



NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS

FEBRUARY 2009

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Dates to Remember

Grades 1 – 4 SMS Competitions: February 23 to February 26

Ontario SMS March Break: March 13 to March 29

Manitoba SMS Spring Break: March 27 to April 5

Grades 4 – 10 SMS Exams: Lesson 33 (May 11 to 14 in Ontario, and May 5 & 7 in Manitoba)

Grades 1 – 3 SMS Exams: Lesson 37 (June 8 to 11 in Ontario, and June 2 & 4 in Manitoba)

Mathematical Olympiads:

Toronto: Fridays, February 6 and March 6 from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm – open to registered students in grades 4, 5 or 6. **Venue:** Newtonbrook United Church, 53 Cummer Avenue.

Ottawa: March 7 from 6:00-8:00 pm at the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa, 2825 Dumarier Avenue, Ottawa

Winnipeg: Feb 6 and March 6 at the Portage Avenue Church from 4:30 – 5:30

Mathematica Competitions:

Date and time: Wednesday, April 1st, 2009; 9:30 am – 11:00 noon;

Grades: Thales (Grade 3), Byron-Germain (Grade 4), Fibonacci (Grade 5), Pythagoras (Grade 6), Euler (Grade 7), Lagrange (Grade 8) and Newton (Grade 9) Contests.

Venues:

Toronto: St. Elizabeth of Hungary Roman Catholic Church, 432 Sheppard Ave. East.

Brampton: Contact this campus for more information

Don Mills: Donway Covenant United Church, 230 The Donway West, Toronto

Markham East: The Olive Branch Community Church, 175 Anderson Avenue, Markham

Markham West: 7828 Kennedy Road, Unit 238, Markham

Mississauga West and Oakville: St Elizabeth's Anglican Church, 1051 Eglinton Avenue West, Mississauga

Ottawa: Boys and Girls Club, 2825 Dumarier Avenue, Ottawa

Winnipeg: April 8th at the Portage Avenue Church

Kangaroo Competitions:

Many Spirit of Math campuses are satellite campuses for the upcoming Kangaroo Competition. Students can now register with their own campus or online at mathkangaroo.com. Information will be available from your campus regarding the date, venue and registration procedures.

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Students' Accomplishments

Congratulations to the following students for their outstanding accomplishments:

Omer Strumpf, Grade 6, received the Mary Gardiner Award for the 2008 contemporary showcase. This is one of the major awards granted by the *Alliance for Canadian New Music Projects*. Congratulations, Omer!

Justine Law, Grade 5, came in first this summer at the Canadian Music Conservatory (CMC) in piano for 9 years olds. Great work, Justine!

Math Olympiad Competition Cumulative Results for the first three contests (Grades 4-6):

Highest Score 15/15 Perfect!: Christabel Chan, Karan Jain

Honour Roll (80% or higher): Matthew Ban Kim, Brandon Chan, Jasper Ho, Wilson Ho, Gabriel Ip, Shakir Lakhani, Jeffrey Lee, Tiffany Leung, Arthur Li, Kelvin Ng, Sean Purcell, Aaron Vuong, Wilson Wu.

American Mathematics Competitions Results (Grade 8):

Gold Medalist (tie): Shannon Wong & Allen Wu

Silver Medalist: Macaulay Szeto

Bronze Medalist: Clare Moffatt

Honour Roll (80% or higher): Ringo Cheung, Jonathan Lam, Zaheed Shivji, Husayn Kara, Tara Tsang, Lavanya Ramachandran

Kim's Korner

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

How Can You Determine if a Math Program is Strong in Problem Solving?

A mathematics program that successfully teaches problem solving is rare and can be difficult to find. Once you find such a program, how can you determine if it will address the needs of your high performing student?

There are 2 key questions that a parent should ask:

1. Does the content consist of high quality problems, supported with a comprehensive program that teaches kids the fundamental skills?
2. Is the content combined with solid teaching techniques, where the teacher has been specifically trained to get students to think differently?

This article will cover the first part of the first question above: Does the content consist of high quality problems? This leads one to ask: What constitutes a "high quality" problem?

