

## STRAIGHT talk

Published Quarterly for Parents of Kumon Kids

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## Challenge Conquered by Confidence



Thomas Edison once said, “If we all did the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves.” It seems that Suruchi Ramanujan always strives to go beyond her capabilities, and she does it all with a healthy dose of confidence.

Suruchi, now in the second grade, began studying Kumon when she was just three years old, after her cousin in Minnesota had success with the program. Her father Sam says that Kumon has given Suruchi discipline,

and “she gained confidence because of Kumon.” This seems to be a constant theme for young Suruchi, and it seems that confidence is what led her to victory in the Kumon Math Challenge that took place at Washington University in St. Louis last summer, where she won a \$1,500 prize for first place in the First Grade Test.

Soon Bae is Suruchi’s Kumon Instructor at the Overland Park Kumon Math and Reading Center just outside of Kansas City, Missouri. She says that Suruchi is one of her best students and she has a lot of confidence in her abilities. “I knew she would win first place [at the Kumon Math Challenge],” says Bae. “She wanted to enter the Math Challenge before but was not qualified” because the youngest participants had already “completed first grade.” The importance of the Math Challenge was emphasized at the Overland Park Kumon Center. Ms. Bae has had previous winners in the Math Challenge and asserts, “The Math Challenge was a great place for students to achieve.”

When asked how she attacked the Math Challenge, Suruchi says, “I went in confident.” Ms. Cele Wood, Suruchi’s second-grade teacher at the Academy Montessori International of Kansas City where she has taught for 25 years, says that Suruchi has reason to be confident. “She is an extraordinary student with an amazing memory and ability to grasp material, analyze it, and put it into practice.”

Suruchi has a lot of energy and is able to gracefully juggle a variety of different interests. When not in school, Suruchi keeps herself busy with sports like tennis and swimming, playing the piano, and doing classical Indian dance and vocals. Currently on Level I and working on square roots, Suruchi plans to complete Level J by the end of the summer. “I would like to finish Level O. I had a conference with my Kumon Instructor about program completion,” says Suruchi.

A girl who knows how to plan for the future certainly has to have plans for spending the prize money from the Kumon Math Challenge. When asked, she enthusiastically said, “I’m saving it for college.” Every penny will come in handy as she plans to go to Harvard to become a scientist or a doctor.

In the end it is evident that this bright, delightful girl has been able to achieve a great deal in a short period of time because she is able to combine hard work with a lot of confidence—confidence that her parents have in her, confidence that her school teachers have in her, confidence that her Kumon Instructor has in her, and perhaps most importantly, confidence that she has in herself.

*Editor’s Note: The Kumon Math Challenge will not be returning this summer.*

*Unfortunately, Kumon North America has decided to no longer offer academic testing events. It is our desire as an organization to focus on the needs of our students and instructors to provide the best service possible at our centers.*

*We want to congratulate all the present and past winners and participants of the Kumon Math Challenge. A special thanks to all of the parents and families that supported their students during these events.*

*Questions or comments about this matter should be directed to [straighttalk@kumon.com](mailto:straighttalk@kumon.com).*

THOUGHTS BY TORU KUMON

*“It would be a waste not to develop the intellectual capacity of students in early childhood, when they have boundless potential.”*



# The ABC's of Junior Kumon



## What is Junior Kumon?

Junior Kumon is a program for preschoolers and kindergarteners (at participating Kumon Centers) designed to instill a desire to learn and to help prepare them for their first academic challenges in math and reading. Children work closely with a Kumon Assistant at the Center, and with a parent at home. Our individualized and interactive method gives Junior Kumon students a leg up to becoming avid learners and successful students.



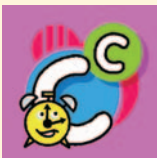
### Interaction

Junior Kumon is a fully interactive program. A trained Kumon Assistant works closely and patiently with Junior Kumon students, providing attention, positive reinforcement, and instruction at each session. Consistent and positive interaction at the Center and at home is crucial at this stage of learning.



