Pumpkin Patch from FMS

A HUGE thank-you to CMU’s Facilities Management Services (FMS) for donating 100 pumpkins to the Children’s School. Special thanks to FMS volunteers Chris, Shannon, Rachel, and Steve for turning our playground into a Pumpkin Patch!! The children had a marvelous time searching through the playground patch to pick their perfect pumpkin!

Classes used the pumpkins in many ways, including weighing and measuring them, rolling and spinning them, and decorating them, all before sending them home for families to enjoy.

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

**Food Bank Donations** – November 1\textsuperscript{st} through 11\textsuperscript{th}

Educator / Parent Discussion re: School Choice (child care provided)
Wednesday, Nov 2\textsuperscript{nd} from 4:30-6:00pm or Friday, Nov 4\textsuperscript{th} from 9:30-11:00am

Sunday, November 6\textsuperscript{th} – Daylight Saving Time Ends – Turn Clocks **BACK** One Hour

**No School on Friday, November 11\textsuperscript{th} - Conference Preparation Day for Educators**

Thursday, November 17\textsuperscript{th} from 6-8pm - Shopping Night at Ten Thousand Villages
Raising 10% of sales for funding professional performances during our Theatre Unit

No School for Children – November 23\textsuperscript{rd} through November 27\textsuperscript{th} – **Happy Thanksgiving!!**
Wear a Hat for Cancer

On October 6th, the Children’s School participated in the Wear A Hat for Cancer Campaign benefitting the Cancer and Blood Auxiliary of the Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh Foundation. Everyone was encouraged to wear a hat to school and we accepted donations to help with the campaign. The staff and families of the Children’s School collected $90. Thank you to alumni parent, Brooke Mullin, for bringing this event to our attention.

Theatre Opportunities for Families

Pittsburgh offers multiple venues for young children to experience quality theatre performances in environments that are sensitive to the facts that their attention spans are limited and they are just learning how to be polite audience members.

“The Citizens Bank Children’s Theater Series showcases imagination, creativity and fun from around the world (https://trustarts.org/pct_home/events/series/childrens-theater-series/).” The Pittsburgh Musical Theater sponsors a Saturday series of informal performances that are free for children and only $3 for teens and adults. See their facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/PittsburghMusicalTheatersTalesAndTreats/.

“The students of the Pre-College and Transitions programs run their own children's theater company. They produce 30 minute shows for community children in our own Gargaro theater. The students serve as the writers, directors, choreographers, designers and technical staff as well as perform on stage in these shows.”

Keep Saving Box Tops

Help us to reach our Box Tops goal of $1,000 for 2016-17! Our November 2016 Box Tops for Education submission totaled $78.50. Since 2012, the Children’s School has earned over $700 via the Box Tops for Education Program. Our next Box Tops submission will be in February 2017.

Box Tops for Education has helped America’s schools earn over $600 million since 1996. You can earn cash for CMU Children’s School by clipping Box Tops coupons from hundreds of participating products. Box Tops also offers easy ways to earn even more cash online at http://www.boxtops4education.com/.
November Gallery Features

3’s Friends: Max C., Lillian H., Emeline K., and Oliver S.

4’s Friends: Addison A., Alisa B., Conor H., and Dean R.

Kindergarten Friends: Malena F., Carlos O., and Grace S.

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.

Wednesday, November 2, 2016 from 4:30-6:00pm - Connan Room of the University Center
  • Child Care will be provided for children of all ages in the Red Room.

Friday, November 4, 2016 from 9:30–11:00am - 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.

NOTE: The Pittsburgh Public School birthday cutoff is September 30, 2017. In other words, a child who turns 5 by September 30th is eligible for kindergarten (or 6 by September 30th for 1st grade).

Cans Across the Cut

The Carnegie Mellon University’s Staff Council Annual Food Drive is being held from November 1st through 14th this year. The most needed items are low sugar, high fiber cereal, tuna or salmon packed in water, canned fruit packed in 100% juice or water, low sodium canned vegetables, canned beans, peanut butter, hand soap and other toiletries, toilet paper, facial tissue, laundry detergent, and diapers. If you wish to donate non-perishable food items during this time period, please send them with your child or bring them to our office. On Monday, November 14th, the children will participate in “Cans Across the Cut”, a yearly event in which University teams compete to see which groups can place the most donated food items in a line across campus. Cash or check donations (made out to the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank) are also accepted.

