Undergraduate Spotlight

Emily Lawlis writes, “Working with the children at the Children’s School is not only a joy, but it also provides peace and stress relief. As a sophomore chemistry major at CMU, hard work and stress go hand in hand. It is too easy to become immersed in classes and homework and to lose perspective of why we do all the work that we do. Teaching and helping with the children strengthens and grounds me.”

“As soon as I walk into the Children’s School, my daily anxiety is lifted from my shoulders. Watching the children’s excitement over learning activities reinforces my love for my own classes. Their joy and happiness when they accomplish something is similar to my own excitement when a tedious experiment actually works. The children’s obvious thrill in creating, learning, and exploring reminds me of my own joy in discovery in the chemistry lab and encourages me to continue my studies. Helping the children to explore new ideas and concepts while having fun is the highlight of my day.”

“It is challenging and, at times emotionally draining, work, but it feels good to serve and to impact their lives. I know that I have learned a great deal from my work experience at the school. It has given me the opportunity to learn patience, to tolerate and to understand others. Most importantly, I have learned to use a variety of approaches to help each child achieve his/her potential. All these qualities will no doubt benefit me in whatever career I chose.”

Early Childhood Practicum Students

From January 18th through February 2nd, we will host four early childhood practicum students from Duksung Women’s University (Seoul, South Korea) for an International Practicum Program (see photos on the next page). The Campus School at Carlow University, the Falk School at the University of Pittsburgh, and the University Child Development Center will each also host students, with the total group including 10 undergraduates and 2 graduate students. We look forward to learning more about the initiatives our South Korean colleagues are leading in early childhood and in reflecting with them about the cross-cultural similarities and differences in our values and approaches related to educating young children.

Thanks to the Moraski (Boden K and Brylie 3’s) and Sekula (John K and Jane 4’s) families for offering housing to these visiting students. There are still opportunities to help by preparing welcome bags for the students, offering to provide lunch for them at the school one day, providing transportation to cultural attractions, etc. If you are interested in helping, please contact Dr. Carver at sc0e@andrew.cmu.edu to discuss options.
Early Childhood Practicum Students, continued ...

Young Kyoung Lee  
Junior  
Young 3’s / Extended AM

Jeonghyo Kim  
Junior  
Older 3’s / PM 3’s

Soobin Lee  
Senior  
Older 4’s / PM 4’s

Jin-Hee Kim  
Masters Student  
Kindergarten

Research Spotlight

The Hearts & Flowers Game

Graduate student Karrie Godwin and her advisor, Dr. Anna Fisher, are investigating the relationship between learning and other general cognitive processes such as attention, memory, processing speed, executive function, and general reasoning ability. In the Hearts and Flowers Game, they are measuring children’s cognitive control and their ability to inhibit a behavioral response. In this computer game, children are presented with a series of hearts and flowers. Children are instructed to respond to each object as follows: When children see a heart on the computer screen, they are told to press the response button on the same side that the heart was presented (e.g., if the heart appears on the left hand side of the screen, the correct response would entail pressing the left response button). However, when children see a flower, they are instructed to press the opposite response button (e.g., if the flower appears on the left hand side of the screen, the correct response would entail pressing the right response button). Next, children are shown pictures depicting the sun or the moon. Children are asked to provide a verbal response that conflicts with the picture. For example, if children see a picture of the sun, they are instructed to say “night”; and when children see the picture of the moon, they are instructed to say “day”. In other studies, children’s skill at tasks that require such inhibition of the common response predicts their learning ability. Discovering the precise correlations will help researchers and educators know how to best facilitate children’s learning foundations.