Welcome to the Children’s School Family!

The 2015-2016 year is off to a smooth start at the Children’s School, and we’re enjoying getting to know our children and families as we explore new learning opportunities. We are already appreciating the ways that each unique child contributes to the group as everyone adjusts to the school’s unique culture. 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 exploring the new mud kitchen, water table, building materials, etc. on 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, which is sent via email as well as on paper.
• 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 also send general school announcements and reminders via our school e-mail (cmuchsch@andrew.cmu.edu), 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.

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

Q&A Sessions with Educators Thursday, October 1st at 8:30am and 12:30pm

October Open House Events
• Wednesday, October 14th from 4:30 – 6:30pm Four Year Old Classes & Kindergarten
• Wednesday, October 21st from 4:30 – 6:30pm Three Year Old Classes

Staff / Parent Discussion re: School Choice (child care provided)
Friday, October 23rd from 9:30-11:00am or Wednesday, Nov 4th from 4:30-6:00pm

No School on Friday, October 30th Conference Preparation Day for Educators
Family Committee News

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered for a school committee. The FSO Committee already had a meeting to plan this year’s events (see below), and the Sewing Committee has also met and volunteers are already hard at work making vests and collection bags for the children. The Gardening Committee has also been making plans for our hillside by the parking lot. A Library Committee meeting is planned for October 5th at 9 am in the office, and future meetings will be planned for the Book Fair Committee and the End-of-the-Year Celebration Committee. Members of the Construction and Repair Committee will be contacted as the need arises.

New this year is the Monthly Teacher Appreciation Events Committee. Each month, one age group (3’s, 4’s or Kindergarten) will be asked to provide a meal or snacks for the Children’s School Staff. The Kindergarten has already hosted a Friday afternoon luncheon and snacks for the teaching staff. In October, the 4’s will plan something, and in November it will be the 3’s classes that will be showing appreciation.

It is never too late to join a committee – just contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu!

Family Social Organization

The Family Social Organization (FSO) would like to welcome new families and welcome back returning families! It is our mission to strengthen the Children’s School community through the organization of fun social events. We have a great group of parents on the committee and an exciting year of events is shaping up! Each month, we will plan one formal and a few informal events. We will also inform families of other local events in the monthly newsletter, emails and occasionally send a flyer home.

The book club, chaired by Michelle Landau and Jen Moak, will resume on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at the CMU Cafe from 8:45-10 am, starting in October. This year's book club will include discussions of TED Talks and various articles. Come join the club and make some new friends! Watch for announcements for the upcoming talk or article each month.

Save the date! Be on the look out for an invitation to the Fall Harvest Tour at Reilly’s Farm for our first FSO trip. This event will take place on Friday, October 30th at 10:30 a.m. This a NO SCHOOL day. Details for a Parent Night out will be coming, too.

In October, there is free admission to the Carnegie Museum of Art and Natural History every Thursday evening from 3-8 PM. Parking is $6. Also, the CMU Tartans have home games on October 10th and 24th. The Pittsburgh Zoo and Aquarium is free on October 11th, sponsored by RADical days. The Maker Faire (part science fair, part show and tell, part carnival) will be held at Allegheny Commons on October 10th and 11th from 12-5 pm (http://makerfairepittsburgh.com).

Questions, comments or ideas, please contact Alexis Tuckfelt (alexiscoupe@aol.com) or Jessica Simcox (jsimcox5@gmail.com). We look forward to a great year of FSO events with the Children School families!

Alexis and Jessica
Fall Fun for Families

CMU students from the Mortar Board Senior Honor Society are planning a family event on the Children’s School playground for Saturday, October 17th from 10am to Noon. Please join Children’s School and Cyert Center families for activities and games relating to nature in the fall, i.e., leaves, acorns, apples, pumpkins, etc., organized by seniors who are striving to integrate their scholarship with leadership and service. We’ll meet on the Children’s School playground if weather permits and in the preschool otherwise. Dr. Carver is the Mortar Board faculty advisor, and April Tillinghast, one of our interns, is the Vice President. Watch for more information and a chance to RSVP via email.

So Many School Choices

How do families make the best choice of an 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 a discussion of strategies for exploring school options.

Friday, October 23, 2015 from 9:30–11:00am in the Danforth Lounge of the University Center
• Preschool 4’s and Kindergarten children will be in school.
• Child Care will be provided for children 3 and under in the Red Room.

Wednesday, November 4, 2015 from 4:30-6:00pm in the Children’s School Kindergarten
• Child Care will be provided for children of all ages in the Red Room.

