Undergraduate Spotlight

Hi, I am Marisa Wiltsie, a senior psychology major at CMU. After graduating, I plan to continue my work with children as a school counselor, or possibly as a grade school teacher. So, the opportunity to work directly with children is very valuable. I have spent time in the Children’s School for research, and I have had experience through some of Dr. Carver’s college courses. However, this year, actually working in the Children’s School, I get the opportunity to interact more closely with the children. Being able to be involved in their daily activities, rather than observing as an outsider, makes all of the theories I have been learning about in my psychology classes that much more accessible and real. Also, seeing in practice the solutions and techniques that the teachers I work with use to help the friends solve disputes or encourage them to try something for the first time is more valuable than anything I could get from a textbook.

I also enjoy being able to share my love of reading with the friends! Often times while waiting for their turn to be dismissed, a child brings me a book to read. Inevitably, more friends will gather, bringing more books for us to read. It is one of the best feelings in the world to see their faces light up with wonder as we read together! They smile and giggle as we make the story come to life.

In addition to being a wonderful learning experience for me, getting to spend time at the Children’s School is an absolute treat! It is energizing to see the creativity and passion with which the friends go about their days. I could not think of a better way to start the day than with the smiling faces of all of the friends as they come to school! Spending time with the friends is a nice way to exercise my inner child. After all, how often do college students get the chance to play in the sand box or with some play dough? I look forward to continuing to get to know all of the friends and hope that I can help teach them important lessons, just as they have been teaching me.

Undergraduate Research

Erik Thiessen’s Developmental Research Methods students are preparing their final projects for the semester. Though the research procedures are still being finalized, the topics are listed below. 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 outside the Children’s School Office. Notice the interesting range of important topics in early childhood development!

The impact of pretend play re-enactment of stories on children’s empathy for the characters (The Knuffle Bunny Game, AM 4’s and K)
The impact of ownership understanding on sharing (The Playdough Game, PM 3’s and K)
The impact of adult encouragement on task persistence in the face of possible and impossible goals (The Water Challenge, AM 4’s)
The impact of toy exposure and adult modeling on perception of gender stereotypes (The Toy Game, AM 4’s and K)