

# POTENTIAL

JAN - JUN 2019

## KUMON FEATURE

"Just-right" Level:  
How Kumon finds the right  
level for every student

## PARENTING TIPS

3 ways to improve mental calculation

## MY LIFE, MY DREAM

- ★ Stephanie Lee
- ★ Lee Yi You





Dear readers,

I hope you had a great start to 2019 and had a wonderful end to last year. All of us at Kumon would like to send our heartfelt thanks to your support and active engagement in our activities and events, and also on our Facebook page - @KumonSingaporeOfficial, over the past year. We now have over 5000 'likes' on our Facebook page. Do follow us on Facebook, if you have not already, to receive the latest updates and keep up with our next activities!

We also hope you enjoyed the workshops and talks organised for families at last November's Singapore Writers Festival - which we are proud to have sponsored once more. Last October, we celebrated the achievements of 116 Kumon Programme Completers and 311 advanced students during our annual Advanced Students Forum (ASF) held at the University Cultural Centre (UCC) - National University of Singapore (NUS).

Besides academic progression, we see the character of Kumon students being developed over the years. They gain vital life skills such as independence, self-motivation and critical-thinking ability, just to name a few. Students begin their Kumon journey at a 'just-right level', progress on to being advanced learners and then further on to complete the whole programme. Within this issue of Potential, we find out from two individuals; Lee Yi You, who is a Kumon triple subject Completer and Stephanie Lee, who is on her way to completing the English programme, how they overcame individual challenges and how they stay motivated to keep going forward.

Have a good read and a great year ahead.

Han

PR & Marketing, Kumon Singapore & Brunei

Tel: +65 6232 5855 Fax: +65 6232 5822/33  
E-mail: [sg-kaoweb@kumonglobal.com](mailto:sg-kaoweb@kumonglobal.com)  
Website: [sg.kumonglobal.com](http://sg.kumonglobal.com)

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ON THE COVER  
JAN - JUN  
STEPHANIE LEE

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**Have something to say?**  
Feel free to send us your thoughts on the newsletter!  
E-mail: [sg-kaoweb@kumonglobal.com](mailto:sg-kaoweb@kumonglobal.com)





Stephanie  
Lee, 10

Subject: Maths, Level I100  
English, Level J10

Starting Level:  
Maths, Level 6A1  
English, Level 4A1

## JOURNEY TO COMPLETE THE KUMON PROGRAMME

Stephanie is a girl of many interests; she loves drawing, listening to music, reading adventure genre books, is part of her school's debate team and participates competitively in fencing. At last year's Advanced Students Forum (ASF), Stephanie received her award for '5-years advanced' in English. She is determined to complete the English Programme. Let us find out more about Stephanie and what keeps her going.

### Kumon then and now

Stephanie joined Kumon four years ago when her mother, Amilia, was recommended Kumon by her friends. She felt that having a strong foundation in language would require work on a daily basis and that the Kumon Method of Learning was very progressive and easy to follow through. Stephanie found her initial Kumon experience a fun one as she was able to make new friends, and also because her Kumon Instructor and the team at the centre were always friendly and helpful.

Amilia shared that her daughter has a strong character and positive outlook. She is one who is determined to do well, especially for her favourite subject and/or teacher. In the initial months, Stephanie could not work on her worksheets for too long a time. Competitive fencing also took a lot of time from her as she trained 3-4 times a week.

Both Stephanie and her mother credits her Kumon Instructor in helping her manage her workload. Stephanie's Kumon Instructor encouraged and supported her in overcoming learning roadblocks and assigned the right amount and level



of worksheets, which facilitated her progressive learning. Stephanie feels that going to Kumon classes helps her in her school work as she has developed a good foundation, as well as learned material beyond her school grade – which gives her an advantage. Her mother added that time management was one key factor in overcoming those initial challenges.

### So why do you want to complete the Kumon programme?

There are times when Stephanie struggles to learn a new concept when she moves on to a new worksheet level. However, she realised that by completing the subject programme, it would help her in school work as she would be well ahead of the school syllabus. Stephanie continues to persevere to become a Kumon Completer, just like her brother who completed the Maths Programme two years ago. Besides her brother as a role model, Amilia shared that Stephanie's Kumon Instructor was also a key motivating factor behind

her desire to complete the Kumon English Programme.

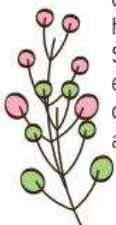
"She has always been very helpful, dedicated and patient," Amilia elaborated.

She has noticed that her daughter has progressed to become a more engaged learner. Stephanie has expressed a more positive attitude, and has developed essential life skills such as independence, discipline and responsibility.

