

Singapore Math gains support

Stephenson wants to aid schools that use method

By Amy K. Stewart, Deseret News

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Camila Vasquez studies a problem on the board while working on Singapore Math in Sarah Van Maren's first-grade class at Silver Hills Elementary School. (Keith Johnson, Deseret News)

subtraction in a different way via a Singapore Math pilot program at Silver Hills Elementary School in West Valley City.

"Who can tell me a number story?" says teacher Sarah Van Maren, pointing to three squares with the numbers 3, 2 and 1 inside.

First-grader Alejandro Nachampasak answers, "There were three frogs. Two went to play outside and one stayed inside."

The students then write the numerals in squares on laminated pieces of paper and also place the correct number of tiny plastic cubes in the squares.

Children are learning addition and

Singapore Math teaches students core concepts by repetition, then moves on to solving problems by applying that knowledge. It is extremely visual and involves word problems.

"It helps students learn 'the why,'" said Shari Goodman, Granite School District math supervisor.

Support for Singapore Math is gaining momentum.

Sen. Howard Stephenson, R-Draper, is proposing legislation to create a program that awards grants to school districts or charter schools that offer Singapore Math in kindergarten through eighth grade.

The bill would appropriate \$3 million annually, subject to future budget constraints, from the Uniform School Fund for fiscal year 2009-2010.

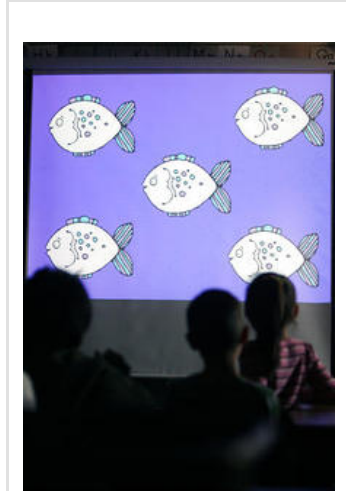


Cynthia Aguilar-Gallegos completes a problem on an overhead projector in the pilot math program. (Keith Johnson, Deseret News)

Singapore Math is something "we should move forward with even though resources are scarce,"

Stephenson said, addressing the Legislative Education Interim Committee on Wednesday.

Three first-grade classes at Silver Hills and one at Sandburg Elementary School in Granite district began using Singapore Math this fall.



Students solve math problems while watching them on an overhead projector in Van Maren's first-grade class. (Keith Johnson, Deseret News)

"It teaches math in a deeper way. The kids really get it well," said Silver Hills Principal Debbie Koji.

Monticello Academy, a kindergarten through ninth-grade charter school in West Valley City, started using the program fall 2006. Students, especially ethnic minorities, have improved in math test scores, said Monticello Director Kim Coleman.

Davis School District has scheduled a workshop to learn about Singapore Math strategies.

The math program was developed in the 1980s after the Singapore government reviewed math programs in other countries, including the United States and United Kingdom. The new math program was launched in Singapore in 1992. It has continued to evolve and has been revamped twice. It is taught in English.

Maryland, Massachusetts and New Jersey are among states teaching it.

While Singapore Math has students in southeast Asia scoring highest in the world, the program could face challenges if implemented into

Utah's curriculum.

The program requires parental support. The schools are scheduling family nights to explain the new math to parents.

Singapore Math demands a lot of teacher training and new materials. Two textbooks and two workbooks cost \$32 per student. Teacher training cost about \$20,000 annually at Monticello, Coleman said.

Singapore teachers are required to put in 100 hours of annual training.

Utah's education leaders haven't put a dollar figure on implementation but say it would likely be done one grade at a time, starting at the elementary level.

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