

Potential

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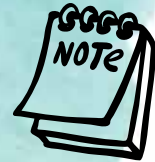


My Life, My Dream

Sanskruti | Ashnuwin



The Value of Learning from Students



A Learning Method for the 21st Century



Parenting Tips

How to Create a Study Routine



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Dear Kumon families,

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

In this issue, we share with you stories of Kumon students from Australia and New Zealand.

First up is Sanskruti, whose passion for the written word has led her to enter the world of competitive debating. She shares what it is like to be in the heat of competition, and how she uses the lessons and skills rendered from completing Kumon English to succeed under pressure.

We also hear from advanced maths student Ashnuwin, who has flown through Kumon Maths and shares what he has learned throughout the programme in order to progress to levels more than five years above his school grade.

Our feature article discusses Kumon as a learning method for the 21st century. The article sheds light on how the Kumon Method trains students to deconstruct problems *first* in order to solve them, arming them with an approach to thinking that is complementary to dealing with the challenges they are likely to encounter in unknown future jobs and industries. As economist Ross Gittins wrote 'The only safe prediction is that the future will be different to the present'.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Potential*. Keep up the good work for 2017.

Sincerely,
The Public Relations Team

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Have something to say?
Feel free to send us your thoughts on the newsletter!

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CONFIDENT IN THE HEAT OF DEBATE

Name: Sanskruti (15 years old)

Subject: English; Completer (Year 10)

Starting Point: 5A

Enrolled: Nov 2007

Sanskruti began Kumon English when she started primary school. A keen writer since a young age, Sanskruti was awarded a medal in Year 5 for narrative writing in ICAS – this meant she came first in her year group across all test-takers in New Zealand. Since then she has continued writing fiction and even participated in the National Novel Writing Month competition which required her to write a novel in just one month. On top of these achievements, Sanskruti completed Kumon English, has become a keen public speaker and championship debater.

Sanskruti says, 'The rich vocabulary in the latter levels of the English Programme inspired me to start writing. I had to read my pieces quite a lot in front of the school or to teachers, so it really started there. We had speech competitions from Year 3 and in Years 4 and 5 I went to the speech finals'.

Once she hit intermediate school, Sanskruti was encouraged by her English teacher to begin debating. 'She said I'd be good at it but I didn't really think I'd like it', admits Sanskruti. 'When I started I really enjoyed it because I enjoy thinking from different perspectives and having to argue from a certain position'.

Sanskruti soon began debating competitively. As with all competitions, the longer one lasts the tougher it gets, but she was no stranger to hard work. 'One thing I've taken away from Kumon is perseverance: just to keep going and power through everything. Even if it

gets hard you should never give up. You should just keep trying', said Sanskruti.

Those competitors who move through to the final rounds in debating not only face the top remaining performers, but must tackle socially relevant issues requiring critical consideration under the pressure of time.

'As we progressed through the competition the debating topics became more difficult', recalls Sanskruti. 'One topic was "Changing Cinderella's love interest to a girl would be better for children to learn the story". It was quite a hard topic because we had to dive into issues of equality. It took the judges about two days to come to a decision as to who won. That was when we won the semi-finals'.

During debates, Sanskruti adopts what is possibly the most daunting role on the team. 'I'm usually the third speaker whose main job is to rebut the other team. That's usually the most difficult because you go in with no preparation'.

According to Sanskruti, two qualities are key to managing this role. The first is a good sense of vocabulary and ability to use formal language. The second is confidence. 'It's important to have the confidence to stand up in front of an audience. In our finals, there were 80 - 100 people watching. Sometimes I got really nervous. In the finals all of our hands were shaking, but it was cool. I had my whole team with me so there was a lot of support'.

For a number of years now, Sanskruti has been able to support those students who are just starting out in Kumon through her work as an assistant at the Kumon Epsom Education Centre in Auckland, where she herself studied Kumon English.

'I really enjoy working with the little kids and helping them to understand the mistakes they make in English', shared Sanskruti. 'Sometimes they'll leave an answer blank so I encourage them to think and give it a try. When I was younger I'd sometimes do the same. On a few days when the books did get quite hard I did tend to get quite frustrated, but then what motivated me to keep going was that my parents and my friends always encouraged me'.

