Professional Development for Educators

Professional Development is a high priority at the Children's School because it supports our continuous quality improvement. We dedicate 1.5 weeks at the beginning of the school year, every Friday afternoon, and 1.5 weeks at the end of the year as paid professional development time. Our time is divided approximately equally between advancement seminars, staff and team planning and reflection meetings, and independent activities. Seminars may be facilitated by Dr. Carver or another staff member, other CMU professionals, or outside speakers, depending on the topics chosen. In all cases, we consistently focus on applying what we learn to enhance our program. Staff and team meeting time is essential for both maintaining and advancing our work because of the team-building, dialogue, and reflection emphasis. Finally, independent time is necessary to support the educators' curriculum development, conference planning, and outreach efforts. The school pays for all staff memberships to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and everyone stays current by reading the bimonthly journal, Young Children.

The Director is responsible for organizing meaningful professional development related to the school's improvement goals and to the staff members’ identified interests and needs. Staff members are involved both in goal setting and topic choice during the formal May program evaluation process, as well as informally throughout the year as needs change and opportunities arise. In addition, each year includes emergency procedure review, pediatric first aid / CPR training, and fire safety training. See CMU's new propane fire simulator in the photo to the right; the propane flame and heat are very REAL!

Our professional development topics for this year are:
1) strengthening the intentionality of our teaching,
2) broadening our emphasis on early childhood mathematics,
3) using sign language to support young children’s learning,
4) learning principles of building & architecture – in preparation for our whole school Building unit, and
5) developing strategies for effective photography – both of and with children.

We enjoyed sharing our emphasis on all five domains of mathematics when we hosted the Staff / Parent Discussion last Friday. If you missed the event, feel free to request a handout so you can read about our efforts and ways you can support them. We launched our staff exploration of Buildings by touring Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater together before school began. Last Friday, we celebrated a successful first full week of programming by going together to the Miller Gallery exhibit entitled, “Whatever It Takes: Steelers Fan Collections, Rituals, and Obsessions.” Yes, the exhibit theme resonates well with our staff’s work ethic and passion for providing quality programming for young children, but sometimes it’s really just for fun!