



Carnegie Mellon University Children's School October 2014 Family Newsletter



Welcome to the Children's School Family!

The 2014-2015 year is off to a great start at the Children's School, and we're enjoying getting to know our children and families as we learn together. We are already appreciating the ways that each unique child contributes to the group as everyone adjusts to the routines and explores new activities. It's been fun to listen as the children discover the wealth of choices here, experimenting with novel materials and interacting with new friends. The beautiful weather has afforded us opportunities for time relaxing in the new Reflection Garden, exploring our playground, and – for the kindergarten – venturing to Schenley Park. Here are some ways you can stay informed and get involved in our learning!

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.
- **NEW** this year: Those who requested the paperless newsletter option will receive them via email.
- We will also send general school **announcements and reminders via e-mail** to everyone, 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.
Electronic versions of our handbook, newsletters, calendar, etc. are available there. Be sure to check the Children's School Gallery on our website! Each month we will feature different children and projects. This month the Gallery Features are 3's Friends Deborah J., Leeza K., and Sean M.; 4's Friends Camryn C., Charlotte C., Hudson O., and Beau P.; Kindergarten Friends Sasha C. and Rory S.



October Dates (Remember to Check the Interactive Web Calendar TOO)

Q&A Sessions with Educators Thursday, October 9th at 8:30am and 12:30pm

No School on Friday, October 17th PAEYC CONFERENCE for STAFF

October Open House Events

- Wednesday, October 22nd from 4:30 – 6:30pm Four Year Old Classes and Kindergarten
- Wednesday, October 29th from 4:30 – 6:30pm Three Year Old Classes

No School on Friday, November 1st CONFERENCE PREPARATION DAY for STAFF

Family Committee News

Mrs. Rosenblum is in the process of organizing the Repair & Construction, Sewing, Teacher Appreciation Luncheon & Celebration Picnic, Book Fair, Gardening, Library Acquisitions & Enhancement, Books-on-Tape, and Family Social Organization committees. If you are interested in joining any of these groups, please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu. Your participation is encouraged and welcomed!

Family Social Organization

This column includes messages from our Family Social Organization (FSO) co-chairs, Ameer Chaudry (ameechaudry@yahoo.com) and Julie Paris (julieparis6@gmail.com).



Hello Children's School families! Welcome to new families and welcome back to our returning families! We are super excited for another year of fun-filled FSO events! We hit the ground running in September. On September 12th, families shared a playground play date at Bartlett Park. Kids and parents got to play, have lunch, make new friends and reunite with old ones! Our second event was Parents' Night where CMU parents enjoyed an evening without the children! We shared delicious food and great conversation at Tamari in Lawrenceville.

The FSO mission is to strengthen the Children's School community through social events. We look forward to seeing you at the next FSO event! See the attached flyer for a schedule of upcoming fall and winter outings. In addition to these events, the FSO also has a monthly book club. The book club meets the second Wednesday of every month at the CMU café from 8:45 to 10:15 am. This month's book club short story is: "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" by Alice Munro (<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/10/21/the-bear-came-over-the-mountain-2>). Join the book club group for an interesting book discussion or just have a cup of coffee with new friends!

Coats for Kids Program

This year, we are supporting the Homewood Children's Village **Coats for Kids** Drive. This program will accept checks made out to "Homewood Children's Village" in order to purchase winter coats for approximately 150 children in need. They also welcome donations of new hats, gloves and scarves. As you choose accessories to donate, take the opportunity to talk with your child about helping others and what being a kind friend means. Envelopes for donations will be sent in your child's backpack, and clothing donations can be sent to the office. Please visit the Homewood Children's Village website at <http://www.hcvpgh.org> for more information about this organization.

Mark Your Calendar for Shopping Night

Shop at Ten Thousand Villages on Thursday, November 20th from 6-8pm and a percentage of your purchase will be donated towards our Library Acquisitions 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>.



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 both at 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.

