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.

*If the table shakes, which block will fall first?*

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.