Whole School Birds & Flight Unit

Birds are the always-present possibility of an awakening to the natural world that too many people have not yet experienced. Birds are important because they keep systems in balance: they pollinate plants, disperse seeds, scavenge carcasses, check populations of other species (insects, rodents, etc.) and recycle nutrients back into the earth. They are wonderful indicators for the health of a habitat. For example, the fact that there are three active Bald Eagle nests in and around Pittsburgh’s city limits is a testament to the water and fish quality of the rivers and the rebound they have made in the past 30-40 years! But they also feed our spirits, marking the passage of the seasons, moving us to create art, stories and poetry, inspiring us to flight and reminding us that we are not only on, but of, this earth. - adapted from a quote by Melanie Driscoll

During the month of February, our whole school community will explore the amazingly diverse world of birds whose unique adaptations to their habitats enable them to both survive and thrive. We will explore the ways our earth’s topography, weather, and seasons impact the birds’ life cycles and behavior, as well as the physical science of their unique features, such as beaks and wings. We will also consider the ways that humans impact birds and are inspired by them to invent ways to fly. We invite you to engage with us in the exploration as we all anxiously await the early signs of spring. Please join us to celebrate our learning at our Family Bird Bonanza on Thursday, March 6th from 4:30 to 6:30 pm.

February & Early March Dates

- Friday, January 31st - Staff / Parent Disc re: BIRDS & FLIGHT 9:30-11:00 (child care provided)
  Re-enrollment Packets Sent Home in Backpacks to Current 4’s Families
- Monday, February 3rd – Deposits Accepted for 2014-15 Kindergarten
  3’s & 4’s Enrollment / Re-enrollment Forms DUE for 2014-15
- Tuesday & Wednesday, February 4th & 5th - Vision Screening
- Thursday, February 6th – 8:30 am and 12:30 pm, Q&A with Educators
- Tuesday & Wednesday, February 10th & 11th - School Photos
- Friday, February 14th Deposits DUE for 2014-2015 Kindergarten
- Monday, February 17th Presidents’ Day Holiday (NO SCHOOL)
  FSO Aviary Event at 10:00 am (Mother Nature’s Diner & Talons Show)
- Wednesday, February 19th – Box Tops for Education DUE
- Friday, February 28th - FSO Aviary Event at 1:30 pm (Talons Show & To Be a Penguin)
- Thursday, March 6th, 4:30-6:30 pm, FAMILY BIRD BONANZA

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 children come 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 for the preschool 4’s and kindergarten, 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: Daniel K., Brylie M., Jack M., Gwendolyn P., and Noah R.
4’s Friends: Emma B., Arnav D., Lorelei M., Joya N., and James V.
Kindergarten Friends: Emmet B., Dany D., and John S.
Committee News

The sewing committee – Julika Lomas (Milo, 4’s), Andrea Boykowycz (Roxy, 3’s), Bridget Sampson (Adeline, 4’s) and Jen Bussler (Alice and Emmet, kindergarten) - have designed and created some wonderful bird costumes for the children to wear during our bird unit!

The library committee has been hard at work updating our inventory. Thanks everyone!

Vision Screening

On February 4th & 5th, the Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh will screen 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. The results of our January Hearing, Speech, and Language screening demonstrate the importance of checking for potential problems. The screener flagged five Preschool 3’s, three Preschool 4’s and four Kindergartners as needing additional diagnostics to check for issues in need of intervention.

