Families Enjoy Florentijn Hofman’s Duck

Almost as enjoyable as visiting the 40-foot art installation at Point State Park is watching the children explore all the photos of themselves and their teachers with the enormous duck. There’s still time to share your favorite photo by sending it to Miss Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu.

As we prepare for our unit on Birds & Flight, we encourage you to share family photos from your experiences with real birds or other aspects of flight. Be creative!

November / December Dates (Remember to Check the Interactive Web Calendar TOO)

Sunday, November 3rd – Daylight Savings Time Ends – Turn Clocks BACK One Hour

Thursday, November 14th from 6-8pm - Shopping Night at Ten Thousand Villages Raising 10% of Sales for Enhancing our Library

Tuesday, November 12th – Run for the Hungry (See Article for Details) – Rain Date 11/14

Friday Afternoon, November 15th - Parent Teacher Conferences for 4’s and K Regular School Schedule in the Morning

NO SCHOOL – Friday, November 22nd – Parent Teacher Conferences for All Ages

No School for Children – November 27th through December 1st – Happy Thanksgiving!!

Tuesday, December 3rd – Extended Morning 4’s Open House 12-1pm

Thursday, December 5th – Extended Morning 3’s Open House 12-1pm

Friday Afternoon, December 6th - Parent Teacher Conferences for 3’s
Fall Open House Events

On October 9th and 16th, our children shared favorite learning experiences with their families. Siblings, parents, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and friends shared the children’s excitement as they confidently demonstrated our favorite routines and activities. Thanks for taking the time to engage in the experience with us! Remember that you can learn about the children’s daily activities by reading the web message that their teachers send electronically each day. Talking about the day’s highlights helps the children reflect on their learning and affords families the chance to enhance and extend it.
Family Social Organization Events

The FSO is off to a great start for the school year! We began the year with a CMU playground play date after school, where over 100 participants enjoyed a beautiful day hanging out with friends, eating lunch, and playing together on the Children's School's new playground. We look forward to hosting many Friday play dates after school on warm Fridays!

On October 11, CMU families also participated in Frick Environmental Center's Annual "Bump in the Night" program. 35 CMU participants had a chance to carve pumpkins, roast marshmallows, meet a nocturnal animal, go on a night hike, enjoy cookies and hot chocolate, and participate in a highly entertaining sing-a-long. It was the perfect way to get in the Halloween spirit!

On October 18, over 60 participants from the 3’s group traveled to Reilly's Summer Seat Farm, and enjoyed a beautiful Fall day complete with a hay ride, pumpkin-picking, a trip through a corn maze, a walk through a storybook forest, and a chance to get to know each other! Special thanks to Alexis Tuckfelt and Bethany Criswell for arranging such a fun morning.

We have a fun year of programs scheduled and look forward to seeing many of you at upcoming events! If you have an idea for an event, would like to give feedback, or are interested in being on the FSO committee, please contact Julie Paris, Amee Chaudry, or Maggie Rosenblum.
Family Spotlight: Guatemala to Pittsburgh

We are the Sanchez family! Carlos (dad), Maria (mom), Carlos A. (PM4’s), Santiago (PM3’s) and Emma (10 months).

Carlos and I are from Guatemala and moved to Columbus, Ohio where young Carlos was born in June of 2009. When he was one week old, we moved once again to Cincinnati, Ohio so dad could continue his cardiology training; and in the summer of 2010, our family welcomed a little boy and Carlos’ best buddy, Santiago. After three wonderful years in Cincinnati, we moved to Pittsburgh and we couldn't be happier. It is a beautiful city with tons of things to do and very welcoming people. We also became a family of five when we welcomed Emma, who was born last December.

We feel very blessed to be part of The Children's School. Carlos is a child who loves learning new things, always asking how things work and WHY. He really enjoys the time at school were he gets to explore and learn new things. After all the stories and all the things Carlos shared with us at home about school, Santiago couldn't wait for his turn to be part of The Children's School. He is learning so much and is eager to learn more and more. They both come to school with the biggest smiles and we love the family time when they share all of what they did at school that day. For that we are very thankful and blessed!

