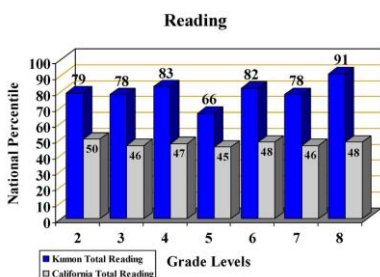
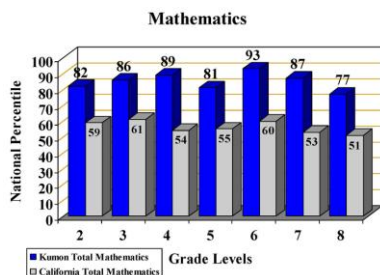


Standardized Testing

Usually in the spring, Kumon students - along with millions of others across North America - can be found taking standardized achievement tests in schools. Although these tests have been around for decades, it is only in the last ten to fifteen years that schools in the U.S. have focused so heavily on testing. Parents and educators alike began taking notice of the failing U.S. public schools when the book *Why Johnny Can't Read* was published in the '60s. Faith in the school system was further eroded in the '80s when a report entitled "A Nation at Risk" was published, stating that U.S. students fell behind those from many other developed nations in virtually every subject. The public immediately demanded accountability. In Ontario, Canada, disenchantment with public education has led to the recent introduction of regular testing of 3rd and 6th graders to verify whether or not they have met the standards set by the province. Many schools responded to this public outcry by testing with a vengeance because the stakes were high: both the rewards and consequences were great. Standardized tests began being used, not just for evaluating student performance, but also for evaluating the performance of school personnel and the schools themselves. Standardized tests continue to be part of school programs almost everywhere in North America now, from the WASIL in Washington State to the EQAO in the province of Ontario.



In order to determine how Kumon students who had been studying Kumon for at least six months fared on standardized tests in comparison to non-Kumon students, a group of Kumon Instructors from northern California gathered readily available data in grades 2 through 8 from the 2001 results of the Stanford Achievement Test 9th edition (SAT 9), one of the most widely used standardized tests today. The data showed that Kumon students outscored their non-Kumon counterparts not only in their home counties, but also throughout California in each of the three major areas of testing: Math, Reading, and Language Arts. These results were gratifying but not surprising. Why? Because the high scores reflect the fact that the Kumon program is a comprehensive program providing students with content knowledge as well as many good test-taking skills, skills which include establishing a positive attitude when taking a test, acquiring the ability to follow directions, learning how to manage time effectively, and knowing how to take a test with confidence. Although there are many test-taking prep courses out there, they usually offer

students test-taking strategies such as how to increase their chances of selecting the right answer, how to proceed through a test most effectively, and what to do if they don't know an answer. Most fall short, however, because none of them offer the total package that long-term Kumon study - which results in advancing beyond grade-level - offers.

To test or not to test is not the question: standardized tests will be around for awhile. However, to prepare is the answer - and Kumon preparation leads to successful scores. With long-term Kumon study, Johnny can learn to read.

Note from the editor:

Standardized Testing – Written by Andrea Pastorok, Ph.D. / Educational Psychologist - Published by Kumon.