Happy New Year, Everyone!

We hope you had a refreshing winter break and that you are energized for the next phase of our learning journey together. Though we are just beginning our January studies of Healthy Me in the Preschool and The Marketplace in the Kindergarten, it is time to prepare for the 2011/12 school year.

2011 / 2012 School Year Information

Preschool Enrollment and Re-Enrollment:
Acceptance packets for incoming 3’s and Re-Enrollment packets for the 4’s Program will be mailed on January 14th. At that time, you will be asked to submit a $500, non-refundable deposit to reserve your child’s space for 2011/12. After February 4, 2011, spaces will be offered to new applicants.

Extended Programs:
Spaces in our Extended Day Programs are limited to 36 children in the morning and 6 in the afternoon, with preference given to children already in the program. Potentially, there are 12 returning Extended Morning friends and 3 returning Extended Evening friends. In addition, 20 of our incoming 3’s applicants have indicated interest in the Extended Day Programs. These spaces fill very quickly, so return your enrollment forms promptly if you are interested in Extended Program spaces!

If you have a sibling to be enrolled in September 2011, or in the future, please make sure you have an application on file in the office.

Open House Events: Monday, January 10th at 12:45pm and Tuesday, January 11th at 9:00am
There are two Open House sessions for our preschool program. They involve presentations by Dr. Carver and observations in the classrooms. Though they are primarily designed for families new to our school, anyone is invited to attend.

Kindergarten Re-Enrollment: This year, we are coordinating our Re-Enrollment for kindergarten with the private school timeline, so packets will not be mailed until February 4th. Our kindergarten class is limited to 24 children, and we currently have 37 children in our Preschool 4’s classes). After the first 24 deposits are received, the remaining deposits will be put on a waiting list. After February 18, 2011, spaces will be offered to new applicants on our waiting list. Kindergarten Orientations and Observations are scheduled on an individual basis. Please call Ms. Drash at (412) 268-2199 to reserve a space in the preschool observation or to observe our Kindergarten class.

January Dates
January 10th – Prospective Parent Open House (PM)
January 11th – Prospective Parent Open House (AM)
January 18th – Vision Screening Make-Up Day
January 22nd – Re-enrollment Packets Mailed to Current 3’s Families / Acceptances to New 3’s
January 28th – Staff / Parent Discussion re: BUILDING 10:00-11:30 (child care provided)
February 4th – Re-enrollment Packets Mailed to Current 4’s Families
Family Committee News

The Library Committee has been doing a great job keeping up with re-shelving our books and organizing our collection. Thanks everyone! Many thanks to the families of Adam Friday, Jonas Cohen, Tristan Marinch, Isaac Lott and Madeleine Park for donating books to our library in November through the Usborne Online Book Fair or other means!

We have recently formed a new committee - the Library Cabinet Committee. Katie Salvi and Elinor Nathanson are working on plans to paint the library cabinet doors. We hope to have each family contribute to the design at the Family Festival on Thursday, March 3rd. Please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu if you are interested in helping with this project.

The School Photos Committee is still seeking parent volunteers to take candid photographs of the children during the school day. If you are interested in scheduling a time to help in this way, please contact Miss Drash at adrash@andrew.cmu.edu.

Barnes & Noble Book Fair a Success!

Our Barnes and Nobel Book Fair, which was held on December 4th at the Waterfront store, was a great success! In store sales totaled $3,885.81, NOOK sales $544.90, and on-line sales $574.30, for a total profit of $667.48 towards our purchase of the Imagination Playground. Mrs. Bird and her brother, Ken Thompson, led a rousing sing-a-long for over an hour, and Cara Sapida of WPXI - Channel 11 News read “The Hat” by Jan Brett. Special thanks to the parents who helped to staff the Children’s School table and distributed vouchers: Beth Lott, Susan Block, Jennifer Huffman, Leah Broudy, and Hyo Jin Kim.

