



# Carnegie Mellon University Children's School October 2013 Family Newsletter



## Welcome to the Children's School Family!

What an amazingly smooth start we've had to the 2013-2014 school year! What a privilege to welcome new children and families while renewing relationships with returning friends. What a joy it is to observe children discovering the wealth of exploration opportunities here, experimenting with novel materials, and interacting with new friends. We are also grateful for the opportunity to welcome Carnegie Mellon's 9<sup>th</sup> president, Dr. Subra Suresh, pictured here with the banner of children's self portraits that we used to adorn his new office in July.



## Communications

Here are tips for staying informed and getting involved in the Children's School learning community!

- Our main source of communication is our **family newsletter and monthly calendar**. General information for all families and the monthly snack menu are included with this newsletter.
- Each teaching team also hosts a web site with a daily blog on classroom activities, photo albums, and other details about their programs, as well as writing a **monthly newsletter** including specific information about the curriculum themes, along with the related activities and projects.
- We will send general school **announcements via e-mail** in addition to the newsletters. So please check that we have your current email address!
- Our fourth source of communication is the Children's School **website**: [www.psy.cmu.edu/cs](http://www.psy.cmu.edu/cs). Electronic versions of our handbook, newsletters, calendar, etc. are available there. 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: 3's Friends Rhys J., Jacobo M., and Mira S.; 4's Friends Sasha C., Eric M., and Nika M.; Kindergarten Friends Clark H. and the whole class!



### October Open House Events

- Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup> from 4:30 – 6:30pm Four Year Old Classes
- Wednesday, October 16<sup>th</sup> from 4:30 – 6:30pm Three Year Old Classes and Kindergarten

### Q&A Sessions with Educators

Thursday, October 10<sup>th</sup> at 8:30am and 12:30pm

### Staff / Parent Discussion re: School Choice

Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 - 11:00am

(child care provided for infants, toddlers & three year olds)

Scholarship Benefit Dinner at Mad Mex

Tuesday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7pm

No School on Friday, November 1<sup>st</sup>

CONFERENCE PREPARATION DAY for STAFF

## Family Committee News

Mrs. Rosenblum is in the process of organizing the Library, Gardening, Construction, Book Fair, Sewing, and Teachers' Luncheon and Celebration Picnic Committees. If you are interested in joining any of these groups, please contact her. Your time and effort to support the school mean a lot to us!

## Family Social Organization



Amee Chaudry and Julie Paris, this year's co-chairs of the Family Social Organization (FSO), met to begin making exciting plans for family get-togethers. Watch for announcements that will be made in our Family Newsletters and through e-mails. An e-mail has already gone out about "Bump in the Night", an event sponsored by the Frick Environmental Center on Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions about this event or would like more information, please e-mail Maggie Rosenblum at [rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu), Julie Paris at [julieparis6@gmail.com](mailto:julieparis6@gmail.com) or Amee Chaudry at [ameechaudry@yahoo.com](mailto:ameechaudry@yahoo.com). Also, please contact us if you would like to join this committee.

## So Many School Choices

How do families make the best choice of elementary school for each of their children and decide when to make the transition? Please join us for a review of school choice principles and discussion of strategies for exploring school options.



**Friday, October 18, 2013 from 9:30 – 11:00am in the Danforth Lounge**

(the round room above the entrance to the University Center that is closest to 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.

NOTE: The Pittsburgh Public School birthday cutoff for the 2014-2015 year is September 30<sup>th</sup> 2014. In other words, a child who turns 5 by September 30<sup>th</sup> will be eligible for kindergarten (or 6 by September 30<sup>th</sup> for 1<sup>st</sup> grade).

The JCC is hosting a Kindergarten Information Night on Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup>. Refer to the enclosed flyer for details.

## New Composting Initiative

You may have noticed some new dark green receptacles around the Children's School. These Food Waste Composting Bins are provided by the University's Facilities Management Green Practices to help reduce our carbon footprint. Food waste including meat, pizza boxes, coffee grounds/filters, Nature Works PLA #7 cups, tea bags, lunch room paper bags/napkins/towels or uncoated paper plates can be composted. Our custodial staff has been trained to remove compost food-waste on a regular schedule. For more information on this program, please visit <http://www.cmu.edu/environment/recycling-waste/food-composting/index.html>.

## Family Spotlight: Snapshot of Our Community

During September, the friends in all of our classes get to know each other by sharing information about themselves and their families, which prompts us to discuss similarities and differences so that we can better appreciate the diversity among us. The "All About Me" projects in each classroom give children and families an opportunity to get to know each other better. You'll get to see all of these at the Open House events!