NOTE: The Pittsburgh Public School birthday cutoff is September 30, 2015. In other words, a child who turns 5 by September 30th is eligible for kindergarten (or 6 by September 30th for 1st grade).

Gardening News: Ready, Set, Plant

Our Garden Committee is up and running! We held our first meeting on September 17th in preparation for Planting Week which will be September 28 – October 3. During this time, we plan to plant shrubs and perennials on the hillside above the parking lot area as well as mums along the curved wall. On Saturday, October 3, we will have volunteers participating in the University’s 1000Plus Day of Service to assist with mulching the area.

There are several ways for you to support this effort:
• To assist in planting, sign up via Google Docs using this link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1B2Xu1wg5osl5uAfpkSCQBp4HGluA39-3n8UPp-PucO_E/edit?usp=sharing
• To lend tools (shovels, rakes, wheelbarrows) for the week, contact Miss Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu.
• To make a donation for the procurement of plants, dirt, and mulch, please send contributions to Miss Hancock via the Main Office.
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 may 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 the preschool 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 fall, we have 83 families with 81 children at the Children’s School, including 27 only children. Thirty of these families are new to the school, including families who recently moved to Pittsburgh from New York, Indiana, Japan, Russia, and China. Among our families, we have two in which the mother is a Children’s School alum!

Thirteen of our families have a parent who is a graduate student or faculty member at Carnegie Mellon, and one is a graduate student at Pitt. One of our fathers and 31 of our mothers identified themselves as stay-at-home parents. The other parents listed a wide variety of professions, including Actuary, Administrator, Antique Dealer, Architect, Artist, Attorney, Audiologist, Baker, Banker, Business Owner, Chef, Designer, Engineer, Entrepreneur, Financial Consultant, Fundraiser, Journalist, Librarian, Manager, Medical Examiner, Nurse, Physician, Real Estate Developer, Researcher, Social Worker, Sports Psychologist, Teacher, Therapist, and Yoga Instructor.

About 25% of our children are dual language learners, and one is trilingual. This year, we have families speaking at least 11 languages besides English: Arabic, Chinese, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog (Philippines), 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 3’s T-shirt display, and other times we work toward a common goal, like the Extended Morning Children’s School sign. Watch the school walls for more examples as the year progresses and feel free to offer your help to support our explorations!
Custodial Appreciation Day

Friday, October 2nd is National Custodial Workers Recognition Day - an annual celebration to pay tribute to and thank those who clean and maintain buildings. Our school is maintained by the incredible Olympia Saunders. Olympia works for Aramark, the custodial services company contracted by Carnegie Mellon University. Olympia’s workday begins after 11pm, which is why families do not meet her. Our staff rarely sees Olympia but we communicate as “pen pals” when we leave each other notes to discuss cleaning needs.

Olympia was born and raised on Pittsburgh’s North Side and currently lives in Avalon. She is the oldest of 6 children – 3 girls and 3 boys. She has been employed by CMU’s custodial services company since September 2011. She loves to do crossword puzzles and collects dolphins, her favorite animal. Her favorite childhood memory is going to Disneyland when she turned 10. It was her first time getting on a plane. Olympia would like to thank the whole staff for making her feel so loved. She also appreciates the kind gifts and letters that she receives from the staff and the children.

Thank YOU, Olympia, for all of your hard work!! In honor of Olympia, we have invited her to join us for breakfast on Thursday, October 1st.

Facility Enhancements

With university funding, we have a newly paved parking lot and a new set of sandstone steps to our playground. Thank you CMU! We also used capital reserves to pay for garden boxes to be installed at the base of the hillside so that each of our classes has space for planting. Now our Gardening Committee can begin focusing on adding a variety of plants (also shown here) to the rest of the hillside and then involve undergraduate volunteers in doing the more labor-intensive work of mulching! Please contact Miss Hancock if you are interested in helping plant and maintain our hillside garden.

Marker Recycling

This year, the Children’s School will participate in Crayola’s ColorCycle initiative – an amazing new program devised to turn used markers into energy. Please help support our efforts by collecting any used markers – even non-Crayola brands – and sending them to school with your child. The markers will be sent, at Crayola’s expense, to a facility where they will be converted into clean fuel that can be used to power vehicles, heat homes, cook meals and more! Included with this newsletter is a label that you can use to designate a box in your home for marker recycling.
Mark Your Calendar for Shopping Night

Shop at Ten Thousand Villages on Thursday, November 19th from 6-8pm and a percentage of your purchase will be donated towards the development of our Make Shop. Your Holiday gifts can give three times, to the recipient, the artisan, and CMU Children’s School! Visit http://www.tenthousandvillages.com/home.php to learn more about this wonderful store located on Forbes Avenue in Squirrel Hill.

