Professional Development in South Korea

From October 21st to 31st, three Children’s School educators were privileged to learn about culture and education in South Korea and to share our early childhood experience with children, parents, pre-service teachers and experienced educators there. We hope these reflections and photographs will give you a glimpse into this amazing professional development experience.

Throughout the years, many families of our Korean students have extended an invitation to "come and visit Korea"! I was so fortunate to actually do that in October. Not only was South Korea a beautiful country steeped in history and culture, but the people were warm and inviting. We could not have had a better experience. Our hosts saw to our every need, providing great accommodations, excellent food and interesting conversation. I enjoyed seeing our former practicum students and meeting new friends. The faculty, students, parents and children at Duksung Women’s University were amazing. The environment and energy of the school was very much like walking into the Children’s School. And, of course, children are children no matter where you are in the world. We shared many smiles and giggles! Choosing one highlight of the trip is difficult but spending time with a Children’s School alumni, Minjune, and the Kim family was one of the best. At the Children’s School, we really are a "family" that cannot be separated over time or distance!

Donna Perovich

December Dates

- Thursday, December 1st – Extended Morning 3’s Open House 12-1pm
- Friday Afternoon, December 2nd - Parent Teacher Conferences for 3’s
- Regular School Schedule in the Morning
- Saturday, December 3rd – Waterfront Barnes & Noble Book Fair (children’s activities 10-1)
- Thursday, December 15th – Last Day of the Semester for 3’s and Extended Day Programs
- Friday, December 16th – Last Day of the Semester for 4’s and Kindergarten Programs
- No School for Children – December 17th through January 2nd

Have a Wonderful Winter Break!!
Ten Days, Ten Thoughts: Reflections on My First Trip to South Korea

Submitted by Jean Bird

Day 1 plus some: The mixture of exhaustion and excitement that comes with travel settled in quickly as I flew forward in time and into another culture. Not knowing what to expect, I surprised myself by really enjoying the first three of many delicious Korean meals. Yes, mom, I tried everything at least once! The steady stream of wonderfully gracious hosts from Duksung Women’s University who transported, housed, fed, organized, and cared for me from this Day 1 were no surprise at all.

Day 2: From the quiet solitude of an ancient shrine and palace, to the history-filled walk by a city stream, to the crushing crowd of the marketplace, I experienced a brief, yet perfect, immersion into the enormous and beautiful city of Seoul. The day ended with an overnight stay in a luxury, traditional Korean Guest House. The heated floor made it an extra-special cozy night.

Day 3: The foreign became completely familiar when I stepped inside the Duksung Women’s University Lab School. The teachers were singing songs and challenging children with interesting games and activities. The children were building with blocks, eating snack, and playing outdoors. I know this place!

Day 4: A trip to the Korean Folk Village gave me an inside, historic view of traditional Korean life. I was especially interested in the working folk art shops housed in the old, refurbished and reconstructed buildings on the expansive grounds. The biggest blessing of the day was getting to spend it with Joy and Ms. Son, two Duksung graduate students who taught at the Children’s School last February. My day was full of “Joy” and “Sun”!

Day 5: I had some trepidation over this day’s visit to the DMZ, or De-Militarized Zone, the four mile wide “line” between North and South Korea. The bus reservations had already been made so my interest in history had to overcome the fret over politics and war. I ended up experiencing a strange fusion of sadness for a separated people and hopefulness for future reunification. I will be pondering on this day for a long time.
Ten Days, Ten Thoughts … continued …

Day 6: I wasn’t sure what I wanted to say in the lecture to the teacher education students and graduate students when I was the one experiencing so much learning on this adventure. It turned out that telling them all about a very special place called The Children’s School was a great choice. They responded with enthusiasm, and intelligent and interesting questions. I am still not positive that Tony (Dr. Byungho Lee) the Interpreter said exactly what I said. There were some times of laughter where I didn’t think I said much that was funny.

Day 7: Even though I truly appreciate the week full of amazing, first time experiences, in the classroom with the children is where I love to be. The universal language of music and the ever-present desire of young children to explore made teaching easy and gratifying. No interpretation needed!

