

## BACKGROUNDER

In 1954, Toru Kumon, a high school math teacher in Japan, began developing materials to help his second grade son who was struggling in math. As an educator, Mr. Kumon realized that a strong foundation in the basics was needed for success in higher-level math. He also believed learning occurs most efficiently when:

- ✓ The level of material being learned corresponds to the students' level of ability;
- ✓ The rate of progress is determined by the student, not by the teacher; and
- ✓ The material is organized into a naturally coherent, logical progression.

With these principles in mind, Mr. Kumon created a series of carefully sequenced materials for his son to do after school. Through daily practice and a commitment to mastering each concept, the young boy improved his math skills and gained the ability to solve math problems well beyond his grade level.

Mr. Kumon's neighbors heard about the success of his son and started asking him to work with their children. To meet this spontaneous demand, the first Kumon Center was opened in Mr. Kumon's home in 1956. For two years, this new approach to education was refined and formalized. In 1958, the Kumon Institute of Education was established with the objective of helping students excel in math and gain a love for learning.

Kumon expanded rapidly through the 1960's. In 1974, the first Kumon Center in North America opened in New York. Canadian operations began six years later with the first center opening in Toronto in 1980. The reading program was established in North America in 1991.

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