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. Please send your Box Tops to Miss Hancock in the Main Office.

Giant Eagle Apples for the Students

Each time you shop at Giant Eagle® using your Giant Eagle Advantage Card®, you can earn points for the Children’s School – points we can redeem for great educational tools. The points are automatically credited to the school through the Giant Eagle Advantage Card®.

Here’s how:
1. Sign up at www.gianteagle.com/about/apples-for-students
2. Provide our School ID #0151
3. Each time your Giant Eagle Advantage Card is scanned through March 17, 2016, your purchases automatically earn our school FREE educational awards.

In the past, we have been able to receive an overhead projector, computer software, books, and physical education materials. If you registered in prior years, there is no need to register again. Please visit www.gianteagle.com to review your school choices.

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 or Mrs. Rosenblum if you are interested in purchasing any items. We take cash or checks.

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

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! If your child brings food in containers for Kindergarten or Extended Day lunch, please be sure that these are labeled with your child’s name as well.
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 Hancock, Dr. Carver, Mrs. Rosenblum, and Miss Drash). 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 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. She is currently the chairperson of the Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Science faculty.

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 (cmuchsch@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.
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

Health and Safety considerations are high priorities for our educators. We participate annually in trainings including Pediatric CPR and First Aid, Bloodborne Pathogens, Medication Administration, Food Safety, Fire Safety and Prevention, and Fire Extinguisher Training. In addition, we work with a Health Consultant and Playground Consultant who come to the Children’s School to evaluate our space and observe our practices to help improve our procedures. For Kindergarten age children, the Pittsburgh Public School District provides a school nurse who comes monthly to monitor health records and to conduct basic screenings such as height and weight, vision, and hearing.

We also collaborate with the University Environmental Health and Safety Department as well as the University Police to create a safety plan for emergency situations. One week each month is designated as Safety Week at the Children’s School. During this week, children and staff practice safety procedures such as evacuations or lock down drills. A different drill is practiced each month at varied times of day. During our drills, each staff member carries a walkie-talkie as well as an emergency bag that contains first aid supplies, class lists, and emergency phone numbers. The University has provided a Fire and Emergency Action Plan that includes a map with recommended evacuation routes. Also during Safety Week, an in depth Safety Check of our facility is conducted.

We held our first evacuation drill on Friday, September 18th 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 1 minute 25 seconds. The 3’s practiced their first evacuation drill during circle time 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.

With both evacuation and lockdown drills we use very simple explanations of why we need to practice, basically saying that we need to be able to leave the building quickly if there is something inside, like a fire, that might harm us or that we need a place inside to be safe away from the windows if there is something outside that might harm us, like a very bad storm. 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. If you have any questions about our Health and Safety Guidelines, please refer to your Family Handbook or contact the Main Office.
Terrific Textiles

In preparation for exploring TEXTILES for our Whole School Unit this year, we dedicated part of our professional development time in both May and August to expanding our own comfort level and skills with fabric arts. For example, we used “rip-stop nylon” and “wonder under” to make colorful waterproof flags for our playground and we transformed used t-shirts into pillow covers, scarves, hats, dramatic play skirts, reusable shopping bags, etc. The topic of textiles will thread throughout the school year in all of our classrooms, starting with noticing the diverse everyday materials that are made from fibers or yarns. Initially, we will focus on the textiles themselves, the types of fibers and ways they are combined to make fabric, etc. During the unit, we will study 1) the science principles underlying both natural and synthetic fibers and the ways they are made into fabric suitable for different purposes, 2) the historical, social, and cultural aspects of textile choices, uses, designs, etc., 3) the many distinctive uses of textiles in the visual arts, dance, and theatre, 4) the mathematical aspects of textile patterns, measurement for making textile products, etc., and 5) the technological innovations that have changed textile design and production over the years. 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 Textile Tip: Encourage your family to intentionally notice the unique features of the textiles you encounter, starting with a scavenger hunt of the textiles in your home, including clothing, linens, furnishings, décor, etc. The Children’s University of Manchester has a helpful website for sharing their work with the community, and it includes a whole section on “Talking Textiles”. Review it yourself and perhaps with your child as a way of introducing the topic of textiles to your family (http://www.childrensuniversity.manchester.ac.uk/interactives/art&design/talkingtextiles/).

