A Visit from CMU President and Mrs. Suresh

On Thursday, November 21st, CMU’s new President and Mrs. Suresh visited the Children’s School to learn about our laboratory school’s role at Carnegie Mellon. Our kindergartners shared a Native American dance and song with these special visitors, as well as joining Mrs. Bird and her older 4’s in singing our welcome song, “We’ve been waiting for you to come to this place … wherever you’re from, we’re glad that you’ve come …” Mrs. Suresh read the book “If You Give a Mouse a Cookie” to the morning 3’s and then left the book with us to enjoy again.

December Dates:

Tuesday, December 3rd – Extended Morning 4’s Open House 12-1pm
Thursday, December 5th – Extended Morning 3’s Open House 12-1pm
Friday Afternoon, December 6th - Parent Teacher Conferences for 3’s
Regular School Schedule in the Morning
Saturday, December 7th – Waterfront Barnes & Noble Book Fair (10am-2pm)

Thursday, December 19th – Last Day of the Semester for Children
Friday, December 20th – Professional Development Day for Staff
No School for Children – December 20th through January 5th
Staff and Children return to school on Monday, January 6th

Have a Wonderful Winter Break!!
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 our second “Run for the Hungry” in conjunction with the Carnegie Mellon food drive. During this “Fun Run” around the playground track at four different times on Tuesday, November 12th, 91 children ran a total of 996 laps. Our sponsors donated a total of $589 and 464 non-perishable food items for CMU’s Cans Across the Cut to honor our effort. CMU considers that $1 = 1 can, so we made a total donation of 1053 items (far more than the 2011 Run for the Hungry total of 892). Thanks again for your support!!

NOTE: Our Run for the Hungry is featured on the CMU Staff Council web site about the food drive. http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/committees/food_drive/2013-drive/index.html

Warmth for Refugees

Daniel Plaut, a Children’s School alum and current 8th grader at Community Day School, is working with Jewish Family and Children’s Services to help refugees who are in Pittsburgh. A refugee is a person who is outside his/her country and fears being persecuted because of his/her race or religion. Did you know that there are many refugee families in Pittsburgh, including families from Somalia, Ethiopia and Myanmar? These families come with few belongings, and, as winter is here, they need winter coats (adults and/or children) very badly. They also need sheets, blankets and comforters (or anything warm for their beds). Daniel will place a large box at the Children's School to receive donations between now and January 17th. Many thanks for helping Daniel to help the refugees!

Holiday Sharing 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.
Ten Thousand Villages Event Success

Thank you to everyone who supported our fundraiser at Ten Thousand Villages. The event was attended by Children’s School families and staff, as well as community members who just happened to be shopping in Squirrel Hill on Thursday, November 14th. Our net sales were $1,126.82 so our event raised $169 (15%) toward our scholarship fundraising goal of $60,000. Every little bit helps!

Business Contributions for Scholarships

The Children's School participates in the state’s Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program, as well as the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) program. Both programs allow eligible businesses to earn tax credits by donating money for scholarships.

• Through the EITC, eligible PA businesses can earn tax credits while providing financial assistance for children to attend preschool. Thus far in 2013-14, we have received a contribution from Beth’s Barricades. We appreciate the continuing support from the Nury family, Children’s School alums!

• Through the OSTC, eligible PA businesses can earn tax credits for contributing funds to provide tuition assistance in the form of scholarships to eligible K-12 students residing within the boundaries of a low-achieving school to attend another school. At present, we have received contributions from the Buncher Corporation and are supporting 5 students in 5 different schools in Western Pennsylvania. Thank you to the Buncher Corporation for partnering with us to support these families.

• If you can recommend a prospective business, please contact the Main Office.

Family Social Organization (FSO)

The FSO had several great events in November, and we hope those of you who participated enjoyed yourselves! On November 1st, over 75 people enjoyed a day at Forward Lanes Bowling Alley.

The FSO 2nd Wednesday Book Club had a great first meeting on November 13th. We discussed our book, A Fault in Our Stars, and really enjoyed the opportunity to meet with old and new friends without kids! We hope you’ll join us for our next book club event, scheduled for Wednesday, December 11th. We’ll be reading The Book Thief and meeting right after drop-off at the Reznick Cafe. Contact Michelle Landau (mklandau@mac.com) with questions.