### Individualization

The Junior Kumon curriculum is individualized for each student. Reading aloud to children, counting with them, and using tools like Worksheets, flashcards, books, alphabet and number boards form the basis of the Junior Kumon curriculum. Each child progresses through these materials at his or her own pace.



### Introduction

Junior Kumon introduces children to basic skills required to learn math and reading. It takes time and repetition to develop these pre-reading and pre-numeracy skills. At this input stage of learning, students may not be able to demonstrate to you what they know upon command. Parents should be patient and understanding.

## WE HAVE MAIL...



**Dear Dr. Andi,**

I am a working parent with little time to spend with my young child. I want to make the most of the time we spend together, yet make it a learning experience for him. Given my limited time, what do you suggest I do?

- *Busy Parent*



**Dear Busy Parent,**

If you can engage in only one activity with your child each day, make it Reading Aloud. Read from a wide variety of books with your child snuggled up close to you. Show your child the front and back of the book, examine and discuss the illustrations, and ask what the book is about. As you read, run your finger beneath the text, read with expression and give different voices to each character. Engage your child in the story, stopping every so often to ask a meaningful question, such as, what do you think will happen next? Reading Aloud encourages a child's imagination and creativity as well as teaches several important pre-literacy skills such as an appreciation of books and stories, print awareness, background knowledge of the world, and oral competency. It also lays the foundation for reading comprehension and for the child to become a reader. Good luck and happy reading!

- **Dr. Andi**

## Doctor on Call

DR. ANDI  
Addresses  
Today's Parenting  
Issues



# The Debate to Prepare Preschoolers for Future Academic Success...

As the media carries out the debate about whether it is best for preschoolers to play OR learn, Kumon takes the position that it is best for young children to play AND learn. Both are integral developmental aspects of a child's life.

Since parents are their child's **first** teachers, Kumon has created a program called Junior Kumon to help parents become their child's **best** teachers. The goal of Junior Kumon is to instill in young children ages 4 to 6 a love of learning while helping them to seamlessly acquire the skills needed for early elementary success. Its purpose is *not* to drill academics or groom preschoolers for Ivy League Schools as some in the media debate have suggested. Rather, in Junior Kumon, preschool and kindergarten-aged children learn critical pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills in a **nurturing** environment, a place where play and learning are synonymous.

Showing your child that numbers are everywhere can set the stage for learning math. Counting objects such as blocks, stairs, cookies or dots; filling in missing numbers within a given sequence; recognizing quantities of dots without having to count each one; understanding patterns of numbers; counting by two's, five's or ten's; counting from a number point other than one; these are just some of the ways that Junior Kumon helps young children develop the critical pre-numeracy skill of **number sense** (*i.e.*, a child's awareness of—and flexibility with—numbers). Students who possess number sense have an easy time later on in learning math computation, making comparisons, performing mental math, and recognizing gross mathematical errors. Possession of number sense prior to elementary school is necessary for learning formal arithmetic in the early grades.

In a similar spirit, word play at an early age can set the stage for learning to read. Identifying and generating rhymes; identifying the sounds of letters and letter combinations; manipulating those sounds to form new words; blending sounds together to identify a word; breaking words apart into their individual sounds; clapping or tapping the number of syllables in children's names and in other words; these are some of the many activities that can be played as word games to help young children develop the critical pre-literacy skill of **Phonemic Awareness** (*i.e.*, the ability to

recognize that words are composed of sounds). Possession of Phonemic Awareness is necessary to learn phonics, a requirement for learning to read in the early grades.

Schools are full of failing math students and struggling readers. The best time for intervention is not AFTER children fail; it is BEFORE. Timing is important and the optimum time for learning some skills is during the preschool and kindergarten years. If at ages 4 to 6, children do not acquire the developmentally appropriate pre-numeracy and pre-literacy skills, they will not be able to do simple arithmetic or break the reading code when they are 6 or 7 years old. And if they cannot succeed at those skills, they will not be on the road to future academic success.

