

# K-K News

November 7, 2008

Dear Families:

Several people have asked at conferences if I like the new math program at Hunnewell. My quick response is a resounding "Yes," but it seems worth spending a few minutes this week explaining why, and putting the stack of papers that are in your child's home folder today in context.

The curriculum we are currently using is the second edition of the TERC Investigations in Number, Data and Space curriculum, which we have been using for several years. Donna McFarlane, Lisa Cannon and I piloted the kindergarten curriculum last year and are using it for the second time this year. What I have seen in the revision is a further development of a wonderful series of activities in each unit that give children many opportunities to practice skills, revisit ideas, and probe deeply into the major ideas in mathematics. In the unit on number that we are currently pursuing, the children get multiple opportunities each day to practice counting; check for accuracy; record their counting; and organize their counting work. While many children enter kindergarten able to count by rote, there is a huge difference between saying the numbers and understanding what they represent. Although adults might see a five and immediately picture the dots on a die or a group of five items, this does not come naturally to many children. They need repeated opportunities to work with number, think about quantities, and think about what each numeral represents. In this curriculum, students have choices each day that allow them to pursue this

work in ways that are engaging and meaningful to them. For some children, the mere practice with counting is critical to their mathematical development. For those children who are confident counting, the activities deepen their understanding as they work to organize their counts, check their work for accuracy with a peer, or represent their counting on paper. As I have shared with many of you at conferences, this last piece is the one that many of our students find most challenging at this point in the year.

One of the only things that I struggle with in the new curriculum is the volume of paper that is generated in all of these centers. Having children record their work is important and mathematically meaningful, but it does lead to a glut of paper on my desk each day. I want you to know that not every piece of paper gets checked each day, but that Julie and I confer with students each day and focus on the written work we observe during those interactions. The rest of the time, the work students are doing at centers is considered practice. The papers you are receiving today - and are likely to receive in the weeks ahead - represent work at three different centers: Inventory Bags; Grab, Count and Compare; and Comparing Lengths. At Inventory Bags, the children grab a paper bag that is filled with math manipulatives; dump the contents; count the contents with a partner (and work to reach consensus on the count, when necessary); and then record what material was counted and the total. Lots of opportunities to practice counting, check for accuracy, and record one's counting can be found in this activity. In Grab, Count and Compare, the children grab two handfuls of cubes; count and record each handful; and then compare the two towers they have created. In Comparing Lengths, the children are using comparison in a different way: to compare the relative length of a tower of ten cubes to various items in the classroom.

I hope that you can find a moment to talk to your child about what his or her work represents. It will be a very meaningful way to connect to the mathematics we are doing in the classroom.

### **In other news...**

- In addition to our work in mathematics, we have been adding activities to our literacy block in stay days. This week, the children worked on a new word-sorting center that will become part of our reading and spelling program in class. They also met with me for guided reading groups for the first time, in which I meet with a group of children that are working on similar reading skills to support their development.
  
- In science, the mold keeps growing and the children are fascinated by the growth! Their descriptive vocabulary and observational drawing skills are getting a wonderful workout.
  
- In Social Studies, we are reading about and discussing families. It is my goal to broaden children's thinking about families from the family they know at home to other families around them. Thus, we have had many new vocabulary words introduced this week, such as adoption, divorce, step-parent, and so on. In each case, I give children a brief explanation of the word and allow them to talk about families they know that represent those words. Please let me know if this is raising any questions for your child.
  
- Related to our unit on families, there are two pieces of homework in the home folder today. The first is a

geography sheet. Adults, please write for your child on this one, so that I can easily read the information I am trying to collect. The other is a data collection sheet which your child should be able to fill in by him/herself, counting the people and pets in your home. Please return both of the papers no later than Wednesday, November 12. Thank you!

- Reminder: On Friday, November 21, you are invited to the classroom between 8:15-9:00 to see our class book about our families; share the outcomes of our data collection from this homework; and have a chance to see your child's work in the classroom. We look forward to seeing you then!

- Of course, I also look forward to seeing you at the parent social this evening, and want to thank Jill Sharrock, Betsy Homa, and Meghan Murray for organizing and hosting this event.

Enjoy the weekend with your children, and know that Julie and I are looking forward to seeing them next week.

Sincerely,

*Lynn*