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## Saginaw Township elementary schools implement hands-on Singapore math program

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**Lindsay Knake | The Saginaw News**

By



SAGINAW TWP. — Elementary school students in Saginaw Township Community Schools are learning math the Singapore way.

The district this year implemented a program called "Math in Focus" for kindergarten through fifth grade students at its five elementary schools: Arrowwood, Hemmeter, Sherwood, Weiss and Westdale.

Superintendent Jerry Seese said the model is based off the Singapore style of teaching math, which was developed in the 1980s.

The teaching model uses concrete examples, such as dice, to explain processes such as addition and subtraction. Then students uses pictures and bar modeling before moving to abstract concepts.

"That's how kids learn best anyway," Seese said. "I

wish I would've been taught this way."

The content goes in greater depth at a higher level of thinking and focuses on mastering the subject instead of covering a larger spread. The books also make math easy for parents to follow along and help their children, Seese said.

Sandra Braun, principal Sherwood Elementary, said she likes the way math is taught.

"There are a lot of hands on learning in the beginning to understand concepts," she said. "Teachers are finding that piece to be really useful."

Math in Focus offers enrichment pieces for students who move more quickly through the material and support for

**Enlarge**

**Jeff Schrier | The Saginaw News**

Kindergarten student Noah Walter, 6, points to the numbers while he leads his class in a song as they count to 100 at Sherwood Elementary School, 3870 Shattuck in Saginaw Township. The district implemented a new program called "Math in Focus," based on education in Singapore, for kindergarten through fifth grade students. The teaching model uses concrete examples, such as dice, blocks or paper clips to explain processes such as addition and subtraction.

**"Math in Focus" at Sherwood Elementary** gallery (6 photos)

students who need more time, Braun said.

"The program itself has a really good package of resources for teachers," she said.

Math in Focus materials were \$220,720 and six days of intensive training was \$75,982. The district used federal grant money to pay for the training, Seese said.

While the program is only in elementary schools, Seese said, he hopes next fall to include the model in the sixth grade curriculum and eventually move it up through the 12th grade as publishing companies introduce Math in Focus at a higher level.

Seese said he hopes more students will be more confident with math and go on to study it on college. Both Seese and Braun said they believe students will see a long-term improvement with Math in Focus.

In Saginaw County, Seese said, Frankenmuth schools also use the program.

"Math is math, this is just a consistent way of presenting it to students," Braun said.

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