Dear Parents,

August 16, 19_

I will be your child's teacher this year. Your child's classroom will be room 12 which is located in the last room on the right of the breezeway.

We will be making collections during the first week of school which we will use in our math program. Could you help your child collect a few objects from four or five different categories on this list? Your child should bring them to school on the first day of school. Once we have our collections, the children will use them for counting, sorting, making patterns with, and so on.

Items for the treasure boxes: small lids (from toothpaste tubes, small jars and bottles) old keys bottle caps (dented ones are fine) old keys bottle caps (dented ones are fine) buttons bits (sawed from peppers, awareness dates, blinks, cherries, and prunes) rocks Eucalyptus buttons (or other seed pods or small pine cones) shells nuts and bolts (rusty and dislocated use ones are best) plastic rice trays from bread necklaces

These materials will be put in separate boxes and used in many different ways with the children. The experience of contributing to the creation of the classroom learning materials helps the children realize they are a valued and needed member of our class. Sharing one's materials with others and having others share their materials with you helps the children appreciate the cooperative effort that is necessary to build a learning environment.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Ms. Mary Baratta-Lorton

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September 18, 19_

Dear Parents,

Your child will be using a special kind of mathematics program this year designed to help your child learn a wide range of mathematical concepts as well as an understanding of basic Arithmetic skills. This program is based on current research evaluating the most effective ways to teach young children mathematics. This method stresses real-life mathematical experiences rather than names and ways of abstract drill. The children become actively involved with concrete materials and make many discoveries using ceramic tiles, pattern blocks, Unifix cubes, geoboards, mirrors, collections of buttons, seed mixes, bottle caps (dented ones are fine), shells, nuts and bolts (rusty and dislocated use ones are best), plastic rice trays from bread necklaces.

The next few weeks will be a period of free exploration in our mathematics program. Each child will have the opportunity to freely explore all the materials available in the program, to determine each material's unique possibilities and limitations, to spontaneously discover and explore number, spatial relationships, balance and classification. During this period the children become familiar with the learning materials, observing likenesses and differences in texture, color, size, shape, weight and number. They share discoveries and ideas with one another and learn to share the classroom space and materials. During this time I will be assessing each child's level of skill and observe how the children interact with the various materials and with one another. To encourage the development of the mathematics vocabulary, I will help the children to put their ideas and discoveries clearly into words.

I will be sending you similar notes as the year progresses to keep you informed on our mathematics program. I will also keep the activities which you might enjoy doing with your child at home which would reinforce your child's school experiences. The following suggestions would supplement your child's free exploration work in mathematics:

1. Encourage your child to have a collection. It could be a collection of stones or shells or rocks or nuts and bolts or anything else. Talk with your child about his or her collection. Compare the sizes, shapes, colors, and textures. Some small groups of objects such as all the small ones, or the round ones, or the two-tone colored ones. Put out three or four of the objects and describe one of them. So if your child can collect the object you are describing.

2. Give your child a name to explore with. Encourage your child to find all the things in one room that are magnetic. Discuss the differences.

3. Collect 10-15 empty jars of various sizes and shapes. Get a flashlight or large pot of water outside and let your child explore the jars and compare the differences by pouring water from one jar to another. Select a small jar and have your child guess how many small jars of water it will take to fill the largest jar.

I look forward to seeing you at our parent meeting October 1st and discussing more of your child's reading and mathematics progress at that time.

Sincerely,

Mary Baratta-Lorton

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October 1, 19_

Dear Parents,

I need some help after school on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week. Could you come to school to help me prepare some of the children's math materials? It will involve cutting, gluing, making contact paper on tagboard, making spinners and drawing lines on paper. It's actually fun to work together on these projects. I will have everything ready at 3:00 and we can go home at 4:30.

If you can come on Tuesday or Wednesday to help, please return this note with your child tomorrow and I will plan your work.

Thank you,

Mary Baratta-Lorton

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October 7, 19_

Dear Parents,

We need to collect some things for our classroom. Could you save some of the following items for us:

- Two empty #10 milk cartons, Cut one off 4" from the bottom so it is square and the second one 1½" from the bottom
- Empty margarine tubs (with lids)
- Empty cottage cheese or cool whip bowls
- Clear plastic lids (from coffee cans, canned hams, peanut cans, pringle potato chips, etc.)
- Lids from jars (any size)
- Baby food jars
- Unusually shaped bottles or jars (ones without straight sides)

For our treasure boxes: We still need a few more small and unusual objects you are describing.

