A Spark Grant for “White Light”

“Spark unleashes the innovative potential of Southwestern Pennsylvania to transform our region into one of the best places on earth to be a kid. Spark supports projects that connect technology to the real life experiences of children. By catalyzing projects that engage children ages birth to eight in the creative use of technology and media, spark challenges individuals, organizations, and communities to generate inventive solutions to issues and opportunities facing today’s young child.” [http://www.sproutfund.org/spark/](http://www.sproutfund.org/spark/)

Maggie Rosenblum and Brynn Flynn collaborated on a successful proposal to the Sprout Fund’s Spark Program with science teacher and artist Amanda Long, who has created “White Light” - a kinetic video sculpture composed of red, green and blue abstract animations. Amanda pilot tested White Light in our school context last March. Children can interactively experiment with multicolored shadows by moving their bodies in ways that interrupt the projected light. In the process, they may learn how additive light mixing works.

The goal of this funded project is to involve Amanda directly with Children’s School teachers and children during the upcoming Light and Color units (December in the kindergarten and March in the preschool) to create and pilot inquiry-based lesson plans designed to utilize White Light experiences to strengthen children’s development in all domains. The $15,000 grant will pay for the artist’s and teachers’ time on the project, as well as the technology for creating a portable kit so that the video sculpture can be easily transported to other early childhood centers where the lesson plans can be used to enhance their curriculum. We also plan to partner with the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh’s Outreach Program so that their school audiences can learn from White Light exploration. To get a better idea of Amanda’s artwork involving light and color, explore her portfolio online at [www.amandalong.org](http://www.amandalong.org).

**December Dates**

Thursday, December 2nd – from 12:00 to 1:00pm Extended AM Open House for 3’s Families
Saturday, December 4th – Waterfront Barnes & Noble Book Fair (children’s activities 10-12)
Monday, December 6th through Thursday, December 9th – Easter Seals Screening
Thursday, December 16th – Last Day of the Semester for 3’s and Extended Day Programs
Friday, December 17th – Last Day of the Semester for 4’s and Kindergarten Programs
No School for Children – December 18th through January 3rd

*Have a Wonderful Winter Break!!*
Family Committee News

The Library Committee appreciates the participation of fourteen families in the Usborne Books eFair. Your purchase of $700 in books yielded credit for $350 worth of free books for the school. Four of the participating families also made direct purchases of gift books for the school. We appreciate your support of our efforts to augment our library!

Imagination Playground FundRaising

To enhance our outdoor classroom during our Whole School Building Unit, we plan to purchase an Imagination Playground (which Mrs. Tomer, Mrs. McGillen, and Dr. Carver enjoyed exploring at the recent NAEYC Conference in Anaheim). Since funds for this $8,320 purchase are not included in our materials fee, we are using a variety of strategies to raise the money.

Thank you to everyone who came to Ten Thousand Villages to support our fundraiser on November 18th. The event was well attended by Children’s School families and staff as well as community members who just happened to be shopping in Squirrel Hill that evening. The net sales in the store from 6-8pm that evening were $2,159.61, so the Children’s School received $323.94 toward the purchase of the Imagination Playground!

Planning to do some online holiday shopping? Be sure to use GoodShop.com to shop on behalf of the Children’s School. A percentage of your purchase will be donated back to our school. Since beginning our GoodSearch/GoodShop relationship in late October 2009, we have raised $199.05 which is about $.50 a day for simply searching the Internet and doing your family’s regular online shopping!

• Holiday Gifts at School

If you would like to show your appreciation for any of the Children’s School staff members at the holiday time, we suggest a simple gift, a donation to the Imagination Playground Fund, or a gift for the classroom (books, puzzles, etc.). Involving your child in the decision and/or creation of a card or gift focuses the activity on the joy of giving rather than on the gift.