Day 8: Connecting with teachers and administrators from many different Korean Laboratory Schools was a fitting end to a week of formal meetings and lectures. It is in these connections that the agenda of high quality and excellence in Early Childhood Education will be studied and advanced in both Korea and in the United States. Reconnecting with a former Children’s School student and his family rounded out the day beautifully.

Day 9: Shopping Day was made extremely productive and fun by way of gracious help from one of the professors at Duk sung (and her nephew who came to carry the bags!!!). A final lovely and delicious Korean lunch, a scenic walk through the side streets of the city, and a needed stop in one of a zillion coffee shops was the perfect end to yet another great day.

Day 10: Time go home and time to say thank you to my family, my colleagues, my fellow travelers, and the people at Duk sung. This opportunity has broadened my world-view and shaped me as a teacher. I look forward to the continuing collaboration!
Korea Connections

Submitted by Sharon Carver

The theme that emerged for me during our visit to Duksung Women’s University in Seoul was CONNECTIONS. I was deeply touched by reconnecting with one of my graduate students from my University of Rochester days; Dr. Myunghee Kang is now a professor of education at Duksung and she graciously hosted all of us in her home for 5 days. Building new connections with Dr. Eunsoo Shin (my counterpart at Duksung) and Mrs. Geum-Gu Lee (the Vice Director) was a joy and an inspiration for future collaboration (see below). The professional challenge of the trip for me was preparing meaningful presentations for audiences of lab school parents, pre-service teachers, and early childhood professionals from all over South Korea. Balancing the universal messages of professional engagement, particularly with other laboratory school colleagues, with the unique aspects of the Children’s School approach and then connecting the ideas to the Korean context was well received by all. The professional highlight was observing two of our amazing educators, Mrs. Bird and Mrs. Perovich, share their expertise, from introducing undergraduates to the inquiry process (with bubbles in the photos below) and then demonstrating the practice with children, to communicating with other professionals in a spirit of openness and cultural sensitivity to minimize the language barrier and respect the hierarchical system. I was honored to represent the Children’s School and Carnegie Mellon University as part of this delegation and I look forward to future connections between the Children’s School and Duksung educators, families, and children!

Upcoming Educator Visit & Practicum

In January, we will host a brief visit by Duksung’s Early Childhood Department Chair, lab school Director, and six teachers (see photo at right). These educators will observe at the Children’s School, the Cyert Center, the Falk School, and the Carlow Campus School, as well as dialogue with the administrators and cooperating teachers who will be working with Duksung’s practicum students several weeks later. The students will observe and assist in early childhood classrooms at either our school, Falk or Carlow, as well as attend a university class, participate in workshops specially planned for them, and visit some Pittsburgh cultural attractions geared for young children.

We are recruiting a few families who live close to the university to provide housing and some meals for the practicum students from Sunday, January 22nd through Friday, February 3rd, 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 this hosting opportunity. We invite all families to be involved in this international practicum and to share ideas for strengthening the experience for families and children.
Barnes & Noble Book Fair on December 3rd

On December 3rd, the Children’s School will be hosting a book fair at Barnes and Noble at the Waterfront from 10 am to 1 pm. At 10 am Dave Crawley will be doing a reading and autographing copies of his books – Cat Poems and Dog Poems. Cara Sapida, of Channel 11 news, will be doing a reading at 11 am, the children will be able to experiment with doing artwork on NOOKs and will be able to decorate and take home bookmarks, and Ken Thompson and our own Mrs. Bird will provide musical entertainment at 12 noon.

When shopping at the store on that day or online, please use our ID #10515344, which is listed on the vouchers that are enclosed with this newsletter. We will receive a portion of any purchase with that ID to help fund our Scholarship Fund (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. Please share our id number (ID #10515344) so that grandparents and other school friends from across the globe can help our fund-raising efforts by shopping online (bn.com/bookfairs from December 3rd through December 8th). We are still looking for volunteers to help distribute vouchers on the day of the fair. To register as a volunteer, please go to: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AlEwBOBGODKWDf4MmdyWl1dGZUNUJtejRTRIZTLVE

On-Line Usborne Book Fair

Thanks to the families who shopped for $852.40 worth of Usborne Books at the recent eFair. We received 21 gift books that were purchased directly by families based on our teachers’ wish lists. Many thanks to the Bussler, Morowitz, Schachter, Cho, Lott, Hritz, Koll, Lyons, and Lieberman families. In addition, we earned $426.20 in credits, which enabled us to purchase 33 additional books from the Usborne Catalogue for our library. What a wonderful contribution to our collection!