This year, we have 88 families with 99 children at the Children's School, including 21 only children and three sets of twins. Twenty-four of these families are new to the school, including families who recently moved to Pittsburgh from New York, China, Columbia, India, and the United Kingdom. Among the returning families, we have three in which the father is a Children's School alum!



Ten of our families have a parent who is a graduate student or faculty member at Carnegie Mellon. Three of our fathers and 39 of our mothers identified themselves as stay-at-home parents. The other parents listed a wide variety of professions, including Attorney, Banker, Business Owner, Chef, Customer Service Representative, Entrepreneur, Financial Consultant, Geologist, Librarian, Manager, Mechanical Engineer, Physician, Pilates Instructor, Professor, Real Estate Developer, Researcher, Social

Worker, School Principal, Software Engineer, Teacher, Therapist, and Visiting Scholar.



Almost 25% of our children are dual language learners, and a few are trilingual. This year, we have families speaking at least 15 languages besides English: Amharic (Ethiopia), Arabic, Chinese, German, Hebrew, Hindi / Urdu, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, and

Telugu (India). Each month hereafter, the Family Spotlight column will introduce one of the Children's School families in more depth. Feel free to contact Mrs. Rosenblum if you would like to be a featured family. You can also see prior family profiles on the Children's School web site under "For Families".



We also talk about the school as a community where we are all helping each other to learn. Sometimes we each contribute to a joint project (like the Kindergarten Community Mural) and other times we actually collaborate to create something more innovative than any of us could accomplish alone (like the Kindergarten Circle Mural Collaboration). Watch the school walls for more examples as the year progresses and feel free to offer your help to support our explorations!





## Positive Discipline Pointer: Clear and 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, gym, 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!

## 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. Seasonal activities will involve fall fruits and vegetables, colorful leaves & acorns, etc.**



## Birds & Flight



*“Birds make any place a chance for discovery! They make a garden seem wild, they are a little bit of wilderness in a city park, and, for a bird watcher, every walk is filled with anticipation. What feathered jewel might drop out of the sky next?” - David Sibley (American ornithologist, author and illustrator of The Sibley Guide to Birds)*

**Birds and Flight** is the topic of our Whole School Unit scheduled for February 2014, so we are weaving the topic as a thread through the year. You can support your children's exploration by observing birds near your home or in your neighborhood. To help you get started, we've enclosed an Audubon Society birding guide for families with this newsletter.

During our unit, we will be observing birds to discover their characteristic properties, compare and contrast the features of diverse species, make hypotheses about their adaptations to the environment, and learn about ways that birds and humans are part of a broader system of interdependent relationships. With the help of colleagues at Pittsburgh's National Aviary, we will introduce environmental issues of pollution, habitat loss, pesticide use, climate change, etc. We will also investigate physical science features of eggs, nests, beaks, feathers and flight, together with representations of birds in literature and the arts, cultural beliefs and emblems related to birds, etc.

## Perhaps you wondered ...

**why we organize our curriculum into thematic units.**

Studying topics in depth builds children's knowledge base, starting with what they already know and creating a network of concepts that are richly connected in ways that help children apply their knowledge to new contexts. We combine verbal and visual representations and provide a variety of activities to help them acquire, strengthen, and refine concepts via experimentation, stories, dramatic play, art, games, technology activities, etc. Children converse and reason in more sophisticated ways about content they understand, so themes provide a foundation for other cognitive challenges.

## Do you have more Questions for Educators?

On Thursday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Carver will host open question & answer sessions for parents from 8:30-9:30am and from 12:30-1:30pm. Perhaps you have questions about handling children's behavior, building character, choosing media, teaching reading, responding to children's questions about sensitive topics, etc. Anything is fair game! Remember that you can also send questions to Dr. Carver any time via email at [sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu) or request a personal appointment.

## Using GoodSearch / GoodShop



GoodSearch donates money to Carnegie Mellon Children's School when you search the Internet, shop online, or dine out at local restaurants! Use Goodsearch.com to search the Internet, and they donate a penny per search to us. Use Goodshop.com when you shop online and they donate a percentage of every purchase and offer over 100,000 coupons to help you save money too! Sign up for their GoodDining program and they'll donate a percentage of your restaurant bill when you eat at any one of thousands of participating restaurants. Please sign up today to help support Carnegie Mellon Children's School. Go to <http://www.goodsearch.com> to get started.

