MEANINGFUL CAMPUS & COMMUNITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EXPERIENCED EDUCATORS

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2013 NCCCC Conference
Building on the Past, Shaping the Future

Introductions

- School & Campus & Community Contexts
- Educator Characteristics
- Challenges of Keeping the Experienced Staff Energized & Growing
  - Individual Differences
  - Availability of Opportunities
  - Time Constraints
  - Resource Allocation
  - Other?
- Session Goals

Engaging Professional Development

- When are experienced educators most fully engaged in professional development? What invites that engagement and keeps them engaged?

Effective Professional Development

- When is professional development for experienced educators most effective? Under what conditions is the learning most productive?

Within / Between Centers

- Book Studies
  - Whole Staff (e.g., Intentional Teacher, Social Competence)
  - Small Group Choice (e.g., DLL, Gender, Sensory Int.)
  - BEST EVER: The Art of Possibility (Zander & Zander)
- Site Visits
  - Neighboring Centers
  - Campus & Community Venues
  - BEST EVER: Community Playthings
- Project Teams
  - Conference Committee, Web Site, Playground Design, etc.

Presentations & Publication

- Sharing Best Practice & Innovation
  - Within Center (for both Educators and Parents)
  - Local Community
  - National and even International
- Build Confidence via Gradually Increasing Risk
  - Center Newsletter / Web -> Campus & Community News
  - NCCCE Web News -> VOICE
  - NAEYC’s TYC
Mentoring
- Most Common is Undergraduate Pre-Service Teachers, but also consider New Teachers, Honors Students, High School Students, etc.
- International Practicum Experiences Challenge Foundational Assumptions
  - Hosting Students
  - Hosting Educators & Professors
  - Being Hosted Abroad & Presenting Internationally

Collaborative Research
- Undergraduate Research (e.g., theses or honors projects)
- Action Research with Colleagues, etc.
- Faculty / Grad Student Research
  - Building Friendship Foundations (BFF)
  - Design Research
  - Laboratory Research

Professional Consultation
- “White Light” Technology Design, Pilot Testing, and Curriculum Design for Dissemination
- “Message from Me” Technology Design, Pilot Testing, Curriculum Design, Professional Development, and Iterative Revision
- “Something Worth Trying” Consultative Review and Parent Focus Group Recruiting

Community Leadership
- University Outreach Liaison
- Local and National Education Boards (e.g., PAEYC, IALS, NCCCC)
- Publication & Web Site Editorial Boards
- Early Childhood Advocacy

Emerging Principles
- Intriguing & Relevant Challenge in Secure Context
- Hands-on / Minds-on with Optimal Risk
- Varied Options with Personalization Possibility
- “Worthy Intellectual Effort, centered on big ideas and important performance challenges”
- Extended Involvement & Collaboration, with Coaching
- Meaningful Exchange of Multiple Perspectives
- Self-Explanation, Self-Assessment, and Self-Adjustment based on Constructive Feedback

Mind in the Making (Galinsky)
- Lifelong Learning Emphasizes, “essential life skills” as a guide for educator professional development
  - Focus and Self-Control
  - Perspective-Taking
  - Communicating
  - Making Connections
  - Critical Thinking
  - Taking on Challenges
  - Self-Directed, Engaged Learning
- Note: See Nikki Baldwin & Mark Bittner’s Upcoming VOICE article re: Emergent/Negotiate Curriculum approach to PD is parallel to approach with children.
Professional Development for Educators

Professional Development is a high priority at the Children’s School because it supports our continuous quality improvement. We dedicate 1.5 weeks at the beginning of the school year, every Friday afternoon, and 1.5 weeks at the end of the year as paid professional development time. Our time is divided approximately equally between advancement seminars, staff and team planning and reflection meetings, and independent activities. Seminars may be facilitated by Dr. Carver or another staff member, other CMU professionals, or outside speakers, depending on the topics chosen. In all cases, we consistently focus on applying what we learn to enhance our program. Staff and team meeting time is essential for both maintaining and advancing our work because of the team-building, dialogue, and reflection emphasis. Finally, independent time is necessary to support the educators' curriculum development, conference planning, and outreach efforts. The school pays for all staff memberships to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and everyone stays current by reading the bimonthly journal, Young Children.

The Director is responsible for organizing meaningful professional development related to the school’s improvement goals and to the staff members’ identified interests and needs. Staff members are involved both in goal setting and topic choice during the formal May program evaluation process, as well as informally throughout the year as needs change and opportunities arise. In addition, each year includes emergency procedure review, pediatric first aid / CPR training, and fire safety training. See CMU’s new propane fire simulator in the photo to the right; the propane flame and heat are very REAL!

Our professional development topics for this year are:
1) strengthening the intentionality of our teaching,
2) broadening our emphasis on early childhood mathematics,
3) using sign language to support young children’s learning,
4) learning principles of building & architecture – in preparation for our whole school Building unit, and
5) developing strategies for effective photography – both of and with children.

We enjoyed sharing our emphasis on all five domains of mathematics when we hosted the Staff / Parent Discussion last Friday. If you missed the event, feel free to request a handout so you can read about our efforts and ways you can support them. We launched our staff exploration of Buildings by touring Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater together before school began. Last Friday, we celebrated a successful first full week of programming by going together to the Miller Gallery exhibit entitled, “Whatever It Takes: Steelers Fan Collections, Rituals, and Obsessions.” Yes, the exhibit theme resonates well with our staff’s work ethic and passion for providing quality programming for young children, but sometimes it’s really just for fun!
Educators Return to School

Professional Development Days are essential for educator team-building, curriculum planning, and coordination of classroom plans with the advancement projects and research being led by the Administrative Team. Here’s a brief glimpse into how the Children’s School educators spent the day prior to the children’s return to school for 2012.

• Classroom Team Planning and Room Arrangement for the January Thematic Units

• Whole Staff Meeting and Surprise Luncheon Baby Shower for Mrs. Armbruster
  [The meeting involved discussion of the Building Foundations for Friendship (BFF) Longitudinal Research Project starting in January and the upcoming Educator Visit and Practicum Experience that are part of our developing partnership with Duksung Women’s University Early Childhood Education Department and Kindergarten.]

• Team Unit Overview Planning for the remaining spring semester units (Space and Rainforests in the Preschool and Egypt, Games, and Chicks in the Kindergarten) [We will work together on the next two Friday afternoons to plan the Whole School Unit on Healthy Mind & Body.] Note that while the teaching teams were busy with curriculum planning, the administrative team worked on other projects, such as Message from Me, the research timeline, and finishing this newsletter.
Perhaps you wondered …

why we closed school last Friday, especially so early in the year. The short answer is that on Friday and Saturday, our staff attended the bi-annual conference of the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC), which was co-sponsored by the Allegheny County Family Support Centers and held at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center downtown.

The more complete answer begins with the fact that professional development is a high priority at the Children’s School because it supports our continuous quality improvement. For our high quality staff, much of our professional growth comes from preparing professional development experiences for other educators, as well as from mentoring practicing and pre-service educators on their career paths in early childhood. In terms of the PAEYC organization and its conference, our staff goes well beyond belonging and attending, which serves a strong model for our mentees.

Beyond the 20+ memberships the Children’s School purchases (approximately $2,000 annually), the PAEYC organization benefits from Maggie Rosenblum serving on the governing board and from our recruitment of Lindsay McGregor, the first student board member.

For September’s conference, the school paid the registration fees for a total of 25 attendees (approximately $3,500) so that all of our staff, substitutes, and students could participate together. In addition, Mrs. Rosenblum worked long days staffing registration and helping with the new attendance scanning system, and six of our teachers presented workshops on the importance of PLAY that were both well attended and positively reviewed by participants. While attending, we encountered Children’s School parents Rachel Perovich (Lexi, PM 4’s) and Shannon Wanless (Charlie, PM 3’s) sharing their gifts with the attendees as well.

- Calming Play for Healthy Minds
  (Jean Bird and Brynn Flynn)
- Creative and Constructive Play with Light
  (Krissy Opferman and Charline Tomer)
- Using Games to Enrich PreSc & K Programs
  (Donna Perovich and Jillian Mangan)

Much of our remaining professional development time this fall will be dedicated to three book-study groups investigating individual differences in dual language learning, sensory integration, and gender. The specific books the groups are reading are listed below.

