Theatre Arts Explorations / Festival March 9th

February has been full of theatrical storytelling at the Children’s School, from simple classics like *Chicken Little* to the kindergarten’s comedic rendition of *Theseus and the Minotaur*. The children have learned about directing, script-writing, set, costume & prop design, and acting. Thanks to all the educators and family members who have engaged with us in our exploration of Theatre Arts, and especially to Sarah Deutsch (Maggie, AM 3’s) for guided tours of the Purnell Center for the Arts and to Attack Theatre performers for sharing their talents for animating ideas with us. We hope all of the Children’s School families will come celebrate and share our learning on Thursday, March 9th from 4:30 – 6:30 pm during our family Theatre Arts Festival. Consider bringing a camera to take snapshots of your family’s creative dramatics. We hope to see you all on stage!

Summer “Bugs” 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. Cherin, Mrs. Loomis, Mrs. Mack, Ms. O’Neill, Mr. Salinetro, Mrs. Wendolowski, and Miss Zhu will engage the children in a study of “Bugs”. We will “go buggy” on the outdoor terrain of our playground, as well as read fiction and non-fiction books and offer related art, cooking, sensory, and manipulative activities to enhance the thematic study. 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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<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 9th</td>
<td>4:30-6:30 pm, THEATRE ARTS FESTIVAL for Families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, March 10th</td>
<td>Professional Development for Educators (NO SCHOOL)</td>
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<td>Sunday, March 12th</td>
<td>Daylight Saving Time so SPRING FORWARD 1 Hour</td>
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<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td>Monday, March 13th - Friday, March 17th (NO SCHOOL)</td>
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<td>Friday, March 31st</td>
<td>NO SCHOOL for children</td>
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<td>Conference Preparation Day for Educators</td>
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Save the Date - Spring Gardening!

Saturday, April 8, 2017

The Children’s School will be participating in CMU’s spring 1000Plus Volunteer Day on Saturday, April 8, 2017. Please plan to join us for a day of spring garden cleanup!!

Swimming Lessons Offered

It is the time of year again for the Tartan Swim & Dive Lesson Fundraiser! This spring, they are offering eight lesson dates for interested swimmers 3 years old and up. The lessons are taught by members of the Carnegie Mellon University Varsity Swimming & Diving team, and they welcome all ability levels, including adults. Please see the attached flyer for more information regarding dates, prices, and times, or contact CMU Assistant Swim Coach James Sica at jsica@andrew.cmu.edu or 412-268-6082.

Scholarship Funding Update

In February, we received another contribution 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 earlier newsletters, we have also received a contribution from First Commonwealth Bank. If you would like more information or can help us to build a list of prospective businesses, please contact the Main Office.

Did you know?

Almost one-third of the children at the Children’s School receive scholarship aid. In honor of our upcoming 50th anniversary in 2018, please consider donating to the Ann Baldwin Taylor Scholarship Fund. This fund was established to honor Dr. Ann Baldwin Taylor who, as the founding director, led the Children’s School from 1968 until 1993. You can make a secure gift online by clicking the “Ways to Give” link on our web site, send a donation to Carnegie Mellon University, P.O. Box 371525, Pittsburgh, PA 15251-7525, or send a check in your child’s backpack to the school office. Checks should be made payable to “CMU Children’s School”. Contact Maggie Rosenblum (rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu) with any questions.

Speech & Hearing / Vision Screening Results

As reported, the Easter Seals Speech and Hearing screening in January flagged 7 children (out of 38 children screened) for additional diagnostics and another 7 children were recommended to be re-checked in 12 months. This February, the Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh screened 51 children, and one child was flagged as needing further testing. The screenings are essential for catching problems early so that children can reach their full potential!
Character Education

During the 2016-2017 school year, Children’s School educators have been exploring character education, beginning with our own understanding of the key elements of character, together with important dispositions for lifelong learning. We compared our concept maps of character with multiple existing descriptions from diverse educators, including those developed by the Pittsburgh-based Heartwood Institute. In January, we continued the dialogue with our practicum students from Duksung Women’s University to begin reflecting on our existing practices for fostering character development and making plans for being more intentional about them.

