## Family Letter

## Dear Family,

Your child is now learning about subtraction. A common subtraction mistake is subtracting in the wrong direction. Children may think that they always subtract the smaller digit from the larger digit, but this is not true. To help children avoid this mistake, the Math Expressions program encourages children to "fix" numbers first and then subtract.

When one or more digits in the top number are smaller than the corresponding digits in the bottom number, fix the numbers by "ungrouping." For example, 1,634-158 is shown below:

1. We cannot
subtract 8 ones from 4 ones. We get more ones by ungrouping 1 ten to make 10 ones.

We now have 14 ones and only 2 tens.

$$
\begin{array}{r}
214 \\
1,684 \\
-\quad 158 \\
\hline
\end{array}
$$

2. We cannot subtract 5 tens from 2 tens. We get more tens by ungrouping 1 hundred to make 10 tens.

We now have 12 tens and only 5 hundreds.

$$
\begin{array}{r}
12 \\
5 \not 24 \\
1,634 \\
-\quad 158 \\
\hline
\end{array}
$$

3. Now we can subtract:
$1-0=1$ thousand $5-1=4$ hundreds $12-5=7$ tens $14-8=6$ ones

$$
\begin{array}{r}
12 \\
5 \not 214 \\
1,634 \\
-158 \\
\hline 1,476
\end{array}
$$

In the method above, the numbers are ungrouped from right to left, but students can also ungroup from left to right. Children can choose whichever way works best for them.

Your child should also continue to practice multiplication and division skills at home.

If you have any questions or comments, please call or write me.

Sincerely,
Your child's teacher Ten and Measurement and Data 4.NBT.3, 4.NBT.4, 4.MD. 2 and all Mathematical Practices.

