

Potential

JAN - JUN 2017

AUSTRALIA •

NEW ZEALAND • Philippines • Singapore • Sri Lanka • Thailand • Vietnam

My Life My Dream

- EDDIE & ANDY
- MANU
- LAYLA

What's on
Parents' Minds?

Cultivate a
love
for **studying**



KUMON



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Dear Kumon families,

We're excited to bring you the first issue of Potential for 2017.

In this issue, we share with you stories of Kumon students and families at different stages of their Kumon journey.

We talk to Manu, a recent Maths Completer and Maths Olympiad medallist, about the role Kumon played in developing his advanced maths abilities and in encouraging his dreams to become a robotics engineer. Manu also shares some words of wisdom for fellow maths students with goals to finish the programme.

The importance of reading early and often is explored as we talk to Sam, mother of avid reader, public speaker and advanced English student, Layla.

For families of young learners, we speak with Linh, whose two sons began Kumon at the very start of their schooling and are now excelling in their studies. We also ask Kumon pre-schooler parents for their opinion on the question "Is my child too young for Kumon?"

Our local news article discusses the relevance of the Kumon Method and how recent research is suggesting improvements to current educational practises that the Kumon approach has been perfecting over decades.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Potential and wish you an inspiring start to 2017.

Sincerely,

The Kumon Public Relations Team



Revitalise your children's reading!

Visit www.readtogether.com.au for a list of our favourite children's books from Australia and New Zealand.

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Have something to say?

Feel free to send us your thoughts.

e-mail: potential@kumon.com.au

Eddie

8 years old
Maths J 200 (ASHR 5); English CI 150
Starting point: Maths 4A 1; English 5A 1
Enrolled: Sept 2014 (Maths);
March 2014 (English)

Andy

7 year old
Maths H 200 (ASHR 5); English DI 80
Starting point: Maths 3A 1; English 4A 180
Enrolled: Nov 2014 (Maths);
Sept 2015 (English)

Starting a Journey



Linh enrolled her sons in Kumon early to motivate them towards learning. Now, Eddie and Andy are studying well above their grade level. For Linh, Kumon is more than just study. It has brought the family closer.

Linh, what motivated you to enrol your sons in Kumon in kindergarten and preschool?

I had a few family friends whose boys seemed to lose their motivation for studying. I didn't want my boys to experience that – I put them into Kumon so they could start a journey, become motivated and see the value of education.

Did you ever worry that they were too young for Kumon?

My husband and I were worried that the work was a bit above what they were capable of but near the end of the first year they were enjoying it and getting up to higher levels, and sometimes they would remind me that they had to study.



How do you feel about your sons studying 5 years ahead of their grade level?

I'm surprised they've progressed so far in what seems like very little time. When they first got to higher levels I wondered how I could help them at home but I've seen them be able to do the work and understand it without having to sit there for hours on end. That just gave me confidence in how much they can handle and continue to progress.

What changes have you noticed in your sons since starting Kumon?

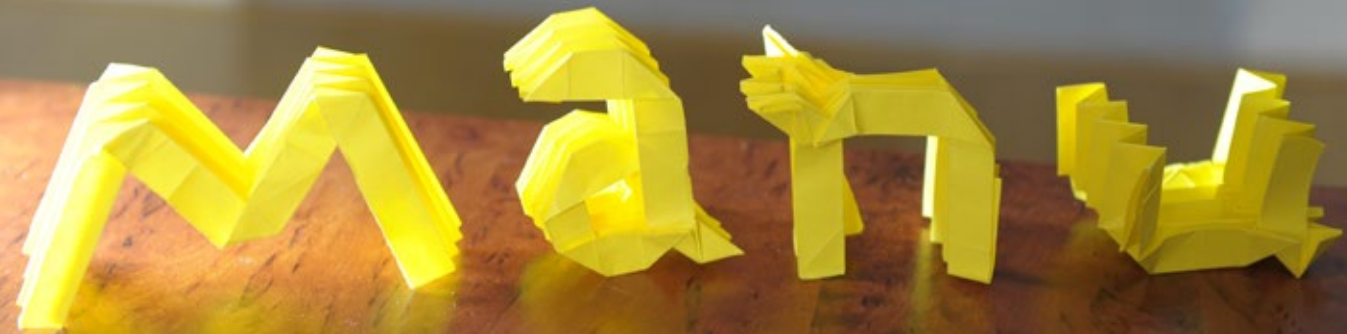
They are much more dedicated to their work. With their class work, they're willing to put all their attention to it and do it all thoroughly.

