



Carnegie Mellon University Children's School March 2014 Family Newsletter



Invitation to the Family Bird Bonanza!

We hope to see all of our Children's School families on Thursday, March 6th from 4:30 – 6:30 pm for our **Family Bird Bonanza**. You'll be able to play a variety of bird-related games, visit the bird gallery, meet a live bird from the Pittsburgh Aviary, explore owl pellets and worms, decoupage a bird necklace, sample snacks that birds and people eat, tour the kindergarten bird-seum, and relax with bird books and puzzles in the "peaceful room". Consider bringing a camera to take snapshots of your family's bird adventures!

NOTE: There will be NO Extended Afternoon Program on the Bird 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!

Summer Camp Enrollment

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 in June from 9 am to 1 pm with as much outdoor time as weather permits. This year, Mrs. Armbruster, Mrs. Bird, Mrs. Blizman, Miss Mangan, Miss McMichael, Mrs. Solomon, Ms. Stevens, and CMU graduate Miss McGregor will engage the children in a study of "**Senses**". We anticipate investigating the many ways we can use our senses to explore nature. We will read 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, March 6th, 4:30-6:30 pm, FAMILY BIRD BONANZA

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

Friday, March 7th Professional Development Day for Staff (NO SCHOOL)

Sunday, March 9th Daylight Savings Time Begins so SPRING FORWARD 1 Hour

SPRING BREAK Monday, March 10th through Friday, March 14th (NO SCHOOL)

Thursday, March 20th, 8:30 am and 12:30 pm, Parent Q&A with Educators

Friday, March 28th, 9:30-11:00 am, Staff / Parent Discussion re: Too Much Too Soon?
Too Little Too Late? (child care provided for children not in school)

Staff / Parent Discussion re: Birds & Flight

Thanks to Mr. Salinetto for sharing his love of birds and birding with parents and our Duksung Women's University practicum students on Friday, January 28th. In preparation for our whole school unit, we learned about diverse features of birds and ways to help children observe them.



Staff / Parent Discussion re: Too Much Too Soon? / Too Little Too Late?

Please join us for a discussion of how adults can make decisions about what is "Developmentally Appropriate" for their children at school, at home, and in the community. We will consider multiple perspectives on what we may be introducing to our young children too early or perhaps too late. This Staff / Parent Discussion will be held on Friday, March 28th from 9:30 to 11:00am. Preschool 4's and Kindergarten children will be in school, and child care will be provided in the Red Room for 3's and younger siblings. School will be in session; please park in the East Campus garage or at one of the metered spots near the school.

Family Social Organization



The FSO had a great Aviary Event in February in which Children's School families enjoyed two very special shows. We started the morning at Mother Nature's Diner, where Mother Nature herself introduced us to different birds and how they eat. In our second show, we got up close with some birds of prey and witnessed the birds' incredible skills while learning about the threats they face and the ways they adapt. We hope everyone enjoyed themselves!

We have some great events coming up in March, including:

- "Aladdin" at the Gemini Theatre on March 1st.
- Field trip to Phipps Conservatory on March 7th. Come join Children's School families for a fun field trip where the children will meet worms and discover how they live, eat, and move. Using a worm-composting unit, the class will explore the ingredients of a worm's home and the healthy soil they create! After class, parents and children will do a 1-hour self-guided tour around Phipps and then meet in the tropical forest for lunch! *Please pack your own lunch.* The cost of the class for children is \$7.50. Adults who are members of Phipps are free. Non-member parents/guardians pay general admission (\$15). Please send an envelope with cash, your child's name, number of participants, and whether you are a member of Phipps to Miss Drash by Tuesday March 4th.
- Monthly book club meeting on March 19th. Join us at the CMU Café after morning greeting for some coffee and a lively discussion. Our March reading is a short story called, "The Caretaker," which can be found in the book "The Shell Collector: Stories by Anthony Doerr." As always, reading of the book is not required to join the fun!
- Golf lesson at First Tee of Pittsburgh on March 21st. Watch for an email with details!

We hope to see you at the next FSO outing! Amee Chaudry and Julie Paris

Family Spotlight: A Parent, Grandparent, and Teacher's Perspective

As a Children's School educator for the past 18 years, I am a believer in the educational philosophy that providing a broad range of developmentally appropriate activities for our students enhances their learning experience. I observe this with my kindergarten students year after year.



