A UNIQUE COMPASSION AND MATH CURRICULUM

# KINDNESS COUNTS

MAUREEN KELLY



# Kindness Counts: a unique compassion and math curriculum

Teaching kids to count is fine, but teaching kids what counts is best. – Bob Talbert

I must admit that I personally measure success in terms of the contributions an individual makes to her or his fellow human beings. – Margaret Mead

The director of the St Helena Co-op Nursery School developed a unique curriculum, embraced by the children and parents at the school, teaching compassion, kindness and generosity, through experiences in math, language, literacy, science, economics, and civic action. At the Co-op teachers don't "teach" kindness and giving; they make space for it to happen every day. This practice becomes a lifestyle and core part of classroom culture, integrated in the daily routine actively reflecting one of the school's core values. The attitude of kindness isn't taught in just one unit, instead kindness inspires how teachers and students spend their school days together. Since 1997, each month the families and teachers of the Co-op focus on gathering and then donating much-needed items to the farm workers' camp, local food pantry, and Heifer International. At the peak of harvest season, health care items are delivered to the Napa Valley Farm Work Camp, supplying the farm workers with new toothbrushes, bars of soap, shaving cream and shampoo. Throughout the school year the Co-op Nursery School continues to be one of the largest consistent donors to the local Food Pantry, typically providing over 60 bags of groceries, 200 pounds of rice, 300 cans of soup, 150 bottles of juice, 70 jars of peanut butter and jelly, and 120 boxes of cereal throughout a typical school year. In the spring, the curriculum broadens from the focus on the local community to encompass the needs of the larger world by collecting money for Heifer International.

As the children collectively work together with the community, meeting and interacting with volunteers from the farm workers' camp, the local food pantry, and the larger world community, they become aware of the needs of others, and are empowered to make a difference. It is in this way, the children of the Co-op community live a hands-on educational experience, integrated in compassion, kindness, generosity, math and literacy. Parents also learn to be caring and generous along with their children. School families in need of food pantry's services are also made aware of this community resource. Each component of the *Kindness Counts* curriculum weaves together learning experiences employing the best practices of early childhood education. "No one has yet realized the wealth of sympathy, the kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The efforts of every true education should be to unlock that treasure."

– Emma Goldman

# WHY WE TEACH KINDNESS

"To reduce hatred and other destructive emotions, we must develop their opposites – compassion and kindness." – His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Daily during circle time, the teachers at the Co-op focus on compassion, kindness and generosity through meaningful conversations as donations are gathered. The experience goes beyond math, science and literacy by engaging students in thinking about the needs of others and how they can meet those needs. Nursery school children aged three, four and five, who learn about compassion, respect, empathy and how to express acts of kindness in both words and actions can have a positive impact on the world in which they live. These lessons also teach students to be active citizens of their local community, and the world.

# BEYOND THE SCHOOL HOUSE

Families have expanded the philosophy of generosity into their homes by making lemonade stands and donating the money to Heifer or having birthday parties where children request the guest bring a can of food for the food pantry. One uncle of a co-op child requested donations to Heifer in place of gifts at his wedding. Other co-op families give Heifer International animals as gifts during the holidays. Graduates from the co-op share with their new school community the idea of donating consistently throughout the school year. When the co-op coordinates music or other community events, attendees are often asked to bring food donations with them.

#### AN INVITATION

We encourage you to embrace and expand the *Kindness Counts* curriculum to best meet the needs of your classroom and community.

**Kindness Counts:** month-by-month

Circle Time at the Co-op is where it all begins. All of these activities take place during the first morning circle, when the children proudly bring in their donations, setting them on the rug until circle time is called. Each child who has a donation is given the opportunity to talk about what they have brought to donate, how they earned the money, or what job they performed. They learn to think and listen to what the group will be collecting, for whom it will be collected and why it is needed. Most everyone can contribute something; however, an attentive teacher can provide a donation for a child who has not brought anything thereby enabling everybody to participate. When others visit the school, the kids explain in meaningful conversation to visitors what they are doing and why; allowing children to teach others gives them fuller learning.

# **SEPTEMBER**

What we do –

We introduce the *Kindness Counts* curriculum to the parents during the first parent education meeting. The monthly parent education meetings are an opportunity to meet in person, form relationships, start conversation and educate the school community. Talking together as a community about the goals of the *Kindness Counts* project gives parents the chance to buy in and embrace the concept of giving back and creating a caring community.

