Building Bonanza Basics

We hope to see all Children's School Families on Thursday evening, March 3rd from 4:30 – 6:30 pm for our Building Bonanza. You'll be able to experience our new (and very blue) Imagination Playground building materials and try the large “Architecture Blocks” that a team of CMU students designed 20 years ago to promote collaborative construction. You can work on a smaller scale to build tabletop towers out of diverse blocks, create paper structures & sculptures, or construct houses of cards, cups, and Kapla blocks. Try your skill at a variety of building and balance games or stretch your imagination with traditional Legos. We'll also be using a variety of blocks to reconstruct Pittsburgh on a HUGE map of the city provided by the Pittsburgh History and Landmark Foundation. Be prepared to remove your shoes in that area, and consider bringing a camera to capture your family’s creative constructions!

NOTE: There will not be an Extended Afternoon Program on the Building Bonanza 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 the end of the regular school day. Thank you!

Enroll for Summer “Creepy Crawly” Camp

Enclosed with this newsletter is a brochure about the Children’s School Summer Camp, which is a mixed-age, four-week program that runs weekdays from 9am to 1pm with as much outdoor time as weather permits. This year, Mrs. Flynn, Miss Furman, Miss Mangan, Ms. McMichael, Mrs. Solomon, and Mrs. Tomer will engage the children in a study of “Creepy Crawlies” to learn about natural processes by which insects, spiders, worms, and other “bugs” enrich our lives. We anticipate investigating the bugs we find on Carnegie Mellon’s campus and in Schenley Park, as well as some that we will import for observation in special containers. We will read a variety of fiction and non-fiction books to enhance the thematic study, as well as offer related art, cooking, sensory, and manipulative activities. In addition, children attending camp enjoy water time with access to wading pools, water slides on our climbing structure, and sprinklers in the playhouse.

Important March Dates

- Thursday, March 3rd, 4:30-6:30 pm, FAMILY BUILDING BONANZA
  (NOTE: There will be no Extended Afternoon Program on that day!)
- Friday, March 4th Professional Development Day for Staff (NO SCHOOL for Children)
- SPRING BREAK: Monday, March 7th through Friday, March 11th
- Sunday, March 13th Daylight Savings Time Begins so SPRING FORWARD 1 Hour
- Friday, March 25th Conference Preparation Day for Staff (NO SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN)
Volunteer Readers Needed!

We are trying to expand our library by including CD recordings of some of our books in languages other than English. This would enable our children who are learning English as a second language to look at the books and hear the stories in their native language. If you would be interested in helping with this project, please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu.

Last Call for Silent Auction Items!

Items for the NALS silent auction are being accepted through March 15. If you have an item for donation, please contact Miss Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu or 412-268-2198.

Win a FREE WEEK OF CAMP !
Come and place your bids at the NALS auction and enter a raffle to win a FREE WEEK for your child at the Children's School Summer Camp! To date, auction items include original artwork, a 1 hour massage, 2 dugout box tickets to Pirates game, 2 Penn State University football tickets (sideline tickets), 2 University of Pittsburgh football tickets (club seats), 2 Steelers tickets (100 level), 2 Pittsburgh Penguin tickets (100 level), a 2011-12 Season Subscription to the CMU Drama Department Productions, a Limited Edition Eat-N-Park Smiley Purse, and Steeler footballs signed by #43 Troy Polamalu and #56 LaMarr Woodley!

Project Prom Accepting Donations

Collections are underway for Project Prom 2011. Please help replenish the Project Prom Shop with new or gently worn formal attire so that the high school students who “shop” there this year have a great selection of gowns, shoes, handbags, jewelry and accessories.

Don’t have any formal attire suitable for prom in your closet? Consider asking friends and family members to participate. The collection is ongoing until March 28th. Bring donations to the Children’s School office, where they will be collected by Bridgett Javid (Dillon, AM 3’s).

Monetary donations are also welcome for the DHS Donations Fund (Project Prom on the memo line) so tuxedo rental gift certificates and gowns in seldom-donated sizes may be purchased. Checks may be mailed to One Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.
For more details: www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/projectprom.aspx.

