Happy New Year, Everyone!
We hope you had a restorative winter break and that your family is energized for learning in 2012. Though we are just beginning our January studies of Art & Artists in the Preschool and Arctic vs. Antarctica in the Kindergarten, it is time to prepare for the 2012/13 school year.

2012 / 2013 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 sent on January 17th. You will be asked to submit a $500, non-refundable deposit to reserve your child’s space for 2012/13. After February 17, 2012, spaces will be offered to new applicants.

Extended Programs:
Spaces in our Extended Day Programs are limited to 30 children in the morning and 6 in the afternoon, with preference for children already in the program. Potentially, there are 12 returning Extended Morning friends and 3 returning Extended Evening friends. In addition, 23 of our incoming 3’s applicants have indicated interest in Extended Day Programs. These spaces fill very quickly, so return your forms promptly if you are interested in Extended Program spaces!

Please make sure you have an application on file in the office for each of your infants and toddlers!

Open Houses: Wednesday, January 11th at 12:45pm and Thursday, January 12th 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: We coordinate our Re-Enrollment for kindergarten with the private school timeline, so packets will not be sent until February 3rd. Our kindergarten class is limited to 24 children, and we currently have 46 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 17, 2012, 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

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>January 4th</td>
<td>Developmental Screening Begins</td>
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<td>January 10th &amp; 11th</td>
<td>Speech &amp; Hearing Screening Days</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 11th</td>
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<td>January 12th</td>
<td>Prospective Parent Open House (AM)</td>
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<td>January 17th</td>
<td>Re-enrollment Packets Sent to Current 3’s Families / Acceptances to New 3’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 24th &amp; 25th</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 27th</td>
<td>Staff / Parent Discussion re: BUILDING 9:30-11:00 (child care provided)</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 3rd</td>
<td>Re-enrollment Packets Sent to Current 4’s Families</td>
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Family Committee News

Many thanks to members of the Library Committee who have been re-filing our books for us. The Library Cabinet Committee has started painting our shelving units and we hope to have them ready for the Family Festival in March. If you are interested in joining any of the Children’s School committees, please contact Maggie Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu.

Barnes & Noble Book Fair Results

The Barnes & Noble Book Fair was a great success. Dave Crawley read selections from his Cat and Dog poetry books, Cara Sapida read “The Cat in the Hat”, and Jean Bird and Ken Thompson led a rousing sing-along. The children enjoyed doing a science-themed scavenger hunt and making bookmarks. Many thanks to the volunteers who helped with the occasion, including –Jennifer Balog, Susan Block, Angela Disipio, Chris Grill, Jennifer Huffman, Keava Jones, Ann Kelton, Beth Lott, Elinor Nathanson, and Berry Wanless. We are awaiting final totals of our sales and profits.

Speech & Hearing / Vision Screenings

This January, Easter Seals will be conducting Speech and Hearing screenings on January 10th and 11th and the Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh will be screening for vision issues on January 24th and 25th. If you want your child to participate in either or both of these screenings, please return the enclosed permission slips. Please note that the Speech & Hearing Screening costs $20, but the Vision Screening is free. Please contact Maggie Rosenblum if you have any questions (rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu).

School Photographs

This year iSimon will be taking school photographs of the children on February 7th. Each family will have the opportunity to view photo proofs before ordering copies of the pictures. We will need parent volunteers to help the photographer with the children that day, so if you are interested in assisting us, please contact Maggie Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu.

January Web Artists

3’s Friends: Alice B., Dany D., Emmet B., Maggie F., and Naveen M.
4’s Friends: Abigail M., Gabrielle W., Jacob M., Kiana S., and Mack J.
Kindergarten Friends: Charlie G., Elias J., and Sebastian D.
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

This year, Carnegie Mellon University is sponsoring children’s activities at the University Center in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. from 1 pm until 3 pm on Monday, January 16th. Children’s artwork from Linden School will be displayed, a quilt maker will assist children in making quilt patches, a one hour movie suitable for school age children will be shown, and the senior honors students from the Mortar Board Society will be reading books and assisting the Children’s School staff to facilitate activities. Cake and juice will be served. Our afternoon preschool classes and kindergartners will be attending the event and any other children are welcome to come if accompanied by an adult. For more information on Martin Luther King, Jr. see the entry re: his 1964 Nobel Peace Prize on the web at http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-bio.html.