Mark Your Calendar for Shopping Night

Need a unique gift for someone special? You can shop and support the Children’s School’s new Make Shop at the same time!! Join us at Ten Thousand Villages in Squirrel Hill on November 17th from 6-8 pm and a percentage of your purchase will be donated towards our exploration of THEATRE. Your Holiday gifts can give three times - to the recipient, the artisan, and CMU Children’s School!

Visit http://www.tenthousandvillages.com/ to learn more about this wonderful store located on Forbes Avenue in Squirrel Hill.
Family Committee News

• The Library Committee met on October 5th and discussed reviewing books for possible purchase for the Children’s School library. This year, we are primarily looking at books that address three themes – gender fluidity, character education, and developmentally appropriate responses to gun play. Members took books home to review with their children so we can start purchasing appropriate texts for our library. Many of the books approved by the committee will be available to purchase for the school at our Barnes and Noble Book Fair on December 3rd, and the profits from the Book Fair will be used to buy other volumes. If you have suggestions for books to purchase or would like to review books with your child, please e-mail Maggie Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu.
• The Book Fair Committee meetings will be held on November 1st at 9 am and 12:45 pm. Please feel free to join us as we discuss plans for the Book Fair.
• Members of the Sewing Committee met on October 24th. As the Whole School theme is Theatre this year, we have a lot of teacher requests for costumes, etc. We also need slip covers made for our couches and window seats. If you are interested in working on some sewing projects for us, please contact Maggie Rosenblum. We will supply all the material!
• A big Thank You to the members of the Repair Committee who have been responding so promptly to our requests for help! Also thanks to the families who are contributing to our Monthly Appreciation Event meals. The teachers are greatly enjoying the dishes provided!
• Thanks to all the volunteers for our Garden Committee and End-of-the-Year Celebration Committee. Watch for notices about when the committee work will begin. It is never too late to join a committee – just contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu!

National Family Volunteer Day

Saturday, November 19th is Family Volunteer Day, “a day of service that celebrates the power of families who work together to support their communities and neighborhoods. Volunteering is a great way for children and adults to make new friends, develop compassion for their neighbors, and even pick up a new skill or two! Points of Light created the day 25 years ago to showcase the benefits of family volunteering and to provide opportunities for families to help create supportive environments in their communities (http://www.pointsoflight.org/signature-events/family-volunteer-day).” Volunteering is one way to help our children learn to be givers. As Fred Rogers said, “As different as we are from one another, as unique as each one of us is, we are much more the same than we are different. That may be the most essential message of all, as we help our children grow toward being caring, compassionate, and charitable adults.”

Save the Date – Children’s School Book Fair

The Children’s School Barnes & Noble Book Fair is being held on December 3rd from 10am until 2pm at the Waterfront store. There will be music, activities, and fun for the whole family. Also, be on the lookout for a volunteer signup sheet for the day of the Fair. We hope to see you all there! Also, you will find a flyer with this newsletter for pre-ordering a Cheesecake Factory cheesecake to pick up at our Book Fair. In addition to the cheesecakes on the flyer, Godiva Chocolate cheesecakes are available. The cheesecakes are $40 a piece and the Sweet Street Apple Crumb Pie is $35. Simply return your order form with payment to the office by November 21st.
Family Social Organization Fun

On Sunday, October 9th, participating families met at Shenot Farm to enjoy fresh apples, a hayride, and pumpkin picking.

We met on Sunday, October 23rd to imagine and create fall art at Hatch Studio, a children’s art space. Shannon Merenstein and her staff welcomed our families and gave us a wonderful experience. Families enjoyed listening to the story *Room On a Broom*, tinkered with pumpkins, and made bracelets to wear home. If you would like a creative-building experience for your child, don’t hesitate to check out Hatch Studio! [http://www.hatchpgh.com/](http://www.hatchpgh.com/)

We hope for you to join the fun in November!
Family Social Organization – You Are Invited!!

Grownups, take some time out for fun! Meet and mingle with other parents at Phipps Conservatory (https://phipps.conservatory.org/calendar/detail/party-in-the-tropics) on Friday, November 4th from 7-11pm for a Parents’ Night Out - Party in the Tropics! Enjoy savory eats, cocktails, and the music of a live DJ in the Tropical Forest Conservatory. Admission is free with Phipps membership, $15 for non-members. Must be 21+. RSVP to Jay Miller at jaymiller01@gmail.com.