November Web Artists

3’s Friends: Sahil C., Asher G., Jackie L., Roxie L., and Phoebe M.
4’s Friends: Andres F., Tripp F., MinSeo K., Minwoo L., and Jane S.
Kindergarten Friends: Mae B., Boden M., and Lexi S.
Run for the Hungry

After Amee Chaudry (Sahil's mom, Blue Room) ran the Nike Women’s Half Marathon to raise funds and awareness for blood cancers, her older son, Kabir expressed an interest in participating. Amee then read an article about childhood hunger and food insecurity in America and she recognized an opportunity to involve her children in helping others in our community. Every year, the Children’s School supports CMU’s annual Food Drive, which benefits the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank. When Kabir was in our Kindergarten, Amee organized a school Run For the Hungry in conjunction with the food drive and our donations came in 2nd campus-wide. The idea is for families to sponsor the children with non-perishable food items or cash donations for the laps they run as a team around the track. This year, the children will run on Tuesday, November 12th at the times listed below, with a rain date on Thursday the 14th. Parents and siblings are welcome to come cheer for the children. In fact, we encourage you to bring cheer signs and/or banners! Then watch for email notification of the lap totals to help you determine your donation amount. Please make all donations by November 15th so that we can take them to the campus Cans Across the Cut event on November 18th.

11:00am AM Preschoolers not in Extended AM 12:30pm Extended AM Preschoolers
11:30am Kindergartners 2:45pm PM Preschoolers

If you plan to attend the event, please use street parking or the garage off of Forbes Ave. Please contact Amee at amee.chaudry@stern.nyu.edu, if you would like to help with the event.

For more information on how to talk to your child about childhood hunger, check out the “Growing Hope Against Hunger” series at http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/food.

Giant Eagle Apples for 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, 2014, 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.

International Hosting Opportunity

In late January, the Children’s School will be hosting 3 undergraduate students from Duksung Women’s University in Seoul, South Korea for an International Practicum Program. A total of 12 Early Childhood Education students will be in Pittsburgh to for practicum experiences at our school, Falk, Carlow, or Pitt’s University Child Development Center. To help the students experience family life in Pittsburgh, we are recruiting two families who live close to the university to provide housing and some meals for the practicum students, with tentative dates from Sunday, January 19th through Sunday, February 2nd. Proximity to CMU is essential so that the students can use public transportation or rides from teachers to get to and from school. Please contact Dr. Carver at sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu if you are interested in this hosting opportunity.
Committee News

• There will be orientation meetings of the **Library Committee** on November 4\textsuperscript{th} at 9:00 am and at 12:45 pm. Please come if you are interested in helping with our library’s database and catalogue system and with simple re-filing and locating books for our teachers.

• Our Barnes & Noble Book Fair will be held on December 7\textsuperscript{th} at the Waterfront store from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm. We held a **Book Fair Committee** meeting on October 30\textsuperscript{th} and we discussed activities and group events to be held at the fair. We are also developing a volunteer schedule for that day. Please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu if you are interested in helping with the Book Fair.

• The **FSO Committee** has been planning many great events. If you would like to contribute, we are having a meeting on November 6\textsuperscript{th} at 9 am. Julie Paris has a great description of some of the recently sponsored FSO events in this newsletter.

• We are working on developing special projects for the **Gardening**, **Sewing**, and **Repair Committees**. More information concerning these groups will be coming in the following weeks.

Ten Thousand Villages

Shop at Ten Thousand Villages on November 14\textsuperscript{th} from 6-8 pm and a percentage of your purchase will be donated towards enhancing our school library. 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 the Ten Thousand Villages web site at http://www.tenthousandvillages.com/home.php.

Interactive Calendar on our Web Site

**Have you seen the new Interactive Calendar on The Children’s School Website?**
When you visit The Children’s School website, [http://www.psy.cmu.edu/cs/](http://www.psy.cmu.edu/cs/), you may have noticed a Quicklink entitled, “Interactive Calendar”. This new feature contains the most up to date information on all events occurring at the Children’s School, as well as community events that may be of interest to our Children’s School families. When you visit the Interactive Calendar, be sure to click on the individual listings on each date to learn more details about each event. Check often because we add FSO events and other pertinent community events as they become available.

October FundRaising

• Our **Benefit Dinner at Mad Mex** was well attended by current Children’s School families, as well as a few alumni. The event added $1,400 to our Scholarship Fund!