In a few years' time Sanskruti will finish high school and take the next step in shaping her life. She's considering a career in law, but not only because it relates strongly to her joy of debating and writing. 'I've always wanted a job that keeps me on my toes', she shared, 'and I really enjoy the idea of helping people through something'.





The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams...

IDEA



Name: Ashnuwin (11 years old)

Subject: Maths: Level I - ASHR 5 Year 4

Starting Point: 3A 71

Enrolled: November 2014

A DRIVING FORCE IN MATHS

Perth is a city that always seems to have the best weather, and this day is no exception. It's a warm, blue-skied afternoon at the Kumon Cottesloe Education Centre in Perth's western suburbs. The sandstone church where the Centre is located buzzes with activity as students skip in and out of its doors, signature Kumon bags in tow. After finishing his Kumon for the day, Ashnuwin steps out of the Centre and into the sunlight. He may have started Kumon less than three years ago, but that hasn't stopped Ashnuwin from flying through the Kumon Maths Programme. Currently studying Level I, the Year 4 student has been described by his Instructor Jaymi as 'The driver of the programme'.

'Ashnuwin now is at the stage where he tells me when he is ready to do his Achievement Tests', said Jaymi. 'He's just finished the last book of Level I and told me, "I don't think I need another repetition, I think I'm ready to do the test". He's got confidence enough to say to me "I'm ready. I'm ready to move on".'

Only minutes prior, Ashnuwin sat the test to progress on to Level J. He didn't pass the first time around but that didn't seem to faze him much. He knows exactly what to do next.

'I'm going to try again in one week. I'm going to study and practise my Kumon books so that I can do better and do it more efficiently', he said.

Ashnuwin has come extraordinarily far in Kumon Maths in a very short amount of time. So what then does he consider to be the key to his progress? 'You need to understand the concept first', he said.

'We spent a lot of time on learning how to learn from the examples with Ashnuwin', said his Instructor Jaymi. 'We focused on making sure he understands how to look at the example and practise from the example'.

'I look at my examples and I ask my mum for help when I need it', Ashnuwin shared when we asked him how he approaches challenging questions. 'The basics are important, if you don't know the overall basics,



"We spent a lot of time on learning how to learn from the examples with Ashnuwin, we focused on making sure he understands how to look at the example and practise from the example".

- Instructor Jaymi

it'll be really hard. You need to learn all of that before you can do the other work'.

Ashnuwin's mother Laxmi is very invested in his study, but admits that he has reached a level where he is becoming largely independent in his learning.

'I'm quite surprised to see how far he has come since starting Kumon. If he is stuck somewhere I'll sit down and guide him. But before I sit down with him, I ask him to do it again on his own first, and if he still is having troubles then that's when I'll sit down and work with him. After every question he will check through the answer and if it's wrong he'll self-correct it. It's just practise', said Laxmi.

Despite Ashnuwin's independence, Laxmi still plays a vital role in his studies. 'I think some boys sometimes don't feel motivated and it's up to parents to motivate them' she said. 'Parents need to take time to get involved in what their kids are doing and do it together. Otherwise it might feel like too much work for the child.

And Kumon might be about hard work, but at the end of the day, once you achieve that, you get to go where you want to go'.

'I want to finish the Kumon Programme', shared Ashnuwin. 'I'll feel really proud to complete the programme because all the work that's really hard for me now is going to be easy for me. It'll help me in the future'.

'And isn't that what we want?', said Jaymi. 'Where he is the driver of the programme? His mother and I are just the support, Ashnuwin is the driver'.

Ashnuwin demonstrates a sense of clarity and focus beyond his years, and when asked what he wants to do in the future, his attitude is one of being open to possibilities.

'I want to be a doctor but I'm not sure what kind of doctor yet. I'm still thinking. I could be a brain surgeon. There are lots of things I want to be'.





Instructors' Quotes

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It's the other joy that you get, when students come into your centre after school saying "We only started simultaneous equations today and yet I did that with you six months ago, and guess what? I was the first one to finish!" That's a joy, and that's what we want. We want the students themselves to see that school is becoming easier because of what we're doing on a daily basis.