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 1st, 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 library.

Child Development Interns

- Siriana Abboud (pictured left) is a senior Psychology and Francophone Studies major preparing for graduate school in speech pathology or counseling while interning in the AM 4’s class.
- Tori Iatarola is a sophomore Psychology major and CMU women’s soccer player. She is interning in the AM 3’s to gain experience with children.
- April Tillinghast is a senior Costume Design major interning in the Extended AM class. She is heading to graduate school in early childhood education to become a kindergarten teacher.

Senior Student Teachers from Pitt’s CASE Program

Cara Vizzini and Sara Kelly 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 Kelly is teaching in the Kindergarten this semester and Miss Vizzini is working with the Morning 4’s and Extended Morning Program.

- Sara Kelly says, “I am from Gibsonia, PA (about 30 minutes north of Pittsburgh). I have spent the last three years working in preschool classrooms both in Mount Washington and Hazelwood, through a program called Jumpstart. Currently, I work at the Children’s Center of Pittsburgh. In my spare time, I enjoy spending time with my family, exploring new places and going running outdoors. I am so excited to have the opportunity to student teach at the Children’s School and I am looking forward to getting to know all of the students!”

- Cara Vizzini says, “I’m from Johnstown, PA. This is my fourth year working at the Falk Laboratory School Extended Day program. During my summers, I coach a junior high competitive cheerleading squad at my alma mater, Bishop McCort, while also working as a tutor in the Johnstown School district. I enjoy my time working with children of all ages and look forward to making memories with the preschool children here at CMU.”
Music & Movement Classes

Welcome back, Lauren Hraber! Last spring, Mrs. Hraber conducted monthly Music and Movement classes with all of the children at the Children’s School. The program was such a success that we have increased her sessions to twice a month. Our first classes were held on September 24th and will continue approximately every other week for the remainder of the school year.

Lauren Hraber is an experienced preschool and elementary music teacher with a MED in Special Education from the University of Pittsburgh and a BFA in Piano Performance from Carnegie Mellon University. She spent 10 years teaching General Elementary Music in Baldwin–Whitehall, Woodland Hills, and Canton City Schools. Lauren founded Piano Tots for preschoolers and has spent the last 10 years teaching Piano Tots classes. Presently, Lauren serves as the music teacher at several preschools in the Pittsburgh area. Lauren's family includes husband Zach and 2 children - Maddy & Jax, a Children’s School alum.

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/childrensschool) 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 Developmental Research Methods class will start with a lab entitled The Wrong Name Game to explore development of inhibitory control in 3 and 4 year old children. Inhibitory control allows one to suppress actions that are not appropriate (e.g., speaking out of turn in class or grabbing a toy someone else is using). This project uses the Day/Night task in which children are instructed to say “day” when shown a picture of the moon, and “night” for a sun. Undergraduates will add more task versions to better understand the conditions under which children can and cannot inhibit inappropriate responses. 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 Shapes and Colors Game

Sandrine Girard, a graduate student working with Dr. Erik Thiessen, is studying the process of statistical learning in children of various ages using an engaging, age appropriate paradigm. Statistical learning involves sensitivity to the statistical structure of the input. Unlike the spaces demarcating word boundaries in writing, words in fluent speech are not consistently marked by pauses. This makes segmentation difficult, especially for individuals (such as infants) who are unfamiliar with the words in the speech stream. However, infants and adults can use a statistical feature of the input to segment words: sounds within words (such as the syllables that go together to make a word) are more likely to co-occur than sound sequences that spuriously occur across word boundaries. By detecting which sounds are more likely to co-occur, learners can identify words.

In this project, the researcher will ask children to watch a sequence of objects appear on the screen, one at a time and press the space bar every time that they see a grey circle. At the end of the video, children are asked to decide which group of objects should go together. To accomplish this task, children have to learn the particular grouping of objects in the video stream. If children learn the groupings, they are able to anticipate the presentation of the grey circle (and so press the spacebar faster) and they are also able to identify the correct grouping of objects during the testing portion.

Children’s performance in the Shapes and Colors Game will help researchers to compare the rate of learning (how fast they press the spacebar when the grey circle appears on the screen) and the outcome of learning (how accurate they are at identifying the correct grouping of objects). Their performance in this task will also be compared to their performance on the project called “Moving Eyes” designed to assess selective sustained attention. If parents completed the optional questionnaire on their child’s language use and history, researchers can also link the child’s language profile to his or her performance on the statistical learning task and the selective sustained attention task. Linking all three sets of data will allow researchers to investigate the link between statistical learning, selective sustained attention, and language background.