## Playground Enhancements

The “temporary” playground that Carnegie Mellon built for the Children’s School during the restoration of the Margaret Morrison Building will now become our permanent playground. Our educators like its location better than the previous playground, and Carnegie Mellon plans to convert the space between the building and the tennis courts into a “Reflection Garden”, which will be a beautiful public space easily accessible to us. During the late summer and early fall, we have taken steps to improve the playground functionality, including transferring the engraved bricks from our former playground to the area around the garden boxes, building a deck under the pavilion, and constructing a new, larger play structure. It’s best to see for yourself, but here are a few images. Our next steps include adding rubber surface under the play structure, planting mature shade trees in the remaining wood chip area, and building steps down the hillside from the playground to the door under the awning.



## Register for the Extended Morning Program

There are limited spaces still available in our Extended Morning Program. This program runs from 11:30am until 1pm and includes a circle time and activity time that extends the preschool theme focus of the month through literature-based activities. The children also participate in a group sing-a-long and then enjoy eating together the lunches they have brought from home. The tuition for October through May is \$2,975.00. Please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at [rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu) if you are interested in registering your child.

## School Spirit Sale

Remember that we have a variety of clothing and items with the Children’s School logo for sale. Please see Miss Drash, Miss Hancock, or Mrs. Rosenblum if you are interested in purchasing any items. We take cash or checks.

Toddler Tees:	\$10.00	Hoodies, Adult & Child:	\$20.00
Water Bottles:	\$5.00	Sweatshirts:	\$14.00
Onesies:	\$12.00		

## Please Label Your Child’s Clothing

As the weather has already become chilly, many children are wearing sweaters, hoodies, and jackets to school. So that they all go home – please be sure to label all of your child’s clothing and outerwear!

## Benefit Dinner at Mad Mex Shadyside 10/22/13

- Are you longing for a night of adult only conversation?
- Are your taste buds craving something other than mac and cheese?
- Are you dying for a date night? (Remember these?)



If you answered **YES** to any of the above, then please join us for a very special evening to celebrate and support the CMU Children's School at Mad Mex in Shadyside. The cost is \$40 per person. Dinner includes the Mad Mex dinner buffet, one 16 oz. Dos Equis draft OR a 16 oz. House Margarita per person (*must be 21 or older*), soft drinks, dessert table, and gratuity.

All proceeds after gratuity will benefit the Children's School Scholarship Fund, but only donations above the \$40 dinner cost are tax deductible.

Seating is limited. To reserve your space, please send cash or a check made payable to CMU Children's School along with the names of the attendees to Linda Hancock c/o the Children's School Main Office. If you are unable to attend, but would like to make a contribution to our Scholarship Fund, please contact Linda Hancock at [lh37@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:lh37@andrew.cmu.edu).

## Pittsburgh Gives on October 3rd



Now in its fifth year, PittsburghGives.org **Day of Giving** provides an opportunity for you to maximize your charitable contribution to the Children's School! Thursday, October 3rd is the 24-hour period when The Pittsburgh Foundation matches donations during their PittsburghGives.org **Day of Giving**. All donations made at PittsburghGives.org on this day will receive a pro-rated match donation from a pool of more than \$750,000!

- To ensure that your donation reaches the Children's School, log on to [www.pittsburghgives.org](http://www.pittsburghgives.org).
- Select Carnegie Mellon University from the List of Eligible Organizations and make your donation.
- Please notify Miss Hancock at [lh37@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:lh37@andrew.cmu.edu) that you have made a contribution via the Day of Giving. She will send a list of the Children's School donors to the Carnegie Mellon Development Office so they can allocate the donation and matching funds to The Children's School. [Only donations made with Visa and MasterCard credit cards that are received during the 24 hours of October 3rd through [www.pittsburghgives.org](http://www.pittsburghgives.org) will be matched. No donations made with cash, checks, debit cards or any other type of credit cards will be matched by the Foundation.]

Each gift is 100% tax deductible. The credit card charge will display as a donation to "The Pittsburgh Foundation" on the donor's credit card statement. The minimum gift per organization is \$25. While there is no maximum gift that an individual can give per organization, only \$1,000 will be matched.

