Welcome, Lily!

On Monday, February 22nd, Kindergarten teacher Mrs. Blizman and her husband welcomed daughter Lillian Greer to their family at 10:22am. Lily was 6 pounds 2 ounces and 19 inches long. Fortunately, the kindergarten friends planned their baby shower for Mrs. Blizman on Friday the 19th, so she was prepared with gifts and advice, such as “give her lots of love”, “feed her milk”, “play toys and games with her”, “let her have play dates”, and “give her hugs when she cries”. We look forward to meeting “Lily” in person sometime soon!

Summer “Olympics” 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. Bird, Mrs. Cherin, Miss Lin, Mrs. Loomis, Mrs. Mack, and Mrs. Wendolowsk will engage the children in a study of “The Olympics” (see photo from 2012). We anticipate investigating a wide variety of Olympic sports, as well as some that we modify or invent based on the outdoor terrain on our playground. 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. Register soon because space is limited!

March Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 3rd</td>
<td>4:30-6:30 pm, TERRIFIC TEXTILE TIME for Families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, March 4th</td>
<td>Professional Development Day for Educators (NO SCHOOL)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td>Monday, March 7th through Friday, March 11th (NO SCHOOL)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, March 13th</td>
<td>Daylight Saving Time Begins so SPRING FORWARD 1 Hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, March 18th</td>
<td>9:30-11:00 am, Educator / Parent Discussion re: Tackling Tough</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Topics such as religion, death, stranger danger, etc. (child care</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>provided for children not in school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, April 1st</td>
<td>NO SCHOOL for children</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conference Preparation Day for Educators</td>
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March 2016 Family Newsletter

Carnegie Mellon University
Children’s School

[Image of a family with a newborn baby]
 Terrific Textile Time on Thursday, March 3rd

Thanks to all the educators and family members who have engaged with us in our exploration of Textiles over the past month, and especially to Conor’s grandmother, Bev Patrick, for teaching us to use her weaving loom and setting it for us to make a permanent collaborative weaving. We hope all of the Children’s School families will come celebrate and share our learning on Thursday, March 3rd from 4:30 – 6:30 pm for our Terrific Textile Time.

• Let’s use our clothing colors to identify families from each class, with red for Red Room families, blue for Blue Room families, green for Green Room families, and white (the presence of all colors) for Kindergarten families.

• We are also still collecting new socks and underwear of all sizes since these are the least frequently donated items in clothing drives.

• Be ready to play games with textiles, do pretend play with textiles, make several types of fabric art, experiment with textiles, be creative with a bandana you get to choose and keep, add your unique touch to our collaborative weaving in the new Make Shop, and share a simple snack.

• Consider bringing a camera to take snapshots of your family’s Textile activity tour. We hope to see you all on Thursday night!

Staff / Parent Dialogue: Tackling Tough Topics

Please join us for a discussion of how to discuss tough topics with our children in age appropriate ways. We’ll consider issues of direct impact, such as the loss of a pet or other illness and death, the balance between appropriate wariness of strangers and respect for diverse others, other varied perspectives like politics and religion, world events and natural disasters, and preparation for greater independence re: choices about behavior, substance use, relationships, etc.

This Educator / Parent Discussion will be held on Friday, March 18th 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. Since school will be in session, please park in the East Campus garage or at one of the metered spots near the school.

Save the Date - Spring Gardening!

Saturday, April 2, 2016

The Children’s School will be participating in the spring 1000Plus Volunteer Day on Saturday, April 2, 2016. Please plan to join us for a day of spring garden cleanup, planting and FUN!!
March Gallery Features

3’s Friends: Ava B., Maren G., Colby K.-R., and Benny R.

4’s Friends: Andrew B., Ava C., Eugene L., and Max T.

Kindergarten Friends: Amanda L. and Ryan M.

Screening Updates

In early February, 50 children participated in the Vision Screening offered at the Children’s School by the Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh. No children were flagged as possibly needing glasses, compared to one last year and nine the year before. The January Easter Seals Speech and Hearing screening flagged three Preschool 3’s, two Preschool 4’s, and three Kindergartners for additional diagnostics to check for issues in need of intervention. These screenings are essential for catching problems early so that children can reach their full learning potential!

