **Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh (687-8017)**

P.O. Box 9024 Pittsburgh, PA 15224

#### **American Cancer Society**

241 Fourth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222 (261-4352)

#### **L.J. Hancock Music Foundation**

P.O. Box 502, Irwin, PA 15642  
[www.ljtribute.org](http://www.ljtribute.org)

*Most organizations provide cards for notifying the special person of your gift.*



## Tips For Happy Holidays

When preparing for **holiday celebrations**, consider the following statement. "While children may be quick to tell their parents that what they want is designer clothes, the latest electronic gear, and brand-name toys, underneath these predictable requests is an unspoken plea for **four, more basic requirements**:

1. A relaxed and loving time with the family.
2. Realistic expectations about gifts.
3. An evenly paced holiday season.
4. Reliable family traditions."

(From *Unplug the Christmas Machine* by Jo Robinson & Jean Coppock Staeheli)

If you are interested in helping your family focus on building relationships and memories during the holiday season, follow these **tips for joyful rather than tearful holidays with young children**.

1. Take your time. Children enjoy helping in family preparations (for example, decorating, wrapping, and table setting) when parents allow the time to follow the child's pace. Gift giving time should also be leisurely; allow children time to play with special gifts before rushing them to the next item.
2. Keep it simple. Be realistic about your child's tolerance for excitement and novelty. Dress children in comfortable clothes that they can easily manipulate for toileting. Bring your own "child-appropriate" foods if you anticipate hosts serving unusual or sugar-filled foods. Expect more shyness than usual in crowded situations with people who haven't been seen recently.
3. Pace yourself. Space exciting events widely so the family can rest and prepare carefully; then relax and discuss each event afterwards. Plan only a few activities that require alterations in sleep patterns.
4. Give extra hugs and kisses. Holidays can be stressful times for all family members. Extra attention and affection from parents can help children relax. Bringing a special toy from home can also provide the comfort a child needs in a new situation.

## **Director's Corner**

Young children's play has many benefits for all aspects of development. At the Children's School, educators support children's play as a significant means to engage them in effective learning in all six of our goal domains.

### *Self-Esteem & Independence*

Play contexts invite children to express their own ideas and understanding while they explore and master new materials. Children thrive when they have a choice of meaningful activities and open-ended options for using a variety of materials. Such choices invite children to take initiative in their own learning and foster intrinsic motivation – the desire to work on a task primarily because it is satisfying.

### *Interaction & Cooperation*

Children play in diverse ways. They engage in “solitary play” apart from others or in “parallel play” near another child who is using the same materials but engrossed in his own activity. Interaction begins with “associative play”, which involves some conversation, sharing of materials, and similar actions but no coordination of goals. True “cooperative play” emerges as children begin to develop shared goals, such as a coordinated scenario in the dramatic play area, a joint building endeavor in the block area, or a team game on the playground. The more children play together, the better they understand other children's points of view, demonstrate empathy and caring, and develop conflict resolution skills.

### *Communication*

As children interact during play, they learn to use language in new ways to describe their play, negotiate sharing, plan joint goals, etc. Their vocabulary increases as they learn words for new objects and actions in our changing theme-related centers (e.g., the paleontologist's office in the green room, or train station in the red room, or the tipi in the kindergarten).

### *Discovery & Exploration*

Children's indoor and outdoor play provides many opportunities for developing and testing theories about how things work in the world. Sand, water, light, and block play enhance children's understanding of physical realities of everyday materials. Changing materials in the centers as new themes are introduced provides frequent catalyst for new experiments.

### *Physical Capabilities*

During play, children's whole bodies are engaged in learning, which builds both small and large motor skills naturally. Increasing physical prowess builds self-esteem and enables greater independence in play.

### *Artistic Expression & Appreciation*

Dramatic play, art and writing center explorations, and other music and movement opportunities offer children a variety of media for expressing their ideas and learning to appreciate others'. These experiences build skills in each of the other domains as well, thus expanding children's learning via play.

Parents can support play in many of the same ways that we do at school, by providing space, opportunities, and materials. Arranging “play dates” with peers and visiting public play areas where children can interact with multiple others. Space where children can play without fear of damaging furniture or injuring themselves, time to choose and become engaged in their own play activities, and simple, interesting materials are key ingredients. Feel free to come observe play at the Children’s School and to share your ideas with us.

## **New Research Initiated**

### The Imagination Game

Christopher Burke, a research associate for Dr. Michael Scheier at Carnegie Mellon University, is interested in childhood optimism. The purpose of this study is to trace the development of optimism in children. The first step in this process and the focus of the Imagination Game is to objectively evaluate the optimism of each participating child. In this game, the experimenter read the child several short scenarios with ambiguous endings. For each story, the child was instructed to imagine himself / herself in the situation and then choose between a positive and negative ending presented by the experimenter. This process was repeated for a total of twenty scenarios, and an example scenario is given below. The child’s responses were recorded via audiotape to later be coded for optimism. In order to maintain the child’s motivation and attention through all of the scenarios, the child was able to choose the order of the scenarios by selecting from a deck of numbered and decorated “Imagination Cards”. To further evaluate optimism level, the child also participated in a task involving children’s mazes. In adults, optimism is related to how long a person persists on a difficult task. The child was instructed to work on a set of four maze puzzles. Since one of the mazes was intentionally difficult, the child was instructed to try as long as he / she liked on each puzzle and that it was okay not to complete all of the mazes. The time of persistence for the difficult maze was recorded using a stopwatch for future analysis. The other three mazes were made sufficiently easy that the child would have no trouble solving them. A small version of one of the easier mazes is given below.



*Sample Scenario:* Imagine that you just saw a beehive behind a tree. You are afraid that one of the bees will sting you. Do you think that you will be able to get home without a bee sting or will one of the bees get you?