How has Kumon helped your relationship with the boys?

It's helped me to become that bit closer to them. I'd just ask them about what's happening with the work and go from there. It'd be an opening for discussion between us.

Currently, Eddie and Andy wish to continue with their Kumon studies. In the future, they wish to use their skills to help others.





Beating Challenges...for Myself!

Manu

11 year old
Maths completer (2016)
Starting point: 3A 71
Enrolled: March 2012



Manu began Kumon at the age of seven. Four years later and the 11 year old has excelled in multiple maths Olympiads and national competitions, been accepted into the accelerated maths programme at the University High School in Melbourne, and dreams of becoming a robotics engineer.

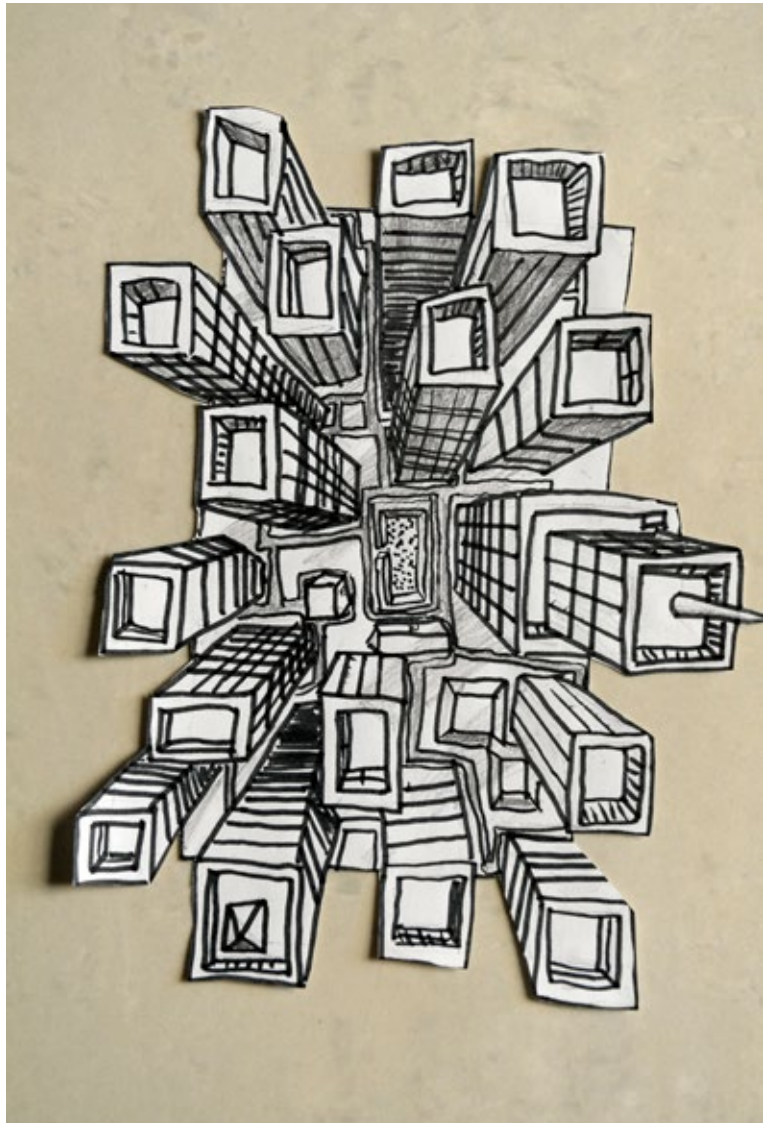
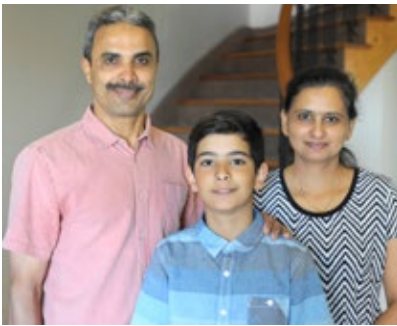
'I'm a pretty curious person so I like new things and new ideas', said Manu. 'I want to become a robotics engineer because I'm fascinated by robots and I want to help people with new types of robots'. Manu imagines creating robots that improve the lives of others. For example, 'robots that carry your coffee to you, make food for you, and even help people with disabilities as well. If they can't do something by themselves I would make a robot that could help them'.

