



Carnegie Mellon University Children's School December 2014 Family Newsletter



A Season of Giving

At the Children's School, we began our fall season of giving by supporting the Homewood Children's Village **Coats for Kids** Drive with new coats and cash donations, then gave 60+ bags of useful items to the Alpha Chi Omega collection for the **Women's Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh**, and finally contributed 183 non-perishable food items to the **Carnegie Mellon University Food Drive**. Unfortunately, the heavy rain prevented our participation in the campus-wide "Cans Across the Cut" event, but the kindergarten friends helped by counting our items in the school hallway instead. Mrs. Rosenblum and Mrs. Bird also helped at the Homewood Children's Village family event on November 15th by organizing a family craft activity for everyone!



During January, we will collect used magazines and books for the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh's "adopt a book/magazine" program. Books for adults and children are welcome, but please limit magazines to those less than a year old and remove your subscription labels. If you have any questions, please email Jessica Morowitz (Jack, AM 4's) at jessicachristiemorowitz@gmail.com.

December Dates:

Tuesday, December 2nd – Extended Morning 4's Open House 12-1pm

Thursday, December 4th – Extended Morning 3's Open House 12-1pm

Friday Afternoon, December 5th - Parent Teacher Conferences for 3's

Regular School Schedule in the Morning

Saturday, December 6th – Waterfront Barnes & Noble Book Fair (10am-2pm)

Thursday, December 11th – Q&A with Dr. Carver (4:30-6:00 pm)

Thursday, December 18th – Last Day of the Semester for Children

Friday, December 19th – Professional Development Day for Staff

No School for Children – December 19th through January 4th

Staff and Children return to school on Monday, January 5th

Have a Wonderful Winter Break!!

Generous Givers & Gracious Receivers

During the year, we seek to help the learners at the Children's School to become generous givers and gracious receivers. Whether giving and receiving affirmation, help, or actual items, we aim to emphasize respect and gratitude. For example, when collecting food in November, we explained to the children that some of our neighbors in Pittsburgh do not have enough food or enough money to buy food. We can help them stay healthy by sharing nutritious food with them. At other times, people may share food with us, perhaps when we are traveling or when someone in our family is sick. We also emphasize the importance of expressing gratitude verbally or by drawing or writing.

Involving your whole family in helping provides opportunities that go well beyond donation drives in ways that build relationships. A child's smile, hug, or drawing can brighten a neighbor's day. Once children have learned skills by helping in their own homes and yards, they can share those skills with their elderly relatives and friends. Families can also share from their abundance when they cook or bake together, when flowers bloom or vegetables ripen, or when they have time to sit and listen. See "*14 Little Ways to Encourage Kindness*" by Kristine Breese from Parents Magazine for more ideas (<http://www.parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/advice/14-little-ways-to-encourage-kindness/?page=1>).

Motivating Recovery

Many Children's School educators and families supported Mr. Salinetto and his family when his sister, Rachel, was in a terrible car accident on May 30th and nearly lost her life. Her miraculous recovery and determination to strive for her best life possible has amazed her doctors and everyone in her wide network of support. Rachel is now inspiring others who strive to thrive! You might be interested in the feature story WTAE did on the 6-month anniversary of Rachel's accident.

<http://www.wtae.com/news/accident-victim-inspires-others-walks-again/29995162>

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.

Ten Thousand Villages Fundraiser

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 20th. Our net sales were \$813.33 so our event raised \$81.33 (10%) toward our purchase of new library books. Every little bit helps!

Business Contributions for Scholarships

The Children's School participates in the state's PreK Educational Improvement Tax Credit (PKEITC) 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.

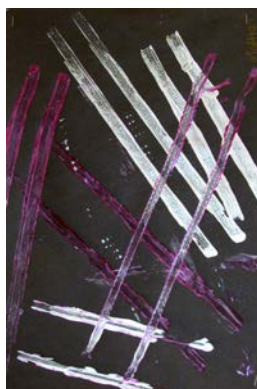
- Through the PKEITC, eligible PA businesses can earn tax credits while providing financial assistance for children to attend preschool. Thus far in 2014-15, we have received a contribution from the Buncher Company and Beth's Barricades. We appreciate the continuing support from the Nury family, Children's 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. In 2014-15, The Children's School OSTC Program is funding 30 students, Kindergarten – 11th grade, in 15 different schools throughout Allegheny and Westmoreland counties. We have received contributions from The Buncher Company, PNC Bank, and UPMC Health Benefits. Thank you to these companies for partnering with us to support these families.
- If you would like more information or can help us to build a list of prospective businesses, please contact the Main Office.