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.
Research Spotlight, continued …

The Finding Pictures Game

As children learn about things in the world around them, they also learn about how different things are related to each other. For instance, children can learn that different things are taxonomically related when they share features with each other (e.g., dog and seal both have fur), or thematically related when they are associated with the same event (e.g., dog and bone). Sometimes, things can be both taxonomically related, such as cat and dog, which both share features and are often associated with each other. The purpose of Dr. Anna Fisher and graduate student Layla Unger’s study is to explore how children’s knowledge of these relations develops with age. During this study, children look for a specific target picture amongst an array of four pictures depicted on a computer screen that includes the target picture, a related distractor picture, and two unrelated distractor pictures. While looking for the target picture, children’s eye gaze was recorded using an eye tracker. By examining children’s looks towards the related distractor pictures, researchers can investigate the development and activation of children’s knowledge about relationships between different things.

The Look Alike Game

Learning to identify category membership is theorized to involve detecting the features shared by items in the same category, such as pointy ears and long tail for the category of cats, and ignore features that vary within a category, such as color. The purpose of this study by Dr. Anna Fisher and Layla Unger is to investigate the effect of category knowledge on perceived similarity. In the Look Alike game, children are asked to choose which of the two animals in the bottom row looks like the animal on the top by pressing one of two buttons on a response box. On every trial, the animal on the top looks similar to one of the animals on the bottom and dissimilar from the other animal on the bottom. On some rounds (No Conflict Trials, left example above), the similar animal also belongs to the same category; whereas, on other rounds (Conflict Trials, right example above), the correspondence between similarity and category membership was reversed. Each of these sets of animals was presented both with all animal pictures upright and with all pictures upside down. The researchers predict that category knowledge will influence children’s responses on this task such that they take longer to identify the animal that looks like the one on the top when it belongs to a different versus the same category, but ONLY for rounds in which all animals are presented upright. We predict that presenting animals upside down will interfere with access to category knowledge, so that it will not impact similarity judgments.

The Odd One Out Game

In a similar study, children are shown an array of 16 pictures of animals arranged in a 4x4 grid with a dividing line down the middle on a computer screen. 15 of the pictures are identical Distractors, and one was a different, Oddball picture. The images were designed so that the Distractors and Oddball either looked very similar, or very different. The category membership of the animals was also manipulated so that the Distractors and Oddball belonged to either the same or different categories. Arrays were presented with animal pictures either upright or upside down. Researchers predict that children will identify the Oddball more quickly overall when it is dissimilar from the Distractors and when it belongs to a different category, but only when the images are upright.
Research Spotlight, continued …

The Reading Game

Professors Anna Fisher and Ken Koedinger are beginning a new line of research on the development of reading. Undergraduate June Walitzer is conducting an initial investigation of how reading comprehension relates to different patterns of eye gaze in beginning and fluent readers. In the reading game, each child is asked to read a short story book displayed on the screen of a laptop computer. If the child is a beginning reader, the researcher helps the child read the story to ensure a positive experience in the study. After reading the book, the child answers several comprehension questions. While the child is reading, the researcher monitors the eye gaze patterns using a portable eye tracker, depicted below. The research team is interested to determine how eye gaze patterns of children who are beginning and fluent readers differ from each other. Specifically, they aim to learn whether beginning readers are more likely than mature readers to shift their gaze between text and illustrations, and whether these frequent gaze shifts are negatively related to children’s comprehension and memory of the stories they read. If we observe this pattern of results, it would suggest that the layout of the books designed for beginning readers can be improved by reducing the competition between text and pictures, in order to enhance children’s reading experience and reading comprehension.

New Research Paradigm

functional Near Infrared Spectroscopy (fNIRS)

Dr. Anna Fisher and graduate student Layla Unger are the first to begin using functional Near Infrared Spectroscopy (fNIRS) techniques for research at the Children’s School. This technique has been approved by CMU’s IRB as a minimal risk procedure for use with young children, but the research permission form that families signed for the 2015-16 school year does not cover its use. Thus, all fNIRS studies require separate parental permission. fNIRS records brain activity by measuring changes in blood flow in a given region of the brain. Changes in blood flow are measured by emitting infrared light into the scalp and underlying tissues, including the surface of the brain, at a frequency that is primarily absorbed by blood. By detecting the amount of light that is absorbed, we can infer changes in blood flow over the course of a cognitive task. Light is emitted and detected by diodes positioned on the scalp and held in place with a soft cap. The benefit of fNIRS is that it allows the child to sit and move comfortably while doing the task. The near infrared light exposure is comparable to sun exposure MINUS the UV wavelengths. The researchers also have health and safety protocols to ensure that the caps are free from lice and that the light never shines in the children’s eyes.

