

Undergraduate Spotlight

• **Lilah Buchanan** (Extended AM) is a Senior Psychology Major with a concentration in Developmental. She is also minoring in Hispanic Studies.



During my time at CMU, I have often been struck by the multitude of different kinds of learning going on at any given time in the academic buildings that dot Carnegie Mellon's campus. I remember thinking just this when I mistakenly wandered into an upper level mechanical engineering class on my first day of college. As a future psychology major, it was a shock. Students in one classroom are becoming experts in robotics while, in a classroom right next door, students are learning the fine points of rhetoric, or Chinese history. I spent my first three years at CMU enraptured by the diversity of all this classroom learning. Racing across campus to my own classes, I was unaware of another learning process that was happening on the ground floor of Margaret Morrison.

At the Children's School, students have been busy too. As you know, these students, or "friends" as I would come to know them, have been deeply engaged in becoming kind and compassionate critical thinkers. These friends and their teachers at the Children's School warmly invited me into this learning last fall. They taught me lessons distinct from those imparted in classrooms elsewhere on campus. They taught me complete engagement in the present moment and true wonder in the face of new experience and discovery. I learned about the unbridled self-confidence that accompanies a phrase like, "I am so good at blinking; I can blink with both eyes at the same time", and I have seen this same self-confidence make tackling new challenges a source of joy. I learned lessons on equality taught by young children who pronounced, "Just because one boy is bigger than another doesn't make him better." The teachers, always ready to guide me, have shown me what masterful and intentional teaching looks like and have helped me to be thoughtful and purposeful in my interactions with young children.

At the Children's School, I have seen excellence in early childhood education. As I look (with trepidation) at the post-graduation "real world" and seek to find a useful role in social work with families, I will take with me this experience in excellence in early childhood. This experience has given shape and purpose to my desire to work with families to create meaningful experiences for young children back at home.