December Gallery Features

3's Friends: Evelyn L., Lily T., and Shourya T.

4's Friends: Nick D., Rhys J., Mattias K, and Miyako S.

Kindergarten Friends: Natalie B. and Lola F.



Family Spotlight: At Home Away From Home

Namaste (*hello*),

We are a Hindi-speaking Indian family who came to Pittsburgh at the end of December 2013. Saatwik is the most energetic member of the family. He is now Mrs. Solomon's friend in the Green Room and will turn 4 very soon. Mani (father) is a faculty in the department of chemical engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Bombay, India. He is on a one year sabbatical at CMU. Alka (mother) is a Ph.D. in computer science & engineering. For the last two years, she has been at home so that she can spend more time with Saatwik and in the process learn more about herself. In her spare time, she keeps herself professionally engaged by working as a research volunteer on research problems of her interest.



In India, we live in Mumbai, which is on the western sea coast. Known as the “city of dreams”, Mumbai is most famous for “Bollywood”, a term derived from Hollywood that represents the Hindi movie making industry in India. Though geographically not huge, India is culturally a very diverse country with more than 20 officially recognized languages and with 30 languages spoken by more than a million native speakers (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_India). Even though not native to India, English is widely spoken as well. India is the biggest democracy in the world with almost all religions being practiced in the country.

This is the first visit for Alka and Saatwik to USA. When Saatwik would ask us in Mumbai about why we were going to USA, we told him that we were going to see the snow. He was really excited by that. Given the abundant snowfall last winter, we can confidently say that he was not disappointed. The snow made it easy for him to settle in Pittsburgh, and he is now rooting for a lot of snow this winter as well!! We (Alka and Mani), however found the weather harsh and daunting in the beginning. Slowly we realized that Pittsburgh is a fantastic place with lots of fun places, museums and friendly people. By summer, we completely understood why Pittsburgh is such a great place to stay.

We feel that the best part of our stay in Pittsburgh is that Saatwik really likes going to school. Initially, we were apprehensive about Saatwik being able to adjust in a totally different environment. Looking back at the events, we can now say that deciding to send Saatwik to the Children's School was one of the best decisions we made in our US trip. A pleasant thing has been that till this day, Saatwik has never refused to go to school, even during his initiation period. Personally for us, the Children's School has been more than just a school. We think of it as a big family that has been a source of information and support for us. Regarding pedagogy, we love the theme-based teaching practiced at the Children's School. We also love the fact that children are involved in cooking activities at school. As a result, Saatwik started helping in food preparation at home and also helps us buy groceries!!

We will be going back to India at the end this year. “*Give them roots and give them wings*” is our favorite quote that we read on the Children's School notice board. We don't know how much Saatwik will remember about this School when he grows up, but we will cherish the memories and are sure that the process of developing his roots and wings has been truly set in motion during his time here. Finally, if any of you are thinking about escaping the coming (or rather ongoing) winter, we strongly recommend that you visit Mumbai - a city with no winter. We will be happy to host you.

Pittsburgh Perspectives

Pittsburgh was home to America's Favorite Neighbor, Fred Rogers, whose life on and off the television screen modeled "neighborliness" for children and adults alike. For more than 30 years, he sang "*Won't You Be My Neighbor?*" to invite us all to make our communities better neighborhoods through our words and actions. During this season of giving, let's begin on our own block!

*It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood,
A beautiful day for a neighbor. Would you be mine? Could you be mine?...*
*It's a neighborly day in this beauty wood,
A neighborly day for a beauty. Would you be mine? Could you be mine?...*

*I've always wanted to have a neighbor just like you.
I've always wanted to live in a neighborhood with you.
So, let's make the most of this beautiful day. Since we're together we might as well say:
Would you be mine? Could you be mine? Won't you be my neighbor?
Won't you please, Won't you please? Please won't you be my neighbor?*

December's Pittsburgh Tip: The Fred Rogers Company (<http://www.fredrogers.org>) offers parent resources on a wide variety of topics. Their professional development newsletter is as helpful for parents as educators. You can register for the monthly emails via at link at the bottom of either the Parent or Professional Resources page.

