Week of the Young Child

April 14th to 18th 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 as a way of sharing the responsibility of ensuring the well being of children and families. 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 families. Watch for our Week of the Young Child card in your child’s backpack and know that we send it to diverse colleagues on campus and in the community. Our staff will also be sending early childhood advocacy messages to Pennsylvania’s representatives in the US Senate and Congress using postcards specially designed for that purpose by the National Coalition for Campus Children’s Centers.

Enrollment Updates

2013-2014 School Year: We currently have 22 children registered for the Kindergarten, 28 children registered for the Morning 4’s, and 24 children in the Morning 3’s. 24 children are registered for the Extended Morning Program. The Afternoon 4’s program has 10 registered children, Afternoon 3’s has 9 children, and Extended Afternoon has 6 registered participants. Basically, all of the regular morning programs are full, including 7 on the kindergarten waiting list, but there is space in Extended AM. Mrs. Rosenblum is working her way through the waiting lists to fill the few remaining afternoon spaces. Thanks to all of the families for referring your relatives, friends, and neighbors to us!

Summer Camp Enrollment: There are spaces remaining in our Summer Camp. This year’s camp theme is Gardening 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. Please act soon if you want to register your child for one or more weeks of camp.

April Dates:
- Friday, April 5th – NO SCHOOL for children / Conference Preparation Day for Educators
- Friday, April 19th – NO SCHOOL for children
- Afternoon Parent / Teacher Conferences
- Enjoy CMU’s Spring Carnival “Fractured Fairy Tales” April 18th to 20th
- www.contrib.andrew.cmu.edu/~sc0v
- Friday, April 26th – Parent / Teacher Conferences – NO SCHOOL for children
Teacher Appreciation / Year End Celebration

This year, the **Teacher Appreciation Luncheon** will be held on Friday, May 3\(^{rd}\). This event is an opportunity for Children School families to show their appreciation for their children’s teachers and the other staff members of the school by preparing, setting up, and cleaning up for this staff-only meal.

The **Year-End Celebration Picnic** will be held after the kindergarten graduation ceremony on Friday, May 17\(^{th}\). The Children’s School will be providing pizza and salad, and we will need volunteers to provide drinks, paper products, fruit and cookies, as well as to help with the set up and clean up.

The committee will be meeting to plan these two events on Friday, April 12\(^{th}\) at 9 am (children are welcome), so please join us if you can! Even if you cannot join us on that date, there will be volunteer opportunities for both of these occasions. Please contact Maggie Rosenblum at [rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu) if you can attend the meeting.

If your child missed the Vision Screening …

The Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh will be at the Children’s Museum for “Kindergarten Here I Come!” offering free vision screenings on August 10, 2013.

Family Social Organization

The FSO has had a busy March! First, the second half of the interested families were able to tour the PWSA. Thank you to Anna Mehrotra for arranging that visit! It was very informative and a great way to explore our water unit! FSO committee member, Bob Slammon, also organized a group outing to the Pittsburgh International Children’s Theater performance of a show called "Bubble Time!" Many families came for this fun afternoon of further water exploration with bubbles. Finally, FSO committee member, Alissa Meade, coordinated a kid free night out at Verde. We had 5 couples (and one happy baby!!) in attendance - not a huge crowd but conversation flowed well and gave us a great chance to really get to know each other. Next year, look for a grown up night out near the start of the school year so we can start building new friendships right away; we encourage you to add it to your to do list!

The FSO has 2 more events in the works for this school year.

- **April - Playground Playdate** on Friday April 26\(^{th}\) (Parent / Teacher Conference Day)
  We will meet at 9:30 at the playground at the corner of Bartlett and Hobart, which is very close to the Children's School. Come play with your friends!

- **May - International Children’s Festival** – For the 4\(^{th}\) year in a row, we will be organizing group tickets to one of the Pittsburgh International Children's Festival shows, which runs May 15-19 in Oakland. Please watch your email for more information!

