

Emphasizes good study habits

Private program teaches math skills Japanese style

By ANGELA BLACKBURN
The Champion

Math may not be everyone's favourite subject but it doesn't have to be scary.

At least not with the Japanese Kumon learning method which brings back a traditional approach.

"It's a return to basics and beyond. It gets back to discipline, independent study skills and the development of attention spans," explains Bev Paul, who is opening a Kumon Centre in Milton this month.

Ms Paul has operated a centre in Oakville for a year and will take over

the one that first opened its doors here late last spring.

Parents, and children attended an open house Tuesday at the 900 Nipissing Road facility.

Repetition, key to the Kumon method, cements building blocks necessary for learning and eventual ease.

Ms Paul, an educator for 30 years, recently left the Hamilton-Wentworth Board of Education as a special education instructor to turn fulltime attention to her Kumon franchises. "I'd really like Kumon to become a household word," she said.

"In my own experience in teaching,

I did see children whose math skills were extremely weak. They could be bright children, yet they had weak computational skills. There's a lot of concern from parents about math programs in schools, that children aren't learning the basics when they're young and the gaps in learning can make it difficult for them to cope with math in high school," she said.

Kumon isn't "a quick fix" nor tutoring, said Ms Paul. "It isn't meant to replace school curriculum but complement it."

It's designed for those aged 4 to 15, and was developed in 1958 in Osaka, Japan by Toru Kumon, a high school math teacher concerned about his son's math proficiency.

Japanese immigrants brought Kumon to North America a decade ago. The Kumon Educational Institute of Canada Inc. says the method is now used by almost two million children in 27 countries. In Canada, over 16,000 students are enrolled in 180 centres.

Ms Paul's Milton centre will operate two days a week, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., as a drop-in centre. Students are encouraged to visit twice a week, to



Bev Paul

Each level contains about 20 booklets of 200 worksheets. Students must complete each and attain success in a timed test on the work before moving to the next level.

"Kumon doesn't feel a student has truly mastered it until they've mastered it within a time frame," said Ms Paul. "We want the mastery so it becomes automatic," she explained.

The repetitive nature of the Kumon method also develops discipline and good study habits, said Ms Paul.

Kumon centres are franchised and operated by instructors qualified by the national institute. Tuition is \$60 per month plus a one-time \$40 enrolment fee.

Math skills, like those involved in sports or music, come with "practice, practice, practice," said Ms Paul. But is it popular with students? Ms Paul said Kumon requires both parental and student commitment.

"Once students realize their improvement, they are less apt to make a fuss about the repetition," she said. For information call 338-9720.

work then leave with homework, to be corrected by parents and returned on the next visit. Homework consists of numerous worksheets to take approximately 20 minutes every day.

New students are given a diagnostic test and usually started in a level below their ability. "We want them to experience success right away," said Ms Paul.

Then they work independently, at their own pace, on Kumon worksheets, standard the world over, for levels from pre-school to university.

Lesley sings at Stratford

Local vocalist Lesley Andrew will perform Sunday at the Stratford City Hall Auditorium.

The well-known soprano will be accompanied by baritone David Playfair and pianist Che Anne Loewen in the 7 p.m. concert. Bach, Bernstein, Mendelssohn and Menotti will be featured.

A second performance will take the stage Thursday, October 20, same time, same place. Judy Hunter will be the pianist. The concert will include Barber, Chausson, Hundley and Ravel.

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Leslie Andrew

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