Quote -

What do we live for, if not to make life less difficult for each other? – George Eliot

**OCTOBER** 

What we do –

Collect hygiene products for the farm workers who live at the local Napa Valley Farm

Workers' Camp.

Introduction to the children –

**First**: What we are collecting, where it is going, and why it matters.

**Second**: The introduction of sorting, our first math concept.

It is explained to the kids that grapes are everywhere in our community and that they are the primary agricultural product of our valley. We say -

"Many people in our community make wine or work in the wine industry. There are so many grapes to pick that we need help during harvest time. Sometimes the workers travel a long way from their countries and families to help here in the valley. We are never exactly sure when the grapes will be ripe, so sometimes they have to wait. If they don't pick grapes, they don't get paid, so they don't have money yet. As they wait, they still need to take care of themselves. We can help by collecting *items for* body care, oral care and shaving. When the month is up, we can call a volunteer from the Farm Workers Camp and ask them to come pick up collected items and *distribute* them to the farm workers."

# **MATERIALS**

Photographs of the farm workers in the vineyards picking grapes.

Sorting bins.

Labels for the bins.

What we learn -

SORTING (by attribute):

The children sort the items into three labeled picking bins: oral care, body care, shaving supplies.

The three categories of items for the collection are lined up in the center of the circle rug.

Children have a chance to say what they've brought and sort it into the correct bin.

#### **WRITING**

Read the letter from the farm workers thanking the school for the items.

Write a list with children documenting what personal care items they use to take care of their bodies.

Projects to expand the lessons –

- Make juice or wine with the children.
- Visit a winery (or local farm).
- Provide other sorting activities throughout the classroom.

Quote –

Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive.

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Book(s) we read\*

DeCarlo, Tessa and Llynne Tuft. *The Grapes Grow Sweet: A Child's First Family Grape Harvest*. Riverine Press, 2007.

#### **NOVEMBER**

What we do –

For the entire month of November we collect bags of grocery items for the local food pantry.

Introduction to the children –

It is explained to the children that when some people are hungry, they look in their wallet or purse and there's no money there to buy food. When they open their refrigerator there is no food there. And when they open their cupboards, they are empty. People go to the food pantry when they do not have any food at home. (Show the children pictures and explain what a food pantry is.) The food pantry gets its food from people who, when they look in their wallets or purses, have money and when they look in their cupboards have food. We learn to give from what we have.

And we introduce the math concept of one-to-one correspondence.

**MATERIALS** 

Stack of unnumbered grocery sacks and a marker.

Picture of the food pantry building. Picture of the inside of the food pantry, with empty shelves.

What we learn -

One-to-one CORRESPONDENCE.

Each bag of groceries is numbered consecutively (this is done bag by bag in front of the children), as the children fill the bags with the items they bring from home. Full grocery bags are lined up in the classroom, giving children a concrete experience with the number of bags (as the number of bags increases). The kids coexist with the growing numbers of bags and understand the number concept.

LANGUAGE

Each child shares with the group what they are donating before placing the item in the grocery bag.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCES

Children have the chance to carry the grocery items in the door, share the space as the bags grow, and carry the bags out the door for pick up from food pantry volunteers.

*Projects to expand the lessons –* 

Small table toys and manipulatives for the children to count and all the other opportunities a child has to count in the nursery school classroom.

Field trip to the food pantry.

Quote -

Don't think a small group can't change the world. Indeed, it is the only way it can happen.

Margaret Mead

*Book(s)* we read –

Anno, Mitsumasa. Anno's Counting Book. Harper Collins, 1977.

# **DECEMBER**

What we do –

For the entire month of December we collect rice for the local food pantry.

*Introduction to the children* –

Again we revisit the food pantry and the need to help others and the new math concept of weight.

Talk about how rice is eaten around the world. Read the book, *Everyone Eats Rice*. Bring a scale to circle and talk about weight.

What we learn -

# **WEIGHT**

Children learn to read the package of rice to identify the weight. Children are shown different types of scales: household scale, baby scale, food scale, and balance scale.

# **CHARTING**

As each bag is brought in, the weight is recorded on a classroom chart.

Projects to expand the lessons -

Cook rice. Eat with chopsticks. Chopsticks and cotton balls at the manipulative table. Weigh individual children, then add the weight of the class. Then add the weight of all of the children in the entire school. Place scales around the school with objects to weigh.

Quote -

People acting together as a group can accomplish things which no individual acting alone could even hope to accomplish. – Roosevelt

*Book(s)* we read –

Dooley, Norah. Everybody Cooks Rice. Carolrhoda Books, 1992.