Book Drive for Children’s Hospital

In January, we are collecting used books on behalf of the Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh. The Hospital runs a program whereby patients and their families adopt donated used books. Books and periodicals for all ages are accepted, especially books and magazines for the parents of patients. Please bring your donations to the office during the month of January. Jessica Morowitz (mom of Anna, AM 4’s) will arrange for delivering the books to Children’s Hospital.

Family Social Organization (FSO)

Mark your calendars for the following 2012 upcoming events:
- Gymkhana Play Date on Sunday, January 22nd at 1:30pm
- Snow White at the Gemini Theatre, with a backstage tour, on Saturday, February 25th at 3pm

If you have any questions, or suggestions for future activities please contact Aparna Brown (mom of Delia, K) at aparnabrown@gmail.com. Aparna is also still collecting cloth tote bags for the Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, so feel free to bring any donations to the school office.

Box Tops for Education

The Box Tops for Education program has helped America’s schools earn over $400 million since 1996. You can help earn cash for the Children’s School by clipping Box Tops coupons from hundreds of participating products. Please see the enclosed list of products. Box Tops also offers easy ways to earn even more cash online at http://www.boxtops4education.com/Default.aspx.

We are searching for a Box Top Coordinator!

Coordinators are often the driving force in a “Box Tops for Education” program. They develop creative ways to let families and friends know about the program, how it works, and how much the school has earned. They work with educators to show everyone how valuable Box Tops are for the school. Coordinators collect, organize and mail all the Box Tops submitted by school supporters—and watch everybody smile when a big check comes in return! If you are interested in being the Box Tops Coordinator for the Children’s School, please contact Linda Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu.
Family Spotlight: Rooted in “Da Burgh”

Bob Slammon and Amy Williams (Liam, AM 4’s) moved to Pittsburgh almost seven years ago. Before “Da Burgh,” we lived in many different places: Chicago, Buffalo, Bennington, New York City, Boston. We love Pittsburgh, with its vibrant cultural institutions, first-rate schools, and just enough grit to keep things real. In many ways, it reminds us of our hometown of Buffalo, New York, so when we moved here, we immediately felt at home.

We both feel more “rooted” in Pittsburgh than we did in the other places we have lived. Perhaps this is a consequence of starting a family in Pittsburgh. But it may also have to do with the ease with which we have found a sense of community here. We live in a close-knit neighborhood, appropriately called Friendship, and we have met so many wonderful people since we moved here. As we’ve heard many other Children’s School parents say, Pittsburgh is a great place to raise a family. It has so many great resources for children, from its wonderful parks to its outstanding cultural institutions. One of those great resources is, of course, the Children’s School.

Liam started the Children’s School this fall in Ms. Mangan’s group. It has been a very positive experience for him. Liam came to the Children’s School with a rather mixed attitude about pre-school. We were relieved when, after his first week, he declared, “I love it!” And he has loved it ever since. It is great to see Liam thrive at his new school. Recently, he has started lobbying to be put in the extended morning program.

We love seeing Liam and his sister, Maeve, grow and develop into distinct personalities. From a very young age, Liam has loved music. He didn’t care so much for nursery rhymes or even his mom’s style of music but for jazz and blues. At age two and a half, he would say, “Thelonius Monk,” when people asked him who his favorite musician was. Now he listens to everything and loves to play instruments (saxophone and drums, mostly). Liam also loves to build, play pretend, paint, read mystery stories, and play games. Lately, he has been fascinated by the human body and how it works. He loves science and says he’d like to be a paleontologist when he grows up so he can work at the Carnegie Museum. On other days, he’d like to be a fireman, like his grandfather.

His sister, Maeve, started walking just before her 1st birthday in December. She is expanding her vocabulary on a daily basis—she is proudest of “apple”, “choo-choo” and, of course “dada” and “mama.” She wants to do whatever her big brother does. It is so pleasing to see Liam and Maeve’s relationship develop. The two of them are already a team.

Amy teaches music composition at Pitt and also regularly performs with the Bugallo-Williams Piano Duo, which focuses on contemporary classical music. Bob recently finished his Ph.D. in sociology, and his research focuses on the use of information technologies in the medical field.

