Dear Parents and Caregivers,

We appreciate the support you give to your child's education. You are a vital partner in his/her learning. This year we are teaching the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which help to better focus students' learning for success. The PTA has several *Parents' Guides to Student Success* featuring these standards on its website at www.pta.org/4446.htm.

Unlike previous standards, the CCSS have the energy of 46 states behind them and a nation striving to prepare our children for the jobs of the 21st century. As part of this effort, you may see some unfamiliar vocabulary and strategies. We will clarify these throughout the year as we use ways of thinking that help children make sense of numbers, develop underlying mathematical ideas, and end with children understanding math in a form that may be more familiar to you. We do not expect you to teach these new methods but want to help you understand the work children will be bringing home. I welcome any questions you may have. This letter is about **counting.**

Counting

In kindergarten there are two major goals for counting. First, the standards ask students to learn to count to 100 by tens and by ones. They are expected to learn the number names to 100. We will be helping children understand what the numbers mean (how many 9 or 25 are), but this letter is about learning the **number names and their order**. Children memorize basic number names and understand a pattern. Some children come already counting, others do not. This is our plan to help all children.

- Children will first learn the numbers 1 to 10 and then move on to learning 11 through 20.
- The next step is to learn to count to 100 by tens (10, 20, 30, etc.)
- Students will master counting from 1 to 20 and counting by tens to 100 before beginning to count by ones from 20 to 100.

This is very different from what we did in the past. The reason for this is to help students know the order of twenties, thirties, forties as the framework of our number system. When they simply try to memorize numbers from 1 to 100, moving from 29 to 30, 39 to 40 and so on is hard for many children. Researchers have found that when students learn to ***count to 100 by tens before*** they fill in the ones pattern (21, 22, 23, etc.), that students easily move from twenties to thirties to forties and they count more fluently.

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Family practice. You can help your child by counting every day. Count out loud and often. Have your child count with you and then alone. Here is the order we recommend.

1. Count 1 to 5.
2. When the child knows 1 to 5, extend the count to 10.
3. When the child has learned 1 to 10 well, extend the count to 20.
4. When the child can count quickly and accurately from 1 to 20, start counting by tens to 100.
5. Finally, extend the count by ones to 100.

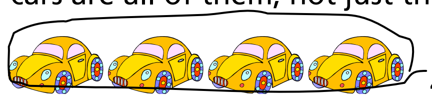
Counting forward starting with any number. Once students can consistently count correctly, you can start helping them with another part of the counting standards. They will count forward from any number they know rather than always starting with 1. If a child is learning up to 20, have him begin with 6 or 11 and count to 20. If she is learning to count to 100 by tens, have her sometimes start with 20 or 50.

You can find some counting games online at
www.kidsmathgamesonline.com/counting.html.

Counting backward. Children also count backwards from 10. They can pretend a rocket is lifting off or sing songs such as 10 Little Monkeys Sitting in a Tree or 10 Little Birdies Sitting on the Fence to practice.

Connecting number names to meaning. Once children know the number names at a certain level (5 or 10 or 20), they need to connect the names to **how many** by counting things. In daily life you can ask children to count things around them: spoons needed for breakfast, glasses on the shelf, cookies on a plate, how many crayons in the box, words on a sign, children at the bus stop, times you clap. Have them draw 15 triangles or count 12 buttons. These quick activities provide practice with numbers and their order as well as meaning.

Cardinality. A very important understanding when children count things is that the last number said (e.g., one, two three, **four**) stands for **all the things counted**, not just the last one! Four cars are all of them, not just the car touched when saying "four."



4 cars

One two three four

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Kindergarten Teacher