## Mark Your Calendar for Shopping Night



Shop at Ten Thousand Villages on Thursday, November 14 from 6-8pm and a percentage of your purchase will be donated towards our Scholarship Fund. Your Holiday gifts can give three times, to the recipient, the artisan, and CMU Children's School! To learn more about this wonderful store located on Forbes Avenue in Squirrel Hill, visit <http://www.tenthousandvillages.com/home.php>.



## Undergraduate Spotlight

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, either as student employees, interns, or volunteers. 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. Photos are posted on the Family Communication bulletin board.



### **Child Development Interns**

- Jill Ackman is a senior Psychology major interning in the AM 4's to gain experience in education.
- Sarah Anderson is a junior Fine Arts major exploring options for combining her interest in early childhood with a career involving the arts (PM 4's).
- Cecilia Franchi (right) is a junior Psychology and Statistics major interning in the AM 4's class. Cecilia also works at the Carriage House Children's Center.
- Joo Hwan Shin is a senior Psychology major interested in a career in clinical psychology (PM 3's).
- Ashley Taylor (right, green shirt) is a junior Psychology major exploring options for both research and teaching careers (Kindergarten).



### **Senior Student Teachers from Pitt's CASE Program**

Brittany Bauer, Caitlin Florek, and Brianna Amoscato are seniors in the University of Pittsburgh's Combined Accelerated Studies in Education (CASE) Program, a five-year undergraduate and masters program that includes a BS in Applied Developmental Psychology and a Masters of Education in early childhood and special education. For their practicum experience this fall, they are teaching with mentors Charline Tomer, Krissy Opferman, and Holly Blizman respectively.



Brittany says, "I am from just east of Pittsburgh and love to visit my parents, two sisters and two dogs that still live there. I also have a cat named Belle who lives with me! I love to play and attend sporting events (especially the Pirates and Pitt!!). I love to cook and enjoy all of the unique culinary events around Pittsburgh. I enjoy being active, riding my bike and being outdoors. When I have free time, I love to read! I hope to share my love of books with all the students in the classroom."

Caitlin is from Claridge, PA. She also has her American sign language certificate. In her free time, she reads, enjoys movies, spends time with her family and is president of a dance group at Pitt.



From Brianna, "In addition to academics, I am a flute player in the University of Pittsburgh marching band, a Summerbridge tutor and a flute teacher at the Falk Laboratory School. I am looking forward to a semester filled with innovative thinking, creative methodologies and countless teachable moments."



## 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. We also have **recent articles** resulting from Children's School research posted on the school web site ([www.psy.cmu.edu/childrenschool](http://www.psy.cmu.edu/childrenschool)) and a notebook of articles in the office.

**Observations for Psychology Assignments:** Students from Dr. David Rakison's Child Development class have already begun their periodic observations this fall. For each assignment, they observe specific differences between preschoolers and kindergartners in motor skills, social interactions, language, etc.

**Research Methods Class Studies:** Students in Professor Erik Thiessen's Developmental Research Methods class will start with a lab entitled the **The Doll Game** to explore children's developing theory of mind, which is the ability to attribute mental states to oneself and others, as well as to understand that others have beliefs, desires, and intentions that can be different from one's own. Specifically, they will test whether they can help children better understand the perspective of a character who doesn't know something has been moved while she was out of the room by having them cover their eyes while listening to a similar story being read and enacted by a researcher. Later in the semester, students will work in groups to conduct a study of their own design, which will be approved both by their teacher and by Dr. Carver.

Feel free to contact Dr. Carver to discuss any questions you have about research.

## Research Spotlight

### The Kris Koala Game

Senior Matt Masticova and his advisor, Dr. Anna Fisher are investigating how context clues affect language acquisition. There is debate over which methods are most effective in teaching children new vocabulary. One prevalent theory is that we learn new words by using context clues from the phrases and sentences in

which we encounter the word. For instance, we might learn that frigid means cold because it is in the same sentence as chilly or frozen. The Kris Koala game investigates whether *synonymous* context clues or *example* context clues are more helpful to children when they encounter unknown words. For example, a synonymous context clue would be using the word **nervous** in the same context as the word **timid**. An example context clue would be saying that someone who is **nervous** might **stutter** or **worry** about small problems. In this task, children listened to a story including words created by a researcher. These words were introduced using one of these context clues. Researchers then asked children which of two possible definitions was correct for each word.

Researchers expected the children to be more accurate at choosing the correct definition for words that were paired with a *synonymous* context clue. Educators and parents can use the results of this experiment to decide the best ways to teach children new vocabulary words.