Lastly, 40 participants enjoyed a morning at the Squirrel Hill Fire House, where our 3s children met firefighters, got a tour of the firehouse, "drove" the fire truck, and took home special prizes from our visit. We look forward to seeing many of you at our next tours in December, and hope to schedule future tours given the popularity of this activity. Special thanks to Jen Ammirati (Michael’s mom) for arranging these tours.

We have several events coming up in December, including:

* Gymkhana play date on December 8th (a few spots available)
* A movie morning on December 20th - we’ll be seeing Frozen at the Waterworks Cinemas (more info coming via email)
* Informal play dates during Winter Break, including Sports Works (host: Amee Chaudry) on December 27th and Phipps (host: Jessica Morowitz) on December 30th. No need to register, just meet at 10am at the entrance! Please call Amee (617-905-8787) or Jessica (312-351-3617) if you have any questions.
Committee News

- **The Gardening Committee** - The Gardening Committee has held a meeting and is planning to focus on the hillside between the playground and the parking lot. The goal is to do planting during “Volunteer Week” - the first week of April. If you would like to join this committee and/or have some suggestions for what plants would work well on the hillside, please contact Maggie Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu.

- **Sewing Committee** - The members of this committee had a lively meeting and are in the process of designing prototypes for bird costumes for our upcoming unit. If you are interested in design or are simply willing to sew a costume – please contact Maggie so you can join this creative group.

- **Library Committee** - Many thanks to our library committee members – Kara Van Houdnos, Elena Kogay, Jen Bussler, Michelle Landau, Collyn Evans, Alexis Tuckfelt, Yesung Kim, Claudia Mendez, Mark MacWhinney, Jennifer Moak, Jennifer Ammirati - who are working very hard at organizing and fixing our library inventory!

Barnes & Noble Book Fair

On Saturday, December 7th from 10 am until 2 pm, we will be holding our annual Barnes & Noble Book Fair at the Waterfront. At noon, Mrs. Bird and her brother, Ken Thompson, will be hosting a sing-along and at 1 pm there will be classical music provided. Craft activities available will include kite and paper airplane making and bookmarks with bird cut outs. The Children’s School will receive 15% of sales that day, provided our coupon number is presented at the cash register. 15% of purchases made during the week of December 7th through December 14th on-line will also be credited to the Children's School if the correct number is used. Please see the accompanying insert for purchase details and vouchers! Thanks to Carolyn Colonna and Katie Gancy for helping with the plans and to the parent volunteers who will be assisting that day.

Upcoming Screenings re: Eyes & Ears

This year, the Easter Seals Speech, Language, Hearing and Middle Ear Screenings will be held at school during the week of January 13th. The rate for screening is $20 per child. Lynn Hofstetter, who has conducted these tests at the Children’s School for many years, will be returning. 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 enclosed permission form and return it to the school office with your check made payable to Easter Seals by Friday, January 10th (a receipt can be given for reimbursement by eligible HSA accounts).

The Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh will be conducting free screenings for vision issues in February. A permission slip for this screening will come with your January 2014 newsletter. Please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu if you have any questions.
Family Spotlight: Proud & Grateful Newcomers

Hello, Children’s School friends! We are the Mendez Family; Camilo, who just started a Masters in Information Systems Management at CMU; Claudia, currently a full-time mother; Jerónimo, who is 5 years old and recently joined the kindergarten class; Jacobo, who will turn 4 in January and is a class member of the Blue Room; and Antonia, who will join our family in early February 2014.

Where We Come From
We come from Colombia…not Columbia😊 If you have misspelled it, don’t be ashamed; it is a common mistake!! Colombia is a beautiful tropical country located in the north part of South America. We feel very proud of our diverse natural resources and the warmth of our people. Following are some interesting facts about Colombia:
- 1st country in bird diversity in the world – 19% of all bird species reside in our territory
- 1st in fruit diversity in the world
- 1st in number of amphibian species
- 4th in number of mammal species
- 3rd in largest reserves of fresh water per capita – 7th of total reserves
- 1st emerald producer in the world
- Largest flower supplier for the US

We lived in Bogotá, the capital city of Colombia. Bogotá is a metropolis of more than 8 million people, that enjoys great weather (average = 66°F)... when it is not raining (average = 180 rainy days per year)! We don’t have seasons, but you can get all of them on the same day; sunny morning, windy noon, rainy afternoon and hail storm in the night. Bogotá has developed vastly in the past 20 years and now offers a very attractive nightlife with multiple cultural and gastronomic alternatives.