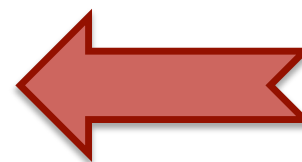
Put everything in its place.

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.

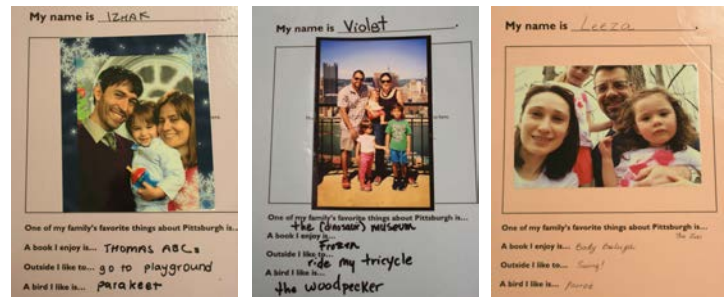
At the Children's School, the children do not "dress up" for Halloween because children can be scared by costumes and costumes often cause toileting difficulties. Seasonal activities will involve fall fruits and vegetables, colorful leaves & acorns, etc.



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 85 families with 91 children at the Children's School, including 25 only children and one set of twins (see drawing at left). Twenty of these families are new to the school, including families who recently moved to Pittsburgh from Boston, Michigan, Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. Among our families, we have two in which one parent is a Children's School alum!

Fourteen of our families have a parent who is a graduate student or faculty member at Carnegie Mellon, and two are graduate students at Pitt. One of our fathers and 40 of our mothers identified themselves as stay-at-home parents. The other parents listed a wide variety of professions, including Antique Dealer, Attorney, Audiologist, Banker, Business Owner, Chef, Designer, Entrepreneur, Financial Consultant, Geologist, Librarian, Manager, Mechanical Engineer, Music Composer, Nurse, Physician, Professor, Real Estate Developer, Researcher, Social Worker, School Principal, Software Engineer, Teacher, Therapist, and Yoga Instructor.



About 40% of our children are dual language learners, and two are trilingual. This year, we have families speaking at least 17 languages besides English: Arabic, Bahasa (Indonesia), Chinese, German, Gujarati (India), Hebrew, Hindi / Urdu, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Telugu (India), and Turkish. 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 Neighborhood, and other times we work toward a common goal, like the 3's Peace Day Weaving. Watch the school walls for more examples as the year progresses and feel free to offer your help to support our explorations!

Box Tops for Education

The Children's School participates in the **Box Tops for Education** program. Clipping Box Tops is an easy way for you to help our school. Box Tops are each worth 10¢ and they quickly add up to real cash for our school. This school year, our school's earnings goal is \$1,000. To help our school, just look for pink Box Tops on products, clip them, and send them to school. For more information on the Box Tops for Education program, including a list of participating products and our school's progress, visit <http://www.BTFE.com>. Be sure to become a member to receive exclusive coupons and recipes, as well as to learn about extra ways for our school to earn. Our fall submission deadline is **October 16th**. Please send your Box Tops to Miss Hancock in the Main Office.

Using GoodSearch / GoodShop



GoodSearch donates money to Carnegie Mellon University Children's School when you search the Internet, shop online, or dine 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 University Children's School. Go to <http://www.goodsearch.com> to get started.

Register for the Extended Morning Program

There are limited spaces still available in the Extended Morning Program and the Extended Afternoon Program. The morning program runs from 11:30am – 1 pm and includes a group time and an activity time that extends the preschool theme focus through literature-based activities. Then the children enjoy eating together the lunches brought from home. The afternoon program runs from 3:15pm – 5:30pm with a similar extension of the preschool theme. The children also prepare their own afternoon snack together. If you are interested in joining either of these programs or for tuition information, please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu.

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

With chilly weather already upon us, 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!

Who Can Help? Administrative Structure & Roles

The Children's School has a team of four professionals to jointly meet the administrative needs of our active laboratory school (left to right: Miss Drash, Miss Hancock, Mrs. Rosenblum, and Dr. Carver). We all strive to know all of the children and to interact with them frequently. We are all available to serve the educators, students, families, and researchers. At the same time, we each focus distinctive talents in different areas, so here are some helpful hints about who to approach for which issues.