• The Children’s School participated in the **Pittsburgh Gives** Day of Giving. Children’s School families and alumni donated funds that were matched by The Pittsburgh Foundation totaling $2,700. Thank you to everyone who contributed!
Fall Parent / Teacher Conferences

The fall conferences are great opportunities for the parents and teacher to discuss their views of each child’s development. This year, parent conferences are being conducted primarily on Friday afternoon, November 15th (4’s and K), Friday, November 22nd (all ages), and Friday afternoon, December 6th (3’s). Specific schedules are included with this newsletter. Please remember to call Ms. Drash to reserve your particular conference time.

At the Children’s School, our conferences are structured by the developmental objectives that are the focus of our program design. For the fall conference, teachers of three year olds will emphasize the first three domains of development and teachers of four year olds will emphasize four, while kindergarten teachers will cover all six domains. The primary reason for this difference in emphasis is that the preschoolers are in school for less than half as much time as the kindergartners and typically require a longer period of adjustment to the school environment and routine.

- Self-Esteem and Independence
- Interaction and Cooperation
- Communication
- Physical Capabilities / Health & Safety
- Discovery and Exploration
- Artistic Expression and Appreciation

We encourage parents to prepare for their child(ren)’s conference(s) by considering the progress they have noted, particularly in the context of family discussions of the daily classroom web page updates. One strategy is to identify one adjective to describe your child in each of the areas that will be discussed. Another is to recall one prototypical anecdote for each category. A third is to consider the school activities and events related to each area that your child has discussed with you. Finally, you might specify one goal related to each domain that you would like to see your child achieve during the next six months. This year, we invited you to also share your view of your child’s development by completing two Ages & Stages Questionnaires, so this input may also guide your conference discussion. Sharing your views with your child(ren)’s teacher(s) facilitates productive dialogue about the ways that your child is progressing in both home and school environments. It's always interesting to see the parallels that exist between the two contexts, as well as the distinct differences that are often evident.

The conference dialogue will help parents to choose the next school for their child so that its program will best match the child and family. We have posted Open House information for other schools on a bulletin board outside the office for your convenience. In addition to the conference opportunity, Dr. Carver is available to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about your child’s development or about our program. We are privileged that you have entrusted your children to us and look forward to our continued partnership in their education.

Recommendations for Elementary Schools

Many families are working on school applications for next year. If any require a recommendation from the Children’s School, please obtain a Request for Release of Student Records form from Miss Hancock (lh37@andrew.cmu.edu or 412-268-2198). Please send the completed form along with your request to Miss Hancock. Depending on the timing, we will either send your child’s Fall conference report to the school(s) of your choice or prepare an updated version in January.
School Choices Discussion

If you missed the October 18th Staff / Parent Discussion on Making School Choices, you can find the handouts on the Children’s School web site in the “For Parents” section. Remember to Focus on the MATCH between your child, your family, and the school rather than seeking an absolute best choice (i.e., one school that’s best for all children in all families). Take a BROAD, LONG-TERM VIEW including your priorities for future years’ programs as well as other children in the family so that you can avoid multiple school changes and placements of siblings in too many different schools.

Early Literacy Conference

On Friday, October 11th, Mrs. Blizman and Miss Hancock attended the Friedberg-Segel Early Literacy Conference at the Fred Rogers Center at St. Vincent College. Nancy Tarshis, Supervisor of Speech and Language Services at the Children’s Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center at Einstein College of Medicine, presented the keynote address entitled, “Language, Social Cognition, and Play: Teaching Early Learners to Read the Room”. She discussed “the many important facets of development that underlie play and language in preschool and early elementary children.” Ms. Tarshis cited research on the importance of pretend play for developing executive function, self-regulation, and literacy skills as building blocks for success in school and life. Following the keynote, Ms. Tarshis continued discussing the value of promoting play in the classroom and discussed ways to include and support dramatic play as an alternative to screen time and paper & pencil based tasks. She stressed the importance of educating families and schools to make time for play every day. Her message affirmed our Children’s School philosophy.

Matt Phelan, children’s author and illustrator, also provided a session on his experience working with author Jeanne Birdsall to illustrate the book, “Flora’s Very Windy Day”. He provided insight into the process of creating the visual appearance of the characters and a world that existed only in the author’s mind and manuscript. His humorous presentation, coupled with the delightful drawings from the book, rounded out a very informative day of learning and networking with other early childhood professionals from the region.