Be a part of a Children’s School November tradition: Family Bowling! Come to Arsenal Lanes (http://www.arsenalbowl.com/) in Lawrenceville on Friday, November 11th at 11:00am. $8 per person. This is a NO SCHOOL day. Please RSVP by Friday November 4th to Jessica Simms at jwo360@hotmail.com.

Join friends of the Children’s School at the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden on Sunday, November 20th, 10am-12pm for a morning exploring the unique setting of the garden and discovering the life that inhabits it! There is a scavenger hunt activity available to encourage exploration for all ages! No RSVP required, we hope to see you there! Adults $9, Children $6, Children under 3 Free! http://pittsburghbotanicgarden.org/

Please join the FSO for a kids Yoga class on Saturday November 26th from 12:00-12:45pm. Come to Amazing Yoga Oakmont located at 636 Allegheny River Blvd., Oakmont, PA 15139 for an afternoon of movement and meditation. We will discuss breathing techniques, meditation, and yoga in a fun and understandable way. The cost of this event is free!! Space is limited so please reserve your spot! Contact Sarah Hummel at shummel1010@gmail.com or 412-334-2520. Namaste.

So many fun things to do in our great city during the month of November! Check out these city events!

• For a memorable skating experience visit The Rink at PPG Place or the Schenley Skating Rink. The Rink at PPG Place opens November 18th and remains open through February. Adults $8, Children $7. http://www.ppgplace.com/directory/the-rink/ The Schenley Skating Rink opens mid-November and is located at Overlook Drive, Schenley Park 15213. Adults $5, Children $3. http://pittsburghpa.gov/citiparks/schenley-skating-rink

• Want to learn more about the Steel City? Then head over to the Heinz History Center in the Strip District! Current exhibits include From the Ferris Wheel to the Big Mac, Pittsburgh: A Tradition of Innovation, Mister Roger’s Neighborhood, Pixburgh: A Photographic Experience, and the interactive Kidsburgh. Adults $16, Children 5 and under are Free! http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/

• And don’t forget to stop by Phipps this November, where there’s something for everyone! Come see the Fall and Winter Flower Shows, the Garden Railroad (200 Years of Pittsburgh!), or plan a date night dinner during one of the Pop-Up Pix Fixe. https://phipps.conservatory.org/exhibits-and-events/next-month/

If you would like to help plan events, please contact Sara Torretti (storretti@hotmail.com) or Jay Miller (jaymiller01@gmail.com) parents of Isaac Miller (K).
Family Spotlight: **We had a good day!**

Lisa and Jono (Jonathan) Fortier met in 1st grade at elementary school in Hampton, north of the city. In their 5th grade classroom, Lisa’s desk was behind Jono’s desk, and she would often stretch her long legs out, while he usually tucked his feet under his chair. She didn’t know it at the time, but every time she’d “bump” his feet, that made his day! They became best friends in their later high school years and dated throughout college - Lisa at Slippery Rock and Jono at Duquesne. They are excited to be celebrating their 10th anniversary in early November.

Before Eli (4 years old, afternoon Green room) and Lucy (soon to be 3, afternoon Blue room) were born, Lisa and Jono enjoyed traveling and trying new restaurants – but times have changed! One of their most memorable explorations was in 2008, when they both took a leave from their careers and travelled around the world, while working onboard a ship for the Semester at Sea program. They had memorable adventures in 10 different countries for 4 months.

Lisa has been with the Wilkinsburg School District for 14 years where she is a 5th grade teacher. She was able to take the last 3 years off from teaching, to be at home with the children but is happy to be back in the classroom where she positively impacts the lives of many students. Jono worked for Deloitte Consulting for a few years after college, but has been with UPMC in various roles over the last 11 years. His favorite position was being part of the new hospital project team where he managed the physical move of the Children’s Hospital from Oakland to Lawrenceville. He currently works part-time for the UPMC Enterprises division. Jono is extremely grateful for his current work situation, which allows him to be with Eli and Lucy when they aren’t at their favorite place – the Children’s School!

The Fortier Family lives in Regent Square and they enjoy walks around the neighborhood and frequent hikes in Frick Park. Their travels have tamed down for sure, but they enjoy visiting friends in Chicago or New York City when possible. They love all that Pittsburgh has to offer and frequently visit the museums, zoo, and as many festivals and outdoor concerts as they can.