Dr. Carver (sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu) 412-268-1499

Miss Hancock (lh37@andrew.cmu.edu) 412-268-2198

Mrs. Rosenblum (rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu) 412-268-3476

Miss Drash (adrash@andrew.cmu.edu) 412-268-2199

Dr. Carver, the *Director*, takes primary leadership for **school programs and staff development**. She recruits educators, coordinates all professional development and outreach efforts, and manages the school web site, as well as leading the school's **NAEYC accreditation process**. She observes the classroom frequently and provides support for new curriculum development, alternate teaching strategies, ways to meet individual student needs, etc. She prepares the **whole school newsletter** and serves as a **resource for parents** with questions about child development, education, special needs, and family issues. Dr. Carver coordinates all uses of the Children's School as a **psychology laboratory**, including undergraduate courses, graduate student research, and faculty research. As a **teaching professor in the Psychology Department**, Dr. Carver also teaches a Child Development course, supervises the Child Development Interns, teaches the graduate course on Educational Design, serves as an academic advisor, and participates in other department and college events.

Miss Hancock, an *Educational Administrator*, handles **program administration issues**, including managing the school calendar, ordering materials, conducting safety drills, monitoring the school's primary email account (ed-admin@andrew.cmu.edu), handling student allergies and medications, and working with our health and safety consultants. She also coordinates requests for **Carnegie Mellon services**, particularly those regarding facilities and security. She takes a lead role with teacher mentoring and consultation for the kindergarten educators and families.

Mrs. Rosenblum, also an *Educational Administrator*, concentrates her administrative efforts on **family support**, beginning with recruiting and initial admission, but also including tuition payments, scholarship assistance, re-enrollment, family involvement, general family resources, committees and special events. She also coordinates **undergraduate support staff**, mentors high school interns, and arranges classroom coverage when teachers are absent. She takes a lead role with preschool teacher mentoring and consultation for the preschool educators and families.

Along with Dr. Carver, both Educational Administrators collaborate to maintain strong relationships with local schools, to broaden our public relations, to manage the school budget, to secure funding for special projects and scholarships, to maintain the school's NAEYC accreditation and PA private academic school licensing, to represent the school in the local, national, and international education community, and to continually seek ways to improve all of the services we offer.

Administrative Structure & Roles continued ...

As the *Administrative Coordinator*, Miss Drash manages the office operations and equipment, answers the primary **school phone** number, keeps student records, takes messages for teachers, and monitors all **observation and research activities**. She handles visitor entry and exit via the **security system** and is the person to whom **ALL forms** are returned. She maintains all of the school's **databases**. She also keeps our reception areas stocked with family resources, particularly for school choices and community services.

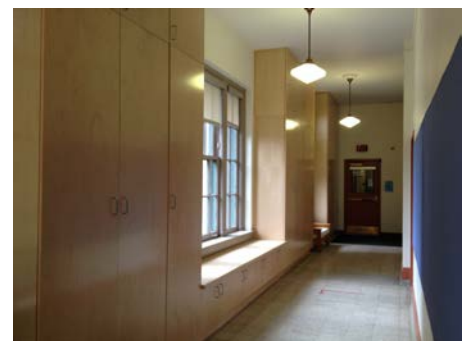
Most importantly, we're all here to help provide an excellent early childhood program for your children. If you have a question or concern and are not sure which administrator to approach, feel free to ask your child's teacher or to call the school office. We'll be happy to direct your call. You may also contact us through email for quick questions or comments you may have.