# **JANUARY**

What we do –

For the entire month of January we collect soup for the local food pantry.

*Introduction to the children* –

Again we revisit the food pantry and the need to help others and the new math concept of a number line.

What we learn –

#### NUMBER LINE

For each can of soup brought in, a number is recorded on a number line posted around the entire classroom.

# LANGUAGE

During meaningful, authentic circles, children have the opportunity to explain to visitors about the food pantry, why we collect food, and why there are 300 cans of soup in our classroom. (This opportunity to explain what is happening with the *Kindness Counts* collection can happen in any month of the school year.)

Projects to expand the lessons -

Cook Stone Soup.

Quote -

Children can change the world, one can of soup at a time. – Maureen Kelly

Book(s) we read –

Ehlert, Lois. *Growing Vegetable Soup*. Harcourt Children's Books, 1987.

Muth, Jon. Stone Soup. Scholastic Press, 2003.

# February

What we do –

For the entire month of February we collect juice for the local food pantry.

*Introduction to the children* –

Again we revisit the food pantry and the need to help others and introduce the new math concept of liquid volume.

What we learn –

# LIQUID MEASUREMENT

Students explore and compare liquid measurements by sorting the juice they donate. At the science table they have the hands-on experience of pouring liquid.

Projects to expand the lessons -

Facilitate discussions during circle time to predict different volumes. Make fresh orange juice.

Quote -

You must be the change you wish to see in the world. – Mahatma Gandhi

*Book(s)* we read –

Purnell, Ann. Apple Cider Making Days. Millbrook Press, 2002.

March

What we do –

For the entire month of March we collect money for Heifer International.

*Introduction to the parents –* 

Starting with the parent education meeting in February, parents view the Heifer International video introducing Heifer's mission of providing "food security in an equitable and environmentally sound manner" (Heifer International, www.heifer.org)). Parents are also educated on the idea of spend, share, save (teaching children to equally divide their moneybetween money to spend right away, share with others and save for the future) as a way to discuss money with their children.

*Introduction to the children* –

The work of Heifer International, how goats benefit people and the new math concept of money.

What we learn –

# ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

# 1. Food

Goats are milked to give families goat milk, cheese, and yogurt.

Goat milk is a nutrient rich food that builds strength and provides protein.

#### 2. Science

As the goats poop, the families compost the manure, combining it with the soil to make rich earth to grow food. This rich manure fertilizes their gardens and increase yields.

#### 3. Animal Care

Share with children how Heifer teaches a person from each village receiving a goat how to care for the animal. Because goats often have two or three kids a year, the gift is quickly passed on to other children and their families. Before you know it, the fortunes of an entire village have been turned around, simply because a group of small children were taught to care.

# 4. Clothing Production

Children are shown pictures of how goat hair can be saved and made into clothing.

#### **MONEY**

Children are introduced to what money is, learning how to earn money doing chores, how to handle their earnings; and more consciously spend, share, save. (See Moon Jars for bank to help kids save allowance: https://www.moonjar.com/) Co-op children learn how the goats from Heifer help the families who receive the gift of a goat.

Because goats are such productive animals, there is often extra milk and manure. Both items can be sold to pay for children's clothing and education in Heifer communities. Co-op kids get to stamp the chart each time they make a deposit to the Heifer fund so they can see how they are helping others earn money.

# **CIVIC ACTION**

When the deposits reach the cost of a goat the kids get to vote on what other animals they would like to purchase for Heifer. As they practice democratic action the children are trusted as being capable of making real and important choices.

Projects to expand the lessons -

Composting, spinning & knitting, goats visit the school, making yogurt, make a bank to save money in.

Quote -

Quite often happiness, real happiness, for us human beings comes when we go beyond ourselves and we serve others. Real unhappiness quite often is found in people who are too preoccupied with themselves. – Wangari Maathai, Nobel Laureate

*Book(s)* we read –

Bergoli, Jane. The Goat Lady. Tilbury House Publishers, 2008.

McBrier, Page. Beatrice's Goat. Aladdin Paperbacks, 2001.

DK Publishing. *Money: Eyewitness Books*. DK Publishing, 2000.

McKenna Siddals, Mary. Compost Stew: An A to Z Recipe for the Earth. Dragonfly Books, 2014.

# **April**

What we do –

For the entire month of April we collect peanut butter and jelly or jam for the local food pantry.

