



**Spotlight on Math
Models:**

A Story of Units has several key mathematical “models” that will be used throughout a student’s elementary years.

Number towers, also known as number stairs, are representations of quantity made by joining together interlocking cubes. In Kindergarten, they are used to help students literally build their knowledge of cardinality (the number of elements of a set of objects) by erecting towers of various numbers. Number towers are then used to teach concepts of “more/less”, as well as the specific patterns of “1 more than/1 less than”. This model leads to an understanding of comparison and the word “than” in other contexts as well: taller and shorter than, heavier than, longer than, etc.

Students are encouraged to build towers for quantities 1 through 5 in one color, with quantities beyond 5 added on in a second color. This color change provides developmental support for understanding the important benchmark number 5, which will serve them well when they begin to add and subtract within groups of 10 as the year progresses.

