

Carnegie Mellon University Children's School

May 2013 Family Newsletter

Whole School Celebration

Please join us on Friday, May 17th from 11am to 1pm on the Children's School playground for our whole school celebration of the 2012-13 school year. Pizza, salad, watermelon, and a variety of desserts will be provided, along with plenty of drinks. This event is scheduled immediately after the Kindergarten Graduation, which will be held in Margaret Morrison's Breed Hall 103 at 10am.



Summer 2013 Camp Pointers

50 children are registered for varied weeks during our summer **Gardening** Camp. The Camp staff includes Mrs. Bird, Mrs. Mack, Ms. Mangan, Ms. McMichael, Mrs. Opferman, Ms. Scholes, and Ms. Stevens. We also have student employees Rebecca Campbell, Abby Cryan and Gabi Rueda. If your child is registered for camp, please make your final payment by Friday, May 17th. We will be greeting the children at the front of Margaret Morrison and taking them directly to the playground after a stop in the bathroom for toileting and hand-washing. Also, please recall that the morning greeting time for camp is 8:45am, rather than the earlier time during the regular year. All children need to bring a lunch, sunscreen labeled with their full name, and their bathing suits and towels. We also suggest hats because there is only a little shade on the playground. Remember a jacket for the cool morning hours!



May Dates:

- Friday, May 3rd – Teacher Appreciation Luncheon Sponsored by Children's School Parents
- Thursday, May 16th - Last Regular Day for ALL Programs
- Friday, May 17th - Kindergarten Graduation at 10:00 AM in Margaret Morrison Room 103
Whole School Picnic at 11:00 AM on the Playground
- Monday, May 20th through Friday, May 31st – Professional Development for Staff

Playground Play Dates

To celebrate the Month of the Young Child, the Children's School invited our friends from the Cyert Center across campus to join us for picnics on our playground. On April 22nd and 23rd, we hosted visits from their 3's, 4's and 5's programs for a few hours of play and snacks. We supplied Teddy Graham crackers, and they brought lemonade. The weather cooperated beautifully and everyone had a good time!



Lost & Found

We have collected quite a number of mittens, hats, gloves, etc. over the last few months. Please visit the school to check the lost and found or send a note with a description of a lost article before May 17th. Unclaimed items will be donated to the Pittsburgh Women's Shelter.

Classroom Year in Pictures

Children's School educators have collected classroom photos into a Year in Pictures slide show as a gift for families. The photos are designed only for the personal use of families in private media contexts, so the slide shows 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. The agreement form is included with this newsletter, so please review, complete with **both parents' signatures** if applicable, and return it to the school office if you would like to receive the Year in Pictures DVD(s) for your child(ren)'s class(es).



Family Social Organization

Thanks to everyone who attended and helped organize all of the fun FSO events this school year. Special thanks to Beth Lott for organizing the FSO. The final FSO event is a May 18th, 9:30am performance of "Egg and Spoon" (see description below) at the Pittsburgh International Children's Festival. The performance will be in the Studio Theater in the University of Pittsburgh Cathedral of Learning. Tickets are \$7 per person (children under two years of age are eligible for free "lap passes").

There are twenty-three tickets left for the May 18th, 9:30am performance. Tickets, therefore, will be reserved on a first come, first served basis. For this reason, we ask that you submit payment ASAP and no later than Wednesday, May 1st by placing an envelope with your payment and a note indicating the number of tickets (including lap passes) requested in your child's backpack.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Bob Slammon (Liam's dad) at 412-390-6663. We hope you can join us!

Description of Spoon and Egg: You and your chickadees will be taken from summer to winter to spring in this multi-sensory, highly interactive celebration of nature. The youngest theater-goers will be delighted with peek-a-boo puddles, fluffy snowflakes, blowing leaves, bursting cherry blossoms, a birdie egg that just might hatch and other splendiferous surprises. Don't miss the magic of zipping through a magical year of seasons in just 40 minutes. More information is available here:
<http://www.pghkids.org/2013/04/18/egg-and-spoon-theater-for-a-new-age/>

Family Input for School Enhancement

Please take time in the next two weeks to complete the Survey Monkey Family Input Questionnaire so that we can use your input for our upcoming professional development planning time. You'll get an email this week with a clickable link to the survey. We appreciate your support for our quality improvement efforts!