Ten Thousand Villages Shopping Night

Thanks to everyone who shopped at Ten Thousand Villages to support our Scholarship Fund. In addition to helping us raise $273 for tuition assistance (15% of the $1,820 in sales), your purchases contribute to fair compensation for artisans around the world.

GoodSearch / GoodShop

Planning to do some online holiday shopping? Be sure to use GoodShop.com and shop on behalf of the Children’s School. A percentage of your purchase will be donated to our school’s Scholarship Fund. Since beginning our GoodSearch/GoodShop relationship in late October 2009, we have raised $616.98 which is about $1.00 a day for simply searching the Internet and doing your family’s regular online shopping. We just received the 2011 check for another $441.68.

EITC

As you know, the Children’s School participates in the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. Through the EITC, eligible Pennsylvania businesses can earn tax credits while providing financial assistance for children to attend the Children’s School. Thus far in 2011-12, we have received $5,000 from Duquesne Light and $5,000 from UPMC Health Plan. If you would like more information or can help us to build a list of prospective businesses, please contact the Main Office.
Learning to Help Others

**Trick or Treat for UNICEF**: Seventeen 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. The total they collected for UNICEF was $229.10. Many thanks!!

Children’s School Dominates PAEYC 5K Run

The Children’s School dominated the PAEYC 5K Run on Sunday, October 23rd at North Park. Brynn Flynn won the race in her gender/age category and Mike Flynn, her husband, won in his gender/age category. Krissy Opferman and Beth McMichael made a strong showing and Maggie Rosenblum proudly strolled in dead last – right behind our own Charline Tomer! Hey, someone has to be the caboose! Jillian Mangan won a bag of stuffed animals in the raffle – a hippo, a rhino, and an elephant holding three small elephants. GO TEAM! This event was designed to help promote the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children, to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood education, and to raise funds to support professional development for educators working with children, families, and their mentors. The event raised $7,000 for PAEYC!

Children’s Run to Help the Hungry

With the inspiration of Amee Chaudry and the support of many other parents, the Children’s School students did a “Run to Help the Hungry” in conjunction with the Carnegie Mellon food drive. During this “Fun Run” around the new playground track at four different times on Monday November 7th, the children ran 516, 244, 126, and 309 laps for an amazing total of 1,195. Our sponsors donated a total of $361 and 531 non-perishable food items for CMU’s Cans Across the Cut to honor our effort. The Children’s School placed second in this campus wide competition, and the campus community collected a record 1,991 food items and $1,824.62. Thanks again for your support!!
Family Social Organization (FSO)

At the end of October we had a great trip to Soergels Orchards. About 40 children had fun taking a tour and learning all about apples and cider. Some other highlights were the cornstalk maze and the hayride! We also had a playdate at My Little Outback the Friday before Thanksgiving. 10 families took advantage of the day off and came to play.

Our Parents’ Night Out at BrGr was also big hit! We had 13 parents come for a night of fun, food and new friends. We dined on gourmet burgers, along with great specialty drinks and interesting conversation. The "milkshake" seemed to be the hit drink of the night. All expressed interest in getting together again so the FSO will organize another grownup outing soon!

Remember that we have started an ongoing Coffee Klatch on Thursday mornings after greeting. We meet in the cafe across the lane from the Children's School. Please come join us any Thursday you are free. There is easy-metered street parking, or you can park in the garage. If you have any questions, or suggestions for future activities please contact Aparna Brown (mom of Delia, K) at aparnabrown@gmail.com.

Mark your calendars for the following 2012 upcoming events:

- Gymkhana Play Date on Sunday, January 22nd at 1:30pm
- Snow White at the Gemini Theatre, with a backstage tour, on Saturday, February 25th at 3pm

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 gift for the classroom (books, puzzles, etc.), or a donation to the school that the teachers can use to choose new classroom or professional development materials. 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.
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.