- Basics of Supporting Dual Language Learners (by Karen N. Nemeth, NAEYC 2012)
- The Out-of-Sync Child: Recognizing and Coping with Sensory Processing Disorder
  (by Carol Stock Kranowitz, Perigee 2005)
- Cinderella Ate My Daughter (by Peggy Orenstein, Harper 2011)
Professional Development Outreach

Professional Development is a high priority at the Children's School because it supports our continuous quality improvement. For our high quality staff, much of our growth comes from preparing professional development experiences for other educators, as well as from collaborating with diverse partners on projects that will impact early childhood education. Here's a sampling of our recent experiences.

• On August 18th and 19th, we hosted nearly 50 educators for our annual Early Childhood Enhancement Workshops.
  - Meaningful Math: Numbers, Shapes, Patterns, Measurements & Data (Dr. Carver & Ms. Hancock)
  - Building: Beyond the Basics for Young Children (Mrs. Bird)
  - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Introducing Young Children to Environmental Responsibility (Mrs. Bird & Mrs. Rosenblum)

• White Light Exploration is a collaboration with artist Amanda Long that involves a movement experience with three light projectors to foster learning about traveling light, shadows, and mixing light colors. After all our educators piloted the experience with their children, Mrs. Flynn, Mrs. Opferman, and Mrs. Rosenblum developed a curriculum to accompany the White Light Unit when it travels to other early childhood programs. The Children's Museum will be running the loan program, but we also have a unit for our continued use.

• Message from Me is a collaboration with the CREATE Lab & PAEYC, with funding from PNC’s Grow Up Great initiative. The goal is to develop technology to enhance family communication via child sending digital images with audio messages to adult cell phones or email. These pictures show the initial prototype that we tested in 2010 and the improved model that we will begin pilot testing in October. Our educators will then design the curriculum to familiarize other teachers with the technology and facilitate their classroom implementation. Please be sure to return the permission form if you want to participate!

• Duksung Women’s University Partnership - After hosting 10 early childhood students from Duksung in January 2011, three representatives from the Children’s School have been invited to give seminars and demonstration lessons in Seoul, South Korea. In late October, Sharon Carver, Jean Bird, and Donna Perovich will be interacting with Duksung lab school’s children, parents, and educators, the Early Childhood faculty & students, and the members of the local laboratory school association.
Children’s School Co-Hosts NALS Conference

Thanks to all the educators, researchers, parents, and children who contributed to the positive and productive professional development experience at the 2011 Annual Conference of the International Association of Laboratory and University Affiliated Schools! We were honored by the presence and encouragement of H&SS Dean John Lehoczky, Psychology Department Chair Mike Scheier, and Founding Director, Dr. Ann Baldwin Taylor. We were able to share our school’s approach to early childhood education through offering tours, sharing a poster and presentations, and informally dialoguing with colleagues from around the globe. During the 3-day conference, we hosted 302 educators from 15 states, Canada, Indonesia, and Japan. We had access to 63 presentations from educators at 21 different laboratory schools, some of which involved community partners. We earned accolades for our organization and hospitality, with much of the credit going to Ms. Hancock, Dr. Carver, and committee members at our co-host schools, The Falk School at the University of Pittsburgh and the Campus School of Carlow University.

NALS Auction News!

• Congratulations to our Camp Raffle Winners – Elizabeth Gaul, Neve Goldberg, Madeleine Park, and Harrison Salvi!! They have won a free week of the Children’s School Summer Camp!
• The NALS Auction was a huge success! Between the Falk School, the Children’s School, and the Conference Attendees, we had over 65 items donated! The Auction raised a total of $4,668 for the NALS Endowment Fund, The Falk School, and the Children’s School. The amount donated back to the Children’s School will be $1,313.50. • Thanks to the fantastic Silent Auction Committee and all of the donors for your efforts and ingenuity!
Family Collages

Estelle Solomon

Family Collage Activity Plan

Why do this activity? To let children, families, and teachers learn more about each other and contribute to the classroom in a meaningful and visually appealing way. Sharing the collages early in the year helps children get to know each other by sight and by name.

What can children learn? Families have similarities and differences. For example, families might use different names for family members (mama, mommy, dad, papa, and so on). Their classmates have a variety of unique backgrounds, interests, and hobbies. Each child is part of a family, and each child and family are part of the larger preschool community.

Vocabulary words: collage, hobby, quilt

Materials:

- Colored 9” x 12” pieces of construction paper
- Markers (red and black or two other bright, contrasting colors)
- Glue
- Decorative items such as adhesive stars, stickers, or dots
- Photographs of family members, pets, homes, and meaningful items (provided by families)
- Laminating supplies (optional)

Prepare for the activity

1. Write each child’s name on a strip of paper. Write the first letter of the child’s name as a capital letter in red and the rest of the name in black lowercase letters.
2. Glue the name in the center of the long side of a piece of construction paper.
3. Write a handout describing the project. Invite families to work with their child to create a family collage together. Provide a due date, and explain that the family collages will be used to create a classroom quilt. Send home the handout ahead of time, or share it at the orientation.
4. Display a sample collage in the classroom where families will see it.
5. Thank children and families as they bring in their collages; remind others of the deadline, as needed.
6. Laminate the family collages (optional).
7. Designate an area of the room for displaying the collages together.

At the orientation for families of children in the 4-year-old class at the Children’s School, Carnegie Mellon University, we invite the families to make a photo collage at home. We provide the paper and a handout with instructions. Then, families work with their child to produce a collage with photos and sometimes captions that serve as a way to introduce the child and family to the class. We laminate and display the collages in groups that resemble quilts.

The family collages remain hanging throughout the year. Children enjoy talking about them with each other and looking at them when they want to feel a connection to their life outside the classroom.

You can adapt this sample activity plan and let the children in your classroom bring their families to preschool with them.
A picture is worth a thousand words!
Even the most secure preschool children have moments during the day when they miss their families. The photographs in the family collages offer children the comfort of viewing their loved ones during the day, particularly when they miss them. There are many other benefits.

- Creating family collages promotes children’s self-esteem and reinforces their early memories as they recall past events.
- Sharing the collage with classmates is an opportunity for children to use language skills and learn how to ask and answer questions.
- Discussing similarities and differences among families introduces children to a variety of backgrounds, interests, and hobbies, promoting respect for diversity.
- Talking about the collages helps children learn descriptive words for colors, shapes, and sizes.
- Counting family members in each photo, the number of pets in all the collages, or anything else of interest reinforces math skills.

If you want to try the Family Collage activity with the children in your classroom, review the sample plan, then ask yourself:

- Will we provide all of the materials families need, make the activity part of a family meeting, or make other changes to fit our program?
- What learning standards can this activity address?
- Should I adapt the plan in any other ways to make it a success for the children and families in our program?

Download a blank planning form from tyc.naeyc.org.

Lead small groups of 3 to 4 children
1. Have children take turns presenting their family collage in a small group activity.
2. Encourage children to ask and answer questions about the people, activities, and things in the photos.
3. Use discussion questions and prompts as needed:
   - Where are you in the photo?
   - Tell us about who is with you.
   - How did you choose the photos to put on your collage?
   - That’s a big kitty. Tell us about him or her.

Respond to individuals
1. Show an interest in each child’s family.
2. Support each child in presenting the collage by scaffolding with hints, information, questions, and suggestions for ways to describe each photo, as necessary.
3. Model respectful ways to respond to each child’s culture. Answer questions that arise openly and honestly.

Follow up after the activity
1. Display collages close together, like patches in a quilt, on the wall or bulletin board at children’s eye level.
2. Allow plenty of time for conversation as children view the collages and discuss the family photos again and again.
3. Place books and puzzles about families in the library area.
4. Sing songs and do finger plays about families during circle time.

Involve families
This activity is all about families. Parents and other family members take part in creating the photo collage. Families also learn about the classroom community by viewing other families’ collages when they visit the classroom.

Download a blank planning form from tyc.naeyc.org.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR
Worms to Beans

Our preschool program does a yearlong class project that we call Worms to Beans. In the fall and winter, the children raise worms in the classroom and use the worms to compost food scraps. In the spring, the children use the worm castings (manure) to fertilize the soil in our garden. The children plant the seeds, transplant the seedlings in the garden, then watch them grow until the vegetables are ready to pick and eat.