We are looking forward to the new semester!
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 …

… how we handle classroom coverage when educators are absent. Understanding our coverage decisions for absences depends on first understanding what “full staffing” means in our context. The NAEYC Accreditation Standards specify Teacher-Child Ratios based on children’s ages. For 2.5 to 3 year olds in preschool, the acceptable ratios range from 1:6 to 1:9, for 4 and 5 year olds in preschool, the ratios range from 1:8 to 1:10, and for kindergartners the ratios range from 1:10 to 1:12. We use these guidelines when planning our professional staff ratios, which are 1:8 for the AM 3’s, 1:9 for the AM 4’s, 1:6 in the PM 3’s and 4’s, and 1:6 in the Extended Programs. For kindergarteners, we have a 1:8 ratio in the morning and a 1:12 ratio in the afternoon. In other words, if all the educators are present, we meet the NAEYC standards without counting any of the student teachers, interns, student employees, etc. Nonetheless, we aim to schedule these students with a few to spare so that all of our preschool ratios are 1:6 and kindergarten 1:8, even if one or two students are absent.

If educator absences are known in advance, such as when we send them to conferences or to visit other schools or when they schedule Paid Time Off, we attempt to arrange for substitute coverage. Mrs. Cheri Mack and Mrs. Annie Smith have been our regular substitutes for several years. For last minute educator absences, we review the remaining coverage and have one of our Educational Administrators, Linda Hancock or Maggie Rosenblum, serve as substitutes when necessary to ensure that we maintain the NAEYC ratio standards. Because Mrs. Smith is moving to New Jersey in a month and we want to increase our pool of substitutes, we are beginning to interview new candidates for substitute positions and hope to hire two or three of them in January.

In the rare case of extended leaves, such as Mrs. Armbruster’s maternity leave this spring, we seek to hire full replacements rather than depending on day-to-day coverage arrangements. Because Mrs. Armbruster does not plan to return from her leave until the fall semester, we have hired a one-semester, full-time temporary assistant teacher for the kindergarten class. Ms. Holly Scholes joined the staff on January 2nd so that she will be fully integrated into the kindergarten teaching team prior to Mrs. Armbruster’s leave. Below is her staff bio and photo. Please welcome her and introduce yourself when you encounter her in the school. Also, feel free to direct any questions or concerns you have about classroom coverage to Dr. Carver, Ms. Hancock, or Mrs. Rosenblum.

Holly Scholes (pronounced ’skols’ or ‘like scrolls without the r’) earned a BS in Human Development and Family Science at Ohio State with a minor in Early Childhood (2008) and a Masters of Arts in Teaching in Early Childhood (PreK-3rd) from Kent State (2009). In addition to day-to-day substituting in K to 5th grade since then, Holly has done long-term substitute positions in 2nd grade, 1st-3rd grade Art, and 4th-5th grade Math Tutoring. She also had student teaching placements in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, as well as being a summer nanny for children ages 4 and 6 and a summer nanny for a family with children ranging from 7 to 11, including a child with special needs. During her free time, Holly enjoys cooking, traveling, playing with her dog, and trying new restaurants. She is excited to join the Kindergarten team at the Children's School!
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 alert 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.

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](http://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. 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.

Depending on the road conditions, we will choose from three options:

- **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. This option enables us to conduct the morning preschool classes, while giving our staff and families time for the road conditions to improve. Dismissal will be at the normal times and the Extended and Afternoon Programs will be on normal schedule.
- **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 but the Afternoon Programs will be on normal schedules.
- **School Closure for all Programs**
Habits for Healthy Minds & Bodies

In preparation for our Whole School Unit exploring Healthy Mind & Body, we are planning a Staff / Parent Discussion on Friday, January 27th from 9:30 to 11:00am. Preschool 4’s and Kindergarten children will be in school, and child care will be provided in the Red Room for 3’s and younger siblings. Because school will be in session, please park in the East Campus garage or at one of the metered spots near the school.

According to the Scholastic Parent web site, “Teaching your child how to maintain the right balance of diet, exercise, and relaxation is the key to her well-being — for life.”


Come join our discussion of ways to foster young children’s healthy body care, nutrition, exercise, rest, mental & physical challenge, stress reduction, and giving.

