

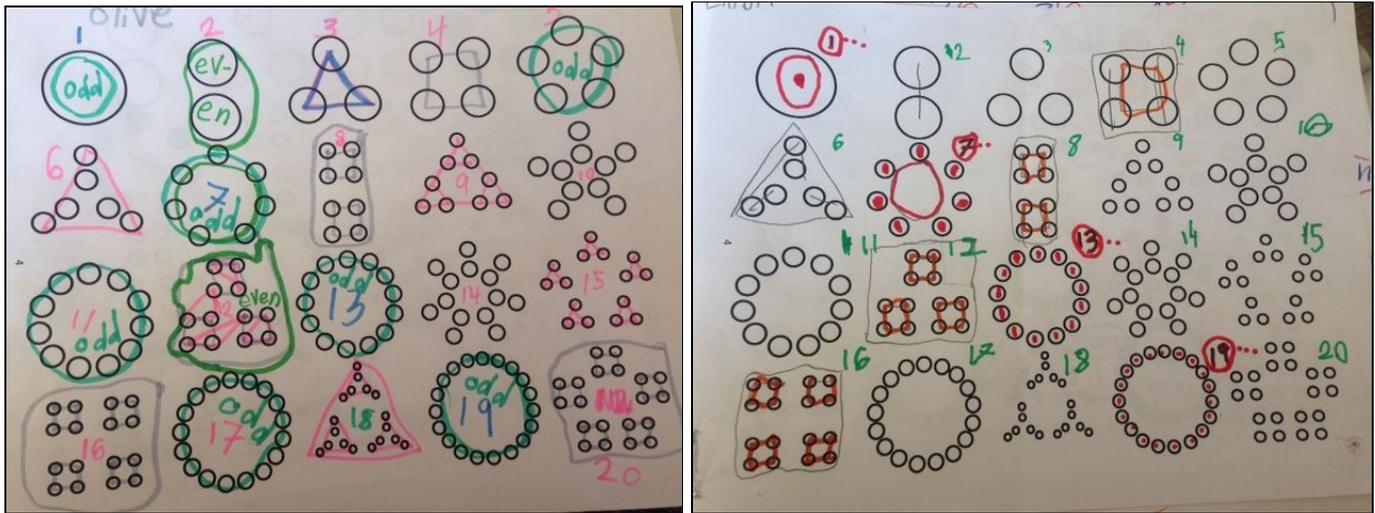
Junior Up Newsletter- Community Beginnings- Week 1



The 2017-2018 school year has begun! We could not have asked for a better three days to begin our school year. The Old Hands welcomed with open arms three new Arbor students, along with new Juniors coming from the Nest and Den. After a lovely Portland summer, we spent time this week getting to know one another and easing back into the routines of school.

This summer, I focused much of my energy on math instruction, taking a course from Stanford Professor Jo Boaler, entitled [How to Learn Math for Teachers and Parents](#). Boaler's insights about how children learn maths (I use *maths* because it emphasizes that there are many different kinds of math and encourages children to think beyond calculation) are supported by the latest brain research and mesh well with the approach we take at Arbor, as she advocates for moving beyond some of the traditional methods that have caused trauma and struggle for some students. After taking this course, I believe even more strongly that all children can learn high level maths, that maths are creative and beautiful, and that appropriate struggle, making mistakes, and persistence are key to learning. In our first maths tasks this week we learned about how our brains grow and that taking risks and making mistakes are an essential part of brain growth. We also learned that people see maths in many different ways and that

visualizing numbers are a key component in understanding them. With this in mind, we looked at a visual representation of the numbers 1-20 and discussed together the many different patterns we noticed. As you can see in some sample student work, the kiddos loved noticing shapes and how the numbers were connected, as well as the various groupings present in the visual designs. Through Number Talks and other discussion formats, we are asking the children to learn maths together, to support one another in this process, and to articulate their thinking clearly to others.



In addition to beginning our maths learning, the kiddos also began their first writing project this week, creating Maps of Our Hearts. Holly shared with the kiddos that writers love to write from ideas, places, people, or experiences that are close to their heart and matter to them. With this in mind, we brainstormed a list first and then began writing and drawing on watercolor paper, adding images to accompany our words, and finishing with black-line sharpie and watercolor. These maps will adorn our classroom soon, so please venture in to admire them when you have a chance.

To welcome new members to our classroom, we began new traditions and renewed familiar ideas as well. We have started a tradition of a Closing Circle in Junior Up at the end of the day, when we all get to look through the Arbor songbook and sing songs together by request. It can be somewhat daunting as a new person at Arbor when everyone begins singing an unfamiliar song at Assembly and you feel like you are the only person who does not know it. We wanted to help our new students feel more comfortable in this situation and will be previewing songs together each week to familiarize them and continue to practice ourselves. Knowing these songs goes a long way towards helping students feel more apart of the Arbor community.

In another nod to the idea of community, we read a wonderful book this week called *The Three Questions*, by Jon J Muth, based on a story by Leo Tolstoy. In this story, a boy seeks out the answers to his questions: 1) *When is the most important time*, 2) *Who is the most important one?*, and 3) *What is the most important thing to do?* After several encounters along the way, he comes to learn that 1) *The most important time is now*, 2) *The most important one is the one you are with*, and 3) *The most important thing to do is to do good for others*. As a class, we decided that these three answers could stand strong as our Junior Up Agreement for this year-- aiming to always live

up to these ideals. Already, I find myself saying as I get home from school each day, "Remember, the most important time is now. Do those dishes, don't push them off."

Finally, on Friday we were able to begin to acknowledge and celebrate the hard work each child put into his or her map this summer. Taking turns, three students shared the US maps they made and read aloud the story they wrote of how their families came to Oregon. Using a large map, we began placing stickers on states and other countries students in our class have come from. We also began to make lists together of some of the reasons people move to a new place. So far, we

have identified four different reasons, 1) For a new job, 2) For education, 3) Because they like that place, and 4) For love or family. Next week, each child will get an opportunity to share as well and we will continue to identify commonalities and differences between our migration stories. We look forward to hearing each story and making many connections.

Looking forward to another great week together!
Best, Laurel and Holly