Five years ago, the role of grandmother was added to my resume. My only choice for Lexi's first school experience was The Children's School. Yes, it was convenient to have her come and go with me, but watching her grow and blossom her first year with Mrs. Flynn and Mr. Salinetto was worth so much more than the carpool. She eagerly ran into the Blue Room and never looked back, so I was able to walk away knowing that she was in loving, caring hands for the afternoon. Lexi continued to grow in the Green Room as Ms. Mangan, Mrs. Solomon and the 4's team provided the perfect balance of play and learning, meeting her creative needs but also challenging her cognitively. Socially, she was encouraged to be a kind friend. Because of this mantra, Lexi has made friends with children and adults from all over the world!



Her kindergarten year has been joyful for me as I have watched her continue to build upon the foundation laid the previous years. As an educator, parent and grandmother, I have experienced the value of preparing the environment in such a way that allows children to explore and discover the world, independent of an adult's agenda. Watching their faces light up when the concept clicks is priceless. When the learning becomes their own, it is more likely to generate excitement that leads to more in depth exploration.



I had my "YES!" moment about the value of the Children's School education when I overheard a conversation that Lexi had with a friend. As the two of them came up with a solution to a problem they were having in the blocks, an adult in the classroom commented on their creative approach. Lexi replied, "Well, we are thinkers." The perfect summation to her time at the Children's School was stated by Benjamin Franklin. "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."

Submitted by Donna Perovich,
Children's School Kindergarten Teacher
and Grandmother of Lexi Steiner (K)

Screening Updates

In February, 62 children participated in the Vision Screening offered at the Children's School by the Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh. Five were flagged for possible vision problems requiring further diagnostics (one 3, three 4's, and one K), and we are already seeing children come to school in new glasses! In the January Easter Seals Speech and Hearing screening, 12 of the 60 children screened were found to need additional testing of their hearing, language, and / or speech (five 3's, three 4's, and four K). These screenings are essential for catching problems early so that children can reach their full learning potential!

March Web Artists

3's Friends: Saatwik B., Sara H., Matias S., and Emma T.

4's Friends: Simone B., Vivian J., Basil K., Muriel L., and Carlos S.

Kindergarten Friends: Alice B., David D., and Rohan P.



Box Tops for Education Update

Thank you to everyone who collected and submitted Box Tops for Education. In this collection period (November-March), we received 1,029 box tops plus 188 Bonus Box Tops for a total of \$121.70! A very special thanks to Shamica Harper for being our Box Tops Coordinator for the 2013-14 school year.

Pre-Kindergarten EITC Update

In February, we received contributions to our Pre-Kindergarten Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program from **Dollar Bank** and **Keystone Health Plan West**. Through the PK-EITC, eligible Pennsylvania businesses can earn tax credits while providing financial assistance for children to attend preschool. We are currently providing financial support to 22 preschool children within the Pittsburgh area, and we anticipate funding even more before the end of the school year.

If you would like more information or can help us to build a list of prospective businesses, please contact the Main Office.

Do you have Questions for Educators?

On Thursday, March 20th, Dr. Carver will host open question & answer sessions for parents from 8:30-9:30am and from 12:30-1:30pm. Perhaps you have questions about handling children's behavior, building character, choosing media, teaching reading, responding to children's questions about sensitive topics, etc. Anything is fair game! Remember that you can also send questions to Dr. Carver any time via email at sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu or request a personal appointment.

Undergraduate Spotlight

My name is Yu Zhao. When I think back about two years to when I first started working at the Children's School and remember all the children with whom I've had the privilege to interact and develop pleasant bonds, I realize that the whole experience of working at an educationally-driven yet laid-back environment has been one of the highlights of my college career. As a senior in the BXA interdisciplinary program for Art & Psychology (as well as an additional science curriculum due to my recent decision to go to dental school), I feel as if the Children's School has become my second home on campus because of the sheer joy and reward I feel when I help a friend accomplish a certain task or teach him/her the value of being kind to others. I always look forward to working because the presence of every lively child is like a sanctuary from the stressful and demanding workload from school. To be able to have witnessed whole cycles of some of the friends joining us as three year olds and then growing and flourishing into capable and intelligent kindergartners is something so special that not many people besides a young child's family get to appreciate! Having grown up as an only child, I've always wanted a little brother or sister. I feel almost as if each friend at the Children's School is my sibling who can brighten my day. Being able to work with so many wonderful young children has taught me countless important life lessons about responsibility, patience, and communication.