March Web Artists

3’s Friends: Aaron H., Sasha K., Jacob M., and Melynda N.
4’s Friends: Delia B., Jonas C., Julia G., Joby M., and Kouta T.
Kindergarten Friends: Adam F., Talia G., Kaelin L., and Cooper O.
Family Spotlight: Zoom!

My name is Golan Levin, and I’m a professor in the School of Art at CMU. Our son Zen, who started the Morning 3s program in the Blue Room this year, is an enthusiastic scooter, and we are very excited that it's finally March, since warmer weather means we’re finally able to start scooting to school again. Zen and I share the same commute, and given how fast he’s been going lately, I'm definitely going to need a scooter of my own to keep up. My wife Andrea and I live in Oakland, just across the park from CMU.

Andrea's father taught in the architecture department here for thirty years, and Andrea grew up zooming around the halls of the College of Fine Arts just as Zen does now. Our daughter Roxy, who's just seven months old, is a bit young to be scooting yet, but she's already able to enjoy the walk through Schenley Park and the brighter sunshine that's been peeking through lately. Walking and scooting to school through the park is one of our favorite activities, even in the summer when we're doing it just for fun.

This winter has been a very busy one for me, as in addition to my teaching and my work as the director of the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, I've been preparing for an exhibit of my work at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts. My medium is primarily software – I write code the same way a painter uses paint, or a composer writes and scores music -- and my work is very much about the experience of interaction and play. Zen is an invaluable beta-tester, and has been helping me with debugging eye-tracking software and multi-touch gestural input devices since he was a baby. I enjoy learning from Zen about intuition and responsiveness, every time he plays with one of my pieces. He seems to enjoy playing with the work, too. The exhibit, which occupies half of the second floor galleries of the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, is on display until March 20.

Looking at Looking at Looking, Golan Levin

Through performances, digital artifacts, and virtual environments, Golan Levin’s art applies creative twists to digital technologies, highlighting human connections with machines.

PCA Galleries - the Marshall Building, 6300 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15232 (412-361-0873)

Tuesday-Saturday: 10am-5pm, Sunday: Noon-5pm
Open until 7pm on Thursdays!
Family Social Organization (FSO) Play Date

Wondering what to do on Friday, while school is closed so the teachers can do professional development? Come to the FSO play date at My Little Outback!

Come and play with other Children's School families on Friday March 4th at 10:30am. My Little Outback is located at 1936 Murray Avenue in Squirrel Hill. Cost of admission is $8 per child, and there are often coupons in the Clipper Magazine. Socks are required for play. Siblings and friends are most welcome to attend.

Later on this year, we are planning a music afternoon at the school and a trip to the International Children's Festival in Schenley Plaza. If you have any questions or suggestions please contact Aparna Brown at aparnabrown@gmail.com.

Parents Welcome at the NALS Conference

NALS is an international association of pre-kindergarten through graduate laboratory and university-affiliated schools engaged in teacher training, curriculum development, research, and professional development to promote educational excellence for all learners.

Won’t you be my neighbor? Creating Campus & Community Collaborations April 14 &15, 2011

Join educators from around the world for stimulating seminars, keynote luncheons, and research forums. (View the Full Program at http://falk-school.org/news/2010-nals-conference.)

• Thursday, April 14, 2011, Falk School, 8:00am to 4:30pm
  Continental Breakfast, Morning and Afternoon Seminars
  Keynote Luncheon at the University Club

Hedda Sharapan, The Fred Rogers Company
Working Together as "Neighbors": Fred Rogers' Inspiration for Today's Educators

• Friday, April 15, 2011, Falk School, 8:00am to 4:00pm
  Continental Breakfast, Morning Seminars, Afternoon Research Forums
  Keynote Luncheon at the Pittsburgh Athletic Association

Louis Gomez, University of Pittsburgh School of Education
Mutual Benefit: Research at the Nexus of Community and University

The cost for Host School Parents is only $25 per day, with continental breakfast and lunch included! Register on line at www.regonline.com/Register/Checkin.aspx?EventID=913042.

Book Donations Always Welcome!

