

Mansfield Township woman learns Singapore Math overseas

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By **Tom Rowan Jr. | The Express-Times**



Photo courtesy
of Peggy
Campbell-Rush

Campbell-Rush is observing
classes for two weeks to
better understand the
teaching methods of
Singapore Math.

Peggy Campbell-Rush left her home in **Mansfield Township** on Wednesday a fan of the Singapore method of teaching mathematics.

But when she returns to her home in Warren County and her job in Somerset County two weeks later, she hopes to be an expert.

Campbell-Rush, director of the Lower School at Gill St. Bernard's School in Peapack-Gladstone borough, is traveling to Bali and Singapore for two weeks to learn more about the Southeast-Asian approach to mathematics education.

"It's a math curriculum that is pretty much sweeping the country here in the United States," she said.

She is sitting in on math classes in primary schools and observing the teaching practices as a guest of the ministry of education and through a private donation.

Why the method attracts so much attention, she said, is because the Singapore Math method teaches students to master one area of math before moving on to another topic. The method also uses many visuals before inundating students with rules and formulas.

"The foundational piece of it," Campbell-Rush said. **"It covers math in-depth rather than breadth."**

Campbell-Rush used fourth-graders as an example. When learning fractions, the kids can solve one problem and take a half hour to study it.

"It's such an in-depth study that once you find the ins and the outs and the ups and the downs of what can go wrong and will go wrong," she said, **"then no matter what kind of problem they come across, they can figure it out rather than doing 25 problems of the same thing."**

The trip is also facilitated by the educational publishing company Marshall Cavendish Institute, which produces Singapore Math textbooks. Yeap Ban Har, principal of the institute, is considered "the guru of Singapore Math worldwide," Campbell-Rush said.

Har said the method is essentially a three-part lesson. The first part, about 15 minutes discussing one problem, then

guided practice with several problems but keeping focus on the original problem and finally independent practice.

"They're spending a lot of time on the first problem ... so they really learn the concept," he said.

Har added that Singapore Math textbooks don't "jam" too many topics into one overwhelming volume.

The method **"spends several days on the same topic,"** he said.

Campbell-Rush said Gill St. Bernard's has instituted the program up to sixth grade. When she returns, she said, she hopes to refine the program.

"I'll bring back a wealth of ideas on how to make it a better success," she said.

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