Analyzing problems is tough, especially if you haven't worked with math since high school. Below is a list of pointers that parents can use:

1. Look carefully at the questions: Just because words dominate in a math question, it doesn't mean that it is a strong problem. A typical type of problem that a student will usually encounter in a textbook is a "word problem", where a student has just learned a new concept and has practiced it with numbers, then the same questions are asked, but words are added. Students are required to recognize the information in a sentence. This is the most basic type of problem. All the information is in the question, and given in a way that is familiar to the student. This type of question does not develop deep problem solving skills, nor does it force students to think differently: it gets the student to practice one skill.
2. Substituting values into an equation is NOT problem solving. It is only learning a procedure and practicing the procedure over and over again.
3. Algebra can be used to answer many problems, but good problems in grades 1 through 7 should be able to be solved without the use of algebra. Parents often want to use algebra to solve problems, and they will tend to teach their kids to do the same. When we get

- parents to problem solve, and tell them that they can't use algebra, they often find this challenging. Parents are forced to look for alternative solutions. It shows them the skills that students need to learn before learning algebra. Look for problems that can be solved without algebra.
4. Questions have to be ones that are thought-provoking. The way to approach the question may not be immediately obvious. Kids should have to think about it and figure out what skills they need to use, to "get into" the problem.
 5. A good problem forces the problem solver to approach an idea in a new or unexpected way.
 6. A good problem forces the student to be cautious and to think about the question carefully. It may appear easy, but it could require more insight than expected. There can be common wrong answers.
 7. A good problem is challenging, even if the skills it requires are not complex. The question is appropriate to the level of math the kids have studied, but presented in a challenging manner to force creative thinking.
 8. A good question requires students to bring in other ideas and the application of some basic knowledge that may need to be researched by the student independently.
 9. A good question may appear simple, but requires creative insight.
 10. For grades 5 and up, a good problem often involves drawing on a series of skills to arrive at one solution.

Resources for Parents

Wall Street Journal Article

Doing the Math to Find the Good Jobs

Mathematicians Land Top Spot in New Ranking of Best and Worst Occupations in the U.S

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123119236117055127.html>

Two Good Books

I highly recommend reading the following two books:

1. *Outliers: The Story of Success*, by Malcolm Gladwell (#1 bestselling author of *The Tipping Point* and *Blink*)
"There is a story that is usually told about extremely successful people, a story that focuses on intelligence and ambition. In *Outliers* Malcolm Gladwell argues that the true story of success is very different, and that if we want to understand how some people thrive, we should spend more time looking around them – at such things as their family, their birthplace, or even their birth date. The story of success is more complex – and a lot more interesting – than it initially appears." (From the cover.)
2. *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World*, by Don Tapscott (bestselling author of *Growing up Digital* and *Wikinomics*)
"The net generation has arrived. Are you ready for it? Chances are you know a person between the ages of 11 and 30. You've seen them doing five things at once: texting friends, downloading music, uploading videos, watching a movie on a two-inch screen, and doing who-knows-what on Facebook or MySpace. They're the first generation to have literally grown up digital – and they're part of a global cultural phenomenon that's here to stay. If you're a baby boomer or GenXer: This is your field guide." (From the cover.)

If you haven't read Malcolm's two other books, *The Tipping Point* and *Blink*, then I would highly recommend you do so. Malcolm is a brilliant person who has an insight into humans and why we do what we do, which is why his books are so thoroughly fascinating to read. *Kim Langen*

Something to Do...

An interesting, educational and fun-filled event is being organized by the students of the University of Toronto Engineering Department for students in Grades 1-8. It will be a one-day event on Saturday, February 28 and it will be FREE! If your children or students are interested in Science and Design, have a look at the links below for Designapalooza. This is a great chance for our kids to have fun and learn and it also gives everyone a chance to share what they know.

Please feel free to contact Bernardette for more information (berni_dudette@hotmail.com)
See the following page for basic details of the day.

DESIGNAPOLOOZA!

For Grades 1 to 8, this is an event full of design challenges like building a paper dome structure (a little bit like an igloo) and making slime, or making Rube Goldberg machines. For grades 5 to 8, here are some more complicated examples of a Rube Goldberg machine: <http://ca.youtube.com/watch?v=hP3AZZJmqol&feature=PlayList&p=E286FF9021C1BDFA&playnext=1&index=9>)

Saturday, February 28, 12:30pm to 4:00pm

Sandford Fleming Building, 10 King's College Road

PRE-REGISTRATION at www.prospective.engineering.utoronto.ca/explore/national.htm
<<http://www.prospective.engineering.utoronto.ca/explore/national.htm>>

Campus Happenings

Brampton

Afsana Reshmin, our grades 1 and 2 teacher, has just become engaged! Afsana and her fiancé Mahfuz will be married this summer. Congratulations!

