

# HeyMath!

## Does it Mean the End of the Textbook?

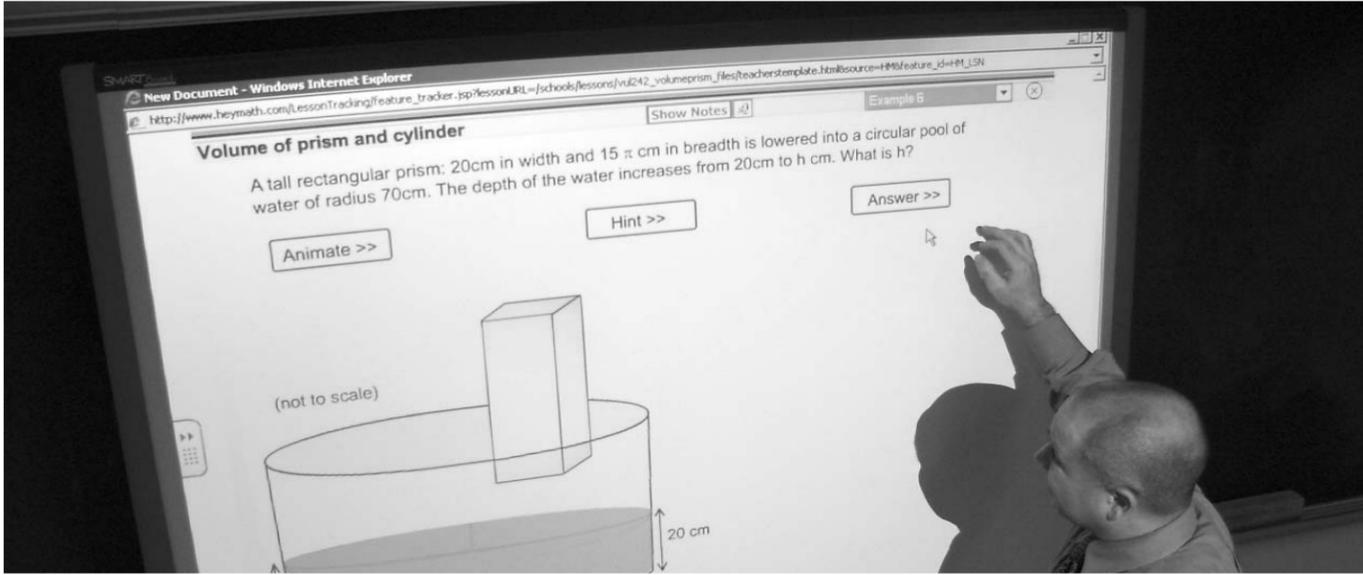


PHOTO BY NAVI SOMAL '09

TEACHING WITH STYLE: Math teacher William Wilkes uses a Smart Board to operate the new math program, HeyMath!

NAVI SOMAL '09

Arts and Entertainment Editor

Staples' Math Department is one of the first in the country to use the eLearning program HeyMath! With headquarters in India, HeyMath! is an online math tutoring company which uses interactive lessons, coupled with animation, practice quizzes and problems for the use of students and teachers.

"The goal of HeyMath! is to provide every student in the world no matter where and no matter the quality of the school they attend to be able to have access to a world-class math program," said math department chair Frank Corbo.

Corbo learned of HeyMath! when attending a math conference and decided to introduce it to the Westport school district in the 2006-07 school year. This includes both the high school and middle school.

"HeyMath! just seemed to be a way of managing our curriculum that was so 21st century," said Corbo.

This is the third school year that Staples has used HeyMath! as a tool for teaching certain units in Algebra 1. However, this is also the first school year that the program is being used to teach subjects in Geometry and Algebra 2, as well.

Students in these classes have complete access to the material present online as they are provided with a personal login.

Although it is used widely in Algebra 1 classes today, according to Corbo and math teacher Caroline James, les-

sons provided by HeyMath! originally needed a lot of "tweaking" to fit the Staples curriculum.

When it was first introduced, it was Karen Tomas, a representative from the middle school, who continuously communicated with HeyMath! representatives in India via e-mail and video chat to adjust the programs available on HeyMath! to meet the Westport school district curriculum.

"After a year of back and forth communication, the HeyMath! Algebra 1 curriculum is pretty much set and has been working well," said James.

**"We are helping [HeyMath!] create a program that will be able to sell much more easily around this country."**

**—Frank Corbo**

According to James, currently both she and math teacher Sarah White are communicating with HeyMath! representatives in India to tweak lessons to fit the Geometry and Algebra 2 curriculums.

At the same time, the math department is planning on conforming HeyMath! lessons to those of the Pre-Calculus curriculum in preparation for next year.

According to Corbo, HeyMath! is revolutionizing the way math is taught now and how the students perceive it.

Lessons provided by HeyMath! use real life examples to clear concepts by making math more fun.

"HeyMath! provides a certain amount of animation to math so that it's not so abstract. It livens the way math is taught today," said Corbo.

Through the step-by-step process, not only does this online math program make math more fun, but it also acts a student's personal tutor.

