



# Children's School

FAMILY NEWSLETTER

January 2003

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## Important Dates

January 17 (F) .....	Parent/Teacher Brown Bag 12 – 1:30PM
February .....	Kindergarten Parent Conferences
February 14 (F).....	Professional Development Day (no school)
February 17 (M).....	President's Day (no school)
February 28 (Th).....	Deposits due for 2003/04
March 6 (Th).....	Family Festival 4:30 - 6:00 PM
March 24 - 28 (M-F).....	CMU Spring Vacation (no school)
April .....	Preschool Parent Conferences
April 7 - 11 (M-F) .....	Week of the Young Child
April 11 (F).....	CMU Spring Carnival; no school
May 15 (Th) .....	Last Day of School for 3's & Extended Day Programs
May 16 (F) .....	Last Day of School for 4's and 5's
June 2 (M) - June 27 (F).....	June Camp

## Looking at the Next School Year

It is now time to look ahead to the 2003/04 school year. If Children's School parents have a sibling to be enrolled in September 2003, please contact Mrs. Simpson immediately.

Letters to reserve your child's place in the threes, fours and kindergarten programs will be mailed the first week of February. At that time, you will be asked to submit a \$200, non-refundable deposit by February 28<sup>th</sup> to reserve a place for your child for the 2003/04 school year.

There are two observation days for our preschool program and two observation days for our kindergarten program.

Parents will be able to talk to our director about our program and observe in the classrooms.

**Preschool** Observations: Monday, January 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM or Tuesday, January 21<sup>st</sup> at 12:45 PM.

**Kindergarten** Observations: Thursday, January 16<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 to 10:00 AM, or Wednesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> from 8:00 to 10:00 AM.

Please call Miss Bowers at (412) 268-2199 to reserve a space in either the preschool observation or the kindergarten observation. Both of these events are for parents only.

## Speech, Hearing and Language Screenings

On Tuesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, Thursday, January 16<sup>th</sup> and Friday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, Margie Dubner from the Easter Seals Communication Department will be here to conduct a speech, language, hearing and middle ear screening program. This service helps to identify communication and/or hearing problems early and will recommend courses of treatment. Written results will be given to parents.

If you would like your child to be screened, please send **\$12 (cash only)** along with the completed form by Wednesday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003. There are extra forms in the Children's School office.



### Winter Reminders

Please listen to the radio or television after 7:00 AM if you suspect that the Children's School will close due to the weather conditions. We announce our school closing on both WTAE (1250 AM) and KDKA (1020 AM). WTAE also announces school closings on their web page, [wtaetv.com](http://wtaetv.com).

Because Children's School staff and families live in diverse areas in and around the city, we cannot factor travel conditions from every location into our decision about whether to delay or close school. Therefore, we encourage parents to use their best judgement about whether the roads in your area are safe to bring your child to school.

During the winter months, please send labeled hats and mittens to school every day. We take our children outside daily, except in the most extreme weather conditions. If your child is not well enough to participate in outdoor play, please keep him/her at home. On snowy days, please also send labeled snow pants and boots. Children who do not have appropriate snow clothes will be restricted to playing on the sidewalk when there is snow on the play

surfaces. Feel free to provide a set of outdoor clothes to be kept in your child's locker.

Now that the weather is turning colder and many of our children are showing signs of colds and flu, please remember to keep your child at home if he/she shows any of the following symptoms:

- Oral temperature above 99 degrees within the past 24 hours
- Uncontrolled diarrhea
- Rash, bump or other out-of-the-ordinary skin conditions
- Flushed face, "watery" or "glossy" eyes
- Excessive running nose
- Deep or dry cough
- Continuous sneezing
- Sore throat
- Vomiting within the past 24 hours
- Unusual irritability, listlessness, fatigue

Any of these symptoms may indicate the beginning of an illness, which might be easily communicated to other children.

When your child will not be in school, please call the school at (412) 268-2199 before the school day begins.

*This month's Web Artists are: Olivia P., Jake L., Lauren K., Tom S., David T., Dana W., Teddy G., Joshua B., Aidan L., Nicky F., Mac N., Alexandra M., and Thomas C.*

## **NAEYC Accreditation Update**

On Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, Sarah Seaman, our validator from NAEYC, was here from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM. She spent the day observing in the classrooms, checking documents and talking with us. Her role was to verify that the program description we completed is an accurate description of our daily operation. Our program description and her observations were mailed to the Academy in Washington, D.C. for their review to determine accreditation. We expect to hear from the Academy before Spring Vacation and we will keep you posted!

