

Dear Family,

The last unit in your child's course of study in mathematics class this year involves one of the most common aspects of arithmetic that we encountered as young children, but that can become complicated very quickly: counting.

When we learned to count, we probably memorized the numbers 1, 2, 3, and so on. Only later did we understand what those words meant. In their mathematics work this year, students have had many opportunities to further their understanding of numbers and operations. In *Clever Counting*, they learn to recognize situations in which multiplication can help them to count how many ways certain events can happen. As students work on the unit, they will increase their skill with multiplication and making sense of large numbers.

The task of counting becomes complicated when we place conditions on what we are counting. Students will investigate a fictitious robbery in this unit. In the process, they will be asked to count, among other things, the number of combinations a lock can have, the number of license plates that are possible with particular characteristics, and the number of paths a night guard might travel during periodic inspection rounds.

Here are some strategies for helping your child during this unit:

- Ask for an explanation of the ideas about counting that are presented in the book.
- Help your child locate examples of counting that people deal with in their everyday lives.
- Discuss with your child real situations in which counting techniques are used; for example, the field of cryptanalysis, a branch of mathematics in which people work with secret codes such as those used in banks and most businesses.
- Encourage your child to do his or her homework every day. Look over the homework and make sure all questions are answered and that explanations are clear.

As always, if you have any questions or suggestions about your child's mathematics program, please feel free to call.

Sincerely,