Children respond enthusiastically to caring for the worms and plants, and they enjoy tasting food they grew themselves. Many families are inspired by the project and begin composting, gardening, and establishing their own worm farms.

Teachers can continue the worm farm and garden from year to year. Worms will continue to reproduce as long as they are fed every few weeks and get new bedding every few months.

Worm to Beans Activity Plan

Why do this activity? To help children gain respect for living things and their contributions to the earth.

What can children learn? Natural science processes of worm life cycles, recycling, composting, conservation, and plant growth, as well as nutrition concepts related to health, like eating plenty of vegetables.

Vocabulary words: Compost, recycling, conservation, castings, fertilizer, roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, seedlings, stretch and squeeze (worm movement terms), aerate, shovel, rake, hoe, primary and secondary leaves.

Materials:

Worm farms
Worm composting bin (17” x 13” x 11”)
Worms (Collect earthworms from the soil in your area or purchase 1 lb of red worms [approximately 1,000] by mail.)
Bucket (1 gallon)
Garden soil (6 cups)
Newspaper (1/2 gallon, shredded)
Water
Hand rake (tine cultivator)
Food processor
Fruit and vegetable food scraps (1–2 lbs per week)
Large plastic sheet or tablecloth
Plastic containers of any size to store castings

Vegetable garden
Potting soil
Egg cartons or small recycled food containers
Seeds (sugar snap pea and green bean or other vegetables appropriate for your climate)
Low fencing to enclose the garden
Topsoil
Tools (child-size rakes, shovels, hoes)

Prepare for the activity

1. Purchase or gather the materials listed above.
2. Write to families to explain the steps in the project, what children will be learning, and how families can be involved.
3. Introduce the project to the children. (We do this for half the class at a time.) Explain what you will be doing throughout the year—worm farming, composting, planting seeds, and growing a garden. Ask children what they know about worms and what questions they have. Record their responses on a concept web and post it in the classroom.

4. Add books about worms to the classroom library. Read them aloud to children in small and large groups. Leave the books on display so children can revisit them on their own.

**Lead small and large groups**

Children and teachers work together to carry out the steps below. Involve one or more children at a time, depending on the task and the children’s interest in participating.

**Worm farms**

1. Make the worm bedding. Shred the newspaper. Mix a half gallon of shredded newspaper with six cups of garden soil and enough water so the worm bedding is moist, but not dripping wet. It will look like solid, moist mud. Fill the bin three-quarters full with the bedding.

2. Add the worms. Place the worms on top of the bedding. Watch and wait for two days as the worms dig into the bedding.

3. Feed the worms. Have children save fruit and vegetable scraps from their snacks and lunches. Every two weeks, grind six cups of scraps to a pulp in a food processor or cut the scraps into fine pieces (the smaller the food pieces are, the easier it is for the worms to eat them). Bury the pulp in one corner of the bin, alternating corners each time.

4. Separate the castings. Once a month, spread a large sheet or plastic tablecloth on the floor, then dump out the worm bin contents. Store the castings in an airtight container so they do not get hard and dry. Castings will last for many months.

5. Repeat steps 1 through 4, each time putting the worms into new bedding. Continue the process throughout the year.

**Children’s books about worms**


Download a blank planning form from naeyc.org/tyc.
**Vegetable garden**
1. Prepare the garden beds. Three weeks before outdoor planting time, turn the soil, remove rocks and sticks, mix in a two- to three-inch layer of top soil, and put up the garden fence.
2. Grow seedlings. Fill egg trays or small recycled food containers with a mixture of ¾ potting soil and ¼ castings. Plant seeds as directed on packets. In a few days, the seeds will sprout and leaves appear. When the second set of leaves (secondary leaves, total of four on the plant) appear, it is time to transplant the seedlings in the garden bed.
3. Plant seedlings. THIS NEEDS A BRIEF TEXT.
4. Care for the plants. Every few weeks, add castings to the garden. Weed and water frequently.
5. Harvest the crop. When the vegetables are ripe, pick, rinse, eat, and enjoy! Talk about why fresh vegetables help us stay healthy.

**Respond to individual needs**
1. If some children are hesitant to touch worms, invite them to observe with magnifying glasses. Hold a worm in your hand so a child can see it without having to touch it. Be patient. Over time, most children get used to holding the worms.
2. Help children with disabilities participate in all aspects of the project. Provide one-on-one support, have them work with a partner, and offer hand-over-hand guidance as appropriate.
3. Make a list of key words for the projects in English and the children’s home languages. Place the list near the children’s books on worms and gardens or anywhere teachers and children can put these words to use.

**Follow up after the activity**
1. Have children document each step of the project. They can draw, take photographs, and write or dictate captions to create a time line or a book. Use the documentation to review the steps in the project and reinforce learning.

**Involve families**
1. Make a take-home worm bin. Interested children and families can borrow or keep the bin. We use an opaque plastic half-gallon container with holes in the lid or a clear container covered with black paper. Prepare bedding as described above and divide it into the smaller bins. Take some worms from the class worm farm to start each family worm farm.
2. Invite families to help water and weed the class garden. Suggest they start a garden of their own.
3. Provide project updates in a family newsletter or on a bulletin board.
Student Teacher Reflections

Maria Tedeschi, student teacher with Mrs. Tomer in the 3’s Program, writes, “I was not aware of the CMU Children’s School prior to receiving my placement for student teaching from the University of Pittsburgh; however my quick research convinced me that it would be a remarkable first experience for my professional development. From the beginning of my time here, I was immediately astounded by the abundant resources, outstanding staff, and remarkable research that takes place here. A laboratory school is an ideal environment for student teachers due to the original pedagogical styles that reflect the most current research. I have seen how much the children that attend the Children’s School benefit in this environment because they are truly receiving all of the resources and extensions needed for every child to reach the highest potential of development. This experience has inspired me to think in more sophisticated ways about children's growth, and I will undoubtedly take this with me as I continue with my professional development. Unfortunately, my placement at the Children’s School was only for one semester, however I will take with me the vision, creativity, and edification that has been generously offered to me from the CMU Children’s School.”

Allison Ross, student teacher in the 4’s Program, reflects, “My experience at the Children’s School is my first teaching opportunity, and it has been wonderful. The school atmosphere is nothing like I’ve ever experienced. The curriculum is fast paced, well planned, and encourages creativity and discovery. The school itself is beautiful and inspires learning in every way. My experience with my mentor teacher, Jean Bird, has exceeded my expectations. To have the opportunity to work with such a talented teacher has been an honor and I have learned so much. Working together with Mrs. Bird and the rest of the 4’s Team has been exciting and fun. I have loved the experience of working with more than one teacher. The children here have the unique opportunity of learning from multiple teachers on a daily basis. I myself have learned so much from working with the faculty and getting to practice different teaching strategies. I’ve enjoyed getting to know the students and staff. Everyone has been so kind and welcoming that it will be difficult to leave at the end of the semester. I can definitely say I have been spoiled with such a great school, teachers, and students to kick off my student teaching experience.”

Brittany Woler, the Kindergarten student teacher with Mrs. Perovich, notes, “Working as a student teacher in the Kindergarten classroom has been an extremely beneficial and memorable experience for me as a future educator. When I first heard that I was being placed in not only a private school, but also a laboratory school, I was eager to see what the next few months had in store. I discovered a close-knit group of educators who work extremely hard to provide their students with a fun, interactive, and unique learning experience. I also found twenty-three energetic and eager children. One of the most beneficial things was that whatever activity I could imagine I could always implement. I was given the freedom to develop my own ideas, and I was always able to find the resources I needed. I am sad to see that my time here is coming to an end, but I cannot wait to use what I have learned here in my other student teaching assignments, and eventually in my own classroom as well. Thank you so much for letting me become a part of your child’s educational experience this year!”
Undergraduate Spotlight

Esther de la Torre is an assistant in the Blue Room and a sophomore Biology and Global Studies major at Carnegie Mellon. Esther grew up in Los Angeles, California, and enjoys playing baseball and listening to music. In addition to volunteering at an elementary school, Esther taught robotics workshops for middle school students throughout her time in high school. She has traveled extensively throughout Central America, most recently to Nicaragua, where she studied the impact of art on community development (and practiced her Spanish). This semester she is working on furthering a transnational art collaboration between students in Pittsburgh and in Nicaragua.