## **Staff/Parent Brown Bag**

Music Explorations  
Friday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003  
12:00 to 1:30 PM

Presenters:  
Miss McMichael and Mrs. Tomer

Come with your lunch for a discussion and hands-on exploration of the many ways that adults can support children's musical expression and appreciation.



Once again, child care will be provided. Please complete the enclosed flyer with the number of children and their ages and return it to the office by Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup>. 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.

## **Thanks to our Winter Break College Student Assistants!!**

We appreciate the help that we have and will receive from the two college students who are serving as classroom assistants during the break between CMU semesters. Erin Brownstein, a freshman majoring in education at Westminster College, has been working with the 4's and Katelyn Shearer, a senior majoring in architecture at Carnegie Mellon University, has been working with the 3's.

Please join us in offering best wishes to both of these students as they return to their respective colleges at the end of next week.

## **Safety Corner**

### *Stay Safe in Your Winter Wonderland!*

For children, winter is not the end of outdoor fun. From sledding to skiing, snowmobiling to ice skating, children find lots to do when the snow starts to fall. Unfortunately, winter activities can also lead to tragedy. When properly prepared, children can enjoy safe and fun outdoor activities. "The inviting snow draws children to ice-covered lakes and ski slopes each winter, regardless of the frigid temperatures and the risks," says Heather Paul, Ph.D., executive director of the National SAFE KIDS Campaign. "Parents should watch their children closely, limit their outdoor playtime and make sure that they are dressed appropriately for the weather." Here are few other winter tips to keep in mind:

- Parents and caregivers should inspect equipment and the environment for possible hazards before children engage in winter activities such as sledding, ice skating and skiing.
- Be aware that the increased use of hot tubs and whirlpools as well as the danger of hidden bodies of water or weak ice make winter drowning a risk.
- If a child complains of numbness or pain in the fingers, toes, nose, cheeks or ears while playing in the snow, or if his skin is blistered, hard to the touch or glossy, be alerted to the possibility of frostbite. Tell the child to wiggle the affected body part(s) to increase blood supply to that area. Warm the frozen part(s) against the body. Immerse frozen part(s) in warm, not hot, water. Frozen tissue is fragile and can be damaged easily. Avoid warming with high heat from radiators, fireplaces or stoves, and avoid rubbing or breaking blisters.
- Slippery driveways and sidewalks can be particularly hazardous in the winter. Keep them well shoveled, and apply materials such as rock salt or sand to improve traction.
- Make sure children wear appropriate boots and brightly colored (not white) clothing while walking and playing in snowy conditions. Use reflective stickers on clothing for maximum protection, especially at dawn and dusk.

## **Nutrition Corner**

The Nutrition Corner is a new addition to our monthly Family Newsletter. The idea came from a discussion during our Staff Development Day on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Over the winter vacation, the Children's School Staff read three articles on children's eating patterns and the importance of nutrition and nutrition education. During the spring semester each family newsletter will include a new nutrition topic.

### *Start the Day with Breakfast!*

Breakfast is an important start to the day. The foods you serve for breakfast should be the source of half the day's energy. The Child and Adult Care Food Program of the USDA recommends milk, fruit and a grain to be served at breakfast. Milk provides carbohydrates, protein, and fat, the energy building materials that support the growth and development of young children. Although the energy needs of young children are great, they can only eat a small amount at each sitting. Here are some recommendations from the USDA of ideas and serving sizes for preschool children at breakfast:

- 6 ounces of milk
- 1/2 slice of bread
- 1/3 cup of cold dry cereal
- 1/4 cup of hot cooked cereal
- 1/2 cup of fruit (Whole fruit is preferred to fruit juice because it is more filling, more nutrient dense, and contains more fiber.)

Beginning the day with a good breakfast can help provide children with nutrients and the fuel for the day's activities.

## **Practicum in Child Development**

The Practicum is a "guided field experience" designed to help students deepen their understanding of developmental psychology by assisting in a preschool or kindergarten classroom and discussing the ways that their experiences relate to the theories they have learned previously and to new readings. Each student works in one of our classrooms for 6 hours per week, in a role similar to that of our work study students. In addition, the students do readings related to various aspects of early childhood development, keep a journal of their experiences and how they relate to the readings, and meet as a group with Dr. Carver once per week to discuss the readings and their experiences in the classroom. Please join me in welcoming the following students for the Spring Semester, which begins on January 13<sup>th</sup>.