Questions? Contact Beth Lott at [elisabeth.lott@gmail.com](mailto:elisabeth.lott@gmail.com), 412-243-2626 (H) or 412-849-0327 (C).
Family Spotlight: High Standards for Education

Hello. We are the Kim family – Amy, Hoon, Basil and Calabria. Currently Hoon owns Pittsburgh Prep, an SAT Company, and Fukuda, a Japanese restaurant in Bloomfield. I, Amy, am a stay at home mom. Hoon was born in Korea and moved to New York with his family at the age of 9. He attended NYU for undergrad and Harvard for a Masters in Education. I was born in Pittsburgh, attended Carlow College for Elementary Education and U. Pitt. for a Masters in Early Childhood Education. I moved to New York City after graduate school and taught kindergarten for 7 years at a private school on the Upper Westside. Hoon worked on the New York stock exchange for 6 years. We met through a friend and were married in Manhattan in 2006. We decided to move to Pittsburgh to start a family and be closer to my family. Pittsburgh was an affordable city that would allow me to be a stay at home mom. I taught at Shady Side Academy for one year before getting pregnant with Basil, the love of our lives. Basil has always been a creative, imaginative little boy with many interests. He loved to pretend cook since he was 12 months and liked seeing watermelons and pumpkins at the markets. Now he has an interest in collecting toy spiders, exploring outside, singing songs, and drawing. He loves construction sites and can’t get enough of watching real diggers at work, especially excavators, his favorite! He will often create an excavator out of anything in his sight (e.g., fruit, blocks, sticks, pasta).

Being an early childhood educator, I had high standards and expectations when researching preschools for Basil. After sitting in the parent orientation at the Children’s School and listening to Dr. Carver explain the philosophy, I knew it would be a great fit! We have been so pleased with the Children’s School. Basil has flourished here. He loves his teachers and shares everything they do in the classroom at home. During the “Animals in Winter” study, Basil would often say he is hibernating under the table or, while studying “Water”, he would lay on the floor and be a puddle of water and then evaporate. Now he is very fascinated with scorpions from the “Desert” unit! Calabria, our daughter, who just turned 18 months, is Basil’s number one admirer. She is adventurous and not afraid of anything. She brings us pure joy as well! We look forward to the time in two years when we can send her to the wonderful Children’s School.

Reading is a love we share everyday. Basil has a growing collection of books counting over 500 (my addiction)! We also enjoy walking our dog, Gnocchi, eating ice cream in Shadyside, visiting Phipps (especially the Chihuly & to pretend to grocery shop), and exploring the museums. During the weekends, we relax, play at home, cook / bake, and often visit Basil’s Nonna and Pappap in the country. Their house is a learning environment indoors and out!

We want to thank all the educators at the Children’s School for being so kind, caring, and sensitive to Basil. You are all fantastic!!
Even MORE Good News re: EITC

In February, the Children’s School Pre-K Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC) received a generous donation of $16,500 from Keystone Health Plan West, Inc. bringing our Pre-K EITC total to $69,500 for the 2012-13 school year! We appreciate all of the support we have received from the businesses that have donated to us this year!!

We continue to search for funding for our new Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program (OSTCP), which will provide tuition assistance in the form of scholarships to eligible Children’s School Kindergarten students residing within the boundaries of a low-achieving school. For more information about this program, please call Miss Hancock at 412-268-2198 or visit http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/school_services_office/9153/p/1202312.

Be Screen Smart

Thanks to everyone who attended the Staff / Parent Discussion re: Technology on March 22nd. We reviewed the amazing progression of beneficial technology innovations to support the work of educators and the learning of children since the Children’s School opened the first Macintosh computer lab for preschoolers in 1983. Dr. Carver highlighted the school’s philosophy for choosing technologies that can be integrated into our program in balance with our varied learning experiences but with clear value added. We seek to enhance interactive, exploratory and creative learning, with equity of access across all children and options for individualization and customization. Dr. Lorrie Cranor, an internet security expert and former Children’s School parent, discussed a range of protection strategies for our children and families. The handouts will be posted on the web site soon!

One of the discussion topics raised by parents was concern about the amount of screen time children are experiencing, particularly at home. At school, we aim to balance a wide range of valuable learning activities, so our screen time is comparatively brief. If you’d like an opportunity to more proactively encourage activities other than those involving screens, consider participating in National Screen-Free Week, April 29th – May 5th. Screen-Free Week (http://www.eyi.org/linck/146-screen-free-week.html) is “a national celebration where children, families, schools and communities spend seven days reducing time spent on screen-based entertainment media and turning on life. It's a time to BE SCREEN SMART and find alternative activities to play, explore, create and promote living a healthier lifestyle with family and friends. Play helps children build essential learning skills - constructive problem-solving, critical thinking, social competence, emotional maturity and communications skills.” There’s a great list of indoor and outdoor screen-free activities on the web site above. Please let us know if you participate in this event. We’d love to hear about your experience!
Wonders of Water Family Festival