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**- Ms Jaymi,
Kumon Cottesloe Education Centre
(Kumon Australia & New Zealand)**



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In a technologically driven world, where young minds are heavily influenced by their mobile devices, we at Kumon strive to upkeep the ability of a child to "THINK". Whilst breaking the existing taboos of dependency in children in a culturally unique nation, we aim to foster independence at a very tender age, ensuring that children are able to progress smoothly while self-learning. As Instructors, our challenge lies in nurturing sound individuals with the "I CAN DO IT" attitude, for if you can dream it, you can do it!

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**- Ms Femidah Wahid,
Kumon Dehiwala Centre
(Kumon India & Sri Lanka)**

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Children's potential is unlimited. Studying beyond school grade allows children to maximise their true potential and at the same time children will grow more confidence through facing challenges.

Studying beyond school grade allows children to learn something new through the systematic and small-step worksheets, and pushes them to acquire analytical thinking through self-learning.

If children are regularly trained by the worksheets and given appropriate repetition, their brains will recognise the worksheet and learn from every problem showing in the worksheet. Their ability in maths and English is built through continuous worksheet training, therefore they can memorise better. Through repetition children master the material given in the worksheet.

Kumon is amazingly designed so, not only can children do the worksheets, but they build their discipline by daily study. By doing and training through worksheets every day, their study habit can lead them to a better life.



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**- Ibu Titik
(Kumon Indonesia)**

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Advanced study through self-learning is the true value of Kumon learning in which I witnessed my advanced students gain high academic abilities not only in maths or English but other subjects as well. They are the ones whom the school teachers see stand out from other school students in terms of their sharp learning skills and deep analytical thinking skills.

In my past 15 years of experience as a Kumon Instructor, I've enjoyed nurturing pre-schoolers (4-6 years old) who can self-learn easily at their own pace. Despite the difficulties and challenges they faced in learning content that they are yet to learn in school, they are willing to try on their own to understand and gain the confidence to do more. These pre-schoolers are equipped with learning skills which prepare them to enter the next phase of school life.



- Ms Jaclyn Lim Lai Fong
(Kumon Malaysia)

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- Ms Grace Quijano
Iligan Learning
Center
(Kumon Philippines)

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Only when students are advanced and are able to walk and do things independently will they truly appreciate the value of each fall, each attempt at walking, and each failed step. They need to be able to advance on their own, with us by their side to encourage and cheer them on.

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I tell my students, "Give it a try first, see how the worksheet is guiding you." I'd like to instil in my students the ability to learn from the worksheets and in the process, build up their confidence and become independent self-learners.



- Mr Koh Jun Jie,
Great World
City Centre
(Kumon Singapore)

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- Ms Sirirat
Toysuwan
Suratthani
(Rajutid Rd., Soi
GSB) Center
(Kumon Thailand)

The Kumon Method is the most natural way to develop students to be able to apply the ability they've gained unknowingly in their daily study. The Kumon worksheet plays an essential role to help students progress by themselves without having to wait for someone to teach. More importantly, students will have a chance to solve problems which they might previously think that they could not solve. This will lead them to find their own ability which is very important to nurture good study habit and positive learning attitude.

Being a Kumon Instructor makes me feel so proud to see the smiles of each student, especially when they come to tell me that they could do it. I feel so happy with their achievements and so grateful to be a part of nurturing more capable people for society in the future.

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As a Kumon Instructor, I am frequently asked about the necessity of studying beyond school grade level and whether advanced learning is beyond the students' ability. I have many students who are studying two or three or even five years ahead of their peers. Besides visible learning outcomes such as excellent performance in maths and opportunities to explore advanced concepts, there are lifelong benefits of studying beyond school grade level. Increased confidence, the will to learn and advance further, a challenging spirit and perseverance are unique values of Kumon that I am proud to foster in my students. It's not only about maths.

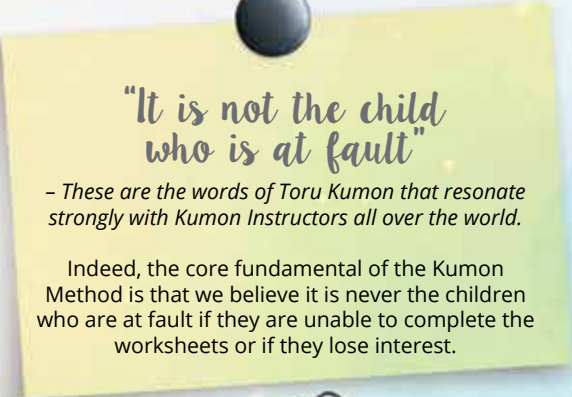


- Ms Bui Thi Be Ha
(Kumon Vietnam)

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The Value of Learning from Students



"It is not the child who is at fault"

- These are the words of Toru Kumon that resonate strongly with Kumon Instructors all over the world.

