Our New Classroom

The Kindernews is the Children’s School kindergarten class newsletter published to keep our families and friends updated on what is happening in the kindergarten classroom. The Kindernews is filled with photographs of your children working, learning and playing together. The Kindernews features your children as artists, inventors, explorers and authors. The Kindernews also addresses the philosophy behind the activities that engage your children. Along with our kindergarten classroom website (cmukindergarten.weebly.com), it is a link between our classroom and your home. We hope you enjoy!

EXPLORING OUR CLASSROOM

Our 2015 school year began with getting acquainted with our classroom, the routine, the other friends, and the teachers. The children all know our morning routine of checking for notes in backpacks, hand washing and answering the Question of the Day. We became familiar with the classroom routines of freezing when the lights go out, coming to the teacher when the bell rings, walking in a line, pushing in our chairs, etc. The children learned our “necklace or chair system”, which monitors the amount of spaces at a center.

We spent time in each classroom center and learned how to appropriately use the materials there. The children were given time to explore the materials freely. We learned where the materials live so that we can all share in the responsibility for cleaning up our space. During lunch and snack, we are responsible for cleaning up our table space and taking care of the trash. The children are also being introduced to time management. Giving a two minute warning and providing a mailbox for them to keep unfinished work allows them to keep track of their progress.

Our 2015-2016 Kindergarten Class!

Alexander and Ryan building a train track.

Rhys, Evy and Marley with a completed puzzle.

Campbell, Megu and Sara playing a game.
We took advantage of the beautiful September weather to begin our Bug Unit in nearby Schenley Park. We spent the first two Friday mornings working on our observation skills. Observation is the cornerstone of the inquiry process. It begins an investigation and continues throughout it. When making observations, the children are learning to gather evidence, organize their ideas, and propose explanations about the world around them. We challenged the children to use their five senses to make detailed observations. Their vocabulary was enriched as they used descriptive words to share their findings.

Next we went bug hunting! The children looked high and low, over and under for bugs. Just by taking a step into the grass, several bugs would scurry or fly away from us. We were surprised at how many different types of bugs we were able to find. We were able to find a slow moving honey bee and watch as it was collecting pollen from a dandelion. We watched a line of ants take crumbs to their ant hill. We brought some of our finds into the classroom to observe closer. A wooly bear caterpillar stayed for a few days and we were able to watch it eat leaves. (We also found a dead chipmunk which we kept to observe the decaying process!)
After our Bug Hunt, we learned about Insects. Insects are the most diverse and important group of animals on land. There are more species of insects than all other land animals put together. Insects are members of a larger group called arthropods. All arthropods have a rigid exoskeleton and legs that are jointed. In order to grow, arthropods have to shed their whole exoskeleton all at once; this is called molting. All insects have bodies that are divided into three sections: the head, thorax, and abdomen. Nearly all insects have a pair of antennae on their heads. They use their antennae to touch and smell the world around them. Adult insects have six legs that are attached to the middle section of the body, the thorax. Insects are the only arthropods that have wings, and the wings are always attached to the thorax, like the legs. Insects have two compound eyes.

All insects lay eggs. There are two ways that insects grow: complete or incomplete metamorphosis. Insects that have complete metamorphosis have babies that look very different from the adults and often eat very different foods than adults. Butterflies, beetles, and true flies are some of the groups that have complete metamorphosis. The babies are called larvae. Caterpillars and maggots are examples of insect larvae. Larvae often have soft exoskeletons that stretch so they can grow fast, and they go through a resting stage called a pupa before emerging as an adult. Insects that have incomplete metamorphosis have babies that look like small adults with no wings. They usually eat the same kind of food as the adults do. Grasshoppers and cockroaches are two kinds of insects that have incomplete metamorphosis.

Our first insect to study was the butterfly. The children recreated the 4 life cycle stages for all butterflies: egg, larva (or caterpillar), pupa, and adult - emphasizing the difference between a chrysalis and a cocoon. As we took a closer look at a variety of butterflies, we realized that the wings - are symmetrical - the same on both sides. The children used paint on laminate to create symmetrical butterflies for the hallway windows.
BEES

After studying the butterfly, we moved on to the most famous pollinator, the honey bee.