One fun fact about Eli and Lucy’s paternal great-grandparents is that they met and fell in love on CMU’s campus (then Carnegie Tech). Jono’s grandfather was the proprietor of the Skibo Inn, a popular campus eatery, and his grandmother was taking classes on campus (while still in high school). He closed the Skibo in 1943 to join the Volunteer Officer Corp for the Army during World War II. Pictured here is Charlie taking the sign down. The original sign now hangs on the wall at Wheelfish – a neighborhood BBQ restaurant / live music venue in Ross Township - a venture that Jono and his younger brother are partners in. The namesake for the original Skibo still exists on campus in the union as the Skibo Café – recently re-done and now operated by Au Bon Pain.

Most evenings Eli and Lucy can be heard playing instruments in the family room and singing “**We had a good day, we had a good day, we had a good day, at the Children’s School……[high pitched and louder]…….OOOOLLL”** Lisa and Jono are grateful to be part of the Children’s School Family.
The Pittsburgh Alliance of University Schools (PAUS) sponsored a free lecture by “Dr. G.”, Dr. Deborah Gilboa, on Thursday, October 20, 2016 at Pitt’s Frick Fine Arts Auditorium for parents and educators from schools associated with PAUS to attend. Dr. G’s message focused on teaching children “the 3 R’s of respect, responsibility, and resilience” and then allowing children to practice these skills to develop “confidence, competence and good relationships”. She encouraged adults to give children opportunities to learn and practice “everything we want them to be able to do when they leave our homes … while they are in our homes.” She advised that children need a “more intentional little bit less of you rather than more” to “give them the skills they need to manage” their experiences as they become adults.

Attendees were invited to subscribe to www.AskDoctorG.com/join as well as to email her directly with questions. Anyone referencing the October 20th talk will receive a personal response from Dr. G. In addition, enclosed in this newsletter is Dr. G’s “Chores Chart” for ways to include your child in household responsibilities.

Some observations by attendees:
• “We really enjoyed Dr. G’s talk. Her approach is very practical and entertaining at the same time. She definitely provided us with some tips that will help us overcome some of our challenges as parents.” Jillian Jochum, current parent, Children’s School
• “I enjoyed attending the lecture by Dr. Gilboa presented in collaboration by Falk, the Children’s School and Carlow. Dr. Gilboa’s suggestions for raising confident and well-adjusted children were thoughtful and I credit both the Children’s School and Falk, two institutions that my children have attended/are attending, for beginning this discussion. I look forward to the next presentation.” Jessica Morowitz, former Children’s School parent and current Falk School parent
• “As a parent, I appreciated the clear and direct counsel Dr. G offered to help me think about how we can take action now to set our kids up for lifelong success. As a university administrator, I see first-hand the important role resilience plays in helping students navigate their college years. Dr. G helped us see that it’s never too early to start cultivating this quality in our kids. I found her advice on when your kid is ready for more responsibility and increasing autonomy to be especially helpful at my kids’ stages of development.” Gina Casalegno, parent at Carlow Campus School, CMU Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students
• “Listening to Dr. G speak was an excellent opportunity for our family to begin practically thinking about our transition to the “Older Threes” at The Children’s School next fall. Many of her practical suggestions happened to be aimed at older children; however, the over-arching concepts of her theory apply across the lifespan and empowered me as a parent to feel confident in my role as ‘expert on my child.’ Dr. G’s three R’s: Resiliency, Responsibility, and Respect are not a method but a guide that is easily malleable to one’s own context. Her approach is conscious of culture and identity so it will allow us over time to adapt it to our family’s needs. I am grateful for the opportunity to take this time to have these conversations in a conscious way. I am able to look forward with more confidence and more eager anticipation to our transition to preschool next year.” Darrah Bird, prospective parent and Children’s School alum
International Laboratory School Tour

In October, the International Association of Laboratory Schools (IALS) hosted its third international tour with educators traveling to both Toronto, Canada and to Pittsburgh. Mrs. Opferman joined the group on October 17th and 18th at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study Laboratory School in Toronto. She observed the programs for children ages 3-12 and dialogued with educators from Canada and the U.S.

