



NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS DECEMBER 2009

Contents

[Dates to Remember](#)
[Kim's Korner](#)

[Students' Accomplishments](#)
[Campus Happenings](#)

[Resources for Parents](#)
[And then there's...](#)

Dates to Remember

Report Cards sent home: Lesson 16 (Dec. 14 – 17)

Christmas Holidays: December 18 to January 3

Grades 1 – 4 SMS Competitions: February 22 to February 26

Ontario SMS March Break: Weeks of March 8th and March 15th. Classes resume March 22nd

Manitoba SMS Spring Break: Week of March 29th. Classes resume April 6th

New Jersey SMS Spring Break: Week of March 29th. Classes resume April 6th

Grades 4 – 10 SMS Exams: Lesson 33 (May 10 to 13 in Ontario, May 4th and 6th in Manitoba and May 4th in New Jersey)

Grades 1 – 3 SMS Exams: Lesson 37 (June 7 to 10 in Ontario, June 1st and 3rd in Manitoba and June 1st in New Jersey)

Students' Accomplishments

Congratulations to the following students for their outstanding accomplishments:

Grades 4 to 6 Mathematical Olympiad Part 1 (American Competition)

| Perfect Scores | "Off by One" |
|--|---|
| Jeffrey Lee, Don Mills Rebecca Moranis, Don Mills | Shuli Jones, North Toronto; Abby Karunakaran, Richmond Hill; Arthur Li, Richmond Hill; Ishrat Natal, Willowdale; Helen Ng, Willowdale; Frederick Ngo, Richmond Hill; Moujan Sadari, Willowdale; Marie Song, Willowdale; Emma Tse, Willowdale; Tiberiu Vatamanu, Willowdale; Gregory Wong, Richmond Hill; Jerry Yang, Willowdale; |

Other Accomplishments

Nicole Li, Grade 11, a talented young violinist, was a featured performer, along with her sisters **Chantal and Rachelle**, at the Koffler Chamber Orchestra's season debut under the direction of Jacques Israelievitch. The performance was in celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Felix Mendelssohn, a gifted composer and a fervent supporter of Bach who in turn championed Vivaldi. Congratulations on this wonderful accomplishment, Nicole, Chantal and Rachelle!

Rebecca Moranis, Grade 6, and **Angela Wong, Grade 10** have been invited by the National Ballet School to dance in the National Ballet of Canada's Nutcracker Ballet this year. Performances will take place at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts from December 12 through January 3. Way to go, Angela and Rebecca!

Kim's Korner

Written by Kim Langen, Spirit of Math® Schools CEO and Co-Founder

Overcoming Fears of “Non Acceptance”

Grade 6, 7, 8 and 9... those years can be the toughest years to get through for a bright student. Students go through a transition from being a young child wanting to please adults, to a teenager who is trying to figure out how they fit into this world; feeling the need to be accepted by their grade-specific peers. This need to be accepted is present at all ages, but is often more acutely felt by kids in grade 8, and can linger into their 9th and 10th year of school. But it doesn't end there: bright kids also realize that they **are** different from most of their peers in a regular school, and will sometimes do whatever it takes to be the same, or to be accepted. This includes looking “dumber” than they really are. This is particularly true for girls.

I am writing this article today because I am seeing this trend of “looking dumber” in some Spirit of Math classes. This is a serious issue for bright kids, and consequently, for their parents.

Some specific indicators to watch out for:

1. **Marks dramatically decrease:** Students will give an excuse for the lower marks such as the material is much harder. What is actually happening is that they don't want to look different. Purposely lowering their marks will make them appear more like the other students, and therefore, they won't be different.
2. **They become very quiet and less social.** This typically happens when a student isn't finding others like them to share their ideas. This can also happen when they realize that their ideas are very different from others. Instead of sharing their ideas and looking very different, they keep quiet to protect themselves from appearing “strange”.
3. **There is extra attention being paid to their looks.** Girls may want to wear clothes that are far too revealing, whereas boys will dress down. The girls want to be seen as attractive, and may think that a boy will like them if they look good, and again fit in: not if they are smart. Boys will dress down just to fit in.
4. **If students are very bored and feel extremely isolated, or think that they need more excitement or an escape, then they may go to the extreme of using alcohol or drugs.** Parents are telling me now that alcohol is at house parties with kids as young as grade 7 and that parents at those homes know that it is happening. Bright kids want to fit in, and they may see this as the way to do it. Parents need to know that underage use of alcohol or drugs is not right, or normal.