On Thursday, February 28th, over 250 Children’s School family members and friends participated in our Wonders of Water Family Festival. Together we explored many ways to play with water, move water, pump water, and make bubbles and art with water. We experimented with the properties of water, played a game with ways to melt ice, and saw demonstrations of how to change water’s state of matter (solid to liquid to gas) and how to filter water. We learned that water is both wet and fun!
More Family Festival Fun with Water

We got to try snow cones made by shaving frozen water, learn about the amount of water in different fruits and other foods, and then practice proper ways to brush teeth with water to keep our teeth healthy. Pattye Stragar, CMU's Operations Manager for Fitness and Aquatics, organized a tour of the pool and a swimming / diving demonstration for our families, followed by a family free swim time.
Sharing our Resources to Help Build a Well

Thanks to all the children, families and staff who contributed money toward the building of a well for people who do not have access to safe water. We raised a total of $1,350 for WaterAid, which means we will give 54 people access to safe water, improved hygiene and sanitation!

The photo here shows a “bore hole” style well that members of several churches in the west end of Pittsburgh provided for the community of Ntaja, Malawi (central Africa) in 2010. Dr. Carver’s daughter, Ariel, is pumping the water for her father, Dave, who is a Presbyterian pastor. The cement pad is designed to provide an area for washing clothes. Other similar bore-holes have a type of merry-go-round attached and a large water tank above them so that children can pump water into the tank while playing on the merry-go-round. What creativity while seeking to improve health!

Sharing our Expertise with Educators

• From March 5th through the 9th, Mrs. Bird and Miss Hancock traveled to the campus of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, LA for the International Association of Laboratory Schools (IALS) Conference to present a workshop entitled Message from Me: Facilitating Collaboration and Communication. Laboratory school educators from the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico attended the annual conference to share the work that is occurring in their early childhood, elementary, and secondary school laboratories. The educators also had an opportunity to observe at the LSU Laboratory School, which serves children from Kindergarten through 12th grade, as well as at Mentorship Academy, a charter public high school with a project-based learning approach. The group had an extensive evening tour of the LSU stadium and met live mascot Mike the Tiger.

• During spring break, Dr. Carver attended the National Coalition for Campus Children’s Centers (NCCCC) board meeting and conference in Williamsburg, VA. The conference is primarily attended by directors of early childhood programs on college and university campuses, so she presented a session on Meaningful Campus & Community Professional Development for Experienced Educators. The conference also provided opportunities to network with an early childhood specialist from the US Department of Education about the changes in policy from President Obama’s first to second term, with a Scottish educator responsible for launching the movement to create “nature kindergartens” (see www.mindstretchers.co.uk), an occupational therapist who specializes in therapy for children with challenges in sensory integration, and a variety of educators developing innovative campus early childhood education programs.
April Web Artists

3’s Friends: Wesley H., Min Woo L., Broden S., and Sean W.

4’s Friends: Alice B., Maya D., Felix G., Naveen M., and John S.


Perhaps you wondered …
... why we offer preschoolers playdough activities so frequently.

Working with playdough strengthens children’s hand muscles, encourages eye-hand coordination, and builds tool use skills – all in ways that are within their developmental reach. This strength and skill are prerequisite to using tools for drawing and writing, so daily or weekly practice is valuable in reaching that eventual goal. Meanwhile, working at the playdough table also affords children the opportunity to learn social interaction skills for sharing, conversation skills for communicating their ideas and making their requests known, and artistic expression skills for both visual arts and pretend play. Adding safety scissors to the set of playdough tools gives children a chance to practice cutting as well, while not needing to coordinate both hands to maneuver the paper.

While children are building hand strength and skill by using playdough, we scaffold their drawing and writing (i.e., make it easier for them) in a variety of ways. We use fat markers because they are easier to grasp and make satisfying marks on paper without children needing to apply consistent pressure (which is necessary with crayons and pencils). We also provide letter stamps and stickers so that children can begin using letters even before being ready to write themselves. Teachers may take dictation so that the children can express ideas well beyond their writing capability. We also focus mostly on encouraging effort and expression rather than on the exact formation, sizing, and alignment of letters so that children will be motivated to write frequently. As with most skills, repeated practice is key, so we offer children many opportunities to develop their skills. [NOTE: Both photos are the same child’s hands, one at age 3 and one at age 5.]

Children’s School Famous Playdough

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Flour</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cream of Tartar</td>
<td>2 teaspoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>1 tablespoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Coloring</td>
<td>1 teaspoon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: We usually double the recipe. Giant Eagle sells LARGE containers of Cream of Tartar.

