

Carnegie Mellon University Children's School

March 2013 Family Newsletter

Explore the Wonders of Water!!



We hope to see all Children's School families on Thursday, February 28th from 4:30 – 6:30 pm for our **Wonders of Water Family Festival**. You'll be able to enjoy a variety of water play options (including some that glow in the dark), experiment with the properties of water, predict how much water is in different fruits, use water for creative art explorations, learn the importance of water for teeth brushing, and relax with water games in the "peaceful room". Remember to bring your WaterAid banks to contribute to our collection for a well, and try your luck at our raffles for a week of camp or two Pens Tickets for the April 2nd game. Wear comfortable clothes that you don't mind getting wet, bring towels & water shoes, and consider bringing a camera to take snapshots of your family water explorations! Families can also enjoy swimming and diving demos at the CMU pool, which will be open for free family swim from 6:00-9:00 pm.

NOTE: There will be NO 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 the end of the regular school day. Thank you!

Enroll for Summer Gardening 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. Bird, Mrs. Mack, Miss Mangan, Ms. McMichael, Mrs. Opferman, and Miss Scholes will engage the children in a study of "**Gardening**" to extend our emphasis on the importance of WATER. We anticipate investigating a wide variety of ways to grow plants that enhance our urban lives with beauty and sometimes delicious food. 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, sprinklers, etc. We provide a daily snack, and children bring their own healthy lunch.



March Dates:

Thursday, February 28th, 4:30-6:30 pm, WONDERS OF WATER FAMILY FESTIVAL

NOTE: There will be no Extended Afternoon Program on that day!

Wednesday, March 6th School Photo Orders DUE to the Main Office

Sunday, March 10th Daylight Savings Time Begins so SPRING FORWARD 1 Hour

SPRING BREAK: Monday, March 11th through Friday, March 15th

Friday, March 22nd – Staff / Parent Discussion re: TECHNOLOGY 9:30 - 11:00am

(child care provided for children not in school)

Perhaps you wondered ...

... how NAEYC assessors conduct site visits as part of accreditation renewal.

This question is timely because we have been notified that our two-day NAEYC site visit will take place sometime between Monday, March 4th and Friday, March 22nd. Since our spring break is the middle week of that three-week window, we know it will happen either the week before or the week after spring break. We will receive final notice of the exact timing just one business day prior to the start of the visit, so we will notify families via email. There's really nothing that families need to do differently while the NAEYC assessor is here, other than recognizing that even the best educators who are used to being observed constantly in a laboratory school environment get a little extra nervous on days when the school's accreditation status is being assessed.

On the first site visit day, the assessor will begin at 8am with an administrator orientation meeting, which involves checking lots of documents, including verification that the staff have the required First Aid / CPR training, that we can prove we conducted staff and family surveys as we claimed, etc. We then provide a tour of our facility and a workspace for the assessor that has access to our electronic program and classroom portfolios. The portfolios include photos, documents, and descriptions of the ways that we meet each of the standards that might not be evident to the observer otherwise. After that, the assessor will work independently for the two days to observe 6 of our 10 groups, each for one hour, to conduct a facility and safety check, and to review the randomly chosen subset of our portfolios. We will have a chance to locate any "missing evidence" for the assessor and finish the visit with a brief visit verification procedure. Then, the assessor submits her findings to the Academy for review, and we wait for their decision about our accreditation renewal. We'll keep you posted!

Introducing Olympia Saunders

Have you ever wondered who cleans the school at the end of a busy day of learning? It is Olympia Saunders! Olympia works for ISS, the custodial services company contracted by Carnegie Mellon University. Olympia's workday begins after 11pm, which is why families do not meet her. Until recently, our staff had not even met Olympia, except as "pen pals" when we leave each other notes to discuss cleaning needs. On Friday, February 22, we invited Olympia and her supervisor, Rege Koslof, to share breakfast with the staff and meet the children. It was wonderful for all of us to be able to get to know each other and for Olympia to finally see the school in action!

Olympia was born and raised on the North Side of Pittsburgh and currently lives in Avalon. She is the oldest of 6 children – 3 girls and 3

boys. She has been employed by ISS since September 2011. She reports that she loves to do crossword puzzles and collects dolphins, her favorite animal. Her favorite childhood memory is going to Disneyland when she turned 10. It was her first time getting on a plane. Olympia would like to thank the whole staff for making her feel so loved. She also appreciates the kind gifts and letters that she receives from the staff and the children. Thank YOU, Olympia, for all of your hard work!!



Honoring the Children's School

Sincere thanks to Edwin Sligar, father of Agatha (Mrs. Opferman's AM 4's), for donating a US flag "Flown on 1 January 2013 over Area 82, Bagram, Afghanistan in honor of Children's School at CMU". Once the flag and certificate are framed, you can view them in the Children's School office.



Staff / Parent Discussion re: Technology



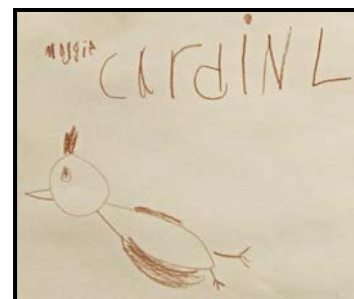
Please join us for a discussion and demonstration of developmentally appropriate uses of technology for preschool and kindergarten children. This Staff / Parent Discussion re: Technology will be held on Friday, March 22nd from 9:30 to 11:00am in the Kindergarten Classroom. We'll review the recent *NAEYC Position Statement on Young Children and Technology*. You'll have opportunities to see the iPad version of Message from Me to better understand how your children use it to send you messages. You'll be able to try some of our favorite computer programs and apps, as well as see how the kindergarten teachers utilize the SmartBoard with their class. 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. School will be in session; please park in the East Campus garage or at one of the metered spots near the school.

March Web Artists

3's Friends: Emma B., Lena L., Lorelei M., and Jane S.

4's Friends: Amanda B., Maggie F., Ezra H., Ben P., and Lexi S.

Kindergarten Friends: Maya C.A., Roland C., Elena E., and Jacob M.



Water Music Concert



On February 19th, the morning classes enjoyed a piano concert performed by Yeeha Chiu, a world-renowned pianist and grandmother of Kiana Sutton (kindergarten). The children sang along to such water songs as "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" and "The Itsy-Bitsy Spider". They enjoyed listening to the raindrops and thunderstorm in Chopin's Prelude 15 and the fountain in Arabesque No. 1 by Debussy. They also enjoyed hearing about Suzanne who swam with the sharks to the music of Ondine Prelude by Debussy.

Yeeha recently performed an adult version of the concert in Hong Kong, and we are privileged to have her share her talents with us!



Screening Updates

In February, 77 children participated in the Vision Screening offered at the Children's School by the Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh; two were flagged for possible vision problems so will have further diagnostics done. In the Easter Seals Speech and Hearing screening, three of the 55 children were flagged for fluid in their ears and 10 were found to need additional testing of their hearing, language, and / or speech.

Family Social Organization

A night out with ADULTS? Yes! Please join other Children's School parents for a night of good food, drink and conversation on Monday, March 25 at 7:30pm. We will convene at Verde Mexican Kitchen & Cantina for a wonderful adults' night out.

Verde Mexican Kitchen & Cantina (5491 Penn Ave, East Liberty)

Monday, March 25 at 7:30pm

Please let us know by March 21 if you are able to join us so we can set our reservation number. We look forward to seeing many of you then! Contact Beth Lott at elisabeth.lott@gmail.com with questions. This event is an adults only night out, but babes in arms are welcome. This is not a pre-paid event but we do need an approximate headcount; if you are a maybe / yes, let us know! Contact Beth Lott at elisabeth.lott@gmail.com, 412-243-2626 (home) or 412-849-0327 (cell)

- March - **Bubble Time** on March 23rd at 5pm.
- April - **Playground Playdate** on Friday April 26th (Parent / Teacher Conference Day)
We will meet at 9:30 at the playground at the corner of Bartlett and Hobart, which is very close to the Children's School. Come play with your friends!
- May - **International Children's Festival**
Watch for details in upcoming newsletters and emails.

Farewell Duksung Friends

The last few days of our 2013 Duksung Practicum involved the students joining staff and parents for our Wonders of Water Discussion, then lots of reflection, appreciation, farewells, and last minute Pittsburgh experiences. Our final weekend day included trips to the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, a ride on the Monongahela Incline, and our student team using their bodies to spell CMU!



Family Spotlight: Love of Learning

Katie and Dave Gancy are the proud parents of Julia (4) and Cayla (10) and are thrilled with The Children's School. Julia is in the Blue Room this year. Cayla also attended and is now enrolled at the Environmental Charter School. The Children's School has been great for both girls helping them to make new friends and instilling a love of learning.

Cayla was delighted when her little sister was starting at The Children's School. She has the best memories of her time there and was so happy that Julia could have the same opportunity. Julia loves sports, dancing, reading and art, all of which she gets to do at school. She also enjoys walking to school with her parents as they live in the neighborhood.



Dave is a chef who owns The Red Oak Café in Oakland, and also operates the café in Tepper Business School on campus. Katie works for a movie theater company, which operates Waterworks Cinemas and Cranberry Cinemas (both theaters always have the latest kid movies).



The Gancy family enjoys getting outside and appreciates The Children's School's inspiration for outdoor activity. The family also loves learning together at the museums and libraries around town. They feel fortunate to be a part of The Children's School community with the incredible staff, dynamic teachers, and lovely families.

Usborne Book Fair

We are very pleased to be hosting a virtual *Usborne Books & More* Book Fair from February 25th to March 25th, as well as a Book Show on Friday, March 8th from 8:30am - 12:30pm. Our classrooms will receive 25% of total retail sales in FREE books, so this is a wonderful opportunity to stock your own home-libraries, and to help our classroom libraries grow as well!

You can shop 3 ways:

1. Anytime at our e-fair link on the Usborne Books & More website
<https://t3291.myubam.com/15715>

This is a great way for family and friends to support our school, too, so feel free to share this link with grandparents, neighbors, or anyone who loves books.

2. You may complete and return the Usborne flier that is being sent home with this newsletter. Please return your completed flier to school by Monday, March 18th. If you would like to place an order after that date, you may do so at the website through Monday, March 25th.

3. Visit the Book Show on Friday, March 8th. Peruse a selection of Usborne and Kane Miller titles, browse the full catalog, and leave a paper order with our Usborne consultant, Anne Lee.

Please note that our teachers have posted wish-lists for their classrooms in case you want to purchase one of their wish-list titles for the school. Please make a note by the title or cross it off the list to help us keep track of how our libraries are growing. We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing lots of fresh, new titles in our classroom libraries.

Undergraduate Spotlight

For **Alicia (Yi Jun) Low**, the Children's School is where she unearthed a new passion. Alicia never truly realized how much she adores children until her internship with Dr. Sharon Carver's Practicum in Child Development class. This is her second semester with the Blue and Red Room friends, and she says, "Being around these bright and energetic children never fails to make me smile!" She is especially excited about the science experiments in this month's Water unit, where the children are asked to create hypotheses, observe outcomes, and form conclusions.



Alicia has had a longstanding interest in child development and infant language acquisition. In the past, she was actively involved in her church's Sunday School and day camps, and she has worked as a research assistant in Dr. Erik Thiessen's Infant Language and Learning Lab. This semester, Alicia sought opportunities to get more involved in education. She is mentoring high school students for a community literacy project as part of a class, and she will be working with Guatemalan children for a week with the "Alternative Spring Break" group.

Alicia is a senior and will graduate this coming May with degrees in linguistics and psychology (concentration in cognitive neuroscience). She will be heading back to Malaysia, where she will participate in a 6-week internship program with *Voice of the Children* or *Teach for Malaysia*. She hopes to pursue a career in education policy or education research.



Undergraduate Researchers in Training

Dr. Anna Fisher's two sections of **Developmental Research Methods** students are preparing their final projects for the semester. Though the research protocols are still being developed, the students are planning to study the impact of many educationally relevant strategies on children's performance on typical early childhood tasks. For example, groups are studying whether working alone vs. working with a partner yields better performance on puzzles, whether children modulate the speed of their motor performance based on the pace of background music, whether comprehension prompting increases children's understanding of different perspectives, whether using familiar task materials makes it easier for children to imagine viewpoints counter to their own, whether verbal prompting increases sharing behavior, whether giving synonyms or examples helps children learn vocabulary in context better, and whether physically pointing to items in a story helps with recall. 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. What an interesting set of developmental psychology topics!



Research Spotlight

The Zibbo the Zookeeper Game

Layla Unger, a graduate student working with Dr. Anna Fisher, is testing the validity of a task her research group has used previously for investigating children's organization of animal concepts. In the *Zibbo the Zookeeper Game*, children assist Zibbo as he organizes animals in a zoo. The zoo is represented as a game board that is divided into squares. In this task, children are told where Zibbo will put a particular animal in the zoo. Then, children are asked to predict where they think Zibbo will put a second animal. In the previous version of this task, each animal was represented as a wooden block that the researcher described as a particular animal. In the current version, each animal is represented with its picture on a card. The researchers use the distances between each pair of animals to infer how the children's mental concepts that correspond to these animals are organized. They aim to determine whether children understand the game instructions by replicating their previous findings on the wooden blocks task in this new picture version of the task.



The Breathing and Thinking Games

Graduate student Emma Satlof-Bedrick, a student of Dr. Carl Johnson in the Psychology Department at the University of Pittsburgh, is conducting a study to assess children's developing knowledge about and awareness of physical and mental processes, such as breathing and thinking. The study will be conducted at several local schools with children between the ages of 4 and 8 to determine when exactly children develop general knowledge about how breathing and thinking work and when children become able to monitor these two processes. Because Emma is a Pitt not a CMU researcher, this study requires additional parental consent, so watch for a consent form to come via the children's backpacks sometime in March. Children whose parents submit the signed consent form will participate in two short games within one 15-minute session. The Breathing Game will consist of children sitting for 30 seconds and indicating whether they are breathing. The Thinking Game will consist of children sitting for 30 seconds and indicating whether they are thinking. Children will also be asked approximately 10 questions to assess general knowledge about breathing and thinking. The researchers are interested in differences between children of different age groups, not in differences between individual children. These data will help the researchers determine the developmental timeline for awareness of and knowledge about breathing and thinking.

Director's Corner: Health & Safety

The NAEYC standards for **Health** and **Physical Environment** include detailed quality specifications for promoting the nutrition and health of children, protecting children and staff from injury and illness, and providing a safe and healthy physical environment. Basically, the standards advocate designing welcoming, accessible, and developmentally-appropriate indoor and outdoor environments, with sufficient space for the number of children (35 sq. ft. indoors, 75 sq. ft. outdoors), safe and well-maintained equipment, materials, and furnishings, adequate supervision by sight and sound, clear, ADA accessible pathways, and secure boundaries, with access to safe drinking water and adequate toileting facilities and protection from environmental hazards ranging from extreme temperature and harmful sun exposure, to insects, smoke, pollution, asbestos, lead, etc. NAEYC also advocates designing environments for children and adults that are aesthetically pleasing, comfortable, naturally lighted, and well-ventilated, with spaces designated for individual belongings and clearly arranged for individual, small group, and whole group interactions.



- Best practices in these aspects of early childhood education begin with training, which we provide for all of our staff members, plus as many substitute teachers and support staff as are available to attend. Each year, we provide Pediatric First Aid / CPR training, including “standard precautions” regarding bloodborne pathogens, the “5 Rights of Medication Administration”, and “SafeServ” food safety training. Through the Environmental Health and Safety Department, Carnegie Mellon also provides our annual Fire Safety training and consultation any time we have questions or concerns.
- NAEYC also requires that we contract with health, nutrition, and playground safety consultants who periodically observe our facilities and practices to determine whether we are following the recommendations for record-keeping, maintaining first aid and emergency supplies, handwashing & diapering procedures, cleaning and sanitation frequency, choking prevention, managing allergies and other special medical conditions, etc. and to make recommendations for improvement.
- Because we are part of the university community, Carnegie Mellon provides our security, building maintenance, cleaning, grounds-keeping, routine safety checks, hazard responses (e.g., pest management, unusual smell investigation, etc.). Though we pay for renovations to our kitchen and playground, the project management, bidding, etc. goes through the university Facilities Management Services department, and the insurance and liability policies are maintained by the university.
- On our Administrative Team, Miss Hancock serves as the primary liaison with the trainers, consultants, and university personnel for all aspects of meeting the Health and Physical Environment standards. Our teaching teams focus on the daily classroom procedures for health and safety, and they are also responsible for designing the classroom environment with varied materials that are organized for children's independent use, created and rotated to align with our thematic studies, and adapted to the children's interests and developmental levels.



In all of these ways, we seek to provide an effective learning environment as a context for all of the relationships, teaching, curriculum and assessment, etc. that I have described in prior articles this year. When classes are in session, much of this proactive preparation and intentional design is invisible, but it is essential to our quality program. Thanks to all who support our efforts!