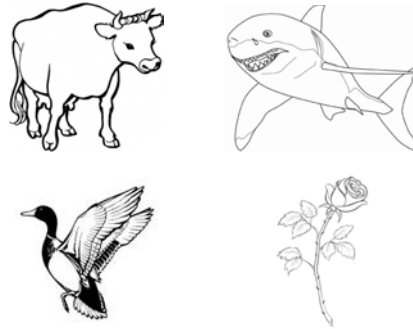
One of the most amazing things about the Children's School is the diversity of topics the children get to study at such a young age. From transportation and recycling to dinosaurs and birds, the plethora of ever-changing themes from month to month and the corresponding creative activities involved is not only captivating to the children but also eye-opening for me as well; I wish I knew half as much as these children know when I was their age! The children are like sponges that absorb new material with such open minds. What an enriching sight to behold! I love it when they've just studied something they find intriguing and cannot stop telling everyone around them how a certain phenomenon works. Sometimes they relay information in such an innocent yet original way that I cannot hold myself back from laughing. I also enjoy immensely the opportunity I get to plan new activities with the teachers. Being able to offer my input and think of novel ways to help the children explore different subject matter is something that makes me proud. Just like the children always say, "Everyone is a friend." Working at the Children's School has taught me a great deal about the value of friendship and the gratification of being able to help others. I know that with whatever I do in the future, I will always look back on my time here with fond memories.



Research Spotlight

The Picture Finding Game

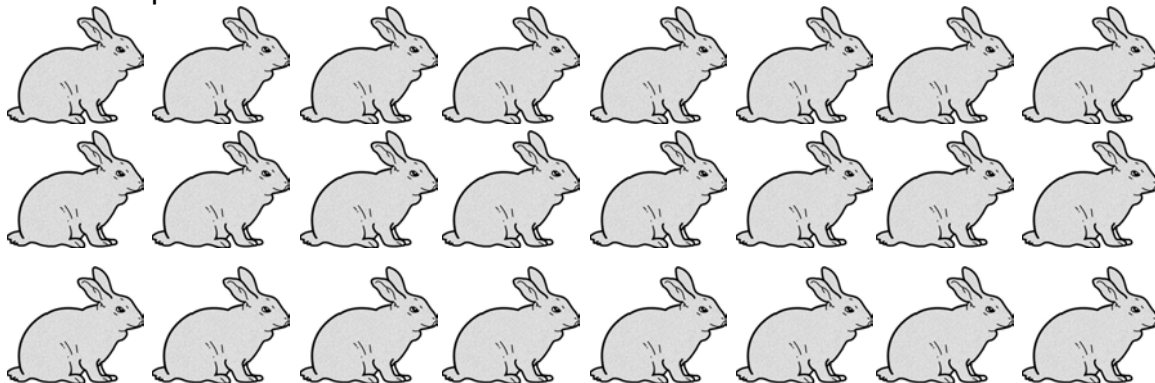
Early childhood is a time when children discover many new words. Word recognition tasks are often used to determine the average age of acquisition for these words. These data can then be applied to the study of other cognitive topics, including generalization or inductive inference, when using words and pictures. Dr. Anna Fisher and graduate student Layla Unger are particularly interested in the degree to which children utilize this knowledge in various reasoning tasks. In the Picture Finding Game, children are shown black and white slides of pictures. Then, children are asked to find the picture representing the target word on each slide. For example, we might ask children to find the picture of the rose among the set below.



The Numbers Game

Kindergarten is also a time when children learn many new math skills and concepts, such as identifying numerals, counting, and comparing sets of different sizes. The purpose of the Numbers Game is to develop an age-appropriate assessment of Kindergarten students' math skills and knowledge. During this task, participants are presented with problems like the one depicted in the example below, and the experimenter reads the instructions for how to complete the problem. Kindergarten students who take part in this assessment are only given generalized positive feedback (e.g., "You did a great job!"); they are not told whether their responses are correct or incorrect. The data collected from this study will only be used to contribute to the evaluation of math instruction materials that are being investigated in other studies being conducted this year. These data will not be used as an academic evaluation of participants in any way.

Experimenter instructions: "Please circle seven of these bunnies."



Research Spotlight, continued ...

The Reasoning Game

In this study, Dr. Anna Fisher and graduate student Karrie Godwin are investigating young children's understanding of categories and the development of category-based reasoning. In particular, they are interested in examining the role of conceptual and perceptual information on category-based reasoning and induction in early childhood. Specifically, they are interested in the degree to which children utilize their knowledge of categories and perceptual similarity in a reasoning task where these sources of information are in conflict. They are also interested in whether labels help children make inferences. In the Reasoning Game, children are shown sets of three pictures similar to the ones presented here. For example, we might show children a lemon, a tennis ball, and a lemon slice. For half of the trials, children may be told the object labels. For the other half of the trials, no labels will be used. Children will learn that one of the objects has a particular property, and then the children must decide whether this property can be generalized to the other two objects.