*Introduction to the children* –

Again we revisit the food pantry and the need to help others and introduce the new math concept of counting by fives.

What we learn –

# **COUNTING BY 5s**

Children are introduced to counting with hash marks, bundles, and counting by fives.

#### **CHARTING**

Each jar of peanut butter and jelly or jam is brought in and recorded on a classroom chart.

Projects to expand the lessons –

One to one cooking experience with adults allows for conversation when making peanut butter, and then making a PB&J sandwich.

# LANGUAGE

"Tell me how to make a peanut butter sandwich" experience. A language experience in which the children tell the teacher how to make a sandwich and the teacher follows the directions literally.

Quote -

A good exercise for the heart is to bend down and help another up. – John Andrew Holmes, Jr.

Book(s) we read –

Robbins, Ken. Make Me a Peanut Butter Sandwich and a Glass of Milk. Scholastic Trade, 1992.

# May

What we do –

For the entire month of May we collect cereal for the local food pantry.

Introduction to the children –

Again we revisit the food pantry and the need to help others and the new math concept of counting by fives and addition.

What we learn -

# **COUNTING BY 5s**

Children continue to work with counting with hash marks, bundles and counting by fives.

# **ADDITION**

Children are introduced to simple addition, plus signs, equal signs and total signs.

# **CHARTING**

Each box of cereal is brought in and recorded on a classroom chart.

Projects to expand the lessons –

Eat cereal at snack time.

Quote -

He or she who knows that enough is enough will always have enough. - Lao Tzu

*Book(s)* we read –

Hutchins, Pat. The Doorbell Rang. Greenwillow Books, 1989.

McGrath, Barbara. The Cheerios Counting Book. Tandem Library, 1999.

# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We encourage you to embrace and expand the *Kindness Counts* curriculum to best meet the needs of your classroom and community. Please acknowledge, and give credit, to Maureen Kelly (Director of the St Helena Cooperative Nursey School), for developing and writing the curriculum, with help and collaboration from the school's teachers, children, and families.

# Best Practices Teaching through Experience

Children need to construct their own knowledge through experiences, immersing themselves in environments that inspire children's real interests (Katz, 1995). Some of the best practices integrated throughout the Kindness Counts curriculum are:

- Adequate time and repetition of concepts
   (each school day the children actively participate in the experience during first circle), each math concept is taught for an entire month and donations continue for the entire school year.
- **Documentation** through number line, charts (tallies and counting by 5's), graphs (stamps of deposits to Heifer International), photographs (farm workers in the field, photos of items to sort into bins, pictures of the Food Pantry where the food is donated, and pictures of the children loading food into volunteer's car from the food pantry).
- Books are present throughout the classroom. Children are surrounded by opportunities to actively engage with literature related to *Kindness Counts* themes. Books in the classroom library, science area, dramatic play, cooking, art, manipulative area, and circle rug.
- Daily routine is predictable always thinking of others. Children expect to bring something to school each day to give to someone else.
- Meaningful circles with authentic, relevant conversations where children can raise their voice and make a difference.
- Family, school and community partnerships teach a desire and willingness to work together. Relationship with food pantry volunteers and from the Farm workers camp are examples of this collaboration.
- Concrete activities build on prior experience.
- Active learning in classroom, building knowledge with hands-on daily experiences.

- Math concepts are scaffolded by older, more experienced children. A younger child talking at circle can model themselves after older students.
- Age appropriate: children find their own developmental skill level (for some math with addition is comprehensible, for others, sitting and listening, remembering they brought an item to share with the group is their learning experience).
- Create teachable moments: Children are given time to share what they brought. They also have the time for conversation and to ask questions, opening a window to teachable moments.
- Sensitivity to play items: sensory table of non-food items. In order to be sensitive to the need for sensory experiences while we are collecting food to feed people, provide alternatives and move away from seeing food as an expendable play item.
- Meaningful hands-on experiences: concepts are explored for an entire month. Allowing children to soak in each skill as it is taught. Extended time to really integrate the meaningful experience.
- Develop math ideas naturally and pleasurably.
   Introduce concepts in a rich varied way relevant to child. Classroom includes a variety of hands-on activities children perform for real reasons within context of their own experiences (Shillady, 2012).
- Resist competition/reward: The goal of the Kindness Counts curriculum is internal motivation and living a compassionate life. When implementing curriculum, resist the urge to reward child or class that brings in most items. Participation is focused on helping others in need (Kohn, 1999).
- Trust the child to succeed: All children have the capabilities and internal motivation for the right reason to participate.



