Early Years are Learning Years

April 11th to 17th has been designated “The Week of the Young Child” by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. NAEYC encourages early childhood communities to organize projects and events that create broad visibility and support for the importance of the early years.

By focusing on the needs of young children and their families, we share the responsibility of ensuring the well-being of children and families. We can and must do more to create opportunities that help all children and families succeed. As a laboratory school affiliated with a Psychology Department, we contribute to the success of all young children by facilitating high quality research, offering a model program that serves as an example for practitioners and as a field placement site for pre-service teachers, and offering seminars and workshops as professional development for our colleagues. In partnership with other local programs, we also support their development of excellent programs and services for young children and their caregivers. One way parents of young children can contribute to these advances is by volunteering to participate in research surveys and focus groups. This spring, Children’s School parents have the opportunity to collaborate with professionals at Family Communications, Inc., and the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development. Milena Nigam (mother of 4-year-old Simon) is recruiting parents to discuss and experiment with strategies to help young children learn to keep trying in the face of setbacks. See enclosed flyer for details.

Enrollment Updates

2010-2011 School Year
We currently have 22 children registered for the Kindergarten, 31 children registered for the Morning 4’s and 20 children in the Morning 3’s. As you know, we have expanded the Extended Morning Program to accommodate 34 children, and there are only 3 spaces remaining. The Afternoon 4’s program has 8 registered children, Afternoon 3’s has 6 children, and Extended Afternoon has 5 registered participants. We have several applicants for each age group so these numbers should continue to grow as the semester continues. We are still accepting applications for the 2010-2011 school year, so please continue to refer families to us!

Summer Camp Enrollment
Thirty-five children are already registered for our Summer Camp. This year’s camp theme is Plants & Dirt and will be run by members of the Children’s School teaching staff. Camp runs for four weeks in June and the hours are 8:45 AM- 1:15 PM. If you have not yet registered, please do so as soon as possible to reserve your child’s space.

April Dates
Friday, April 16th – Parent / Teacher Conferences – NO SCHOOL for children
Friday, April 30th – Teacher Appreciation Luncheon
History with a Twist

Carnegie Mellon’s Spring Carnival begins the evening of Thursday, April 15th and concludes on Saturday, April 17th. The theme this year is “History with a Twist”. The Spring Carnival Midway, which includes carnival games and amusement park rides, is located in the Morewood Gardens Parking Lot (on Forbes Avenue between Morewood and S. Craig Street). Sweepstakes, also known as Buggy, is held on Friday and Saturday of Spring Carnival. The racetrack begins in front of Margaret Morrison on Tech Street and continues around Flagstaff Hill. Student organizations race with their buggies, which are small, low, aerodynamic vehicles, powered only by gravity and human pushers. At its fastest, a buggy can reach speeds up to 35 miles per hour. It’s a fun event for the whole family. For more information, please visit: http://www.cmu.edu/alumni/involved/events/carnival/schedule.html

There will not be school on Friday, April 16th because of the congestion caused by traffic and the closing of roads surrounding the Children’s School during the buggy races in the early morning hours. After 11:00 AM, parents attending parent/teacher conferences will be able to park in our lot.

Join Children’s School Families:
2010 Pittsburgh International Children’s Festival

Aparna Brown (Delia’s mom) is planning a trip for Children’s School families to attend the Pittsburgh International Children's Festival. We will be purchasing group tickets to 2 shows (details listed below). The tickets will cost $6 or $7 each, depending on how many tickets we end up purchasing. Every person attending, regardless of age, requires a ticket. Friends and family are welcome to join the group; the more the merrier!

If your family would like to attend the shows please send an email to Aparna at aparnabrown@gmail.com by April 4th. Please list your child’s name, which shows you want to attend, and how many tickets you would like.

Mapapa Acrobats
Saturday, May 15th, 2010, 10am, All Ages
The Mapapa Acrobats are a super circus show from Africa. Join in the fun as the Mapapa troupe takes acrobatics to exhilarating extremes. Watch them limbo beneath rods of fire, tumble, contort, dance, juggle, chair-balance, and more, all to native African music.

