

"Everyday Mathematics"

David Kristofferson from *The Highlands* · 15 Feb 2016

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I'd like to get feedback from Highlands parents about their experiences with the "Everyday Mathematics" program. This program is used at many schools across the country.

I taught in San Francisco a few years back, and my department chairperson had been a math major at the University of Chicago. She is an excellent teacher, and I highly respect her opinion. Although we did not agree on every single educational controversy (though we did agree on many), she was always happy to debate the issues and exchange views. She knew the people who developed this program and thought that it was an excellent program. It was being used at the time in the SFUSD elementary schools, but students who started in the program had not yet made it up to the high school level, so she was eagerly awaiting the results. The program's developers claim that it is one of the most highly researched/tested math programs in use. However, I keep hearing local anecdotes that this program is not well-received by parents in the Highlands.

I do not usually tutor elementary students, but decided to take on two students from Highlands in 4th and 5th grades a couple of years ago to get some direct experience with it myself. It teaches several novel computational methods/algorithms which might be part of the cause for discontent?!? Another issue might be that the program is great, but the implementation is ineffective due to lack of teacher training?!?

In any event, I would be grateful to hear any experiences that people are willing to share either publicly or privately. Private communications will be held in confidence.

Thank you!

And from the discussion on the above article:

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Here is a link to the research summary document for Everyday Mathematics.

<http://www.everydaymath.com/wp-content/t...>

If you take the time to read through this, you should be pretty convinced this program is well-researched, thoroughly tested, and will benefit your children. Personally I don't know whether it is a great program or not.

But how many people will take the time to read the copious references at the end? I'll bet money that this is true also of professional educators looking to evaluate/adopt the program. I looked at just a few over the past couple of days and, in one case, the author was a psychologist doing experiments on college students who, I am guessing, were probably volunteers. Can these studies be extrapolated to elementary school children?

There are also several sets of performance statistics near the end of the document from various selected locations around the U.S. The details for each are lacking. Are these results representative or just ones that were favored by the McGraw Hill marketing department? Why isn't there some kind of "overall comparison" instead of just showing stats from certain locations? Right, different states use different tests and measurement is complicated.

Once again, this is clearly a document put together by the company selling the product, not an independent research organization such as a university. Of course, UChicago itself is not a commercial venture, but the creators of a program should not be the ones evaluating it in a properly controlled setting. This should be done by an independent organization, possibly the Department of Education? Shouldn't the government track what works if they are spending tons of money on education? But, then, how often do regulators get co-opted by the companies being regulated?

All of this raises questions about Everyday Mathematics, but it may be a great program and was unfortunately poorly implemented locally? Or perhaps I am only hearing from a small set of unhappy parents while the "Great Silent Majority" in the Highlands loves it?

My point above is simply to show how amazingly difficult it is to come to definitive conclusions in complex subjects such as education. In the end, a decision is simply made to try out a new educational program, and the kids become guinea pigs. Unfortunately, as I have mentioned in earlier articles, around here that seems to happen far too frequently.

When my kids went to Highlands, I was concerned about their writing; math seemed to be working. I'm not sure how Highlands children are faring with their writing now, but one wonders why the need arose to change the math curriculum? Statewide STAR test results in math are miserable, but a lot of this is due to big city schools with poor minority populations.

Was Everyday Math adopted at Highlands as part of a higher up plan to resolve a statewide problem or was it a local decision?? Can anyone address this?

The U.S. Department of Education DOES have a tracking list called the "What Works Clearinghouse." Here is the link for Everyday Mathematics:

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/interventionr...>

They reviewed 92 research studies and NONE of them met required research standards. Only ONE of these 92 studies met standards with "reservations" !!! And yet the McGraw Hill research document mentioned in my last reply cites this as a recommendation of the program by the Department of Education, but does not include the link to this information in their research summary!

Strike another blow for educational research and integrity!!!