Imagination Playground Fund Raising

As we anticipate the delivery of our Imagination Playground in mid-February, we are thrilled to have successfully raised the $8,320 necessary for the purchase. The B&N, Ten Thousand Villages, and Good Shop fundraisers contributed $1,190.47 all together. In addition, we received donations from individuals totaling $1,175.00. The Young Family Foundation and the Cyert Family Foundation also provided sizeable year-end gifts that will be split between our scholarship fund ($3,000) and the Imagination Playground ($2,500). Andrew Young is an alum who was very active in the Children’s School throughout his psychology program. Margaret S. Cyert is a long-time advocate of early childhood education with particular interest in making the highest quality programs available to all children. Finally, the administrative team plans to use $3,500 of the fees from the Duksung Women’s University practicum toward the purchase. We appreciate all of this support for our efforts to provide innovative materials for our children to explore as they learn about building!
Family Spotlight: Family Focus Group Helps Researchers Develop Family Resources

Last spring, five Children’s School parents participated in a focus group to help researchers from the Office of Child Development (including Milena Nigam, mother of kindergartner Simon) on a project entitled *Something Worth Trying: Supporting a Growth Mindset at Home*. What follows are excerpts from a summary report the researchers provided to the school, and there is a formal published report enclosed with this newsletter.

“One of the most valuable life lessons a child can learn is to keep trying in the face of challenges and setbacks. When children understand that their progress and learning depend on their effort, and not on their innate intelligence and ability alone, they try harder, they are less anxious about their performance, they learn more, they perform better in the long run, and they are prouder of themselves for the right reasons. Believing that effort and persistence relate to learning potential is considered having a ‘growth mindset.’”

“As identified during our parenting workshops last year, the Something Worth Trying project team believes the following messages embody a growth mindset and are important, applicable, and accessible in today’s parenting of preschoolers and kindergartners:

• Effort is valuable for its own sake, regardless of its outcomes.
• Interest and willingness to participate in activities, learning experiences, and the world around us are capacities that will serve children well throughout life. “Getting in the game” and enjoying the experience of play is much more important than winning.
• Try and try again. Take risks. Embrace both attempts and mistakes.
• Take time to notice and honor the details of your children’s experiences and attempts.”

“In addition, the following practical considerations were raised during our discussions with parents last year on how to effectively communicate the Something Worth Trying messages:

• Parents are busy
• The most effective learning experiences are interactive and are means to strengthen and/or build parent-child relationships.
• Storytelling trumps moralizing.”

“Based on the Something Worth Trying messages and the practical considerations from parents, we envisioned two resources for parents and children:

• *The Trying Box*—a three-dimensional answer to scrapbooking to place mementos that symbolize things that the child has really tried at, or put effort into.
• *The Trying Box* book—a picture book for parents to read with young children to accompany the Trying Box, and instruct children and parents in its use.”

January Web Artists

3’s Friends: Grace C.-B., Madeleine P. & Gabrielle W.
4’s Friends: Michael B., Andrew G., Julia G., Anna H., & William S.
Kindergarten Friends: Juliette G. & Annika V.
Family Social Organization (FSO) Play Date

We are planning some fun events to keep folks from going stir crazy during the long winter, including ice-skating in Schenley Park, a music making afternoon, and a pajama party. More information will be forthcoming! If you are interested in helping or have a great idea that you want to see organized, please contact Aparna Brown at aparnabrown@gmail.com.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Observance

This year, senior honors students from the Mortar Board Society have volunteered to plan an age appropriate reading and activity session about Dr. King at 1:30 at the Children’s School on Monday, January 17th. Our afternoon preschool classes and kindergartners will be attending. Our morning friends are welcome to attend if they are accompanied by a parent or caregiver.

Health Tip re: Nut-Free Baking Mixes

According to the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network, an estimated 1.8 million Americans are allergic to tree nuts. Because several of our students have been diagnosed with tree nut or peanut allergies, we have become a nut free facility. Tree nuts are often found as ingredients in unexpected places, such as pancakes, pie crusts, and Multi-Grain Cheerios. The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network (www.foodallergy.com) recommends cake, pancake, and brownie mixes sold by Cherrybrook Kitchen (www.cherrybrookkitchen.com). Vermont Nut Free (vtnutfree@aol.com) sells chocolates and baking chocolates that are safe for children with nut allergies. You might consider these sources of nut-free items for birthday parties and other gatherings.