Zany Umbrella Circus
Sunday, May 16th, 2010, 12:30pm, Ages 3+
In Beppe's Elephant, an Italian circus artist dreams of the big, the impossible, and the ridiculous. Will Zany Umbrella Circus help realize this dream? Find out as circus arts, masks, puppetry, video, music, and more are combined to tickle your imagination.
Family Committee News

The FSO is planning a wine tasting at Enrico's in Shadyside in the near future. A Family Jam Session will also be occurring at school sometime soon - keep an eye out for dates and times!

The Library Committee continues to do a beautiful job. The teachers send thanks!

Thanks to Eunjung Kim for helping Miss Furman with the grocery shopping this month.

National TV-Turnoff Week
April 19-25, 2010

How much television does your family watch? You may be surprised at the number of hours in just one day the television is on at your house. The average American watches 4 hours and 35 minutes of television each day according the 2006 Nielson statistics. April 19th to 25th marks National TV-Turnoff Week, whose aim is to demonstrate how rewarding life can be without television. Turning off the television (this includes the one in the car) gives us a chance to think, read, talk and create. It also gives us the chance to connect with our families and interact with others in our communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT TV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of 30-second commercials seen in a year by an average child: 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of minutes per week parents spend in meaningful conversation with children: 38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of minutes per week that the average child watches television: 1,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of children ages 6-17 who have TV's in their bedrooms: 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of day care centers that use TV during a typical day: 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per year the average American youth spends in school: 900 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Americans that regularly watch television while eating dinner: 66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Join thousands of teachers and other families by celebrating TV-Turnoff Week 2010.
♦ First, talk with your family about the week.
♦ Think about what times you watch TV.
♦ Plan activities you can do in place of watching television. For a list of suggested activities, please visit http://www.turnoffyourtv.com/turnoffweek/TV.turnoff.week.html

Please let us know if you participate in this event. We’d love to hear about your experience!

Web Artists

Kindergarten Friends: Virginia G., Samuel H., Alok S., Aidan S., Parisha W.
4’s Friends: Adam F., Simon N., Wil M., Juliette G.
3’s Friends: Caroline B., Kouta T., Jolene H., Anton L., Sebastian D.
Family Spotlight: Lauren Hraber’s Piano Tots

As an undergraduate at Carnegie Mellon studying piano and music education, Lauren Hraber (mother of kindergartner Jackson) remembers initially wanting to be a high school choral director. Lauren says that, “After student teaching at the high school and elementary levels, that goal changed—the elementary classroom was definitely the place for me! Since then, my students have gotten even younger. After teaching elementary general music classes for several years in Canton, Ohio and in Pittsburgh, I designed a new program of music study for preschoolers called Piano Tots.”

When Lauren’s daughter, Madeline, was a preschooler, she tried several different music programs. Nothing quite met her expectations, so she decided to create a new approach. “Piano Tots” would focus on pre-piano skills, introducing children to the geography of the keyboard and proper body and hand position while incorporating general music skills, such as steady beat, tempo, dynamics, articulation, and much more. As a big believer in thematic learning for preschoolers, Lauren decided to structure each lesson around a preschool-appropriate theme: zoo animals, things that hop, insects, etc. Each lesson includes creative movement, small percussion instrument play, singing, stepping on the “big keys” and practice on small keyboards. Lauren transformed an old-fashioned metronome into her class mascot, and “Pete the Beat Keeper” dressed in different costumes each week to introduce the lesson’s theme.

Since its inception in 2005, Piano Tots has grown, recently expanding into some local nursery schools, where Lauren visits monthly or bi-monthly to teach thematic lessons, either with or without the keyboard component. If you have a kindergartner at the Children’s School, your child probably knows Lauren well, since she has visited the classroom several times to present music lessons to complement the monthly themes. For more information about Piano Tots, visit Lauren’s website at www.pianotots.com or call 412-654-9677.
What’s New at the Theatre?