So what is character? “The Heartwood is the strong inner core of the tree trunk that keeps the tree upright through storm and drought. Children also have a core called ‘character’ that can grow stronger and support them as they deal with the challenges and stresses of life.” Based on this principle, the Heartwood Institute developed the following mission:

*To promote the understanding and practice of ethical values that are the foundation of community among all people, with particular emphasis on children and families and the understanding of seven universal attributes: Courage, Loyalty, Justice, Respect, Hope, Honesty, and Love. These attributes constitute a holistic framework for strong community among all people. Heartwood offers powerful literature-based ethics education resources to children, school, and families.*

To create this PreK to 8th grade spiraling curriculum, the developers chose quality literature from around the world with human characters to act as fictional role models, with values presented in a positive manner, in stories that reflect diversity of culture and gender, together with exceptional illustrations. For each of the stories selected for each of the grade levels, the educators developed companion activities so that the character education could be woven throughout schools’ existing curriculum, much in the way that our Extended AM educators choose a theme-related focus book for each week and then plan related activities to help deepen children’s understanding.

Though we have not used the Heartwood curriculum in its entirety, we share the seven core values and have collected many of the early childhood books into our library, along with numerous others that similarly emphasize character building. We aim to model these values in our interactions with all of the diverse learners in our laboratory school environment, and we explicitly discuss them as they relate to the situations that arise from day to day so that the children become familiar with values vocabulary and learn to identify opportunities to be respectful, fair, caring, honest, etc.

The Heartwood curriculum is now out of print, so the developers asked the Children’s School to develop a web site whereby we could help them disseminate the materials free of charge to any interested families and educators. Thanks to the hard work of Miss Zhu, our educational intern, and Tyler Farren, one of the Psychology Department computer support professionals, we now have a user-friendly site with all of the resources posted. We hope you will peruse the site and consider sharing some of the books with your family as you partner with us in building your child’s character.
Family Spotlight: Constants Across 7 Years

Hello! We are the Goldberg Family. After ONLY 7 consecutive years of enrollment at the Children’s School, we have finally been honored with a family spotlight. Either the Children’s School was waiting for our last check to clear or they wanted to build a seven-year suspense to unveil the fabulous Goldberg family.

Our perfect family consists of Eric, the handsome Dad, the Stepford wife, Beth, and three brilliant children Neve (age 9), Asher (age 7) and Maren (age 5). We live in Squirrel Hill and love to dine at the finest that the area has to offer. You will usually find us at Mineo’s Pizza, Dunkin Donuts, Cold Stone Creamery, Eat ‘N Park and the CMU food trucks. As a family, we love to travel, watch sporting events and cook together. Beth is an Audiologist. She previously worked at the VA hospital. Beth loves when people say to her “What? I can’t hear you”. Eric runs a sports incentive travel company and a commercial real estate development company. Both Eric and Beth were born and raised in Pittsburgh. Eric also has roots in Toronto, Canada. Eric is an avid canoer and spent two weeks last summer paddling down the Snake River in the Yukon Territories. Beth is an avid sun tanner. She spent last summer at the Edgewood pool.

We first heard about the Children’s School from a friend while Neve was in utero. Being the neurotic first time parents that many of us are, we submitted the application for an unnamed child for admission into the school! With a name picked, in 2010 the Children’s School offered our three-year-old daughter, Neve, admission. Neve joined Mrs. Flynn and Mr. Salinetro in the Blue Room, starting our 7 year run. From that moment, we were a part of the loving, thoughtful and dedicated Children’s School family. That same family also allowed Eric to walk into their break room and share their lunches, which he did each and every time he walked into the school. During that first year, the Children’s School was probably hopeful that we were just going to be "one year wonders", but Eric loved the staff’s lunches so much that Neve moved on to the Green Room with Mrs. Bird. Neve followed the Green Room with Kindergarten with Mrs. Perovich and Mrs. Blizman. After a wonderful kindergarten experience, Neve matriculated from the Children’s School to Falk School. Neve is doing great at school and is also a student in Pittsburgh Musical Theater. In fact, she has an upcoming role in “The Lion King Jr.”.

The following year, after a very tough negotiation with Ms. Drash, we decided to enroll our son, Asher, into the Blue Room in exchange for a better selection of cookies for Eric during staff lunch. Asher was guided by the team of Ms. Stevens and Mr. Salinetro. Asher loved the experience and, to this day, still remains great friends with some of his Blue Room classmates. To our delight, Asher followed the footsteps of Neve and joined the Green Room with Mrs. Bird. Asher loved to regale us about Mrs. Bird’s versions of Lynyrd Skynyrd’s “Free Bird” and “Going to California” by Led Zeppelin. The following year, Asher moved on to join his sister at Falk. Asher loves Falk and is often seen at the cafeteria eating double lunches. He also loves playing basketball and baseball.
Family Spotlight … continued

Last year, following Asher’s matriculation and keeping the consecutive payments rolling, it was Maren’s turn to join the Children’s School community! Having literally grown up with the Children’s School (she was born while Neve was in the Green Room and made it into the daily email), she was eager to start in the Blue Room. Maren would finally get to witness firsthand the magic of Mr. “Sal” along with Mrs. Marshall. This would be the third Goldberg child with Mr. Salinetro. While some in the Goldberg family have gone grey, grown taller, and lost teeth, one thing remains a constant - Mr. Salinetro hasn’t aged! Maren believes that he is actually a CMU robotic teacher. She may have a point. After leaving the Blue Room, like her siblings, Maren joined Mrs. Bird in the Green Room. Maren loves school and is truly disappointed when she is not there. Maren loves to get dressed up and will do so even if we are going to Jimmy John’s.

