



# NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS

## OCTOBER 2008

### 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. 15 – 18)

**Christmas Holidays:** December 19 to January 4

**Grades 1 – 4 SMS Competitions:** February 23 to February 27

**Ontario SMS March Break:** March 13 to March 29

**Manitoba SMS Spring Break:** March 27 to April 6

**Grades 4 – 10 SMS Exams:** Lesson 33 (May 11 to 15 in Ontario, and May 5 & 7 in Manitoba)

**Grades 1 – 3 SMS Exams:** Lesson 37 (June 8 to 12 in Ontario, and June 2 & 4 in Manitoba)

[Contents](#)

### Students' Accomplishments

---

**Congratulations to the following students for their outstanding accomplishments:**



**Shannon and Brennan Wong, Grades 10 & 6** received a certificate of appreciation from the York Region School Board in June, 2008 for having raised over \$10,000 in the past year for Free the Children and Habitat for Humanity York Region. In



addition, Shannon also received 1st place in Canada for the Turning Points Essay Contest by the Learning Partnership and attended the awards ceremony at Hart House, U of T. Brennan placed 1st in the Air Pollution Solution Essay Contest for the City of Toronto by the Clean Air Partnership and was honoured at the awards ceremony at Exhibition Place.

**Jeffrey Lee, Grade 5**, received student's selection for Wings of Hope 2008. His poem will be published in the Wings of Hope book on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Wings of Hope is an undertaking by PrepSkills, Inc. to support Education Scholarships for Kids with Cancer.

**Jonathan Schneider**, a graduate of SMS, earned a Silver Medal this year at the International Mathematics Olympiad in Spain. This is one of the highest awards worldwide, for secondary school students.

[Contents](#)

---

## Kim's Korner

---

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

*"If you are not prepared to be wrong you will never come up with anything original."*

- Sir Ken Robinson: Do schools kill creativity?

Recently during an interview for a new student, the child's mother asked me what the ultimate goal of Spirit of Math was for the students. Did we want to produce a massive number of mathematicians, or is there another purpose? Good question! I wish more people would ask this. My answer: we want to develop students who are good thinkers and who can work with others; in other words, kids who are able to not only think "outside the box", but who can also think logically, with the ability to see the link between one idea and another. Ultimately we also want kids to appreciate the importance of others, and be able to work with them in a meaningful manner.

So what are we doing to get kids to become good thinkers, who will then become excellent decision makers and problem solvers, (and maybe even some mathematicians)? I believe that Sir Ken Robinson's quote at the beginning of this article, combined with a strong skill base, is the key of to the answer to this.

First, building a strong skill foundation gives kids something to work with. Mathematics is an ideal subject to sharpen logical skills, and conceptual thinking. Proponents for creative thinking often stress the creative, original thought more than the skill foundation and that only frustrates students if they don't have the proper background and tools to work with. A non-spiral curriculum, like the core curriculum for our grades 5 and up allows students the time to thoroughly build a solid foundation, and to test their knowledge by going deeper into the topic. Working with others in the classroom solidifies these skills as students are asked to justify their answers, and listen to the reasoning of others.

Second, giving students material that forces creative risk-taking linked with the safe opportunity for them to test and stretch their thinking, will get them to use original thought. Providing students hundreds of problem-solving questions a year does just that and during the process, students will be testing their reasoning and problem-solving skills. Sometimes they will be right, and other times, wrong, and that's okay, as long as they know how to fix it. They must have the confidence to take the risk of being wrong. Our grade 9 "Cerebral Contortions" were given that name because the questions are designed to get kids to use their imagination and think creatively – to twist their brains in ways that they aren't used to. These questions are VERY tough, however, the emphasis is not on building skills but rather on how to use their skills. (They have been taught the skills in Spirit of Math). The purpose is to creatively apply those skills. To do this, kids must have the confidence to take a chance to be wrong, and know that it isn't just getting the answer that is most important: it is the process itself. A proper process will allow a person to get the right answer over and over again. Working with others also opens their minds to new ideas.

At home, please remember that giving your kids the final answers to homework questions is easy to do, but doesn't provide the most sustainable results in the end. Discussing the questions and getting ideas from your kids enables you to see how they are thinking, and therefore, enables you to help your kids think well, processing their information in such a way that will allow them to be better problem solvers. Let them struggle a bit, and take chances. It is okay that they may get the wrong answer along the process, as long as they understand why, and can correct it.