“The highlight of my experience at The Jackman Institute of Child Study was observing and learning from the exceptional teachers. Exploration, creativity, curiosity, and building confidence are evident in the developmentally appropriate program. Their emphasis on inquiry-based learning allows for innovative and compelling experiences. It was exciting to connect with like-minded educators who honor each child's unique learning style and interests.” Mrs. Opferman

From the 19th through the 21st, an international group of educators explored Pittsburgh’s three laboratory schools, beginning with attending the Children’s School family open house, conducting observations at the Children’s School, Carlow’s Campus School, and Pitt’s Falk School, and joining the schools’ parents and educators at the collaboratively sponsored lecture by Dr. Deborah Gilboa. Dialogue throughout the experience focused on laboratory school leadership & innovation.
Fall Open House Events

On October 5th and 19th, 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 also send electronically each day via email. Talking about the highlights of each day helps the children reflect on their learning and affords families the chance to enhance and extend it.
More Fall Open House Events
Fall Parent / Teacher Conferences

The fall conferences are great opportunities for parents and teachers to discuss their views of each child’s development. This year, parent conferences are being conducted primarily on Friday, December 2\textsuperscript{nd} and the afternoon of Friday, December 9\textsuperscript{th}. Specific schedules will be emailed in mid-November with a request that you call Miss 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.

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

Teachers will highlight the progress they have seen in each area at school. We encourage parents to prepare for their child(ren)’s conference(s) by considering the progress they have noted at home, particularly in the context of family discussions of the daily classroom blog 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.

Earlier this year, we invited you to 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 how 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. Parents and teachers will also dialogue about strategies they each can use to support children’s growth.

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. For your convenience, we have posted Open House information for other schools on the family bulletin board across from the school library. 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. At that time, your child’s fall conference report will be sent to the school(s) of your choice.
Family Fall Fun Fest

Thanks to the CMU students from the Mortar Board Senior Honor Society who offered a fun fall family event on the Children’s School playground on the morning of October 15th. More than 80 children and adults from the Children’s School and the Cyert Center played a corn hole game, a spider jumping game, harvest bingo, and pumpkin/gourd tic tac toe, as well as doing an obstacle course and a fall leaf scavenger hunt. We used magnifying glasses to examine flint corn and tweezers to remove the hard multicolored kernels. The children also decorated pine cones with fall colored paint and pompons, as well as rolling acorns in paint to create beautiful designs. The playground climbers, wooden blocks, musical instruments, and mud kitchen were also open for play. Everyone got to snack on apple cider, apples, and pretzels provided by the Mortar Board students.

Special thanks to event planners Lisa Murphy, Jordyn Lopez, and Dr. Sharon Carver, who is the Mortar Board faculty advisor!
Undergraduate Spotlight

Every semester, students who have done well in the Principles of Child Development course and want to explore early childhood development more deeply can participate in an internship at the Children’s School. In addition to discussing the ways that their experiences relate to developmental theories, students learn observational and case study methodology and gain practical experience working with children and educators.

Interns from the “Practicum in Child Development” Course

• Aliya Blackwood is a junior Psychology major with an HCI minor in learning media. She is from Patterson, New Jersey and enjoys a variety of visual arts, including both sketching and digital. Aliya is aiming for a career in educational technology and game design.

• Lilah Buchanan is a senior Psychology major from Portland, Oregon. She is minoring in Hispanic Studies and planning a career in social work. Her enjoys serving as the volunteer coordinator for Camp Kesem, which serves children whose parents have cancer.

• Brianna Hudock is a junior Psychology major from the south hills of Pittsburgh. She plans to become a social psychology researcher, and she also enjoys improv and sketch comedy.

• Priscilla Medor is a junior Psychology major with a concentration in neuroscience. She resides in New City, New York and enjoys surrealistic art. She hopes to become a clinical psychologist.

• Chi Chi Nwankwo is a junior Psychology major from Coppell, Texas, planning a career in pediatrics. She enjoys volunteering, particularly for the 1000+ event at CMU and Project Sunshine at the Children’s Institute.

• Sydney Remson is a senior Costume Design major from Barrington, Rhode Island. She is aiming for a career in theatre, film, and arts education. In addition, she likes creative fiction and non-fiction writing.
Research Spotlight

Longitudinal Research with fNIRS

Children with permission to participate in the functional Near Infrared Spectroscopy (fNIRS) research are beginning our first longitudinal series of studies, with three sessions in the fall and three in the spring. The aim of Dr. Anna Fisher and Dr. Erik Thiessen’s project, being conducted with new graduate student Jaeah Kim is to understand how developmental changes involving increases in coordination among brain regions relate to the development of core cognitive capacities, including inhibitory control and working memory. Researchers begin by measuring brain activation in the left and right prefrontal cortex during free play to determine the child’s ‘resting state’ brain activation – in other words, brain activation in the absence of an externally prescribed goal or task. They then compare the resting state levels to those recorded during a variety of other tasks, such as the Opposites Game. This game is often used by researchers around the world to investigate the development of inhibitory control, which is one’s ability to suppress responses that are not appropriate in a given moment (such as eating cookies before dinner, answering a teacher’s question out of turn, or taking a toy that another child is playing with). In the Opposites game, children are instructed to say “day” when presented with a picture of the moon, and “night” when presented with a picture of the sun. In future sessions, children will play other games involving similar cognitive processes so that the researchers can compare the brain activation when given a challenging task to the resting state activation previously measured.