Safety at the Children's School

One week per month is designated as **Safety Week** at the Children's School. Children and staff practice safety procedures such as evacuations or lock down drills, with a different drill practiced each month at varied times of day. During our drills, educators carry walkie-talkies as well as an emergency bag that contains first aid supplies, class lists, and emergency phone numbers, and they follow the recommended routes and procedures detailed in our Fire and Emergency Action Plan from the university. We held our first evacuation drill on Friday, September 12th with the 4's and Kindergarten classes. After discussing the procedure during circle time, the children listened for the fire alarm and walked through our main emergency egress to the Reflection Garden, with all children accounted for in less than 2 minutes. The 3's classes will practice their first evacuation drill during circle time once the teachers feel that the children are acclimated to their surroundings. This drill will be done without the fire alarm to teach the children the procedure. In October, we will have all of the children participate in a regular drill together. Your child may discuss this experience with you. We have found that reading the book Fire Drill by Paul DuBois Jacobs is very helpful in explaining the concept of emergency situations to young children.

Library Enhancements

One of our major summer projects was converting our library of children's books to a new online system with librarything.com and having custom-designed cabinets installed in our hallway, both for "big books" and for regular books.



With the leadership of Mrs. Rosenblum and Miss Hancock, and the collaboration of educators, undergraduate employees, and contractors, we now have beautiful and functional storage for our more than 4,600 children's books with plenty of room for new acquisitions. We are grateful for a generous gift from the Cyert Family Foundation that, together with funds in our capital reserve account, paid for the project. Now our Library Committee can begin focusing on choosing books to enhance our library collection!

Pittsburgh Perspectives

Why did the Shawnee, French, and British all want to live at the confluence of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio rivers? Why have so many major innovations in science & technology, medicine, industry, the arts, etc. originated in Pittsburgh? How did the “Steel City” become the most livable city in the US? Why did each of us choose to call Pittsburgh “home” for this period of our lives?



These are among the exciting questions that prompted us to choose Pittsburgh for the theme of our 2014-15 Whole School Unit. Our educators began our own explorations by visiting the Fort Pitt Museum & Blockhouse and the Heinz History Center. Though the unit is scheduled for February, we are already introducing Pittsburgh as a thread throughout the whole year. Watch for images of the city skyline and three rivers, displays honoring Pittsburghers who are famous for their work supporting children and learning, and monthly tips for expanding your family's adventures in Pittsburgh. If you are interested in helping to design the unit or have ideas to share, please contact Sharon Carver (sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu) or Violet McGillen (vmcgille@andrew.cmu.edu).

October's Pittsburgh Tip: Whether you are new to Pittsburgh or a lifelong resident, there is much to explore here. Visit the city's official visitor's guide at <http://www.visitpittsburgh.com> to see why they chose the slogan “Pittsburgh Mighty and Beautiful”. NextPittsburgh focuses on “taking Pittsburgh to the next level”, and they have a great section on family adventures at <http://www.nextpittsburgh.com/events/family-adventures-september-in-pittsburgh/>. Enjoy!

Perhaps you wondered ...

why we organize our curriculum into thematic units.

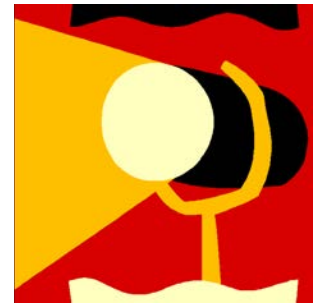
Studying topics in depth builds children's knowledge base, starting with what they already know and creating a network of concepts that are richly connected in ways that help children apply their knowledge to new contexts. We combine verbal and visual representations and provide a variety of activities 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 9th, 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 or request a personal appointment.

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 across from our new library.



Child Development Interns

- Emily Kim is a junior Psychology major exploring education and research while interning in the AM 4's class.



- Lailonny Morris (pictured right) is a senior Psychology major with a Health concentration. She is interning in the AM 4's to gain experience in education.



- Lisa Murphy (pictured left) is a sophomore Psychology major interning in the Kindergarten class. She hopes to pursue a career in special education or clinical psychology.

- Allaina Ray is a junior Psychology major interning in the AM 3's to further her interest in a career working with children.