Mebs Haji, Campus Owner - Brampton

Don Mills:

Congratulations to Nimo Hussein and husband Paul Gray upon the arrival of their first-born baby boy, Nasser, born on January 6th weighing 7.9 lbs and measuring 20 inches long.

Nimo Hussein is the administrator and co-owner of Spirit of Math Don Mills.



Markham East

Meet the Spirit of Math Markham East Campus Team

[from left] Wai Fong Chan (grade 4 teacher), Nana Dankwa (grade 6 teacher), Lisa Chiu (grade 2 teacher and campus admin), Veronica Gheorghiade (grade 7 & 8 teacher), Sandra Gibner (church admin), Anne Ison (church admin), Mohammad Rezai (grade 5 teacher and Principal), and Ramzan Khuwaja (grade 3 teacher and campus admin). Missing from this picture: Farah Khuwaja (grade 1 teacher).



Mississauga West and Oakville:

Mississauga West and Oakville are now offering Neuron Tickler workshops!

Neuron Ticklers are a great way for students to learn first-hand about some of the concepts covered at Spirit of Math. These one-hour math sessions are led by Spirit of Math teachers for students in their day-schools. Their purpose is to expose kids to problems that they wouldn't necessarily see in their schools and to give them an opportunity to see how well they can do with challenging problems. If you think this would benefit your school, please contact me for more information.

Salima Mussaji, Campus Owner and Principal Mississauga West and Oakville

North Toronto

On Thursday December 11th, over 25 parents at the North Toronto campus attended a parent workshop and information session.

Joshua Markham, Campus Director – North Toronto

Ottawa

Thank you to all parents for your support this this year. The first year of Spirit of Math Schools, Ottawa is a success because of you.

Jan-Erik Nyhuus, Campus Director - Ottawa

Richmond Hill

A testimonial from a grade 7 student at Richmond Hill: "One thing I really like about SMS is that it helps me a lot at my school. At my school I'm one of the smartest in math and when the teacher teaches something new it is easy for me because I might already have learned it in SMS and it is really helpful".

Becky Belzycki, Campus Director – Richmond Hill

Willowdale

A new grade 10 class has started on Thursday evenings. This class started at lesson 1 and is being accelerated.

Kim Langen, Campus Director - Willowdale

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Important News about Tuition Increases:

Effective immediately, some campuses will be increasing tuition fees for **new student registrations only**. This does not apply to those students who are already enrolled with Spirit of Math Schools. Please contact your campus for more details.

And then there's...

Cartoon Contest!!!!!!! Calling All Artists and Creative Thinkers!

Open to all current SMS students.

Create a cartoon based on a mathematical object or concept (1,2,3 or 4 frames).

All artwork and captions must be original.

OPEN TO: Group # 1 – any elementary school student
Group # 2 – any secondary school student

Winning entries will be published in:

- Ontario Mathematics Gazette starting June 2009 (and in the subsequent 4 issues)
- SMS 2009 - 2010 School Calendar
- SMS June Newsletter

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: Friday, March 20, 2009

SUBMIT ENTRIES as jpegs to: cartooncontest@spiritofmath.com

ENTRIES MUST INCLUDE:

- Student name
- Day School Grade
- Student Contact Information

Drill Books

Do you want to mark your child's drills at home, without having to figure out the answers yourself? Now 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

Teacher/Parent Drill Books - \$49.95 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

Others

Spirit of Math bags, pencil cases and gator clip magnets are available. Please view flyer online by visiting www.spiritofmath.com/flyer.

The Spirit of Math Competition Book is \$29.99 + GST and available from your campus. This book is a compilation of questions and answers from SMS Mathematics Competitions for Grades 1 to 4 from 1999 – 2000 and 2002 – 2005. It is a great reference and review for SMS students as they prepare for the upcoming competitions. Students who don't attend Spirit of Math also find this book a great resource for problem solving questions.

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