Bridgett Javid (Dillon, AM 3’s) delivered our fall book donations to the Children's Home of Pittsburgh & Lemieux Family Center in Garfield. The staff especially liked the pregnancy/parenting/reference books to put on the shelves for the moms & dads staying there for long periods of time. Bridgett can always take book donations to these programs or the court waiting rooms, so please bring your gently used books to school any time that is convenient for you. Children’s Hospital has a similar used book program. Each child going to the hospital is able to choose one of the books from the shelves to take home, so donations of books for kids up to 18 are always welcome!
Marvelous Mud

Since the groundhog saw his shadow and spring is on the way, we’ve noticed that our one patch of ground under the remaining tree on the playground is turning to mud, intriguing and inviting mud. In keeping with our commitment to promoting productive play in our outdoor classroom, we are allowing the children to explore this mud patch in many creative ways. They are making the traditional “mud pies”, building beaver dams, and digging trenches to facilitate the water flow.

In order to keep this marvelous learning opportunity from becoming maddening for parents, we suggest that you send mud boots to school and keep some old towels in your car for protecting your seats. Send your children in easily washable clothes, and be sure to keep your extra clothes supply well stocked at school so that the children can change when necessary.

For an article on “ways to incorporate mud play into the preschool program”, see … progressiveearlychildhoodeducation.blogspot.com/2010/03/ways-to-incorporate-mud-play-into.html

Real Mud Buildings


Kibbutz Lotan was founded in 1983 in the Arava Desert in Israel, with the discovery of a significant source of groundwater. Lotan sits at a low point in a valley, hundreds of feet above an aquifer. Over the years, Lotan has become known for its example in sustainability, proving that an inspired group of people can create community and habitat in even the harshest of environments, by being resourceful.
Dr. Carver Honored for Distinguished Teaching

On February 15th, during Dr. Carver’s Principles of Child Development class in Baker Hall, Dean John Lehoczky and Associate Dean Joseph Devine announced Dr. Carver as the winner of the 2010-2011 Elliott Dunlap Smith Award for Distinguished Teaching and Educational Service. They were accompanied by a parade of Psychology faculty, graduate students, and staff. Below are quotes from the announcement speech and the official university press release.

Sharon’s accomplishments as an educator are remarkable in both their range and depth. An outstanding course designer and classroom instructor (“without a doubt,” her nomination letter stated, “the most remarkable teacher we know”), Sharon has also masterfully filled the challenging role of Director of the Carnegie Mellon Children’s School, where she mentors a small army of children ages 3-5, as well as preschool teachers, staff, undergraduate students working in the school, and parents. Moreover, she is the Associate Director of the Program for Interdisciplinary Education and Research (PIER) – an interdepartmental graduate training program, funded by the U.S. Office of Education – whose mission is to train Ph.D. students from diverse departments (e.g., Psychology, Human-Computer Interaction, Statistics, Robotics, Philosophy, and Language Technologies) to conduct rigorous research that will lead to scientifically supported innovations in educational practice. Thus, Sharon has had (and continues to have) a profound impact on the lives of countless children, staff, undergraduates, and graduate students of all ages and skill levels at Carnegie Mellon.

Indeed, Sharon’s impact is even felt at the wider community and national level. In this regard, for example, Sharon has acted as Coordinator of Communication and Technology for the International Association of Laboratory and University-Affiliated Schools, and was recently re-elected to the board of the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children. In 2009, she was selected to serve on the board of the National Coalition of Campus Children’s Centers.

For this award, however, we focus on and praise Sharon the teacher. Her hallmarks are extraordinary dedication to fostering the learning of each individual student, drawing on her extensive expertise and research in cognitive development and learning sciences and applying it to everyday interaction with students. She is vigilant about making herself available to meet individually with students outside of class, both to stay on track in class but also on track in their overall CMU experience. Students note how motivating it is to be so “noticed” and “supported” like this, with challenges and high standards, but also with warmth, sincere concern and substantive guidance. Sharon’s courses are meticulously planned, with clear goals and components linked to those goals. She seeks to accomplish goals that can be applied outside of the context of a particular course, thereby promoting a life-long appreciation and continuation of the learning that begins in her classrooms.