Snow Day Ideas for Healthy Minds & Bodies

A little planning ahead will go a long way to helping you and your family have positive and constructive snow days this winter. Here are a few ideas for creatively using snow days to reinforce important lessons about Healthy Minds & Bodies.

• Rest – Let everyone sleep in, lounge in pajamas, and have a slower pace to the day.
• Healthy Body Care – Open a new toothbrush, practice brushing, and photograph each others’ smiles, take a leisurely bath and use a washcloth to carefully clean all the body’s nooks & crannies.
• Nutrition – Freeze leftover vegetables, rice, potatoes, etc. in advance so that you have lots of ingredients to make a warm and healthy vegetable soup to enjoy together.
• Exercise – Make playdough together (see recipe below) and then play with it to strengthen small muscles, use the Sound Play movements children have learned to creatively move large muscles to music, allow children to play dress up with adult clothes and shoes.
• Mental Challenge – Play board games together or start a family puzzle (available with 3 sizes of pieces so that family members of all ages can participate).
• Stress Reduction – Snuggle with a book, and practice the yoga positions children have learned.
• Giving – Focusing on others and the ways that we can encourage and support them helps children have a healthy perspective. Make pictures or cards for friends and family, or sort clothes, books, and toys to select ones to share with others.

Children’s School Playdough (NOTE: We usually double the recipe.)

1 cup White Flour 1 cup Water
1/2 cup Salt 1 tablespoon Oil
2 teaspoons Cream of Tartar 1 teaspoon Food Coloring

1. Combine flour, salt, and cream of tartar in a saucepan. Mix water, oil, and food coloring in a separate bowl and stir them gradually into dry ingredients until the mixture is smooth.
2. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until a ball forms.
3. Remove from heat and when the mixture is just cool enough to handle, knead until smooth.
4. Also, you can add vanilla, instant coffee, etc. to add aroma, or add glitter to enhance the visual sensation. Be creative!
5. Store in a ziplock bag in the refrigerator when not in use.
Physical Education Highlights

During December’s gym classes, we practiced relay racing. This activity develops leadership, self-esteem, cooperation, creativity, and a sense of fair play. Throughout this activity, we emphasize fun and teamwork, rather than winning or losing. We have enjoyed learning the following relays:

• Zig- Zag Relays focus on agility, speed running, and teamwork.
• The Simple Locomotor Relay focuses on teamwork as well as basic locomotor movements such as running, skipping, hopping, jumping, and galloping.
• The friends have become skilled at “Hurdle the Cones”. The children play in teams of three or four and the objective is to have all players take a turn jumping each cone and then sitting back down.
• The “Rescue Relay” is the most popular type. Teams of three or four players are arranged in single file behind the starting line. The leader of each team stands on the turning line, facing his or her team. On the signal “Go”, the leaders run to the first player of the team and grasps the friend’s wrist. Then both friends run back to the leader’s turning line. The relay continues in this way until all the players are “rescued”. The first team to complete the task and sit crossed-legged on the floor wins the relay.
• The “Around The World Relay” focuses on running and ball control. Friends play in teams of three. All teams make one big circle, with each team making up one quarter of the circle, and all players facing outward. On the signal "Go", the first player holds the ball and runs counter clockwise around the outside of the circle and back to the starting position. The ball is then given to the second player, who repeats the circle run.
• The “Under Passing” and “Overhead Passing” Relays focus on ball handling. On the signal "Go", the ball is passed through the legs of the first friend to the player behind, until it reaches the last player. The last player carries the ball and quickly runs to the front of the line to begin passing it down through the legs again. The relay continues in this way until everyone returns to the starting position. The “Overhead Passing” Relay works the same way, except that the ball is passed overhead. We will continue learning more relays in the New Year.

Undergraduate Spotlight:
Start On Success

The Children’s School has partnered with the Pittsburgh Public School’s Start On Success program for several years. SOS is a transition program that provides a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences over four years of high school to prepare youth for successful careers or post secondary education or training. Lashawna Brown is an SOS student who is working with the afternoon 4’s class.