2013 National Bike Challenge

2013 NATIONAL BIKE CHALLENGE



"In 2009, the Kimberly-Clark Corporation created an internal Bike Challenge for its more than 50,000 employees. With the help of the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin, the Challenge was successfully piloted in Wisconsin at the state-wide level in 2011. The Bike Challenge, then called the *Get Up & Ride National Bike Challenge*, went national in 2012. It had over 30,000 participants riding 12 million miles; 2013 will be the second year the Challenge is national in scope. The Challenge is an exciting health and wellness initiative that encourages people to bike for transportation and recreation. In 2013, the goal is to have 50,000 riders pedal 20 million miles from May 1, 2013 until September 30, 2013. It is open and free to anyone who lives in the U.S. or works for an organization with U.S.

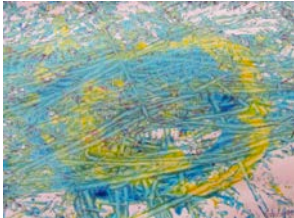
employees. Every time you get on your bike the miles count. Whether they are for fitness, fun, or transportation make sure to join and log them on nationalbikechallenge.org."

May Web Artists

3's Friends: Arnav D., Gwyneth J., Min Seo K.,
Tayshawn L., Eric M., Carlos S., and Charlie W.

4's Friends: Savanna D., Clark H., Briggs J., Isaac L.,
and Amelie S.

Kindergarten Friends: Zen L. and Lili T.



Fundraising 2012-13

This year's fundraising efforts garnered a total of \$89,549.32. We were awarded \$69,500 in EITC scholarship funds, received \$7,100 for the Abraham Broudy Scholarship, and raised \$12,949.32 via other fundraisers and donations! Thanks to Miss Hancock, Mrs. Rosenblum, and our supportive families for their effort and energy!

Box Tops for Education

Thank you to everyone who supported our Box Tops for Education Program either by collecting Box Tops or by using the Box Tops for Education online program. We received a check in the amount of \$100.02 for our spring collection bringing our Box Top collection total to \$157.12 for the 2012-13 school year.

Giant Eagle Apples for the Students Program

The Children's School earned 504 points through the Apples for the Students Program. Using these points, the school was able to purchase some new equipment, including a weather station, a giant flying disk, a small microwave oven, and 2 Teacher Tote-all Carts!

Usborne Book Fair

The Children's School received 2 gift books and \$120 worth of books as a result of our on-line Usborne Book Fair. Thank you to everyone who participated by purchasing books!

SAVE the DATE!

The Children's School has been approved for a Big Burrito Benefit Dinner to be held at Mad Mex Shadyside, on October 22, 2013! Watch for more information this summer!

Children's School to Participate in Pittsburgh's Day of Giving

Every year, The Pittsburgh Foundation sponsors a Match Day through its **Pittsburgh Gives** website. Carnegie Mellon is a recipient of these match funds. Donations made to CMU through the Pittsburgh Gives website can be earmarked for the Children's School! Watch for more information!

Perhaps you wondered ...

... how we handle individual differences in the classroom.

Despite parents' hopes and best intentions, and counter to portrayals in the media, most of our children are NOT "*practically perfect in every way*". Even children whose conference reports have a ✓ for every item probably needed more support to develop some of those skills than other children. Realistically, educators expect that **every child comes to school with a profile of strengths and weaknesses**, including some with more dramatic highs and lows than others. In other words, some of our new 3's start school with a set of skills across all domains that are roughly average for their age (some a little higher and some a little lower), but one child may already be reading (i.e., well ahead of peers) while physically unable to sit still for more than one minute of circle time (while most are ready for 10). A 4-year-old child's insightfulness may make her extremely sensitive to others, but her impulsivity still prevents her from resisting the temptation to grab or hit. Another may create advanced representational drawings and copy letters and numbers flawlessly but be unable to remember the names of those symbols or of the teachers and children in the room. A kindergartner may be able to type on the computer and play chess skillfully, but he will lash out in frustration because he cannot write his name or open his lunchbox. Another may be able to read and discuss complex stories but throw temper tantrums when she cannot handle the emotions involved in not getting her way with friends.



Research has revealed that, while experiences in the home may explain some of this variability, much of the profile is rooted in genetics. Brain wiring related to temperament, sensory processing, attention and memory, motor control, etc. yields predispositions for learning certain skills more easily than others, especially in early childhood. Therefore, we waste little time assigning credit for children's strengths or blame for their weaknesses and focus our attention on **helping each child function and flourish in the classroom**, while also ensuring that the group interacts safely and progresses well.

