During our Building Theme we identified the basic concepts of building, including balance, foundation and stability. We offered guided exploration of building to reinforce our Construction Rules and vocabulary. We finished our unit by discovering the buildings around us and learning about purpose, design, and tools for building. We were so fortunate to have architects Shanna Kovalchick and Brandon Nicholson, Josh’s parents, do two hands-on presentations for the children. The first was an overview of “What Do Architects Do?” The second was specifically about how architects design and draw buildings.

**Construction Rules**

Blocks are for building.
Be gentle with blocks.
Keep blocks clean.
Build only as high as your head.
Take down structures one block at a time.

Josh helps his parents demonstrate how strong the keystone of an arch is.

Jack plays the dog in the doghouse in the game “Doggy, Doggy, Where’s Your Bone?” The friends designed and built the box house.

Maya and Aya pose with their very tall structure of foam blocks.
We began our building theme by reading *The Three Little Pigs*. This classic story allowed us to introduce the basic concepts and vocabulary of building including structure, balance, foundation, materials and stability. During the week, we explored the different materials the pigs used to build their houses. We assembled props for our story, which included houses made of sticks, straw and bricks. We built our stage and enacted the story. We practiced balancing our bodies on the balance beam, used the scale to balance various objects and played several balancing block games. We learned about the importance of a strong foundation when we experimented with building with small blocks using various foundations.
We progressed in our study as we introduced various building materials, including Unit Blocks, Wedge-its, Cuisenaire Rods, popsicle sticks, tree blocks, stone blocks and cups. The teachers guided the children when building to reinforce our building rules and vocabulary. During the week, we experimented with tension to construct bridges, measured our height using rectangular prisms, made a building out of boxes, and created Wedge-it structures using various foundations. Our Dramatic Play Center became The Green Room Architect Studio, where children could use various tools to copy or draw their own designs. We had the great opportunity to visit the Intelligent Workplace, a green architect studio on the top floor of our building. We had a personal tour by former Children’s School parent and CMU Architecture Professor, Azizan Abdul-Aziz.

After brainstorming some ideas, Eli and Avi work together to build a bridge that will hold up a toy car.

Caleb and Colby keep the clown balanced as they add more small wooden blocks.

Azizan shows the children an architect’s section model of a building in the Intelligent Workplace. The walls of the work area in the IW are mostly glass to save energy by using natural light as much as possible.

The children touch a special material that can collect heat to be used at a future time. Saving energy is important to the people who built and work in the Intelligent Workplace.

It is especially exciting to see a bird’s eye view of our playground from the top of the building!
We finished our unit by focusing on the tools of building and continuing to design structures with various building materials. The children learned more about our woodworking tools and then used them to design and build a structure. We built with Roman and Egyptian style blocks, and built large structures with our unique hand-made Architecture Blocks. These blocks were designed and constructed more than 25 years ago by a team of architecture students who wanted to promote collaborative building among young children.

Addison plays the Memory Match game with photos of the tools from our Woodworking Center.

In music class Aubri plays a wood block that sounds like a saw.

Elijah, Benny and Isaiah decide what they will play in the structure they built.

Julia adds more heavy blocks to her Architecture Block structure.

John and Henry balance their foam blocks on a wide, strong foundation.

Harris and Benny decide how to attach a roof to the building sides.

Former Children’s School parent and CMU Architecture Professor, Josh Bard, chats with Mrs. Bird’s friends about what they have learned in the Building Unit. The friends were visiting the Arch Window, a favorite spot in the Margaret Morrison Building.

Adrian makes some pepper prints representing plans, sections and elevations of buildings.
During the month, we explored and experimented with building ramps in the Make Shop.

Elaborate ramps emerged as the children learned about how to keep ramps stable and what kinds of balls worked best on certain ramps.

Evren experiments with a noodle on his ramp and tunnel. Will it fit through?

Yerick, a new afternoon friend, elevates a tube to make a run for a large wooden ball. Welcome to the Children’s School Yerick and family!

Birthday Fun and Visits!

Chudi’s mom and dad visited to celebrate his birthday in school. The children made delicious fruit salad for snack and Chudi’s mom played the drum for the friends as they danced.

Book reading and frozen yogurt were a part of Lillian’s family visit to celebrate her birthday.

Josh’s brother Benjamin joins Mrs. Bird’s class to read one his favorite books about Architecture.

Josh’s parents use a sliced pepper to demonstrate the different kinds of architectural design terms.