- Combine flour, salt, and cream of tartar in a saucepan. Mix water, oil, and food coloring in a separate bowl and stir them gradually into dry ingredients until the mixture is smooth.
- Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until a ball forms.
- Remove from heat and when the mixture is just cool enough to handle, knead until smooth.

Also, you can add vanilla, instant coffee, etc. to add aroma, or add glitter to enhance the visual sensation. Be creative! The playdough stores best in a ziplock bag in the refrigerator.
Undergraduate Spotlight:

For Cat Mao, “working at the Children’s School is like taking a mini-vacation in the middle of a busy day. As soon as I see the children playing, making conversations with one another, or even getting so excited that their laughs turn into screams, any stress I have just disappears. Their endless energy is simply contagious! I definitely would love to work at the Children’s School throughout my college career, and hope to continue similar work after college.

As a pre-med student with an intended major in Global Studies, I hope to eventually become a pediatrician. I plan to work with Doctors without Borders for a year or two before settling down in San Francisco (my hometown). By working at the Children’s School, being involved in UNICEF and Global Medical Brigades, and volunteering with children in the past, my desire to help children maintain their health and well being has only gotten stronger. The lessons I’ve learned from interacting with the 3s and 4s have already come in handy - especially during this past spring break, when I travelled to Nicaragua to help set up a free health care clinic. We discovered a major similarity between the Nicaraguan children and the children here. As long as they’re playing, they’re happy! Working at the Children’s School has truly made my freshman year at Carnegie even more enjoyable, and I cannot wait to return next year.”

Shared Design Experience

During the last week of our Water unit, our Preschool 4’s had the opportunity to visit the Freshman "Design Studio II Class" exhibition upstairs in Margaret Morrison. Co-teachers Dan Boyarski and Wayne Chung focused their RE:USE Project 2013 on Animals. The children were so inspired by the creative ways the undergraduates recycled materials into art that they wanted to build their own sculptures. Since the children were studying water, the teachers challenged them to construct an undersea animal or form of transportation. They designed an amazing variety of sculptures and then invited the freshmen to come tour the preschool exhibit. At that point, the freshmen were impressed – both with the children’s creativity and their ability to explain their work!
Research Spotlight

The Mapping Game

One of the groups in Dr. Anna Fisher’s Research Methods class is revisiting Piaget’s and Inhelder’s famous Three Mountain Experiment, investigating perspective taking in young children and how it develops with age. In the Mapping Game, researchers present the child with two different model cities, one containing 2 buildings and the other containing 6. A stuffed animal is moved around the city, stopping at each of the three sides of the model, not including the side the child is facing. The child is given 4 pictures (one from each side of the model) and asked to tell the researchers which one is the one that the stuffed animal would see. One trial from each side of the table is done for the first model city. Then, the second model city is introduced, and the task is repeated. Similar to Piaget’s initial study, the only objects in the model are the buildings, so children are assessed based on their ability to take a new perspective on the angle, order, and positioning (left-to-right) of the various buildings at a new viewpoint. This is important because, unlike Piaget, the researchers predict that children can successfully complete the task with fewer objects, showing that they do have some ability to take others’ perspectives and are not completely egocentric.

Sample pictures from opposite viewpoints:

The Puzzle Game

Another group is studying the effect of working with others to complete a task versus working alone. As children develop, they become more able to engage in pro-social behavior and work together with peers towards a common goal. During the study, researchers compare children’s performances on two different puzzle tasks (pictured below) to see if their performance time is faster when they work with a partner than when they work alone. One puzzle task is more physical, where there isn’t as much need to communicate and cooperate. The other puzzle involves more strategy, and communication is needed for the pair of children to effectively complete the task.

In the study, some children work on the puzzles individually; these children complete both the physical puzzle as well as the strategic puzzle without any help from a peer. Other children work in pairs to complete the puzzles; these children complete both the physical puzzle and the strategy puzzle collaboratively with a peer. Based on the existing evidence that children’s friendships, compared to non-friend relationships, help to support more effective task performance and more pro-social activity, the researchers predict that children who work in pairs will have a higher performance rating than children who work individually. If this result is obtained, it will provide further evidence suggesting that working collaboratively with peers supports more effective task performance.
Research Spotlight, continued …

The Moving to Music Game

This group of undergraduates is studying motor skill development as it relates to background music and speed/accuracy. Students are investigating the possibility that playing faster music while children perform a motor skills based task would increase the speed and efficiency at which they are able to perform the task.

