

We Give Math Equal Status

The following are excerpts from comments made by Philadelphia School District CEO Paul Vallas at a December, 2004 press conference to announce PECO's \$500,000 Energy for Education grant to the School District of Philadelphia.

“Everybody focuses on reading, and is preoccupied with reading and language arts, and indeed we are too. But we give math equal status. The academic failures that many different inner city schools have experienced in the areas of math and science are as detrimental as their failures in language arts. When you look at the children who drop out of high school, it's not because they're failing their language arts, it's because they are failing their math and science courses. You look over the years, at the children who have failed and have had to repeat as 9th graders, generally it's because they fail their math and science courses.

So, from the very beginning, as we move to reform our curriculum instructional models, we have moved to focus not only on language arts but also to focus on math—and to give math the same status and high priority of importance.

For the math initiative you're funding today I want to recognize Bob Sun, who is the designer of this magnificent math supplement program.

Though I get a lot of credit for being reasonably smart in mathematics, all of my math skills, the skills that I use most today, aren't skills I mastered in high school or at college. It's the skills that I mastered when I was in primary grades, the basic multiplication tables, the ability to work with statistics, that I continue to rely on today. Mr. Sun's approach, I call it 'Mathphonics,' is a focus on those math basics like multiplication, division, critical thinking. When you focus on those core areas,



Paul Vallas, CEO of the School District of Philadelphia with Bob Sun, Inventor of 24° game and First In Math® Online.

you lay the building blocks for future excellence in areas of mathematics.

The supplement (*First In Math Online*) which we have in all of our schools, and the competitions that we're going to have city-wide, and state-wide are the math equivalent of spelling bees. What we

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want to do is elevate the importance of math as an area of academic rigor which is so critical for our children to master. This is great day for me, it's a wonderful Christmas gift for the children of Philadelphia, and I'd like to thank Denis (O'Brien, President of PECO), Mr. Sun, and Dr. Johnson, who's done such a fine job. I want to thank PECO for thinking and caring about the children of Philadelphia. Thank you all so much.” ■