Month of the Young Child & Earth Day

PAEYC (Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children) designates the month of April as the Month of the Young Child. The theme suggested by the national organization (NAEYC) this year is “Celebrating Our Youngest Learners”. 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 diverse 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.

To honor both young learners and Earth Day (April 22nd), the Children’s School will be celebrating with the Cyert Center, the Reggio-Emilio inspired full day early learning center on the CMU Campus. The children from both schools will be collaborating on art work, playing games together, and joining in a sing-a-long and snack time on April 21st during regular school hours. Stay tuned for descriptions and photos of this event!

Enrollment Updates

**2016-2017 School Year:** We currently have 19 children registered for the Kindergarten, 26 children registered for the Morning 4’s, and 24 children in the Morning 3’s. The Afternoon 4’s program has 12 registered children, and Afternoon 3’s has 8 children. We also have a few spaces still available in our Morning Extended Program. Thank you for your referrals to family and friends and Mrs. Rosenblum is happy to conduct tours for prospective families!

**Summer Camp Enrollment:** There are also spaces remaining in our June Summer Camp. This year’s camp theme is Olympics and will be taught by Children’s School educators. You can register your child for one, two, three or four weeks and the hours are 8:45 am until 1 pm, Monday through Friday. Please contact Maggie Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu if you would like to enroll your child. We had a great time with our summer Olympics experience 4 years ago!

April Dates

- **Friday, April 1st** – NO SCHOOL for children / Conference Preparation Day for Educators
- **Friday, April 15th** – NO SCHOOL for children
- **Parent / Teacher Conferences in the Afternoon**
- Enjoy CMU’s Spring Carnival “Game Night” April 14th to 16th (http://www.springlearnival.org)
- **Friday, April 29th** – Parent / Teacher Conferences – NO SCHOOL for children
Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day

On April 28th, the Children’s School will be participating in Carnegie Mellon University’s “Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day”. Over 200 children are hosted at CMU annually, as they shadow their parents and take part in various campus sponsored events and activities. We will be hosting two groups of 15 children on the afternoon of April 28th. They will experience typical Children’s School activities and meet and interact with our educators and students.

Year End Celebration

The annual Year-End Celebration Picnic for all Children’s School families will be held after the Kindergarten Graduation Ceremony on Friday, May 13th. The Children’s School will be providing the main course, and we need volunteers to provide paper products, beverages, salads and desserts, as well as to help with the set up and clean up. Committee meetings to plan this event will be held on Monday, April 11th at 9 am and 12:45 pm. Please join us if you can! Even if you cannot join us on that date, there will be volunteer opportunities for this event, so watch for an email about using a Google.doc to indicate how you can help. Please contact Maggie Rosenblum if you have any questions (rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu).

Parent Resources: Tackling Tough Topics

Thanks to the dozen or so parents who joined Dr. Carver and Mrs. Tomer for a discussion of how to handle talking with young children about tough topics, such as death, religion, and sexuality. We talked about the importance of taking a long-term view of conversations happening a little at a time over months or years as the child grows, which takes the pressure off any one explanation. We emphasized telling the simple truth with accurate vocabulary from an early age so that children build both trust in the parent’s responsiveness and foundational concepts about the topic. Openness to calm, honest dialogue is key to the child’s willingness to engage in challenging discussions, and keeping the child’s developmental level in mind helps the adult gauge how much detail to include in any one conversation. The comfort and safety the child feels with the parent is typically more important than the information conveyed because it is easier to add detail over time but difficult to calm anxieties that arise. With those general principles in mind, we discussed specific concerns that parents raised and offered resources on a wide range of topics. If you missed the discussion but would like resources, see Miss Drash in the office to review what we have available. Because so many parents asked about explaining sex and sexuality to children, we are seeking additional children’s books on the topic and will soon have them available for parents to review. Please feel free to contact Dr. Carver at any time for consultation about how to address particular issues with your child.

Evacuation Drill

As part of our March Safety Week, the children and educators practiced an evacuation drill to the Cohon University Center (CUC). In the event that we would need to evacuate the Margaret Morrison Building for a lengthy period of time, we would relocate to a space in the CUC.
April Gallery Features

3’s Friends: Harris B., John E., Jack G., Connor H., Josh N., Elijah S., and Sydnee S.

4’s Friends: Morgan F., Javier G., Owen H., Atticus M., Sean, M., and Parker N.

Kindergarten Friends: Rhys J., Brylie M., and Alexander W.

