Welcome to the Children’s School Family!

The 2009-2010 year is off to a great start at the Children’s School, and we’re enjoying getting to know our children and families as together we explore our newly renovated space. Kudos to Jendoco Construction Corporation, our fabulous contractors, and especially to Aut Kish, our tireless construction supervisor. They were creative in solving problems, attentive to quality improvements, and particularly sensitive to the special needs of young children. Special thanks to the DSF Charitable Foundation for quickly providing $10,000 of funding to support strategic enhancements during our reconstruction process, most notably the new sandbox roof that both shields children from the sun and enables them to play outside even during a light rain!

Communications

1. Our main source of communication is our family newsletter and monthly calendar. General information for all families is included with this newsletter.

2. Each teaching team also sends a group letter including specific information about the curriculum themes, your child’s class activities, and projects. The teams are also experimenting with email distribution of daily information.

3. We will send general school announcements via e-mail in addition to the newsletters. So please check that we have your current email address! We communicate the most urgent messages via memos (if the children are currently at school) and phone trees (if they are not).

4. Our fourth source of communication is the Children’s School website: www.psy.cmu.edu/childrensschool. Be sure to check the Children’s School Art Gallery on our website! Each month we will feature different children. This month’s artists are: Nina C., Sydney S., Jocelyn O., Harlyn T., Harrison S., Balaji A., Chelsea H., Zoe W., Olivia J., Janise K., Kate N., Virginia G., Ryan H., and Minjune K.

October Open House Events

Wednesday, October 14th from 4:30 to 6:00pm Four Year Old Classes
Wednesday, October 21st from 4:30 to 6:30pm Three Year Old Classes and Kindergarten
First Aid Facts: CPR / Pediatric First Aid

Every fall, our staff participates in a CPR/Pediatric First Aid Training course. Even though NAEYC’s accreditation standard only requires this training for one staff member per classroom every other year at the school, we feel it is important for all of our staff to take part in this training yearly.

Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh offers a variety of Community Education and Injury Prevention classes specifically for parents. Please call 412-692-7105 to reserve a spot in a CPR/First Aid class. You will learn the proper emergency responses and how to care for your child in an emergency. We recommend this training for all families and caregivers.

Children’s Hospital also offers classes on sibling rivalry, discipline and other topics, which can be presented on site or at our school. For a presenter to come to the Children’s School, we would need 10 parents committed to attend! To learn more about Community Education courses offered by Children’s Hospital please log on to their website at www.chop.edu.

Positive Discipline Pointer: Clear & Consistent Behavior Expectations

At times of transition, children adjust best when adults provide clear expectations and stable routines for safe and smooth interactions. Consistency is key for facilitating productive adaptations to new situations. That’s why the Children’s School staff spends so much time during September teaching children the expectations and routines of our school days. Taking the time to establish these practices so that they become comfortable and automatic will free both children and adults to responsibly focus on deeper learning and more challenging activities as the year progresses. We take special care with cooking, woodworking, and campus trips because of the extra safety concerns involved. One way that you can help the children at both school and home is by modeling the same behavior expectations with the same words that the children hear at school. We’ll all benefit from working across contexts to:

- Be a kind friend.
- Follow the routine.
- Use your words.
- Use walking feet.
- Put everything in its place.
- Listen the first time.
- Stay in your own space.
- Use inside voices.
- Use things appropriately.

Thanks for working collaboratively with us to make school a safe and positive experience for everyone!

EITC!!

Are you a business owner? Do you know a business owner?
The Children’s School participates in the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. Through the EITC, eligible Pennsylvania businesses can earn tax credits while providing financial assistance for children to attend the Children’s School. If you would like more information or can help us to build a list of prospective businesses, please contact the Educational Administrator Team (Mrs. Rosenblum, Mrs. Smith, & Miss Hancock) at ed-admin@andrew.cmu.edu.
This past June, Karris Jackson (Olivia’s mom) took her Urban Youth Group to visit China. This is what she had to share about the trip:

This summer I had the privilege to travel to Beijing, China. The goal of our trip was to learn about Pittsburgh-based corporations who have significant operations in China, compare and contrast the Chinese culture with American culture, explore the Chinese economy and education system, and experience community service from a global perspective. I enjoyed learning about the importance of a global workforce from such companies as K&L Gates and PPG Industries. I also enjoyed meeting high school students from China and learning about their educational experience and how drastically it differs from the experiences of most American children. Having the opportunity to participate in community service projects in Beijing was very eye opening. The word “poverty” has definitely taken on a new meaning. The most fascinating parts of our trip were our visits to The Great Wall, Tiananmen Square and The Forbidden City. These three cultural attractions were vast and amazing so I cannot find the words to adequately describe them. It was truly an educational experience and I look forward to going back to China in the future.
What’s New at the Theatre?

This year the Pittsburgh International Children’s Theater will be presenting a variety of performances to enhance the cultural education of young children and their families! We encourage families to take advantage of these performance opportunities. It will be a great complement to our curriculum as we introduce the children to theater and create our own theater experiences at school.

2009 Performances

• Click, Clack, Moo October 11-18
  The cows in this tale can type and they are on strike! What do you think the cows will ask in their letters to Farmer Brown? This show will take place in locations throughout the region. Visit www.pgharts.org for details.

• The Adventures of Harold and the Purple Crayon November 8-14

2010 Performances

• Pigeon Party! January 24-31
• Henry and Mudge March 7-14
• Fred Garbo’s Inflatable Theater Co. April 10 and 11
• Pittsburgh International Children’s Festival May 12-16

Stayed tuned for more theater opportunities!

Holidays at the Children’s School

At the Children’s School, holidays are viewed as educational opportunities that give us the chance to learn about our diverse school community. As part of our emphasis on family identity and respect for diversity, we encourage children to talk about their family traditions, and we share stories related to the meaning of holidays. We plan age-appropriate activities to involve the children in preparing for simple school celebrations and to help them contribute to family events (e.g., basic cooking, making gifts, and so forth). We limit our school celebrations to very brief spans of time (typically one day), attempt to maintain our regular school routine, and, as always, are ready to provide extra attention and comfort as needed. Because the children may prepare their own special snack related to holidays and because many children have dietary restrictions (especially related to nuts, candy and other sweets), please do not send any food as gifts for children. In all of these ways, we can create meaningful celebrations with the young children in our educational context.

At the Children’s School, the children do not “dress up” for Halloween because children can be scared by costumes and costumes often cause toileting difficulties.
Keeping Parents Informed about Research

The **Research Spotlight** section of the monthly newsletter is one way Children’s School parents can learn about research in progress. Also, each time your child participates in a study that involves playing a “game” with a researcher (i.e., as opposed to merely being observed), he or she will get a **participation sticker** suggesting that you, “Ask me about the … game” and a **study description** detailing the task. Feel free to contact Dr. Carver to discuss any questions you have about research.

**Observations for Psychology Assignments:** Students from Dr. David Rakison’s Child Development class will be doing periodic observations this fall. For each assignment, they observe specific differences between preschoolers and kindergartners in motor skills, social interactions, etc.

**Research Methods Class Studies:** Students in Dr. Erik Thiessen’s Research Methods course will start with a lab to explore whether teaching children to subdivide a number line will help them better understand the relative size of numbers. Then they will work in groups to conduct a study of their own design, which will be approved both by their teacher and by Dr. Carver.

### Honoring Dr. David Klahr

On October 9-11, the Psychology Department will host a festschrift entitled, **From Child to Scientist: Mechanisms of Learning and Development**, to honor of the scientific and educational contributions of David Klahr on the occasion of his 70th birthday and 40th year at Carnegie Mellon. The symposium aims to connect leading researchers whose work bridges theory and practice to advance understanding of scientific and mathematical development and research regarding strategies for both formal and informal education. In scores of publications, David Klahr has pioneered research to strengthen the reciprocal contributions of cognitive development, scientific discovery and reasoning, and education. Throughout his career, David has mentored and inspired undergraduates, graduate trainees, post-doctoral fellows, and other leading researchers in the field, many of whom will participate in the symposium.