What We Have Liked About Pittsburgh and What We Have Found Different
So far, we have had a great experience in Pittsburgh. We have found very nice, warm and welcoming people and a very family-friendly city, full of parks and museums both for children and adults. One thing that we have found notable is the pride and devotion of the city to its sports teams; there is no day when you won’t find someone with a jersey of one of the city teams. Autumn is also a different and beautiful experience for us; many times we are awed by the beauty of the fall leaves. The other difference for us is the weather…the cold weather! The children are anxiously awaiting the snow; the adults are less excited and more frightened.

Our Children’s School Experience
Our experience at the Children’s School couldn’t be better. We had great expectations and they have been exceeded. We have felt a warm welcome both from the staff and from the Children’s School families. We feel in our kids’ attitude towards the school, the close attention, the care, and the love that the school’s staff puts into their teaching. Another important thing is that the school understands the role they play in society in helping parents to raise not only smart children but more importantly happy and environmentally-conscious persons. The school has been fundamental not only for our children’s smooth transition to a new country but also for the whole family’s settlement process. We are very grateful!
Winter Bird Feeding

As winter approaches and you have extra time for family activities, consider attracting wild birds to your best windows for observation by hanging bird feeders outside them. The food you provide helps birds that do not migrate south in the winter because their traditional sources of food may be less available (e.g., insects) or buried in frozen soil or under snow.

Wisconsin’s Environmental Education for Kids site has wonderful resources to help families get started with both making bird feeders and observing birds, as well as caring for bird feeders and discouraging squirrels and raccoons from stealing the food you intend for the birds (http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/nature/winterbird.htm). They also provide directions for making bird feeders from recycled materials and for choosing different types of food based on the species of birds you hope to attract. According to the site, “Grains are very popular with many bird species. Sunflower seeds, corn, milo, and millet are common birdfeed grains. Black, oil-type sunflower seeds and white proso millet are probably the best and most popular seeds to attract goldfinches, blue jays, cardinals, black-capped chickadees, evening grosbeaks, pine siskins, purple finches, pine grosbeaks, and white-breasted nuthatches. Corn is also a very popular grain food on the ear, shelled, or cracked. Blue jays, house sparrows, starlings, and pheasants all prefer corn. Milo, another grain, is preferred by dark-eyed juncos, American goldfinches, pine siskins and tree sparrows. Cardinals like squash seeds if you’ve got any extras from your fall harvest.” The site’s authors do caution that it sometimes takes time for the wild birds to “discover” your feeder, so you might want to start on this project before the weather gets too cold and try a few different types of feeders and locations around your home to have the best chance of success!

Here are a few sample feeders to inspire your creativity in the coming weeks. Be sure to invite your children’s ideas as well!

One last tip:
The Cornell Lab’s Project FeederWatch web site offers lots of tips for observing the detail of backyard birds. With this newsletter, we’ve included their free field guide for backyard birds in the eastern United States, but you might want to check their web site for more information (http://feederwatch.org/learn/identifying-birds/).

Enjoy!
Winter Health Pointers

WINTER WEAR: As the chilly winter weather approaches, please replenish your child’s extra clothes container 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

We have accumulated quite a collection of jackets, barrettes and other items of unmarked children’s clothing. If your child is missing anything, please look in our lost and found box in the hallway or send a note to your child’s teacher with a description and we will see if we have it!

December Web Artists

3’s Friends: Sammy D., Cherry G., Avery K., and Owen L.

4’s Friends: Ruby A., Natalie B., Tayshawn L., Rocco V., and Ailee W.

Kindergarten Friends: Shaylee G., Emma M., and Benjamin N.

Friendly Reminders about Parking

As you know, if you are coming to the Children’s School for a conference, birthday snack or just to visit, you may park in the Margaret Morrison Parking Lot. Each space in the parking lot is marked with an “S” for Staff, “L” for the Infant Laboratory, or “V” for Visitor to the Children’s School. Never park in the spaces marked “L” for the Infant Laboratory or behind Donner Hall, which is a private lot 24 hours a day. You WILL receive a ticket. There are only eight “V” or Visitor spaces available for families to park in the Margaret Morrison Visitor Lot, so please do not park there for other campus errands. Please use the pay-as-you-park Garage on Forbes Avenue if there are no “V” spaces available. When parking in the Margaret Morrison Parking Lot, your purple dashboard parking permit must be visible.
Education Exchange in South Korea  (Violet McGillen)

Mrs. Tomer and I spent a busy but enjoyable 9 days in Seoul, South Korea last month visiting Duksung Women’s University’s Early Childhood Education Department to share ideas from our laboratory school and learn about early education in Korea. We found the city of Seoul to be a vibrant, lively city that never stops. It is very clean with friendly people, lots of excellent food, fabulous museums, shopping 24 hours a day, and many cars. Along with all the many attributes of a modern, cosmopolitan city, there are plenty of historic places as well.