### Piece of encouragement to fellow Kumon students?

"I would like to urge my fellow Kumon students to never give up and persevere through the Kumon Programmes. No matter how difficult it gets, being advanced in your Kumon studies will help you in school. Knowing this helps me appreciate Kumon and urges me to continue through to the finish line."

– Stephanie Lee.







## CONQUERING ALL 3 SUBJECTS

Yi You is a secondary one student with multiple interests. Like most teenage girls, her biggest sources of entertainment include Korean, Chinese and English dramas and anime. She finds great joy in learning and playing the piano, guitar and ukulele. She reads online novels and enjoys a game of badminton and basketball with family and friends as a way to wind down. Yi You is also studying the Japanese language as a third subject in school and aims to follow her brother's footsteps in enrolling in the Bicultural Studies Programme in secondary three.

Recalling her earlier years when she first joined Kumon at the age of four, Yi You shared that her grandfather used to bring her to classes. She looked forward to the end of her classes as she would get to pack and stamp her worksheets to bring back as homework.

Managing both school work and her Kumon studies was definitely not easy as both required a large amount of commitment. Yi You remembers staying up late at night to complete both, especially when she entered secondary school. She shared that the discipline and independence instilled in her were additional driving factors in her journey to completing the Kumon Programmes. She felt that her level of perseverance and self-discipline was at a much higher level than that of her peers then. She could manage her time well and did not have much difficulty focusing on her work for long periods at times.



Lee Yi You, 13

Subjects completed:  
English, Chinese & Maths  
Year of completion:  
English & Chinese (2017),  
Mathematics (2018)





Having her elder brother as a Kumon triple-subject Completer was also a source of motivation for her to strive on. After witnessing her brother's milestones, she too was determined to complete the Kumon Programmes and receive her very own set of Completion plaques.

"It is very difficult to give up on something you spent years on. In fact, giving up is even more difficult than continuing," Yi You shared.

At difficult moments, she credits her parents and her Kumon Instructor for their constant support and encouragement.

Yi You revealed more memories of her Kumon journey, "At four years old when I started Kumon, she (Kumon Instructor) held my hand and sat with me at the small tables. From then, I progressed on to a larger table independently – advancing with higher level content. Throughout the nine years in my Kumon journey, she was definitely an important character in my growth".

Having completed all three Kumon Programmes, Yi You admitted that after the immense joy from all her years of hard work had subsided, she seemed to have a block of free time – previously allocated to Kumon, that she did not know what to do with. Now, she helps her nieces who are studying in Kumon and monitors their progress.

**"I actually do miss the Centre as a whole; everyone and everything within it holds a very big part in my heart," Yi You revealed.**

She concludes with an encouraging piece of advice for all Kumon students, "Hold on and a beautiful destination awaits. Trust that all the struggles and difficulties that you encounter now are present only to accentuate the beauty at the end".



# “Just-right” Level: How Kumon finds the right level for every student

What is the most important feature of Kumon? According to Toru Kumon, the most important aspect of Kumon is the “just-right” level of study.

“I have made a revision to *The Strengths of the Kumon Method* last autumn. I decided that the “just-right” level of study is the most important element of education, because every child should be given the learning that matches his or her ability. When they are given what is “just-right” for them, they enjoy learning that will help them advance beyond their school grade level.

Up to this point, ‘Advancing beyond school grade level’ has been ranked as the Number One Strength of the Kumon Method. But to emphasise even strongly what is most important, I think the “just-right” level of study is the Number One,” Toru Kumon wrote (*Yamabiko*, 1995).

What does this Kumon jargon really means? In this article, we look to demystify the concept of “just-right” level.

Finding the “just-right” level simply refers to identifying the sweet spot that motivates every child to do his or her best. In sports, sportsmen have specific abilities best suited to the level required by the role or position they operate at. For example, football fans would remember Thierry Henry as a flop at Italian club Juventus. He was assigned to play as a left winger and in addition to organising the attack, was also expected to defend. He could not perform and career was in the trench. Most of all, he was not happy. “I wasn’t enjoying myself at all, I felt like I’d lost the desire to play football,” Henry later

admitted. He was allowed to seek employment at Arsenal after just one season in Italy. In Arsenal, he was deployed to play as a reserve striker but it was where he truly flourished. Henry later became the first-choice striker and eventually became the all-time top scorer for both Arsenal and the France national team.

Through this example, it is clear that Henry was not played correctly in Juventus. It was only at Arsenal where the coach found the sweet spot that matched his ability, or in Kumon, we call it the “just-right” level. It was also then when he started to enjoy playing football. “When I scored, in that moment, I rediscovered some emotions, some feelings that I had not felt in a long time,” he said.