Birds & Flight

Exploring Birds & Flight affords many opportunities for children to practice the executive function, self-regulation, and literacy skills mentioned above as central foundations for children’s learning. The essence of bird-watching is observation, noticing the small details that distinguish between birds and paying attention to the birds’ calls, location, behavior, nests, etc. so that you can begin to understand why you see certain ones in certain places at certain times, but not others. Bird-watching also requires patience, stillness, and quiet, all qualities that are challenging for young children to acquire but rewarding in terms of bird sightings and useful for calming and collecting oneself in many other situations. To add literacy elements to the experience, encourage children to use field guides to help identify birds, as well as to keep a journal of their observations or start a “life list” of birds.
Undergraduate Spotlight

Hi, I am Marisa Wiltsie, a senior psychology major at CMU. After graduating, I plan to continue my work with children as a school counselor, or possibly as a grade school teacher. So, the opportunity to work directly with children is very valuable. I have spent time in the Children’s School for research, and I have had experience through some of Dr. Carver’s college courses. However, this year, actually working in the Children’s School, I get the opportunity to interact more closely with the children. Being able to be involved in their daily activities, rather than observing as an outsider, makes all of the theories I have been learning about in my psychology classes that much more accessible and real. Also, seeing in practice the solutions and techniques that the teachers I work with use to help the friends solve disputes or encourage them to try something for the first time is more valuable than anything I could get from a textbook.

In addition to being a wonderful learning experience for me, getting to spend time at the Children’s School is an absolute treat! It is energizing to see the creativity and passion with which the friends go about their days. I could not think of a better way to start the day than with the smiling faces of all of the friends as they come to school! Spending time with the friends is a nice way to exercise my inner child. After all, how often do college students get the chance to play in the sand box or with some play dough? I look forward to continuing to get to know all of the friends and hope that I can help teach them important lessons, just as they have been teaching me.

Undergraduate Research

Erik Thiessen’s Developmental Research Methods students are preparing their final projects for the semester. Though the research procedures are still being finalized, the topics are listed below. Families whose children participate will receive fuller parent descriptions via the child’s backpack. Everyone can read the study descriptions on the Research Bulletin Board outside the Children’s School Office. Notice the interesting range of important topics in early childhood development!

The impact of pretend play re-enactment of stories on children’s empathy for the characters (The Knuffle Bunny Game, AM 4’s and K)

The impact of ownership understanding on sharing (The Playdough Game, PM 3’s and K)

The impact of adult encouragement on task persistence in the face of possible and impossible goals (The Water Challenge, AM 4’s)

The impact of toy exposure and adult modeling on perception of gender stereotypes (The Toy Game, AM 4’s and K)
Research Spotlight

The Look Alike Game

This game involves pictures of novel bug-like creatures. The top animal has lots of features in common with one of the animals on the bottom of the picture (for example, body, tail, and wavy ‘fingers’) and only one feature in common with the other animal on the bottom (can you find it? here is a hint: look at the top of the antennae!). Researcher Dr. Anna Fisher is interested in how children perceive such images. Specifically, she would like to know whether children always judge two pictures with multiple features in common as looking more similar, or whether single features can sometimes determine whether two things looks similar. The research involves novel objects to eliminate the possibility that factors other than feature overlap would influence children’s judgments (prior knowledge of object names, for example).

The Discovery Game: Ocean

Audrey Kittredge, a post-doctoral researcher working with Dr. David Klahr, is comparing the effect of different teaching styles on children’s goal-directed search. During the Discovery Game, the child is asked to find animals in an ocean (pictured below) and put them in a special bag. Each child will get a specific kind of instruction: (1) instruction that simply describes the goal of the game, (2) instruction that additionally demonstrates one way to find animals, (3) instruction that demonstrates one way to find animals while reminding the child that there could be many other ways to find animals, or (4) instruction that simply tells the child there could be many ways of finding animals. Depending on how much the child searches, s/he might discover just one hiding location (e.g. finding fish under sea-shells) or multiple hiding locations (e.g. finding fish under sea-shells and starfish under logs). After exploring the ocean, a friendly puppet (pictured below) will ask children questions about the game. Will the instructions that children hear impact how much they explore and how many animals they find? The results of this research may reveal the ability of different instructional techniques to encourage independent exploration in early childhood. This, in turn, would allow educators to choose curricula and instructional techniques in a more informed manner.
Research Spotlight, continued …