Lost and Found

Our Lost and Found box is already overflowing with unmarked children’s clothing. Please look through the box in the hall or send a detailed description of any missing items in your child’s backpack so that we can locate and return any missing items.

Developmental Screening

Beginning with the 2012 - 2013 school year, all children attending the Children’s School are required to receive a developmental screening as part of our National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation. The Pittsburgh Public Schools Early Intervention Program offers a free developmental screening service that we are piloting this year to determine if their process meets our needs. The screening is available to all children regardless of home school district and will be conducted during the month of December. If you haven’t already returned the Screening Permission Form please do so as soon as possible. Please contact Ms. Hancock at lh37@andrew.cmu.edu if you have any questions or need another form. Mrs. Rosenblum will be contacting families about separate vision and speech & hearing screenings early in 2012.

December Web Artists

**3’s Friends:** Brady G., Maya G., Clark H., Rohan P., and Chase W.
**4’s Friends:** Grace C., Annette H., Alex K., Will N., and Clara S.
**Kindergarten Friends:** Mark H., Nina H., and Sophia H.
Perhaps You Wondered …

… why we need to raise money at the Children’s School when we already charge tuition, snack, and materials fees. Let’s work in round numbers and start with the money families pay. For our 100 children during the academic year (i.e., not including camp), families pay $725,000 in tuition and $60,000 in snack and materials fees.

• Of the tuition income, $600,000 (82%) pays the salaries and benefits for our 16 staff members. Though half of our educators have taught here for a decade or more, three have masters degrees and three more are working on them, only the two teachers who have been on staff for more than 20 years earn what a first year teacher would make in the Pittsburgh Public School system. The full time staff members do have excellent benefits, including tuition support for themselves and their children.

• The remaining $125,000 pays for our undergraduate employees & substitutes ($25,000), office equipment & supplies ($25,000), professional development ($15,000), parking lot spaces for visitors ($10,000), internet services ($4,000), advertising ($3,000), phone service ($2,000), accreditation fees ($2,000), and other basic office expenses, such as printing, postage, etc.

• All of the $60,000 in fees is budgeted by the educators for classroom and whole school materials, including consumables like paint, paper, snack, and cooking supplies, as well as learning materials such as games, puzzles, books, etc. and equipment such as classroom furniture, computers, appliances, and so on. We collaborate closely to pace the large purchases across the years.

• The university provides our space, utilities, and access to centralized services such as janitorial, grounds-keeping, accounting, human resources, legal, insurance, security, etc.). The Psychology Department also provides our computer support and 25% of our administrative salaries and benefits.

The reason we raise additional money beyond tuition and fees is to cover expenses over and above those listed above. The Children’s School has no endowment, and renovations to our kitchen, playground, and children’s bathroom are not covered by CMU, so we have had major fundraising projects in past years to fund those renovations (e.g., $80,000 for the 2006 kitchen renovation). We have been fortunate that our renovations after the floods in 2009 and 2011 were covered entirely by the university’s insurance, and our temporary playground costs are part of the Margaret Morrison Building Restoration project budget. The regular materials fee is not sufficient to cover major equipment purchases, such as when we chose to purchase the Imagination Playground last year ($9,000) or needed to buy new laptops for the teaching teams this year ($8,000). Such purchases require special fundraising or the use of our limited reserves (about 20% of our annual budget).

Given the current economic climate, we have more and more families requesting scholarship assistance. At present, we have very limited funding for scholarships (a maximum of $20,000 per year so far, some of which comes from individual donors and the rest from the EITC program). We offer an additional $45,000 in tuition waivers (i.e., lost income) in order to enable lower income families to send their children to the school. We use a simple income scale with tax form documentation to determine eligibility. Currently 20% of our children pay less than full tuition; two children receive full scholarships, several pay only 35% of the regular rate, and others pay 50 to 75%.