School Picture Days

On February 10th and 11th, Jessica VanDyke of VanDyke Photography will be taking school pictures of our children. Jessica starts by photographing the youngest children and then works up through the kindergartners. We would suggest sending your children in “picture clothes” on February 10th and be aware that the older children may need “picture clothes” for the second day. Please feel free to send “school clothes” in your child’s backpack so the teachers can change their outfits after they have been photographed. Parents will be able to view hard copy proofs before placing orders for pictures.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

On January 20th, 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 decorate a banner that was hung at the University Center and attend a concert held by Josh & Gab. The children also enjoyed a snack of Teddy grahams and juice boxes before heading back to school.
Family Spotlight: CMU Dad and Daughters

We, the Hayashi family, moved from Osaka, Japan to Pittsburgh in 2008. Our family has Eiji (dad), Eriko (mom), Anna (7 years old), and Sara (3 years old). Eiji is pursuing his Ph.D. in Human-Computer Interaction at CMU. I guess Eiji will finish his Ph.D. some time soon, but I’m not sure. When I heard that asking a Ph.D. student when he/she will finish the Ph.D. is equivalent to asking a woman how old she is, I stopped asking him about it. Anyway, it is great for him to have opportunities to do something he loves.

Anna, a second grader now, was a student at the CMU Children’s School for two years. When Anna was going to the Children’s School, Sara was born. It is surprising that Sara has grown so quickly and is going to school now.

Sara loves singing and dancing. At home, she always sings songs that she learns at the Children’s School, dances pretending she is a princess, or jumps around happily. It is very fun to see how Sara and Anna, a rather shy girl, are developing in such different ways.

Finally, we are very glad that Anna was and Sara is part of the Children’s School. Anna had an exciting two years with great people at the Children’s School. Sara had been waiting for so long for the day when she could join the school. Now, it’s her school, and she LOVES the CMU Children’s School.

Box Tops for Education

Continue to Save Your Box Tops and submit them to the Children’s School office by February 19, 2014!!

To date this year, we have raised $71.40 via Box Tops for Education!

Box Tops for Education has helped America’s schools earn over $400 million since 1996. You can 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.
The Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is an annual four-day event that encourages bird watchers of all ages to count birds. The 2014 Great Backyard Bird Count will be happening Friday, February 14th through Monday, February 17th. Participants can choose to count birds for as little as 15 minutes a day, or can count all day every day of the four-day event. Most importantly, it’s free, fun, easy, and it actually helps the birds. Since there are so many different species of birds, one scientist or a team of scientists cannot watch all of the birds. Therefore, they need our help. Scientists need to learn about the distribution and movements of so many birds in a short time, to get the “big picture” about what is happening to bird populations. Everyone is welcome - from beginning birders to experts. To become a new participant, establish an account on the web site http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/ and on February 14th start counting. In 2013, participants in Allegheny County submitted counts for 86 species of birds!

Pittsburgh Gives!

Support the Children’s School on May 6 via Pittsburgh Gives!

We have been notified that the Day of Giving 2014 will be on Tuesday, May 6, 2014. This event will take the place of the day traditionally held in October. The Day of Giving 2014 will be a 18-hour event, running from 6:00 a.m. until 12:00 a.m. (Midnight.) This event is part of Give Local America, the national day for community foundations across the country.

To ensure that your donation reaches the Children’s School, log on to PittsburghGives.org. Select Carnegie Mellon University from the List of Eligible Organizations and make your donation. Please notify Miss Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu that you have made a contribution via the Day of Giving and that you want it to be designated to The Children’s School. She will send a list of the Children’s School donors to the University Development Office who will allocate the donation and matching funds to The Children’s School.

Organizations will receive a pro-rated portion of the match pool. The match will be capped at $1,000 per donor transaction per organization. For example, if an individual donor makes a gift of $5,000 to one organization, only $1,000 of that gift will count towards the match calculation. Amounts sent to the individual nonprofits are for operating support only. Donations may not be used to fulfill dues, pledges, or for named or capital projects. Donations will not be accepted by third parties. The donor must make the online contribution and he/she will be receipted directly for that donation by the Pittsburgh Foundation. Donations are MasterCard/Visa credit card gifts only on May 6, 2014 in the given time period at www.pittsburghgives.org - checks, stocks, or cash will not be accepted.
Family Social Organization (FSO)

The FSO had several great events over the winter break and in January! We hope everyone enjoyed these winter outings.