Finally, her nominators note that Sharon is so motivating to be around largely because she so loves what she does in all of her educational roles. This, they note, is “one of the reasons she is not only the best at what she does, but also an inspiration to students, and to her colleagues.”
Research Spotlight

The Pet Name Game

Dr. Dan Hufnagle is investigating the development of children’s knowledge of sound categories. While children understand ambiguous language very well in context, they often categorize individual sounds in a very graded fashion, especially if those sounds are acoustically ambiguous. Adults, on the other hand, tend to perceive sounds in a less graded manner. The goal of this experiment is to understand what kind of language input helps children shift to adult-like categorization patterns in an experiment that takes 2 sessions. Children hear a computer say names of animals (Daw and Taw are pictured below), which they repeat to the experimenter while playing a game of helping identify someone’s pets. In one session, children hear daw and taw in distinctive contexts (Dawgoo and Tawbow). In the other, they hear daw and taw in similar contexts (Dawbow and Tawbow). Children also hear the syllables daw and taw on their own in both sessions. Sometimes the sounds are ambiguous (acoustically intermediate between daw and taw). Your child’s responses to these intermediate sounds help us understand how they are categorizing sounds.

The researcher predicts that children will show more adult-like categorization patterns for daw and taw when they are exposed to sounds that include more distinctive contexts (tawgoo and dawbow) than sounds that include less distinctive contexts (tawbow and dawbow).

Participate in an exciting science project to learn how the brain develops!

Researchers in Dr. Marlene Behrmann’s Neuroscience Lab are seeking right-handed, 5-8 year old subjects for a study of how the brain becomes organized for processing objects and faces. Each 1.5 hour session will be conducted at the new Scientific Imaging and Brain Research Center (SIBR) at CMU. The child will lie in the brain scanner and be shown pictures of objects, while the researchers record his/her brain activation. Afterwards, the child will look at pictures of objects on a computer to determine which objects are the same or different. There is a flyer with additional information enclosed with this newsletter.

Please contact Lauren Lorenzi at Carnegie Mellon University if you are interested in having your child participate (412-268-8228 LLorenzi@andrew.cmu.edu).
Research Spotlight continued …

The Matching Game

Graduate student Bryan Matlen and undergraduate Emma Adair are working with Dr. David Klahr to investigate how children learn relational categories. In this study, children are shown two standards of a relational category and are asked to select another member of that category. Among two possible answer choices is a category choice that is related \textit{relationally} to the first two sets (e.g., they all are facing each other) and the other response category choice is a set that is related \textit{perceptually} to the first two sets (e.g., they are the same objects). Examples of a relational category are shown below. The researchers are conducting this study because previous research suggests that providing comparisons fosters children’s learning of relational categories.

"These are both Daxes, do you see why they are both Daxes?"

"Which one of these is also a Dax?"

EITC Scholarship Funding Update

Thanks to \textbf{Highmark Casualty Insurance Company} for contributing $5,000 to the Children’s School Scholarship Fund through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. If you would like more information about your business participating or can suggest prospective businesses, please contact one of our Educational Administrators, Mrs. Rosenblum & Miss Hancock, at ed-admin@andrew.cmu.edu.
Undergraduate Research

Dr. Erik Thiessen’s Developmental Research Methods students are preparing their final projects for the semester. Though the research procedures are still being finalized, the topics are listed below. Families whose children participate will receive fuller parent descriptions via the child’s backpack. Everyone can read the study descriptions on the Research Bulletin Board outside the Children’s School Office. Notice the interesting range of important topics in early childhood development!

**Impact of Collaborative Puzzle Completion on Sharing Quantity** – Exploring whether preschool 4’s who complete a puzzle with a partner later share more stickers than those who complete the puzzle alone. (The Puzzle Game)

**Self-Control When Told Not to Touch** – Testing the effectiveness of stern vs. friendly directions not to touch an appealing toy on preschool 3’s likelihood of obeying. (The Plasma Ball Game)

**The Role of Sound in Letter Naming** – Determining whether pronouncing a “pseudoword” shown on a card helps preschool 3’s and 4’s name the letters. (The Letter Name Game)

**Decision-Making about Toy Quality** – Exploring the role of conscious vs. unconscious thought in kindergartners’ judgments of toy quality after being given multiple attributes. (The Thinking Game)

**Memory for Stories with Same vs. Opposite Gender Character** – Testing whether kindergartners answer more comprehension questions correctly when the main character is the same gender. (The Storybook Game)