We need more plastic price tags from bread too. C

Thank you for your help. These items will be a great help to us!

Sincerely,

Ms. Mary Baratta-Lorton
Dear Parents,

The children are beginning to work on patterning in their mathematics program now. Current research in mathematics education points out the importance of pattern in the development of children's growing mathematical understanding. Pattern is the underlying theme of all of mathematics and is a powerful problem solving tool. During the next few weeks your child will be experiencing pattern visually, verbally, and mathematically. The children will participate in rhythmic clapping activities where they will have an opportunity to clap patterns and translate those patterns to other rhythmic actions and to various concrete materials. They will analyze and extend a variety of visual patterns with dot pattern cards, pattern blocks, geometric solids, unifix cubes, and common objects. This pattern work prepares children to see number patterns later on in the program.

If you would like to reinforce this beginning patterning work with your child at home during the next few weeks, you might do any of the following activities:

1. Examine and discuss the patterns in objects around your home. Jewelry often has a pattern on it: large, small, large, small, small, small, large, large, small, small. Necklace beads. Drapes often have stripes which are in a pattern: white, cream, white, cream, white, cream, green, white. Sometimes fences are put up in a pattern:

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         Right, straight, round; Right, straight, round
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Red, white, red, white.

2. When arranging food on a plate, you might enjoy placing it in a pattern and see if your child can tell you what the pattern is or even add to the pattern you have begun: apple, grape, cheese, Sally, cheese, Sally, cheese. White bread, brown bread, white bread, brown bread. Pickle, olive, olive.

3. When riding with your child in the car, look for patterns together. The striped roof of the Kentucky Fried Chicken Store: Red, white, blue. Cans are often stacked in patterns with one on the top, two on the next row, three on the following row, and so forth. Fences, buildings, windows, and flowers often have patterns.

4. Have your child set the table for family meals. Draw a simple picture on a piece of paper showing where the fork, plate, glass, etc. goes. Your child can refer to this as needed.

Thank you for reinforcing the concept of pattern with your child. This idea will be broadened and expanded throughout the year enabling the children to discover the interrelatedness of all mathematical ideas.

Mary Baratta-Lorton

November 13, 19...

Dear Parents,

The children are working on comparing activities in their mathematics program now. They are comparing weight, length, volume, length, time, and quantity. The children make a great many measurements and describe these comparisons mathematically.

During the next few weeks the children will be comparing their height and weight, their fingernail patterns and the length of their stems and their classmates names. They will apply the appropriate vocabulary of more, less, and the same to each of these comparisons. The children will learn to compare sizes and to compare wholes. They will discover volume is not necessarily a function of height: for example, this jar may contain two or three times as much as this jar.

As the children weigh a variety of common objects they also discover that weight is not necessarily a function of size: A small steel ball is much heavier than a much larger rubber ball.

These comparing activities prepare the children for measuring, geometry, and measurement, and is the mathematical foundation for understanding the relationships between one number and another.

If you would like to reinforce comparing with your child at home during the last few months, you might do any of the following activities:

1. When you have a moment to talk informally with your child, ask questions like the following: Are the buttons on this shirt larger or smaller than the ones on your brown shirt? Does this suitcase weigh more or less than you do? (Put it on the bathroom scale and check.)

Are there more spoons or more forks in the drawer? Will it take longer to clean up your room or to take your bath? (Guess how many minutes it will take for each and write down your guess.)

Try to guess how many minutes it will take to get close to the ground? Does your shadow look the same at 9:00 in the morning or at 1:00 noon and at 9:00 in the afternoon?

Thank you for reinforcing comparing with your child at home.

Two musicians from the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra will visit our classroom on Thursday afternoon at 4:00 to show us their instruments, play some music and answer the children's questions. If you are free, we would welcome you to join us.

Sincerely,

Mary Baratta-Lorton

Ms. Mary Baratta-Lorton