During the parent orientation meeting, each family received a permission form for the use of fNIRS while children do a task requiring inductive inference. One theory about how children do the task involves using category inclusion rules that would be processed in the Prefrontal Cortex (PFC), rather than simple perceptual cues that would be processed elsewhere. To test this hypothesis, researchers compare the fNIRS readings for versions of the task that require more rule use to see if the prefrontal cortex is more active for those that can be solved perceptually. The permission slip describes the study in much more detail. Please contact Dr. Carver if you have any questions about fNIRS or would like another copy of the permission form.
Director’s Corner: Math Matters

What pops into your mind when I invite you to think about math? Yippee! Huh? Oh no! Are you dreading the thought of helping your child with math throughout the school years? Are you poised for an intriguing puzzle? If so, there’s a “chocolate math” puzzle included just for you. But keep reading before you try it!

Whether math excites or exhausts you, it’s important to help foster positive attitudes and strong conceptual foundations for young children’s mathematical thinking while they are in preschool and kindergarten. It’s also important to reinforce the value of children’s efforts so that they develop a growth mindset, rather than emphasizing their talents or intelligence. In studies where adults commented that children’s success meant that they were smart vs. that they had worked really hard, those given “intelligence” feedback subsequently chose easier tasks than those given “effort” feedback. They were also more likely to lie about their performance when asked to share their scores with others. This year in my monthly articles, I’ll share ways that families can engage in enjoyable math explorations starting now so that all of our children grow up with positive attitudes toward math and growth mindsets regarding future math learning.

At the Children’s School, we introduce children to five conceptual areas within math, each of which corresponds to math topics they will encounter later in school.

1) **Number & Operations (Arithmetic)**
2) **Patterns & Functions (Algebra)**
3) **Shapes & Spatial Arrangements (Geometry)**
4) **Measurement**
5) **Data Analysis & Probability (Statistics)**

I’ll elaborate on each of these in a subsequent article and share how our educators integrate math naturally into the classroom routines and activities. Here I’ll start with two suggestions for families to more intentionally focus children’s attention on the mathematics of their daily lives.

- Involving children in household work reinforces their place in the family, and you can highlight mathematical concepts at the same time. For example, when children help with folding the laundry, they can 1) Count the items, add how many are sorted or subtract to see how many are left to sort. 2) Notice patterns in the fabric. 3) Identify shapes in the designs. 4) Arrange items by size (which may also identify whose they are). 5) Sort items by type and compare quantities.

- Fall is a great time to start or expand a collection, whether it be rocks, sticks, leaves, acorns, pine cones, etc. 1) Count the items in your collection. 2) Arrange the items to make patterns that repeat or grow. 3) Identify the shapes in your collection. 4) Arrange the items in order of size, thickness, weight, etc. 5) Sort the items in many different ways and record which groups have more, fewer, or the same number. To give a personal example, my granddaughter Lucia has a “rock box” outside. Though she is not yet 2, she already gets the idea of simple patterns like rock, pine cone, rock, pine cone (which is a precursor to odd, even, odd, even). As we play, I elaborate the patterns to show the possibilities but follow her lead and interest regarding how far to go.

In both of these ways, and many others, we help children notice that math is everywhere to explore!
## Preschool Theme:
- Rainforest

## Kindergarten Theme:
- Elements of Art

### October 2015

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Children’s School
CMUCChSch@andrew.cmu.edu  http://www.psy.cmu.edu/cs/ 412-268-2199

2015
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<td>1 Hummus on Flat Bread</td>
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<td>7 Yogurt &amp; Granola</td>
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<td>14 Saltines &amp; Sun Butter</td>
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The Children’s School Snack Menu
Why do we offer young children playdough activities so frequently?

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. This strength and skill are prerequisite to using tools for drawing and writing, so daily or weekly practice is valuable in reaching that eventual goal. Meanwhile, working at the playdough table also affords children the opportunity to learn social interaction skills for sharing, conversation skills for communicating their ideas and making their requests known, and artistic expression skills for both visual arts and pretend play. Adding safety scissors to the set of playdough tools gives children a chance to practice cutting, while not needing to coordinate both hands to maneuver the paper.
Children’s School - Famous Playdough

1 cup White Flour  ½ cup Salt  2 teaspoons Cream of Tartar
1 cup Water  1 tablespoon Oil  1 teaspoon Food Coloring

NOTE: We usually double the recipe. Giant Eagle sells LARGE containers of Cream of Tartar.

