Undergraduate Spotlight

Jessey Schwartz (Senior, Psychology)

As a student, many days are filled with scheduling time throughout the day to finish papers and projects as quickly as possible with few breaks. When I come to work at the Children’s School, it allows me to hit pause in the middle of my hectic schedule. Playing with shaving cream and paint, mailing letters to friends in the classroom, and creating balloon rockets to take a trip to the moon are a few examples of the great things I get to do at work. The children impress me every day with their wit and creativity. Everything is exciting, not only for the children, but for everyone involved. And after my shifts are over, I get to show off my dyed blue fingers from making playdough and the stickers stuck to my jeans.

I’ve spent four wonderful semesters working at the Children’s School, and since I am graduating in May, unfortunately this one is my last. Without the Children’s School, I wouldn’t have such an extensive vocabulary for types of dinosaurs or the levels in the jungle, which impresses my friends every time they come up in conversation (which is more often than you’d think!). I also wouldn’t have learned how important it was to stay positive in spite of bad behavior or mistakes. The teachers seem to know the perfect solution to every fight over a toy, every wrecked castle, every spill of milk, and every distraction during circle time. It’s thoroughly impressive how careful and positive each teacher’s response is to these problems, when it’s so easy and instinctive to be negative and critical.

Lessons like these are just the tip of the iceberg of what I’ve gained during my time at the Children’s School. My experience here has provided a great foundation for working with children, as I plan on attending graduate school for speech-language pathology. I’ll miss every teacher and child, but I know they’ll all be doing wonderful things!

Student Volunteers, Interns & Employees

The Children's School is an ideal setting for students with tight schedules to arrange opportunities for observation and practice of excellent early childhood education as volunteers, interns, and employees. Because we have both morning and afternoon preschool sessions, our kindergarten has instructional times both in the morning and the afternoon, and our extended day programs run at lunchtime, there are essentially continuous instructional sessions in progress. Because of our existing procedures for observation and research, we are equipped to handle students at all levels in their teaching practica, from pure observation to student teaching. We also benefit from the students' diverse talents!
Family Math Fun with Mortar Board Seniors

On Saturday morning, February 20th, CMU students from the Mortar Board Senior Honor Society hosted a Family Math Fun event at the Children’s School for Children’s School and Cyert Center families. Dr. Carver is the group's faculty advisor, and April Tillinghast, a kindergarten intern, is the Vice President. During the event, children got to do crafts and collages with 100 stickers, try different ways to make 100 cents, play dice games to 100, predict the volume of 100 water drops, do 100 exercises, build with 100 blocks, make a snack with 100 pieces, draw a self-portrait of themselves at age 100, etc. Thanks to the talented seniors who sponsored this engaging event!
Undergraduate Researchers in Training

Students in Dr. Stephanie Siler’s Developmental Research Methods class are preparing their final projects for the semester. Though the research protocols are still being developed, the students are planning to study many educationally relevant early childhood tasks. Learning the impact of the variables studied on children’s performance and learning can help parents and educators better choose approaches for supporting their progress.

- **The Tower of Hanoi Game** – Testing whether providing subgoals for challenging tasks will increase kindergartners’ persistence in solving them.

- **The Line Game** – Experimenting with factors that influence the likelihood that 3, 4, and 5-year-old children will change their answers on an open-ended line comparison task when adults offer contrasting perspectives.

- **The Block Game** – Determining whether demonstration and feedback during practice will improve 4 and 5 year olds’ performance on a 3-dimensional mental rotation task.

- **The Storytelling Game** – Testing whether gender and/or sibling status influences 3, 4, and 5-year-old children’s responses to stories in which there is a conflict, such as how to share one toy, between characters who appear to be of equal status (left) vs. differential status (right).

- **The Letters and Numbers Game** - Determining whether gender-biased theming of letter and number games (e.g., color and image type) impacts 4 and 5 year olds’ preferences when given choices of which to play, compared to games with similar content but gender neutral themes.

- **The Toy Sharing Game** - Testing whether 3 and 5-year-old children are able to integrate another’s perspective into their decisions about which toys to offer for sharing.

Families whose children participate will receive fuller parent descriptions via the child’s backpack. Everyone can read the study descriptions on the Research Bulletin Board to the left of the Children’s School office. What an interesting set of developmental psychology topics!