Scholarship Funding Update

In February, we received contributions to our Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs. Through the EITC and OSTC, eligible Pennsylvania businesses can earn tax credits while providing financial assistance for children to attend preschool or an approved K-12 school. In addition to the donations mentioned in January’s newsletter, we have also received contributions from The Buncher Company, UPMC, and Trumbull Corporation. If you would like more information or can help us to build a list of prospective businesses, please contact the Main Office.

Box Tops for Education Update

Thank you to everyone who collected and submitted Box Tops for Education. In this collection period (October - March), we received 950 Box Tops, plus 28 BONUS Box Tops for a total of $97.80. Our next Box Top Submission Deadline is in the fall of 2016.

Lost and Found

We have accumulated quite a collection of jackets, barrettes and other items of unlabeled children’s clothing. If your child is missing anything, please look in our lost and found area in the hallway or send a note to your child’s teacher with a description and we will see if we have it!
Family Social Organization Fun

On February 5, Children's School families had "sew" much fun working with textiles in the MAKESHOP at the Children's Museum. The activities were “tailored” to our needs. 3's families “bonded” in the morning and 4's and Kindergarten families “assembled” later in the afternoon. Sewing and weaving were among the activities the children enjoyed. We love weaving FSO events into this year's Textile theme!

On President’s Day, seven families took part in Munchkin Monday at The Science Center. They heard stories about robots, made a robot creation from recycled materials (including fabric and felt!), and explored the many hands-on exhibits the Science Center has to offer.

We hope you'll join the fun in March!
Family Social Organization for March

Spring Break Skating! Please join the FSO over Spring Break for some roller skating fun! It’s Tiny Tots Skate on Tuesday, March 8 from 1-3 pm at Romp N Roll in Glenshaw (off Rt. 8). This event is for children ages 9 and under. For $5, you get skate rental, pizza and a drink. For more information contact Alexis Tuckfelt at alexiscoupe@aol.com.

We hope to see you at the March Book Club!

When: Wednesday, March 16th after morning greeting (around 8:45am)
The meetings usually last until around 10am/10:30am.
Where: The CMU Café, which is in Resnik House, ground floor (close to the football field).

For this next meeting, we will watch a video from the web site of Dr. Anthony Rao, author of the book: The Way of Boys: Promoting the Social and Emotional Development of Young Boys

The video can be found at the very bottom (scroll all the way down) of this web page: http://www.anthonyrao.com/book.html

Please feel free to contact Michelle Landau (Owen’s mom) mklandau@mac.com or Jen Moak (Ryan’s mom) jimoak95@yahoo.com with any questions!

Family Fun around town in March

• Wednesdays at 1 pm - Story Time at Phipps Conservatory, Free with admission
Listen to storytellers weave tales about gardens, fruits, vegetables, garden animals and other fun things. Make a craft to take home and treasure. https://phipps.conservatory.org

• Fridays from 1 to 2:30pm - Bring children ages 5 and up to REI Pittsburgh for an afternoon of adventure and socialization. REI’s highly trained staff and non-competitive climbing environment ensures that parents and children alike will bond during climbing and games! This program is free of charge but limited to REI members only ($20 for a lifetime membership).

• 2nd & 4th Saturdays from 10 - 11 am - Young children explore a variety of themes and installations at the Mattress Factory, participate in story time and work on a collaborative hands-on project. Mini-Factory is a mobile, adaptable pop-up space students can help to build and we use to explore new ideas and concepts. Free to members or $5 / child (http://mattress.org/content/mini-factory). RSVP to education@mattress.org or 412.231.3169 as space is limited.

• Toys of the '50s, '60s and '70s exhibition, with larger-than-life versions of games and toys, including Connect Four, Jenga, and Chess at the Senator John Heinz History Center (http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org)

• April 4th from Noon to 4pm for Children 3–10 years old - Egg-cellent Egg Hunt at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Follow the clues that lead to the treats. Meet some live springtime animals!