Senior Student Teachers from Pitt's CASE Program

Jennifer Young and Kayla Kirschenmann 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. Miss Young (pictured right) is teaching in the Kindergarten this semester and Miss Kirschenmann (pictured below) is working with the Morning 4's and Extended Morning Program.



- Jennifer Young says, "*I am from the small town of Drums, PA. I worked in a preschool classroom with JumpStart Pittsburgh for the past four years. I love reading in my spare time and love finding new books for the classroom. I also enjoy exploring*



Pittsburgh's different neighborhoods, playing softball, and being outdoors. I look forward to spending the semester in the Kindergarten classroom."

- Kayla Kirschenmann says, "*I am from Plymouth Meeting, PA which is right next to Philadelphia. I am an only child. I have a dog and a cat. I am a huge Pittsburgh sports fan. I currently work at the Falk Laboratory School After-School program. In my free time, I love to bake and do arts and crafts. I am the President of Future Educators of America at Pitt. This semester I look forward to getting to know the students and creating great memories."*

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) and a notebook of articles in the office. Feel free to contact Dr. Carver to discuss any questions you have about research.

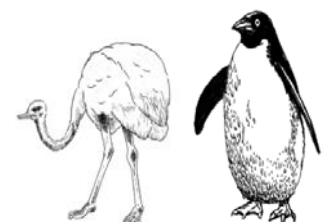
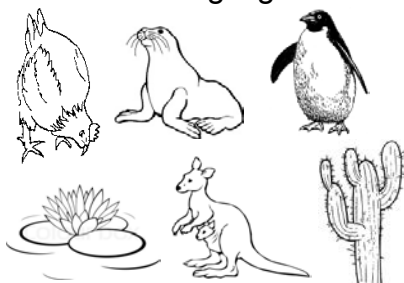
Observations for Psychology Assignments: Students from Dr. David Rakison's Child Development class conduct periodic observations throughout the fall. For each assignment, they observe specific differences between preschoolers and kindergartners in motor skills, social interactions, language, etc.

Research Methods Class Studies: Students in Professor Anna Fisher's and Graduate Student Lucy Erickson's Developmental Research Methods classes will start with a lab entitled the **The Animal Names Game** to explore age related changes in children's working memory capacity by having them do a word span task. The experimenter starts with a short list of animals for the child to repeat and gradually lengthens the list. As part of this study, the students are varying the length of the animal names (e.g., frog vs. butterfly) to determine whether it is the number of items in the list or the amount of time it takes to say the items that determines how much can be remembered. Later in the semester, students will work in small groups to conduct a study of their own design, which will be approved both by their instructor and by Dr. Carver.

Research Spotlight

The Learning About Living Things Game

Previous research has suggested that, as children grow older, they increasingly recognize that living things can be divided into different biological taxonomic groups, such as mammals, birds, and plants. The purpose of the Living Things study that graduate student Layla Unger is conducting this fall is to test whether an instruction session that explicitly highlights these biological taxonomic groups facilitates the organization of children's knowledge about living things. All of the participants will complete a pre-test and post-test during which they are asked to arrange a set of pictures on a game board according to which are "the same kind of thing" and then again by which ones "go together". Between the two tests, half of the children will participate in an instruction session that highlights similarities between living things that look very different but are part of the same category (e.g., "This ostrich is a bird, and this penguin is a bird. See? They're both birds."). The researchers may repeat the instruction and related post-test multiple times to strengthen the effect of the instructional manipulation.



Research Spotlight, continued ...



The Picture Finding Game

Word recognition tasks are often used to determine the average age of acquisition for these words. These data can then be applied to the study of other cognitive topics. For example, Dr. Anna Fisher's research team is particularly interested in the degree to which children utilize their word knowledge in various working memory and reasoning tasks. In the Picture Finding game, children are shown slides of pictures of animals and plants and then asked to find the picture representing the target word on each slide. For example, we might ask children to point to the picture of the *rabbit*.