This issue is much more common with girls, and I am seeing it in our Spirit of Math classes. There are several students who were very strong in grades 6 and 7. However, once they hit grade 8 their behaviour in class changed, (not as focused on the material), and their strong work habits diminished. “Glib” remarks in class, and trying to look “cool” are now more important.

Nimo Hussein, Don Mills Campus Co-Owner, told me a story that I would like to share:

“We have a female student (in one of our senior classes), she has been at SMS since grade 4. She is one of the brightest students in the class. I recall a chat I had with her when she was in grade 6. I mentioned to her how smart she was and what a brilliant mathematician she would be one day. She looked around her (we were standing in the hallway) and put her index finger to her lips saying “shhh..I don't want people to know that!” I was surprised, and asked, “why?! What's wrong with people knowing you are an A+ student?” She said that it wasn't cool and that some kids at school made fun of her. She said she didn't want to be known as the math geek.”

Kaynan Anshur, who has worked with SMS since 2002, also commented. *“I noticed that one of the few times our teenage students can really be themselves is in our classes. However, some of the girls are a bit quiet, so that they don’t show all that they know. I also noticed the same pattern with some of my boys who used to participate more in the younger grades. You can break them out of this habit in our classes if you are aware of it, but I can only imagine how they are in their day schools.”*

When I went through high school, I fell into this trap. In grade 9 I got the highest marks in science and my overall average was very high. I also realized that I didn’t “fit in”. I tried to lower my marks so that I appeared to be more like others, and would be more “popular”. What a mistake! One of the key things my parents did was to introduce me to other kids like me in after-school programs such as ballet, swimming, piano and violin. It took a lot of work and time for my parents to do this, but I was so thankful when I went to university and “fit in” with all the others.

To this day, I am always taking extra care to watch out for these kids. It can be a very tough time as their “regular” peers will probably not be as sensitive to their needs as they are to others who are “regular” like them. It is therefore, essential that bright students get extra support from home, and find a place where it is safe to be themselves. I sincerely hope that Spirit of Math is one of those places for these students and their parents.

Resources and Information for Parents

Book: Being Smart about Gifted Education Dona J. Matthews, PhD and Joanne F. Foster, EdD

A book for parents, and educators interested in understanding and supporting high-level development in children. <http://www.beingsmart.ca/>

Award-Winning Finalist in the Education/Academic category, National Best Books 2009 Awards, sponsored by USA Book News, Exceptionality Education Canada 2006 Exceptional Book of the Year

Savings and Investment Challenge for Grades 9 and 10

The Investor Education Fund is sponsoring the Savings & Investment Challenge offered through the Ontario Business Educators Association (OBEA).

The challenge meets the overall expectations from the Ontario Curriculum 2006 Business Studies course, BBI Introduction to Business, Finance strand which concentrates on the ability to “demonstrate an understanding of effective investment practice.” Students can win a cash prize and learn about different types of bank accounts and services provided by financial institutions. To participate in the challenge, visit the Contest section of the OBEA’s website: <http://www.obea.ca/contests.htm>

American MENSA – Book List for Parents of Gifted Children

American MENSA Book List for Parents.

