Whole School Water Unit

On February 4th, both Preschool and Kindergarten classes will begin a thematic unit to explore the properties of water, the water cycle, the uses of water, and to reduce, reuse, and recycle water. We will experiment with water in different states, water purification, using water in art, and making art to represent water. Plan now to bring your entire family to the Wonders of Water Family Festival on Thursday, February 28th from 4:30 – 6:30 pm. Consider bringing a camera to capture your family’s water fun!

NOTE: There will not be an Extended Afternoon Program on the Family Festival day so that the staff can prepare the school for the event. If your child is enrolled in the Extended Afternoon Program, we will dismiss your child at 3:15 with the afternoon preschoolers. Thank you!

Enrollment Reminders

Registrations for the 2013/2014 Preschool Programs are arriving steadily and the Extended Morning Program is filling quickly, so please submit your re-enrollment materials as soon as possible. It is especially important that families let us know if you are NOT planning on re-enrolling so that we can notify families on the waiting list that we have spaces for their children. Even if you are not re-enrolling, ALL families need to return the corrected and signed “Child Information Form”. Thanks!

Registration for the Kindergarten Program is being sent home February 1st. Remember that we send more re-enrollment packets than we have space available, so we expect to have a full class. If you intend to enroll, please respond as quickly as possible. Mrs. Rosenblum will begin to accept completed forms and deposits at 8am on Monday, February 4th. Based on last year’s timeline and this year’s projections, we do not anticipate the program filling within the first few hours, so please do not bring packets early or feel a need to begin the queue before 8am on the 4th. If you have any questions concerning admissions, please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu.

February Dates:

- Friday, February 1st - Staff / Parent Discussion re: WATER 9:30-11:00 (child care provided)
- Re-enrollment Packets Sent Home in Backpacks to Current 4’s Families
- Monday & Tuesday, February 4th & 5th - Vision Screening
- Friday, February 8th – Kindergarten Orientation & Observation for All Interested Parents
- Tuesday & Wednesday, February 12th & 13th - School Photos
- Friday, February 15th Deposits DUE for 2013-2014 Preschool & Kindergarten
- Monday, February 18th Presidents' Day Holiday (NO SCHOOL)
- Thursday, February 28th, 4:30-6:30 pm, WONDERS of WATER FAMILY FESTIVAL

NOTE: There will be no Extended Afternoon Program on that day!
February is Children’s Dental Health Month

The American Dental Association (ADA) sponsors National Children’s Dental Health Month to raise awareness about the importance of oral health. Developing good habits at an early age and scheduling regular dental visits helps children start on a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums. The ADA states that the most important concepts for preschool children to know are (1) our teeth are important, (2) we need to take good care of them, and (3) the dentist is a friendly doctor who helps you take good care of your teeth. Teeth are meant to last a lifetime. A balanced diet, limited snacks, brushing and flossing each day and a regular dental check-up are the keys to healthy teeth and gums.

For programs where children are older than one year and receive two or more meals, NAEYC (5.A.16) promotes good dental hygiene by requiring the staff to provide an opportunity for tooth brushing and gum cleaning to remove food and plaque. At the Children’s School, since our children are not here for two or more meals, we talk about brushing our teeth and good dental hygiene. We also encourage children to rinse their mouths with water after eating. However, just as you encourage hand washing when your child comes home from school, you should also encourage them to brush their teeth.

Please note that, in compliance with Caring for Our Children 8.015, we require contact information for your family dentist on your child’s re-enrollment information update.

Valentine’s Day

February is also the month when some families celebrate Valentine’s Day. Since the holiday falls on a school day, each class may plan a simple celebration, perhaps preparing a special snack, reading a related story, etc. Please watch the daily emails for specific information from your child’s teachers. As always, children will have access to card making materials in the writing centers for use if they are interested in sending greetings to family and friends. Please do not send candy or any other food items for distribution to your child’s classmates.

February Web Artists

3’s Friends: Natalie B., Adeline H., Samuel R., and James V.
4’s Friends: Sammy C., Brady G., Xander M., Collin R., and Henry S.
Kindergarten Friends: Thomas A., Megumi K., and Kiana S.
Vision Screening

On February 4th and 5th, the Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh will be screening our children for vision issues. There is no charge for this service. If you have not registered your child for this screening but would like to do so, please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu.

