Dear Families:

The symbols greater than (>) and less than (<) are easily confused. It is hard for children to remember which side is for the smaller number and which side is for the larger number.

Today, we used an alligator’s mouth constructed from craft sticks to help us remember that the open part of the symbol is directed at the larger number. The alligator was “hungry” and, therefore, wanted to eat the larger number. We compared the two numbers and talked about whether the first number was greater than, less than or equal to the second number.

Children begin to learn **greater than/less than**⎯or comparing numbers⎯early on in their mathematical development. They should be able to mentally compare numbers up to 10 in their heads or by counting on their fingers. As they begin to compare larger numbers (11-20 and up), they will usually be asked to read a number to figure out which is greater.

You can help reinforce this skill by asking your child **greater than**, **less than** questions. When putting away toys, ask: “Is the number of LEGOS greater than the number of building blocks?” Then rephrase the question to include “less than.” This will help solidify your child’s skill in comparing numbers while reinforcing his or her vocabulary.,

Happy comparing!