Not long after starting Kumon Maths, Manu advanced quickly, causing his parents to question whether he was accelerating too fast. 'I actually thought about stopping him. He started fractions when he was in Year 3 or 4 and I thought it might be too much for him but he said he was enjoying it and wanted to finish' said his mother Kala.

'Now I just want to beat challenges so I don't have to worry about them anymore', Manu shared. 'It feels really good to have finished because I achieved a goal that I set when I started Kumon. Maybe at the start, I thought I was doing Kumon for my mum but then I

realised I was doing it for myself.' Testing himself and his maths abilities has become a regular focus for Manu, a medallist in the Australian Maths Competition's Maths Olympiad. With only twenty-five minutes to complete five questions, calculation speed plays an important part in the competition, an edge which Manu attributes to Kumon. 'It helped a lot with my multiplication and division because I can recall them really fast. It also increased my thinking capabilities as I can do more in my head than I can do on paper.'

For Manu, maths is about more than sums on a page. He sees mathematical relationships in many things, including his hobbies of origami and drawing. These hobbies are a way for Manu to utilise his maths skills and link them to real world applications. 'I like to draw shapes, most of the time geometry and 3D shapes because I like shading and drawing things in perspective, so a shape would get smaller if it's very far away in the drawing. Once there was a question in maths test, and I could do the question really easily because I'd done origami before and because there was a pattern in it.'



For the recent Kumon Completer, applied maths can change the world. 'Everyone wants stronger buildings because of earthquakes and things. If you find a new discovery in maths you may be able to make buildings stronger and cheaper than what they are right now. You can definitely help people by giving them machines to do things. I like helping people and making their lives better.'

The journey to completion wasn't always easy. 'I didn't really think I would finish Kumon when I started it. There were times in levels like Level L

when I did want to quit but I kept on going.'

When asked why it is important to keep going, Manu's response was simple: 'If you don't keep going you won't finish, and if that's what you want to do you've got to keep going.'

So what advice does Manu have for current Kumon students? 'The advice I'd give to other students is if you want to do Kumon, you have to try and do it yourself, it's your programme.'

Reading: Ahead of the Grade

Layla

8 years old
English ELL 170
Starting point: 4A 1
Enrolled: May 2014





Like all students in Year 3, Layla sat her first NAPLAN test this year. While big exams can be cause for apprehension, her mother Sam was quietly confident that Layla would do well – she is reading two years above her grade level after all.

Sam enrolled Layla in Kumon two years ago in order to help improve her daughter's vision. 'Layla was vision impaired so doing enough reading will exercise her eyes' she shared.

Since starting Kumon, Sam has seen Layla progress greatly. 'At school, she has gone from having a teacher's aide in Year 2 to being competitive in Year 3. Her reading has become very advanced. Her spelling has improved. She can spell Year 6 words that her brother is spelling.'

'I like spelling' said Layla. 'I like spelling the word 'extraordinary'. Kumon helps me a lot.'

In 2015, the Australian Institute of Family Studies published new research linking early reading in children to higher NAPLAN scores in both literacy and numeracy. The study found that children who were read to every day and who had more than 30 children's books at home received NAPLAN results that ranked them four months ahead of their cohort.

'My favourite book is *Matilda* – she is an extraordinary genius' said Layla. 'I love

Roald Dahl books. Another favourite is *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. I also like the Hey Jack series and the Billy B books. I've got the whole collection!'

'She was always willing to learn and asking questions so I needed something to stimulate her brain' said Sam. 'Through Kumon, her love of English has really blossomed. I've been told she is doing Year 5 English when she is in Year 3. She is able to think outside the box. Her thinking is way ahead.'

Layla is also a keen writer. 'I was chosen for public speaking recently. I needed to choose a topic and give a speech in front of parents and other people. There were 500 people at the speech. My speech was about the meaning of Australia Day. I was very proud' she shared.

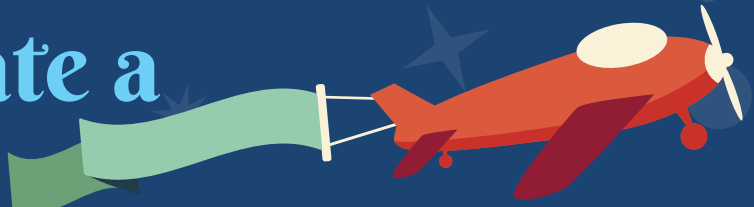
A keen interest in reading, writing and public speaking will no doubt serve Layla well in her goals for the future. 'My goal is to finish Kumon and study law. I want to help people who are in trouble.'