# Kindness Counts: a list of non-food sensory table options

The traditional preschool has a sensory table that includes food items. Here are some ideas for non-food items:

- Colored shredded paper
- Pom-poms
- Cotton balls
- Sand & glitter
- Ground walnut shells
- Dish washing
- Farm animals and hay
- Shaving cream
- Beads
- Ping-pong balls
- Kinetic sand
- Sensory balls
- Clean mud (Ooey Gooey® Handout http://www.ooeygooey.com/resources/handouts/)
- Ice
- Clay
- Moist Soil
- Birdseed
- Rubber ducks & water
- Water and sea life
- Coco mulch
- Water Beads

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A list of resources and professional articles –

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Brazelton, T. Berry, MD. Touchpoints: The Essential Reference. Addison-Wesley, 1992.

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Praise, and other bribes. Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

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Stacey, Susan. Emergent Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings. Redleaf Press, 2011.

# **Recommended Reading List**

OCTOBER: Hygiene Products

DeCarlo, Tessa and Llynne Tuft. The Grapes Grow Sweet: A Child's First Family Grape

*Harvest*. Riverine Press, 2007.

NOVEMBER: Bags of Food

Bang, Molly. Ten, Nine, Eight. Greenwillow, 1983.

Falwell, Cathryn. Feast for 10. Clarion Books, 1993.

Fleming, Denise. *Count*. Henry Holt and Co., 1995.

Gibbons, Gail. Thanksgiving Day. Scholastic, 1992.

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Lukas, Catherine (author) and Victoria Raymond (illustrator). The Oreo Cookie Counting Book.

Little Simon, 2000.

Tudor, Tasha. 1 is One. Oxford University Press, 1956.

**DECEMBER:** Rice

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JANUARY: Soup

Collins, Ross. Alvie Eats Soup. Oxford University Press, 2004.

Disalvo-Ryan, Dyanne. Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen. HarperCollins, 1997.

Ehlert, Lois. *Growing Vegetable Soup*. Harcourt Children's Books, 1987.

Forest, Heather. Stone Soup. August House, 1998.

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Sendak, Maurice. Chicken Soup with Rice. Harper Trophy, 1991.

FEBRUARY: Juice

Conrad, Liz. Sip and Slurp: A Juice Box Book. Grosset & Dunlap, 2002.

Purnell, Ann. Apple Cider Making Days. Millbrook Press, 2002.

MARCH: Heifer International

Ajmera, Maya and John D. Ivanko. *To Be A Kid*. Charlesbridge Publishing, 1999.

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APRIL: Peanut Butter & Jelly or Jam

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MAY: Cereal

McGrath, Barbara. The Cheerios Counting Book. Tandem Library, 1999.

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Markel, Michelle. *Gracias, Rosa*. Albert Whitman & Company, 1995.

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Siegel, Bernie. Love, Magic & Mudpies: Raising Your Kids to Feel Loved, Be Kind, and Make a Difference. Rodale, 2006.

Smith, Stephen C. *Ending Global Poverty: A Guide to What Works*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Twist, Lynne. *The Soul of Money: Reclaiming the Wealth of Our Inner Resources*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

# Additional resources:

Educators for Social Responsibility www.esrnational.org

Free Spirit Publishing www.freespirit.com

Heifer International www.heifer.org

Read to Feed www.readtofeed.org/getit

The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation www.actsofkindness.org

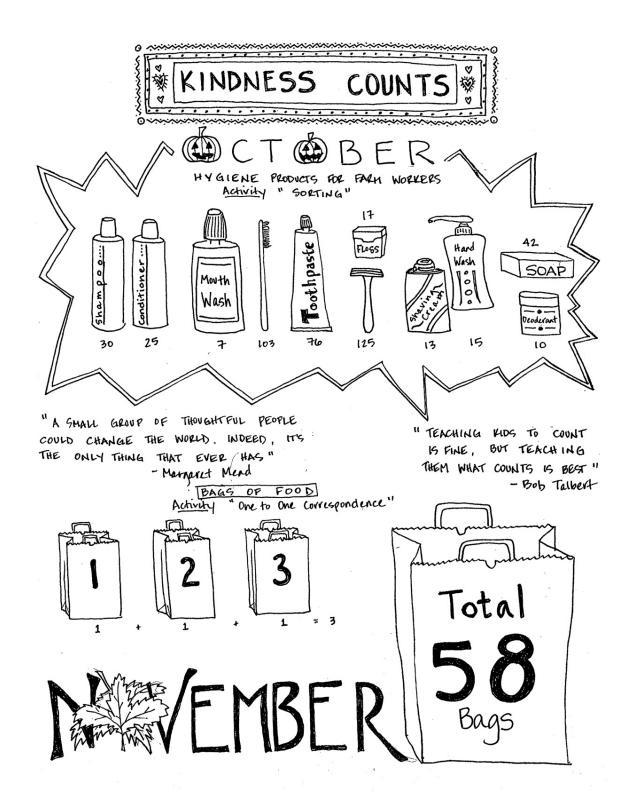
Teaching Tolerance, A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center www.tolerance.org