While each of our children has had a unique experience at the Children’s School, including favorite themes, activities, and daily jobs, the constant among them all is their love of the wonders and excitement that the school brings each day. The fantastic staff and educators at the Children’s School have provided our children with the framework for intellectual growth and discovery. Asher and Neve, on their days off, are thrilled and proud to walk into the school as alumni to pick up their sister and say “Hi!” to their former teachers. Years later, they are still always greeted warmly by all of the teachers and administrators. Eric, on the other hand, is greeted with a groan as they know that their snacks will be raided again. It is hard to believe that our time at the Children’s School is coming to an end. While we will miss the Children’s School facilities and educational platform, we will really miss the people that have turned a school into a home for us. We would like to thank Dr. Carver and the entire team for embracing us. We firmly believe that our children have been given a foundation that will create educational, artistic, and social successes for a lifetime. We will all come back to visit and, of course, eat the staff’s lunches.

With great love, appreciation and admiration,

The Goldbergs

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 644 Box Tops for a total of $64.40. Our next Box Top Submission Deadline is in the fall of 2017.

Lost and Found

We have accumulated quite a collection of jackets, mittens, 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 in February

On February 11th, children and families kicked off their shoes together at the Alloy School of the Kelly Strayhorn Theater in East Liberty. Families experimented with the rhythms of West African Movement and Samba in the beautiful first floor studio at Alloy. A wonderful time was had by all!

On February 18th, families from the Children’s School gathered at Gaynor’s School of Cooking to create a series of menu items that included homemade pasta, sauce, fruit kebabs with yogurt dip, and chocolate mousse for dessert! The children especially liked working the homemade dough through the pasta machine, and of course eating their creations!

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

Join friends and families of the Children’s School for a **March Potluck** at the **Wilkins School Community Center (WSCC)** in Regent Square on **Saturday, March 18th** from 2-4pm. Children can eat with their friends, play games, and enjoy the WSCC playground (weather permitting.) RSVP to Sara Torretti (Isaac’s mom, K) at storretti@hotmail.com by Wednesday, March 15th.

Back by popular demand, **Hatch Art Studio**! If you missed coming to Hatch in October, now is your chance. Say hello to spring with a spring-themed story time and art activity guided by Shannon Merenstein on **Saturday, March 25th**. Register for one of two sessions, 9-10am or 10:30-11:30am. $15 per child. RSVP to Sara Torretti (Isaac’s mom, K) at storretti@hotmail.com by Sunday, March 19th. Hatch Art Studio is located in the Point Breeze Neighborhood of Pittsburgh at 6739 Reynolds Street, 15206. [http://www.hatchpgh.com/](http://www.hatchpgh.com/)

Save the date, April 7th! Join us for a **Just Ducky Tour** on Friday, April 7 at 1:30 p.m. Just Ducky Tours take riders on Pittsburgh’s only adventure through the city on land and water. Each excursion begins at Station Square before waddling downtown for the ride of your life. Advance reservation is required to book a boat and receive a discounted school rate. Be on the lookout for an email with more details. Contact Alexis Tuckfelt (Ruthie PM 3’s) at alexiscoup@aol.com with any questions.

Explore these events in and around the city!

**Circo Comedia Sunday March 5th-12th.** If you like to laugh and be amazed, this show is for you. Featuring acrobatic tricks, juggling, cycling, magic, and lots of comedy! This is an all ages event with performances at various locations around the city, including the Byham Theater. For tickets, go to [https://trustarts.org/production/49797/list_performances](https://trustarts.org/production/49797/list_performances).