Since starting Kumon, Sam has seen Layla develop more than just reading skills. 'I noticed Layla was going around helping her classmates at school. This year she has developed into a confident girl. She finds Kumon exciting every time she gets to a new level. She wants to continue until she finishes the programme and I'll be there when she does.'



Cultivate a love for studying

Is your child falling out of love with reading books?



Why do children fall out of love with reading books?

Young children love books. Many older children do not. Why do children fall out of love with reading books when they get older?

Young children, especially toddlers, take to books easily when they are read to in an animated and interesting manner. Once they fall in love with the characters, plots and pictures in a storybook, they yearn for the same book to be read again. They become excited upon discovering the joy of reading on their own.

Yet, as they get older, their love for reading falters as more activities compete for their attention and time. Many elementary and high school children squander time on sedentary habits like using mobile devices, surfing the net and watching television. While they still read, it is often mandated by schools in the form of reading assignments. It becomes usual for reading to become less of a leisure activity as children are exposed to a broader spectrum of activities.

Reading has learning, emotional and social benefits.

When one is able to read for pleasure and not out of necessity, the learning, emotional and social benefits are boundless. Besides obvious benefits such as an increase in general knowledge and language proficiency, children gain a greater insight into human nature and decision making from reading books.

How then can parents encourage their child to read?

While it may be prudent for parents to limit the time their child spends on other activities, this may not be enough to spur a good reading habit. It is more important that children continue to enjoy what they are reading. This can be achieved by choosing books that your children can enjoy for as long as possible.

Singing 200 songs and reading 10,000 books makes children smarter!

Founder of Kumon, Toru Kumon strongly believes that 'singing

200 songs and reading 10,000 books makes children smarter.' Keep a record of the songs sung by your child as well as books that he or she has read and enjoyed. The rhythmic lyrics in songs will allow them to pick up words more quickly. While choosing book titles, pay attention to details such as genre, sentence length, vocabulary, storyline, illustrations and even font size. This can help you make the right choices consistently while still adjusting the degree of difficulty from time to time.

Remain engaged even as your child is older

Strive to remain involved in your child's reading journey and choose the right books for them for as long as you can. To ensure a varied reading experience spanning different genres, provide book recommendations even as they grow older and are able to select titles on their own. Your efforts will definitely help to maintain your child's love for reading.





The Kumon Recommended Reading List (RRL)*

This list comprises over 380 books intended to help Kumon students find books that they will enjoy reading, and encourage them to read books from a wide range of genres and styles. The books are divided into twelve sections, broadly corresponding to the levels of the Kumon English Programme. Like the Kumon worksheets, the RRL is designed so that each student can start reading books at a comfortable level and progress, step by step, to those that are more difficult. Each title includes a short blurb to help students choose books.



*Source:
© Kumon Institute of Education
www.kumon-english-rrl.com

Reading Ability is a Fundamental Part of Self-Learning

“ Self-learning is founded upon reading ability (the ability to read and understand books). I would like you to look at it this way: first, we should help children acquire reading ability through reading books, and then have them study Kumon worksheets to enable them to read more advanced books. By reading various types of books, each child will develop a well-rounded character, establish their own perspectives on life and eventually grow up to contribute to society.”

Toru Kumon
Founder of the Kumon Method

Source: Publication “Yamabiko”
No. 121, 1990



The Relevance of the Kumon Method

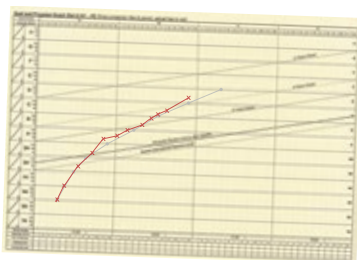


Consider the education issues currently making news in Australia and New Zealand. Reports share of declining results in literacy and numeracy in international student assessments and declining maths engagement rates in high school. More parents, across a range of socio-economic circumstances and cultural backgrounds, are actively seeking out extra support for their children's education. They are better informed and many, like you, are choosing Kumon.

The mindset that reading and maths is the responsibility of only our schools has changed. This is supported by the University of Queensland's research findings that the single most important determinant for a child's success at school is how much they are exposed to reading in their early years. As mentioned in the last issue of *Potential*, 75 percent of the fastest-growing occupations require science, technology, engineering and maths: the STEM subjects¹. Companies have created unprecedented demand for mathematically capable graduates in IT, optimisation, data science and financial mathematics. So, naturally, parents want their children to have the maths skills necessary to succeed in the occupations of the future.