School Picture Days

On February 12th and 13th, Jessica VanDyke of VanDyke Photography will be taking school pictures of our children. Although this is the first time Ms. VanDyke has worked with us, she comes highly recommended. Parents will be able to view hard copy proofs before placing orders.

Usborne Book Fair

From February 25th through March 25th, we will be sponsoring an online Usborne Book Fair. The Usborne company specializes in non-fiction books that convey accurate information in developmentally appropriate ways with step-by-step explanations, relevant illustrations and diagrams, and interesting extensions for children to explore. Please visit their spring catalog online at http://t3291.myubam.com to see a selection of their books. We will also be hosting a book fair at school on Friday, March 8th in the morning to enable parents and children to view displays of the books and activities that Usborne has available. Further information will be coming via e-mail!

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

On January 21st, in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the afternoon preschool classes and the kindergarten class joined other children from the Carnegie Mellon University community and student volunteers from the Mortar Board Honor Society at the University Center to collage and decorate “The Children’s School Peace Sculpture” and to color books of “Peace and Friendship Songs”. They all joined Mrs. Bird in a heartfelt sing-a-long and enjoyed Teddy Grahams and juice before returning to school.
**Water Aid Collection**

During our Whole School Unit exploring **WATER**, we are leading a collection of funds for Water Aid (www.wateraidamerica.org) to help poor communities in Africa, Asia, the Pacific region and Central America gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education, and work to influence policy. The children will be making small banks to collect coins during the month and then bring to the Family Festival on February 28th. We are also accepting larger donations, so feel free to bring cash or a check made out to WaterAid, either to the school office or on the night of the festival. We appreciate your generosity!

**Perhaps you wondered …**

**… why children suddenly start lying when they’re about 5 years old.**

Many developmental gains have both positive and negative aspects. When children learn to crawl and then walk, we need to carry them less and they can be more independent, BUT we also need to childproof the house more thoroughly and keep a close eye on them because they haven’t yet learned to judge what’s risky and safe. Children learning to talk is a wonderful boost to family communication, BUT they then begin repeating what they’ve heard, including both the affirming and public information and the swear words or secrets. Similarly, the lying that children begin to do as they approach age 5 is the down side of a really important cognitive advance that psychologists call **Theory of Mind**.

Before age 5, children’s understanding of their own and others’ minds is quite limited. Once they know something, they have trouble reasoning about a time when they did not know it. One classic task involves showing children a familiar box, such as a Crayola crayon box, and then asking them what they think is inside. Children will, of course, say, “crayons”. The experimenter then shows the child that there is something unexpected in the box, like marbles. After the surprise, the experimenter asks what the child **thought** was inside the box **before it was opened**. Preschoolers will typically answer, “marbles”. Furthermore, if asked what another child who hasn’t seen what’s in the box will say when asked the first question, the child will again respond, “marbles”, as if the child believes that everything she knows is known by everyone else also.

Understanding that our minds are separate is crucial for interpersonal relations and communication because it guides our level of explanation when telling a story, based on whether the hearer knows the place, the people involved, etc. It’s also what helps us understand the value of keeping a secret or arranging a surprise. On the other hand, it is what also leads to children experimenting with lying. If children continued to believe that parents and teachers know everything they know, there would be no point in lying, but the advent of this theory of mind helps the child to realize that we do not actually know the truth unless they tell us. Together with a fear of disappointing us, the theory of mind makes a lie quite tempting. The key for parent response to lying behavior is to discuss the problem directly. Help the child understand that it is important for you to know the truth and that telling the truth helps people know they can trust you. At this point in school, we are also talking about stories that are true and others that are from our imagination (non-fiction vs. fiction). It’s wonderful for children to begin exploring the types of stories that they can imagine, but sometimes they do not signal which type of story they are telling. Feel free to ask them whether their story is a true story that really happened or whether it is something from their imagination.
Family Social Organization (FSO)

The FSO hosted an afternoon of **bouncing and zip-lining delight at Gymkhana** on snowy Sunday, January 27th. We had almost 30 Children's School friends in attendance! Parents had a chance to mingle while the children worked off some winter energy! The children got to use the balance beam, swing on the rings, zip on the zip line, bounce on the trampoline and tumble track, and do tricks on the bars. They are a strong, talented bunch! Thank you to everyone who participated in the event. This event is a keeper for future years!