[Contents](#)

## Resources for Parents

---

### Internet Sites

With the massive expansion of the Internet, and the changing use of the Internet, we are now experiencing an explosion of information from which we can use to educate ourselves. One of my current favourite places to learn is the site: [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com). It has hundreds (maybe thousands) of speeches by very successful people. Below are two links to two different talks. (The second is a fun one.) You will have to go online to get these. KL

[http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_says\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity.html](http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html)

[http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/arthur\\_benjamin\\_does\\_mathemagic.html](http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/arthur_benjamin_does_mathemagic.html)

## News Article

The following is a link to an interesting article about number sense and math learning. I have included the first couple of paragraphs, but the entire article is worth reading. KL

### ***How One's 'Number Sense' Helps With Mathematics***

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/07/AR2008090701899.html>

By Rob Stein, Washington Post Staff Writer, Monday, September 8, 2008; Page A06

*Scientists have for the first time established a link between a primitive, intuitive sense of numbers and performance in math classes, a finding that could lead to new ways to help children struggling in school. A study involving 64 14-year-olds found that the teenagers who did well on a test that measured their "number sense" were much more likely to have gotten good grades in math classes.*

*"We discovered that a child's ability to quickly estimate how many things are in a group significantly predicts their performance in school mathematics all the way back to kindergarten," said Justin Halberda, an assistant professor of psychological and brain sciences at Johns Hopkins University who led the research, published online yesterday by the journal Nature. "It was very surprising."*

[Contents](#)

## Campus Happenings

---

### Spirit of Math Conference

On Saturday, September 20th, SMS staff from around Toronto, Ottawa and Winnipeg gathered in Toronto for the Spirit of Math Conference. This day has become an annual event where campus owners, principals, teachers and other staff from all of our campuses meet to share ideas, learn new skills, and build new relationships. Parents were also invited this year and those who attended the morning sessions said that they learned so much, and had a wonderful time meeting others with the same focus they had. This year, in the afternoon, we were honoured to have as our Guest Speaker, Jonathan Schneider, who spoke about how he advanced to a world class level in the International Mathematics Olympiad.

### High Park:



Spirit of Math High Park had a successful Grand Opening, on September 16<sup>th</sup>. In attendance were our students; parents; City Councilor Bill Saundercook; Member of the Order of Canada, Dr. Rita Cox; Member of Parliament Ms. Peggy Nash; and SMS President and co-founder Kim Langen.

*Picture on left: Dr. Rita Cox cuts the ribbon, officially opening the High Park Campus while honoured guests and students look on.*

### Oakville:

Spirit of Math Oakville campus held their Grand Opening event on September 25<sup>th</sup>. This exciting event was attended by parents, students, the Mayor of Oakville Rob Burton, Oakville Councilors Mary Chapin and Roger Lapworth, and SMS president Kim Langen. Check our website often for open house events in Oakville.

*Picture on the right: Salima Mussaji, Oakville Owner, and Kim Langen, SMS Co-Founder, cutting the cake.*



## Ottawa

This year Spirit of Math opened two new campuses in the Capital Region; one in Kanata and one in downtown Ottawa. The Grand Opening celebration will take place on Monday, October 27th at the Boys and Girls Club. Please tell all your Ottawa friends about this exciting event!

## Toronto

We wish to offer many thanks to our parents. You continue to go to great lengths to support your children's education at Spirit of Math – getting them to their classes, helping with homework, staying in communication with their teachers, and calling us when you have questions or concerns about the program. Gina Lim, our office manager provides terrific assistance for general information and registration, and is happy to take your calls.

We are very gratified with the growth we have seen in our campuses this year, and would like to thank you for continuing to support our program, and for the referrals that you give to friends and family. We will continue to work hard to ensure that your belief in our program is well-placed.

## Private School Exam Preparation Day and Parent Information Session

On Friday, September 26th, we held our annual Private School Exam Preparation Day. Our academic staff spent the day at our Willowdale head office working with our students and parents. Many of our Grade 6 students participated in a full day of preparations for upcoming entrance exams to several private schools in the area, including University of Toronto Schools. Good luck to each of you as you continue to prepare for this important day! If you have any questions about the material that was presented on the 26th, please feel free to ask your teacher for help before or after your regular class.

Each year, all the proceeds from this event are donated to the Gwen Ledger Memorial Fund. This fund assists those who attend the Out of the Cold/Drop-In Centre to receive the education they need to get a job. The memorial fund, which has been in place for 7 years, has helped young men and women enrol in, and complete academic training. These men and women have been successfully hired or promoted because of this opportunity and they credit the Gwen Ledger Memorial Fund for changing their lives. In addition, the foundation is now helping out students who have demonstrated the ability to go on to college or university, but don't have the financial means to attend due to adverse family situations. This year \$3250 was donated to the program.

[Contents](#)

## And then there's...

---

### Drill Books

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

[Contents](#)