Thanks for Donations to the Roselia Center

On behalf of the Roselia Center, the Carnegie Mellon Campus Police Association sent thanks for our donations of baby clothes and maternity wear. Heather, of the CMCPA, wrote, “Your amount of donations was incredible and you really helped us to make this year’s event a very special one. We delivered the donations yesterday and the staff was just overwhelmed and so appreciative.”

Educational Improvement Tax Credits (EITC)

The Children’s School participates in the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. Through the EITC, eligible Pennsylvania businesses can earn tax credits while providing financial assistance for children to attend the Children’s School. Applications for the 2011-2012 school year must be received by July 1, 2011, but all the funds are often allocated much before that. If you would like more information or can suggest prospective businesses, please contact the Educational Administrator Team (Mrs. Rosenblum & Miss Hancock) at ed-admin@andrew.cmu.edu. We have recently received EITC funds of $4,200 from Duquesne Light and a commitment of $10,000 from UPMC. Thanks to these businesses for supporting broad access to quality education for Pennsylvania’s children!
Stay Safe in Your Winter Wonderland!

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

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

Building Basics

The Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation works “throughout the Pittsburgh region to identify and save historically significant places; revitalize historic neighborhoods, towns, and urban areas; preserve historic farms and historic designed landscapes; and educate people about the Pittsburgh region’s rich architectural heritage.”

Visit the web site at www.phlf.org and click on Downtown Dragons for a tour of interesting downtown buildings that might be worth a family visit. The songs page has an adaptation of “Rock Around the Clock” with lyrics entitled **Walk Around the Block** by Marlan Thomas and P.S. 1. Use the verses to help you highlight relevant features of the buildings you visit.

**Chorus:**
We’re gonna walk around the block today.
We’re gonna walk, walk, walk in a curious way.
We’re gonna walk, gonna walk around the block today.

**Verse 1:** We’re gonna look at the windows. Look at the doors. Notice all the gargoyles, and even the floors.
**Verse 2:** What is it made of? What is it for? What is its age? Is it one to restore?
**Verse 3:** Who were the architects? What did they use? Were they serious or did they just amuse?
**Verse 4:** We’re gonna look at the colors. Look at the shapes. Notice decorations, as well as landscapes.
**Verse 5:** Won’t you come along with us, join with us too. Architecture might just be the thing for you.
A Winter Reminder

On days when snow or ice may affect driving conditions, please listen to the radio or the television. If the Children’s School should close due to the weather, we announce our school closing on both WTAE and KDKA. WTAE will also announce school closings on their web page: www.thepittsburghchannel.com/index.html.

Because Children’s School staff and families live in diverse areas in and around the city, we cannot factor travel conditions from every location into our decision about whether to delay or close school. Between 5:30 and 6:00 AM, we listen to the news, determine what other schools in the city are doing, and make our best judgment on whether to have a delay or close school that day. Depending on the road conditions, we may decide to choose one of three options:

1. **One Hour Delay**
   During a one-hour delay, we will greet the Kindergarten at 9:30 AM and the Morning Preschool Classes at 9:30 AM. Dismissal will be at the normal times and the Extended and Afternoon Programs will be on normal schedule.

2. **Two Hour Delay/No Morning Preschool**
   During a two-hour delay, we will greet the Kindergarten Class at 10:30 AM and dismiss at the normal time. The Morning Preschool and Extended Morning Programs will be canceled and the Afternoon Programs will be on normal schedules.

3. **School Closure**

Option #1 enables us to conduct the morning preschool classes, while giving our staff and families time for the road conditions to improve. In all cases when school is in session, we encourage parents to use their best judgment about whether the roads in your area are safe to bring your child to school.

Indoor Building Adventures

Make the most of your “Snow Day” opportunities by having ideas and supplies ready for indoor activities. Here are a few ways you can support the learning children will be doing during our upcoming Whole School Unit on **BUILDING**.

- **Make Blocks** – Save empty paperboard containers from cereal, oatmeal, etc., paper towel tubes, and other clean packaging to make your own blocks. They can be used as is or covered with wrapping paper, decorated with paint and stickers – whatever appeals to your child. Add masking tape so creations last longer!