**Mini Factory at The Mattress Factory**. Saturday, March 11th at 10-11am. The theme is **LOOK: exploring observation skills to see beauty and detail in objects through story time and activity.** $5 per child. [http://mattress.org/content/mini-factory](http://mattress.org/content/mini-factory)

Carnegie Performing Arts Center presents **Alice in Wonderland** at the Andrew Carnegie Music Hall on **March 17th-19th**. 300 Beechwood Avenue, Carnegie, PA 15206. For tickets call (412) 279-8887. [www.carnegieperformingartscenter.com](http://www.carnegieperformingartscenter.com)

The University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Latin Studies presents the **37th Annual Latin America and Caribbean Festival** on **Saturday, April 1st** from 12-10pm at Wesley W. Posvar Hall, First Floor, University of Pittsburgh. Featuring music, food, dance, arts, crafts, and children’s activities from Latin America and the Caribbean. Free and open to the public! [https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/clas/festival](https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/clas/festival)

If you would like to help plan events please contact Jay Miller at jaymiller01@gmail.com and Sara Torretti storretti@hotmail.com (Isaac’s parents, Kindergarten)
Pittsburgh Alliance of University Schools

During our 7th International Practicum Experience for Duksung Women’s University students, we purposely offered opportunities to engage in professional experiences beyond classroom teaching by scheduling one of our educators’ professional development events during the students’ two weeks here. 2016-17 is the inaugural year for the Pittsburgh Alliance of University Schools (PAUS), and the Falk Laboratory School educators offered everyone the opportunity to learn about Mindfulness and Making on Thursday, February 2nd. Mindful practices aim to create connections between people, in experiences, and across abilities to build a community driven by kindness. Making opportunities are hands-on, project-based ways teachers can foster curiosity, collaboration, integrative thinking and experimentation in children and themselves. Here, colleagues share mindful eating, get a lesson on stop-motion animation, and help collage the “Cathedral of Learning”.

Educator / Parent Dialogue re: Theatre Arts

On Friday, February 3rd, educators, parents, and our two Duksung students explored creative ways to bring stories to life through a series of activities led by Mrs. Armbruster, who earned a BA in Dance at Point Park and toured nationally with Sesame Street Live (as Elmo) and My Little Pony Live (as a ladybug). We experienced developmentally appropriate ways to engage in a variety of theatre activities to build children’s knowledge, skills, and confidence without inducing anxiety about performance. We each got to suggest motions for the group to imitate, like twisting and jumping in a circle. We brainstormed motions to enact songs and nursery rhymes, like Row, Row, Row Your Boat and Hickory Dickory Dock. We all got bolder as we practiced and laughed together!
Animating Ideas with Attack Theatre

On Wednesday, February 22nd, Anthony Williams, Ashley Williams, and Sara Zielinski from Attack Theatre (https://www.attacktheatre.com/) spent the day with us in the Cohon University Center teaching us how to use our bodies to make shapes, to represent familiar things like waves, bouncing balls, snakes, etc., and to combine actions into a dance to accompany a poem set to music. On Friday, February 24th, these performers returned with Michele de la Reza, Peter Kope, Dane Toney, and their sound technician, Lindsey Kaine, to demonstrate how dancers “partner” with each other, trusting and counterbalancing each other while utilizing careful timing and momentum to animate their ideas in engaging ways. We learned how everyday actions inspire dances and how diverse props like ladders, cloth tunnels, and even a hover board can encourage creative movement.

March Gallery Features

3’s Friends: Joaquin B.B., Sloan H., Emiah J. and Raj W.

4’s Friends: Colby K.R., Elijah S., Sydnee S., and Max T.

Kindergarten Friends: Jovie J., Mao O., and Penelope W.
Undergraduate Spotlight

- **Martha Cryan** (AM Preschool 4's) is a Freshman Computer Science Major considering adding a minor in French. Martha’s older sister, Abby, also worked at the Children’s School during her tenure at CMU.

This is my first semester at the Children’s School, and, so far, it has been an absolutely amazing way to spend my mornings and a really great learning experience. Amidst challenging coursework and other obligations on campus, being in the company of an enthusiastic staff and creative and caring friends has been a very positive addition to my weekly life. I love to see special moments between friends that show they care, like when two friends have a long hug because one is the line leader and the other is the caboose. I’ve also started to learn and grow myself as I learn to help the friends with different situations and problems that they encounter in their daily lives.

For example, one day, one of the friends forgot her toys at home and was upset that she wouldn’t be able to take them to another friend’s house for a playdate after school. As she walked up to circle time teary-eyed, Mrs. Opferman decided to make the situation into a learning experience for the friends and ask, “how might we fix the problem our friend has?” As the friends went around the circle giving advice, I started to see how asking this kind of question is productive and positive both for the friends to think about in their daily life and for anyone to think about when they encounter a problem. These kinds of lessons weren’t what I expected to learn while working at the Children’s School, but they are most definitely valuable in and outside of my job here, and I hope to continue to learn more during my time working here!