Similarly to the role performed by coaches in football, one of the most important roles of a Kumon Instructor is to find the “just-right” level of each child. Since different children have different level of abilities, their “just-right” level has to be different too. But matching the materials to the children’s ability is important, because when they study at their “just-right” level, they will begin to enjoy







studying and self-learn the materials. Eventually these children will enjoy learning and be able to progress beyond their level in school – just like Thierry Henry who began to enjoy football and played well at Arsenal.

How do Kumon Instructors ensure that every student is studying at their own “just-right” level? To illustrate this, let’s look at how Toru Kumon ensured that his method and worksheets are suitable for his son, Takeshi, using worksheets on addition of fractions as an example.

When Takeshi was doing the addition of fractions, he did not understand the concept of lowest common multiple at first; he simply multiplied all the denominators together to get a common denominator. He also did not know how to reduce his answers. Toru Kumon did not simply ask Takeshi to redo the entire worksheet again and again until he gets it on his own, contrary to popular belief. He provided examples, based on Takeshi’s errors in the previous worksheets to draw his attention to the correct way to reduce the fractions. Then he made Takeshi redo one side of the worksheets, but this time with all the denominators written as hints. His purpose of this repetition was to help Takeshi solve the problems without having to deal with the denominators.

In the next worksheet, Takeshi was able to solve the problems without additional help from Toru Kumon. However, he still just multiplied the

denominators together and this time, after marking the worksheet, Toru wrote, “For all of these problems, it is not necessary to multiply all the denominators”.

The next day, while doing corrections, Takeshi read his father’s note and realised that he should have just used the lowest common multiple instead of simply multiplying the denominators together. In the next worksheet, Takeshi could use the lowest common multiple and solved the problems, getting most answers correct.

To this day, the Kumon Method continues to use worksheets suitable to each student’s ability and let them work out their own solutions using hints, examples and, if necessary, guidance from the Instructors.

Atsushi Yamada, president of Kumon Asia & Oceania, believes that finding the “just-right” level begins with the Diagnostic Test.

“Before a child comes to the Centre, you should share fully with your assistants the image that you have formed of the child when doing the Diagnostic Test or the likely learning situation on the next class day, so as to provide the appropriate instruction. Such efforts will translate into children gaining motivation and confidence, as they are given the “just-right” level of study upon enrolment,” Yamada wrote to Instructors in May (*President’s Message to Instructors, 2018*).







**Ms Melissa Zheng**  
Kumon Singapore

## INSTRUCTORS' QUOTES

*The concept of "just-right" level is the most important aspect of the Kumon Method. Through the regional article "Just-right" Level: How Kumon finds the right level for every student, we have seen how Toru Kumon, founder of the Kumon Method, found the "just-right" level for his son, Takeshi. In this edition of the Instructors' Quotes, let us find out what our Instructors think about the "just-right" level and how they go on finding the "just-right" level for their students.*

*I believe that students should love learning and that it can be interesting and fun. To be able to achieve that, students must be on the "just-right" level. The "just-right" level is where students are able to grasp challenging material with the knowledge of previously learnt concepts and have a good attitude towards studying. Observing students in class and communicating with both students and parents would help give them a clear goal to work towards to and keep the students in the "just-right" level, so that students can continuously be motivated with the learning process.*







**Ms Salina  
Thaweewatthanakijborworn**  
Kumon Thailand

*Determining the “just-right” level of starting point will not discourage students to study Kumon continuously and feel motivated to study beyond school grade level consequently. Therefore, it’s essential for instructors to determine the “just-right” level to be able to make effective study plan and to provide proper instruction for students from the beginning so that they can progress smoothly and not give up easily when facing with challenging contents. Instructor should put the importance in finding the “just-right” level for each student in order to have a good start and progress continuously.*

*The “just-right” level is the sweet spot where students’ are challenged in their studies without feeling overburdened. I believe this benchmark categorically defines the Kumon Method. It represents a Kumon Instructor’s desire to help each child excel, unrestricted by age, school year, or because of their own or others’ preconceptions. I would argue finding a student’s just-right level could be life-changing because they prove to themselves they can overcome challenges. Therefore, I spend much of my time mulling over each of my students’ “just-right” level, so they can show themselves they can achieve through their Kumon study.*



**Ms Saree Lawler**  
Kumon Australia &  
New Zealand

*Students are not likely or willing to do something that is difficult for them. They will instead lose focus on the work and start doing other things such as daydreaming or playing with the items in their surroundings. However, with the “just-right” level, they are able to do their worksheets with ease, without getting too bored working on over-easy work in the beginning. Students doing the “just-right” level worksheets will most likely do their work with full concentration and with a high level of focus. These students may even begin to enjoy doing their work which is slightly challenging for them. They will be able to progress independently, without the need of specific teaching nor guidance.*



**Ms Liang Muh Jiuann**  
Kumon Brunei



# Advanced Student Forum (ASF) 2018

On 6 October 2018, we celebrated the accomplishments of 116 Kumon Programme Completers and 311 students who were studying five years ahead of the Kumon International Standard (KIS) at the Advanced Student Forum.