Hi, my name is Lashawna Brown. I am in the 11th grade at Langley High School. I work at McDonalds and do my internship at the Children’s School. Working at the Children’s School I meet a lot of friends. When I first came to the Children’s School, I was amazed at how much the children knew. At the school, it’s a loving and caring place! I enjoy every moment of it.
Early Childhood Practicum Students

From January 22nd through February 3rd, we will host five early childhood practicum students from Duksung Women’s University (Seoul, South Korea) for an International Practicum Program. The Campus School at Carlow University will also host five students, and the Falk School at the University of Pittsburgh will host four. In preparation, Dr. Eunsoo Shin, the chair of Duksung’s Early Childhood Education Department, will lead a delegation including the Duksung University Kindergarten director and six educators to visit all three of the Pittsburgh laboratory schools from January 9th through 12th. We look forward to learning more about the initiatives our South Korean colleagues are leading in early childhood and in reflecting with them about the cross-cultural similarities and differences in our values and approaches related to educating young children.

Hea-Lim Kwen
Masters Student
Preschool 3's (Tomer)
Team Leader

Jeong-Eun Yong
Senior
Preschool 4's (Mangan)

Eun-Hye Lee
Senior
Kindergarten (Perovich)

Hyun-Joo Kim
Junior
Preschool 4's (Bird)

Eun-Ji Choi
Junior
Preschool 3's (Flynn)

Thanks to the Brown, Mehrotra, and Park families for offering housing to these visiting students (seniors, masters student, and juniors respectively). There are still opportunities to help by preparing welcome bags 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.
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.
Communicating is next on Ellen Galinsky’s research-based list of “seven essential life skills every child needs” in *Mind in the Making*. In this case, the Children’s School developmental objectives set for preschool and kindergarten includes an entire category for Communication to cover comprehension and expression skills beginning with oral (listening and speaking) and progressing to written language (reading and writing). Galinsky’s similarly broad view of communicating emphasizes the use of *language tools*, “the ability to comprehend, speak, and read words – but then … to use those tools with power and precision – i.e., to communicate” (p. 105).

Babies are prepared at birth to selectively focus their attention on the words, expressions, and gestures that the significant adults in their lives intuitively exaggerate to reduce the complexity of language learning (parent-speak, parent-look, and parent-gesture in Galinsky’s terms). For example, American infants quickly learn many nouns for labeling objects because adults who care for them commonly use simple sentences with raised pitch to introduce a new word (e.g., Look at the *BALLOON!*”) while gazing directly at it and pointing. For infants and young toddlers, these strategies are perfectly matched to the developing brain’s capacities, so the language development progress is impressively rapid.

Interestingly, the strategies shown by research to be most effective for preschoolers are *almost the opposite* of those tailored to infants and toddlers. Rather than greatly simplifying communication, adults who shift to highlighting the breadth and depth of communicative possibility foster stronger language and literacy skills by early elementary school. As was true with focus & self-control and perspective taking, *both parents and educators can be more intentional* about fostering communication by adopting the research-based approaches, specifically mealtime conversations and book reading that “go beyond the here and now” to discuss causes, explanations, predictions and other “extended discourse”, use of “meaningful, grown-up words”, and support for children’s literacy exploration by both modeling personal reading and writing, as well as by providing diverse written materials and writing tools (p. 127-129). Similarly, researchers who study preschool programs recommend that, “Teachers use ‘cognitively engaging talk’, … more complex, sophisticated words when talking to children, and … have a content-oriented curricular plan” (p. 130).

The research literature also suggests a broad approach to promoting literacy at both home and school, rather than narrowly emphasizing drill and practice of the literacy mechanics, during the preschool years. At the Children’s School, we purposefully focus on comprehension and expression, using a variety of enjoyable activities, sound games, and open-ended explorations to teach and reinforce the key concepts, incorporating visual representations with the verbal, and emphasizing effort and improvement – all so that children’s experiences with language and literacy are meaningful to them, which will motivate them to engage fully in further learning.

January will be an opportune time to discuss communication explicitly with our children because we will be spending three weeks hosting South Korean educators and practicum students. We can observe the unique sounds and symbols of Korean, and we can highlight the importance of our gaze, facial expressions, and gestures to support communication. Always, children benefit when parents take the time to talk, read, and write with them about their areas of interest so that they can both learn from others and share their ideas with others via oral and written communication.