The educators at Duksung Women’s University rolled out the red carpet for us. First, we went on a tour of the university and got to meet with Dr. Hong, the newly appointed president. I was surprised that such a busy man of a prestigious university would take the time to meet with us. We next got to visit the Early Childhood Department, which has its own building with classrooms for the university students as well as a laboratory preschool. We met many times with the professors of the department to discuss the aspects of teaching young children and also to enjoy delicious lunches and dinners. We gave our workshops to the graduate students, the undergraduates, and to the parents of the children at the preschool.

As teachers, we were extremely happy and excited to go into the preschool to interact with the children. We did activities with them and found the children to be delightful. The children were happy to see us as well and sang songs and asked us questions. Mrs. Tomer and I decided this was the highlight of the week.
Education Exchange, continued …

As part of the trip, we visited other early childhood facilities, including the Seoul Early Childhood Education and Development Institute, which is similar to Pittsburgh’s Children’s Museum, but with many more things for the children to experience. We also visited a Government Complex Day Care Center, which is located downtown and is connected to a government building and serves the children of the government employees. We were surprised to see their fabulous outdoor playground on the roof since there is not much land around the building.

We also visited the Seoul Museum of Art, a historic palace of a past king, the Demilitarized Zone (the divide between North and South Korea), the Korean Folk Village, which depicts Korea long ago, and we went shopping. The trip to Seoul was the highlight of my year and reminded me that no matter where they are from, most children are eager to learn!

Teaching in South Korea (Charline Tomer)

When preparing for my trip to South Korea, I was excited and anxious at the same time, but the excitement overwhelmed me as we took off from the Pittsburgh airport, headed for Seoul. Mrs. McGillen was a great partner for both travel and work. We boldly explored all of the sights, smells, learning and wonderment that we could. Our partner educators were wonderful hosts, and we were fortunate to have fantastic weather for our entire trip.

One of the outstanding experiences, and there were many, was the day we spent with the Korean children in the Duksung Women’s University’s Child Development Laboratory Kindergarten, the Education and Development Institute and the Korean government’s day care center.
Teaching in South Korea, continued …

I enjoyed reading, “Polar Bear, Polar Bear” by Eric Carle to the children in the lab school. The children loved using the shaky eggs, listening and moving to the CD “Color In Motion” with the colored ribbons, playing with goop and doing spin art!

We were honored to meet with Duksung Women’s University’s new president, and he said to us, “How about those Pirates?” We met with several groups: undergraduates, graduate students, and parents, as well as faculty, administrators and staff in the early childhood department. Mrs. McGillen and I planned and presented several workshops, which included Teaching Science During Circle Time, Partnering With Parents, and Parent Involvement.

We tasted a variety of Korean dishes while dining with the students, faculty, directors and staff. The last evening, we went to dinner with the practicum students from last January 2013; they all say, “Hello”, and they miss our children. Now we are invigorated by our experiences to host a new group of early childhood practicum students from Duksung in January!

Beyond the classroom, we toured palace grounds, took a bus tour of the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, and visited a Korean Folk Village that showed Korean life from years ago.
Undergraduate Spotlight

Arielle Cohen has always loved working with children and is so happy to be working with the wonderful group of children at the Children’s School! She writes, “I love seeing them grow and learn through all their different experiences. I particularly enjoy seeing their creativity. It’s always an adventure, whether it’s watching them come up with imaginative games on the playground, hearing them tell stories, or marveling at their artistic creations in the classroom. Even though I’ve only been here a couple months, I can already see their ability to express themselves growing.”

