Director’s Corner: Leadership & Management

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has identified 10 accreditation standards that represent the quality of early childhood programs. The sets of measurable criteria for each standard were created by a blue-ribbon panel of early childhood experts and are based on the latest early childhood research. In this year’s Director’s Corner columns, I plan to share the Children’s School’s unique approach to meeting each standard to help everyone in our learning community more clearly understand the intentional design of our laboratory school as we progress through the NAEYC Accreditation Renewal process this year. I also hope that this series of articles demonstrates the value of our school’s integration into Carnegie Mellon University, an entire community that strives collaboratively for excellence and innovation.

NAEYC’s standard for Leadership and Management requires schools to implement strong personnel, fiscal, and program management policies so that all children, families, and staff have high-quality experiences. CMU encourages the same practices and provides many resources for us.

• We begin with a mission statement that is distinctive to our laboratory school objectives, together with a diverse leadership team that facilitates our progress in a climate of mutual trust, collaboration, and inclusion.

• Our own administrative team handles the required strategic planning, staffing, and program design for our unique open classroom model, but we receive significant support for the required technology systems, governance, insurance, human resources, and contracts with expert consultants from the broader university community through central campus services.

• The University’s finance management professionals guide us in the use of their systems to ensure that we meet all of the criteria for sound fiscal accountability and long range financial planning, with sufficient resources for excellence in all aspects of our mission, even those that are unique at CMU, such as support for our participation in the PA Educational Improvement Tax Credit program.

• Assistance from CMU’s Environmental Health and Safety team, Security professionals, Emergency Medical Technicians, and Nutritionist provide many of the resources necessary for developing the necessary policies and procedures related to health, nutrition, and safety. March’s article will focus on these issues, as well as those related to our school facilities.

• Similarly, the majority of our personnel policies, including those related to hiring, orientation, and benefits, are managed via the campus Human Resources Department, with excellent consultation available for the personnel work that I do as the director. My design of our annual professional review process and professional development program also benefits from diverse campus colleagues, such as those in the central Learning and Development department, the Counseling and Psychological Services team, etc.

• Finally, Carnegie Mellon’s leaders model an inclusive continuous quality improvement process that inspires our annual school evaluation, which is then reported to the Psychology department chair, staff, and families to encourage broad involvement and accountability in the enhancement process.

As we take the final steps in our Accreditation Renewal Process this year, we are ever more aware of the many ways that the university supports our work, and we are inspired to continue providing excellent and innovative services for all of our constituents.