- **Practice Aligning & Stacking** – Experiment with whatever blocks you have or use inexpensive materials that can be purchased in large quantities, such as disposable cups.

- **Play a Pattern Game** – Take turns creating a simple block structure and having your partner copy the design. Or, create a pattern (triangle, square, circle, triangle …) and challenge your partner to extend it.

- **Experiment with Measuring** – Use a ruler, a yardstick, or – even more exciting for a child – an age-appropriate tape measure to measure the height, width, and depth of the structures you build. Keep a clipboard handy to record measurements. For all of these activities, take a photo so structures can be compared or rebuilt on subsequent days.
Early Childhood Practicum Students

From January 15th through 30th, we will host early childhood practicum students from Duksung Women’s University (Seoul, South Korea) for an International Practicum Program. Dr. Kyung Ok Lee, a visiting scholar in CMU’s Entertainment Technology Institute will collaborate on the program with Dr. Carver and the Children’s School educators.

**Juniors:** Yu Jin Chang, Pil Sun Hwang, Ye Su Lee, Yei Eun Lee, Eun Sung Park, and Hae Soo Yoon

**Seniors:** Hae Jin Kang and Ji Young Lee

**Graduate Students:** Suh Yun Cho and Hae Jin Son

Thanks to the Balog, Brown, Cranor, Fulmer, and Sekula families for offering housing to these visiting students, as well as to the Charles Kim family for organizing a luncheon for the staff and students one Friday afternoon. There are still opportunities to help by preparing welcome baskets for the students, offering to provide lunch for them at the school one day, providing transportation to cultural attractions, etc. If you are interested in helping, please contact Dr. Carver at sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu to discuss options.

Several staff members are planning to take the students to the **Children’s Museum on Sunday, January 23rd from approximately 1:30 – 4:30 pm.** Please feel free to join us if that afternoon is free for your family so that you can meet and interact with the practicum students in a child friendly context. The students will also be attending our **Staff / Parent Discussion about the BUILDING Unit on Friday, January 28th from 10:00 – 11:30 am.** Child care will be provided for infants, toddlers, and 3 year olds.

We are excited about the opportunity to broaden our outreach by introducing these pre-service teachers to our school’s developmentally appropriate philosophy and programs. We also look forward to learning about the unique approaches used in Korean early childhood programs. We hope you will find a way to be involved in this international practicum, and we invite you to share any ideas you have for strengthening the experience for families and children.
Research Spotlight

Parenting & Children’s Behavior

Senior Ashley Herrick is working with social psychologist Dr. Brooke Feeney to study the effects of parent attachment style and parent socialization strategies on preschool and kindergarten children’s behaviors. It is well known that the relationship between a parent and a child affects how the child develops physically, mentally, and emotionally. However, less is known about the ways in which a parent’s own attachment style in their relationships affects how they interact with their children. Ashley’s research project involves investigating how parent’s own attachment style, the amount of stress they experience, and the harmony in their marriage affect the parenting strategies they use with their children. Then, she will investigate the relationship between these strategies and the observed behavior of the children in a variety of school situations.

For children whose parents volunteer to complete a set of confidential questionnaires that will not be seen by Children’s School staff members, Ashley will observe six categories of the children’s behavior: prosocial behavior, social interaction, exploration, emotion regulation, gender roles, and negative behavior. To test prosocial behavior, children will participate in a play-doh session with two other children and their sharing behaviors will be observed. To examine social interactions, the parent will give researchers the name of the child’s closest friend. The child will then be shown a variety of cards displaying various tasks they may complete with their friend, differing in levels of closeness. From these choices, the researchers will infer the depth to which the child has developed close relationships. Exploration will be measured through observing the tasks a child engages in during free time. Emotion regulation will be measured by observing children during transition periods throughout their day to observe how they separate from their attachment figure when brought to school, how they transition between tasks in the classroom, etc. Gender roles will be measured with the help of the parents, who will be provided with a list of general household chores and indicate which member of the household typically completes the task. Then, the children will be shown cards relevant to the make-up of their household and will be asked who generally completes certain tasks so that the consistency between the parents’ and children’s views of gender roles is evident. Lastly, negative behavior will be measured by the actions children portray while playing with plastic toys, such as police officers, generally aggressive animals, etc. In order to triangulate the data, teachers also will complete a behavior scale rating the frequency of different behaviors for each child, which can then be compared for consistency with the scores from the other measures.