Arielle is an art loving, pre-med, psychology major who is not exactly sure what she’ll end up doing. “Right now, I love the idea of working in developmental pediatrics. I am fascinated by development and education through childhood and early adulthood, and I have experienced it in a few different ways. I am a co-director of Carnegie Mellon’s Strive for College, which is a local chapter of a national non-profit that aims to help disadvantaged high school students through the college application process by providing mentors who are current college students. I also study the history of the Juvenile Court with Dr. Steven Schlossman. I feel very lucky that I’ve been able to learn from a wide variety of ages and populations, and the Children’s School is an integral part of that!”

Student Teacher Reflections

• Brittany Bauer (AM Young 3’s with Mrs. Tomer)

This field placement has been one of the best educational experiences I have had over the last 4 years at the University of Pittsburgh. Seeing all of the hard work and planning done by the teachers at the school inspired me throughout the semester, not only in my work with the children here, but also in my coursework and gym class. I have learned so many skills that I am able to translate into other facets of my life. No words can truly express how meaningful this experience has been. Working with Mrs. Tomer has been wonderful; she is a wealth of knowledge and is an exceptional mentor teacher. All of the teachers in the school are welcoming and great examples of what I aspire to be in the future. Everyone has a unique background, so there are many enriching experiences that developed, and I was happy to be a part of the process. Working with the children has been so much fun! Each one has grown over the semester, and I have been fortunate to see this growth and development; it is so enriching interacting with the children everyday! All of the extra work I put into different activities for the Children’s School has prepared me for the future and proved beneficial, propelling my studies even further. Thank you to the families, teachers and especially Mrs. Tomer and Dr. Carver for allowing me to have this experience and learning opportunity.
Student Teacher Reflections, continued …

• **Caitlin Florek** (AM Middle 4’s with Mrs. Opferman)

I cannot believe my time at the Children's School is coming to a close. I have had so many great experiences and memories of my time here. Every morning, I was able to start my day with the smiles of all the students arriving at the school. They knew that the day was planned full of fun learning activities. The staff has been so welcoming and caring to all the students, parents, and three student teachers. I could not ask for a better place to have my first real teaching experience. I was so lucky to have a team that worked together so well and allowed me to join in with my ideas. I will miss the staff and every one of those children who have changed my life as a future teacher and a person. This was one of my best experiences and I'm always in awe on how well everyone gets along and collaborates. I know I can take everything I learned from this school and apply it to a future classroom.

• **Brianna Amoscato** (Kindergarten with Mrs. Blizman)

It is hard to believe that my valuable teaching experience in the Kindergarten is coming to a close. The last 16 weeks have been filled with hours of hard work, creating lesson plans, completing student evaluations, learning classroom management techniques and successfully differentiating instruction. I must admit that I was somewhat overwhelmed upon first entering the Kindergarten classroom with a group of 22 intelligent and creative students. However, my mentor teacher Mrs. Blizman and the other Kindergarten teachers, Mrs. Perovich and Mrs. Armbruster, welcomed me into the team with open arms and encouraged me to explore new teaching techniques and instructional strategies. In addition, they helped me implement new lessons and look at teaching from a different perspective. Mrs. Blizman gave me valuable advice and suggestions that I will take with me as I begin a new journey in a new classroom next semester. I feel incredibly fortunate to have had the opportunity to experience a warm, innovative, supportive and caring environment such as the Children's School as a pre-professional teacher. I will miss the Kindergarten students immensely as they have taught me that *Childhood is a journey not a race.* Their joy and the smiles will remain with me forever.
Research Spotlight

The “Feel the Stories” Game
Investigating the Influence of Haptic Stimulation on Story Listening

Siyan Zhao is a senior at Carnegie Mellon University, majoring in Cognitive Science and Human-Computer Interaction. Together with psychologist Dr. Bobby Klatzky and researchers at Disney Research, she is studying whether children ages four to six can relate haptic stimulation (tactile or touch) to verbal materials, and whether haptic sensations paired with verbal descriptions affect children’s responses to stories. For children ages four to six, story listening is an important method for building vocabulary, grammar rules and social knowledge. As a learning process, story listening mostly takes place with children listening to adults reading to them while, sometimes, with children looking at pictures from the book as well. Therefore, traditional story listening mainly involves 2 sensory modalities, visual and auditory. As past studies have suggested that multisensory input has an effect on learning, we want to integrate haptic input in story reading. How can the new sensory input influence children’s understanding, recall and preference of verbal materials? To understand the influence, we will read verbal materials, such as short stories, to children while they wear a vest that produces gentle and short vibrations on their back, similar to cell phone vibrations. The vibration can be felt through the clothing on their back. Children will listen to stories while feeling vibratory patterns related to the stories. For example, while listening to a story in which there is light rain, children may feel a vibratory pattern intended to resemble the feeling of rain. After feeling vibrations, children will complete simple tasks, such as naming the sensation suggested by a vibration or comparing vibrations to one another; or, after hearing a story with key words accompanied by vibrations, children may retell the story, indicate their liking for it, or answer questions about its content. Audio recordings will be made for the tasks so that researchers can transcribe them in the future. The audio will be used to assess how accurately and in what detail children remember the story.