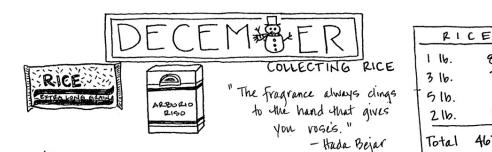
Alfie Kohn www.alfiekohn.org

Moon Jar www.moonjar.com

Money in Motion Bank www.chinaberry.com

Gallon Measurement Set www.LearningResources.com





Activity - Scales, wieght, weigh children, weigh class, read "Everybody Cooks Rice" ※一業一※一※一※一※一※一※一※一※一※一※

Soup E(5) Creamof Tomato

SOUP COLLECTION Activity - A number line all around the classroom

"No one has yet realized the wealth of sympathy, the Kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The efforts of extens true education should be to unlock that treasure.

- Emma Goldman

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I lb.

516.

467 LBS!

Soup

COJ

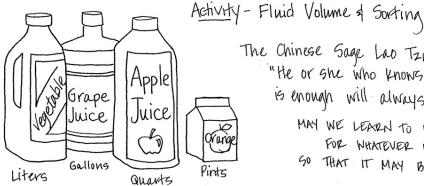
Chicken

Noodle

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26...

" LIFE BEGINS TO END THE DAY WE BECOME SILENT ABOUT THE THINGS THAT MATTER." - Martin Luther King Jr. "WE MUST BE THE CHANGE WE WIGH TO SEE IN THE WORLD." - Martina Gardin

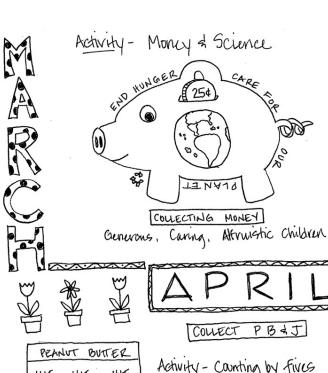
FEBRUARY .--- JVICE COLLECTION ~



The Chinese Sage Lao Tzn once said, "He or she who knows that enough is enough will always have enough."

> MAY WE LEARN to BE GREATPUL FOR NHATEVER WE HAVE SO THAT IT MAY BE ENOUGH.

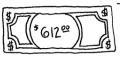
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"I MUST ADMIT THAT I PERSONALLY MEASURE SUCCESS IN TERMS OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS AN INDIVIDUAL MAKES TO HER OR HIS FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS."

-Margaret Mead



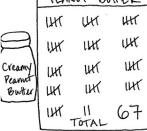








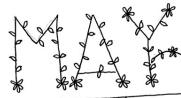




Activity - Counting by Fives
read "How to make peaned butter"

"PEOPLE ACTING TOGETHER AS A GROUP CAN ACCOMPLISH THINGS WHICH NO INDIVIDUAL ACTING ALONE COULD EVEN HOPE TO ACCOMPLIGHT." -Theodore Roosevett

JAL	1 & JE	elly	
W.	ILK	W	8
WI	W	IM	Je
IK	ILK	IM	
IH	ILK	IM	1
WY	111	68	1
T	OTAL	00	]



COLLECTING CEREAL practivity - Counting by fives of Addition of

		_				
Date	Collected	+	What we	Add	=	Total
May 1st	Ø	+	IH I	6	=	6
May 2nd	6	+	ואל ווא או	12	=	18
May 3rd	1	+	IN IN IN	1117	=	35
May 4th	1	1	IM	5	=	40
May 5th	1	1	INK II	7	=	47
May 6th			+ 141 1111	9	1	56

"A GOOD EYERSIZE FOR THE HEART IS TO BEND DOWN AND ANOTHER UP. "

- John Andrew Holmes Jr.

