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!