• NALS Conference Silent Auction

In April 2011, the Children’s School, along with the Falk School at the University of Pittsburgh and the Campus School at Carlow University, will host the International Association of Laboratory and University Affiliated Schools (NALS) Conference here in Pittsburgh. Laboratory school educators from all over the world will be traveling to Pittsburgh to visit our 3 schools and to participate in the conference. As part of the event, we are planning a silent auction to raise money to support both NALS and the local host schools. The Children’s School’s share of the proceeds will go towards the purchase of the Imagination Playground. If you have an item for donation or would like to help with the Silent Auction, please contact Miss Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu or 412-268-2198.
• Barnes & Noble Book Fair on December 4th

Please join us at the Waterfront Barnes & Noble for the Children’s School Book Fair. As long as you present our ID #10264521 at the cash register, we will receive a portion of any purchase made during that day to help fund our Imagination Playground (10% up to $2,000 in sales, 15% up to $10,000, etc.) – including DVDs, CDs, and food and drink from the Café! Only gift cards are excluded. Join us for “Brunch, Books, and Buddies”, enjoy some “Children’s School Fuel” (hot chocolate) at 11:00, join the Curious George Scavenger Hunt, decorate bookplates for our library, and then sing along during a special Singing and Story group time scheduled for 12 noon!

Any purchases made online at bn.com/bookfairs from December 4th through December 9th will also benefit the Children’s School, as long as our ID #10264521 is specifically entered. This option means that friends and relatives far and wide can support our project as well.

We are still looking for volunteers – even for ½ hour - to help with supervising the Scavenger Hunt, distributing Children’s School ID Vouchers, and reading books. Please e-mail Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu if you are available.

International Hosting Opportunity

From January 15th through 30th of 2011, the Children’s School will be hosting 8 undergraduates and 2 masters students from Duksgung Women’s University in Seoul, South Korea for an International Practicum Program. All of the women are studying Early Childhood Education, and one of their professors, Dr. Kyung Ok Lee, is a visiting scholar in CMU’s Entertainment Technology Institute this year. The students will be observing and assisting in our preschool and kindergarten classrooms, as well as attending university colloquia and classes, participating in discussions and workshops specially planned for them, and visiting some of Pittsburgh’s cultural attractions geared for young children.

We are recruiting 10 families who live close to the university to provide housing and breakfast for these students, both to reduce the cost of their practicum experience and to provide an opportunity for them to experience family life in Pittsburgh. Proximity to CMU is essential so that the students can use public transport or rides from teachers to get to and from school. Please contact Dr. Carver at sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu if you are interested in learning more about this hosting opportunity.

Other families can be involved in the practicum experience by preparing welcome baskets for the students, offering to provide lunch for them at the school one day, providing transportation to cultural attractions, etc. More information on these possibilities will be available in January.

We are excited about the opportunity to broaden our outreach by introducing these pre-service teachers to our school’s developmentally appropriate philosophy and programs. We also look forward to learning about the unique approaches used in Korean early childhood programs. We hope you will find a way to be involved in this international practicum, and we invite you to share any ideas you have for strengthening the experience for families and children.
Family Spotlight: Making Pittsburgh Home

It has been a little over a year since our family made the decision to leave our home in Graham, North Carolina, to take on a new city – Pittsburgh. It was a tough decision, as our son, Elias, was getting ready to start preschool. So the first week we were in Pennsylvania, we decided to check some of the schools that we began researching a month before. When we visited the Children’s School, we knew that we were in the right place. Plus, Elias told us that “this is going to be my new school, yay!” And, the rest is history. The three-year-old program was fantastic! After a couple of weeks, Elias would run around the house dropping everything, just to explain to us how gravity worked! We are now in our second year at the Children’s School, and it is still the best choice for us.

It seems as if it took us no time to adjust to our new state. We quickly became regular attendees of the Pittsburgh Zoo, the Carnegie Science Center, and the Museum of Natural History. However, the biggest thrill for our entire family has been major league baseball. Elias has become such a Pirates enthusiast that he has even named one of his stuffed animals Elias Andrew McCutchen Garrett Jones. Elias loves that he and Garrett have the same last name.

