Undergraduate Spotlight

Danielle Lehmann is working at the Children’s School for her 3rd year, in the preschool. Here she describes her experience.

My favorite aspect of the Children’s School is the environment for the friends and for work-study students like myself. As a helper, I’m always welcomed into the Children’s School with smiles and questions about my day, and I can tell that everyone genuinely cares. In the classroom, friends are encouraged to use their words and explain how they feel, which I think is a vital skill for everyone, especially in this technology-focused world. Sometimes the friends surprise me with how well they listen to each other, to the teachers, and even to me. Their ability to share, use kind words, and help each other is so uplifting.

When others ask what I do for work, I get to tell them that I make crafts and play with children, but in my third year here, I know that my responsibilities lie well beyond that. I walk an interesting line between playmate and “adult.” I am able to engage with the friends in dramatic play or with blocks and playdough. However, when a friend is feeling hurt and upset or needs help, I’m able to provide adult support, echoing the words and ideas that I’ve heard the teachers say for the past two years.

When friends want my attention, I kneel at their level. At first it usually surprises them, but I feel we can have a better conversation when we’re eye to eye and they know I’m listening. The stories the friends tell are so fascinating. As an architecture and creative writing major, I love listening to their lists of things they like or things they did that day. They give me a different perspective on life by sharing a simpler view of the world. My job has always been my respite from long hours of schoolwork and it has rejuvenated me more times than I can count. As I work toward graduation this spring, I will always remember the Children’s School as a vital part of my college experience.

SisterFriend Support by Mortar Board

The Mortar Board Senior Honor Society is partnering with SisterFriend (www.sisterfriend.org), which is “an organization by women for women dedicated to sustaining feminine health by providing homeless and underprivileged women and girls with feminine care products. Women living in poverty typically know where to find a safe place to sleep or a hot meal to eat. But when it comes to taking care of their feminine hygiene needs, they often have nowhere to turn. Tampons and sanitary pads usually top the list of needs at shelters, since they’re pricey and supporters don’t often donate them. The Honor Society members are collecting feminine hygiene supplies for SisterFriend and have invited SisterFriend founder and director, Tamara Whiting, to speak about her organization on Tuesday, December 8th at 7:00pm in Porter Hall 100. If you would like to make a donation, please send the feminine hygiene products to the Children’s School office. Everyone is also welcome to attend Tamara’s presentation. Please contact Dr. Carver if you have questions.
Student Teacher Reflections

Cara Vizzini and Sara Kelly are seniors in U. Pitt’s Combined Accelerated Studies in Education (CASE) Program, a five-year undergrad and masters program that includes a BS in Applied Developmental Psychology and a M.Ed. in early childhood and special education.

• Cara Vizzini (AM Younger 4’s with Mrs. Opferman)
This past semester has been amazing. I was fortunate enough to experience what a school should be like. Mrs. Opferman and the other Green Room teachers are wonderful mentors, and I can't thank them enough for all that they've taught me. The children that I have taught this semester have shown me how important it is that playing and learning go hand in hand. I had a great time trekking through the rainforest and exploring space with them. It's sad that my time at the Children's School has come to an end, but I can't wait to take what I've learned here and use it in my future endeavors. Thank you to all who have welcomed me, and I hope to see you again.

• Sara Kelly (Kindergarten with Mrs. Perovich)
Over the last few months, I have learned so much about what it means to be a teacher. From the very beginning of the semester, the educators and families at the Children's School made me feel welcome. Mrs. Perovich, Mrs. Blizman and Mrs. Armbruster were so encouraging and allowed me to be creative with my lessons. They taught me strategies that I know I will use in my own classroom someday. The kindergarten students made me excited to wake up and come to school every day. There was never a moment where they could not make me laugh or smile, and I am truly going to miss spending my days with them. I did not know what to expect for my first semester as a student teacher, but I can honestly say that this experience was better than I could have ever imagined. Next semester, I will be working in a life skills classroom, which will be a brand new challenge for me. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your family this semester, the memories I made will surely last a lifetime.

Continuing Partnership with Homewood HUB

Our educators have continued partnering with PAEYC’s (Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children) Homewood HUB. Once a month, members of our staff attend a “Come Play” session held at the HUB to demonstrate and discuss methods of instruction with approximately 10 at-home educators and the children they teach. This past semester, Mrs. McGillen and Mrs. Loomis demonstrated a cooking lesson, Mr. Salinetro and Mrs. Perovich introduced hands-on natural science activities, and Mrs. Bird and Mrs. Marshall entertained with some music and movement fun! We truly enjoy engaging with these educators and children at a center located only 2 miles from CMU, and we learn as much from these experiences as we share!