Indeed, the core fundamental of the Kumon Method is that we believe it is never the children who are at fault if they are unable to complete the worksheets or if they lose interest.



Why do children become disillusioned?

Often, children fall out of love with learning because of the frustration that comes from not being given the "just-right" worksheets. However, at Kumon, we believe the student is not entirely to blame as the materials provided may be overly challenging for the student. When students are expected to perform significantly beyond their current ability, they can quickly lose interest in the work.

So, how do we keep them interested?

Instructors ensure that the children are given the "just-right" worksheets and instructions to fuel their interest for learning. When given worksheets and instructions that are "just-right", children will be able to self-learn from the hints to complete the worksheets given. The key of providing "just-right" instructions lies in continuously learning from the children.

Yes, Kumon learns from children.

Speaking to Instructors from time to time, Toru Kumon had this to say to ensure that Instructors and Kumon staff never forget the importance of learning from children, 'Excellent Instructors are those who improve their instruction compared to the previous year. This is because if Instructors carefully observe the way their students study for a year, they will certainly learn a lot from them'.



How to learn from children.

Our Instructors do this through a number of ways, including observation of study behaviours and learning attitudes, observation of students doing worksheets, assessment of completed worksheets, assessment of study records based on the Instructor's projection and study goals, talking with parents and students etc. A child that is given the right learning materials should feel excited to take on the work given. Each of these aspects will help Instructors understand more about each individual child.

Study behaviour and attitude allows the Instructors to observe if a student is conscientious and motivated towards learning. Observation of students doing worksheets and assessment of completed worksheets shows the student's current ability. Typically students will demonstrate their current ability through the way they attempt the questions and the way they write the answers. Self-correcting their mistakes is an important step to building up their correction skills in the first place.

Through talking to students and parents, Instructors can understand children's motivation to reach progress goals and their attitude towards learning. The Instructors can also understand more about their learning environment at home and what the children are like when studying at home.

Considering all factors, the innate and acquired attitudes and learning abilities of each child will manifest themselves to the Instructors, who will in turn be able to provide the "just-right" instructions to the students, such that it is neither too easy nor too difficult for the students to complete the worksheets to keep them interested and motivated to learn.

As parents, how can we help?

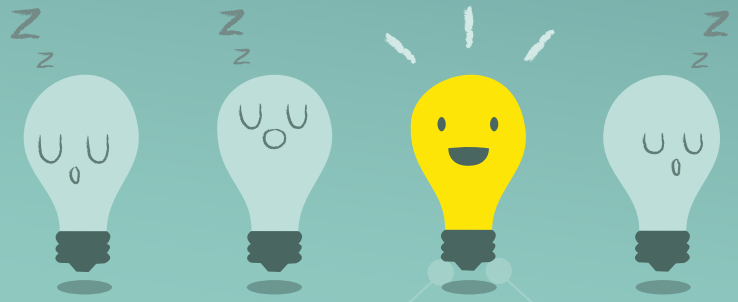
In the learning journey of our children, parents play an important role from providing an environment that is conducive for studies, to observing the children at home.

Ideally, children should be able to study in an environment that is free from distraction, as things like television diverts their attention.

Parents inform the Instructor about the child's behavior when studying at home as well their school grades, reading habits, interests and other special talents. This information will help Instructors understand the points that they are unable to observe when the child is not in the Centre, in order to get a clearer picture of the student's attitude towards learning and ultimately providing worksheets and instructions that are "just-right" for the student.



A Learning Method for the 21st Century



'The only safe prediction is that the future will be different to the present', wrote Australian economist Ross Gittins in a comment piece published by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 2017. His comment offers a logical response to the many reports that speculate on the future of jobs (and working culture in general) in the face of advancing AI technology and the 'gig economy'. Despite our best predictions, all we know for certain is that we do not know for certain what our future will look like. So how do we prepare the next generation for it? And where does Kumon fit within this puzzle?