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 program runs 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 practicums, from pure observation to student teaching. We also benefit from the students’ diverse talents!
Research Spotlight

The Finding Stars Game

Dr. Erez Freud, a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Psychology, is working with Dr. Marlene Behrmann on a research study that aims to characterize the developmental trajectory of visuomotor object control. The ability to interact with objects is crucial for every aspect of our lives through childhood and adulthood. Our understanding of how we are able to reach and grasp objects so effortlessly and how these skills develop over childhood remains rather poor. To shed light on this question, researchers will play the “Finding Stars” game. In this game, right-handed 4 and 5-year-olds will be asked to grasp objects of different shapes and sizes to look for a star sticker that is placed underneath a subset of the objects. Researchers will measure different aspects of the reach and grasp behavior, such as speed, width of finger opening, etc., using an Optotrak camera that records the 3D motion of the hand, which then allows the team to describe children’s visuomotor behavior in detail. Three LED markers (lights) will be taped to the child’s right hand to enable accurate movement tracking. Importantly, the LED markers are merely infrared lights that do not emit any signal. This study will help researchers to understand to what extent shape sensitivity, in a visuomotor task, is developed in children aged 4-5 years old.

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. 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 Finding Game – Exploring whether adult digital game play with visuals and sound impacts Preschool 3’s and Kindergartners’ attention and performance on a picture finding task.

• The Puzzle Game - Testing whether using mindful breathing as a break increases persistence on a challenging puzzle in comparison to a “typical” wiggle break for preschool 4’s & Kindergartners.

• The Story Game – Investigating the effect of imagining an observer vs. a participant role on suggestions for peer conflict resolution strategies given by 4 and 5-year olds.

• The Animal Game – Exploring whether Preschool 3’s and Kindergartners learn factual information about animals better when animal characters are represented realistically instead of in anthropomorphic ways.

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!
Director’s Corner: Parents-as-Set Designers

Last month, I claimed that being a parent is like being a theatre’s director, in terms of defining the vision for the entire production with the aim of synergy between all of the diverse elements of family life and child-rearing. This month, I consider the role of “Set Designer”. How is being a parent like being a set designer? According to the American Association of Community Theatre (https://www.aact.org/set-designer), “The set designer’s job is to design the physical surroundings in which the action will take place,” including the scenery, furniture, and stage properties (or props). For children’s development, the primary setting is the home, which is further set within a community that includes secondary settings of the neighborhood, school, museums, worship sites, parks, etc. Since most readers of this article chose Pittsburgh’s family-friendly environs for our neighborhood and the Children’s School’s developmentally appropriate environment for our children’s early learning, I will focus the rest of my reflections on Parents-as-Set Designers in the home.

The primary goal of the theatre’s set designers, in collaboration with the costume, lighting, and sound designers, is to create a unified look and feel for the production that aligns with the director’s vision. Parents’ efforts to design the atmosphere of the home sets the overall mood for the family and tone for their interactions. Consider your priorities for the look and feel of home. Do you want a “Goodnight Moon” type of set, or do you have a different image in mind? Think about what will make family members and guests feel most welcome, secure, comfortable, etc. At school, we aim for color schemes that are naturally calming and décor that respectfully displays children’s images and work.

Set designers also envision “creative possibilities for movement” of the actors throughout the space so that they can interact most effectively to bring their stories to life. For parents, that means balancing safety elements with opportunities for age-appropriate risk taking, both indoors and outdoors. We organize furniture and materials so children have the freedom of independent and innovative action, but we also recognize the limits of their self-regulation (e.g., so we anchor tall furniture, protect outlets, etc.). Set designers also consider varied groupings of the actors, so that the space is conducive to scenes with single actors, pairs, small groups, or the entire company. Similarly, homes can be arranged so that there are cozy places for individuals to rest, work, and play alone, as well as spaces for small groups to converse or the whole family to share a meal, a game, etc. Having multiple options for group size is especially important for managing the differing preferences and needs of the introverts and extroverts in the family.

Finally, the theatre’s set may also need to be designed so the backstage areas used by the actors and stage crew are kept out of sight from the audience. Props are on stage only when they are needed. In the same way, Parents-as-Set Designers can rotate books, toys, games, etc. to limit children’s choices to a manageable number and to highlight forgotten options in ways that might re-ignite interest. Children also benefit from learning to help tidy the living spaces so that everyone can safely maneuver without tripping. All of this set design work can support the director’s vision so that the family home is a place of consistent encouragement and nurture for each child and for the family as a whole. Likewise, we aim for a school environment where your whole family feels welcome!