Barnes & Noble Book Fair

On Saturday, December 6th from 10 am until 2 pm, we will be holding our annual Barnes & Noble Book Fair at the store in the Waterfront. At 11 am, a story and song time will be held and Mrs. Bird and her brother, Ken Thompson, will host a lively sing-a-long at 12 noon. Origami activities will be available, as well as a scavenger hunt. 15% of the in-store and on-line sales will benefit the Children's School library enhancement fund. Please use the enclosed vouchers when making a purchase. We are still looking for volunteers to help with the gift-wrapping table and to greet our families as they shop. If you are available to volunteer that day, please sign up at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AhLnfm9qVJDdER3SG9jdHhSMEV5dXJPWEp1aEZWdHc&usp=sharing>

Still Seeking Hosts for Korean Students

In late January, the Children's School will be hosting 4 undergraduate students from Duksung Women's University in Seoul, South Korea for an International Practicum Program. A total of 12 Early Childhood Education students will be in Pittsburgh for practicum experiences at our school, Falk, Carlow, or Pitt's University Child Development Center. To help the students experience family life in Pittsburgh, we are recruiting two families who live close to the university to provide **housing and some meals** for two practicum students, with tentative dates from Sunday, January 18th through Sunday, February 1st. Proximity to CMU is essential so that the students can use public transportation or rides from teachers to travel to and from school. Please contact Dr. Carver at sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu if you are interested in this hosting opportunity.



Questions for Dr. Carver

On Thursday, December 11th, Dr. Carver will host an open question & answer session for parents from 4:30 to 6:00pm. Children can join the Extended PM group for play in the preschool.

Perhaps you have questions about what household tasks are reasonable for children at different ages, how to help children interact better with friends and relatives, why children sometimes behave better at school than at home (or vice versa), etc. Anything is fair game! Below are some answers to previous questions that you may have pondered. Remember that you can also send questions to Dr. Carver any time via email at sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu or request a personal appointment.

Perhaps you wondered ...

... whether all children write letters backwards or whether it's a sign of dyslexia.

The simple answer is that it's typical. Basically, until children encounter letters and numerals, the orientation of an object is not a factor in its name. A dog is a dog no matter which way it's facing or whether you view it from the right or left or above or below. So, children are not used to encoding the orientation and using that information to decide what to call something. All of a sudden, with letters and numerals, orientation matters, sequence matters, and position on the page matters, etc. Partly, children have to be told that these things matter, and they have to have the short-term memory capacity to store all the information at one time. Usually, adults are good at telling them what matters, but we have to be patient until they mature enough to hold that much information in memory at once. With lower case letters, p, d, q, and b are the worst because they're all basically a circle and a line but in all the possible orientations relative to each other. Sigh.

It's not unusual for us to see some of these issues in kindergarten and 1st grade. By age 7, there should be enough memory capacity to handle them, which is why challenges such as dyslexia aren't typically diagnosed until that time. Because we know the errors are common and that maturity is the main factor in remedying them, we do not make a big deal about correcting them. Instead, we want to encourage the children to do as much beginning writing and reading as they can, and we don't want our corrections to discourage their efforts. That being said, there are a few strategies that adults can use to help children work from left to right, top to bottom. For example, you may see teachers use a green dot on the left and a red dot on the right, so they tell the children to start at the green dot. With reading, we'll often use a finger to cue where to start since we don't want to write in the book.

... why children suddenly start lying when they're about 5 years old.