A CONVERSATION WITH LAURENCE STEINBERG Developmental Psychologist Says Teenagers Are Different

By Claudia Dreifus, Published: November 30, 2009 The New York Times

Laurence Steinberg, a developmental psychologist at Temple University in Philadelphia, is one of the leading experts in the United States on adolescent behavior and adolescent brain biology. Dr. Steinberg, 57, has won the \$1 million Klaus J. Jacobs Research Prize, which will be awarded to him at a ceremony in early December in Switzerland. Here is an edited version of two conversations with Dr. Steinberg last month:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/01/science/01conv.html?_r=2&emc=tnt&tntemail1=y

Article: A Fresh Look at Brain-Based Education By Eric P. Jensen

http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k_v89/k0802jen.htm

It has been more than 20 years since it was first suggested that there could be connections between brain function and educational practice. In the face of all the evidence that has now accumulated to support this notion, Here are a couple of points Mr. Jensen makes:

Schools present countless opportunities to affect students' brains. Such issues as stress, exercise, nutrition, and social conditions are all relevant, brain-based issues that affect cognition, attention, classroom discipline, attendance, and memory. Our new understanding is that every school day changes the student's brain in some way. Once we make those connections, we can make choices in how we prioritize policies and strategies. Here are some of the powerful connections for educators to make.

1. The human brain can and does grow new neurons.
2. Social conditions influence our brain in ways we didn't know before.
3. The ability of the brain to rewire and remap itself by means of neuroplasticity is profound.
4. Chronic stress is a very real issue at schools.
5. The old-school view was that either environment or genes decided the outcomes for a student. We now know that there's a third option: gene expression. This is the capacity of our genes to respond to chronic or acute environmental input. This new understanding highlights a new vehicle for change in our students.
6. Good nutrition is about far more than avoiding obesity.
7. The role of the arts in schools continues to come under great scrutiny. Five neuroscience departments and universities (University of Oregon, Harvard University, University of Michigan, Dartmouth College, and Stanford University) currently have projects studying the impact of the arts on the brain. Arts and Neuroscience is a new journal that tracks the connections being made by researchers.
8. Exercise is strongly correlated with increased brain mass, better cognition, mood regulation, and new cell production. This information was unknown a generation ago.
9. Stunning strides have been made in the rehabilitation of brain-based disorders, including fetal alcohol syndrome, autism, retardation, strokes, and spinal cord injury. It is now clear that aggressive behavioral therapies, new drugs, and stem cell implantation can be used to influence, regulate, and repair brain-based disorders.
10. The discovery that environments alter our brains is profound. This research goes back decades to the early work of the first trailblazing biological psychologists: Mark Rosenzweig at the University of California, Berkeley, and Bill Greenough at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. In fact, a new collaboration has emerged between neuroscientists and architects.

Candy Counting Winners

Brampton: Jack Ginocchi – Grade 2, Evan Attfield – Grade 4, Ankur Verma – Grade 5, Deiondrae Small-Ormsby – Grade 8

Central Toronto: Nathan Goldbach – Grade 1, Zachary Li – Grade 4, Nathalie Trinh – Grade 6

Don Mills: Brandon Leung - Grade 2, Sam Easterbrook - Grade 4, Azaan Moosa - Grade 5

Edison: Angela Yuen – Grade 6

High Park: Mia Kramer - Grade 1, Rachel Pizzonia - Grade 2

Markham East: Addison Chan – Grade 1, Akshaya Kathiravelu – Grade 2, Rumi Khuwaja – grade 4, Vanessa Lai – Grade 5

Markham West: Ishan Verma – Grade 1, Steven Lui – Grade 2, Beatrix Yip – grade 7, Alyn Nanji – Grade 8

Mississauga West: Priyanka Rao – Grade 1, Katelyn Pavlidis – Grade 2, Aliya Rajwani – Grade 4, Aaron Park – Grade 5, Na'ashantea Miller – Grade 8

North Toronto: Alicia Stack – Grade 1, Kendra Wong – Grade 9

Oakville: Charlotte Chau – Grade 1, Imogen Govan – Grade 2, Kieran D'Mello – Grade 4 , Tarin Jauhal – Grade 5

Ottawa: Seth Eichhorst - Grade 7

Richmond Hill: - Lauren Hood - Grade 1R1, Valerie Fernandes - Grade 1R2, Alyna Nanji – Grade 4R1, Clarence Lin – Grade 8R2

Willowdale: Tiffany Yuen – Grade 1N, Eric Tu - Grade 1E, Doen Kim - Grade 1I, Conrad Lim – Grade 8N, Jibrael Rolston – Grade 5E, Daniel Balicki – Grade 6I

Winnipeg: Barac Thon – Grade 1, Michelle Huh – Grade 4, Robert Morissette – Grade 5, Sebastian Lee – Grade 9

Campus Happenings

High Park

Parents at High Park Campus participated in grade-specific parent workshops to give them the tools they need to support their children's SMS learning at home. Thank you for the positive feedback. The event was a great success! Our next parent workshop covering term 2 topics will be scheduled for January.