- Combine flour, salt, and cream of tartar in a saucepan. Mix water, oil, and food coloring in a separate bowl and stir them gradually into dry ingredients until the mixture is smooth.
- Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until a ball forms.
- Remove from heat and when the mixture is just cool enough to handle, knead until smooth.
- Also, you can add vanilla, instant coffee, etc. to add aroma, or add glitter to enhance the visual sensation. Be creative! The playdough stores best in a ziplock bag in the refrigerator.

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Got Used Markers? ColorCycle it!

For more information, please visit www.crayola.com/colorcycle
CLIPPING IS EASY!
FIND BOX TOPS ON HUNDREDS OF PRODUCTS YOU KNOW AND LOVE

RECORTA BOX TOPS ¡Y RECAUDA DINERO PARA TU ESCUELA!

It’s easy to find Box Tops. In fact, you may have some in your home right now. Clip Box Tops from your favorite products and turn them into your school today! Box Tops are each worth 10¢ and they add up fast!

Encontrar Box Tops es fácil. De hecho, tal vez tengas algunos en tu casa en este momento. Recorta Box Tops de cientos de tus productos favoritos. Cada cupón de Box Tops tiene un valor de 10¢ para tu escuela ¡y esas cantidades se suman rápido!

Baking & Bakeware
Horneado y Productos para Hornear

- Betty Crocker™ Baking & Cake Mixes
- Betty Crocker™ Brownies & Dessert Mixes
- Betty Crocker™ Complete Pancake
- Betty Crocker™ Create ‘n’ Bake Cookies
- Betty Crocker™ Frosting
- Betty Crocker™ FUN da-Middles
- Betty Crocker™ Gluten Free Mixes
- Betty Crocker™ Muffin & Cookie Mixes
- Betty Crocker™ Pizza Crust Mix
- Bisquick™
- Fiber One™ Mixes
- Reynolds® Genuine Parchment Paper
- Reynolds® Non-Stick Baking Pans
- Reynolds® Staybright Baking Cups

Cereal
Cereales

- Basic 4™
- Cascadian Farm™
- Cascadian Farm™ Protein Granola
- Cheerios™
- Chex™
- Cinnamon Toast Crunch™
- Cocoa Puffs™
- Cookie Crisp™
- Fiber One™
- French Toast Crunch™
- Gluten Free Cheex™ Oatmeal
- Golden Grahams™
- Honey Nut Clusters™
- Kix™
- Lucky Charms™
- Nature Valley™ Protein Crunchy Granola
- Oatmeal Crisp™
- Raisin Nut Bran
- Reese’s Puffs™
- Total™
- Trix™
- Wheaties™

Frozen
Congelados

- Green Giant™ Vegetables
  o Green Giant™ Seasoned Steamers™
  o Green Giant™ Just for One™
- Green Giant™ Family Size Frozen Vegetables
- Green Giant™ Valley Fresh Steamers
- Pillsbury™ Breakfast
  o Pillsbury™ Grands! Biscuit Sandwiches
  o Pillsbury™ Pancakes
  o Pillsbury™ Toaster Scrambles™
  o Pillsbury™ Toaster Strudel™
- Totino’s™ Party Pizza® & Pizza Rolls™ Snacks

Paper Products
Productos de Papel

- Kleenex® Facial Tissues
  o Kleenex® Mainline flats (160 ct., 195 ct., 230 ct. and multipacks)
  o Kleenex® Ultra Multipacks
  o Kleenex® Anti-Viral
- Scott™ Bath Tissue
- Scott® Paper Towels
- Scott Naturals™ Flushable Cleansing Cloths

Food Storage
Contenedores para Alimentos

- Ziploc® brand Big Bags XL (4 ct.)
- Ziploc® brand Freezer Bags
- Ziploc® brand Smart Snap Containers
- Ziploc® brand Storage Bags
- Ziploc® brand Twist ‘n Loc® Containers
- Ziploc® brand VersaGlass® Containers
- Ziploc® brand Vacuum Freezer System
- Ziploc® brand Zip ‘n Steam™ Bags

School & Office Supplies
Artículos para Escuela y Oficina

- Boise Polaris® Paper
Participation in the Box Tops for Education program may vary among individual products and package sizes. © General Mills