Many developmental gains have both positive and negative aspects. When children learn to crawl and then walk, we need to carry them less and they can be more independent, BUT we also need to childproof the house more thoroughly and keep a close eye on them because they haven't yet learned to judge what's risky and safe. Children learning to talk is a wonderful boost to family communication, BUT they then begin repeating what they've heard, including both the affirming and public information and the swear words or secrets. Similarly, the lying that children begin to do as they approach age 5 is the down side of a really important cognitive advance that psychologists call **Theory of Mind**.
(... continued on the next page)

Perhaps you wondered ... (continued)

Before age 5, children's understanding of their own and others' minds is limited. Once they know something, they have trouble reasoning about a time when they did not know it. One classic task involves showing children a familiar box, such as a crayon box, and asking what they think is inside. Children will, of course, say, "crayons". The experimenter then shows the child something unusual in the box, like marbles. After the surprise, the experimenter asks what the child thought was inside the box before it was opened. Preschoolers will typically answer, "marbles". Furthermore, if asked what another child who hasn't seen what's in the box will say when asked the first question, the child will respond, "marbles", as if the child believes that what she knows is known by everyone else also.

Understanding that our minds are separate is crucial for interpersonal relations and communication because it guides our level of explanation when telling a story, based on whether the hearer knows the place, the people involved, etc. It's also what helps us understand the value of keeping a secret or arranging a surprise. On the other hand, it is what also leads to children experimenting with lying. If children continued to believe that parents and teachers know everything they know, there would be no point in lying, but the advent of this theory of mind helps the child to realize that we do not actually know the truth unless they tell us. Together with a fear of disappointing us, the theory of mind makes a lie quite tempting. The key for parent response to lying behavior is to discuss the problem directly. Help the child understand that it is important for you to know the truth and that telling the truth helps people know they can trust you. At this point in school, we are also talking about stories that are true and others that are from our imagination (non-fiction vs. fiction). It's wonderful for children to begin exploring the types of stories that they can imagine, but sometimes they do not signal which type of story they are telling. Feel free to ask them whether their story is a true story that really happened or whether it is something from their imagination.

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!

Upcoming Screenings re: Ears and Eyes

This year, the Easter Seals Speech, Language, Hearing and Middle Ear Screenings will be held at school during the week of January 12th. Lynn Hofstetter, who has conducted these screenings for many years, will be returning. This speech pathologist plays a series of **Talking & Listening** games with each child that take about 15 minutes total and give a snapshot of the child's development in the areas of hearing and listening, direction following, understanding and use of language, speech sound production, voice quality, and fluent communications. If you are interested in having your child screened, please complete the enclosed permission slip and return it with cash or a check for \$20 made payable to Easter Seals. In February, Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh will be conducting screenings for vision issues. Permission slips will be included with our January newsletter. Please contact Mrs. Rosenblum at rosenblu@andrew.cmu.edu if you have any questions.



Family Social Organization

Hello everyone!

We can't believe that three full months of school have already passed! The FSO had another great month of events. We are looking forward to completing our fall semester with a festive month of activities in December.

On Halloween, we had a roaring event at the Pittsburgh Zoo. Children got up close with some furry friends at the **Zoo Moves class**, followed by lunch and a self-guided tour around the zoo. Special thanks to Alexis Tuckfelt and Aimee Bednar for all of their help in making Zoo Moves such a huge success! Later in the month, friends gathered at the Ryer Academy for a fun martial arts class – perfect for a chilly fall day.

Finally, our book club had a great turn out for a discussion of the "School's Out" documentary! Everyone there felt that they would enjoy another piece about parenting choices, so for the next book club (Wednesday, Dec. 10) we'll be reading an article that is available online for free: <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/03/hey-parents-leave-those-kids-alone/358631/>

We are gearing up for some fun activities in December! Please watch for emails about the Holiday train show at the Model Railroad museum, and Morning at the Movies.

Amee and Julie



We're thrilled to announce an FSO Morning at the Movies on a day off from school! The Gancy family, a Children's School alumni family, has once again been generous enough to arrange a special private Children's School screening of **Penguins of Madagascar**:

Movie: PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR

When: Friday, December 19th. Movie starts at **9:30am** (doors will open at 9am)

Where: Waterworks Cinemas (Fox Chapel)

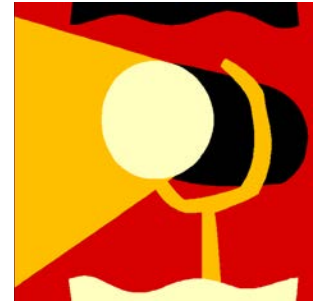
Cost: \$10/person (includes movie ticket, small popcorn, and drink)

Please send cash in an envelope marked, "FSO Movie" with the names of those attending to the Main Office by Tuesday, December 16th.