On week 12, students brought their friends to the "Bring-A-Buddy Night." A big thank you to everyone, for inviting their friends and for making our guests feel so welcome!

Don Mills

We would like to wish our students, parents and teachers the best over the holidays.

Mississauga West and Oakville:

During the month of November, The St. Elizabeth Anglican Church of Mississauga and Spirit of Math Mississauga West Campus participated in a food drive to help the less fortunate families in the community. We managed to fill two barrels of non perishable food items to be given out to various families! We would like to thank all the parents, students and teachers who generously donated food items to go towards this worthy cause. Thank you for your generosity and support.

Pictured to the side: Students from Spirit of Math Schools, Mississauga West and the one of the barrels full of food



Markham East

Holiday Charity Sale and Celebration, December 16th, 2009 from 6:00-6:30 and 7:45-8:15 pm. 175 Anderson Avenue, Markham East Campus. Donate your old Books, CDs, Video Tapes, DVD's, Video and Board Games by December 9th. On December 16th, all items will be available for sale for a greatly reduced price! All proceedings to be donated to The SickKids Foundation and The Salvation Army

North Toronto

The North Toronto parent workshops and "Bring-A-Buddy Night" went very well; thanks to everyone who participated! Our new location at Blythwood Baptist Church is working out very well. Parents are reminded to read the letter about parking that was sent home on Nov. 26.

Richmond Hill

Watch for upcoming parent evenings to happen after the holidays.

Willowdale

During weeks 12 and 13, Kim Langen, held parent evenings with parents of Grade 1 to 6.

Also, during weeks 12 and 13, students in various grades brought their friends to the "Bring-A-Buddy Night." Thank you to each of our students in these classes, for inviting their friends and for making our guests feel so welcome!

Registration for National Math Contests

We are pleased to be able to continue to offer our students with many opportunities to participate in national mathematics contests. See your campus for details.

Annual Summer Programs

Join us for a week of half-day intensive Math classes designed to challenge motivated students from grades 2 to 9. Please contact your campus for details and registration.

| Date | Willowdale | Markham East |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Aug 9 – 13, 2010 | Graphing & Patterns (Grade 2 and 3) Basic Skills and Problem Solving II (Grades 4 – 6) Probability (Grades 7 - 9) 9:00am-12:00pm | Graphing & Patterns (Grade 2 and 3); 9:00am-12:00pm |
| Aug. 23 – 27, 2010 | Grade 5 Refresher Course 9:00am-2:30pm | Basic Skills and Problem Solving II; (Grade 4 to 6); 9:00am-12:00pm |

Safety Reminders

Flu Season

If you or your child have a fever, please stay home and call the office to arrange to pick up the missed work.

Entrance Doors

Please keep entrance doors closed at all times for security.

Winter Weather

Due to the nature of our program, Spirit of Math Classes run during inclement weather. If you have questions about whether the classes are still on, please contact your campus office.

Winter Break

The last class before the winter break is the week of December 14. Classes resume the week of January 4.

And then there's...

Drill Books

Do you want to mark your child's drills at home, without having to figure out the answers yourself? You can! Solution books are available for sale. Please see below.

Spirit of Math® Schools Drill Books are available for sale!

Student Drill Books - \$19.95 + GST

Teacher/Parent Drill Books - \$49.95 + GST and includes a Teacher/Parent Training DVD. Use these to mark your child's "at-home" drills.

For more information, please call 416-223-1985 ext. 110

SMS Contest Books

Spirit of Math contest questions and solutions are available in a book for \$29.95 + GST. See your Principal for more information. [Contents](#)