Dr. Rena Subotnik, from the American Psychological Association, summarized her tribute by saying, “David Klahr is dependable, generous with his time, has innumerable contacts, makes creative suggestions, and is blessedly forthright when ideas get murky.” Colleague Dr. Brian MacWhinney commented, “David Klahr has been the person who has stated the core challenge facing developmentalists most clearly and consistently, while maintaining his firm and appropriate commitment to a mechanistic view of psychological processing.”

Closer to home for Children’s School families, Dr. Klahr was the graduate school advisor of Dr. Carver, and he was the head of the Psychology Department who hired her as our Director! Together, Drs. Klahr and Carver published **Cognition and Instruction: 25 Years of Progress** in 2001, and they co-direct the Program in Interdisciplinary Education Research (PIER) at Carnegie Mellon.
Research Spotlight

Building Robby’s House Game

Dr. Dan Hufnagle and Dr. Lori Holt are investigating how context influences sound perception in children. The children help Robby the Robot (in the center of the picture below) to build his house by repeating the name of the building block that they hear. Another robot (upper right) tells the children over headphones what kind of block is needed, either “da” or “ga”. The child then tells Robby, who chooses one from the appropriate pile of blocks. Before the robot says the name of the block, it either beeps or says, “Please say what this word is.” Sometimes the name of the block is ambiguous (acoustically between “da” and “ga”). For adults, the context influences what sound they hear, depending on the pitch of the tones or words. We are interested in whether these sounds influence children in the same way they do adults in order to determine how the effect develops. The answer to this question will help us understand the nature of auditory perception.

The Memory Game - Dr. Robert Siegler and Dr. Clarissa Thompson, postdoctoral research associate, are investigating whether the way children estimate numbers on a number line impacts the way that the children remember numbers presented in short stories like, “Beth went to the library to read. At the library, she saw 18 newspapers.” Children are asked to recall or recognize from a short list the numbers heard in the short story. Previous research has indicated that children will be more accurate at remembering smaller numbers (like 2) as compared to larger numbers (like 98). Children also listened to short stories that contain a list of three words, such as, “In Amy’s room, there were: pillows, tables, and windows.” Later, they are asked to recall what was in Amy’s room. Research has suggested that children living in East Asian countries outperform their U.S. counterparts on a variety of mathematical tasks. These researchers are exploring whether differences in mathematical performance might stem from underlying mental capacities like intelligence or memory abilities. They are also currently investigating Chinese children’s memory for numbers and words to determine if there are cross-cultural differences in children’s performance on these tasks. The research may highlight why there is such a disparity in mathematical achievement between these two countries.

The In or Out Magic Game – Dr. Mayu Nishimura, a post-doctoral fellow working with Dr. Marlene Behrmann, is examining the development of face and object recognition. Recognizing faces is an important social skill, and adults have a remarkable ability to recognize and discriminate many faces. In particular, adults have an amazing sensitivity to the spatial relations among facial features, such that adults notice a change in eye position in a photograph within a few pixels! This study examines how this skill develops by comparing the ability of young children to older children, adolescents, and adults. Children are told that a “tricky wizard” had changed some photographs, so that the eyes of a face were in the wrong place, and are asked to sort the pictures into bins of “eyes too far out” and “eyes too far in”, so that researchers could use the appropriate magic to move the eyes back to the right place. They repeated the game with photographs of dominos (dots too far in / out) and houses (windows too far in / out) to examine how this visual ability develops with age and whether it develops specifically for faces or more generally for all objects.
Research Spotlight Continued …

The Moving Objects Game

The world around us is complex so maintaining focused attention can sometimes be challenging, even for adults. The goal of Dr. Anna Fisher’s project is to investigate the developmental course of deliberate selective attention and to examine factors that play a role in attentional selectivity at different points in development. In this task, researchers asked children to play a game in which they see several objects moving on a computer screen and then landing on one of the nine screen locations, each associated with a different character. Children were asked to watch a particular object while ignoring the rest of the objects. When the objects stopped moving and disappeared from the screen, children were asked which cartoon character was last visited by the object they had been watching.