The greatest challenge of moving has been adjusting to the weather. We were here to witness the worst winter on record, with massive amounts of snow. However, once we were able to dig out our car, it was pretty cool! We still miss our friends and family down South, but the most rewarding part of this journey is seeing our son grow into an independent little boy who continues to thrive in a new community and make “best buddies” at the Children’s School.

Marlon, Keava & Elias Jones

Winter Health Pointers

**WINTER WEAR:** As the chilly winter weather approaches, please replenish your child’s extra clothes bag with apparel appropriate for the season, as well as clothes to accommodate their physical growth.

Layering your child’s clothing for school days is helpful. While the temperature in our building is fairly constant and comfortable, some children may feel too warm or too cold on any given day. Wearing a t-shirt under a sweater allows the child to adjust to a personal level of comfort.

Even in the winter, we go outside daily except in very extreme weather conditions. Please send labeled hats and mittens to school every day. On snowy days, please also send labeled snow pants and boots. Feel free to provide a set of outdoor clothes to be kept in your child’s locker.

**PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL DAY:** Our school day is filled with active and interesting projects that are planned in advance to ensure appropriate adult supervision. To that end, we ask that children come to school only if they can fully participate in the day’s activities, including outdoor play and gym. If your child is not well enough to fully take part in the day, please keep the child at home because we do not have staff members available to supervise children indoors while the rest of the class is outdoors or at gym.
Learning to Help Others

Trick or Treat for UNICEF

About 25 families collected change while Trick or Treating this year in order to help UNICEF to provide nutrition, medicine, education, and other things children need in order to thrive. Some families also donated their change collections from home. Many thanks!!

Children’s School Places Third in Cans Across the Cut

The Carnegie Mellon Community collected 9,026 pounds of non-perishable food items plus $2,107.90 for the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank during the November Drive. Our children contributed 321 cans to the Cans Across the Cut project on November 10th, earning us a third place finish in this campus wide competition. On this day, 2,210 items were collected along with $573.90. This drive was the largest ever in terms of both total pounds collected and monetary donations. Thanks again!!

Opportunity to Donate Gently Used Maternity & Baby Items

The Carnegie Mellon Campus Police are collecting gently used maternity and baby items for a local Pittsburgh women’s shelter, the Roselia Center in Oakland, that provides care for young pregnant or parenting women. Involving your children in choosing items for this charity is a great way to involve them in recycling. Please bring donations to the Children’s School office by December 10th.

Easter Seals Screening

This year, the Easter Seals Speech, Language, Hearing and Middle Ear Screenings will be held at school on Monday, December 6 through Thursday, December 9. The rate for screening is $20 per child. The speech pathologists play a series of Talking and Listening games with each child that take about 15 minutes and provide a snapshot of each child’s development in the areas of hearing and listening, direction following, understanding and use of language, speech sound production, voice quality, and fluent communication. Written results are provided, and the Easter Seals specialists are available to answer any additional questions. If you are interested in having your child screened, please complete the permission form sent previously and return it to the school office with your check made payable to Easter Seals. Please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu if you have any questions or need another form.

December Web Artists

3’s Friends: Elizabeth F., Grace C.-B., & Mintaek C.
4’s Friends: Joby M., Kabir C., Madeleine F., Oscar O., Roland C., & Sydney Sh.
Kindergarten Friends: Ella R., Jane B., & Simon N.
Family Social Organization (FSO) Play Date

The Family Social Organization organized some activities for the days off of school this semester. While the teachers were prepping for conferences in October, we had a chilly but fun visit to Reilly's Farm. About 20 families braved the cold to have a hayride, pick pumpkins, wander through a corn maze, and feed some farm animals. We also took advantage of gorgeous weather and a day off of school for teacher conferences in November to have a second playdate at Bartlett Park.

We are taking a break from activities for the rest of 2010, while everyone is busy with holiday activities. We have some fun things planned for the doldrums of winter, including an afternoon of music, a pajama party, and an indoor playdate.