Our highest priority for the use of new funds would be to fully cover and expand our scholarship pool. Next would be increasing educator salaries, hiring a full-time substitute so that staff members can take the paid time off they have earned, and extending our professional development opportunities. Of course, starting an elementary school is another intriguing possibility, but that is a VERY big-ticket item! Thanks to Beth Nury and the Fundraising Committee for providing the detailed finance questions that prompted this article. Please contact Dr. Carver if you have questions or suggestions.
Family Spotlight: New in Town

Hello everyone, we are really excited to have this opportunity to write to all of you.

A little about us: We are the Andini family of four. Two little members in our family are Kayla, age 4, and Laras, nearly 1 and a half. We moved to Pittsburgh last June because my husband got accepted to the Tepper School of Business at CMU, and this was our first time to be in the U.S.

The journey from Indonesia: A mix of flying from halfway across the world, 30 hours of flight, 3 transits, and two toddlers to take care of surely tested our parental skill to the limit. However, the excitement of coming to the U.S. for the first time gave us the energy to stay awake. At first, we were quite nervous whether we could fit with the American lifestyle. The language, culture, and even the side of the road on which we used to drive are different. Surprisingly, we found that Pittsburgh is very enjoyable with all those parks, hills, bridges and warm friendly people. And don’t forget all the enthusiasm for Steelers!

Children’s School: Having the opportunity to live in Pittsburgh for 2 years, we knew that our daughter, Kayla, would have the opportunity to experience better education. We realize that having the ability to learn English in the early years is fundamental for her future. We first learned about Children’s School from the website, and we were lucky enough to get Kayla accepted after previously being put on the waitlist. After a few months, we are surprised with Kayla’s ability to speak English with even better pronunciation than her parents. Seeing Kayla’s enthusiasm for learning new letters, singing and dancing, we know that we chose the right school for her.

What’s the difference? In Indonesia, I used to be a working mom, so we had a nanny and a maid to take care the children and the house. Having paid help is very common there because the salaries are cheaper than day care, most families have both parents working. I used to be gone at the office from 6.30 am until 6 pm, but my husband usually got home at 8 pm, so we had so little time with the girls. We only spent family time together on the weekend because after work we were just too tired to play or the children were already asleep. Living here gives us more quality family time. Even though my husband is very busy with his study, we still manage to have time to spend with the girls. I also learn about being a full time mom with so many tasks such as taking care of two children without the help of the nanny, my mother & my mother-in-law, cleaning the apartment, doing the laundry (usually the maid did it), and of course cooking (we had a catering service). Turns out that I have a hidden talent for cooking. If we didn’t move to Pittsburgh, I think my cooking talent wouldn’t be discovered.

Speaking about Indonesia, it is a beautiful tropical country located exactly on the equator. Moving to Pittsburgh where there are 4 seasons is very exciting for all of us. When we first got here, it was summer, so the weather was pretty much the same as our drought season; but when it comes to fall, we are surprised with all the different colors of leaves, and we enjoy the cool breeze. Now we are very anxious to experience the winter; we just can’t wait to play in the snow.

Nindya and Dimas Andini
Physical Education Highlights

During the past month, our gym classes continued exercising with Sound Play, by Leon H. Burton and Takeo Kudo. First, the children had an opportunity to refresh their memories of music from the first ten lessons. They then learned to differentiate between walking, skipping, running, and trotting as each movement was assigned a different selection of music. Scarves, ribbon wands, and the parachute were also incorporated into the lesson to help the children move creatively to the music. The goal of these exercises is for the children to create their own unique dance to the music. They will be able to do this by using movements they believe express how the music sounds.

In this curriculum, the aspects of music the friends learned to recognize are:

- the beat of music
- pitch (higher and lower sounds)
- volume (louder and softer sounds)
- tempos (faster and slower music)
- music that gradually becomes faster (accelerando) and slower (ritardando)

After a vigorous physical workout, the closing activity serves as a quiet, cool-down activity and leaves children ready to continue with classroom work (such as circle time).

This year we have learned to play these closing activities:

- Mouse Trap
- Cat and Mouse
- What Time Is It, Mr. Wolf?
- The Great Pumpkin
- Vegetable Soup

It has been great to see the friends becoming so excited about exercising and participating in fitness activities. Our plan for next week is to learn about Relays. See you at the Gym!

