Nurture Their Nature

Speak Up For Kids! is a nationwide education campaign developed by the Child Mind Institute and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) to raise awareness about psychiatric and learning disorders in children. Hundreds of child and adolescent psychiatrists, as well as other mental health professionals, will educate parents and teachers during National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week (May 1-7). Together, they will create awareness in communities across the nation that early diagnosis and intervention are key to children’s success in school, with friends, and at home.

As part of this initiative, Dr. Michelle Horner (Annette, PM 3’s) will offer a parent seminar entitled, “Nurture Their Nature: Create an Environment to Maximize Your Child’s Potential” on Friday, May 6th from 10:00 to 11:30 am in room 227 of the Margaret Morrison Building that houses the Children’s School. Preschool 4’s and Kindergarten Children will be in school. Child Care will be provided for children 3 and under in the Red Room.

May Web Artists

3’s Friends: Thomas A., Perry D., Elena E., Tiernan J. Benjamin K., Isaac L., and Will N.
4’s Friends: Jake B., Eddie D., Mack J., Carter L., Charlotte S., and Harrison S.
Kindergarten Friends: Ryan H. and Ashley S.

Year-End Celebrations

The 2011 Kindergarten Class will graduate on Friday, May 20, 2011 at 10:00AM in Breed Hall (Room 103 in the Margaret Morrison Building. Kindergarten families will receive an invitation soon, so keep your eyes open!

Following the Kindergarten Graduation, ALL Children’s School Families are invited to celebrate our wonderful school year by joining us for a picnic from 11:00AM to 1:00PM on our playground. Please join us for a lunch of pizza and salad and fun outdoor activities. We’ll move the fun indoors if the weather does not cooperate.

Important May Dates
Friday, May 6th – Family Seminar with Dr. Michelle Horner from 10:00 – 11:30am
Thursday, May 19th - Last Regular Day for ALL Programs
Friday, May 20th - Kindergarten Graduation at 10:00 AM in Margaret Morrison Room 103
Whole School Picnic at 11:00 AM on the Playground
Family Committee News

A big THANK YOU – to all of our families who donated prom dresses and gently worn children’s shoes. Your donations were much appreciated by their recipients!

The Teacher Appreciation Luncheon and End-of-Year-Picnic Committee devised a Google document to organize volunteers for the two events. If you have not already done so, please go to https://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=0AlEwBOBGrDKWdDVxApVVTkFPLUjWkQ1U2R3MEF20Hc&hl=en to indicate how you can help. The appreciation luncheon is a staff only event, but the picnic is for the entire school community. We especially need families of 3’s and 4’s to help with picnic preparations on May 20th while the kindergarten families attend the graduation ceremony. This preparation would primarily involve waiting for the pizzas and cutting watermelon. If you have any questions concerning these events, please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu.

Lost and Found

Please check the Lost and Found before the end of the school year for any missing items. Unclaimed items will be donated to the Women’s Shelter.

School Photo Project

During this school year, a staff / parent committee experimented with taking close-up photographs of children during the regular course of the school day so that we could offer families school portraits that were more representative of children’s interests and personalities than those that are taken only on one day by a professional who is not familiar with the children.

As the project progressed, the committee recognized that families were interested in photographs of the classroom interactions more than portraits, and that whole class photographs would also be valuable. For that reason, the educators are working to compile a CD with classroom photos and a slideshow as a gift for families. The photos are designed only for the personal use of families in private media contexts, so they will be distributed only to parents willing to sign an agreement that they will not post photographs of other people’s children on the web or social media venues.

Arbor Day / Earth Day Celebrations

In honor of Earth Day, CMU offered a special event on April 21st for the campus community to learn about local birds of prey. Several of our classes observed four different species from a safe distance, including a peregrine falcon, a red-tailed hawk, a goshawk and a hybrid falcon. There was also a wild red-tailed hawk circling nearby because he noticed a competitor in his territory. The children also saw a 4-week-old great horned owl, still fluffy with down, that someone had rescued. Because he couldn’t fly, the children were able to get close to him.

Also on April 21st, Annie Blissit, a Carnegie Mellon University student who works at the Children’s School, hosted an Arbor Day event with her co-ed service fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega. Our extended afternoon friends were able to build and paint birdhouses with the group.
Family Spotlight: A Year Already?