Every child will play six rounds of the Moving Object Game, tracking either many or just a few objects at a time. Children’s performance in the Moving Objects Game will help the experimenters to map the developmental course of deliberate selective attention and improve the understanding of this basic cognitive ability, which is required for successful performance in many everyday tasks.

The Guessing Game

Generalization from the known to the unknown, or inductive inference, is crucially important for human cognition. When performing generalizations, young children are often influenced by the visual similarity of presented objects. In Dr. Anna Fisher’s previous research, she found that children are also influenced by the phonological similarity of presented labels, such that they are more likely to draw an inference if presented labels are phonologically similar (such as HOUSE-MOUSE) rather than phonologically dissimilar (such as HOUSE-KITTEN). In the present study, Dr. Fisher’s research team will examine effects of conceptual similarity (or synonymity of words) and strength of association between words (or likelihood of generating the second word of a label pair given the first word) in a generalization task.

This one is called a ROCK in the far away place.

Which of these would be called a STONE in the far away place?
Undergraduate Spotlight: Getting to Know You

As a campus laboratory school, the Children’s School offers research and observation opportunities to many undergraduate and graduate students from different departments across campus. In addition to these opportunities, we offer undergraduates a chance to work in the classrooms on a regular basis. In the Undergraduate Spotlight, we will be featuring each of our undergraduate assistants so that parents can learn about the students who work in the classrooms with their children. Below is a brief introduction so you can become familiar with the names your children might mention. Photos are posted between the office and the preschool.

Student Employees

**Kelly Carter** is new to the Children’s School and spends 2 mornings a week with the 3 year old classes. Kelly is a sophomore majoring in math and cognitive science.

**Brian Chambers** is starting his second semester as an undergraduate assistant in the AM and PM 3 year old classroom. He is a sophomore majoring in chemical and biomedical engineering.

**Amy Donovan** is spending her second year at the Children’s School and she is volunteering in the Green Room two mornings a week. Amy is a senior biology major.

**Alice Kim** is new to the Children’s School this semester. She is working with the Extended Evening children two afternoons a week. Alice is a junior majoring in art.

**Tina Li** is new to the Children’s School. She is working one morning a week in the Green Room. Tina is a senior majoring in psychology and piano performance.

**Lindsay McGregor** is new to the Children’s School this year. She is spending two mornings in the Kindergarten and 2 afternoons with the Extended Evening children. Lindsay is a sophomore double majoring in psychology and linguistics.

**Danielle Morse** is returning for her second semester working in the Green Room and with the Extended Morning children. She is a junior majoring in biology and psychology with a minor in health care and public policy.

**Saskia Op Den Busch** is joining the Children’s School for the first time this year. She is spending two mornings in the Kindergarten. Saskia is a junior majoring in psychology and biological science and minoring in Chinese studies.

**Laura Pacilio** is new to the Children’s School and will be spending two mornings a week with the 3 year olds. Laura is a junior majoring in psychology.

**Sarah Shade** is spending her third semester with us and is helping in the 3 year old classrooms. Sarah is a senior this year majoring in Psychology.

**Cze-Ja Tam** is returning to the Children’s School for her second semester. She is currently working in the office, but may be used as a substitute in the classroom when needed. She is a sophomore majoring in psychology.

**Tian Wu** is new to the Children’s School this semester. She is spending two mornings a week with our Green Room friends. She is a sophomore majoring in business administration.
Undergraduate Spotlight Continued …

Interns in Dr. Carver’s Practicum Course

Laura Alfonso is spending her first semester at the Children’s School as a helper with the AM 4 year olds. She is a junior majoring in psychology and creative writing.

Helen Kim is spending her first semester at the Children’s School with the AM 3 year olds. She is a senior majoring in psychology and music performance.

Sumin Park is spending her first semester at the Children’s School with the Kindergarten children. Sumin is a junior majoring in psychology and art.

Practicum Students from Other Programs

Nora Presson is observing the afternoon preschool classes twice a week to gain field experience for her Interdisciplinary Program in Education Research. Katie Held and Lauren Schweiger are students from Carlow University spending 30 hours this semester observing in the Green Room and Kindergarten respectively.