Hillside Garden News

IALS Mini-Grant Funding

The International Association of Laboratory Schools (IALS) announced that The Children’s School has been awarded a $2,000 mini-grant to aid in the development of our Hillside Garden Project! The funds will be used to procure plants and materials for creating stepping stones, adding rain barrels, and building bird and butterfly houses, as well as general garden maintenance. Thanks to Miss Hancock for preparing this grant application on our behalf!

Garden Donations

Thank you to the Fortier family (Eli PM3) for donating a beautiful butterfly house to the garden and to Chris Grill (Kaya PM4) for building us a bat house!

Please Join Families and Undergraduates on Saturday, April 2, 2016

The Children’s School will be participating in the spring 1000Plus Volunteer Day on Saturday, April 2, 2016. Our tasks for the day include:

• pruning plants on the hillside,
• fluffing mulch on the playground,
• sifting and raking sand in the sandbox to remove mulch and adding more sand,
• prepping garden boxes on the playground as well as on the wall for planting, and
• washing the Imagination Playground blocks.

Please plan to join us for a day of spring garden cleanup, planting and FUN!!

Adopt our Garden for a Week in the Summer

During July and August, our garden will continue to grow but will need some friends to help with watering and weeding. If your family would be interested in adopting our garden for a week in July or August, please contact Miss Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu or 412-268-2198.
We had a wonderful turnout for the **bowling** event at **Forward Lanes**. Children bowled with the aid of bumpers and ramps and had fun watching their ball knock down the pins. Strike!

The Spring Break **skating** event at **Romp N Roll** was great! We practically had the roller rink to ourselves. The session ended with the limbo, Hokey Pokey and Chicken Dance. So much fun!

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

April 1: There will be a **Children’s School and FSO FUNdraiser at Altimate Air Trampoline Park** in North Versailles (see enclosed flyer). Take this flyer with you to the park and 40% will be donated back to the Children’s School. The event is from 10:30am - 12:30pm. Jumping and bouncing are available for children ages 2-6. Activities for other ages can be found online at [http://www.altimateair.com](http://www.altimateair.com). Please contact Alexis Tuckfelt (Marley’s Mom) alexiscoupe@aol.com with any questions.

April 13: After morning greeting (around 8:45 a.m.), join the **FSO Book Club** at the CMU Café, on the ground floor of Resnick House (near football field). The meetings last until 10 or 10:30am. For this meeting, we will discuss an article about homework for elementary-aged children. The article can be found here: [http://community.today.com/parentingteam/post/heres-why-i-said-no-to-homework](http://community.today.com/parentingteam/post/heres-why-i-said-no-to-homework)

Please feel free to contact Michelle Landau (Owen’s Mom) mklandau@mac.com or Jen Moak (Ryan’s Mom) jlmoak95@yahoo.com with any questions.

April 15: **CMU Carnival at the Races.** Join us from 8 am - 12 noon at the KidsZone tent featuring Lego Buggy Races. Coloring, free t-shirts and kids under 10 can build their own Lego buggy and race it on a track. Sorry, you can’t take the buggy with you though.

April 29: **Just Ducky Tour - Kindergarten only event.** Look for an email with more details.

Free City Events in April:

- **April 2 and 3: Great Pittsburgh Eagle Egg Hunt.** Celebrate the region’s bald eagles. Crafts and activities for all ages. Register at [www.aswp.org](http://www.aswp.org).
- **April 22, 23, 24: Earth Day in Frick Park:** The Pittsburgh community gathers for a free, three-day celebration. [http://www.pittsburghparks.org/earth-day](http://www.pittsburghparks.org/earth-day)
- **April 27: Buzzword Performance Series** presented by Opera Theatre. This interactive and child-friendly show is geared toward children ages 0-5 but engaging enough for older siblings as well. The event is from 6-7 pm. Food is served and space is limited. Reserve your spot by calling Norma Meyer at East Liberty Presbyterian Church 412-441-3800 x11. [www.HopeAcademyArts.com](http://www.HopeAcademyArts.com)

Admission Events in April:

- **Spring Flower Show at Phipps: Masterpieces in Motion** - through April 10. Open daily from 9:30 am - 5 pm and 10 pm on Fridays. $15, $14 seniors and students, $11 ages 2-18. More info at: [https://phipps.conservatory.org/calendar/detail/spring-flower-show](https://phipps.conservatory.org/calendar/detail/spring-flower-show)
- **Hatch Art Studio: Open Studio** - A time for families to make a project together or for children to discover a new way of creating. April Open Studio Hours are Tuesdays 4pm-7pm and Saturdays 10 am-2 pm. $12 / hr. for an adult/child pair, $8 per extra child. [http://www.hatchpgh.com/open-studio/](http://www.hatchpgh.com/open-studio/)