The Flowers Game

Professor Anna Fisher and graduate student Karrie Godwin are investigating the relationship between learning and other general cognitive processes such as attention, memory, processing speed, executive function, and general reasoning ability. In the Flowers Game, they are examining how children allocate their attention in different learning environments. In particular, they are interested in examining whether children's ability to effectively distribute their attention has consequences for learning new science content. In this computer game, children are presented with a series of pictures of flowers. 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 flowers, children may be presented with a picture of a flower and asked to recall the flower's name (e.g., "*What was the name of this flower?*").



The Butterfly Game

Fisher and Godwin's Butterfly Game is a similar computer game in which children are presented with a series of pictures of butterflies. 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 butterfly, children may be asked to identify the morpho (e.g., "*Point to the morpho*").



The Remember That Game

In a series of games like the Flowers Game, the Butterfly Game, the Land Animals Game, and the Fish Game, children learn about novel science content by reviewing a series of pictures of animals or plants and practicing the name for each picture. In the Remember That Game, experimenters examine whether children's ability to engage in sustained attention during those initial games affects their long-term retention of the science material. In the Remember That Game, children are asked questions about the animals and plants they learned about over the semester. For example, children are presented with a series of pictures and asked to recall the name of the objects (e.g., "*What was the name of this Butterfly?*"). Children are also asked about educational displays that were present in the classroom to see if children remember the classroom visual environment. For example, children may be presented with pairs of objects and asked to identify which object he or she saw in the classroom previously.



Director's Corner: Why Explore?

Early childhood educators utilize a broad **continuum of teaching strategies** to facilitate children's learning. For example, at the beginning of the school year, we directly teach one hand-washing strategy with an accompanying song so that all the children learn the "best-practice" procedure, but we invite more open-ended discussion to negotiate the classroom meaning of "be a kind friend". Also, we provide multiple opportunities in the context of dramatic play, block building, sand table exploration, playdough creation, etc., for children to discover ways to interact effectively with their peers, all with the support of adults who model appropriate behaviors.



The same continuum of strategies applies to our support for learning in all developmental domains, including self-esteem & independence, interaction & cooperation, communication, discovery & exploration, physical capabilities / health & safety, and artistic expression & appreciation. We use the more "teacher-directed" strategies when they are efficient and effective for learning facts, rules, techniques, and other procedures. Discovery approaches via play and other open explorations are very useful for helping children notice interesting features of the world, themselves, and others, observe cause and effect relationships in the physical and social spheres, and begin to ask questions about how things work. Such discoveries serve as "preparation for future learning" in that they spark interest and build experience that serves as a foundation for inquiry activities that are structured and guided by the teachers to help children build key concepts in all of the topic areas within science, math, social studies, literature, the arts, technology, etc.

Since young children are essentially universal novices, they benefit from having a range of opportunities to safely explore interesting spaces and materials both indoors and outdoors. These explorations promote interest, engagement, and creativity – essentially a positive and proactive approach to learning. Exploring also strengthens skills in all developmental domains.

- Self-Esteem & Independence – pride in achievements & motivation to independently explore
- Interaction & Cooperation – inclination to work and learn collaboratively
- Communication – emphasis on descriptive language to share discoveries
- Discovery & Exploration – disposition to experiment and extend learning via the inquiry cycle
- Physical Capabilities, Health & Safety – skilled and safe use of bodies with purpose and control
- Artistic Expression & Appreciation – investment in creative outlets, both your own and others'



To give a concrete example, exploring playdough enables children to independently pursue their own ideas and projects, as well as to experiment with different tools and materials that we provide with the playdough. Working with playdough strengthens children's hand muscles, encourages eye-hand coordination, and builds tool use skills – all in ways that are within their developmental reach. When peers are involved, the playdough work affords children the opportunity to learn social interaction skills for sharing and conversation skills for communicating their ideas and making their requests known. Either individually or with peers, children can build artistic expression skills for both visual arts and pretend play. In my Director's Corner articles this year, I plan to share the benefits of children learning through explorations of nature, literature, cooking, construction, etc. We hope you will explore with us!