The Chinese Words Game

Dr. Erik Thiessen and his research team are testing how easily children can learn new second language words in a game context by having children play an iPad learning game (uTalk) with Chinese words and pictures of simple colors and body parts. They hypothesize that although the task will be harder for children than adults, the children will show learning of new Chinese words. In addition, they hypothesize that older children will learn more due to increases in memory and attentional capacity. Finally, they hypothesize that the greater simplicity of the color labels (compared to more complex pictures for body parts) will lead to better learning in this limited training context. There is little exploration of the effectiveness of training techniques for adult language learners on learning in children. However, the fact that children are more successful language learners in general means that providing useful and age-appropriate language learning experiences before puberty is an important goal. Therefore, the researchers aim to modify existing training approaches for younger learners. Ideally, instructed practice like this game would be only one component of a richer, more interactive second language learning environment.
A Series of Science Content Games

The purpose of Karrie Godwin’s dissertation study is to investigate the relationship between learning and other general cognitive processes such as attention, memory, processing speed, executive function, and general reasoning ability (see the Reasoning Skills description in the October 2013). In this series of science games, she and her research team are examining how children allocate their attention in different learning environments. In particular, they are interested in examining whether children’s ability to effectively distribute their attention has consequences for learning new science content.

In the **Monkey and Ape Game**, children are presented with a series of pictures of monkeys and apes on a computer. Children are told the name for each picture. At the end of the game, a memory assessment is administered to see which items the children learned. For example, after learning the names of different types of monkeys and apes children may be asked to identify the vervet (e.g., “Point to the vervet”). It’s the one in the top right corner of the display.

In a second computer task called the **Bird Game**, children are presented with a series of pictures of birds. Children are told the name for each picture. At the end of the game, a memory assessment is administered to see which items the children learned. For example, after learning the names of different types of birds, children may be presented with a picture of a bird and asked to recall the bird’s name (e.g., “What was the name of this bird?”). The one pictured here is called a lilac-breasted roller (commonly found in the open woodlands and savannas of sub-Saharan Africa and the southern Arabian Peninsula).

Perhaps you wondered …

**why children occasionally participate in the same study twice.**

There are several reasons researchers might administer the same task to a child on more than one occasion. There might be technical problems with research equipment or the research session might be interrupted (for example, due to a fire drill). If this happens, you will find the exact same study description in your child’s backpack on two separate occasions. Another possibility is that the researchers are testing research stimuli or calibrating the time elements of a task, so it is helpful to compare the same child’s performance in two slightly different versions before deciding which way to run the study; that approach also reserves the largest number of children as subjects for the final version. Lastly, some studies are longitudinal, meaning that they involve monitoring children’s performance over time to measure their maturation or learning. In these cases, the multiple sessions are planned in advance and the study descriptions are labeled “Session 1 of x”, “Session 2 of x”, etc.
The Tricky Monkey Game

Alexandra Ossowski is an undergraduate student working with Dr. Marlene Behrmann (Department of Psychology) to examine the development of left hemisphere specialization for word reading ability. In adults, the left hemisphere of the brain has a much stronger ability to recognize letters and words than the right hemisphere. This ability can be observed by measuring accuracy in matching words and letters in the right visual field and in the left visual field. Normally, due to the fact that information in the right visual field has access to the left hemisphere before the right hemisphere, adults show superior accuracy for word recognition when the information is presented to the right visual field. This right visual field advantage grows over the course of development. It is often not present until the age of 6 or 7, when children solidify their letter knowledge. The researchers are interested in investigating what about the left hemisphere leads it to be strongly involved in word recognition. The hypothesis is that the left hemisphere is superior at identifying words because of its superior ability to recognize high spatial frequency information. They are interested in seeing whether children who are not yet reading show left hemisphere/right visual field superiority for high spatial frequency visual stimuli. If so, this may indicate that the left hemisphere becomes specialized for word reading due to its bias to high spatial frequency information.