Please contact FSO chairs Alexis alexiscoupe@aol.com and Jess jsimcox5@gmail.com with any ideas, questions or concerns.
Families Helping Families:  
The DeLima Family invites support for Refugees

With the reports of refugees in the news through the fall, I felt the need to do something to help. As a child, my family helped a family from Vietnam move to Pittsburgh as refugees. It was an eye opening experience to see the father of a family of six get off the airplane from Vietnam with a backpack. One backpack, which had less than I would have packed for a sleepover, was all the family had to help them start their new life in Pittsburgh. They relied on their faith that they would be greeted with all that they needed here through the goodness of others. A group of families from our church assisted our new friends from Vietnam by donating furniture, linens, kitchen equipment, and enough clothing for a family of six. We helped them move into their new home and assisted with taking them to appointments and learning English. It was nothing short of an amazing experience as a child.

In an effort to help the many refugees we hear about in the media and offer a service learning experience for my children, I sought ways we could get involved with helping refugees in Pittsburgh. I discovered the South Hills Interfaith Movement (SHIM, http://shimcares.org) and learned that they provide many services to families who have had to relocate to Pittsburgh. They provide after school care for refugee students in grades K-5 and an Early Childhood Program to support the preschoolers of refugee families. In addition to other services, the organization also has a food bank and clothing room where families can come to obtain items they need at no cost to them.

This is where we come into the story. I thought it would be great if we could rally together at the Children’s School to support this effort by collecting some items SHIM indicated are most needed by the families they support.

These items include:
- 2T to size 12 clothing for boys
- Shoes for boys
- Linens (towels, sheets, blankets, etc.)
- Dried beans and lentils
- Baking items like flour, sugar, oil
- Cereal
- Pasta sauce
- Juice, Coffee, Tea
- Soap, Shampoo
- Toothbrushes, Toothpaste
- Diapers (especially larger sizes, so if someone has recently mastered potty training and you have diapers hanging around you don't need please pass them on as they do not need to be in an unopened package)

Throughout the month of March, donations can be made to the school, and I will ensure safe delivery to SHIM. Anything you can offer will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,
Maria DeLima
Family Spotlight: A Few Favorite Things

My husband Ken and I (Lisa) both grew up in the Pittsburgh area, but left the city for college, graduate school and work. I was living in California and Ken was in North Carolina when we became engaged and the plan was that we would settle in North Carolina once married. However, as plans often change, we found ourselves moving back to Pittsburgh before the wedding even happened! It ended up being a wonderful blessing in disguise, especially since we started expanding our family right away and had all the grandparents living here. We always loved Pittsburgh but never realized how amazing it would be to raise children here and how many terrific schools there are in the area. A friend told us about her family's experience with The Children's School and couldn't say enough wonderful things about the program. She also recommended putting in an application right away even though I was still pregnant! Once I learned more about the program, I was happy to ensure a spot by submitting the application so early.

Our family began our time at The Children’s School in 2010 when our eldest daughter Clara joined the Blue Room. Within the first week, she felt right at home and was so excited to go to school every day! When our son Broden started visiting the school for family events, his sister's birthday and playtime in the Red Room during parent seminars, he was enthralled with all the activities and couldn't wait to go to school himself. Sloane was born while Clara was finishing her time in the Green Room and continued her visits over the next 2 years while Broden had his turn in the Red and Green Rooms. Sloane thought The Children’s School was the greatest place and would try to explore every nook and cranny any chance she had to visit (we were often chasing after her through all the rooms just to keep an eye on her!). When she realized it was her turn to join the Blue Room, she was more than ready to go -- drop off on day one was harder for me than her, but her enthusiasm and excitement was reassuring. She has been enjoying her time in the Blue Room and Extended morning immensely and is still excited for school at greeting every morning!

We feel very lucky to have found such an amazing preschool that has fostered our children's curiosity and development in a homely environment. The faculty is so warm and nurturing and has become an extended family! The older alumni love any chance to come back with Sloane to see all the teachers and staff -- some of their favorite teachers are from their years at The Children's School. They often remember their activities from years before and during open house or family festival they make sure to do all their favorite things (like hammering nails and golf tees). We will always cherish our memories of The Children’s School and continue to highly recommend the program, even when someone is still pregnant!
Undergraduate Spotlight

Jessey Schwartz (Senior, Psychology)

As a student, many days are filled with scheduling time throughout the day to finish papers and projects as quickly as possible with few breaks. When I come to work at the Children’s School, it allows me to hit pause in the middle of my hectic schedule. Playing with shaving cream and paint, mailing letters to friends in the classroom, and creating balloon rockets to take a trip to the moon are a few examples of the great things I get to do at work. The children impress me every day with their wit and creativity. Everything is exciting, not only for the children, but for everyone involved. And after my shifts are over, I get to show off my dyed blue fingers from making playdough and the stickers stuck to my jeans.