• We kicked off winter break with a “Morning at the Movies”. We packed the theatre for our own special showing of “Frozen”. Thanks again to the generous support of the Gancy family (parents of Julia, 4’s), for arranging the showing for the Children’s School community!
• Over the winter break, families also got together for informal playdates at the Science Center and Phipps Conservatory. At the Science Center, friends got active in SportsWorks. Racing each other, playing ice hockey, and rock climbing were just a few of the fun activities we enjoyed. We also had a chance to see the winter railroad all lit up for the holidays!
• At Phipps, we went on a scavenger hunt throughout the gardens. We also got to make special ornaments and potted plants to bring home with us. Of course, who can leave Phipps without a trip to the grocery store! Children’s School friends cleaned out the shelves at the “Phipps grocery store” and got to learn about healthy eating at the same time!
• On January 18, more than 25 Children’s School friends got together to try a free martial arts at the Ryer Martial Arts Academy. It was a wonderful class where children got active and learned about self-discipline.

The FSO book club had a great meeting as well. The next book club meeting is scheduled for after greeting on Wednesday, February 12th at Resnick Cafe. Our February reading is a short story called "Birthday Girl," which can be found in the book "Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman" by Haruki Murakami. Please contact Michelle Landau (mklandau@mac.com) if you have any questions.

If you haven’t had a chance to participate, we hope you join us at a future event. We have several events between now and Spring Break.

• **Aviary Programs** on Feb 17th at 10 am and Feb 28th at 1:30 pm. Tickets are $8 and include the “Talons” show, plus “Mother Nature’s Diner” on the 17th and “To Be a Penguin” on the 28th. Please send an envelope with your name, child's name, number of tickets you want for which date(s) and either exact change or a check made out to the Children’s School to Miss Hancock by Thursday, February 13 to reserve your spot. Contact Miss Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu with questions.
• **Aladdin** at the Gemini Theatre on March 1. Join the Children’s School at The Factory on Saturday, March 1 at 3:30 for a special showing of “Aladdin”. Tickets are $11 and include a private tour of the theater following the show. Please send an envelope with your name, child's name, number of tickets you want and either exact change or a check made out to Gemini Theater to Ms. Drash by Monday, February 24 to reserve your spot. If you have questions, please contact Jessica Morowitz at jessicachristiemorowitz@gmail.com.

As always, we look forward to seeing you at the next event!                      Amee Chaudry & Julie Paris
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

Rafael McCauley started working at the Children's School midway through the first semester, and already knows it's the best job a student can have on campus. He says, “I get to spend a few (read: not enough) hours away from the stress and grind of Carnegie Mellon to spend quality time with some of the most adorable children you'll ever meet. I've always enjoyed working with children so this is a great opportunity to get back to doing something I enjoy.

Outside of the Children's School, you can usually find me in Gates-Hillman working on the latest ridiculous Computer Science assignment. Apparently this school's got the idea that they're pretty good at Computer Science, so they really like to challenge us. I'm only a sophomore right now, but I've made it this far, so I feel pretty confident about it. I also play for the men's Ultimate Frisbee team, Mr. Yuk. We go to tournaments throughout the year, but the actual season is in the spring so I'm just starting to get geared up for it now. I'm looking forward to more good years here at Carnegie Mellon and the Children's School.

Child Development Interns

Dr. Carver has five interns in her Practicum in Child Development course this semester.

• Marie Avilez (below left) is a Junior Ethics, History & Public Policy major with aspirations to improve education. She is working with the 4’s Team on Monday and Friday mornings.
• Angela Mitchell (below middle) is a 5th year Architecture student who is interested in teaching architecture to children and designing children’s spaces. She is enjoying the Building Unit with the 4’s on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings.
• Elisa Pabon is a Sophomore Biopsychology major interested in a career in developmental neuroscience. She works with the Kindergarten Team on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, as well as serving as a TA for Dr. Carver's large Principles of Child Development course.
• Ramya Sivakumar (below right) is a Senior Civil Engineering major interested in learning more about working with children. She is helping the 3’s Team on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.
• Grace Sohn is a Sophomore double majoring in Psychology and Piano. She enjoys teaching piano and Sunday School and is supporting the 3’s Team on Monday and Wednesday afternoons.
4th International Practicum Experience