*Pittsburgh International Children’s Theater presents Fred Garbo Inflatable Theater Co.*
Saturday, April 10-Sunday April 11, 2010 at the Byham Theater
Advanced Tickets: $9.50 and Tickets at the door $11
For tickets visit www.pgharts.org.

Fred Garbo’s inventive inflatable creations shimmer, balloon, deflate and bounce into a rainbow of colors in this energetic performance. These blow-up shapes move in sync with the music across the stage, and before long, the audience is playing catch with the giant inflatable objects. Fred Garbo’s imagination comes to life to mesmerize audiences of all ages.

*Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra presents Musical Celebrations Around the World*
Saturday, April 17, 2010 ~ 11:15 a.m. at Heinz Hall
For tickets call 412.392.4900 or visit www.pittsburghsymphony.org.

What is a celebration without music? Discover how music from around the world is a big part of special occasions. When you listen to Mendelssohn's "Wedding March," you will imagine you are part of a magnificent wedding, and hearing *De Colores* will make you think of the bright colors of nature. Celebrate the songs of other countries and see how music makes any occasion special!

*Peanut Butter and Jam Sessions presents Hello Cello*
Saturday, April 10, 2010 ~ 10:00am and 11:30am at McClintic Hall of the Calvary Episcopal Church
For tickets call 412-394 3353 or visit our website at www.chathambaroque.org.
Tickets are $5 per child and $8 per adult.

Chatham Baroque's wildly popular *Peanut Butter & Jam Sessions* are designed especially for preschool children and their accompanying adults. These interactive and informal programs present musical experiences in a fun and family friendly way.

*PNC Broadway Across America-Pittsburgh Special presents The Wizard of Oz*
Tuesday, March 30 to Sunday, April 4, 2010 at Heinz Hall

There’s no place like home as the greatest family musical of all time twists its way across the country. The entire family will be captivated as they travel the Yellow Brick Road with Dorothy, Toto, the Cowardly Lion, Tin Man and Scarecrow in this lavish production, complete with munchkins and flying monkeys. Don’t miss the chance to travel “Over the Rainbow” and experience this musical on stage.

*Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra presents Cirque De La Symphonie*
Thursday, April 22 to Sunday, April 25, 2010 at Heinz Hall ~ Ticket Prices vary from $20-$83.

Circus and Symphony collide with the wildly popular Cirque de la Symphonie! Musical excellence joins the stage with some of the world's most amazing performance artists including acrobats, contortionists, dancers, jugglers, and strongmen, each performing synchronized to music.

Stayed tuned for more theater experiences!
Theatre Visits a Smashing Success

A Gateway to the Arts theater performance was one of the attractions at our February 26 Family Theatre Arts Festival. After the rousing success of *The Little Barnyard Opera*, we investigated more professional theater opportunities for our children, using funding from a mini-grant we received for the Theatre Arts Unit from the International Association of Laboratory and University Affiliated Schools (NALS). Using these funds, we were able to arrange two performances in March for all of the children. All three of these performances were a great way to extend and apply the children’s learning from our Whole School Theater Unit!

On March 16\(^{th}\), we saw *Little Red Hen!* Guitarist Dan Burgun and singer/actress Rebecca Covert brought the popular folktale, The Little Red Hen, to life while exploring different styles of American music (bluegrass, folk, jazz and blues). The children got to sing-a-long to silly songs and use their bodies to create animal characters, sound effects, and rhythms. Unlike the lazy animals in this popular tale, the children helped the Little Red Hen work in the garden, grind the flour, and bake a cake while learning the importance of helping others. The performers commented on the children's knowledge of theatre terms, like actor and character, their understanding that “things aren’t always what they seem” (e.g., the box that appears to require exertion to push may not really be heavy), and their creative suggestions and offers of help to enact the story.