Maria Shchensnyak	Morning Preschool	Mondays / Wednesdays
Rachel Minkoff	Morning Preschool	Tuesdays / Thursdays
Jenny Lane	Morning Preschool	Tuesdays / Thursdays

## **Facilities Improvement!!**

Through a gift from the F. Brooks Robinson Family, our greeting and dismissal process will be made more comfortable by the installation of a large awning over the door at the bottom of the rainbow stairs. Mamaux Supply Company will fabricate and install a rigid style awning and frame (23 ft long by 3 ft high by 10 ft projection plus a 2 ft valance). The durable fabric will be a shade of green and will be supported by a frame of 1" square steel. It will be installed high enough to provide clearance for the small buses that transport some of our kindergartners. This awning will eliminate the need for teachers to fumble with umbrellas or get soaked while helping the children out of or into vehicles. Many thanks to the Robinsons for their thoughtfulness, initiative, and generosity.

## **Director's Corner**

Welcome Back! I hope that your winter vacation was a pleasant time of celebration and relaxation with family and friends.

As we start a new school semester, I want to initiate a Children's School community discussion about what shapes children's behavior. During the several weeks prior to the break, parents from a variety of classes approached their children's teachers or the administrators with questions about the effect of other children's behavior on their own children. Some of these questions arose in contexts outside of school, such as playdates and birthday parties, while others referred to children's descriptions of interactions at school. All of them are questions that parents commonly begin asking as their children more frequently venture outside the home, and, as I have learned while parenting my own 14 year old, the questions only increase in frequency and complexity as the children broaden their social circles. As with many issues regarding our children, it helps to take a broad, long-term view with our priorities clearly in focus.

You have already made many choices that will affect your children's development, including your choice of neighborhood, proximity to family, circle of friends, caregivers, school, and other family activities. Most likely, you have selected options according to the match between your priorities, resources, and the options available. Making your priorities explicit typically facilitates the decision process in much the same way that the goals we have for children's development shapes our program design at the Children's School. Discussing these priorities with parents of your children's classmates will help you identify families that are likely to be a good match for your child and your family. Issues such as level of supervision, type of toys, media exposure, foods offered, method of handling conflicts, etc. could all be discussed in advance or during a first visit or outing. You might also consider the value of complementary characteristics, rather than seeking relationships only with families highly similar to yours. Promoting relationships with families that have interests in sports or arts (if that's not your forté) or whose background, religious beliefs, or culture are different from yours can enrich your child and your family's life in many ways.

During the preschool years, children are already able to identify similarities and differences, and they are able to adapt their behavior to fit differing contexts. We

frequently say, "At the Children's School, we ..." when we describe our way of doing something, and many children will share alternate approaches that they have learned at home. We model a respectful attitude for handling differences that arise in types of play, language usage, preferred foods, et cetera. This type of awareness of diversity prepares children for effective functioning in a multi-cultural world. At the same time, clear and consistent modeling and discussion that reinforces your family's unique value system will have the major influence on the values and behaviors that your child adopts. Even so, children are continually experimenting with new ideas, actions, and interactions based on what they see and hear at school, at a friend's house, or at the playground. By being calm but firm about the family's expectations and supportive of the child's ability to meet them, parents can shape the child's behavior without squelching the exploration that is essential for development.

Both at home and at school, this shaping of behavior takes time. It progresses at differing rates for children of different ages, unique temperaments, changing family situations, and developmental difficulties. Alertness, patience, flexibility, and persistence are the key ingredients for ultimate success. In a school context, these differing rates of development often cause concern for parents, particularly when negative verbal or physical behaviors seem to persist within a class. In a case of consistent misbehavior, our approach is to use careful observation, thoughtful reflection, direct communication with the child's parents, referral for special services, and a balance of firmness and patience as we try to help the child develop more effective self-regulation and peer interaction. We often use class discussions to review expectations and help children internalize strategies for responding appropriately to negative behavior (e.g., using your words, asking a teacher for help, etc.). In this way, we strive to meet the needs of all the children in the class. Parents can model such constructive approaches when children discuss behavior issues at home by emphasizing the prosocial skills that their own children have learned and can use in the challenging situations encountered. We also appreciate your sharing the children's concerns with their teachers to facilitate observation and reflection focused on resolving the current issues while promoting respectful ways of handling conflict that will last a lifetime.

I invite you to continue this discussion within your own family, with your children's teachers, with other parents, and with me. The book, *Positive Discipline for Preschoolers: Raising Children Who Are Responsible, Respectful, and Resourceful* (Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin, and Roslyn Duffy, Prima Publishing, 1998) offers practical advice and encouragement for parents interested in being more intentional about shaping their children's behavior. I recommend it highly. I also encourage you to raise questions that you would like to see addressed in future Director's Corners so that we can continue to support each other in fostering our children's development.

May you and your family experience a year of health and wholeness in 2003!