The data from this project will allow the researchers to draw conclusions about the ways in which parents’ relationship styles affect their parenting strategies, as well as how they in turn affect their children’s behavior. Parent consent forms are included with this newsletter, and questionnaires will be sent to those families who return the consent forms for each parent in the household. During the spring undergraduate “Meeting of the Minds”, Ashley will share her summary data, and she will provide a report for the May Children’s School newsletter.
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, in order to have firsthand experience with the dramatic developmental progress that occurs during the early childhood period (i.e., rather than just reading about it in a textbook). 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. Dr. Anna Fisher (mom of Sasha in the AM 3’s) is teaching a new freshman seminar called How Children Learn to Learn. Her students will also learn observation skills by watching classes in a variety of contexts to better understand their approaches to learning.

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.

Undergraduate Spotlight: Getting to Know You!!

Sam French is an assistant in the Children School’s Kindergarten and is a freshman directing major at the Carnegie Mellon University School of Drama. In high school, in Saint Petersburg, Florida, Sam founded a children’s theater company dedicated to taking shows to local elementary schools and introducing children to theater. He also taught theater during the summers at local camps. After college, Sam is planning on continuing theater outreach with young students to help develop new audiences for theater and to help develop artistic passion in children.
Director’s Corner: Cultivating Communication

The Children’s School’s “developmental goals” for communication direct us to focus broadly on oral communication via listening & speaking as well as written communication via reading & writing – all in age appropriate ways, from the time children enter the school until they leave. By explaining our approaches to meeting these goals, I hope to show the purposes behind our practices so that families can be similarly intentional in supporting children’s increasingly effective communication.

Communication - facilitating comprehension and expression skills beginning with oral and progressing to written language.

Children’s ability to learn oral language without direct instruction is amazing. Simple encouragement to participate in the naturally occurring conversations that are part of family and school life typically promotes appropriate developmental progressions, even with multiple languages being learned simultaneously, especially if children have exposure to effective models. I’m sure you’ve noticed, however, that children are just as capable of imitating the negative tone of voice and socially inappropriate words that they overhear, and that they usually do so at just the wrong time. That’s where consistently purposeful use of appropriate vocabulary, polite phrasing, and positive tones of voice, together with specific reinforcement, help children to use language for effective participation in varied social contexts. As with social skills, Children’s School educators use the triad of modeling, explicit instruction, and coaching to help individual children progress. Developing skills for reading and writing surely benefits from the same approaches, but there are two key differences, both of which stem from the need to process many MORE bits of information, with lots of potentially confusing similarities (e.g., b vs. p vs. d vs. q or to vs. too vs. two) and exceptions (e.g., why do enough and stuff rhyme when cough and cuff do not?). Because of this heavy “cognitive load”, the learning process for most children takes an extended period of time and involves frequent, repeated errors. We cannot, therefore, expect the same rapid progress that is evident for oral language development. In order to support children’s motivation for tackling the written language challenges, we must be extremely careful to encourage children’s efforts without emphasizing their mistakes. For these reasons, we focus on children’s communication of meaning rather than on conventional spelling, consistent letter sizing and orientation, etc. Research has shown that the key initial steps involve abilities to hear the separate sounds that together make words and then identifying the letter-sound correspondence. That’s why you hear us doing lots of activities with alliteration and rhyme.

Within each theme, educators introduce new vocabulary and offer opportunities for children to utilize new terms when they converse about theme-related activities. We also utilize many visual representations of words, often together with relevant pictures, so that children begin to build site word vocabulary and can easily find conventional spellings if they are interested. Interestingly, practicing mathematics skills for patterns also helps children notice common features across words, such as bat, brat, hat, that, sat, splat, etc., or distinguish features for commonly confused words, such as where, wear, were, and whir. Families can promote both oral and written communication by encouraging children’s involvement in conversation, story reading, and writing for real purposes. Enclosed with this newsletter, you’ll find an article with more detailed developmental sequences and suggestions. Offer multiple options and follow your child’s interests along the way.