Amongst the Completers, there were three who received awards for completion of double subjects. The youngest Completers in 2018 were four primary four students who completed the English Programme.

The youngest awardees were two kindergarteners (K1) receiving the award for 5-years advanced in Mathematics.

Achievement (2018)	No. of Awards
Completion	116
5 Years Ahead	346
3 Years Ahead	1253
2 Years Ahead	1734
6 Months Ahead	4537

Held at the University Cultural Centre (UCC) at the National University of Singapore (NUS), the Advanced Student Forum saw two Completers; Tan Yan Ling and Lee Yi Jing on stage to share about their journey to completion of the Kumon Programmes.



In a separate segment of the ASF, four awardees Yu ZiChen (K2), Lau Yan Ting Hannah (P2), Yap Yi Zhe (P3) and Hasif Bin Mualana Abdul Halim (P5) went on stage for a Kumon Mathematics worksheet demonstration. They demonstrated their ability with worksheet levels that were 5 years ahead and even higher, than their school grade level. At the end of the demonstration, the entire auditorium was left in visible admiration of their ability.

In his speech, Mr Masahiro Takatsu, General Manager of Kumon Singapore and Brunei conveyed to the awardees his congratulations and urged them to pursue even greater heights.

Mr Takatsu shared, "In doing one thing, never give up halfway but continue to strive until the end. This ability to persevere on is the greatest ability and the most powerful weapon in your life. Truly, all of you have gained this greatest ability and most powerful weapon. Therefore, believe and be proud of yourself, and advance further from here".







# 3 WAYS TO IMPROVE MENTAL CALCULATION



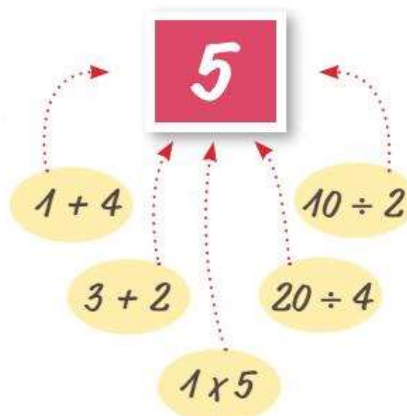
	10s	1s
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
Total		

## 101 AND OUT

To play, you'll need a sheet of paper, a pencil and one dice. The objective of the game is to score as close to 100 without going over. Players take turns rolling the dice. As you roll, you can either take the number as a one or a ten. For example, if you roll a 1, it can be used as 1 or 10. Players keep a running record of their total as they play. While the numbers are written on the paper, encourage your children to use mental calculation. This game is a great way to build mental math strategies as children often think critically in regards to what number they need to roll next.

## MATHS JEOPARDY

Give your child a piece of paper and then say a number. Give them one minute to find as many ways as they can to make the number using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.



A strong foundation in calculation can go a long way into helping your child progress more easily to higher level maths.

In addition to helping your children's calculation abilities, playing simple maths games is also a way to get your children off their mobile devices and engage in some family fun.

Here are 3 maths games to improve and challenge their mental calculation skills.



## MULTIPLICATION WAR

Deal the number cards equally to every number facing down. Assign the cards with the number zero to represent the number ten. Each player turns two cards face up, reads the number sentence and supplies the answer. For example, if your child draws a 7 and an 8, he says  $7 \times 8 = 56$ . If you draw a 6 and a 4, you say  $6 \times 4 = 24$ . Because his product is larger, he wins the four cards and puts them at the bottom of his pile. If each of you has a number sentence with the same product, each player puts four cards face down and turn up two of them. The player with the largest product wins the eight cards. Continue the game until one player runs out of cards and the player with the most cards win.





# JOIN US AS A franchise Instructor!

Due to the interest and demand in Singapore, we are expanding our footprint by seeking passionate individuals to join us as a franchise Instructor.

As Kumon parents, you have worked through the programme with your child. We believe no one knows the benefits of the Kumon Method better than you. If you possess a passion to work with children and desire to become an educator within your community, join us as a franchise Instructor to transform a child's life through education.

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Register your interest at <http://www.sg.kumonasiaoceania.com/franchise/> today!  
For more information, contact Linda at 90041941.

KUMON