Upcoming Events:

- **February – Water Treatment Plant Tour**
  
  In connection with the whole-school WATER unit, the FSO is touring the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority’s drinking water treatment plant near Aspinwall. We’ll learn how PWSA takes the water from the Allegheny River and turns it into clean water suitable for your tap! The tour is scheduled for Friday, February 8 at 1 pm and will last approximately 1 ½ hours. Because we have had 70+ people interested in the tour, we are working to schedule additional sessions. Watch for an email so you can choose which session to attend.

- **March - Bubble Time** on March 23rd at 11am.
- **April To Be Determined** - something with a chance to run around :)
- **May - International Children's Festival.**

Watch for details in upcoming newsletters and emails.
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](http://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!
Family Spotlight: Homeward Bound

We are the Sekula family--Anne, Raymond, William (6), John (4), and Jane (3). We have recently returned to Pittsburgh, where we previously lived for 10 years, after a 2 year stint up north in snowy Erie, PA. Anne moved back with the children in January, specifically so John and Jane could have at least a half year at The Children's School before John starts Kindergarten. While in Erie, the children enjoyed playing at Presque Isle Beach and hiking through The Asbury Woods Nature Center. William attended the Children's School and is a Blue and Green Room alumni. He is now enrolled in 1st grade at Sacred Heart Elementary. He was able to visit his teachers a few weeks ago during greeting.  On his way out, he said he would really like to come back to The Children's School and wants to attend CMU so he can intern there.

Two years ago, we were fortunate to host three Korean students for two weeks who were studying American early childhood education at CMU. We learned a lot about the different styles of raising children between the two cultures like "Why do American children sleep in their own beds" (Because Mom would like her sleep) and "There is no such thing as Gifted in Korea". John (4) and Jane (3) have quickly settled in and are reminding William and Mom of songs and rhymes learned years ago ("There's a Bubble in Your Mouth", "What's The Weather"). Though they attended great preschools in Erie, they are much more animated about what they have been learning each day at The Children's School. John has unfortunately been exposed to Star Wars Legos by his older brother that is their primary past time. Jane would like for her brothers to play with her more, but is primarily interested in tea parties, play doh, painting, and princess or baby make believe.

Raymond is a Pittsburgh native and Central Catholic and CMU Business School graduate. He is a neurosurgeon at UPMC Hamot in Erie and is excited to return in March to work nearby at UPMC Presbyterian. Anne ran the grantmaking and community initiatives programs at The Erie Community Foundation, and is currently just getting everyone settled in Pittsburgh. Anne was excited to introduce The Imagination Playground that she learned of through the Children's School to the Erie early childhood community, as a way for snowed in preschoolers to expend their energy indoors. Serving on the Board of the Sprout Fund and the Spark Program, which funds projects aimed at children using technology, media, and the arts, Anne has been excited to see creative projects from the Children's School and CMU, like Message from Me, earn pilot support over the past few years.

During evenings and weekends, the Sekula kids are way over-involved in Chess, Wrestling, soon to be C-Mites, CMU Music Preparatory School, and Ballet. So we especially enjoy Friday Family Movie Night and Sunday Jammy Day. We live in Squirrel Hill and can often be found at all East Side playgrounds and Ice Cream shops.
Keeping Healthy During Flu Season

We have all heard of the recent flu epidemic in the United States. Below is a description of flu symptoms from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website:

Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The flu is different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever* or feeling feverish/chills
- Sore throat
- Muscle or body aches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headaches
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

* It’s important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.

With this in mind, we encourage everyone to continue to follow the Children’s School Family Handbook Guidelines for exclusion due to illness. If your child does not feel well enough to comfortably participate in usual program activities, including playground and gym class, please keep your child home from school.

In addition, we ask that everyone who comes into the Children’s School, including family members, wash their hands using the procedures recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Rub hands together vigorously until a soapy lather appears and continue for at least 10 seconds. Rub areas between fingers, around nail beds, under fingernails, jewelry, and back of hands and continue for 10 seconds. The children are being taught a more detailed version using the following handwashing song (to the tune of Row, Row, Row Your Boat).