Our educators utilize a range of teaching and classroom management strategies. They carefully organize a learning environment with diverse materials based on age expectations and then adapt to provide more challenging options for children who demonstrate advanced proficiencies or more scaffolding for those who struggle. Our behavior expectations are clear and consistent across the school, but we creatively respond to individual needs for more movement, more structured or more flexible seating options, etc. as needed. When talking with children about these accommodations, we emphasize that everyone is working on learning something but that we're not always learning the same things in the same way. From our point of view, what's "fair" is not always what's "equal". For us, what's fair is doing our best to provide for each child what he or she needs in order to progress.

Sometimes, we recommend that children receive additional therapy outside of school from professionals trained to meet particular needs (e.g., physical, occupational, speech or cognitive behavioral therapy). Other times, children benefit from therapists collaborating with educators in the school setting. What's clear is that the **best interventions are early, specifically tailored** to the individual child, and consistently implemented by therapists, educators, and families with the support of the learning community so that we have the best chance of making progress while the brain is still in its formative years. For all children, the early years are foundational for learning, so we communicate and collaborate with families to make them as positive and productive as possible.

Family Spotlight: Growing Together In Pittsburgh

Since Isaac was 2 and in the Red Room with Mrs. Tomer and Mr. Salinetto, one of the first things I, Beth Lott, ask when he gets in the car is, "what was snack today?" He was a little late with talking so, in those early days, I didn't get much of an answer. Nowadays, I think the influence of an older brother is affecting the exasperation in his voice when he answers, "Mom, you ask that every day!" The worst is on Mondays when I also ask what his new job is. The only time he can't wait to tell me about his job is when he is the Line Leader (for the record, Caboose is his least favorite). I wonder if that desire to be line leader means something for when he grows up? One thing is certain; he is charming and charismatic so I bet he will go far in whatever he decides to do.

Our family is from Pittsburgh and aside from a brief stint in Raleigh, NC for college, we have always lived in Pittsburgh. We chose to settle here after Isaac's big brother, Alex (age 10), was born. We live 5 minutes away from both sets of grandparents, and we are extremely lucky that they are very involved in our lives. Alex and Isaac enjoy going to baseball games with Jeremiah's parents and they love sleeping on Friday nights at my parents' home. Jeremiah and I sure enjoy that too!



Jeremiah is a software engineer at a thriving young company, part of Pittsburgh's vibrant tech scene. I stay home with the children and volunteer as I can at their schools, including coordinating volunteers and planning events. Alex loves nature, swimming, rock climbing and math. Isaac loves playing outside, music, and making new friends. We are really looking forward to summer. Some of our favorite things to do in the summer as a family are hanging out at the pool, going to the beach, taking nature walks, visiting zoos and museums, and going to Pirates' games (though Isaac only goes for the Dippin' Dots!).

We thank the Children's School for being a wonderful school for our children. I was just pregnant with Isaac when Alex started in kindergarten at the Children's School. Isaac's application was in for preschool when he was just 6 weeks old. Both boys had fantastic teachers, learned a lot, and had a bunch of fun!

Isaac will be starting kindergarten in the fall at the Environmental Charter School. Alex is in 5th grade at ECS and we have been part of that community since the school started. We will be sad to leave the Children's School behind but at least we can always visit!



Undergraduate Spotlight: Farewell Seniors & High School Interns

Sadly, we have to say goodbye to some of our CMU student employees and interns. We wish them well in their future endeavors!

Chris Conte will be working in the IT department at Freddie Mac for a year then doing a Teach For America Program. He plans to become a teacher.



Abby Cryan will be working at our June Camp this year so we don't have to say goodbye to her just yet! Then she will be studying Speech Language Pathology at the University of Pittsburgh.

Tyler Dossett plans to take a year off to explore the fashion world and then go to graduate school to pursue drama therapy.



Caroline Landau will be living in New Zealand and working on her art for a year and then entering graduate school for art education in the fall of 2014.

Anna Loiterstein plans to attend Yeshiva University in their doctoral program in Child Clinical Psychology.



Alex McCluskey will attend Columbia University to get a Master's Degree in Mental Health Counseling. Then she hopes to obtain a doctorate.

