Family Spotlight: Full Circle …  
Children’s School Alum to Children’s School Mom

Paul and I fell in love while we were grad students at Carnegie Mellon University 10 years ago. Much of our courtship occurred in and around the Margaret Morrison building because I was studying design, and my studio was on the second floor. At the time, we couldn't have known that we would be visiting Margaret Morrison every day to bring our children to school. Shortly after graduating (me with a Master's in Design and Paul with a Master's in Robotics) and getting married, we ventured to New York City to further our careers. After many years of designing interactive products, making robots, rushing around, and spending way too much time and money on delicious restaurants, we decided to move to a more livable city for our young and growing family. Much of this decision was driven by where we could offer our children the best education. With my family here, Pittsburgh was an obvious choice. We moved back last year.

Sending Evren (our first) to the Children's School created one of many connections to the school and to CMU. I went to the Children's School back in the early 80s, along with my twin brother, Mete. My father, Omer Akin, is a long-time professor of Architecture at CMU. He was lucky enough to send his twins to school a few floors below his own office. As a result, Margaret Morrison is practically my second home. The memories I have of my time at the Children's School are wonderful. I remember how special I felt on my third birthday (despite having to share it with my twin) because I got to stick three Velcro candles onto a giant picture of a cake while everyone applauded. I remember Mr. Fricke's exotic animals that lived in the building (ferrets, I discovered, are pretty smelly). And I remember happily riding my tricycle outside on a sunny fall day.

When we visited the Children’s School Open House last year, much had changed, of course. But I was blown away to see a familiar face: Mrs. Bird, who was one of my former teachers. It's a testament to what a wonderful community the school provides. People don't want to leave. Everyone who works at the school has a critical combination of warmth and strength - the perfect mix for helping our little ones learn to navigate the world. After just a couple weeks of attending school, we have seen an immediate transformation in Evren's sense of independence, confidence, and overall happiness. We couldn't feel more at ease with our decision to have Evren, and later his baby sister Ada, attend the Children's School.

We know that what the Children's School espouses - creative play, the art of making, critical thinking, and the practice of empathy and compassion – will lay a solid groundwork in our children's lives, as they did mine.

Ayca, Paul, Evren, & Ada Bartlett
Family Spotlight: The Children’s School & Our Family

My history with the Children's School started some 30 years ago when my sister and I attended the program. I have a few memories of the school, but I more remember my parents' fondness for The Children's School and our experience. My mother recalls the feeling of community with teachers and parents of our classmates. She told me about "pot luck" dinners and fall pumpkin festivals. My mother said her favorite thing about The Children's School was the encouragement for the children to express their feelings and individuality. My parents always attributed our confidence as small children to our early education received at Carnegie Mellon.

When it came time for my husband and I to plan for preschool, I knew right away where I wanted to send my children. When I called to ask a few questions, I had a lovely conversation with Mrs. Rosenblum; she was thrilled to learn that I was an alumnus of the preschool and that I wanted to send my children there. My husband Jim and I attended the Open House in January and Dr. Carver's presentation blew us away! The School was everything I wanted and more! I remember pointing out to Jim the children coming in from the playground on that winter day because I am a believer that children should get outside every day possible! This experience showed me that the staff here share my belief and take the time to put snow pants, hats, gloves, scarfs and boots on all these children. We left that day so excited to send our little princess to The Children's School.

The following September, Grace started her adventure with the three year olds. We have been more than pleased with the education she is gaining. She began learning about trees and moved on to so many topics that she wanted to talk about all the time. The theme was Pittsburgh and one day I picked her up she started to sing a song about our three rivers! The greeting / dismissal line was a huge convenience, especially with Grace's new baby brother along for the ride, and it continues to be. We had so much fun at all the FSO events and made new friendships that continue this year.

Every single staff member, from the teachers to the helpers to the administrators, has been a pleasure to encounter. They all seem genuinely happy to be there and are all so great with my daughter and my son James when they see him. The few times I have walked Grace to class, I feel like I am leaving her with family, all the teachers and administrators know her name and some even know James, and they all greet us with a big smile. This year Grace is enjoying learning about the rainforest and the solar system. I recently sent in James' application for next year and, while I am sad my babies are growing so fast, I feel very blessed to be able to provide them with The Children’s School experience. We are very proud to be part of the Children's School family! Jessica Simms