NOTE: If you would like your child to be included in this ground breaking research but have not yet signed the permission form for participation in fNIRS studies, please contact Miss Drash to have a consent form sent to you.

Undergraduate Research

Dr. Anna Fisher and Graduate Student Sandrine Girard’s Developmental Research Methods students are preparing their final projects for the semester. They are beginning to pilot test their projects on the topics 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 near the office door. Notice the interesting range of important topics in early childhood development!

- Can increased emphasis on conflict resolution in stories promote children’s sharing behavior? (The Cupcakes Game, PM 3’s, PM 4’s & K)
- Does exposure to children’s books depicting atypical gender roles decrease the strength of gender stereotyping? (The Story Game, AM 3’s and K)
- Is young children’s difficulty with false belief tasks a result of language limitations or lacking theory of mind? (The Special Object Game, AM 4’s and K)
**Director’s Corner: Outdoor Play**

“It is a happy talent to know how to play.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson  
“Play is the highest form of research.” – Albert Einstein

Free play outdoors is one of the most developmentally rich opportunities we can offer our children. Pittsburgh’s diverse parks and playgrounds afford families a myriad of venues for exploring together and enjoying each other. At the same time, outdoor free play provides children with varied challenges to foster growth in all developmental domains. For example, outdoor play helps children gain confidence in their skills and fosters initiative (Self-esteem & Independence), encourages peers to support each other’s ideas and negotiate plans (Interaction & Cooperation), provides rich topics of conversation and contexts for recording nature observations (Communication), provokes inquiry with diverse opportunities to compare, sort, and quantify (Discovery & Exploration), builds skills for controlled movement and use of tools while managing risks (Physical Capabilities / Health & Safety), and inspires children to both perceive and create beauty (Artistic Expression & Appreciation).

During November, the preschoolers will be learning about ways to have a “Healthy Mind & Body”. They’ll explore strategies for giving their minds and bodies good nutrition, exercise and rest. In addition to the obvious benefits of outdoor experiences for physical exercise, time outdoors also nourishes our minds, stimulates our senses, gives our attention and observation skills a workout, calms our nerves, and focuses our thinking, all in ways that relax both our minds and bodies. The kindergartners will be studying “Native Americans”, with an emphasis on the cultural values that emphasize reverence, respect, and humility in our relationship with nature, as well as the practices that encourage humans to live within and as a part of nature.

The National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor play cites research by Fjortoft (2004) and Burdette and Whitaker (2005) indicating that children who play outdoors regularly “become fitter and leaner, develop stronger immune systems, have lower stress levels, have more active imaginations, play more creatively, and have greater respect for themselves and others”. At the Children’s School, we have enhanced our outdoor classroom to include a wide range of interesting options for children’s play, and we are encouraging our classes to spend more time outside. We are observing increasing creativity in children’s play in our “mud kitchen” and in the complexity of the imaginative games that involve running and climbing, both when we provide props, such as fabric or costume wings, and when children use what nature provides, such as rocks, acorns, leaves, etc.

Now that the weather is turning colder, families may hesitate to venture outside. But the cold is not a good reason for healthy individuals to stay indoors. At the Children’s School, we go outside every day – except in heavy rain and unusually cold temperatures. Children simply need to have the appropriate outer garments – hats, scarves, mittens, boots, etc. In “Last Child in the Woods”, Richard Louv suggests that families ‘adopt’ a tree in your yard or nearby and then visit it regularly. Take pictures of it as it is losing leaves, when it has no leaves, when it has snow on it, and then as it buds in the spring. Rake the leaves and jump in them. Collect the leaves and do an art activity. Do a tree rubbing with crayons and paper. Compare and contrast the tree with others nearby to see which is taller, thinner, darker, smoother, etc. Encourage your child to creatively consider how else you can explore your adopted tree. We’d love to hear about and see photos of your experiences!