**Undergraduate Spotlight: Getting to Know You !!**

Anna Rosenblum is a third year architecture student at Carnegie Mellon University who enjoys reading, watching movies, listening to music, and spending time with her family (especially watching Desperate Housewives with her mother, Mrs. Rosenblum). Her interest in sustainable design, urban issues, and history led her to CMU, where she is very much enjoying her experience. She has been working on and off at the Children's School since the winter of 2008 and has had the pleasure of volunteering and being a part of the Children's School community for the past 11 years. Her time at the Children's School has provided her with invaluable experiences that have greatly prepared her for positions assisting with the School of Architecture's Saturday Sequence architecture programs as well as her experiences last summer as a teacher for the Carnegie Museum of Art's Architecture Summer Camps. While pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Architecture as well as a minor in history, her schoolwork keeps her busy during the semester, but she does look forward to helping us again in May.

Anna has also been helpful in supplying the school with her own and some of her peers’ old drawings and models from their studio last semester. The main focus of her studio last semester was "site" and so many of the projects are concerned with issues of site and the environment, dealing with matters such as sunlight, how their buildings interact with the ground and integrate into their surroundings. We hope that these plans, sections, elevations, diagrams, experiential images and other planning and architectural drawings will be a great addition to our building unit, when the students may enjoy drawing or just examining these drawings.
Director’s Corner: Facilitating Physical Capabilities

The Children’s School’s “developmental goals” for physical capabilities, including health and safety, focus our program design on offering diverse opportunities for children to strengthen their bodies while actively learning indoors and out. By emphasizing the ways we purposefully invite productive and creative movement in safe contexts, I aim to encourage families to collaborate with us to promote healthy and active lifestyles at home, at school, and in the community.

**Physical Capabilities / Health & Safety** - giving children opportunities to use their growing bodies in safe ways to develop small and large motor skills, coordination, and healthy living habits.

Our intentional planning for young children’s motor development includes both small (fine) and large (gross) motor skills. Small motor skill building includes offering a wide range of activities that require eye-hand coordination (e.g., puzzles, blocks, beads, pegs), use of tools for real tasks (e.g., drawing, writing, cutting, woodworking, cooking, sewing, and using computers), and coordinated hand motions involving clapping, tracing, folding, etc. Large motor skill development includes strengthening leg & foot skills (e.g., balancing, walking, marching, running, hopping, etc.), arm & hand skills with varied balls (e.g., throwing, catching, rolling, bouncing, etc.), and coordinated movements of both arms & legs (e.g., riding a tricycle, pulling a wagon, climbing, jumping rope, doing exercises, etc.). For all movements, we aim for sufficient practice to increase coordination, strength, and body control. The specific concepts and skills that we teach about health and safety include nutritious food choices, effective hygiene habits, appropriate waste disposal and recycling, and consistent use of safety procedures and equipment (e.g., crossing the street, emergency drills, wearing safety goggles, etc.).

As with the other developmental domains, we combine modeling, explicit instruction, and coaching throughout the individualized process for each child, and we encourage initiative, attention, concentration, planning, persistence, acceptance of mistakes as part of learning, and the value of multiple strategies and solutions to movement problems.

For every theme, we develop related activities in each of the learning centers so that children have novel materials, projects, games, and dramatic play opportunities to practice their developing skills while learning about the topic of study. Our recent whole school theme of Building involved a wonderful variety of small and large building materials and incentive for learning appropriate body control so that the children could build safely without their structures falling.

You might be surprised to learn how much mathematics is involved in movement. We count movements and arrange movements in patterns, particularly when rhythm and dance are involved. We can move our bodies to create shapes and explore ways to move in, out, under, over, and around our friends or objects in our environment. We can measure our movement frequency, speed, distance, etc. and graph these measurements to monitor our progress over time. There is also math involved in many of our health and safety practices, such as using the food pyramid, washing our hands for a certain length of time, and sorting learning materials at clean up time.

Families can enhance everyone’s physical development by making active, healthy, and safe choices on a daily basis, as well as by discussing options with the children. Many household tasks involve exercising small and large muscles, so have fun cooking, cleaning, and doing yardwork together!