I can’t believe this is the last newsletter of the school year. How did that happen so quickly? It seems like it was only last week that I was learning the Byzantine intricacies of the drop-off and pick-up routines, trying not to embarrass myself in front of the veterans. Now I’m a seasoned pro and know exactly how late I need to be to get a spot at the back of the line, thereby eking out a few extra minutes of Fresh Air on the radio.

I used to work on campus at the School of Computer Science and occasionally I would hear the sounds of the Children’s School friends playing outside as I walked across The Cut to get lunch. I never imagined back then that one day my daughter would be one of those little noise-making hooligans playing by the tennis courts, or that I would even have a daughter, but there you have it! She is, and I do, and we feel very fortunate.

I left the School of Computer Science to stay home with Grace, and I have to say I’ve never had so much fun working so hard. The changes, the different developmental stages, they come fast and furious, and it’s all I can do to keep up most days. Grace started the school year learning to ride a bike, tearing around on the playgrounds, and hiking in Frick Park with her dads, Eric and Devin. (I’m Dad, Devin is Pop.) Then we entered the seemingly endless indoor months, and it was all about fairies and princesses and books, books, books! Grace is learning to read and is getting quite good at it. I gave her one of my old Calvin and Hobbes books a few weeks ago, thinking she might enjoy the illustrations. One morning before school she rewarded my lapse in judgment by asking me at breakfast, “Is that your face, or did a possum get stuck in your collar?” I tried not to take it personally.

Grace’s Pop is a French and Russian teacher for Pittsburgh Public Schools, and he’s always teaching her new words in both of those languages. As parents, we both believe that learning other languages and exploring other cultures is an important part of being a well-rounded individual. Also, I believe Devin is teaching Grace how to speak French so that I can’t understand what they’re saying. But that’s just me.

Now it’s spring, the sun is shining (kind of, sometimes), and we’re picking up where we left off when school started. The princesses and fairies are spending more time alone, “watching TV” in the dollhouse, and Grace is back outside riding her bike, tearing around the playground, and hiking with her dads. There have been changes, of course. She rides her bike a little faster this year and has taken to bombing down steep hills, much to the dismay of her parents. And this year, it is Grace who is patiently waiting for us to catch up on the hikes through Frick Park.
Enrollment Update for 2011-2012

We currently have 24 children registered for the Kindergarten, 32 children registered for the Morning 4’s and 22 children in the Morning 3’s. Since the expanded Extended Morning Program can accommodate 34 children, there are still 6 spaces remaining. The Afternoon 4’s program has 13 registered children, Afternoon 3’s has 10 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 2011-2012 school year, so please continue to refer families to us!

Staffing Plan for 2011-2012

We anticipate that all of our current staff members will be returning for the 2011-2012 school year, which is wonderful. To best utilize everyone’s gifts and effectively accomplish the varied programming responsibilities of a busy laboratory school, we are planning some shifts in responsibilities.

Our two Morning 3’s Classes will be taught by Mrs. Tomer (Young 3’s) and Mrs. Flynn (Older 3’s) with the support of Mr. Salinetro and undergraduate assistants. Mrs. Flynn with teach our Afternoon 3’s Class with the support of Mr. Salinetro.

Our three Morning 4’s Classes will be taught by Ms. Mangan (Young 4’s), Mrs. Opferman (Middle 4’s) and Mrs. Bird (Older 4’s) with the support of Mrs. Solomon and undergraduate assistants. Mrs. Solomon will teach the Afternoon 4’s Class with the support of Ms. Mangan.

The Extended Morning Program will be taught by Mrs. Bird, Ms. McMichael, and Mrs. Tomer, with the support of Ms. Furman, Mrs. Opferman and undergraduates. The Extended Afternoon Program will continue to be taught by Ms. McMichael with the support of Ms. Furman.

Our Kindergarten Program will taught by Mrs. Perovich with the support of Mrs. Armbruster all day and Mrs. McGillen in the morning.

Mrs. Rosenblum and Ms. Hancock will increase their administrative time to 75%, with the other 25% of their time devoted to classroom support, professional development, and outreach. Dr. Carver and Ms. Drash will continue in their full-time administrative roles.