Please contact FSO chairs Alexis alexiscoupe@aol.com and Jess jsimcox5@gmail.com with any ideas, questions, or concerns.
Nurse Ginny’s Hand Washing Lesson

On March 16th, Ginny Allison, our School Nurse Practitioner from the Pittsburgh Public Schools, visited all of our classrooms to talk with the children and staff about hand washing and other habits to keep us healthy. She blew bubbles to simulate what happens when you cough or sneeze and talked with the children about the proper way to “catch your cough or sneeze” in your elbow so that the germs will not float in the air like the bubbles.

She then led the children in a discussion of when we should wash our hands, as well as how to effectively wash our hands. Nurse Ginny brought a special glow lotion and black light machine called the Glitter Bug to make the experience concrete for the children. The children were given 1 pump of the special lotion to rub on their hands. Like germs, we cannot see the lotion on our hands. However, when the children placed their hands under the black light in the machine, the lotion illuminated. The children then went to the sink and washed their hands with regular soap to remove the “pretend germs”. The children returned to the Glitter Bug to determine if they removed the “germs” or if they needed to wash again.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Handwashing is like a "do-it-yourself" vaccine you can take to reduce the spread of diarrheal and respiratory illness so you can stay healthy. Regular handwashing, particularly before and after certain activities, is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others.” Thank you to Nurse Ginny for sharing her knowledge and expertise to keep us all healthy!!

Educators Learning from Colleagues

During the first half of April, five early childhood leaders from the NOBO (http://noboedu.com/en/) Education Company in Beijing, China, will visit Pittsburgh. Dr. Carver has prepared a program for them that includes observation and dialogue with educators at CMU’s Children’s School and Cyert Center, Pitt’s University Child Development Center and Falk School, the Campus School and Early Learning Center at Carlow, and the Crafton Heights Community Preschool. The educators will also meet with leaders of the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC) at the Homewood HUB, Dr. Junlei Li from the Fred Rogers Center, and Dr. Robert Siegler from CMU’s Psychology Department. The visitors will be hosted for 12 days of their stay by families, including professor Yueming Yu, visiting scholar Yunqi Wang, and kindergarten teacher Donna Perovich.

During the last week of April, the International Association of Laboratory Schools (IALS) is offering international members and friends an opportunity to tour laboratory schools in New York City and then attend the annual conference, which will be held in Puerto Rico this year. As a member of the IALS board, Mrs. Bird will represent the Children’s School as one of the hosts in NYC who will be welcoming educators from South Africa, Canada, and Japan. Educators from Jamaica and the Czech Republic will join the group in Puerto Rico, along with American educators from across the country. See http://www.laboratoryschools.org for more information.
Family Spotlight: A Few Favorite Things

In August 2009, I packed my bags and moved to Pittsburgh, where I was about to begin the next chapter in my life, marriage and career. I had already considered Pittsburgh my home after attending Point Park University as a Dance major and performing locally for a few years, making it easy for me to say yes to settling in Pittsburgh when I married Dan (a born and raised Pittsburgher). Before marriage, I had been performing with the National Tours of My Little Pony Live and Sesame Street Live, but I wanted to be in the same city as Dan when I entered into marriage, which meant time for a career change. I had always known that I wanted to work in the education field after I was finished performing, so when I saw the job posting for Associate Kindergarten Teacher at the Children’s School, I decided to take a chance and apply. I was ecstatic and nervous when I was offered the job. I quickly saw that the Children’s School was a perfect place for me. The staff welcomed me with open arms and encouraged me to share my passion and talents in the arts with the children. I knew that when Dan and I were ready to start a family, we would without a doubt send our children to the school.

This school year, Dan and I began that journey as preschool parents at the Children’s School when our oldest daughter, Addison, joined the Blue Room with Mrs. Marshall. That same ecstatic and nervous feeling came back once again as the school year started. I felt like every parent sending their child to school for the first time, with that endless list of questions in my head. But the nervousness quickly disappeared as I watched Addison grow during the past few months. I smile as she asks each morning, “Can I go to Mrs. Marshall now?” She is eager to leave my side to start her day in school. I have been amazed with the stories she shares about what they are learning, the endless art pieces that come home each day, and her eagerness to learn more. I feel blessed to bring my child to work with me each day and to peek out the window to see her running with a big smile on her face on the playground. Seeing her joy makes me excited for the years to come, as I know I will get to witness memories being made by my youngest daughter, Kiley, when she joins the Children’s School in 2018.

