

## [Baltimore Jewish Day Schools](#)

Outstanding schools building bright Jewish futures

- [rss](#)
- [Shalom](#)
  - [Contact](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Research Studies](#)
- [Articles](#)
- [Links](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [Contact](#)

### **Making Math Count: Beth Tfiloh's Lower School Launches New Math Curriculum**

admin | December 7, 2011

In 2007, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) found that in both 4th and 8th grades, American students were outperformed in math scores by their peers in Singapore. Last summer, Beth Tfiloh Lower School principal Nina Wand and assistant principal Susan Yurow discovered the secret to Singapore's math success at the National Math Conference. Starting this year, first through third grade teachers are implementing Math in Focus, the U.S. edition of Singapore's top-ranking math program.

What makes this curriculum different from the traditional American approach?

#### **A New Approach**

"In Math in Focus, the lessons progress from the concrete, using manipulatives, to pictures, such as bar-modeling and number bonds, and then finally to the abstract—just using numbers," says third grade teacher Mrs. Rona Zukerberg. "The curriculum is language-based, as opposed to focusing on rote memory."

As Mrs. Wand explains, "The students don't just have to get the right answer... they have to figure out how they get to the answer." That's very different for the children, especially for the advanced math students. "They know the right answer, but not always how they got the right answer. Problem-solving is at the core of the program, and provides the essential foundation for advanced mathematics later on."

#### **Right from the Start**

First grade teacher Mrs. Rae Goldberg, a veteran BT teacher of 30+ years, is equally enthusiastic about Math in Focus—especially about its integration of technology, to create a more interactive educational experience. She also finds the focus on multi-step complex problem solving is central to every skill and concept discussion.

"They are visually engaged," observes Mrs. Goldberg. "Beginning with manipulative materials, then creating a pictorial representation of the word problem, and finally writing the problem in numbers, connecting the visual to problem solving through mathematical reasoning and critical thinking. It's an opportunity to learn in a wonderful way."

Using this innovative approach, each topic is covered in greater depth, reinforcing the concepts and utilizing multiple strategies to understand the same equations. By staying on the same topic until it's fully mastered, students develop a thorough understanding of core mathematical concepts and develop an automaticity and fluency that underpins their future success as math students. This operates in stark contrast to the traditional American math programs, which often use a "spiral approach," exposing children to a broad range of concepts at several points in their education, but without any emphasis on mastery.

#### **Parents See a Difference**

At the Nov. 18 Parent Visiting Day, they got a hands-on introduction to Math in Focus, when students taught their parents

how to do their math assignments. And excitement about this new curriculum is spreading...

Ellen Shevrin is impressed by her daughter's progress with the new curriculum. "Meghan always had a challenge with math...up until this year," observes Mrs. Shevrin. While doing her homework, Meghan is now "able to explain what she's learning – the whole process. It's definitely teaching her a different way of looking at math."

Mrs. Wand agrees. "It's been an amazing change so far," she notes.

Ready to give it a try? [Download this sample Math in Focus lesson PowerPoint](#), developed by Jessica Kresky and her Third Grade Team.

Watch this Fox News video: [FOX Focus: Singapore math](#)



### Categories

[Academics](#), [Educational Excellence](#), [Testimonials](#)



[Comments rss](#)



[Trackback](#)

« [Krieger Schechter Day School's Kristallnacht Commemoration](#)

### Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

heades

Index

Type the two words:



Submit Comment

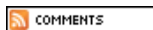
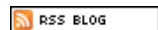
Search

### Recent Posts

- [Making Math Count: Beth Tfiloh's Lower School Launches New Math Curriculum](#)
- [Krieger Schechter Day School's Kristallnacht Commemoration](#)
- [Reading Multiple Books, by Dr. Norman Prentiss](#)
- [The Day School at Baltimore Hebrew Brings 21st Century Technology to the Classroom](#)
- [Bringing together US Literature and History at The Cardin School](#)

## Meta

- [Register](#)
- [Log in](#)
- [Entries RSS](#)
- [Comments RSS](#)
- [WordPress.org](#)



Google Analytics integration offered by [Wordpress Google Analytics Plugin](#)