On March 25\(^{th}\), we experienced *ABC Animals on the Move!* Dancer Mary Miller and percussionist Dan Meunier used the alphabet to get children moving like animals. Mary Miller is the founder and artistic director of Mary Miller Dance Company (and wife of Psychology professor Sheldon Cohen). Dan Meunier is a professional percussionist. The performers noted that the children have learned to be a good audience, demonstrated strong memory for the characters and sequence of events, and asked insightful questions about the performance.
Research Spotlight

The Foam Puzzle Game

Alan Jern and Yevdokiya (Dussy) Yermolayeva, Ph.D. students working with Drs. Anna Fisher and Charles Kemp, and Undergraduate Meghan Reese are studying when and how people begin to develop extensive knowledge of objects and concepts in the world (like dogs, fruits, chairs, and telephones). Although such knowledge often seems mundane, it can actually be very rich and subtle. For example, try coming up with a set of properties that defines a chair, and then decide whether your definition includes bean bag chairs or tree stumps. Their project aims to address this developmental issue by teaching children a new concept based on showing them some examples and then asking them to make a new one. The idea is that one way to determine what people’s mental “chair” concepts are like is by asking a handful of people to build a completely new chair and then noting what properties all of their creations do and don’t have in common. All the objects in the game are puzzles of different colors made of a foam material. The researchers show children a few example completed puzzles. The only thing the puzzles have in common is that the outside pieces are the same color, creating a kind of “color sandwich”. Then, children are given an uncompleted puzzle and some new pieces and asked to make a new example of the group. Children play the game several times with different colored pieces. Finally, they are shown some new completed puzzles and asked to decide whether they go with the group or not. This study will help the researchers determine what kinds of knowledge about objects children are capable of learning.

The Listening Game

Graduate students Karrie Godwin and Bryan Matlen, both working with Dr. Anna Fisher, are investigating how young children learn synonyms. They are particularly interested in examining how factors such as co-occurrence in child directed speech (e.g., bunny-rabbit) influence how children learn synonyms. In addition, they are exploring whether children are able to use their knowledge of synonyms in order to solve reasoning problems. In this study, children listen to audio recordings of word pairs (co-occurring synonyms, like rock-stone, or non co-occurring synonyms, like rock-cup) while engaging in a task such as coloring a picture or building a puzzle. At the end of the session, children will complete a variety of reasoning tasks requiring them to rely on their knowledge of synonyms in order to solve the problem. The researchers are interested in the degree to which children utilize their knowledge of synonyms in various reasoning tasks. Parents will receive separate descriptions for each of the reasoning tasks used.
Undergraduate Spotlight: Getting to Know You

Amy Donovan is a junior biology major in the Health Professions Program at Carnegie Mellon. She has been a volunteer at the Children's School in the green room for several years and was an intern in the kindergarten classroom for one semester last year. Amy is a member of the CMU Global Medical Brigades (GMB), and she will be visiting Honduras for a week this summer. CMUGMB is a student run organization on campus that focuses on bringing basic medical care to villagers who live in isolated regions of Honduras. During their weeklong stay in Honduras, Amy and a group of 19 other CMU students and local medical professionals will establish temporary medical clinics to provide free medical care to any villagers that attend, some of whom walk hours just to reach the clinic. In the months before the mid-May trip, CMUGMB members help to prepare for the brigade by recruiting medical professionals, collecting medicine, and raising funds.

In response to the large number of young children who came with their families to receive free medical care during last year’s brigade in Panama, the group is working to collect appropriate toys and games to share with any children they meet during their week in Honduras. Because the need for medical care in isolated regions of Honduras is so great, many villagers come to take advantage of the free opportunity, and families often spend hours waiting to receive care.

Amy, and the entire CMUGMB, are asking for donations of toys to bring with them on their trip. Toys such as inflatable sports balls, jump ropes, universal card games (such as “Uno”), coloring books and crayons, finger puppets, small puzzles, and any other lightweight and/or portable toys will be greatly appreciated. Remember that the toys will be taken on the airplane, and space and weight limitations need to be considered. Toys can be new or lightly used, and they will be accepted until May 10th. If you prefer to make a financial contribution so that the group can buy toys or to help with travel costs, please make checks payable to “Carnegie Mellon Global Medical Brigades”.