Please contact Beth Lott at elisabeth.lott@gmail.com or 412-243-2626 with any questions.
A Veteran’s Day Visitor from the Army

Todd Schultz (father of kindergartner Ashley and preschooler Hunter) talked with the kindergarten friends on Veteran’s Day about his experience in the Army. He said, “I really had a great time visiting with the Kindergarten class on Veteran's Day! I am currently active duty Army, attending graduate school at CMU. Once I graduate in May, my family and I will leave Pittsburgh for West Point, NY, where I will teach Economics. I was so happy to get the opportunity to speak to the Kindergarten class. What a lively bunch they are! I was surprised to see how much they knew about a helicopter and how it worked. In addition to the helicopter, I was unsure of what else to talk about. Ashley gave me the clue to bring other props that her friends would enjoy seeing or using. It was fun to see the excitement when it came time to try the gear, such as the poncho, the goggles, and, of course, the glow sticks. All the friends were eager to share their stories about the toys they had at their houses, and it turned into a lively discussion to say the least. Lastly, I thank the kindergarten team for hosting me and the children for the thank you notes. They will be a keepsake for years to come.”

Building Basics

“At one time used to transport prisoners from the Allegheny County Courthouse to the Jail, the Bridge of Sighs mimics the original in Venice, Italy. The distinctive Bridge of Sighs is just one of many architectural highlights of the building which Henry Hobson Richardson considers his best work, the Allegheny County Courthouse & Jail in downtown Pittsburgh. The Bridge of Sighs is one of 720 bridges within Pittsburgh city limits, and one of more than 1,700 bridges criss-crossing Allegheny County. Pittsburgh has more bridges than any city in the world except for Venice, Italy.” In preparation for our Building Unit, take a family tour of Pittsburgh bridges, noticing their materials, the shapes & patterns in their structures, etc. (Excerpt quoted from http://pittsburgh.about.com/od/pictures/ig/architecture/bridge_of_sighs.htm.)
Research Spotlight

Show me the word!

Dr. Dan Hufnagle is investigating the development of children’s knowledge of sound categories (See November’s newsletter for descriptions of the Building Robby’s House and Da and Ga games, and October’s for the Deer or Tear game). One aspect of Dr. Hufnagle’s research focuses on determining the relationship between children’s developing categorization abilities and their vocabulary abilities. This new game assesses children’s vocabulary levels using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Task (PPVT-4), which is designed to test vocabulary from 2.5 years of age through adulthood. During the game, the experimenter asks children to “point to the ___. “ Children look at a display of 4 pictures and point to the picture that matches the word. For example, children might be asked to point to the sink in the pictures below.

Children begin the task at various levels, depending on their age at the time they are tested. For every 12 words, the experimenter checks to make sure that the child gets more than 4 correct before continuing to the next 12 words, which are a little more difficult. No feedback is given, so children do not know if they choose correctly or incorrectly. The results of the vocabulary measure will be matched to data from other tasks in this series of experiments in order to understand the relationship between sound categories and vocabulary. We predict that children who know more words will demonstrate well-defined sound categories. If you have any questions about this research, do not hesitate to contact Dr. Dan Hufnagle at hufnagle@cmu.edu or 412-268-3647.

Cognitive Control Games

How do children learn to adapt their behaviors to their changing environment? When does children’s ability to monitor and control their own behavior reach mature levels? What factors affect the development of the cognitive side of this important process? These are some of the questions that senior Janelle Higa is investigating in the honors thesis she is conducting on cognitive control, with the support of Dr. Anna Fisher. Cognitive control is an important ability that allows people to adapt their behavior to the changing demands of their environment. This ability has been found to develop very differently in each individual. The purpose of Janelle’s thesis is to investigate social factors that may contribute to variations in children’s development of cognitive control. As a part of the study, she will ask parents to complete a brief survey to determine whether children’s level of cognitive control in her tasks correlates with family demographics and styles.

Continued …
Research Spotlight continued …

• The Sorting Game
Janelle’s first of two games is designed to measure cognitive control via a computer-based card-sorting task. Children are shown cards on a computer and asked to sort them either by shape or color first. They are then asked to switch rules to sort by the opposite dimension. The example to the right shows the shape dimension of the card-sorting game. The child would be asked to sort the middle card into the either the fish or star pile.