(Submitted by Ms. McMichael)

Undergraduate Spotlight:
Start On Success

The Children’s School has partnered with the Pittsburgh Public School’s Start On Success program for several years. SOS is a transition program that provides a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences over four years of high school to prepare youth for successful careers or post-secondary education or training.

Hi! My name is Janay Bottoms, and I am a senior at Taylor Allderdice High School. I play basketball and run track for Allderdice. Next year, I plan to go to college for basketball and plan on majoring in music or communications. I hope to make it to the W.N.B.A. after four years of college. I am excited to work with the children at the Children’s School. It relieves stress when I see the children laugh and play. Working at the Children’s School has taught me patience and awareness. My favorite activity is when we go to the park and to the gym. To see their faces light up when the door opens warms my heart.

If basketball doesn’t work out for me, I will probably consider a job that involves working with children.
Student Teacher Reflections

**Maria Tedeschi**, student teacher with Mrs. Tomer in the 3’s Program, writes, “I was not aware of the CMU Children's School prior to receiving my placement for student teaching from the University of Pittsburgh; however my quick research convinced me that it would be a remarkable first experience for my professional development. From the beginning of my time here, I was immediately astounded by the abundant resources, outstanding staff, and remarkable research that takes place here. A laboratory school is an ideal environment for student teachers due to the original pedagogical styles that reflect the most current research. I have seen how much the children that attend the Children’s School benefit in this environment because they are truly receiving all of the resources and extensions needed for every child to reach the highest potential of development. This experience has inspired me to think in more sophisticated ways about children’s growth, and I will undoubtedly take this with me as I continue with my professional development. Unfortunately, my placement at the Children’s School was only for one semester, however I will take with me the vision, creativity, and edification that has been generously offered to me from the CMU Children's School.”

**Allison Ross**, student teacher in the 4’s Program, reflects, “My experience at the Children’s School is my first teaching opportunity, and it has been wonderful. The school atmosphere is nothing like I’ve ever experienced. The curriculum is fast paced, well planned, and encourages creativity and discovery. The school itself is beautiful and inspires learning in every way. My experience with my mentor teacher, Jean Bird, has exceeded my expectations. To have the opportunity to work with such a talented teacher has been an honor and I have learned so much. Working together with Mrs. Bird and the rest of the 4’s Team has been exciting and fun. I have loved the experience of working with more than one teacher. The children here have the unique opportunity of learning from multiple teachers on a daily basis. I myself have learned so much from working with the faculty and getting to practice different teaching strategies. I’ve enjoyed getting to know the students and staff. Everyone has been so kind and welcoming that it will be difficult to leave at the end of the semester. I can definitely say I have been spoiled with such a great school, teachers, and students to kick off my student teaching experience.”

**Brittany Woler**, the Kindergarten student teacher with Mrs. Perovich, notes, “Working as a student teacher in the Kindergarten classroom has been an extremely beneficial and memorable experience for me as a future educator. When I first heard that I was being placed in not only a private school, but also a laboratory school, I was eager to see what the next few months had in store. I discovered a close-knit group of educators who work extremely hard to provide their students with a fun, interactive, and unique learning experience. I also found twenty-three energetic and eager children. One of the most beneficial things was that whatever activity I could imagine I could always implement. I was given the freedom to develop my own ideas, and I was always able to find the resources I needed. I am sad to see that my time here is coming to an end, but I cannot wait to use what I have learned here in my other student teaching assignments, and eventually in my own classroom as well. Thank you so much for letting me become a part of your child’s educational experience this year!”
Research Spotlight

The Falling Game

Catherine Chase, a postdoctoral scholar working with Dr. Vincent Aleven, is exploring young children’s knowledge of stability. Do they have an intuitive understanding of what attributes of a structure make it stable or non-stable? In this study, children will attempt several comparison tasks where they will be shown two blocks that vary on one or two dimensions (e.g., height or base width). They will be asked to predict which block would fall first if the table underneath the blocks were to shake. They will also be asked to explain why. Sessions are videotaped for later analysis of children’s gestures and explanations. The practical aim of the study is to create an assessment for young children’s concept of stability. The assessment will ultimately be embedded in an educational game that is designed to teach children building principles for stable structures.