*Slide, slide, slide your hands. Make a bridge like this. Don’t forget both bracelets. Then you have to twist!*

Also, here are some tips from University Health Services for preventing the spread of the flu.

- Stay home, especially if you have a fever.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing by using tissues or the crook of your elbow.
- Avoid touching your mouth and face after touching public surfaces like doorknobs and keyboards.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Do not share keyboards or other mobile devices; wipe them with a cleaning agent before use.

Thank you for your continued attention to the health and wellness of our Children’s School Family!
Undergraduate Spotlight:

Matt Mastricova was an intern for Dr. Carver’s Practicum in Child Development last semester and enjoyed working in the Children’s School so much that he decided to come back to work as a classroom assistant this semester! He’s excited that he is working with the friends in the Green Room again this semester and that he gets to work with the Red Room friends. Matt never fails to be amazed at how much he learns from the students and staff and loves working in such a supportive community. His favorite part about working at the Children’s School is seeing how the friends can tell fantastically detailed narratives using simple classroom materials. Just last week, he helped some students build a disaster management factory that made new stores and buildings after a volcanic eruption.

Before coming to Carnegie Mellon, Matt was a camp counselor for the YMCA and JCC in addition to being a classroom assistant in a preschool class for children for developmental disabilities, where he learned the basic principles of ABA therapy and worked with local occupational and physical therapists. Matt is a junior majoring in psychology and creative writing, and when he’s not working at the Children’s School, he DJs for Carnegie Mellon’s radio station, WRCT, and helps runs a writers’ workshop for CMU students.

Child Development Interns

• Chi Chi Do-Nguyen is a junior Psychology major interning in the PM 4’s. She has taught children acting and modeling, and she is a volunteer at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh.
• Tyler Dossett is a senior Psychology major interning in the AM 3’s. She was a student employee at the Children’s School last year then spent a semester studying in South Korea. She enjoys theatre, fashion, and visual arts.
• Aurelia Henderson (MLK photo) is a senior Creative Writing / Psychology major interning in the Kindergarten. She taught Sunday School at her church, studied abroad in London, and enjoys acting, filmmaking and screenwriting.
• Becca Jacobs is a senior Psychology / Spanish major who has a lot of experience working with children. She loves animals, crafts, and music, and she is interning in the Kindergarten.
• Hannah Leavenworth (above right) is a senior Civil Engineering major who always enjoyed doing science experiments at home. She aims to share a love of math and science with the Kindergarten children while interning.
• Anna Loiterstein (front page) is a senior Psychology major who works at the Children’s School in three capacities. She is interning in the Extended AM program, working as a researcher in Dr. Anna Fisher’s lab, and TAing for Dr. Sharon Carver’s Principles of Child Development course.
• Alex McCluskey is a senior Psychology / Spanish major interning in the PM 3’s. She just returned from studying abroad in Spain and is a competitive ballroom dancer.
• Corinne Rockoff (MFM photo) is a junior International Relations and Politics / Psychology major interning in the AM 4’s. She participates in the Scotch & Soda theatre and plays cello and piano.
• Anna Vande Velde is a sophomore Psychology major who works at both the Cyert Center and the Shadyside Presbyterian Church nursery. She is interning in the Extended PM program.
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.
The Quick Picture Game

Ashna Shome, a high school student at The Ellis School, is interested in understanding whether children aged 3-6 show any evidence of same-race preferences. The intent is not to study or analyze racism, but to observe children as they play a brief game, in order to understand whether children innately prefer faces of their own race. In the task, the children are shown a series of three images. These images flash very quickly [less than a second each] in succession. The first is a face, the second a Chinese character, and the third an abstract image. The researcher then asks whether the child likes or dislikes the final, abstract image. This process is repeated multiple times. Sample images are shown below. The image of a face varies in race during the multiple rounds of the game. The face is neutral in terms of gender, age, emotion, etc. The researchers expect that the children’s choice of liking or disliking the abstract image will be influenced by their reaction to the face and the Chinese character. Any differences in preference depend on the race of the face, since the character is a neutral stimulus. These data can be used to determine if children implicitly and unconsciously prefer faces of their own race. Because the reactions that are being measured are entirely implicit, the children are completely unaware that the focus of this project is race.

