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Dear Parents,

You have probably noticed some changes in the FunShine Curriculum Program this year. In particular you might have noticed that your children are not bringing home Enrichment Sheets for the Letters/Numbers/Colors and Shapes. Instead, we have included a monthly Journal and Activity Strips for your child that focus on these concepts. These skills are also covered with a variety of new teacher materials, along with children's puzzles, games, and more. I would like to explain why we made these changes.

Each year, my Curriculum Team and I take a step back to look at the overall program and ask a number of questions. Is it fresh and fun for our customers and kids? Is it appropriate according to the latest research in child development? What components are being used or not used (liked/disliked) by the majority of customers? How can we best spend the money that goes into each kit to provide value to customers? What should we think about changing and why? With each of those decisions comes the risk that not everyone will like the changes we make. I can assure you however, that each change that has been made over the years has a solid educational reason behind it.

Regarding the Journals, there are a number of reasons that we made the change away from worksheets. The first and most important is that almost all child care/preschool licensors, accreditation agencies across the nation, and committees that set standards within each state view them very negatively. They simply do not believe that the concepts presented on worksheets are age appropriate for preschool children. We've taken heat on this. In fact, in a number of states, simply having them in our kits is enough reason for them to disqualify our program as an approved curriculum. They want to see children involved in more active, hands-on learning. To some extent, our curriculum team is uncomfortable with worksheets for the same reason but we have continued to include them in the kits because providers and parents like them.

Of course, we don't think a child is going to be "harmed" by using a worksheet, but there are probably better ways to teach the same skills. In fact, the most important learning that happens each day for your child is gained through creative exploration, discovery, and social experiences – and has very little to do with what they bring home at night on a project or worksheet. If you think about it, your child is probably much more excited about various events of the day other than the worksheets.

Your child's teacher presents many wonderful learning experiences each day with some assistance from us. Please be supportive of them as they make this change. The simple fact that they have shared this letter means that they care very much about providing quality experiences for your child. My staff and I want the best for your child as well. Thanks and best wishes for a wonderful year!

Beth Ehlis Strube, Ms ED

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