The Fraction Identification Game

Teachers face two challenges when teaching a new concept to their students. If the new concept is either intimidatingly unfamiliar or uninteresting, students may fail to apply their mental resources to the task of learning it. To overcome these challenges, teachers may present new concepts in “concrete” forms that convey extra details beyond the abstract core. Some details convey real-world information that is relevant to the concept to render it more familiar, which, in turn, can allow students to apply their prior knowledge to the learning task. For instance, fractions are often depicted as slices of pizza, which may allow children to access prior knowledge, like the fact that slices become smaller as the pizza is divided to more slices. Alternately, details that are perceptually rich (e.g., bright colors) can engage students' attention and render the concept more interesting. However, this approach may come at a cost: The students’ mental representations of the concept can become cluttered with these details, making it hard to recognize and interpret the concept in new situations that are superficially distinct from the situations in which they were learned. The purpose of Dr. Anna Fisher and graduate student Layla Unger’s study is to test the impact of these types of details when they are varied in a controlled and independent manner. In this study, children are taught how to identify fractions based on the total number of parts into which a whole is divided, and the number of parts within this whole that are highlighted. Instruction materials appear in one of four levels of concreteness that conveys a specific amount of real-world and/or perceptual detail (see example below). The impact of each level of concreteness on a subsequent test of learning is then assessed.

Coming Soon … Near InfraRed Spectroscopy (NIRS)

Carnegie Mellon researchers interested in the neurological mechanisms underlying developmental change have acquired the technology for functional NIRS studies. NIRS is a non-invasive brain imaging method based on measures of light absorption (similar to pulse-oximetry). The portable NIRS apparatus allows subjects to move freely during the research tasks so it can be used with even very young children. The NIRS method poses minimal risk to children, but it is not currently included in the Children’s School permission form, so studies involving NIRS will require additional permission from parents. Watch for specifics of new studies in 2014!
Director’s Corner: Potential New Paths

The second step in learning *The Art of Possibility*, according to Zander and Zander (2000) is to move beyond the constraints of our world of measurement and “Step into the Universe of Possibility.” In the world of education, excessive focus on assessments, grades, norms and comparisons creates an emphasis on competition between children, classes, schools, etc. as each strives for the highest rank in a system that restricts the label of “success” for the top few. Setting measurement aside opens the possibilities of each one’s potential so that we can imagine what can be. This stance allows us to use the first practice to invent a positive and productive narrative. Zander and Zander suggest that, “We decide that the essence of a child is joy, and joy she is. Our small business attracts the label, ‘The Can-Do Company,’ and that is exactly who we are.” Basically this practice is about how we think about the people and situations we encounter. By orienting ourselves to the abundant possibilities, we can risk being cooperative, including everyone, and together being the best we can be.

Keith Baker’s children’s book “L, M, N, O, peas” is “for pea-ple everywhere – young and old, large and small, green and round.” The book includes an alphabet of characters (all represented by peas) contributing their talents to the world. The acrobats, artists, and astronauts are all valued, as are the quilters and quarterbacks, the scientists, swimmers, and sailors. Both the text and the illustrations emphasize the uniqueness of each pea character, and the book ends with an invitation to consider, “Who are you?” Helping each other identify ourselves as helpers, listeners, friends, explorers, etc. will help each of us live into the possibilities that fit our unique potential.

The third practice “Give Yourself and Others an A” starts from an affirmation that everyone has potential and focuses all the energy on helping each individual to shine. By assigning an A grade at the outset, we can then seek meaningful ways to support each person’s progress. When the inevitable mistakes occur, we respond with openness to learning from them. The authors suggest an initial reaction of, “How fascinating!”, which then prompts positive and proactive problem solving.

One of the books we discovered while reading The Art of Possibility, “You Are My I Love You” (MaryAnn Cusimano Love, 2001), has become a staff favorite! The poetic book starts with, “I am your parent; you are my child. I am your quiet place; you are my wild.” The book continues in similar fashion to highlight the ways that parent and child could view each other’s qualities as valuable contributions along life’s journey, rather than as nuisances, weaknesses or failures. As I continue to parent an adult child and prepare to become a grandparent, I particularly appreciate the line, “I am your way home; you are my new path.” While supporting my daughter’s choices has led me to learning about different lifestyles, foods, and birthing practices, I also find that my openness to doing so enables her to seek connections with our family traditions going back generations. When parenting challenges you, try to free yourself from expectations and comparisons so you can take a fresh look at your child and at the situation. Look for the possibilities open to you, be bold in exploring them, and appreciate the resulting growth in both you and your child.