Makenzie Romonovich came to us through the Pittsburgh Public Schools Start On Success Program. She will be attending CCAC for 2 years and then plans to transfer to Duquesne University to study Education.



Gabi Rueda will be working in Pamplona, Spain in the International Relations Department of the Universidad de Navarra. She hopes to eventually teach English in Brazil or elsewhere in Latin America on a Fulbright Scholarship. Gabi will also be working at our June camp.

Thanks to all of our amazingly talented student assistants. Each of you helps us achieve excellence!

Research Spotlight

The Discovery Game

Dr. Audrey Kittredge, a post-doctoral researcher in the Psychology Department and member of the Program in Interdisciplinary Education Research, is working with Dr. David Klahr to **compare the effect of different teaching styles on children's goal-directed exploration.**

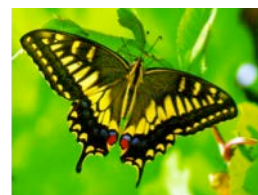
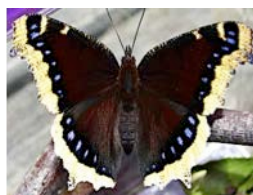
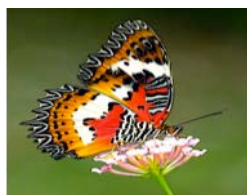
Children in the 3 year-old, 4 year-old and 5 year-old classrooms will participate in the Discovery Game at least once, and may come back for a few more sessions to investigate long-term effects of teaching styles. During the Discovery Game, the child is asked to play two games. In the first game, they are asked to find animals in a forest. In the second game, the child is asked to make 3 different roofs out of Lego blocks for 3 toy animals that are stuck in the rain. Each child will get a specific kind of instruction: (1) instruction that simply describes the goal of the game, (2) instruction that additionally demonstrates one way to play the game (one way to find animals or one way to make a roof), or (3) instruction that demonstrates one way to play the game while reminding the child that there could be many other ways. Depending on how much the child explores the forest or the possible structures s/he can build, s/he might discover just one way to play the game or multiple ways to play the game. Will the instructions that children hear impact how much they explore? Will the influence of instruction be long lasting, affecting how children explore novel environments and problems in the future? The results of this research may reveal the ability of different instructional techniques to encourage independent exploration in early childhood. This information, in turn, would allow educators to choose curricula and instructional techniques in a more informed manner.



The Remember That Game

In collaboration with Dr. Anna Fisher, graduate student Karrie Godwin is conducting a set of three studies for her dissertation to investigate the relationship between learning and other general cognitive processes such as attention, memory, processing speed, executive function, and general reasoning ability. In the Remember That game, she is examining how children allocate their attention in learning environments. In particular, she is interested in examining whether children's ability to effectively distribute their attention has consequences for learning new science content.

In the *Remember That* computer game, children are presented with a series of pictures of animals or plants. Children are told the name for each picture. At the end of the game, a memory assessment is administered to see which items the children learned. For example, after learning the names of different types of butterflies and moths, children may be asked to identify the swallow tail butterfly (e.g., "*Point to the swallow tail*").

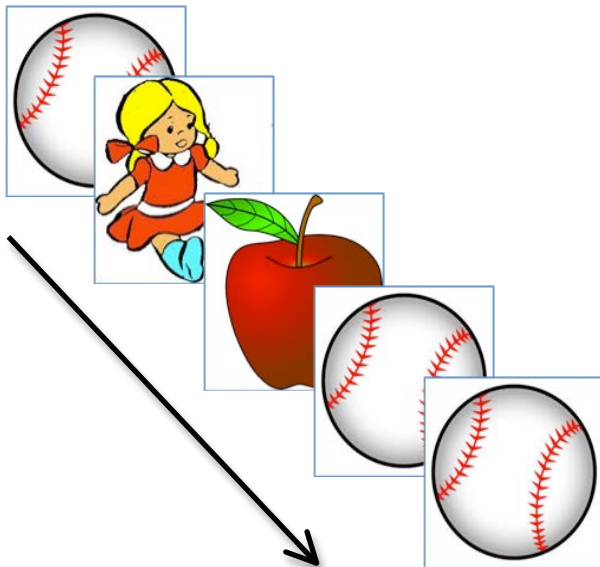
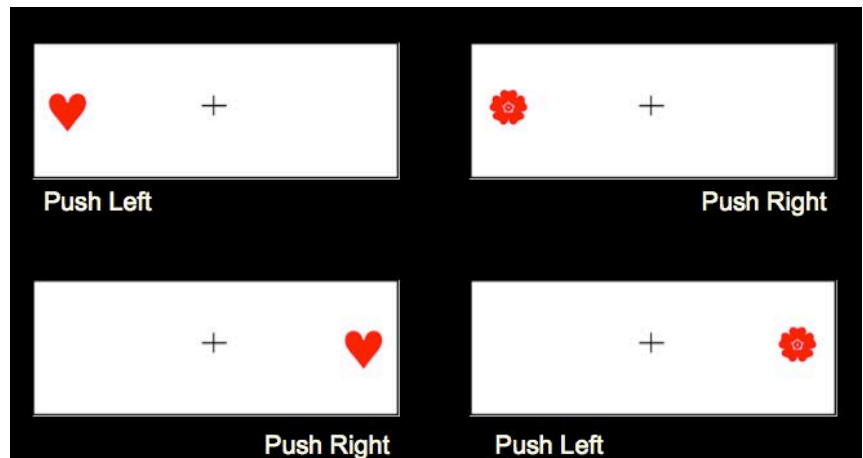