Please contact Julie Paris (julieparis6@gmail.com) if you have any questions.

Undergraduate Spotlight

Rachel McKinney has always enjoyed working with children, which is why she is so excited to be a part of the undergraduate support staff at the Children's School! As a classroom assistant in the PM 3's class, she has enjoyed getting to know the children through various playground activities. She says, "Interacting with the children through play is an incredible experience because you get to see them learn while also having a ton of fun. At this age, they learn so much through exploring their environment, and they also intuitively apply the concepts and skills taught in the classroom in a way that is unparalleled outside of childhood."



Rachel is a freshman psychology major following the pre-med track, and she aspires to someday work in developmental pediatrics or child psychiatry. Before coming to the Children's School, she discovered her passion for working with children in a similar role as a Big Helper in her high school's Early Childhood Development class. She writes, "Working with preschool-age children on a daily basis was an incredibly rewarding experience, and I learned so much about not only the children, but also about myself through that class. I am thrilled to have this opportunity once more as a classroom assistant in the Children's School!"

Student Teacher Reflections

Kayla Kirschenmann and Jennifer Young are seniors in U. Pitt's Combined Accelerated Studies in Education (CASE) Program, a five-year undergrad and masters program that includes a BS in Applied Developmental Psychology and a M.Ed. in early childhood and special education.

- Kayla Kirschenmann (AM Older 4's with Mrs. Bird)



It is hard to believe that my time here at the Children's School is coming to a close. The staff and children have been so welcoming. I have enjoyed seeing the students' smiling faces everyday. The best part of my day was talking with the children and hearing their stories. I have learned so much from the students while working with them. They welcomed me into their classroom and let me try different activities with them. My time here has been one of the best experiences I have had. I have learned so many valuable things that I will take with me in my other teaching experiences. The team of teachers I worked with taught me so much about collaborating and sharing ideas. Learning from Mrs. Bird was a joy. She has taught me so much about how to be the best teacher possible. Watching her interact with the children inspired me everyday to do better. I am truly grateful for being able to work at the Children's School.



Student Teacher Reflections, continued ...

• Jennifer Young (Kindergarten with Mrs. Perovich)

This past semester has been amazing and I can't thank the staff and my fabulous kindergartners enough for making my time at Children's School such a great experience. This program truly exemplifies how important a high quality early childhood program is for children. I have really enjoyed working with such a knowledgeable and helpful staff this past semester. The smiles on the children's faces when they joined me at the rotunda each morning made my day. One of my favorite parts of this experience has been the freedom to plan and implement my own lessons. There are so many wonderful resources available at the Children's School, which helped me stretch my creativity to give the children the best experience possible. Mrs. Perovich, Mrs. Armbruster, and Mrs. Blizman have been so welcoming and open to my ideas throughout the term, and I love the way we were able to merge our different personalities in the Kindergarten classroom. Next semester, I will be teaching in a life skills classroom; and although I am sad to leave the Children's School, I am very excited to see what this new student teaching experience has in store for me. I know that all of the tools I have gained this past semester will be extremely useful in my future teaching.



Research Spotlight

The Let's Balance Game

One of the Research Methods groups tested the impact of encouragement on gross motor skill performance. Encouragement is particularly interesting because it is free and widely available. According to current research, it has the power to motivate and increase children's attention. In the Let's Balance game, researchers used verbal ("Good job!") and physical (high-fives) forms of encouragement to investigate their effects on balancing task performance. Children did five simple balancing tasks to see how long they could sustain each task (up to 20 seconds each). The tasks included balancing on each foot, tiptoeing, and yoga tree poses on each foot. Children in one group received encouragement after performing each gross motor task, and those in the other group received the verbal encouragement and high-fives only after all the tasks were completed. Randomly assigning children to one of the two conditions allowed the students to test whether the timing of encouragement would cause a significant change in balancing task performance, which might then help parents and educators make decisions about the timing of their encouragement as children attempt challenging tasks.



Research Spotlight, continued ...