Appreciation for Clothing Donations

In the March 2016 newsletter, the DeLima family asked for help in collecting items for refugees to be donated to the South Hills Interfaith Movement (SHIM). We are happy to report that 132 POUNDS of various necessities were donated by the Children’s School families and delivered by the DeLimas to SHIM. This collection also included the new underwear and socks that we collected during the Whole School Textile Unit. Thank you to everyone for your generosity!! If you have ideas about how our children and families can support others in our community, please let us know.
Terrific Textile Time

On Thursday, March 3rd, more than 200 Children's School family members and friends donned their classroom colors to celebrate our whole school unit during our Terrific Textile Time, where we had our photos taken in bandanas we got to select and keep. We played games with fabric beanbags, practiced washing mittens like the three little kittens, made sheep with real wool, made necklaces with yarn, contributed to a fabric poof collage, and created sock puppets.
More Textile Time Explorations

During the Textile Unit, we learned about the process of sheering sheep to get wool to transform into knitted or woven fabrics, so we pretended to shear sheep and used a real loom to weave yarn into a decorative wall hanging. In the kindergarten, we experimented with how much liquid different textiles could absorb, we tried to identify different fabrics by feel, and we used the “Zoomy” to magnify textiles so we could see the fibers on the computer screen. In our new Make Shop, we used the low temp glue guns to make a fabric collage bookmark to take home.

Exploring a Wheelchair

During the past month or so, our school community has had the opportunity to learn about the challenges of navigating the world in a wheelchair, thanks to Dr. Carver’s misstep at home and resulting broken leg and subsequent surgery. The educators, children, and families have been extremely caring, and the children frequently ask if her leg is “feeling better”, while seeming somewhat puzzled that the healing process isn’t quicker. They have been so eager to open doors, clear paths, and even push Dr. Carver in the wheelchair that she visited the playground to give them a chance to try riding in it and pushing their friends. We’ve all discovered that it’s not easy and we now have ideas to improve our school spaces to make them more accessible to all!
Undergraduate Spotlight

Lauren Yan (Sophomore, Psychology)

My mom once showed me a quote that read: “Sometimes you need to talk to a three year old so you can understand life again.” I don’t think there is a more accurate statement to describe how much working at the Children’s School has helped me. When a three year old asks me how to spell “I love mom”, suddenly, even if just for a little while, the stress of all those homework assignments to do and exams to study for goes away. The Children’s School is like a bubble inside CMU, and it is a bubble of smiles like sunshine and overflowing energy, even at 8 am on a rainy Monday morning. All the teachers and staff are superb, and they were so welcoming from the start. Every day, I learn a little bit more from them about how to interact with children and how to handle all kinds of situations that arise throughout the day. There’s definitely a lot more to learn at the Children’s School than just outer space and textiles.

And even though the children may be the ones asking me if China is a state or a country, I am the one learning about how curious and bright they all are. It never ceases to amaze me how much they know, how considerate they are, how honest they are, and how quick and eager they are to learn. Watching them solve their own problems and challenges is often inspiring for me to work harder and solve my own. It is fascinating to watch the children ponder something until it makes sense to them, even if it doesn’t make sense to us. In the little time I spend with them every week, I came to realize that sometimes it takes a child’s perspective to figure out the most puzzling questions. They are, after all, the ones that help us understand life again.

The Children’s School has honestly been the biggest turnaround for my sophomore year at CMU. Seeing the children walk in with the biggest smile can only start my day off right. Hearing their stories that they are so excited to tell me makes me just as excited as they are because, if they felt that it was important and awesome enough to tell me, then it must have been pretty super important and awesome. Coming to school is definitely the best part of my week, when I get the chance to escape the CMU world into a little sanctuary. I only wish that I had discovered it in my freshman year, but knowing that I have two more years to try to understand life makes me just as thankful to have found it now.

Scholarship Funding Update

In March, we received additional 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 previous newsletters, we have also received contributions from HM Healthcare, PNC Bank, and UPMC. If you would like more information or can help us to build a list of prospective businesses, please contact the Main Office.
Research Spotlight

The Line Game

One of the groups in Dr. Stephanie Siler’s Research Methods course is studying whether young children are more likely to conform and change their answer to an ambiguous matching question if they are told that others present in the room gave a different answer, in contrast to whether the alternative answer was given by people who are not present, but whose photos were shown. Previous research has suggested a couple of things. One is that younger children are less likely to conform than older children, and another is that adults acting in a “child” position (not as an authority figure) lead children to be more independent. These findings prompted these undergraduates to assess the effect adult presence has on younger children’s conformity.