Research Spotlight continued ...

The Hearts and Flowers Game

As part of Karrie Godwin's dissertation research on the relationship between learning and other general cognitive processes, she is measuring children's cognitive control and their ability to inhibit a behavioral response.

In the *Hearts and Flowers* computer game, children are presented with a series of hearts and flowers. Children are instructed to respond to each object as follows: When children see a heart on the computer screen, they are told to press the response button on the same side that the heart was presented (e.g., if the heart appears on the left hand side of the screen, the correct response would entail pressing the left response button). However, when children see a flower, they are instructed to press the opposite response button (e.g., if the flower appears on the left hand side of the screen, the correct response would entail pressing the right response button).



Example picture sequence from the *Button Game*. Children might be asked to press a button each time they see the picture of a ball.

The Button Game

Another part of Karrie Godwin's study involves measuring children's sustained attention and inhibitory control.

In the *Button* computer game, children are presented with a series of pictures. Children are asked to press a button in response to specific pictures and not to press the button when they see other pictures. For example, children may be asked to press the space bar whenever the picture of a *ball* appears but not when they see other objects.

Director's Corner: Hearts in the Work

As we near the end of our **NAEYC Accreditation renewal year**, we await the decision of the "Academy" regarding our status. We have intentionally reviewed all of our philosophies, programs, policies, and practices, beginning with last spring's family and staff evaluation, job description and handbook reviews, etc. and continuing throughout the summer and fall to complete portfolio documentation of our excellence and innovation relative to the 10 sets of quality standards (some 400+ items). We had our 2-day Assessor Site Visit on March 7th and 8th, and then took a much-needed spring break. We hope to be communicating the good news of our 5-year renewal within the next month or so.



So what now?

- Of course, there are the sighs of relief and the pause to catch our breath after a busy year. We also acknowledge the many individuals who dedicated energy, effort, and expertise while completing the required tasks, particularly the administrative team, the educators, and the Carnegie Mellon facilities management staff. Many professionals from the Dietrich College and various central offices also supported our work by providing documentation of university practices relative to the standards. Heartfelt thanks to everyone for your contributions on our behalf!



- Assuming good news from the Academy, we will follow a fairly straightforward process of maintaining our standards, conducting the required schedule of staff training, health and safety consultation and drills, enhancing any areas noted by the assessor as needing improvement, and submitting annual reports of our progress relative to the standards. Then in 2017, we will update all of our documentation for the next cycle of accreditation renewal.

- Best of all, we now have a sense of freedom to follow our passions as we focus on quality improvements unconstrained by the accreditation system. In the tradition of Andrew Carnegie, our hearts are in the work, so we continually strive to creatively enhance our work with researchers, university students, children, families, practicing educators, and pre-service teachers. Our amazing team of lifelong learners will chart the course for the next phase of our journey during our two weeks of professional development in May. We will seek input from all of our constituents and specifically invite families to contribute their ideas through the online survey to be sent this week via email.



Best wishes for a safe and relaxing summer! We encourage you to share your experiences with us via postcards, journals, photos, etc. and look forward to welcoming many of you back in the fall. For those of you making transitions to other schools, good luck and please keep in touch.

You'll always be part of the Children's School family!