Supplemental Permission Slips

In case you’ve wondered why you’ve gotten so many consent forms for research lately, the reason is that you and your child are being invited to participate in research projects that do not fall within the parameters of the Children’s School’s consent form that you signed during the enrollment process. Such cases either involve researchers interested in studying parents or older siblings, researchers from outside Carnegie Mellon (e.g., the Anti Bullying intervention project described in the enclosed consent form for Preschool 4’s and to be highlighted in the January Newsletter), researchers collaborating with a commercial company that would involve a conflict of interest (e.g., Disney, Google, etc.), or research funded by agencies that require separate consent for each study (e.g., the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency, which is funding the research described above to facilitate young children’s physical science learning). Dr. Carver reviews all such projects carefully for their fit with our philosophy and objectives and then sends the consent forms to families for consideration. Carnegie Mellon’s laboratory school is a valuable resource for scholarly research, training, and practical applications of scientific theories, so we encourage your participation in these extra projects. We aim for excellence in all aspects of our research policy and practice, as we seek to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of developmental and educational science.
Director’s Corner: **Perspective Taking**

Continuing my reflection on the “seven essential life skills every child needs” as framed by Ellen Galinsky in *Mind in the Making*, I turn to the skill of **perspective taking**. Once again, the essential nature of this skill is evident in its central focus in the early childhood curriculum. For example, the Children’s School developmental objectives set includes empathizing with others, asking for help appropriately, comparing and contrasting others’ features with respect, handling oneself well when choosing not to participate, sharing and taking turns, politely interacting with visitors, respecting others’ rights, feelings, and belongings, responding well to winning and losing, generating alternate perspectives, negotiating and compromising to solve problems, etc. - all of which are part of developing versatility in understanding and responding to others’ perspectives.

According to Galinsky, perspective taking involves “the intellectual skill of discerning how someone else thinks and feels; it requires assembling our accumulated knowledge of that person, analyzing the situation at hand, remembering similar situations, recalling what others have told us about such situations, putting aside our own thoughts and feelings, and trying to feel and think as another person must feel and think” (p. 71). One way that even 3 year olds develop their perspective taking skills involves practice “reading, anticipating, and responding to the feelings and plans of their baby siblings” (p. 73). Dramatic play with baby dolls provides similar opportunities, as does care for pets at home or in the classroom. For example, when last year’s kindergartners designed and constructed a coop for the chickens they were hatching, they considered the chick’s need for food, water and warmth, as well as their desire to see their surroundings, have fun climbing, etc. They learned that they had not anticipated the chicks’ desire to stay together in one part of the coop, nor the challenge the coop would be for those cleaning it. Galinsky also notes that children with strong perspective taking skills adjust better to school because they more easily understand what their teachers want and expect. Similarly, when learning strategies for comprehending text, children can leverage their perspective taking skills to both process what has happened and predict what might happen next.

As with focus and self-control, the point of acknowledging the importance of developing perspective taking skills is that **both parents and educators should be more purposeful** about fostering them. At the Children’s School, we intentionally emphasize strategies for identifying others’ perspective, both in the context of play and when reading stories. We verbalize aspects of our own thinking and our predictions about what others might be thinking. For example, when offering the children an opportunity to carefully touch a precious artifact, a teacher might say, “This xxx is special to me because my sister gave it to me. It is very fragile and I would be sad if it gets broken, so please touch it very gently.” To invite the children to predict thinking, an educator might ask the children how a friend who is getting ready to move might feel (including possible excitement and fear or sadness) and then invite them to suggest ways to encourage the child. Allowing children to choose among activities, graph their preferences, etc. allows them to observe that individuals have different points of view. Our laboratory school context also provides many chances for the children to interact with a wide range of peers and adults with different backgrounds, talents, needs, and goals, so they can become sensitive to a wide range of perspectives on both life and learning. Holidays offer a perfect opportunity for families to discuss what is important to them, as well as how we can best honor those we love and respond to the gestures they offer. I encourage you to be alert for chances to discuss others’ perspectives with your children, as well as to brainstorm possible responses.