In the task, a child is asked which line (A, B, or C, for example) is most similar to the target line (“line 1”). The sample lines (A, B, C) vary in length, width, color, or format (dashed, dotted, solid, etc.), but every line has exactly two characteristics in common with the target line (see below). After choosing an answer, children in the “presence” condition are told that the two other researchers in the room made a different choice from the child’s, and children in the the “non-presence” condition are told that two other adults whose photos are shown but who are not present in the room made a different choice. Children are then asked again which line is most similar to one target line, just to see if the child will switch to a different answer. After making the second choice, children are asked to explain their choice to assess their rationalization of their answer on this ambiguous task, and give researchers further insight into why the children may or may not have conformed with the adult answer.

Conformity is an important area of study, especially in children, because it tells us what factors may make children reconsider their own views. This type of information is used in legal cases involving children as well as in other fields in which child reliability may be necessary. Determining whether presence of the adult with a different viewpoint influences children may help adults develop a method of teaching that will encourage children to be more independent and less prone or more resistant to conforming to group or authority expectations.

Five additional groups of students in Dr. Siler’s class are studying other interesting topics, including 1) testing whether providing subgoals for challenging tasks will increase kindergartners’ persistence in solving them, 2) determining whether demonstration and feedback during practice will improve 4 and 5 year olds’ performance on a 3-dimensional mental rotation task, 3) 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 vs. differential status, 4) 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, and 5) 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.
Director’s Corner: What Patterns?

Noticing patterns in the world and describing the mathematics of change is the essence of algebra, which the Khan Academy describes as “the language through which we describe patterns” and a “simple way to express a repetitive process”. According to Marshall Haith’s research, an infant as young as 2-3 months old can anticipate where objects will appear on a screen if there is a systematic pattern, such as left – right – left – right or top – middle – bottom – top – middle – bottom. We can tell that infants learn the pattern and can predict the next location because their eyes move in advance of the object appearing.

By preschool, children can remember and follow many types of patterns, starting with routines in their home life, such as take a bath - brush teeth – hear a bedtime story or sing the hello song - do the calendar – check the weather, etc. Children’s learning of such patterns is especially obvious in their protests that one parent or a substitute teacher isn’t following the routine “correctly”. Additional evidence comes from the popularity of songs with actions, such as “head, shoulders, knees, and toes”, or repetitive stories, such as “Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? I see a red bird looking at me. Red bird, red bird, what do you see? etc.” As with other foundational math concepts, adults who draw children’s attention to patterns in the world help them begin to notice them naturally.

In school, we start with noticing patterns and predicting what will come next, all using everyday objects and situations, such as clothing designs, repeated actions in setting the table for snack (e.g., napkin-cup-napkin-cup), or up-down-up-down, etc. The next challenge is to copy and extend patterns in contexts such as stringing beads, building with blocks, playing follow the leader, etc. We also begin to use letter names to describe patterns. For example, an AB pattern has two repeating elements, such as red-blue-red-blue or clap-snap-clap-snap or eventually odd-even-odd-even. By this time in the year, kindergartners can recognize, extend, and even create much more sophisticated patterns, such as ABBC or ABAC, etc.

At home, there are many common opportunities to promote children’s interest in patterns. Both indoors and outdoors, pay attention to the designs on plants, furniture, buildings, etc. Cooking affords opportunities for repeated actions such as adding an ingredient and then stirring, and table-setting patterns have even more elements, especially for fancier meals. Card games involve patterns of numbers and suits, and most all games involve sequences of actions and turns. The enclosed “Preschoolers as Pattern Sleuths” article from Teaching Young Children offers even more ideas, as well as some children’s books that emphasize patterns. As always, aim to take the child’s lead regarding what is interesting and enjoyable, particularly in terms of using their favorite toys or pastimes as arenas for pattern play (e.g., patterns in block building, with stuffed animals, in art, with sports, etc.). Experiencing the same types of patterns in diverse contexts and different modalities (visual, tactile, auditory, etc.) will deepen children’s understanding of the core concepts.

Working with patterns gives children opportunities to practice other concepts of math as well, starting with counting pattern elements, noticing their shapes and spatial arrangements, etc. Patterns become most useful when they help children make predictions about what comes next. Helping children identify predictability in the world alerts them to regularities that they can use to organize their thinking and behavior, which then makes them more confident and likely to engage more fully.