Honeybees and bumblebees live in colonies or hives. All the bees in the colony work together for the good of the hive. Each has a job to do: the one queen lays the eggs and the workers (females) build the honeycomb, care for the larvae and collect the food, while drones (males) wait to mate with the queen. Only workers have stingers. Bees larvae go through a complete metamorphosis. The larvae goes through a pupa stage and during that time morph from caterpillar to adult bee.

**August pollinating a flower.** Pollination is a very important part of the life cycle of plants. Plants cannot produce fruit or seeds unless they are pollinated. Pollen is transferred by pollinators, which can be insects. Once pollination takes place, seeds begin to grow. The children loved this short Youtube video explaining the pollination process: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzy30r1zC_1U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzy30r1zC_1U)

To demonstrate the pollination process in the classroom, the children ate a cheese covered cheetos “flower” then, without licking their fingers, sipped juice from a “flower” juice box. The “pollen” cheese from the one flower transferred to the juice box flower. Bees fly from flower to flower, sipping nectar and collecting grains of pollen. Bees have a special tongue that sucks up the nectar and a crop in their throat for storing it until they get back to the hive, where it is turned into honey to use as food. Bees collect pollen in the pollen pocket located on their back legs.

One favorite activity was honey tasting. We compared flavors of four different types of honey by tasting each one on a cracker. We chose and graphed our favorite.

Interestingly each colony has an unique odor for member identification. Each “hive” or group of students had to find their own hive by smell. Each bee was given a cotton ball with an essential oil on it. The children had to buzz around the classroom smelling each hive and match the smell on the cotton ball to the hive.
Spiders were the topic of study during the last week of September. A spider is not an insect but an Arachnids. We compared spiders to insects, learning that spiders only have two body parts, a cephalothorax and an abdomen. Spiders have eight legs and some have as many as eight eyes! Even with all those eyes, a spider’s vision is poor. It senses movement through vibrations that are felt with the hairs covering their bodies.

Spiders can make silk in their body with spinnerets. The silk is liquid inside the body but solidifies when it hits the air. Not all spiders spin webs, silk is used for traveling, wrapping prey and lining dens. Spiders eat old silk! Miss Kelly led an experiment to answer the question, “Why don’t spiders get trapped in their own webs?” We learned that spiders have a non-stick coating on their legs similar to oil that prevents them from sticking.

Most spiders have fangs by which venom is injected. Spiders bite their prey, inject venom which paralyzes the prey and then liquifies the prey’s insides. A spider drinks the liquid body, leaving the outer shell.

KINDERGARTEN STUDENT TEACHER
We have wonderful help in the classroom this semester. Miss Kelly is our student teacher from the University of Pittsburgh. Miss Kelly works with us Monday and Tuesday mornings and all day on Wednesdays. She is creating lessons, leading group time and working with all the children in small groups.

Miss Kelly leading a group in a math

KINDERGARTEN WORKSTUDY
Arielle, a senior Psychology/Premed major, is enjoying her third year working with the kindergarten. Arielle is a great help in our classroom. She leads small group activities, reads with the children, accompanies the class on our Friday mornings in the park, plus does any office work that needs to be done. Arielle is vital in helping to keep the kindergarten running smoothly.

Arielle working with a group.
FINE MOTOR PRACTICE

Did you know that fine motor development contributes to the development of communication skills in young children? It affects their ability to write a name or message, manipulate a computer mouse, create a sculpture or draw a picture; all of which are forms of communication. Structured learning experiences such as developmental play and learning centers are opportunities for teachers to provide a range of activities, that will help develop the fine motor skills of children. This month we focused on strengthening our fine motor muscles by stinging beads, cutting tape, hole punching leaves, tweezing spiders, transferring liquid with eye droppers, exploring playdoh with a variety of materials, using small flip crayons, writing with a variety of materials, accordion folding paper strips, squeezing clothespins and counting small manipulatives.

We finished the Bug Unit by using a variety of media to create our own bugs. The children painted a oval piece of cardboard and then wrapped it with wire, string or yarn. They used a variety of materials to construct wings, eyes, legs and antennae.

Although this activity focused on the creative process, the children were overheard using scientific vocabulary in describing their creation. Many made sure that the correct attributes were on the bug, six legs for an insect and eight legs for a spider.

The finished product is a whimsical mix of creativity and reality.