**SNACKS & JUICES**

- Betty Crocker™ Fruit Flavored Snacks
- Bugles™
- Cascadian Farm™ Granola Bars
- Cereal Treat Bars
- Cheerios™ Snack Mix
- Chex Mix™
- Fiber One™
- Brownies
- Cookies
- Streusel
- Food Should Taste Good™
- Food Should Taste Good™ Tortilla & Kettle Cooked Chips
- Gardetto’s® Snacks
- LARABAR™ (multipacks)
- ALT™
- Uber™
- LARABAR™
- RENOLLA Grain Free Granola
- Mott's® Applesauce products
- Mott's® Juice
- Mott's® Medleys Fruit Flavored Snacks
- Nature Valley™ Bars
- Nature Valley™ Granola Bites
- Nature Valley™ Protein Soft Baked Granola Bites
- Pillsbury™ Baguette Chips
- Ocean Spray® Fruit Flavored Snacks

**REFRIGERATED & DAIRY**

- Alpine Lace® Pre-Sliced Deli Cheese
- Kozy Shack® Pudding
- Land O’Lakes® Cheese Products
- Chunk Cheese varieties
- Pre-Sliced Deli Cheese
- Land O’Lakes® Fresh Buttery Taste® Spread (Sticks and tubs)
- Land O’Lakes® Margarine (Sticks and Tubs)
- Land O’Lakes® Sauté Express® Sauté Starter
- Land O’Lakes® Stick Butter or Spreadable Butter Products
- Pillsbury® Crescents
- Pillsbury® Grands! Biscuits
- Pillsbury® Pizza Crust
- Pillsbury® Melts
- Pillsbury® Cookies
- Ready to Bake™
- Refrigerated
- Pillsbury® Cinnamon Rolls
- Yoplait®
- Yoplait® Go-GURT® and Simply... Go-GURT®
- Yoplait® Light & Original Fridge Packs (6 ct.)
- Yoplait® Kids Multipack
- Yoplait® Trix Multipack

**MEALS & SIDES**

- Betty Crocker™ Bowl Appetit
- Betty Crocker™ Hamburger, Chicken & Tuna Helpers
- Betty Crocker™ Helper Complete Meals
- Betty Crocker™ Specialty Potatoes & Potato Buds
- Betty Crocker™ Suddenly Salad
- Green Giant® Canned Vegetables
- Green Giant® Veggie Blend-Ins
- Old El Paso™ Bold Stand n' Stuff Shells
- Old El Paso™ Dinner Kits
- Old El Paso™ Rice & Beans
- Old El Paso™ Shells & Seasonings
- Old El Paso™ Soft Tortilla Taco Boats
- Old El Paso™ Stand n' Stuff Shells
- Progresso® Panko
- Progresso® Bread Crumb Mixers™
- Progresso® Soup
- Progresso® Broth

**WASTE BAGS**

- Hefty® Blackout Tall Kitchen Drawstring Bags
- Hefty® Cinch Sac Large Trash Bags and Lawn & Leaf Bags
- Hefty® Easy Flaps® Tall Kitchen Bags and Large Trash Bags
- Hefty® OdorBlock® Tall Kitchen Drawstring Bags
- Hefty® Renew® Tall Kitchen Bags and Trash Bags
- Hefty® SteelSak® Trash Bags
- Hefty® Twist Tie Tall Kitchen Bags and Trash and Lawn & Leaf Bags
- Hefty® Ultimate
- Hefty® Ultra Flex® Trash Bags

**TABLEWARE**

- Hefty® Deluxe™ Plates and Platters
- Hefty® Easy Grip® Cups
- Hefty® Everyday™ Cups
- Hefty® Everyday™ Soak Proof Plates and Bowls
- Hefty® Printed Cups
- Hefty® Style Plates
- Kleenex® Dinner Napkins (50 ct.)

- Green Giant™ Fresh Vegetables
- Green Giant™ Fresh Fruit
- Green Giant™ Fresh Herbs

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YOUR AGE BY CHOCOLATE MATH in 2015

1. First of all, pick the number of times a week that you would like to have chocolate (more than once but less than 10).

2. Multiply this number by 2 (just to be bold).

3. Add 5.

4. Multiply it by 50.

5. If you have already had your birthday this year, add 1765.
   If you haven't, add 1764.

6. Now subtract the four digit year that you were born.
You should have a three digit number.

The first digit was your original number (i.e., how many times you want to have chocolate each week).

The next two numbers are

YOUR AGE!

(Oh YES, it is!!!!!)

If math puzzles interest you, try to figure out how it works and then change the directions so that you have a formula that will work in 2016.