The strength of the Kumon Method is self-learning. It is a learning method for the twenty-first century because, at its core, it prepares learners for the unknown. Within Kumon, 'the unknown' takes the form of topics students encounter for the first time in our worksheets when they progress beyond their school grade level. Outside of Kumon, 'the unknown' might take the form of new industries, new technologies, new organisational structures, anything.

Educators of today cannot endow young people with the knowledge they will need for the future because that is still in the process of being developed. The Kumon Method remains stable in such circumstances because our Instructors 'teach' in a unique way. "Teaching" for Kumon Instructors does not mean explaining how to solve problems. It means having students realise how to find the answer on their own'.¹ Rather than teaching content, Instructors first let students attempt the worksheets by themselves, focusing on instilling in students 'The mindset and skills for self-learning... and continuing to advance independently'.²

Working independently and with truly new concepts is an important part of the Kumon Method of learning as it is through this process students develop critical thinking skills. Critical thinking requires first, the systematic deconstruction of problems, followed by the production of a logical solution. Kumon worksheets utilise examples, introductory problems and a variety of design features to enable students to deconstruct problems first

in order to solve them. Students are trained to think critically even when they get an answer incorrect, as they are asked to review their work on their own first, locate their mistakes and only erase those parts where they went wrong before making their corrections. This process scaffolds the student to further scrutinise both their own answer and the examples given, leaving no stage unexamined.

Beyond developing thinking ability, every Kumon student develops resilience and determination. Through the process of persevering in study, children develop a sense of self-affirmation (a sense of their own capabilities) and emerge feeling positive about themselves. This sense of self-affirmation becomes a driving force behind developing the enthusiasm to meet the challenge of something difficult or something unknown. It is also what sets them off in setting goals and having dreams for the future'.³

Our approach to learning aims to develop a can-do attitude in our students such that they welcome the future without any fears about what it might bring. As summarised in Kumon's longstanding publication *Yamabiko*, 'We hope they will then continue learning by themselves even after going out into the real world, and grow up into people who are proactive in everything they do'.⁴



¹Understanding the Principals of Kumon Instruction: Maths, Kumon Institute of Education, 2010, p. 15

²Understanding the Principals of Kumon Instruction: Maths, Kumon Institute of Education, 2010, p. 11

³Life Skills, Kumon Institute of Education, 2004, p. 7

⁴Yamabiko, Kumon Institute of Education, 1990 p. 121



How to Create a Study Routine

With Kumon's aim of developing children into self-reliant and independent learners, it is important to help them enjoy daily study.

Here are our tips to get your child into a study habit that runs like clockwork.

#1

Set milestones

Set realistic and achievable milestones for your child. Ideally, they should be working towards the little milestones set for them. These goals can be adjusted as they become more proficient in their school work, moving on to a higher level in Kumon.



#2

Set study goals

Find out the subject that your child has more difficulty with and allocate sufficient time for them to learn at their own pace.

To fuel their interest, allocate more time for them to explore the subject they enjoy more. For example, if your child loves English, make time for a good read after they have completed their work.



#3

Allocate time for leisure

Just as adults treasure work-life balance, children need time for leisure and recreation too. Set aside time for play and other interests such as piano, swimming, drawing or martial arts. By giving your child time to play and to pursue their interests after completing their homework, they will feel motivated to be more efficient in doing their work.



#4

Make a plan

After considering all the above points, the next thing is to prepare a weekly plan. The plan should ideally include such things as Kumon classes, homework and co-curricular activities and interests. Having a plan for the week will help the child have an awareness of routine and a sense of having priorities.



#5

Consider rewards

If your child has tried really hard, achieved their goals, or if they have hit a milestone, consider giving them small rewards such as taking them on a special outing. This will show them that you appreciate their efforts and motivate them to continue working hard.



#6

Involve your child

By allowing your child to be involved in planning their Kumon time, they can feel more motivated to stick to it. They will also learn to take responsibility for their decisions.



The Origins of the Kumon Method

1954

After more than half a century, his philosophy still continues to help many children develop the ability to reach for their goals and dreams.

Kumon offers learning opportunities in 50 different countries and regions around the world.

Handmade materials created by Toru Kumon for his son (Takeshi) in 1954.



Toru Kumon (Founder of the Kumon Method)



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