Esther enjoys working at the Children’s School and learning better communication techniques from the teachers. Her favorite activity is reading to the friends at dismissal. She has had a great time getting to know the friends at the Children’s School. Esther is also taking Dr. Carver’s course, Principles of Child Development, so she will be conducting two observation projects at the Children’s School in preparation for writing papers contrasting preschool and kindergarten developmental levels.

Child Development Interns

• John Frens is a sophomore Computer Science major interning in the Kindergarten. He is campus EMT and has taught swim lessons to 4-12 year olds.
• Jill Goodwyn (pictured) is an AM 4’s intern. She is a junior Humanities and Arts major with interests in designing the art for children’s computer programs.
• Allison Gozion is a senior Art major also interning with the AM 4’s. She has volunteered as an Art Connection assistant at the Carnegie Museum and plans a career in art therapy.
• Ashley Jabar is a sophomore Psychology major with experience working in a day care program. She is interning with the AM 4’s.
• Jenny Patel is a Junior Psychology / Biology major interning with the Extended AM team. She lives in an extended family with 6 younger siblings and cousins.
• Hayley Rahl is working with the PM 3’s while a sophomore combining Psychology and Art majors in the Humanities and Arts program. She has worked as a nanny and camp counselor and has aspirations to become an art therapist.
• Shruti Valjee is a junior Biopsychology major with experience both babysitting and working in a school district preschool. She is interning in the AM 4’s and is heading for a career in pediatrics.
• Shayna Weiss-Perea is an AM 3’s intern this semester. She is a sophomore Psychology major who enjoys music, has experience working with adolescents who have autism, and is planning to be a special education teacher.
Undergraduate Spotlight: Getting to Know You

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.

Child Development Interns
• Alicia Low (AM 3’s) is a senior studying linguistics and psychology. She enjoys writing, reading, baking, painting, doing crafts, and traveling.
• Matt Mastricova (AM 4’s) is a DJ at the CMU campus radio station and writes for the New Yinzer, a Pittsburgh literary magazine. He is a junior psychology and creative writing major.
• Sara Mouhktar (PM 3’s) works as an RA and in the infant language learning lab. She is a senior majoring in psychology and English.
• Marisa Wiltsie (Kindergarten) enjoys sewing and cospla (costume play). She is a junior majoring in psychology and plans to become a counselor for children.

Student Employee of the Month
Caroline Landau is a senior art major from Reading, PA. She loves teaching and spending time with the children, especially in artistic activities that reveal their amazing imagination. She says working at the Children’s School is one of her favorite parts of college because of the incredible learning environment, the teachers, and - of course - the children! No two days are alike, and for that reason it is always exciting. Caroline plans to attend graduate school in education to pursue a career as a high school art teacher. Numerous teachers have made an impact on her life, and she believes that by entering the same field she can have a similar positive impression on her students. At CMU, she enjoys the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority because of the leadership roles, philanthropic activities, and opportunities to meet people on campus and in the larger community.

Senior Student Teachers from Pitt’s CASE Program
• Kristi Frisch, Katie Bouvy, and Carolyn Kroll 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. For their practicum experience this fall, they are teaching with mentors Charline Tomer, Krissy Opferman, and Donna Perovich respectively.
Undergraduate Spotlight: 
Farewell CMU Seniors!

Sadly, we have to say goodbye to five of our CMU student employees, many of whom have been with us for four years!

• Cze-Ja Tam has been with us since she was a freshman. She has assisted in all of our classrooms and has been a great help in the office as well. Cze-Ja is heading to Columbia University where she will study to be a pediatric nurse.

• Ben Howe came to work for us after interning for Dr. Carver’s Child Development class. He has assisted the Extended Morning teachers this past semester and is headed to Harvard Graduate School where he will earn a Master’s of Education in Human Development and Psychology.

• Lindsay McGregor will pursue an education degree at Duquesne University next year. She began working here as a freshman and served as a Teaching Assistant for Dr. Carver this past semester. Lindsay won the Carnegie Mellon University Student Employee of the Year Award for 2011/2012.

• Chuck McKain also came to us after interning for Dr. Carver’s class. He has primarily assisted in the Preschool 3’s and 4’s classrooms. Chuck will work after graduation as a Project Manager/Implementation Consultant at Epic Systems in Madison, Wisconsin.

• Alyssa Katz is graduating with a degree in civil engineering. After graduation, she will be living and working in New York City. Alyssa has been assisting the Three’s Team this year.

We have really enjoyed having these students as part of our Children’s School extended family and we look forward to hearing about their successes in the future!

We also bid farewell to Janay Bottoms, who came to us through the Pittsburgh Public Schools’ Start on Success (SOS) Program. Janay will be graduating from Allderdice High School this June. Janay was a member of the City League Championship girls’ basketball team, and she was named the City League’s Player of the Year for the past two years. Janay has been assisting in our afternoon 3’s program. Janay plans to attend college in the fall, and we know she will make a slam dunk with her future!
Partnering with the Start On Success Program

The Start On Success (SOS) Program is a transition program, in the Pittsburgh Public Schools, that provides a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences over three years of high school to prepare youth with learning disabilities for successful careers or post secondary education or training. Activities in the SOS Program include daily career development elective courses, an eight-week community mentorship program, a semester long service-learning project, completion of the District’s graduation project, and a one-year paid internship focused on career interests and job readiness skills. The Start On Success Program currently operates in 8 of the District’s high schools.

Robert Johnson started the Start On Success Program during his sophomore year at Pittsburgh Peabody High School. During his time in the program Robert has had multiple experiences to help prepare him for the next stage in his life. During his junior year Robert completed a service-learning project where he and his classmates helped clean up a community lot and plant sunflower seeds with GTECH. Also during his junior year, Robert completed a mentorship experience at Eastminster Childcare working in the two year old room. For his senior year, Robert began his internship experience at the Homewood YWCA’s childcare facilities and is now finishing his internship at CMU’s Children’s School. During this time Robert has learned many valuable skills that he hopes will help him after graduation in June. Some of the skills Robert has learned while working with the staff and students at the CMU Children’s School are how to interact appropriately with the students, how to lead students in different activities, what activities are appropriate for early childhood students, and classroom management skills. At this time, Robert is looking to pursue a career in childcare or early childhood education and hopes to start college in the fall.
친구 고마워 (Thank You, Friends)

Ten students from Duksung Women’s University (Seoul, South Korea) smiled for a photo as they saw Pittsburgh for the first time. After orientation, they met their host families at a tea hosted by Cathy Baek and began interacting with the Balog, Brown, Cranor, Fulmer, and Sekula children. The students had a wonderful time experiencing American family life, sharing traditions (including watching the Steelers WIN), tasting new foods, and even sledding.

During their time at the Children’s School, each student was paired with a cooperating teacher and was integrated into one of the teaching teams. They helped as teacher aides and also prepared their own lessons to share with the children. We heard Korean folk tales, learned some words and songs, and played some new games together. Watch for photos in the forthcoming classroom newsletters!

We also helped the students to get a broader sense of early childhood education in our region by arranging tours of the Cyert Center for Early Education, the University Child Development Center, the Carriage House Children’s Center, the Children’s Museum, the Science Center, and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. They learned about the high quality academic community by attending CMU’s Better Brain Panel, Dr. Carver’s Child Development Course, and a colloquium by Dr. David Uttal from Northwestern University. To broaden their experience even further, Michelle Figlar, the Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC) invited the students to her Applied Development Class and arranged a special seminar with Mardi Isler to discuss state and national level policies and funding for early childhood education.

To offer a little taste of home, Charles and Jehee Kim coordinated a group of parents to provide a Korean lunch for the students and staff. Several Korean masters students from the Entertainment Technology Center also provided a tour of their facility in Korean. Throughout the entire experience, Dr. Kyung Ok Lee supported the students’ learning and our mentoring by helping us to reflect on the amazing similarities between our approaches, as well as the sometimes-striking contrasts. Many thanks to everyone who helped make our first international practicum such a rich learning journey!
Professional Development in South Korea

From October 21st to 31st, three Children’s School educators were privileged to learn about culture and education in South Korea and to share our early childhood experience with children, parents, pre-service teachers and experienced educators there. We hope these reflections and photographs will give you a glimpse into this amazing professional development experience.

Throughout the years, many families of our Korean students have extended an invitation to "come and visit Korea"! I was so fortunate to actually do that in October. Not only was South Korea a beautiful country steeped in history and culture, but the people were warm and inviting. We could not have had a better experience. Our hosts saw to our every need, providing great accommodations, excellent food and interesting conversation. I enjoyed seeing our former practicum students and meeting new friends. The faculty, students, parents and children at Duksung Women’s University were amazing. The environment and energy of the school was very much like walking into the Children’s School. And, of course, children are children no matter where you are in the world. We shared many smiles and giggles! Choosing one highlight of the trip is difficult but spending time with a Children’s School alumni, Minjune, and the Kim family was one of the best. At the Children’s School, we really are a "family" that cannot be separated over time or distance!

Donna Perovich

December Dates

Thursday, December 1st – Extended Morning 3’s Open House 12-1pm
Friday Afternoon, December 2nd - Parent Teacher Conferences for 3’s Regular School Schedule in the Morning
Saturday, December 3rd – Waterfront Barnes & Noble Book Fair (children’s activities 10-1)
Thursday, December 15th – Last Day of the Semester for 3’s and Extended Day Programs
Friday, December 16th – Last Day of the Semester for 4’s and Kindergarten Programs
No School for Children – December 17th through January 2nd

Have a Wonderful Winter Break!!
Ten Days, Ten Thoughts: 
Reflections on My First Trip to South Korea

Submitted by Jean Bird

Day 1 plus some: The mixture of exhaustion and excitement that comes with travel settled in quickly as I flew forward in time and into another culture. Not knowing what to expect, I surprised myself by really enjoying the first three of many delicious Korean meals. Yes, mom, I tried everything at least once! The steady stream of wonderfully gracious hosts from Duksung Women’s University who transported, housed, fed, organized, and cared for me from this Day 1 were no surprise at all.

Day 2: From the quiet solitude of an ancient shrine and palace, to the history-filled walk by a city stream, to the crushing crowd of the marketplace, I experienced a brief, yet perfect, immersion into the enormous and beautiful city of Seoul. The day ended with an overnight stay in a luxury, traditional Korean Guest House. The heated floor made it an extra-special cozy night.

Day 3: The foreign became completely familiar when I stepped inside the Duksung Women’s University Lab School. The teachers were singing songs and challenging children with interesting games and activities. The children were building with blocks, eating snack, and playing outdoors. I know this place!

Day 4: A trip to the Korean Folk Village gave me an inside, historic view of traditional Korean life. I was especially interested in the working folk art shops housed in the old, refurbished and reconstructed buildings on the expansive grounds. The biggest blessing of the day was getting to spend it with Joy and Ms. Son, two Duksung graduate students who taught at the Children’s School last February. My day was full of “Joy” and “Sun”!

Day 5: I had some trepidation over this day’s visit to the DMZ, or De-Militarized Zone, the four mile wide “line” between North and South Korea. The bus reservations had already been made so my interest in history had to overcome the fret over politics and war. I ended up experiencing a strange fusion of sadness for a separated people and hopefulness for future reunification. I will be pondering on this day for a long time.
Ten Days, Ten Thoughts … continued …

Day 6: I wasn’t sure what I wanted to say in the lecture to the teacher education students and graduate students when I was the one experiencing so much learning on this adventure. It turned out that telling them all about a very special place called The Children’s School was a great choice. They responded with enthusiasm, and intelligent and interesting questions. I am still not positive that Tony (Dr. Byungho Lee) the Interpreter said exactly what I said. There were some times of laughter where I didn’t think I said much that was funny.

Day 7: Even though I truly appreciate the week full of amazing, first time experiences, in the classroom with the children is where I love to be. The universal language of music and the ever-present desire of young children to explore made teaching easy and gratifying. No interpretation needed!

Day 8: Connecting with teachers and administrators from many different Korean Laboratory Schools was a fitting end to a week of formal meetings and lectures. It is in these connections that the agenda of high quality and excellence in Early Childhood Education will be studied and advanced in both Korea and in the United States. Reconnecting with a former Children’s School student and his family rounded out the day beautifully.

Day 9: Shopping Day was made extremely productive and fun by way of gracious help from one of the professors at Duksung (and her nephew who came to carry the bags!!!). A final lovely and delicious Korean lunch, a scenic walk through the side streets of the city, and a needed stop in one of a zillion coffee shops was the perfect end to yet another great day.

Day 10: Time go home and time to say thank you to my family, my colleagues, my fellow travelers, and the people at Duksung. This opportunity has broadened my world-view and shaped me as a teacher. I look forward to the continuing collaboration!
Korea Connections

Submitted by Sharon Carver

The theme that emerged for me during our visit to Duksung Women’s University in Seoul was CONNECTIONS. I was deeply touched by reconnecting with one of my graduate students from my University of Rochester days; Dr. Myunghee Kang is now a professor of education at Duksung and she graciously hosted all of us in her home for 5 days. Building new connections with Dr. Eunsoo Shin (my counterpart at Duksung) and Mrs. Geum-Gu Lee (the Vice Director) was a joy and an inspiration for future collaboration (see below). The professional challenge of the trip for me was preparing meaningful presentations for audiences of lab school parents, pre-service teachers, and early childhood professionals from all over South Korea. Balancing the universal messages of professional engagement, particularly with other laboratory school colleagues, with the unique aspects of the Children’s School approach and then connecting the ideas to the Korean context was well received by all. The professional highlight was observing two of our amazing educators, Mrs. Bird and Mrs. Perovich, share their expertise, from introducing undergraduates to the inquiry process (with bubbles in the photos below) and then demonstrating the practice with children, to communicating with other professionals in a spirit of openness and cultural sensitivity to minimize the language barrier and respect the hierarchical system. I was honored to represent the Children’s School and Carnegie Mellon University as part of this delegation and I look forward to future connections between the Children’s School and Duksung educators, families, and children!

Upcoming Educator Visit & Practicum

In January, we will host a brief visit by Duksung’s Early Childhood Department Chair, lab school Director, and six teachers (see photo at right). These educators will observe at the Children’s School, the Cyert Center, the Falk School, and the Carlow Campus School, as well as dialogue with the administrators and cooperating teachers who will be working with Duksung’s practicum students several weeks later. The students will observe and assist in early childhood classrooms at either our school, Falk or Carlow, as well as attend a university class, participate in workshops specially planned for them, and visit some Pittsburgh cultural attractions geared for young children.

We are recruiting a few families who live close to the university to provide housing and some meals for the practicum students from Sunday, January 22nd through Friday, February 3rd, both to reduce the cost of their practicum experience and to provide an opportunity for them to experience family life in Pittsburgh. Proximity to CMU is essential so that the students can use public transport or rides from teachers to get to and from school. Please contact Dr. Carver at sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu if you are interested in this hosting opportunity. We invite all families to be involved in this international practicum and to share ideas for strengthening the experience for families and children.
Exploring Local & International Partnership

During early January, a delegation of eight educators from the Duksung Women’s University visited Pittsburgh to tour the Children’s School, the Falk School at Pitt, and the Campus School at Carlow. While they observed classrooms, interacted with educators, children and faculty, visited informal education contexts like Phipps Conservatory, and met with early childhood leaders at PAEYC, we discussed possibilities for future collaboration to enhance professional development and education.
International Partnership: The Courage to Grow

For two weeks at the end of January, we had the privilege of hosting four early childhood education students from Duksung Women’s University in Seoul, South Korea. Twelve of their fellow students are engaged in similar practicum experiences at either the Carlow University Campus School, the Falk School, or the University Child Development Center, and Professor Byungho (Tony) Lee is observing and reflecting with them about their experiences. In addition to touring Pittsburgh, visiting the participating centers, planning with our educators, and teaching in our classrooms, the students explored the Children’s Museum, visited the Fred Rogers Center (photos include Saint Vincent College President, Br. Norman W. Hipps), learned about our local professional organization - PAEYC, and attended some college classes.

Participating in all of these activities when far from home and working in their second language truly requires these young women to have the courage to grow! Our openness to reflecting on, and learning from, our interactions with these valuable partners also fosters our professional growth.
Research Spotlight

Dr. Erik Thiessen’s Developmental Research Methods students are preparing their final projects for the semester. Though the research procedures are still being finalized, the topics are listed below. 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 outside the Children’s School Office. What an interesting set of important topics in early childhood development!

**Effect of Music Emotion on Children’s Story Themes** – Exploring whether kindergartners exposed to sad background music will tell different types of stories about a neutral picture than those exposed to happy music. (The Picture Story Game)

**Effect of Music Tempo on Children’s Self-Control** – Determining whether energetic or calm music better enables 3 and 5-year-old children to delay gratification. (The Goldfish Game)

**Direct Instruction vs. Discovery Learning** – Testing whether kindergartners learn better puzzle solving skills from direct instruction or discovery learning. (The Puzzle Game)

**Effect of Experience on Sensitivity to Prototypic Faces** – Exploring whether 3 and 5-year-old children are differentially sensitive to prototypic faces of their own ethnicity. (The Face Game)

**Impact of Prosocial Priming on False-Belief Judgements** – Testing whether 3 and 5-year-old children are better attuned to the appearance-reality distinction after a prosocial task.

**Gender Effects on Executive Control Tasks** – Testing whether male or female 4-year-olds are better able to inhibit ineffective actions when guided by same or different gender experimenters.

The Fruit Basket Game

Vivek Pai, a senior in the Information Systems department is conducting his senior thesis with the guidance of Professor Raja Sooriamurthi. His goal is to determine whether children will learn more from computer games when the system monitors the user’s expression and adapts the game sequence to the expressed emotion than if it follows a traditional prescribed sequence of progressively harder tasks. Vivek programmed the computer game during our Healthy Mind & Body unit, so he used the cover story of fruit falling from the sky and the user catching it in baskets matching the color of the fruit. Initially, there are only two colors of fruit dropping in only a few locations, but gradually the number of colors, thus number of baskets, and the number of drop locations increases, and the pairing of colors with locations become random instead of predictable. For children in the control group, the game advances as the children’s accuracy improves and goes back to an easier level when the child struggles. In the affect-mediated experimental condition, the game advances while the child’s face displays positive affect and reverts to an easier level when emotions of worry or frustration are detected. In addition to testing the feasibility of accurately monitoring children’s expressions during computer game play, Vivek will compare the learning paths and final scores of children in the experimental and control conditions to see which yielded better performance.
Research Spotlight

The Building Foundations for Friendship (BFF) Game

Several school psychology researchers from Dr. Kara McGoey’s directed research group at Duquesne University are investigating the effectiveness of a preschool anti-bullying curriculum they have designed. Each of the Preschool 4’s classes will participate in eight weekly sessions of the BFF curriculum during which they will learn about friendship skills, identifying different types of peer interactions, and responding appropriately to others’ aggression. Prior to the start of these sessions, each child for whom parents have submitted a consent form will be observed in the classroom, teachers will complete a brief questionnaire about the behavior of the child, and the child will participate in the BFF Game. This game is designed to assess the child’s knowledge of key aspects of friendship, as well as their processes of problem solving, before exposure to the curriculum. Each child will also be observed in the classroom during the weeks that BFF sessions are conducted. After the eight sessions are conducted, the child will again be observed in the classroom, teachers will complete the same brief behavior questionnaire, and the child will participate in the same BFF Game to assess how much knowledge he or she has gained from the curriculum.

The BFF Game utilizes dynamic assessment techniques with progressively more specific prompts offering increasingly more explicit hints to probe deeper into the child’s knowledge base. All learners will progress through the same sequence of prompts during the five to ten minute assessment. For the purposes of the current study, prompts will cover the full range of the targeted knowledge and skills included in the curriculum itself. By comparing children’s pre- and post-lesson responses to prompts such as, “Tell me about friends” and “What do you do when a friend is not nice to you?” the researchers can assess how the BFF anti-bullying curriculum increases knowledge about friendship.

Research for Undergraduate Courses

Carnegie Mellon’s Psychology Department offers multiple courses to provide undergraduates with a variety of theory, research, and practice experiences.

Non-Participant Observation: Students from Dr. Carver’s Principles of Child Development class will do two observation projects during the spring semester to provide firsthand experience with the dramatic developmental progress that occurs during the early childhood period (i.e., rather than just reading about it in a book). For each assignment, they observe specific differences between preschoolers and kindergartners in motor skills, social interactions, etc., using a checklist to record observations and then discussing the similarities and differences in an essay.

Research Methods Class Studies: Students in Dr. Erik Thiessen’s Research Methods course will start with a lab to learn basic strategies for conducting ethical research with young children. Then they will work in groups to conduct a study of their own design, which will be approved both by their teacher and by Dr. Carver. The course is designed to teach undergraduates both the theoretical and practical skills necessary to conduct effective early childhood research.
Robotics Research Featured on Plum TV

The robot Keepon was featured on Plum TV's "Masters of Innovation" in an episode entitled "Robots" about Carnegie Mellon University's Robotics Institute. Keepon is a small yellow robot designed to study the underlying mechanisms of social communication by interacting with children. Keepon has four motors, a rubber skin, two cameras in its eyes, and a microphone in its nose. Its simple appearance and behavior are intended to help children, even those with developmental disorders such as autism, to understand its attentive and emotive actions. For several years, we have collaborated with Marek Michalowski (Robotics Department) as he works to improve Keepon’s synchrony with children’s motions so that the robot behaves as naturally as possible.

View the segment filmed at The Children’s School...

http://vimeo.com/18431799

The link to the full episode is…

www.plumtv.com/videos/masters-of-innovation-robots

Undergraduate Spotlight: Getting to Know You !!

Alexandra Tapak is currently a CMU sophomore doing undergraduate work-study at The Children’s School for her second semester. She loves interacting with the children because they always have the most interesting things to say, and every day is a new adventure with them. Alex observes so many things every day because the children are constantly growing and changing. She’s seen an amazing difference since she started in September and can’t wait to see what has happened by the time May rolls around.

Alex is majoring in Psychology and Biological Sciences; she plans to go to medical school to pursue a career as a neurologist. At Carnegie Mellon, Alex is on the tennis team and cannot wait for the season to start in a few weeks. She loves spending time with her teammates, who are all so talented in many ways. Alex is also the sports editor of The Tartan, which is the campus newspaper. In that role, she gets to meet other athletes and watch Carnegie Mellon’s various sports teams compete. This fall, Alex joined Kappa Kappa Gamma, which has really been a wonderful experience of meeting so many new people and getting involved in the Carnegie Mellon Community.
The “Hear Me” Project

In collaboration with the Carnegie Mellon University CREATE Lab and the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC), the Children’s School is participating in a regional project to capture and distribute youth voices from across Southwestern Pennsylvania. “Hear Me” involves collecting children’s digital audio stories on a web site so that they can “hear, see and read each other’s stories, while educators, parents and policymakers can listen to the poignant and playful insights of our children.” We have already begun talking with the children about creating their own stories and using Flip Cams to record and replay them. If you are willing to have your child’s stories shared via the “Hear Me” project, please sign the enclosed permission slip and return it to the Children’s School office as soon as possible. You can explore the stories that have already been created, edited, and posted at www.hear-me.net. Note that no full names or visual images of the children will be shared on this web site.

Innovation Time at Camp

Jeremy Boyle, an artist in residence in the CREATE Lab at CMU, will partner with our summer camp staff so that the children can explore electricity. During this pilot project, the children will run experiments and learn to make simple circuits, with a primary goal being to offer technology to the children as a creative and expressive medium. The facilitators will work to keep balance between exploration, guided learning, and expressive application. The children will be introduced to a wide range of electrical and electronic components and concepts. Initial lessons will involve exploring disassembled electronic and electrical equipment with observations and conversations about what we see, what things might do, how they might be used, etc. The process of disassembling will be a recurring theme over the course of the program, culminating in dissembling small electronic toys to identify and repurpose components that will by that time be familiar to the children.

Between each recurrence of disassembly, the facilitators will introduce concepts and components, beginning with the most basic components of simple circuits, including the wire leads, batteries, knife switches, lamps and motors. Children will have the opportunity to explore and learn the fundamentals of circuits and build their own, working in small groups of 2-3 students. Children will learn, explore and test many fundamentals, such as conductivity. For example, the children will take a known circuit that they have made and use it as a device to test for and sort materials by conductivity. This activity will lead to explorations and discussions of various types of switches. The facilitators will continue to introduce new components and concepts, such as polarity with LED’s and battery capacity as circuits are built in series. Along the way, children will frequently sketch the circuits they are making as a method to demonstrate and communicate their growing knowledge.

Later in the program, the children will explore sound generation circuits. They will apply their knowledge of components to find ways to control and vary sounds (with switches, potentiometers and other sensors), effectively inventing their own electronic instruments. As they work with facilitators to develop a language for describing the electronic and electrical components and principles, they will do the same with sound. They will explore composition and the organization of sound, balancing their learning of science with expression through sound.
Research Spotlight

**The Chinese Word Game**

This experiment involves children playing an iPad learning game (uTalk) with Chinese words and pictures of simple colors and body parts, to test how easily children can learn new second language words in a game context. Professor Erik Thiessen and his research team hypothesize that although the task will be harder for children than adults, the children will show learning of new Chinese words. Also, they hypothesize that older children will learn more due to increases in memory and attentional capacity. Finally, they hypothesize that the greater simplicity of the color labels (compared to more complex pictures for body parts) will lead to better learning in this limited training context. There is little exploration of how effective training techniques designed for adult language learners are when they are used with children. However, the fact that children are more successful language learners in general means that providing useful and age-appropriate language learning experiences before puberty is an important goal. Therefore, we aim to modify existing training approaches for younger learners. Ideally, instructed practice like this game would be only one component of a richer, more interactive second language learning program.

**Perceptual Similarity and Young Children's Understanding of Categories**

In this series of studies, Dr. Anna Fisher (mother of Sasha, K), graduate student Karrie Godwin, and their research team are investigating the role of conceptual and perceptual information in category-based reasoning and induction in early childhood. In the Animal Name Game, children are given a category and asked to generate as many items as they can that belong to that particular category. For example, children may be given the category ‘Pets’ and asked to name as many pets as they can think of (e.g., dog, cat, fish, etc.). In order to better understand how children make category decisions when different sources of perceptual and conceptual information are in conflict, children will play one of three different games. In the Similarity Game, children are told that objects that look similar go together. For example, children might see a whole lemon, a lemon wedge, and a tennis ball. Children would then be asked to identify which objects go together based on physical similarity (e.g., shape, color, size). In the Matching Game, children are told that objects that are the same kind of thing go together (in this case, the whole lemon and the lemon wedge). In the Reasoning Game, children learn that one of the objects has a particular novel property, and then must decide whether this property can be generalized to the other two objects.

**User Testing of Technology Innovations**

The Children’s School is a partner in several design projects, so our children participate in user testing of prototypes. The ENGAGE team is designing computer games to teach physical science concepts, together with assessments to document children’s learning. Also, the Message from Me team is currently prototyping an iPad version of the family communication tool that we already have in our classrooms.
A Spark Grant for “White Light”

“Spark unleashes the innovative potential of Southwestern Pennsylvania to transform our region into one of the best places on earth to be a kid. Spark supports projects that connect technology to the real life experiences of children. By catalyzing projects that engage children ages birth to eight in the creative use of technology and media, spark challenges individuals, organizations, and communities to generate inventive solutions to issues and opportunities facing today’s young child.” [http://www.sproutfund.org/spark/](http://www.sproutfund.org/spark/)

Maggie Rosenblum and Brynn Flynn collaborated on a successful proposal to the Sprout Fund’s Spark Program with science teacher and artist Amanda Long, who has created “White Light” - a kinetic video sculpture composed of red, green and blue abstract animations. Amanda pilot tested White Light in our school context last March. Children can interactively experiment with multicolored shadows by moving their bodies in ways that interrupt the projected light. In the process, they may learn how additive light mixing works.

The goal of this funded project is to involve Amanda directly with Children’s School teachers and children during the upcoming Light and Color units (December in the kindergarten and March in the preschool) to create and pilot inquiry-based lesson plans designed to utilize White Light experiences to strengthen children’s development in all domains. The $15,000 grant will pay for the artist’s and teachers’ time on the project, as well as the technology for creating a portable kit so that the video sculpture can be easily transported to other early childhood centers where the lesson plans can be used to enhance their curriculum. We also plan to partner with the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh’s Outreach Program so that their school audiences can learn from White Light exploration. To get a better idea of Amanda’s artwork involving light and color, explore her portfolio online at [www.amandalong.org](http://www.amandalong.org).

**December Dates**

Thursday, December 2nd  from 12:00 to 1:00pm Extended AM Open House for 3’s Families  
Saturday, December 4th  – Waterfront Barnes & Noble Book Fair (children’s activities 10-12)  
Monday, December 6th through Thursday, December 9th  – Easter Seals Screening  
Thursday, December 16th  – Last Day of the Semester for 3’s and Extended Day Programs  
Friday, December 17th  – Last Day of the Semester for 4’s and Kindergarten Programs  
No School for Children – December 18th through January 3rd

*Have a Wonderful Winter Break!!*
Library Cabinet Painting Committee

Our library cabinet painting committee has been doing a wonderful job painting the grey, metal book cabinets located in our hallway. Katie Salvi (Harrison, K), has created a design to mimic library bookshelves (inspired by an idea of Elinor Nathanson, Benjamin, PM 4’s), and she has been nobly assisted by Ann Kelton (Noah, PM 4’s), Bob Slammon (Liam, AM 4’s), Jennifer Huffman (Aaron, PM 4’s), Aimee Chaudry (Kabir, K), Sonia Mino (Peter, K), and our own Mrs. Brynn Flynn. At the Family Festival, each family will be able to paint a family “book” on parachute cloth to be added to the decor of the newly renovated cabinets.

Family Social Organization (FSO)

This month 16 families joined the FSO at the Gemini Theater. The group saw Snow White and had a tour by the actors involved in the production.

Watch for these upcoming FSO events:
1. Parents' Night Out at Brgr in East Liberty, in late March / early April
2. International Children's Festival in Schenley Plaza, May 16th-20th

Please contact Aparna Brown if you have any suggestions or questions.

Message from Me (MFM) Update

Thank you for all of the feedback on the Message From Me project! Our pilot testing plus your input has helped the CREATE Lab to fine-tune the message sending kiosk and the website. In January, the Children’s School hosted an information session for educators from 7 early childhood centers that will be receiving MFM kiosks as part of a grant from PNC’S Grow Up Great. As part of this grant, the Children's School educators have been developing curriculum materials for these centers to use as they embark on their journey with Message From Me. In early March, we will be hosting professional development sessions for trainers from the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC) and for educators from these and several other participating centers.

It is not too late to register to receive messages from your child! Log on to www.messagefromme.org to create your own user account!

Fundraising Update

In the December 2011 newsletter, our fundraising needs were described in an article entitled, “Perhaps You Wondered...” As illustrated in that edition, most of our fundraising efforts are aimed at covering the tuition waivers that we offer to families who can demonstrate financial need. To that end, we have raised $23,635.16 so far during the 2011-12 school year! We have raised $4,390 from personal donations, $18,000 from Educational Improvement Tax Credit donations ($5,000 from Duquesne Light, $5,000 from UPMC Health Plan, and $8,000 from Highmark Casualty Insurance Company), and $1,245.16 from School Fundraising Efforts ($529.47 from the Barnes & Noble Book Fair, $442.68 from GoodSearch, and $273.01 from our Ten Thousand Villages Shopping Night).
Already in Step

Good friends Jack Morowitz and Emma Toma look forward to following in the footsteps of their siblings, Anna and Lily, in 2013, when they will join the Children's School 3s program! Until then, they will continue to walk the halls hand in hand at greeting time.

Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC)

This month, we received another $5,000 from the UPMC Health Network, which brings our total EITC funds for this year to $23,000! This EITC total is our highest since being accepted into the program in 2008. If you would like to learn more about EITC or know a business that could support our efforts, please visit http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/funding-and-program-finder/educational-improvement-tax-credit-program-eitc. Together we can make our high quality program accessible to even more children who are eager to learn but whose families cannot afford the full tuition!

Message from Me (MFM): The Bigger Picture

On March 7, the lead educators from centers chosen to expand our pilot testing received training in how to use the Message from Me (MFM) kiosks. Educators from DePaul School for Hearing and Speech, Doris Keith-Clark Family Child Care, Hug Me Tight, Latrobe Kinder-Schull, Righteous Beginnings Learning Center, and all three Angels’ Place Inc. centers participated in an evening workshop to learn how to incorporate MFM into their centers. At the end of the evening, each group left with their kiosk(s) and, in the past few weeks, the educators and their children have begun their journey with MFM. Thank you so much to all of you who participated in the initial pilot testing of this exciting new technology. Your input was crucial to the effective design and implementation of this endeavor!

We will continue to use our kiosks here at the school. You can still register for an MFM account at http://www.messagefromme.org/ so you can start receiving messages from your child. Also, if you have not yet uploaded a picture to your account, you can add one at the same web site so your child will see your image as well as your name when choosing recipients for messages.
Save the Date!!

Have dinner at Mad Mex Shadyside to benefit the Children’s School Scholarship Fund. On October 22, 2013, the Children’s School will host a dinner at Mad Mex Shadyside to benefit our Scholarship Fund. Mark your calendar and watch for more details coming soon!

Message from Me (MFM) Update

MFM is going APP!!! In January 2013, we began piloting an iPad app of MFM. In order to facilitate this pilot test, three iPads have been purchased via a generous donation from the Cyert Family Foundation as well as a holiday donation from a current Children’s School family. In addition to using the iPads for MFM, our teaching staff plans to use the iPads to enhance our theme exploration and curriculum. If you have not yet registered for a MFM account and would like to receive messages from your child, please visit www.messagefromme.org and click Register!

Children’s School Alum Plays Tiny Tim

In December of 2012, Children’s School Alum Simon Nigam (Kindergarten graduate, 2011) played Tiny Tim in the Civic Light Opera’s performance of A Christmas Carol at the Byham Theatre. Ten Children’s School educators attended one of Simon’s performances to show their support, and they got to greet him after the show outside the stage door.

Congratulations, Simon, on a fabulous performance, and best wishes on the rest of your 2nd grade year at the Falk School!
For some parents, the idea that praising a child for intelligence or an accomplishment can do more harm than good seems counterintuitive. "I feel like I'm being asked to abandon praise, and I worry that it could negatively impact his self-esteem," said a parent during a workshop in which the use of praise was among the topics.

But when it comes to promoting the value of effort and persistence, studies suggest it is better to lead a child to explore the process of figuring out a math problem, for example, than it is to praise the child as "smart" for coming up with a correct answer.

Research into such issues has led to a growing awareness of the importance of encouraging effort and persistence throughout childhood.

The effort and persistence seen in very young children are wonderful traits for learning and development. A one-year-old, for instance, learns to walk through a series of trips, tumbles and falls. For many children, however, the link between effort and ability tends to fade with age. A fifth grader struggling with math, for example, may give up trying, write-off math as something he or she will never grasp and abandon the notion that a little more effort may help.

The good news is that research is not only deepening the understanding of effort and persistence in children, but also suggesting ways that parents, teachers and other adults in children's lives can help them sustain the belief that trying to get better at something is worth it.

In one of its current projects, the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development (OCD) Division of Applied Research and Evaluation is collaborating with The Fred Rogers Company to explore how parents and teachers can help young children embrace effort and persistence in school and in life. The project, Something Worth Trying, focuses on children from age 3 years to the third grade.

Junlei Li, PhD, director of the Division of Applied Research and Evaluation, said he became puzzled by how some children had developed a mindset that they were incapable of learning certain subjects when he taught middle school science for low-income minority children in a previous research project.

You would see students who were struggling and no longer believed they could do something to make a difference in their own accomplishment in these subject areas.”

A Matter Of Mindset
Research suggests that with a "growth mindset," children and adults link effort and persistence with improvement in ability. But with a "fixed mindset," children tend to discount the value of effort in improving an ability they are struggling to develop. "The fixed mindset is: I'm only as good as I am today. If I'm lousy at math, I'm never going to be good at math. It's not my thing. Art, maybe, is my thing. But my mom is not good at math. Nobody in my family is good at math. So, I'm not going to be good at it," Dr. Li said.

"There is a shift from early childhood through elementary school age in many children from embracing a growth mindset to a large proportion of children embracing the fixed mindset, whether they are gifted or not gifted. Our argument, based on the research, is that a lot of why they develop that kind of thinking comes from their environment. It comes from how schools or parents or teachers interact with children, particularly in how we emphasize intelligence, natural ability, performance and competition. We overlook the painstaking but ultimately rewarding process of making small, incremental progress each and every day.”

Research provides examples of interventions that show promise in helping promote effort among children. One study, for example, focused on teaching minority, at-risk middle school students about how intelligence is a malleable trait and how effort begets ability. After two weekly sessions, their academic motivation improved, as did their year-end math grades.

Praise For Effort
Somewhat surprisingly, praise can contribute to weakening a child's embrace of effort. Studies find that while praising a child for effort is fine, praising a child for his or her intelligence can lead to a counterproductive mindset.

When, for example, a child demonstrates he or she can add 2 and 2 and arrive at 4, a parent might respond by saying something like, “You're so smart.” But researchers have found that such praise of intelligence over time can make a child anxious, afraid to make mistakes or take risks and leave them ill equipped to handle failure.
In Something Worth Trying, workshops with parents of preschool and kindergarten children suggest such praise is common. "I've noticed that praise is ubiquitous, especially 'good job,'" said one parent. "My daughter is praised constantly by me, by people in stores, everywhere. She seems to get praised just for going with the flow, or not causing a disturbance." Another said: "I noticed that when I'm busy or distracted, I fall back on 'good job' or 'that's nice.'"

Research suggests that process-focused feedback is a more constructive approach than simply praising a child for an accomplishment. Engaging a child in the process can reinforce the value of effort and persistence and help a child understand that mistakes are part of learning.

In the case of a child adding 2 and 2 to get 4, for example, a parent might have the child explain the way he or she figured out the answer, then ask whether the child is able to use the same method to add other numbers correctly.

Parents in the Something Worth Trying workshops seemed to understand that concept, said Alan Friedman, program manager with The Fred Rogers Company. "In talking to them, the challenge is how to practically integrate it into their day-to-day life. We heard from some parents that they felt a little guilty about not showering their kids with praise for accomplishments. It took a little conscious consideration to think about ways of praising the process kids were going through versus just the outcome."

"And it's tough," he said. "It isn't as if there are easily accessible lessons or strategies. That's the challenge we've taken on."

Practical Interventions

OCD is trying to develop and adapt interventions to promote effort and persistence in the classroom and home as part of Something Worth Trying.

Working with the Fred Rogers Company, researchers have begun to explore how parents interact with young children when it comes to achieving various tasks and to develop simple interventions to help parents encourage effort. This work is supported by a grant from the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund for Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education.

Separately, this team is applying to the Institute of Education Sciences – the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education – for a development grant to work with teachers to bring evidence-based methods of improving motivation, engagement and achievement into their classrooms and to create collaborative professional development to improve upon and sustain those practices.

Researchers have held a series of five workshops with parents as a first step toward developing interventions to help promote effort and persistence in children. The children of the workshop parents attend preschool and kindergarten at one of the local university laboratory preschools. The group spoke openly about topics such as the role of praise in their parenting, how their parenting encourages effort in their children and how learning is supported in their homes. Researchers will also conduct workshops with parents of lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

"We're well into the stage of talking with parents about how these things play out in their own families and lives, collecting those comments and working with them to develop something that would be a practical tool for them," Friedman said.

During the first year of Something Worth Trying, researchers identified several messages that both underscore the importance of effort and resonate with parents. One is that effort is valuable for its own sake, regardless of its outcomes. Another is that interest and willingness to participate in activities and learning experiences will serve children well throughout life.

With such messages in mind, a prototype parent-child interaction vehicle was designed called "The Trying Box," a concept similar to scrapbooking that allows children and parents to collect mementos symbolizing things the child tries or puts effort into.

It's all part of an effort to instill in children a lasting understanding of the value of effort. "If you end up with a more effortful child who is persistent, even when the child isn't doing well in something, it will benefit the child in the long run," said Dr. Li.