For two weeks at the end of January, we have had the privilege of hosting four early childhood education students from Duksung Women’s University in Seoul, South Korea. Eight of their fellow students were engaged in similar practicum experiences at either the Carlow University Campus School, the Falk School, or the University Child Development Center. 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, learned about our local professional organization - PAEYC, and attended some college classes. They bravely practiced their English and boldly faced the challenge of our cold, snowy weather. They also enjoyed the comfort and companionship of their host families – the Moraskis and the Sekulas. Thanks to everyone who helped make their Pittsburgh Practicum Experience so positive, productive, and memorable! We also appreciate the many ways that the Duksung students’ involvement with our educators and Carnegie Mellon students has enriched our learning experiences this month!
Research Spotlight

The Classroom Game

The purpose of this study by Dr. Anna Fisher and graduate student Karrie Godwin is to investigate how children allocate their attention in learning environments. We are particularly interested in examining how physical features of the environment (e.g., toys, posters, artwork, etc.) can contribute to or hinder children’s ability to attend to the content of a lesson. We are also examining whether children’s ability to effectively distribute their attention has consequences for learning new content. In this study, a researcher is teaching kindergartners a series of mini-lessons in a small group format. For half of the lessons, the physical environment includes items that are typically found in early childhood classrooms that may be potential sources of distraction (e.g. posters, artwork, manipulatives, etc.). For the remaining lessons, the physical environment only includes visual aids and materials directly relevant to the lesson. Each lesson lasts approximately 10 to 15 minutes. During each lesson, the children listen to a short story as a group. Then, each child answers questions about the content of the story. For example, after a story about plants, the child might be asked to circle which of four pictures was shown in the book.

The Listening Game

In this study by Dr. Erik Thiessen and graduate student Lucy Erikson, researchers are investigating how young children discover words in fluent speech, which lacks reliable pauses between words. One cue that may help children segment speech is its statistical structure. For instance, syllables within words tend to have a higher probability of co-occurrence than syllables that span word boundaries (e.g., the syllables in ‘pre-tty’ and ‘ba-by’ occur together more frequently than the syllables between those two words, ‘ty-ba’). Prior research with artificial languages stripped of all other cues to word-identity has demonstrated that both infants and adults are sensitive to this cue. Furthermore, this learning often happens after brief, passive exposure periods and without participants’ conscious awareness of learning. However, in studies where participants are asked to do a secondary task while listening to the speech, performance is disrupted. This finding suggests that attention is necessary for learning, but the specific role attention plays in the process is not yet known. In the present research, researchers are interested in exploring how performance on a task of sustained attention (the Moving Eyes Game) is related to performance on this word segmentation task. In the Listening Game, children listen to an audio recording of a speech stream while using a coloring app on an iPad. Before listening to the language, children were introduced to a stuffed dog and told they would be listening to a pretend language spoken by dogs. After the exposure phase, they are presented with sets of two words and asked which word sounded more like a word they heard in the dog language while playing on the iPad. All of the words they hear are syllable combinations that were present in the stream, but within each pair one of the words is characterized by higher statistical coherence than the other (i.e., the syllables predicted each other 100% of the time compared to 33% of the time).
Research Spotlight, continued

Research Methods Class Studies

Students in Professor Anna Fisher’s Developmental Research Methods class will start the semester with a lab entitled the **The Remember What and Where Game** (see below). Later in the semester, students 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 Remember What and Where Game**

The Research Methods students will work in pairs and small groups to conduct a study of spatial 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. *Spatial working memory* refers to the ability to remember locations of objects in space, such as remembering locations of landmarks on a map.