Please bring toys or checks to the Children's School office or to the Information Desk in the University Center, Mailbox 95. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Amy Donovan at amydonovan@sbcglobal.net or Eda Akyar and Ronomit Baksi, CMUGMB presidents, at cmugmb@gmail.com.

“Decide, Teach, Dedicate” is a faculty appreciation fundraiser sponsored by the Delta Tau Delta fraternity at Carnegie Mellon. During the week of April 5th, the fraternity brothers will be "tabling" outside of Doherty Hall to raise money for Teach for America - an organization that strives toward education equality - by asking students to donate in the name of their favorite faculty member. These students have nominated Dr. Carver as one of the honorees for the drive. If you are on campus next week during the hours of 11am – 3pm, please walk past Doherty Hall and “vote” for Dr. Carver with your generous contributions to Teach for America!
Carnegie Mellon Service: 1000plus

Carnegie Mellon’s goal for 1000plus is to connect members of the Carnegie Mellon Community (students, staff, faculty, alumni and their families and friends) in service to the Pittsburgh community. For the first time in 2010, the Children’s School was a site for 1000plus service. On Saturday, March 27th, we had over 20 undergraduate and alumni volunteers 1) preparing outdoor gardens on the hillside behind Margaret Morrison for spring & summer camp planting and 2) priming indoor and outdoor walls, as well as parachute cloth, so that educators, parents, and children can make new murals at the Children’s School. If you enjoy gardening or painting, please leave a message for Ms. Drash at 412-268-2199 so that we can involve you in our next steps!
Director’s Corner:
Children, Creativity & Technology

Last week, I had the privilege of joining about 140 experts from around the country at Fred Forward, the first in a series of national conferences of the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media, at Saint Vincent College. The topic of Creative Curiosity, New Media, and Learning was designed to “emulate and extend what Fred accomplished, finding powerful new ways that media and technology can nurture creativity, curiosity, social-emotional development, and learning for children everywhere.” In keeping with the conference theme, the sessions were creatively designed so that conference participants could explore new media in a variety of interactive ways, as well as being challenged to develop ideas for novel uses of technology with young children and debate the alternate perspectives on how much of what types of technology should be a part of young children’s educational lives. We even had an opportunity to offer input to the team of professionals charged with crafting the new position statement on Technology and Young Children that is being prepared by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). You can see a promotional video about the conference at the web site listed below.


This spring, we will be helping Robotics Professor Illah Nourbakhsh (father of Nikou in the afternoon 3’s) and Research Associate Emily Hamner pilot test Message from Me, which is a system designed to enable young children to independently take digital photos at their early childhood programs and send them, with audio messages, to a parent’s cell phone and email address.

To use the system whose prototype is pictured at left, a child takes photos with a digital camera, places it in the red bowl, waits briefly while the photos are wirelessly transferred to the computer, uses the yellow buttons to highlight and then select the photo to send, chooses a photo of the intended recipient from the photo board and places it on the red bull’s eye so that the information encoded on the photo card can also be transferred to the computer, pushes the blue button to record a message, and then pushes the green “envelope” button to send the photo and message. While it sounds complicated, we have already tested the system ourselves and found it straightforward. We will begin the pilot testing with the kindergarten class and then work with the preschool children. Please complete the enclosed permission slip with your contact information if you would like your family to participate in this innovative project pilot and are willing to complete related pre and post project surveys. I look forward to the creative ways that the children will utilize Message from Me to communicate their unique school experience to their families!

Once the pilot-testing phase is completed, our role will be to train educators from other early childhood centers to utilize the technology so that the researchers can determine how to make it as generally useful in diverse communities as possible. We appreciate your support as we experiment with new opportunities for both research and professional development.