Summer 2011 Camp Reminders

48 children are registered for our Creepy Crawlies Summer Camp. The Camp staff includes Mrs. Flynn, Ms. Furman, Ms. Mangan, Ms. McMichael, Mrs. Solomon, Mrs. Tomer, and undergraduate Laura Pacilio. If your child is registered for camp, please remember to make your final payment by Friday, May 20th. Also, recall that the morning greeting time for camp is 8:45am, rather than earlier time during the regular school year. All children need to bring a lunch, sunscreen, and their bathing suits and towels. Remember a jacket for the cool morning hours!
Children’s School Co-Hosts NALS Conference

Thanks to all the educators, researchers, parents, and children who contributed to the positive and productive professional development experience at the 2011 Annual Conference of the International Association of Laboratory and University Affiliated Schools! We were honored by the presence and encouragement of H&SS Dean John Lehoczky, Psychology Department Chair Mike Scheier, and Founding Director, Dr. Ann Baldwin Taylor. We were able to share our school’s approach to early childhood education through offering tours, sharing a poster and presentations, and informally dialoguing with colleagues from around the globe. During the 3-day conference, we hosted 302 educators from 15 states, Canada, Indonesia, and Japan. We had access to 63 presentations from educators at 21 different laboratory schools, some of which involved community partners. We earned accolades for our organization and hospitality, with much of the credit going to Ms. Hancock, Dr. Carver, and committee members at our co-host schools, The Falk School at the University of Pittsburgh and the Campus School of Carlow University.

NALS Auction News!

• Congratulations to our Camp Raffle Winners – Elizabeth Gaul, Neve Goldberg, Madeleine Park, and Harrison Salvi!! They have won a free week of the Children’s School Summer Camp!
• The NALS Auction was a huge success! Between the Falk School, the Children’s School, and the Conference Attendees, we had over 65 items donated! The Auction raised a total of $4,668 for the NALS Endowment Fund, The Falk School, and the Children’s School. The amount donated back to the Children’s School will be $1,313.50. • Thanks to the fantastic Silent Auction Committee and all of the donors for your efforts and ingenuity!
Undergraduate Spotlight: Getting to Know You!!

Laura Alfonso is a senior creative writing and psychology major. Working at the Children's School for the past two years has taught her a lot about patience, enthusiasm, and being a kind friend. After graduation, she plans to work at a foster home for young children in Costa Rica and then pursue a Master's Degree in Biblical Counseling. When Laura isn't studying or working, she enjoys reading and decorating elaborate cakes.

Undergraduate Appreciation

The CMU semester is coming to an end, so we must say good-bye to the many wonderful undergraduates who have assisted us in the classrooms and the office this year. Laura Alphonso, Amy Donovan, Janelle Higa, Laura Pacilio, and Kate Smith are all graduating. Congratulations!!

We hope that Annie Blissit, Tyler Dossett, Sam French, Maya Geleroff, Marissa Gluskin, Emily Gibson, Ben Howe, Tiffany Hunsicker, Lindsay McGregor, Chuck McKain, Prisca Ohito, Kyle Rood, Gabrielle Rueda, Cze-Ja Tam, and Alex Tapak will return to help us next year!

To show our appreciation, the Children’s School is hosting a lunch for our assistants on May 4th from 11 am to 1 pm. The Extended Afternoon class will be preparing “comfort foods” such as macaroni and cheese, rainbow jello, and salad to help our undergraduate friends through finals week!

The “Hear Me” Project

In collaboration with the Carnegie Mellon University CREATE Lab and the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC), the Children’s School is participating in a regional project to capture and distribute youth voices from across Southwestern Pennsylvania. “Hear Me” involves collecting children’s digital audio stories on a website so that they can “hear, see and read each other’s stories, while educators, parents and policymakers can listen to the poignant and playful insights of our children” (www.hear-me.net).

If you are interested in having your child’s stories shared via the “Hear Me” project and have not yet submitted your child’s permission form, please do so as soon as possible. If you need another copy of the permission form, please contact Ms. Drash at 412-268-2199 or visit the school office to get one.
Research Spotlight

Did you hear bee or pea?

Dr. Dan Hufnagle and Dr. Lori Holt are investigating how children learn sound categories. In Session 1 of this game, children hear a friendly space alien who is learning how to say words correctly. The children help the alien learn how to say bee and pea. Then, they hear those words many times and tell the experimenter which word they hear. Sometimes the sound is ambiguous (acoustically between “bee” and “pea”). In cases like this, adults rely on pitch as a clue. The experimenters are testing whether kindergartners similarly use pitch to disambiguate sound categories like “b” and “p” as a means of understanding how native language speech sound categories develop across time. The data from this session will establish a baseline for how strongly pitch affects the child’s responses. Adults judge a sound to be more “bee”-like when it has a lower pitch, all else being equal. A follow-up session then tests how sensitive children are to changes in pitch, such as those that might be encountered in listening to a person with a nonnative accent.

