

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MATHEMATICS THROUGH WORKJOBS

Mathematics is *living-life*—not rote drill with meaningless symbols and still more meaningless “answers.” Mathematics is going shopping for a dozen eggs and three pounds of sweet potatoes, or sharing your candy bar among five friends, or collecting three tons of old newspapers for the Scout paper drive. Mathematics is sorting clothes on washday, or dividing a soft drink for you and your sister so it’s “fair.” Mathematics is saving a nickel a week out of your allowance to buy that great kite you saw at the drugstore, or figuring out how much material to buy to make a minidress from this maxi pattern you’ve got, or trying to guess how many more sprigs of ivy you’re going to need to plant the rest of the embankment.

Every child comes to school with a rich background for mathematical understanding. This background is as yet unorganized in the child’s mind, but it is a rich resource for a teacher who wishes to help the child gain a real and lasting understanding of numbers and all their varied relationships.

The activities in this section have as their main goal *understanding*, not computation or memory. They are intended to assist the child in organizing the mathematics in the world around him. He handles familiar objects and sees sets of objects that he can count. He learns number facts through experience, not by memory. In this way, he will grow to see mathematics as natural and significant, and symbolization and computation as a way of writing down his experiences so they can be shared.