I’ve spent four wonderful semesters working at the Children’s School, and since I am graduating in May, unfortunately this one is my last. Without the Children’s School, I wouldn’t have such an extensive vocabulary for types of dinosaurs or the levels in the jungle, which impresses my friends every time they come up in conversation (which is more often than you’d think!). I also wouldn’t have learned how important it was to stay positive in spite of bad behavior or mistakes. The teachers seem to know the perfect solution to every fight over a toy, every wrecked castle, every spill of milk, and every distraction during circle time. It’s thoroughly impressive how careful and positive each teacher’s response is to these problems, when it’s so easy and instinctive to be negative and critical.

Lessons like these are just the tip of the iceberg of what I’ve gained during my time at the Children’s School. My experience here has provided a great foundation for working with children, as I plan on attending graduate school for speech-language pathology. I'll miss every teacher and child, but I know they’ll all be doing wonderful things!

Student Volunteers, Interns & Employees

The Children’s School is an ideal setting for students with tight schedules to arrange opportunities for observation and practice of excellent early childhood education as volunteers, interns, and employees. Because we have both morning and afternoon preschool sessions, our kindergarten has instructional times both in the morning and the afternoon, and our extended day programs run at lunchtime, there are essentially continuous instructional sessions in progress. Because of our existing procedures for observation and research, we are equipped to handle students at all levels in their teaching practica, from pure observation to student teaching. We also benefit from the students' diverse talents!
Family Math Fun with Mortar Board Seniors

On Saturday morning, February 20th, CMU students from the Mortar Board Senior Honor Society hosted a Family Math Fun event at the Children’s School for Children’s School and Cyert Center families. Dr. Carver is the group’s faculty advisor, and April Tillinghast, a kindergarten intern, is the Vice President. During the event, children got to do crafts and collages with 100 stickers, try different ways to make 100 cents, play dice games to 100, predict the volume of 100 water drops, do 100 exercises, build with 100 blocks, make a snack with 100 pieces, draw a self-portrait of themselves at age 100, etc. Thanks to the talented seniors who sponsored this engaging event!
Undergraduate Researchers in Training

Students in Dr. Stephanie Siler’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. Learning the impact of the variables studied on children’s performance and learning can help parents and educators better choose approaches for supporting their progress.

- **The Tower of Hanoi Game** – Testing whether providing subgoals for challenging tasks will increase kindergartners’ persistence in solving them.

- **The Line Game** – Experimenting with factors that influence the likelihood that 3, 4, and 5-year-old children will change their answers on an open-ended line comparison task when adults offer contrasting perspectives.

- **The Block Game** – Determining whether demonstration and feedback during practice will improve 4 and 5 year olds’ performance on a 3-dimensional mental rotation task.

- **The Storytelling Game** – Testing whether gender and/or sibling status influences 3, 4, and 5-year-old children’s responses to stories in which there is a conflict, such as how to share one toy, between characters who appear to be of equal status (left) vs. differential status (right).

- **The Letters and Numbers Game** - Determining whether gender-biased theming of letter and number games (e.g., color and image type) impacts 4 and 5 year olds’ preferences when given choices of which to play, compared to games with similar content but gender neutral themes.

- **The Toy Sharing Game** - Testing whether 3 and 5-year-old children are able to integrate another’s perspective into their decisions about which toys to offer for sharing.

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 to the left of the Children’s School office. What an interesting set of developmental psychology topics!
Research Spotlight

The Thinking About Animals Game

Different things can be related to each other in many ways, such as by sharing features or by being seen together in the environment. For instance, living organisms may be similar in shape or mode of locomotion, belong to the same biological taxonomic group, or live in the same habitat. Biological taxonomic relationships are particularly cognitively useful because they divide the domain of living organisms into clear categories that can form a reliable basis from which to acquire new knowledge. For instance, biological taxonomic categories can reliably guide inductive inferences about biological features, because organisms that belong to the same biological taxonomic category share many features in common. However, education research suggests that children’s knowledge of other, more easily observed relationships, such as those based on shared perceptual features or habitat, interferes with their understanding of biological taxonomic categories, causing misconceptions about taxonomic relatedness. The purpose of graduate student Layla Unger’s research is to test whether, in the absence of misconceptions about relationships, providing perceptual “Co-Occurrence” input in which real-world organisms that belong to the same biological taxonomic category simultaneously co-occur fosters both the organization of knowledge into these categories and the formation of inductive inferences about biological features that are consistent with these categories. To ensure that children have no existing misconceptions about relationships between these organisms, each pair of organisms consists of one organism familiar to young children (e.g., snake) and one organism unfamiliar to young children (e.g., soft shelled turtle).