## Research Spotlight, continued ...

### Testing Reasoning Skills

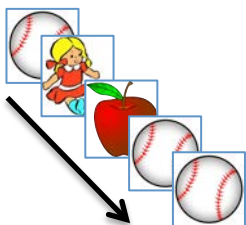
Graduate student, Karrie Godwin is working with Dr. Anna Fisher and several other research assistants to investigate young children's reasoning skills. In particular, they are interested in investigating the relationship between young children's reasoning skills and other general cognitive processes such as memory, attention, processing speed, and language ability. Because the study involves diverse measures for Karrie's dissertation, our children will participate in multiple research sessions with Karrie over the course of the fall semester. As usual, parents will receive descriptions of each session on the day the child participates.



- **The Thinking Game:** In the Thinking Game, children are presented with a variety of reasoning tasks from the Weschler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI). They are presented with various objects and asked to answer questions about the objects or physically manipulate the objects (e.g., rearrange, build, or sort the objects). Children are also asked to label various pictures, complete a puzzle, and build a block tower.

- **The Memory Game:** In the Memory Game, children will listen to a list of words. Subsequently, children will be asked to remember the words from the list. In the first part of the game, children will be read a series of familiar nouns and be asked to repeat them in the same order they were presented. For example, children may be presented with the words "*duck, house, chair*" and then asked to recite the words in order. In the second part of the game, children will be asked to repeat the items but in the reverse order in which they were presented. For instance, if children are given the words, "*duck, house, chair*", the correct response would be "*chair, house, duck*".

- **The Animal Game:** In the Animal Game, children are presented with a series of word pairs. Children are asked if the second word of the word pair is an animal. For example, children might hear the word pair "*bunny – rabbit*" and then decide if the second word ("*rabbit*") is an animal or not. Children respond by pressing a yes or no button on the computer.



- **The Button Game:** In this task, researchers are measuring children's sustained attention and inhibitory control via a computer game that presents 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.

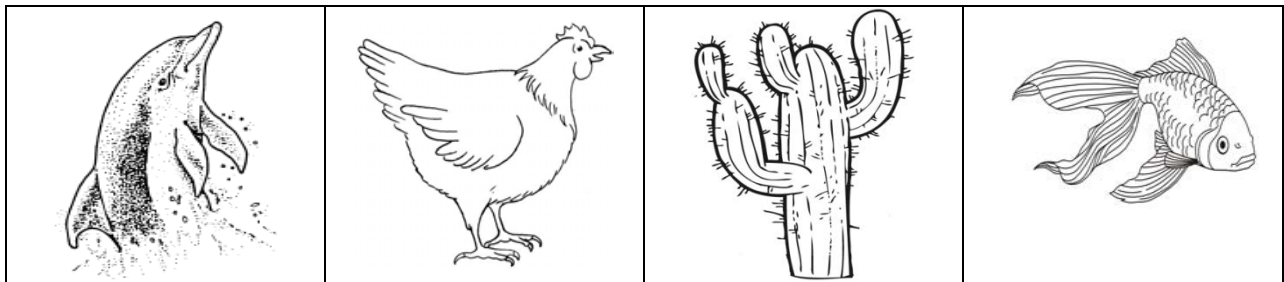
### The Picture Finding Game

Early childhood is a time when children discover many new words. In this study, Layla Unger and Wyatt Demilia, both of whom work with Dr. Anna Fisher, are interested whether children are familiar with the words we plan to use in a follow-up study on conceptual development. In this task, children are shown slides of pictures. Then, children are asked to find the picture representing the target word on each slide. For example, we might ask children to find a 'moose' among four animal images.

## Research Spotlight, continued ...

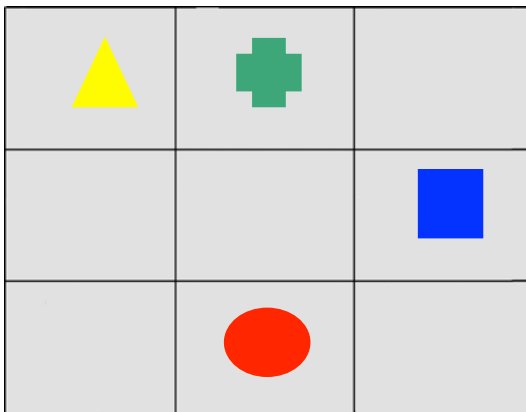
### The Help Zibbo Game

Layla Unger, a graduate student working with Dr. Anna Fisher, is investigating the ways that children organize plants and animals based on a variety of different relationships between them. For instance, children might organize these concepts based on whether they appear in the same kind of environment, whether they belong to the same biological group (such as mammals, fish, birds, or plants), whether they're big or small, whether people eat them as food, and so on. In the Help Zibbo Game, children are asked to help Zibbo "organize his favorite things". Zibbo's favorite things include twelve plants and animals that are depicted in black and white pictures, like those below. During the task, children receive cards depicting these pictures and are asked to sort them on a game board four times. The purpose of sorting the same pictures multiple times is to test whether children can group the pictures in a variety of ways, and, if so, to see what these grouping strategies are.