The Naming Game

In a related study, Dr. Anna Fisher and graduate student Karrie Godwin are investigating young children's understanding of categories and the development of category-based reasoning. In particular, they are interested in examining the role of conceptual and perceptual information on category-based reasoning and induction in early childhood. Specifically, they are interested in the degree to which children utilize their knowledge of categories and perceptual similarity in a reasoning task and whether familiarity with labels helps children make inductive inferences during a reasoning task. In the Naming Game, children are shown a series of pictures similar to the one presented below. Then, children are asked to identify the animal or object pictured.



Example trial: "We are going to play a game with pictures. I am going to show you a picture and I want you to tell me what the picture is called. Okay, let's play the game. What is this called?"

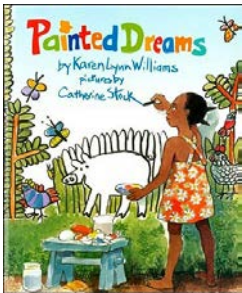
Undergraduate Researchers in Training

Students in Dr. Anna Fisher's **Developmental Research Methods** class are preparing their final projects for the semester. Though the research protocols are still being developed, the students are planning to study many educationally relevant early childhood tasks. For example, groups are studying whether children share more when an adult models generosity, whether children persist longer on challenging tasks when adults comment on their effort, whether children's stated preferences are swayed by knowing what peers or older children have previously chosen, how children resolve discrepancies between a character's words and facial expression, and what type of counting experience helps children learn to recognize numerals. 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!

Director's Corner: The Heart of Work



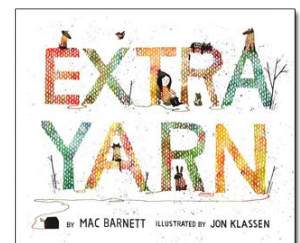
When we adopt the playful and positive attitudes toward our learning, as advocated by Zander and Zander's practices of "**Rule #6**" and "**The Way Things Are**", then we experience the freedom to engage fully in our life and work. This freedom is the foundation for The Art of Possibility's next two practices, both of which resonate very well with the learning culture at the Children's School and at Carnegie Mellon University. Our work here is guided by Andrew Carnegie's motto, "My heart is in the work." Our new leader, Dr. Subra Suresh, has altered the phrase slightly to "My work is from the heart" as a way of emphasizing his inaugural theme of "Crossing Boundaries, Transforming Lives." Both visionaries embrace a passionate sense of possibility, which is exactly what Zander and Zander advocate when they talk about their practice of "**Giving Way to Passion**." In fact, they suggest "actively surrendering our boundaries" so that we can participate wholly with an urgency and momentum to our efforts. This passion yields a "spiritedness in going beyond where before [we] might have stopped" (p. 121), which then inspires others to also do their best.



Karen Lynn Williams' book, "Painted Dreams", demonstrates the possibilities envisioned by Ti Marie when she refuses to have her passion for art limited by her Haitian family's poverty and her need to help with daily chores and caregiving. With only a small amount of found materials, she secretly creates a mural that attracts the attention of her entire community, improves her mother's market sales, and even impresses the revered elder artist in town, all of which change the way her parents view and value her unique talent so she is free to develop it further.

The next step, of course, is that passion freely embraced and expressed results in "**Lighting a Spark**" of possibility in others such that they eagerly enroll themselves in similarly passionate endeavors. "The practice of enrollment is about giving yourself as a possibility to others and being ready, in turn, to catch their spark." Amazing learning is possible when our educators are free to share their passions. For example, our cooking program and renovated kitchen became a reality because Miss McMichael's passion for cooking sparked the interest of our staff, children, and families. In the same way, our involvement in woodworking, our gym classes, our choice of unit topics and related activities, our success in raising scholarship funds, our unique professional development opportunities, etc. all result from passions shared and connections made.

The book, "Extra Yarn" by Mac Barnett "is the story of how a young girl and her magical box of yarn transform a community" from a black and white world of isolation to a colorful world of connection. Annabelle simply enjoys knitting and sharing her knitted garments with everyone and every thing in town, including pets, trucks, and houses. She quietly persists despite disbelief and criticism, and she steadfastly refuses to accept millions of dollars from a powerful person who seeks to control the never-empty box of yarn. In the end, passion trumps power and Annabelle's spark brightens others' lives.



As we together strive to facilitate each of our children's development, let us aim to awaken their passions for learning and be open to the sparks they have to share with us at school and at home. By opening ourselves to the possibilities that they inspire, we will find our own hearts more fully in the work of teaching and parenting.