Australian public policy think tank Grattan Institute released a research report in July 2015. Its key findings and recommendations are strikingly similar to fundamental Kumon principles and

practices. It proposes that, in the school classroom, the most advanced students are not adequately stretched, while our least advanced are not adequately supported and fall further behind over time. Too many miss out when teaching is pitched at the average student or the curriculum level. This thinking is at the heart of Toru Kumon's philosophy. That's why in the Kumon classroom every child is studying something different. Regardless of age or school grade, each child is given what they are ready to learn next. The common denominator for each child is progress. The report also recommends rigorously tracking the learning progress of each student. Keeping accurate information about what students know and having a study plan for what will be learned next, enables instruction to be targeted to each student's needs and ensure progress. Your child's Kumon score book is a detailed record of each worksheet they study, including time taken and accuracy. Based on these results, there is also a plan and projection for future progress.



Jaime Casap is the Chief Education Evangelist at Google. He was part of the original team that launched Google Apps for universities, launched Google Apps into K12, and helped get Chromebooks off the ground and into schools. He is known for challenging

people to stop asking children what they want to be when they grow up and start asking them what problems they want to solve. When Kumon students progress beyond their school grade level in our worksheets, they are encouraged to have a go by themselves first when they come across something new. They study examples, draw on previous learning and give it a try. They make mistakes at first. They try and fail, and then get it. As they advance further, they come to expect the challenge of a difficult problem and they experience the joy of discovering something new for themselves. They learn no problem is too difficult to attempt to solve. These are the type of problems solvers of the future Jaime Casap spoke about.

Recent research is confirming now an approach to education that Kumon has practised and honed for decades. It confirms the importance of individualised self-learning, and the relevance of Kumon in equipping young minds with the skills needed to build a brighter future.

“By striving to bring up the best children they can, parents can help shape tomorrow's world”

– Toru Kumon ²

¹ *STEM Skills the Key to Future Growth*, Randles, J, 2015

² *Seeking the Boundless Potential* (lectures from 1993-4), 1996



What's on Parents' Minds?

Kumon's programmes are suitable for children to begin whenever they are ready to learn, and so more parents are starting their children with Kumon before they reach kindergarten. Still, some parents question 'Is my child too young for Kumon?' We asked Kumon parents of pre-schoolers for their thoughts.



Tam, WA

'I would say my children are not too young. I've noticed that it has helped in other areas, particularly my little boy because he's definitely more disciplined now. He knows when he's in class that he needs to listen and he needs to focus and he knows that it's important. He realises, in his own way, that **he's learning**. He tells me, "Oh mum, I did this today and I haven't done that before."

Leticia, NSW

'There's a period when children are very **open and curious** and if you can catch them there, then the learning kind of happens naturally without distress. The learning just becomes part of who they are, because they are still in their developmental stage. If you can catch them there then it all takes off.'

'I don't think it would be too much for my daughter to do Kumon every day because each workbook only takes a small amount of time. Every day I sit with her to do something else as well with paper and pen. I thought to myself, "Why not start something in a systematic way that has some kind of system to slowly introduce her to difficult concepts?" So starting **one step at a time**, with a little amount of my time and her time, we can achieve a bigger result.'

Stephanie, NSW

Eva, NSW

'When I enrolled my children, both of them, they had very low muscle tone and their **fine motor skills** were very poor, so they couldn't even hold a pencil. For me, the pencil work all came from Kumon. I just thought they'd be ready for kindergarten, I wasn't expecting them to excel, just to be ready for school. Anything after that was exciting for me.'

'**When she doesn't want to do it, I encourage her.** I say, "every now and then we have challenges in our life. Even I don't know my work all the time. What matters is to spend just a little bit of time every day to sit down when mummy's here with you. We'll get through it."

Stephanie, NSW



KUMON



METHOD



COUNTRIES
& REGIONS



YEARS



MILLION
SUBJECT
COUNT

MATHEMATICS ENGLISH



EUROPE

Andorra, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, U.K.



ASIA

Brunei, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, The Philippines, Myanmar, Taiwan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam



NORTH AMERICA

Canada, Mexico, U.S.A.



MIDDLE EAST

Bahrain, Qatar, U.A.E.



AFRICA

Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Zambia, South Africa



OCEANIA

Australia, New Zealand



SOUTH AMERICA

Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia