

News from KUMON of University Village

**KUMON of
University Village**

Center Hours

Mondays
Tuesdays
Thursdays

2:30-7:00 pm

June 2009

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Seattle's shortsighted math curriculum....

I had written an entirely different lead article for the June newsletter, but then I read this op-ed piece in the Sunday, May 31, 2009 edition of the Seattle Times by Cliff Mass, a professor of atmospheric sciences at UW. 15 years ago I turned to KUMON to help my son master math because I couldn't see where he would get this anywhere in the school math curriculum at that time. It is amazing to me that after all of these years we are still in the same place in terms of confusion and controversy over the best way to teach math to our children here in Seattle.

The good news for us is that we have KUMON. Our kids don't have to wait. No matter what is going on in the schools and however long it takes to fix it, KUMON kids are doing exactly what the experts recommend-mastering the crucial algorithms and developing the strong mathematical foundation they need to work successfully and with confidence in advanced math in high school, college and in their careers.

The article by Prof. Mass follows:

"On May 6, the Seattle School Board voted on the purchase of high-school math textbooks, and the results were both disappointing and tragic. In a 4-3 vote, the board adopted the Discovering Math series: "discovery-based" math texts that were found to be mathematically unsound by mathematicians working for the state Board of Education. As noted by Prof. Jack Lee of UW, "definitions, computational algorithms, and formulas seem to be stated vaguely when they are stated at all."

These books are "discovery-based" or "reform" math texts in which discussion, group projects, manipulation of objects, use of calculators and inefficient "exploration" replace students acquiring of key skills, solving real-world problems and developing a strong mathematical foundation. At the core of this math series is the theory that unless students "discover" math facts themselves, they are unable to master and apply them effectively.

The damage from "Discovering Math" is multiplied by Seattle's previous selections of similarly weak "discovery" curricula in elementary (Everyday Math) and middle school (CMP2).....As a result of these poor math adoptions, it will be nearly impossible for Seattle students to get the kind of mathematics training necessary to compete in a technical world. How could the board make such an extraordinary error? Not once but 3 times?

Furthermore, it was well known to the board that the Discovering Math series was found to be unsound, and that the San Diego School District had decided to remove these books at considerable cost....

In fact, the process of book selection was itself flawed: the applications for

curriculum committee members did not inquire into candidates' math backgrounds, and no mathematicians or community members in mathematical careers were selected (although one UW math faculty member with children in the Seattle schools did apply but was rejected). Almost all committee members were Seattle school district employees. The chair of the committee did not have a degree in math or a technical subject.

There are deeper and more disturbing reasons why world-class, "mastery-based" math curricula are not being selected by Seattle and some other districts: the influence of schools of education. Discovery-based learning is the accepted paradigm in most education colleges.....The fact that discovery-based texts have failed to improve student learning has generally been blamed on deficient teaching. The fact that Discovery Math books are nearly impossible for both students and parents to use on their own is considered an unfortunate but unavoidable hurdle...

The tide of education is now turning and the new state math standards, although imperfect, show a clear direction away from discovery learning towards ensuring students have the skills to compete in an increasingly mathematical world. It is tragic that at this point of transition, Seattle Public Schools is turning backward towards an approach that has failed in the past, and that will leave Seattle students at a severe disadvantage in a highly competitive environment.

Eventually, at great expense, the Discovering Math series will be dropped, but an entire generation of students may be lost." Prof. Cliff Mass, University of Washington

Summer Vacation Schedules have been sent home, and more are available in the Center and on our website. Please use these to inform us of your summer plans and of extended absences from the center. We are able to put together vacation packets for however long you are gone, so that your child stays on track with their KUMON study while you're away. We can the daily or weekly workload to fit your schedule.

Some students cut back on pages while they're away, and others find that they can do a little more. Some students take Sundays or weekends off during the summer. KUMON is a very flexible program. Please let us know your plans so that we can adjust the workload to meet your

child's individual needs.

Please check out our vacation policies on our website, www.kumonofseattle.com.

Summer Reading Challenge Begins!

It's June so that must mean that our **Annual Summer Reading Challenge** should be starting soon! This year the Reading Challenge will run from July 1-August 31.

We love our Summer Reading Challenge! It is wildly popular and works like this:

- All currently enrolled students (including math-only students) are invited to participate in the Challenge.
- Students will set their own personal goal for how many books they will read.
- Each student who participates will receive a **KUMON Book Tracker** in which they will record the books they've read, and write a very brief synopsis of the book.
- Each student will also receive a **super-cool T-shirt**. Students should wear their T-shirts when they come to class. Every time they do, their name will be entered in our **weekly raffle**.
- Challengers are encouraged to check out books from our Center library, which includes all of the books on the **KUMON Recommended Reading List (RRL)**. We will send home copies of the RRL along with the T-shirt and Book Tracker when your child signs up for the Challenge. Books read for any other summer reading programs will be accepted in our Challenge.
- **ICE CREAM PARTY!** We will celebrate a wonderful summer filled with reading at our annual Make Your Own Sundae Party in September, date to be announced in mid-June.

Summer is a great time for KUMON!

Daily KUMON study keeps the skills our students have worked hard to build over the year sharp, keeps their confidence up, and helps them to hit the ground running again when school starts up in the fall.

And at only 15 minutes a day per subject, that leaves 23 hours and 45 minutes left for fun in the sun!