The Animal Names Game

Both sections of the Developmental Research Methods class are studying working memory capacity. Working memory refers to our ability to hold in mind information intended for immediate use, such as dialing a phone number someone just told you or remembering directions to a new place. Such information is likely to be forgotten relatively quickly, unless we make a special effort to retain it by rehearsal or some other strategy, and the amount of transient information one can hold in mind increases with development. For instance, a 2-year-old may not be able to remember a sequence of three random instructions (for example: touch your nose, clap 3 times, and shake your head), but a kindergartner should generally be able to do so.

In the Animal Names Game, students are investigating age-related increases in working memory capacity using the Word Span task. In this task, children are asked to repeat animal names. In the beginning, children are given an easy task of repeating a sequence of animal names consisting of just two words, for example FROG-SWAN. The number of words in the sequences is gradually increased, such that the longest possible sequence contained six words, for example SNAKE-FOX-CLAM-WOLF-BUG-HAWK. A coder recorded the maximum number of words a child repeated correctly. Each child plays this game twice. One time, children are asked to repeat sequences of animal names that are only one syllable long (like the examples above). The other time, children are asked to repeat sequences of animal names that consist of multisyllabic words (such as BUTTERFLY, ANTELOPE, or ELEPHANT). Based on the existing evidence that memory span for digits depends more on the amount of time required to say the number names than the number of digits, the class expects children of all ages to correctly repeat more animal names when they each have only one syllable than when they have multiple syllables. If this result is obtained, it will provide further evidence suggesting that our working memory capacity has temporal limits rather than item-based limits.
Director’s Corner: Assessment

The NAEYC standard for Assessment advocates ongoing authentic observations and evaluations of a child’s learning and development, as well as communicating the child's progress to the family. As with the curriculum standard, there is no requirement that we utilize a particular type of assessment or standardized test, so we are free to design a system that fits our developmental goals and our thematic approach to curriculum. We ARE required to demonstrate, through our overall program portfolio and our individual classroom portfolios, that our assessment system is an organized and integral part of our program and document that it meets the accepted reliability and validity criteria for early childhood assessments.

Interestingly, assessment is the one standard in the whole NAEYC system for which our affiliation with Carnegie Mellon University has little direct benefit. In fact, NONE of the data collected by researchers conducting studies in our laboratory school can be shared with school personnel in a way that would identify individual children, both for confidentiality reasons and because many of the measures used in the studies are only in the development stage and might, therefore, not be valid or reliable assessments.

• The Children’s School focuses assessment on describing the developmental progress of individual children so that we can best adapt our program to capitalize on the strengths and interests of our unique groups each year and help our wide range of children progress. Occasionally, we identify areas of weakness that might require referrals for diagnostic testing to determine whether the child would benefit from therapeutic intervention. Most often, such intervention would involve speech / language therapy, occupational therapy, etc., that is either done in the context of school or on an outpatient basis elsewhere.

• To gather our assessment data, we utilize a variety of natural classroom activities that are both interesting and familiar to the children, often in the context of a routine or game. For example, observations of children sharing at circle time provides teachers with information about their verbal communication skills, their ability to interact with peers who ask questions or offer ideas, etc. During a game of bingo in which one child is the “caller” during each round, the teacher can assess the caller’s comfort in a leadership role, knowledge of the numbers or letters on the cards, and ability to coach other children who may not see the called item on their cards. To assess many gross motor skills at one time, a teacher might arrange an obstacle course that involves climbing up and down steps, crawling through a tunnel, hopping from one hoop to another, walking across a balance beam, and so on. Because the tasks are familiar and easily adaptable, they can be used effectively with children who are dual language learners, as well as those who have special needs.

• We discuss assessment information with families most formally during parent / teacher conferences when we review each developmental domain and describe our observations, along with sharing photos and children’s creations. We always informally welcome parent input regarding their view of the child’s strengths and weaknesses, but we formalized that process this year by using the Ages & Stages questionnaires. With this more reciprocal approach to evaluating children’s progress, we are better able to partner in planning next steps for home and school emphasis designed to challenge the strong areas and alleviate the difficulties.

• Overall, our approach to assessment resonates well with Carnegie Mellon’s emphasis on continuous quality improvement in the context of commitment to collaborative and reflective efforts that result in teaching and learning excellence.