

# Covenant Hosts Singapore Math Expert

Posted December 7, 2016 by Lesley-Ann Tommey



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World-renown math educator Dr. Yeap Ban Har spent three days working with faculty, students, and parents at The Covenant School last week. Ban Har led classroom lessons, a parent night discussion, and a full-day professional development conference for 119 educators from across the state, North Carolina, and D.C. He is principal of the Marshall Cavendish Institute, director of curriculum and professional development at the Pathlight School in Singapore, and math researcher and textbook writer.

Ban Har explains that the country's education performance was troublesomely low, motivating leaders to begin to reform the system in the 1980s. They ended up with an approach to learning that inspires students and helps them understand the *why*, not just the *how*.

Because the education system and philosophy developed in Singapore during the 1980s–2000s provides students with the tools to grasp profound understanding of subject material, they continually earn top ranks in maths and sciences globally<sup>[2]</sup>. The country’s outstanding success in education has landed it as a key player on the global stage.

For six years The Covenant School has progressively implemented the Singapore approach to math at its Lower School, seeing steady increases in students’ competency. The approach hinges on a learning environment instead of a teaching environment. Students are tasked to solve problems on their own and in discussion with their peers. Teachers ask questions and make observations, but, as Ban Har explains, when a student gets an answer wrong, it’s not up to the teacher to fix it.

“Remember, students’ answers are not for us to judge; they are for us to build on their learning,” he told a group of Covenant faculty Wednesday.

This kind of learning inspires confidence in students, greater problem-solving abilities, and it captures their imaginations. To learn math in such a way that students actually understand the cause and effect relationships offers young people a strong foundation of deep life-long understanding.

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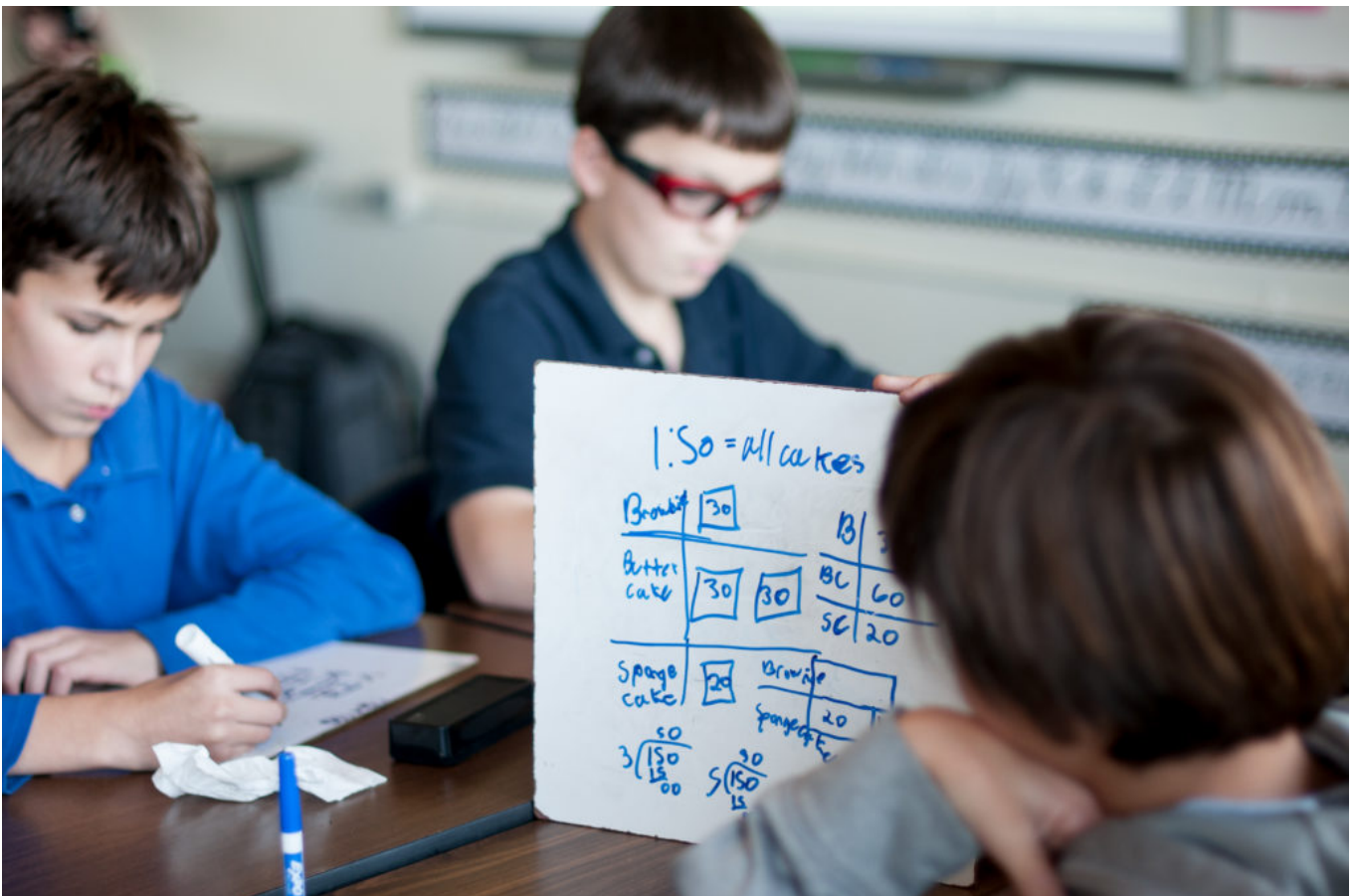
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