• The Waiting Game
Janelle’s second task is a standard Delay of Gratification task. Children are given the option of eating an appealing snack immediately or waiting for five minutes. They are told that if they wait for the full five minutes, they will receive a larger amount of the snack. This task tests children’s ability to cognitively control their behavior in order to receive a greater reward in the future. The Delay of Gratification task is a well-documented research tool, shown to be predictive of later success. The child on the left is deciding between eating the snack in front of her immediately or waiting to receive a larger amount of the snack. View an informative video about this standard task at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amsqeYOk-w&feature=related.

Undergraduate Spotlight: Getting to Know You !!

My name is Laura Pacilio. I am a senior psychology major. In addition to working at the Children’s School, I also do research in the Human Computer Interaction Institute and am a member of Strong Women Strong Girls, an organization where I am a mentor to elementary school girls in the Pittsburgh area. After I graduate this spring, I am planning on attending graduate school in counseling psychology or social work.

I have worked at the Children’s School for two years and have many fond memories and hilarious stories from my time there. Some of my favorite Children’s School memories are: learning how to make play-dough, gym with Ms. McMichael, hearing all the children’s creative Halloween costume ideas, and watching them act in their class plays during the theater unit last year.

Working at the Children’s School has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my college career; and though I am excited to graduate this spring, I am sad that this will be my last year working with all of the phenomenal children and staff!
Director’s Corner:
Fostering Interaction & Cooperation

The Children’s School’s “developmental goals” for interaction and cooperation provide a systematic framework for design details in all aspects of our early childhood programs. To clarify the intentionality of our design decisions, as well as to support families in fostering their children’s development, I will share the theories underlying our philosophy and their implications for our approaches.

**Interaction & Cooperation** - promoting children's social skills for diverse adult and peer relations, including listening, turn-taking, following directions, rules and routines, group participation, care for shared materials, and conflict resolution.

In many respects, young children can learn social skills as they develop self-esteem and independence – by exploration within a safe and encouraging environment. But, social learning theories also emphasize the importance of adults modeling appropriate interactions and acknowledging or reinforcing the behaviors that children need to practice in order to become effectively integrated into a family, a class, a team, etc. Sociocultural theories highlight the need for a supportive context where adults offer scaffolding to help ensure children’s successful participation. Cognitive information-processing theories, such as those guiding much of the research in Carnegie Mellon’s Psychology Department, stress the detailed specification of the knowledge and skills children need for each task and the explicit instruction and feedback relative to those specifications. For these reasons, Children’s School educators 1) purposefully model respectful interactions with children, families, colleagues, undergraduates, researchers, and university personnel, 2) intentionally teach children the steps to take and words to use for both routine and challenging interactions, and 3) coach children through the process repeatedly until they can effectively interact on their own. We also embed directions, rules, and location cues within the environment with signs, visual schedules, photographs, etc.

Within each theme, educators emphasize the necessary interactions and implications of cooperation. For example, preschoolers recently learned about the Community Helpers that work together to help everyone live safely at Carnegie Mellon and in Pittsburgh. They also learned how our efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle benefit our environment so that everyone can live well. At the same time, our kindergartners were learning about the many ways that Native Americans collaborated with each other and their environment to meet the human needs without negatively impacting the environment.

Even fostering mathematics skills can involve social interaction. Children practice counting and timing skills when they follow the rules for the number of children in each center or use a timer to take turns on the computer. They also collect and record data about their classmates, such as when the kindergarten “clipboard helper” conducts the weekly survey and reports the results to the group.

Families can promote interaction and cooperation by using a similar mix of careful modeling, direct discussion of social expectations and strategies, and coaching in the context of natural interactions. Basic manners, social conventions for meeting and greeting people, and appropriate ways to make requests or handle disagreements are all important to practice at home and in the community. You can help children by reviewing in advance and adding just one new skill at a time. The successful interaction will provide its own reinforcement, particularly when others respond positively!