The Playdough Game

Another group of Research Methods students tested if there are differences in preschool children's willingness to share items depends on how enticing the items are. They randomly assigned children to a "bland" playdough condition and an "enticing" playdough condition, with an off-white playdough contrasted with green, sparkly, vanilla-scented playdough. Regardless of the type of playdough, they assessed willingness to share by asking a series of prompts, which progressed from just general conversation ("How are you doing today?") to indirect hints for sharing ("That's really fun playdough!") to direct requests for sharing ("How much playdough are you willing to share?"). Researchers responded to children's sharing by saying, "Thank you!" and to non-sharing with, "That's okay!" The students also investigated whether there was a difference in sharing behavior depending on the birth order of the children. The goal of the experiment is to better understand how sharing skills develop in young children in order to be able to better facilitate healthy sharing skills among peers.

The Faces Game

Yet another Research Methods group designed a study related to recognizing emotions in others based on the age of the child and the gender of both the child and the face. The student researchers hypothesized that five year olds would perform better than three year olds on the task, and they wondered whether children would all be better at recognizing female emotions because of greater time spent with female caregivers, whether that bias would be reduced in older children, or whether the gender of the child would matter. During the study, children see a 2-by-2 grid with four faces, each expressing one emotion - either happy, surprised, sad, or scared. Children were then asked which friend was expressing a certain emotion (for example, "Can you point to the person feeling happy?"). Children answered two such questions per grid and then played the game twice, once with a set of female faces and once with a set of male faces.



Director's Corner: Exploring Books



Why should we encourage children to explore literature, beginning with books? Inquiry with books helps children notice the key features of stories that matter to those who love them, as well as to begin linking cause and effect within the social contexts represented in both fiction and non-fiction narratives. With young children, the primary goal is NOT to teach reading directly, but rather to foster a love of literature that motivates a lifetime of engagement with text. Most children who have many opportunities to explore books with capable readers who encourage their inquiries and applaud their efforts will naturally develop strong reading skills.

I have begun this process anew with my granddaughter, Lucia, who just celebrated her 1st birthday. We spend most of our time with small “board books” or books made of cloth, both of which encourage her to independently manipulate the texts so that she can explore them with her hands and mouth while learning to physically orient the book correctly and manage the page turning. She already delights in choosing a book herself and then initiating an interaction with her parents or grandparents by handing one of us the book and raising her arms. Of course, our reading is teaching her many new words, but our cooperative exchanges related to the story and illustrations promote many aspects of communication. The book topics help teach Lucia about science, math, social studies, etc., and our reading sessions involve exploration of varying voice to represent different characters and emotions, as well as to distinguish narratives that are serious vs. silly. Reading stories again and again helps Lucia identify their rhythms and patterns, as well as experience a variety of ways to creatively tell the same story, particularly when we are exploring the same topics in the real world, such as reading about the animals she sees near her home.

As with all explorations, Children's School educators extend what families have begun by utilizing varied strategies on the teaching continuum to engage preschoolers and kindergartners with books in ever deepening ways. While reading books related to our themes, we explicitly teach the meaning of author, illustrator, fiction, non-fiction, etc., and we engage children in discussions of each story's characters, setting, and plot (starting with simple statements of the beginning, middle, and end). Families can often see how we model story reading because the children typically imitate it when they “play school” at home. All of our classrooms have “library corners” where children can independently choose books to “read” by themselves and where adults will read books that the children choose from our rotating collection. We have a wide range of titles available so that the children can explore books related to their unique interests and so that teachers can select ones that will help the group consider issues that are arising in the classroom or in their lives.

During December, we will be extending our literature explorations through our themes. Our preschoolers will be studying Theatre, which gives them opportunities to experiment with stories in a variety of forms, beginning with books but progressing to songs, puppet plays, dramatic retellings, etc. Our kindergartners will be delving into the world of African Tales, many of which are folktales or fables that teach a lesson rather than ending with “happily ever after”. This season is also the time when many of our families are celebrating religious holidays that involve sharing traditional stories that shape our sense of self and community across generations. What a wonderful opportunity for families to take extra time to read together, to explore different authors' and illustrators' versions of the stories, and to discuss the meaning of stories in our lives. We look forward to the children sharing their learning with us so that we might explore all kinds of stories together.