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By Gerald Grant Washington Post Staff Writer

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The poor showing of American youngsters in the first major international comparison of mathematical ability did not surprise the experts.

Although the study, made public last week, did not attempt to plumb the reasons why such countries as Japan and England outscored the United States, mathematical scholars say they are not difficult to perceive.

The experts assert that teachers here are not as well trained, and that neither American students nor the society at large places as much value on mathematics achievement as do many countries abroad.