• In Session 1 of 3 – The Stripes Game, children will play a computer game to find where a sneaky monkey is hiding. One grating (an image of varying light and dark lines) of high or low spatial frequency will be presented. The children will be told that if they want to find the monkey, they will press the green button when they see the picture with wide stripes (low spatial frequency), and the red button when they see the picture with thin stripes (high spatial frequency).

• In Session 2 of 3 – The Letters Game, children will play a similar game, measuring the degree of left hemisphere/right visual field superiority for letter matching. The children will be told that the way to find the monkey is to indicate whether two letters are the same or different. One letter will appear in the center of the screen and disappear. Immediately after, another letter will appear briefly at either the left or the right of the screen. The child will be instructed to press the green button if the second letter is the same as the one that was in the center, and to press the red button if the second letter is different from the first. The hypothesis is that children with greater letter knowledge (as measured in Session 3) and greater right visual field advantage for high spatial frequency information (Session 1) will be more accurate in the right visual field for matching letters.

• In the final session – The Words Game, the researchers assess each child’s level of reading ability and letter knowledge, as their hypothesis is that children with a higher level of letter knowledge and reading ability will also show a greater right visual field/left hemisphere advantage for high spatial frequency gratings (Session 1) and letters (Session 2). The CORE Phonics Survey will be used in this session. In this survey, children will be asked to name uppercase and lowercase letters, then tell the sound each letter makes, and finally “read” real and non-real words.

Examples of word stimuli used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Real</th>
<th>Nonreal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sip</td>
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Director’s Corner: Imagine the Ripples

Because I am writing this article on the 50th anniversary of John F. Kennedy’s assassination, his famous 1961 inauguration quote echoes in my mind. “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” The quote could be rewritten for any group to which we belong – your employer, your school, your worship community, your neighborhood, and your family.

Developmental Psychologist Richard Lerner (Tufts University) highlights the importance of personal contribution for children’s development. “Nothing may matter more for the healthy development of young people than a belief that they matter: that they are valued by others and that they can make meaningful contributions to their world.”

The fourth practice in learning The Art of Possibility emphasizes “Being a Contribution”. The authors suggest replacing the typical “success/failure” game that promotes competition in a measurement universe with the “contribution” game. “In the game of contribution you wake up each day and bask in the notion that you are a gift to others (p. 58) … [such that you] throw yourself into life as someone who makes a difference, accepting that you may not understand how or why (p. 59).”

The authors suggest starting by reflecting on the ways you have “contributed” over the past week – in any aspect of life. The task for the second week is to simply notice the contributions as the week progresses. The third is to cast yourself “as a contribution into the week ahead, like a pebble into a pond, and imagine that everything [you] do sends ripples out beyond the horizon (p. 62).”

As laboratory school educators, we have the privilege of serving diverse constituents by facilitating researchers’ studies, supporting university students’ coursework, offering children the best possible preschool and kindergarten programs, collaborating with families to nurture their children and handle challenges that arise, organizing professional development experiences for practicing educators and mentoring students pursuing careers in early childhood. Sometimes we are fortunate to see the ripples spread, like a recent email from a Developmental Psychology professor at Rutgers who wrote to say that she attributes her “entire career trajectory” to me (my course, my advice, my hiring her to work at the Children’s School) or the student teacher who trained here with Mrs. Bird and is now the Director of the Early Learning Center at Carlow University. Most times, however, we never know the impact of our words and actions, and the greatest impact may not be from the parts of our job listed on our mission statement or even on the individuals it is our job to serve. For example, the way we treat the professional who cleans our school on the night shift or the electrician who comes to change our light bulbs may have more impact than anything else we do in a given day, particularly as we acknowledge the important contributions they make so that we can do our work here well.

As educators and parents nurturing young children, we have daily opportunities to make contributions in big and small ways. More importantly, however, we can help our children understand the valuable contributions they make to our families, school community, and beyond. It can be as simple as “One Smile”, as beautifully told in the book by Cindy McKinley. In the story, Katie’s spontaneous smile encourages a young man to keep looking for a job, his willingness to help a stranded motorist on the way prompts her to leave a big tip for the waitress who then treats her children to some special food that they then decide to share with a new family in town. And so it goes. It’s a wonderful example for the whole family, especially during this season of thanksgiving and celebration!