

## News Release

### **KenKen Puzzle Inventor and Renowned Japanese Educator Visits Springhurst for Hands-On Math Lessons**

**Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. March 4, 2014**—Imagine if Albert Einstein popped by your school to talk about relativity? For Springhurst Elementary School students, a visit from **Tetsuya Miyamoto, the Japanese inventor of KenKen**, is just as momentous. The renowned educator will be visiting Springhurst on Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup> to work with students who participate in the Math Olympiad extracurricular club for a special “Let’s KenKen with Mr. Miyamoto!” lesson. Springhurst Math Specialist Josh Rosen has been holding KenKen Challenge tournaments with 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students for the past three years and it has become a school-wide craze. KenKen is the most successful brain exercise and logic puzzle since Sudoku.

From its humble beginnings in Tetsuya Miyamoto’s classroom, KenKen has grown into a worldwide phenomenon. KenKen logic puzzles were first invented in 2004 by Mr. Miyamoto, who intended the puzzles to be an “instruction-free” method of training the brain. His main goal was to improve his students’ math and logic skills and create an activity that would be fun and challenging for students of all levels. The name KenKen is the equivalent of the Japanese word for wisdom squared. According to Mr. Miyamoto, KenKen teaches logic, mathematics, problem-solving, creative thinking and reasoning skills, all while removing the intimidation factor, improving self-confidence and making math fun.

Josh Rosen first came up with the KenKen Challenge idea after attending a tournament held in Chappaqua, NY in 2011, where he witnessed a 16-year-old young lady easily decimating a middle-aged accountant in solving the toughest puzzles. While preparing Springhurst for their own Challenge in the weeks prior to the event, Mr. Rosen was thrilled to see excited students “practicing like crazy” for the big day. “KenKen is a wonderful vehicle for teaching many things; among them number sense, perseverance, and a joy of mathematical thinking,” Mr. Rosen said.

With the help of Robert Fuhrer, whose company, Nextoy LLC, brought the puzzles to the United States in 2008, Mr. Rosen organized the challenge to include everything KenKen; Kencils (the KenKen version of pencils) were provided to all challenge participants, KenKen Books were awarded to the challenge winners, and KenKen certificates were distributed to all contestants who participated. And he didn’t stop there; Mr. Rosen also bedecked the walls at Springhurst with KenKen Challenge posters in the days leading up to the event.

Mr. Miyamoto describes the art of the puzzle as “teaching without teaching.” He sets a time limit for students to complete the KenKen puzzles. Questions are not permitted, solutions are not provided and Mr. Miyamoto only communicates whether the answer is correct or not. During his time at Springhurst, Mr. Miyamoto will conduct two hour-long math sessions working with approximately 45 students. An informal KenKen competition will be held at the end of the day with Mr. Miyamoto himself presiding.

This is Mr. Miyamoto's first trip to the United States in five years. Springhurst Elementary School is the only public school he will be visiting in the area. His other stops include a Japanese School in Greenwich, Ct., the Chappaqua Library, the Museum of Math in Manhattan and Princeton University. "We are honored to have such a distinguished guest and are eagerly anticipating his visit and the opportunity to learn from him," said Springhurst Principal Julia Drake.

"The Common Core Standards are built on the foundational goals of students becoming confident and creative problem solvers in all areas of curriculum," said Doug Berry, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction for the Dobbs Ferry School District. "KenKen is a wonderful non-traditional way of enjoying math. Being good at a puzzle is about being willing to probe if you don't get the correct answer right away. KenKen is an engaging school-wide enrichment activity that just keeps growing."

Not long after its introduction in the United States, KenKen became a certified phenomenon for adult puzzlers as well, with more than 100,000 puzzles played each day online and 500,000 puzzle books sold in the U.S. The puzzles appear regularly in The New York Times, Boston Globe, Detroit Free Press, Readers Digest, and on [NYTimes.com/kenken](http://NYTimes.com/kenken). KenKen requires simple arithmetic calculations and logic to decipher the creative puzzles. With a range of difficulty levels, KenKen improves what Mr. Miyamoto ultimately aimed to improve: logical thinking, concentration and perseverance.

Like Sudoku, the goal of each puzzle is to fill a grid with digits — 1 through 4 for a 4×4 grid, 1 through 5 for a 5×5, etc. — so that no digit appears more than once in any row or any column. Grids range in size from 3×3 to 9×9. Additionally, KenKen grids are divided into heavily outlined groups of cells — often called "cages" — and the numbers in the cells of each cage must produce a certain "target" number when combined using a specified mathematical operation (either addition, subtraction, multiplication or division).

Interested in testing your puzzle skills? You can play KenKen puzzles for free online at the [KenKen.com](http://KenKen.com) website. In addition, there is a KenKen app for the iPhone and iPad as well as Android devices. "KenKen involves fact practice, reasoning, fluency and perseverance," said Mr. Rosen. "It's not the mathematical operation that makes it difficult; it's the number of ways or combinations that make it challenging."

**For more information, please contact:**

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