Fraction Action

Grades 2-3

In introducing children to the concept of *fractions*—numbers that aren't whole numbers (such as 1/2, 1/3 and 1/4)— it's often a good idea to use objects that they can see and touch.

What You Need

* Large clear container (holding at least 2 cups)

* Masking tape

* Marker

* Measuring cups (1/2, 1/3 or 1/4 cup measure)

* Unpopped popcorn

What to Do

* Invite your child to help you make popcorn for the family. Begin by having her put a piece of masking tape from top to bottom on one side of the large container.

* For younger children, use a 1/2 cup measure. For older children, use a 1/3 or 1/4 cup measure. Choose the unit of measure and fill the measuring cup with popcorn. Give the cup to your child and ask her questions such as the following:

—How many whole cups do you think the container will hold?

—How many 1/2 cups (or 1/3 cups or 1/4 cups) do you think it will hold?

* Let your child pour the measured popcorn into the clear container. Have her continue to pour the same amount into the container until it is full. As she pours each equal amount, have her mark the level on the container by drawing a line on the tape. Then have her write the fraction, corresponding to the unit of measure on the line. After the container is full, have your child count up the total number of cup increments (1/2, 1/3 or 1/4) and compare it to her estimate from above.

* As you measure out the popcorn to pop, ask your child to answer questions such as the following:

—How many 1/2 cups equal a cup? Two cups?

—How many 1/4 cups equal 1/2 cup? A whole cup?

* Pop the corn and enjoy!