Information stored in working memory is forgotten relatively quickly unless we make a special effort to retain it, for instance by repeating it several times. 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 be generally able to do so.

In the **Remember What and Where Game**, students in the Developmental Research Methods class will investigate the age-related increase in spatial working memory capacity. In this task, each child will see a 4-by-3 grid with 1 to 6 objects placed in random locations on the grid (see example below). The child studies the target grid for 30 seconds and then is asked to recreate the position of each object on another grid. The correct locations are marked on the testing grid in grey, but the child must remember which object belongs where.

![Example grid](image)

Each child will play the **Remember What and Where Game** twice within one session, once with familiar objects (as in the example above) and once with novel nonsense objects that can’t be easily labeled with words. This contrast allows the students to test the hypothesis that children use a mixture of visual and verbal encoding strategies on this task. Verbal encoding strategies (such as saying to oneself ‘car goes here’) should be difficult when unfamiliar objects for which the child does not have a name are used in the game; therefore, the students expect the game to be more challenging to children of all ages with novel objects rather than familiar objects.
The flu season and harsh weather of January, with the resulting changes in plans, delays and inconveniences, coupled with the new year’s transitions, set the perfect context for considering the sixth and seventh practices advocated by Zander and Zander in *The Art of Possibility*. “Rule #6”, which is actually the only “rule” in the book, is to lighten up rather than taking ourselves so seriously. The authors explain that replacing our calculating, exacting, demanding selves with ones who acknowledge the power of humor, laughter, and play will reveal our more compassionate, creative and expressive sides. For most of us, that means being willing to laugh at ourselves when the best-laid plans fail, when nature trumps our control of the schedule, and when perfection eludes us. Some say, “Laughter is the best medicine.”

Miss Mangan introduced the staff to a children’s book that highlights this practice from a child’s point of view. In “The Girl Who Never Made Mistakes”, by Mark Pett and Gary Rubinstein, 9-year-old Beatrice is perfect. She never makes the mistakes other children make, and she always wins the town talent contest with her juggling act. As the authors introduce us to Beatrice’s day, we see her avoiding her friends’ activities because of the risk of making mistakes. We also begin to understand that Beatrice spends much time worrying about her performance and that the anxiety builds as more people affirm her for never making mistakes. Beatrice and her community learn an important lesson about Rule #6 when she makes a very public mistake and experiences the freedom that comes from being able to laugh at herself and with her friends about it.

In a similar way, the practice of being present to “*The Way Things Are*”, including your reactions to the situations you encounter, prevents you from becoming paralyzed. “The capacity to be present to everything that is happening, without resistance, creates possibility… you can leave behind the struggle to come to terms with what is in front of you, and move on (p. 101).” This kind of thinking is especially important when we make mistakes. If we first follow Rule #6, then we can take the next step to own mistakes as part of the learning process and attend fully to the possibilities ahead. When situations happen to us or are in other ways out of our control, Zander and Zander emphasize eliminating our focus on what “should be”, as well as avoiding the common responses of avoidance, denial, and blame. While it may be that the reality of the bad situation cannot change, the way that we view the situation – as a glass half empty or one half full, for example – will determine whether our thinking spirals in a negative direction or radiates with possibility.

When raising or teaching young children, we gradually realize that much of who they are and will become is out of our control. How will we react when they, or we as their caregivers, do not meet “the standard”? In the children’s book “Ish”, Peter H. Reynolds explores this question as Ramon, whose passion is drawing, encounters an older brother who tells him that his pictures are no good. Ramon struggles to meet his brother’s standard but gives up drawing when he continually feels inferior. His younger sister offers a new possibility by suggesting that Ramon’s drawings may not look *exactly* like a flower, house, sun, etc. but that they look flower-ish, house-ish, sun-ish. Her perspective frees Ramon to think “ish-ly” about his drawing and other aspects of life so that he can fully engage once more. Let’s encourage each other and our children to adopt such playful and positive attitudes as we continue to learn and grow.