Each child plays this game twice on the same day. Once, children are asked to move cotton balls from one container to the other with tweezers while listening to fast music. The other time, children move the cotton balls while listening to slow music. The piece of music utilized is a 1-minute recording of Mozart’s Concerto No. 20 in D minor K.466, for Piano and Orchestra, Romanze. The fast version was sped up half-tempo, and the slow version was slowed down half-tempo. We expect that children will be able to successfully move more objects between containers within the allotted time period when the faster piece of music is played in the background, rather than the slower piece of music.

The goal is to discover what environmental conditions are ideal for children when performing motor tasks on a daily basis. For example, when children must clean up their play area by moving all of their toys into a bin, the children may complete this task faster if fast music is played rather than if slow music is played.

The Pointing Game

Another group is studying story memory to determine if hand gestures, specifically finger pointing, will help improve children’s memory. The task involves reading a story called Biscuit Goes to the Fair, by Alyssa Satin Capucilli, and investigating whether there is a difference in information retention if the child pointed to specific images, such as characters or objects in the story, versus if the researcher pointed to the images while reading. After the story is read, the child answers 10 short object-oriented questions about the book, 5 questions based on images that the child pointed to, and 5 questions based on images that the experimenter pointed to. For each question, the tester presents the child with 3 possible image choices. The coder then records the number of questions that are answered correctly. During one half of the story, the child listens and watches the tester point to objects in the story. During the other half, the child plays a more active role in the storytelling process by pointing to objects in the story themselves. Based on existing evidence that a child’s memory capacity will increase when active in the learning process, researchers expect children to answer more questions correctly when they are able to point to the objects themselves during the reading. If this result is obtained, it will provide further evidence that children retain more information when playing an active role in their learning experience.

NOTE: Three other groups are still finalizing their studies, but families will receive study descriptions via the children’s backpacks on the day they participate as usual.
Director’s Corner: Community Relations

As we draw near to the end of our NAEYC Accreditation Renewal year, I reflect on the Children’s School’s approach to the final quality standard, #8 Community Relationships, and the many reciprocal benefits of our integration into the Carnegie Mellon learning community.

NAEYC’s standard for Community Relationships includes three levels of relationships: 1) raising awareness and accessing community resources available to educators and families for promoting young children’s health and well-being, 2) partnering with community agencies to share diverse cultural and arts resources with the children during school and to encourage families to access them within the community, and 3) “acting as a citizen in the neighborhood and the early childhood community” to contribute our resources - including expertise – to local, state, and national early childhood enhancement and advocacy efforts, particularly for quality professional development.

• We work closely with Carnegie Mellon’s Police and Environmental Health & Safety departments regarding security and fire safety issues, and we partner with the university nutritionist regarding our food handling procedures and snack menus. We have also built relationships with the health center (which provides free flu shots to our staff annually), counseling center for referrals as needed, and athletics department (for events such as the pool tour and family swim at our recent Family Festival).

• For families, Mrs. Rosenblum shares a broad list of Pittsburgh resources at the start of the school year or when a family is new to town, Miss Hancock coordinates resources on school choices and transitions, busing, and scholarship funding, and Dr. Carver helps connect families with resources for developmental diagnostics and therapy, as well as dealing with family challenges, grief, etc.

• The Carnegie Mellon campus and Schenley Park provide numerous opportunities for enhancing our program via walking field trips, collaboration on children’s programs such as the recent Martin Luther King Jr. event, access to arts performances (such as the recent ballroom dancing demonstration in the Red Room), and opportunities for inspiration by interaction with undergraduate designers (see the Undergraduate Spotlight page).

• In addition to sharing information about university events intended for families (such as the upcoming carnival), we also utilize our newsletter and email distribution list to notify our families of interesting community events. Our Family Social Organization also plans group outings!

• Our citizenship efforts are among the strongest aspects of the Children’s School. From our reciprocal relationships with the Psychology Department, Cyert Center, and local schools sending practicum students to us, we have educators in leadership roles at the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children, the International Association of Laboratory Schools, and the National Coalition for Campus Children’s Centers (see article about recent conferences).

• Because CMU provides so many infrastructure resources for our school, we have a generous professional development budget, including funding a “floater” teacher so that there is coverage for staff to participate in conferences, collaborative projects, etc. Grant funding for research projects for which we are consultants and collaborators also supports an administrative team with more depth and breadth than most early childhood programs.

As you can imagine, building and extending these relationships increases our exposure to resources and opportunities, which then enhances our efforts and effectiveness connecting with the community.