If students miss a day of class or don't understand a concept or unit, they can simply log on using their handy-dandy account to access a tutorial. Teachers and students alike have the ability to pause the step-by-step movie-like tutorials. Often, teachers use this feature to introduce a subject, pause the lesson, have class discussion, and then continue.

Although an amazing tool, HeyMath! is taking over the role of textbooks.

"I personally could see textbooks become almost obsolete, but life changes and we have to change with it," said James.

Department head Corbo echoes the prediction, adding "we will probably never adopt a new math textbook. Although we are currently using the books that we have, they will be phased out."

Since a lot of schools around the world are starting to use HeyMath!, especially countries like Singapore—which has been ranked number one for math proficiency globally in a recent study conducted by the American Institutes of Research—"It also gives Staples a chance to benchmark against the best schools in the world," said Corbo, since HeyMath! acts as "pool" of information for all schools involved.

Although significant collaborative work is being performed between the Westport school district and the headquarters in India, the price of all this is only \$10 per student for the entire year. There is no extra cost for the changes made to the HeyMath! lessons themselves.

The cost structure is per student rather than per how many changes being made to the online program.

"Although HeyMath! is doing far more work for us than they have for anybody else, they realize that they are also getting all of our expertise. We are helping them create a program that will be able to sell much more easily around this country," said Corbo, "we could never hire anybody to do for us what HeyMath! is doing. It is just prohibitive."

## In Brief

### Tri-State Consortium

The Staples guidance department is currently participating in an evaluation from the Tri-State Consortium. The Consortium is an organization of 42 school districts in the tri-state area that assists member districts through assessments.

Visitors from other high-performing school districts conduct the evaluations. The trained evaluators are a team of assistant superintendents from four districts, guidance supervisors from three districts, and one high school counselor.

The evaluation includes interviews with students, parents, and teachers that were conducted on the Dec. 4 and 5.

Some of the interviewees were selected at random, while others asked if they could participate.

Results will be sent in the form of a written report to Superintendent Dr. Elliot Landon, Principal John Dodig, and Director of Guidance Elaine Schwartz. In addition, a presentation will be made to the Board of Education.

The guidance department has put in many hours into the evaluation, even amidst the business of college counseling for the seniors who are applying. Regardless, they have high expectations.

"We're anticipating a really good report," said Schwartz.

### Collaborative Team

The Collaborative Team decided not to allow Inklings reporters access to their meetings Wednesday, Dec. 11, citing issues of privacy that could compromise the decisions of the team.

The Collaborative Team is an advisory board to Principal John Dodig that consists of department heads, assistant principals and selected teachers.

Inklings requested attendance of weekly meetings as part of an effort to have its reporters obtain real world reporting experience by attending meetings such as Board of Education, Board of Finance and Representative Town Meetings.

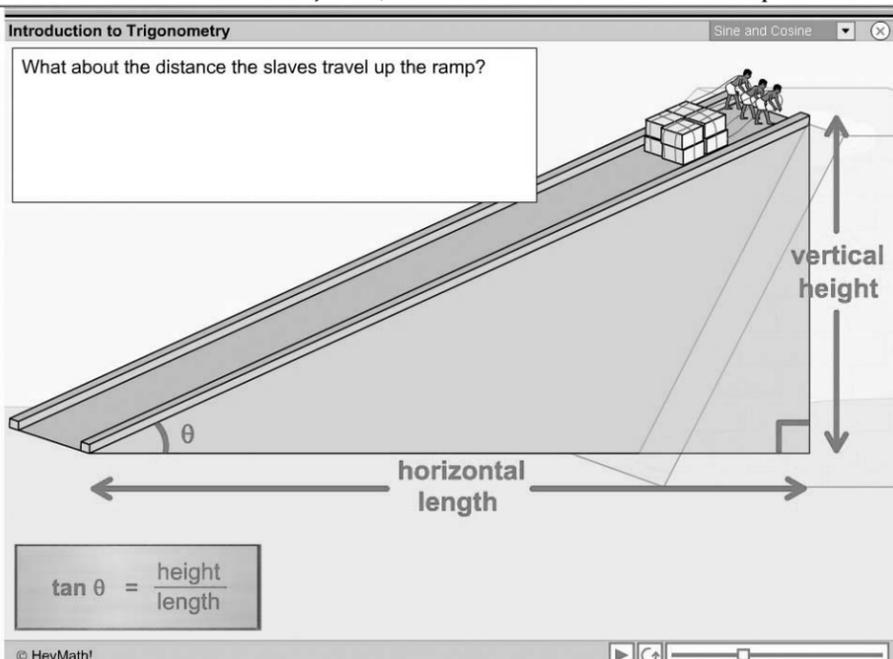
Inklings has since asked the Collaborative Team to release its weekly minutes, currently sent to teachers and other members of the town department of education, to the public.

### Census Data

According to the "Westport News," new information gathered by the American Community Survey (ACS) has revealed that nearly 25 percent of Westport residents work in the financial sector. "Forbes" magazine recently ranked Westport as the seventh likeliest community to be affected by the current US economic situation.

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LEARNING 2.0: Just one of many HeyMath! problems, which attempt to make learning an entertaining experience, incorporating real-world applications.