### The Moving Eyes Game

The world around us is complex and maintaining focused attention can sometimes be challenging, even for adults. The goal of this project in Dr. Erik Thiessen's lab 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 project, researchers ask children to play a game in which they see several objects moving on a Tobii T60 eye tracker (which looks like a typical computer screen) landing on one of the nine screen locations, each a different color. Children are instructed to



watch a particular object while ignoring the rest of the objects. When the objects stop moving and disappear from the screen, children are asked to name the color of the grid in which the object disappeared. Children play the Moving Eyes Game several times, tracking either many objects or just a few objects at a time. Additionally, if there are technical issues with the eye-tracking hardware, a session may be begun on one day and finished on a later day. Children's performance in the Moving Eyes Game will help researchers to map the developmental course of deliberate selective attention and improve scientists' understanding of this basic cognitive ability required for successful performance in many everyday tasks.



## Director's Corner: Lifeworthy Learning

David Perkins, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, frames the future of learning in terms of six "Beyonds", or ways in which educators are "reimagining education with much less 'niche learning'" and much more "lifeworthy learning". He encourages us to aim beyond local to more global perspectives, beyond learning mere content to developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, beyond understanding topics to using knowledge as tools for thinking and action, beyond prescribed studies to more personalized curricula, beyond discrete disciplines to more interdisciplinary investigation, and beyond traditional disciplines to more extended visions of their possibilities.

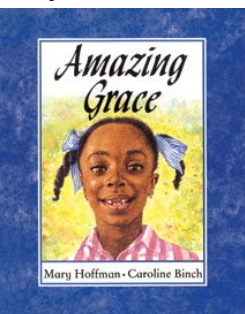
(See <http://mpmengaged.wordpress.com/tag/future-of-learning/>.)



As part of the Children's School professional development, our educators are exploring "The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life", a book of practices by Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander published in 2000. I used the book to study the practices with the staff in 2004 after our first round of NAEYC accreditation and then felt a similar need to stretch our thinking beyond "meeting the standards" (all 400+ of them) after our successful reaccreditation last spring. A major point of the book is that the story we tell ourselves, or our frames of thinking, both **define** and **confine** us so that we do most of our thinking **inside the box**. Once we admit to ourselves that the way we narrate the story is all an invention, then we can enlarge the box so that we can consider a whole set of new possibilities that were always present but never before apparent to us.

To "Admit It's All Invented" is about examining underlying assumptions. When facing challenges, the Zanders suggest asking, "What assumption am I making, that I'm not aware I'm making, that gives me what I see?" and then, "What might I now invent, that I haven't yet invented, that would give me other choices?" Using this perspective on problem solving, we have made strides in creatively designing and funding facility improvements, managing space and scheduling conflicts, planning and implementing meaningful and challenging thematic studies for young children, and increasing opportunities for engaging professional development for even our most experienced educators.

Throughout our book study, we collectively wondered why we had to wait until adulthood to learn the "Art of Possibility" practices, which are necessary for a future of lifeworthy learning. Once again, we uncovered a hidden assumption and decided to seek possibilities for helping our children open themselves to thinking in terms of possibilities. Our approach in recent months has been to collect a variety of children's books to help launch discussions with the children. In my Director's Corner articles this year, I plan to introduce you to the twelve "Art of Possibility" practices and to suggest ways that families can support the use of these practices to transform their thinking and their lives.



The first practice, "Admit It's All Invented", is about learning to question the story "everybody knows" and narrate a more positive story "that brightens our life and the lives of people around us (p. 12)." I suggest you start with a story time reading of "Amazing Grace" by Mary Hoffman. Let yourselves be inspired by Grace's courage to challenge the limitations of race and gender so that you consider new ways for each of your family members to contribute positively and productively at home, at school, and in the community. We look forward to working in partnership with you to encourage each of our unique children to thrive!