Zane Leydig and Christine Seely are working with our preschool and kindergarten this year. They are theater majors from the University of Pittsburgh who will be working with the children to enhance the Children’s School theater unit.

Family Committees

Thanks so much for the many volunteers we have gotten for this year’s committees. If you would like to volunteer, there are still many opportunities. Let Maggie Rosenblum or Allison Drash know if you would like to serve on any of these committees:

• Library - Still seeking a Chair – Are YOU interested??
• School Pictures, Jennifer Balog, Chair
• Family Social Organization, Andi Irwin, Chair
• Sewing, Megan Cohen, Chair
• Repair and Construction, Beth and Jason Myers, Co-Chairs
• Scholastic Book Club/Fair, Grace Tan, Chair
• Teacher Luncheon – Jim Olsen, Chair
• End of the Year Picnic – Still seeking a Chair – Are YOU interested??

*** We are planning a Scholastic Book Fair the week before Thanksgiving (11/16-18) and will need many volunteers to help. Also, it would be nice if we had more volunteers for the Library Committee!

School Pictures

Our school photographs will be taken by Primetime Shots, Inc. this year on October 27th and 28th. AFTER your child’s picture is taken, you will receive a proof with an order form. If you would like to volunteer to help with the pictures this year, please contact Maggie Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu.
Director’s Corner: Children First

From a professional standpoint, the beginning of this school year has been the most challenging of the 17 that I have experienced at the Children's School, yet the children have adjusted to their new classrooms and routines smoothly and are already engaged in constructive learning, and our observers, interns, and researchers are working effectively among them. When faced with delayed reconstruction, the H1N1 threat, and the G20 security concerns, while also designing a new administrative structure, integrating five new staff members, and adding a morning 3’s class, our staff team focused first and foremost on doing our best for all of the students we serve. With the advice and backing of Carnegie Mellon’s top leaders, we put the children first in all of our decisions and then collaborated with our supportive families and university faculty to adjust to new space, systems, and schedules. I commend each staff member for contributing effort and creative energy above and beyond the call of duty, and I thank all of our families and colleagues for continuous encouragement and flexibility. Together, we have risen above the challenges to lay the foundation for a positive, productive year!

As we embark on this year’s journey together, I invite you to consider how our laboratory school already does and can better impact the lives and learning of all children, not just those who attend our programs. As an early childhood laboratory, we share our educational philosophy and program design with pre-service and practicing educators through our practicum programs, outreach workshops, and publications. We offer mentoring and consulting to colleagues across the region and nation, particularly with respect to pursuing accreditation. We serve as officers for regional and national early childhood organizations dedicated to strengthening services for educators, children, and families. Our researchers investigate the mechanisms of children’s learning and development so that they can publish findings that will impact theory, research, and practice worldwide.

The Grable Foundation’s Community Cabinet has posed an intriguing question to spark discussion about “how to make Pittsburgh the best place to be a child and raise a child.”

“Place yourself in some future day and imagine that you are now living in a major foreign capital. One morning, while sipping your coffee, you pick up the newspaper and see the following headline: ‘Pittsburgh, a mid-sized city in the eastern United States, ranks first in the world as child-friendly.’ Intrigued, you go online, search Pittsburgh-based newspapers, and read an op-ed that describes the Pittsburgh region’s remarkable journey. According to the piece, what’s so child-friendly about Pittsburgh, and how did they do it?” (http://grable.org/blog)

This year, families who have migrated to Pittsburgh and joined the Children’s School family have shared with us the fact that our school is one of the attractions to this region. Educators attest to the improvements they have made in their own programs after attending our workshops. Researchers like Dr. David Klahr are being honored for their impact on the fields of developmental psychology and education. Our work is making a difference, but we continue to strive to reach even further. For example, we are exploring new techniques for engaging young children in theatre arts and seeking business funding to support scholarships for a broader range of families. Please share your ideas with us as you envision an even brighter future for children in Pittsburgh and beyond. Consider recording your ideas on the Grable Foundation’s blog as a way of sparking more regional dialogue on behalf of young children everywhere!