If we believe in teaching our young children to swim, to play soccer, or to play the piano, why not also count the number of cheerios left in the bowl and the dots on a worksheet, or figure out how many words rhyme with *tickle*? Learning is fun! Children are not only happy throughout the learning process, but are also satisfied with the end results.





**DOB:** 4/01  
**School Grade:** PK - 2  
**Starting Level:** Math 7A  
**Present Level:** Math 4A (ASHR Math)

**Dominic**



**DOB:** 12/98  
**School Grade:** 1st  
**Starting Level:** Math 3A Reading 5A  
**Present Level:** Math A & Reading 3A (ASHR Math)

**Vincent**



**DOB:** 10/97  
**School Grade:** 2nd  
**Starting Level:** Math 3A Reading 6A  
**Present Level:** Math G & Reading CII (ASHR Reading & G by 5)

**Patrick**



**DOB:** 12/98  
**School Grade:** 1st  
**Starting Level:** Math 6A Reading 6A  
**Present Level:** Math B & Reading BII (ASHR Math)

**Sparsh**

# THE FACES OF KUMON



**DOB:** 3/99  
**School Grade:** 1st  
**Starting Level:** Math 3A Reading 7A  
**Present Level:** Math 2A & Reading All (ASHR Reading)

**Vikhram**



**DOB:** 3/94  
**School Grade:** 5th  
**Starting Level:** Math 4A  
**Present Level:** Math G (ASHR Math & G by 5)

**Sumeet**



**DOB:** 10/92  
**School Grade:** 7th  
**Starting Level:** Math 7A  
**Present Level:** Math L (ASHR Math)

**Chikara**



**DOB:** 4/94  
**School Grade:** 6th  
**Starting Level:** Math A  
**Present Level:** Math I (ASHR Math)

**Sahar**



**DOB:** 5/95  
**School Grade:** 4th  
**Starting Level:** Math A  
**Present Level:** Math F (ASHR Math)

**Wataru**



**DOB:** 1/93  
**School Grade:** 7th  
**Starting Level:** Math A  
**Present Level:** Math I (ASHR Math)

**Yu**



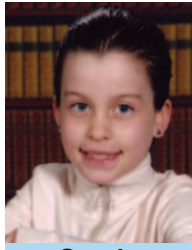
**DOB:** 4/94  
**School Grade:** 6th  
**Starting Level:** Math 3A Reading 4A  
**Present Level:** Math G & Reading I (ASHR Reading & G by 5)

**Harsha**



**DOB:** 3/99  
**School Grade:** 1st  
**Starting Level:** Math 6A Reading 5A  
**Present Level:** Math C & Reading DI (ASHR Math & Reading)

**Siri**



**DOB:** 3/95  
**School Grade:** 5th  
**Starting Level:** Reading 7A  
**Present Level:** Reading F (ASHR Reading)

**Sarah**



**DOB:** 11/90  
**School Grade:** 10th  
**Starting Level:** Math D  
**Present Level:** Math Q (Completed Level O Math)

**Leroy**



**DOB:** 7/98  
**School Grade:** 2nd  
**Starting Level:** Math 2A  
**Present Level:** Math E (ASHR Math)

**Aditya**



**DOB:** 6/98  
**School Grade:** 2nd  
**Starting Level:** Math 5A Reading 7A  
**Present Level:** Math C & Reading CI (ASHR Math)

**Kushmita**



**DOB:** 2/97  
**School Grade:** 3rd  
**Starting Level:** Math 2A  
**Present Level:** Math E (ASHR)

**Delima**

## Interested in having your child featured?

Please talk to your Kumon Instructor.



submissions to The Faces of Kumon must include a signed **Student Profile Form** and a photo (preferably, a head shot no smaller than 2 x 3 inches).

**Incomplete submissions will not be considered.**

Request a form from your Instructor or email us at:

[straighttalk@kumon.com](mailto:straighttalk@kumon.com)

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