During Session 2 of this game, children hear bee and pea many times and tell the experimenter which word they hear. As in Session 1, sometimes the sound is acoustically ambiguous between “bee” and “pea”. The goal of Session 2 testing is to understand how kindergartners learn the cues that make up sound categories (like “b” and “p”) and how those categories develop across time. Session 2 emphasizes and de-emphasizes pitch to test how quickly children learn new patterns of how the secondary pitch cue relates to the sound categories. Adults learn to adjust perception very quickly when pitch varies, but psychologists do not yet know whether this quick learning is present early in language development. In an earlier experiment with different sounds (deer and tear), the same researchers found that pitch strongly influenced how children perceive ambiguous dear/tear sounds, but children did not learn to adjust the mapping of pitch to sound category when it varied in the experiment. In this follow-up study, the experimenters emphasize pitch more and use sounds for which adults are more sensitive to changes in pitch (“b” and “p”). Understanding whether children are able to flexibly remap how sound cues relate to speech categories will help psychologists understand the nature of auditory perception and language development.

Kindergarten Collection for Japan Relief

During March, the Kindergarten studied the culture of Japan. In that context, they discussed the earthquake & tsunami and then decided to collect money to support the relief efforts. During their unit, they collected (and counted) $100.06 to give to the Japanese Student Association (JSA) on campus for sending to the Japanese Red Cross. Thanks to all the children and families who contributed to this donation!
Director’s Corner: Learning Pathways

Over the course of my articles this year, I have introduced our major professional development emphases, Math & Building, and highlighted the ways that our educators intentionally design programs to foster every child’s progress toward meeting the Children’s School’s “developmental goals”. For each set of goals, I also explained the ways that our thematic studies incorporate rich opportunities for strengthening skills, the diverse methods we use for reinforcing central mathematics concepts, and the approaches families can adopt to support the children’s learning.

Earlier this week, I attended a fascinating talk by Dr. Roy Pea, a professor at Stanford University, whose research on children’s learning in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) has impacted our national education policy and practice. He advocated taking a long-term view of children’s “learning careers” with an emphasis on the ways that our culture can shape their “trajectories of participation” in a positive and productive way to help them develop their interests and talents into fulfilling personal and professional endeavors. Through a variety of case studies, Dr. Pea emphasized the importance of parents and other adult mentors in providing opportunities and resources that both spark and support children’s identity as learners in certain disciplines (i.e., viewing themselves as scientists, naturalists, musicians, etc.), their gradual acquisition of accountable disciplinary knowledge, and their navigation of the formal and informal systems that manage access to each field. Not surprisingly, children whose families and communities have less to offer in terms of opportunities and resources are less likely to develop and successfully pursue passions to the level that their innate potential would allow. In order to bridge that gap, institutions like CMU and the Children’s School are actively involved in community outreach for children and educators, partnerships with programs like the Pittsburgh Public Schools’ “Start on Success”, national events like “Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day”, etc.

Perhaps you are involved in similar outreach through your job or your community, but the point of my raising these issues now is to encourage you to consider the coming summer as a time to invest yourself in the early learning careers of your children. No need to buy workbooks or flash cards. Instead, pursue your own hobbies and involve your children. There are age appropriate ways to invite even young children to help with gardening, film-making, woodworking, sewing, etc. If your children seem fascinated by a particular topic that doesn’t fit your skill or interest (e.g., insects, dinosaurs, painting), visit the library to get non-fiction books, check for local exhibits or interest groups that might offer tours or lessons, or check the web for related information and project ideas. Remember that grandparents, neighbors, and other community members might also enjoy sharing their passions with your children, and they might have more time and resources than you have available. Lastly, when you have opportunities to explore your neighborhood or travel even farther from home, consider starting a collection, a photo album, a scrapbook, or in some other way recording your adventures.

We look forward to hearing about your family’s explorations in the fall, when we will again be partnering with you in supporting your children’s learning careers. For those of you with children progressing to elementary schools, we wish you well and hope that you will allow them to visit when possible to share their excitement about more advanced learning with the preschool and kindergarten classes. You’ll always be part of the Children’s School family!