

**KUMON**  
**NORTH AMERICAN HEADQUARTERS**  
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We regret to inform you that after many years of being a loyal Kumon family, and after much reflection, we will be withdrawing our two daughters from the Kumon program. This letter discusses the specific reasons that have led to our difficult decision.

First of all, we have been loyal Kumon parents for seven years. Our older daughter, who is ten years old and in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, first began Kumon when she was only three and a half years old. Her younger sister also began Kumon about two years later, when she was four years old. Both of our children have been enrolled in both Kumon Math and Reading for enrichment, and to give them a “leg up” in their education. Both girls excel in their classes, in part due to their time spent in Kumon, with the discipline of doing math and reading exercises every day. In fact, we believed in the Kumon method enough to recommend Kumon to many of our friends who have subsequently enrolled their children in Kumon.

We definitely credit Kumon with helping our children learn their math facts and their excellent reading skills to their Kumon experience. Kumon has helped give them a solid foundation in their education. As parents, we have consistently had our girls doing their Kumon, without taking breaks, even during the summer or when we were on vacation. They always knew to finish their Kumon before they could go and play. Even when we went on a week-long mission trip, the only time we did not require the girls do their Kumon each day, we had them work ahead instead to complete their practice sets for that week prior to our trip.

We also do not fault our local Kumon center with our decision to withdraw our children from the program. The owner of our local Kumon Center has been supportive of our efforts as parents, and has always been encouraging of our children throughout the years. We have appreciated all of her support and encouragement as we experienced challenges early on in the Kumon process. She genuinely celebrates the successes and milestones of the students.

**So why have we made the decision to end our relationship with Kumon?**

There are two reasons. First, is the extreme focus on time taken to complete the work. I understand that mastery is demonstrated when a student is able to complete a worksheet in a reasonable amount of time. In fact, in school, students are given “math sprints” to see how many math problems they are able to solve in a defined amount of time. However, as the level and complexity of the problems increase, the time that it takes to work out these problems also goes up. It does not mean the student has not attained mastery. In fact, by having a student rush to finish their work is truly at odds with working out the problems carefully and accurately.

Second, Kumon teaches and mandates students to solve problems only one way—their way. Regardless of how students have been taught to solve the problems in school, they MUST do their Kumon work the “Kumon way.” Even though there may be multiple strategies in solving more complex mathematics problems, and while they may arrive at the correct answer, the other ways are considered incorrect unless they are reworked the “Kumon way.” It is certainly important to learn a method that works and is consistent. However, if a student only learns one way to solve a problem, then that student is not equipped to handle variations in how to solve different problems.

There has been much written about the crisis in education we are experiencing and how students are not being taught to think. If we are to build a future of critical thinkers, then the students should be allowed to develop their own strategies to solve math problems, as long as they make sense and consistently provide the correct answer. In fact, our children’s school uses the Singapore Math curriculum, which focuses on developing strategies to solve problems. In most cases, there are multiple strategies to arrive at the correct solution to a problem. Is one way better than another? Not necessarily, as long as the logic is sound and the ultimate answer is correct. However, Kumon does not appear to celebrate the ability to use alternate strategies. Thus, our question becomes: Is Kumon’s goal to provide a foundation that allows students to be able to adapt to changing environments, or is it to train automatons that only learn by rote? We, as parents are doing our children a huge disservice if we are unable to do any better than to train them to learn by rote, memorize answers, and learn to solve problems only one way.

We hope that you take our concerns to heart and reassess the way you are teaching and training the students that have been entrusted to your care. They are, after all, our future.

Sincerely yours,

Christina Liu