To assess the degree to which taxonomic relationships influence children’s knowledge organization and inductive inferences before and after Co-Occurrence Input, children are asked to complete two short tasks during both pre-test and post-test sessions. In the first task, children are shown triads of organisms on a computer screen consisting of a familiar Target organism (e.g., snake), one unfamiliar “match” organism from the same biological category as the Target (e.g., soft shelled turtle), and one unfamiliar “mismatch” organism from a different category (e.g., mudskipper). For each triad, the experimenter attributes a novel biological property such as “plaxium blood” to the Target, and asks the child to decide which of the two other organisms also shares the property. In the second task, children are asked to arrange sets of three pictures corresponding to the three organisms from the triads described above such that they put organisms of the “same kind” close together.

In between the pre- and post-tests, children take part in two Co-Occurrence Activities: A Co-Occurrence stream, in which children observe a sequence of images that each simultaneously present two organisms together, and a Co-Occurrence matching cards game, in which children play a card game depicting pairs of organisms. Half of the pairs consist of a familiar Target organism and its taxonomically unfamiliar “match” from the same triad, and the other half consist of a familiar Target organism and the unfamiliar “match” from a different triad to which it is unrelated. In this way, we can test the effectiveness of experiencing co-occurrences between taxonomically related organisms by seeing whether, from pre- to post-test, participants make more taxonomic responses only for triads in which they experienced the familiar Target and its taxonomically related unfamiliar “match” from the same triad co-occur.
Director’s Corner: How Frequent?

Next for consideration in our series on ways to encourage children’s interest in and exploration of foundational math concepts is learning about how frequently people, objects and events occur in the world. Humans naturally notice patterns of data in their lives and set expectations or choose actions based on the probabilities they discover. Basically, we do statistics all the time. Statistics is the domain of mathematics that includes classifying and organizing data via varied representations and then using the information to make decisions. Even 8-month-old infants express surprise when an adult repeatedly draws white balls from a container that they can see contains mostly red balls and 15 month olds use similar probabilities to form expectations about what type of actions to use with certain objects (see an interesting TED Talk by Laura Schultz at https://www.ted.com/talks/laura_schulz_the_surprisingly_logical_minds_of_babies - t-1057552).

In early childhood, we begin explorations by noticing properties of people, objects, and events in our everyday lives and then using those features to categorize them. The 3’s sort toys during cleanup time, count friends’ characteristics, notice when there are more sunny days than cloudy ones, etc. Preschool 4’s begin to use graphing strategies to organize birth months, name length, family size, and other data about the friends in each class. By kindergarten, the entry routine includes a “Question of the Day”, and the weekly “Clipboard Helper” takes a survey of the class, being careful to note who has already been asked, and then reports the results to the group. The kindergartners typically get so interested in the surveys that they start inventing their own by second semester!

At home, families can promote this early data collection and analysis in both fun and useful ways by sorting dishes, clothes, and recyclables, considering the chances of rolling certain numbers or drawing certain cards during games, comparing choices and preferences of friends and family members while taking beverage or dessert orders, etc. Even in the car, children can tally the color of vehicles they pass and use the data to predict what they are most likely to encounter next. Clipboards and graph paper with large squares enhance the intrigue for children. As with arithmetic and geometry, varied opportunities for practice helps solidify concepts, so offer lots of chances and follow the children’s lead in terms of which ones to pursue in the most depth.

Remember to reinforce the effort required to complete a task and do it well, as well as the ways hard work helps us to improve and keep learning. Such a “growth mindset” prepares children to persevere through challenges and take in initiative to seek new learning opportunities. As with all aspects of math, the possibilities are endless so use whatever resources you and your family have to invent your own ways to explore statistics. I’d love to hear about your math adventures!