



NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS

OCTOBER 2009

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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 25

Ontario SMS March Break: March 5 to March 21

Manitoba SMS Spring Break: March 21 to March 28

New Jersey SMS Spring Break: March 24 to April 4

Grades 4 – 10 SMS Exams: Lesson 33 (May 10 to 13 in Ontario, and May 3 to 6 in Manitoba and New Jersey)

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

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Kim's Korner

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

Just the other day I did a mini seminar for some parents who did not grow up in Canada. They asked me to go over some “do’s and don’ts” of parent-teacher interviews. A couple of parents who were not new to Canada also attended and they said that they learned quite a bit too, so I thought I would share these “To-Do” ideas with you.

The Parent-Teacher Interview – To Do’s

1. Immediately set the atmosphere as a professional one, by shaking the teacher’s hand, and introducing yourself with your first name, last name and your child’s name. Tell your child’s teacher that it is a pleasure to meet them.
2. Come prepared:
 - a. Know what your child has done so far this year **before** the interview:
 - i. specific marks on assignments
 - ii. names of classmates who he/she has made friends with
 - iii. what textbooks/workbooks they are using and how far they have worked through in the books
 - iv. whether or not they have had problems with the work: too hard/too easy
 - b. Read up on the curriculum (textbooks, workbooks, other) that is being used – the Internet has reviews on most of the programs out there. If you go into the

- interview with the ability to comment on even one of the programs, that will impress a teacher. The teacher will be more careful with what they say to you, and how they interact with your child.
- c. Bring some of the work that your child has done and maybe even their day planner. Teachers like to see a parent who is really on top of their child's work.
 - d. If there are any issues such as the way that the teacher is marking, dealing with their students, their expectations, etc. you should nicely indicate that you have a concern and set up a date to meet with the teacher outside of interview time. (Interviews are generally too short a time to get into specifics and a meeting to address a specific issue should be at least ½ an hour, with follow-up communication.)
3. This interview isn't just about you finding out how your child is doing: it is also about you getting to know their teacher. Ask the teacher about themselves:
 - i. Their educational background: what did they specialize in?
 - ii. Are there any special units or topics that they particularly like?
 - iii. How long have they been at this school?
 - iv. How long have they been teaching?
 - v. How long have they been teaching this grade?
 4. Be positive and supportive of the teacher.
 5. If you don't agree with the teacher, make sure that they know that you are trying to understand them, but tell them nicely that you don't agree and give them specific reasons why.
 6. Ask the teacher what the best way is in which **you** can support them.

Teachers will generally pay closer attention to those students whose parents are in regular communication with the teacher, especially when the teacher feels that the parent knows what they are talking about.

Other:

1. Keep in touch with other parents of students in the same class.
2. Be prepared to be involved in the school even for just one event.
3. Try to go to at least one field trip.
4. Be upbeat and positive with the school staff: they appreciate this. As the saying goes: you catch more flies with honey. [Contents](#)

Resources for Parents

SENG: Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted

SENG has established itself as a strong leader in the emotional needs of gifted children particularly with their webinars. If you haven't visited their site, then you may want to as there are many resources available and they are creating more webinars. www.sengifted.org

Good Ted Talks

If you are a fan of Ted Talks, then you may have seen this video. If not, then you might like to watch it.

http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/bill_gates_unplugged.html

Announcement from The Fields Institute in Toronto

Mathematics Circles are held at the Fields Institute on Saturday afternoons starting on September 19, 2009, 1-3 p.m. Location is the Fields Institute, 222 College Street. All high school students are welcome. There are about 50 students participating on a weekly basis. There will be 10 to 12 sessions in the fall term (late September to early December) and another 10-12 in the winter spring term, ending by late May. http://www.fields.utoronto.ca/programs/mathed/math_circles/

Math Circles have been active in Toronto for several years. Some of the students who attend simply like to work on challenging problems, many others use the weekly circles meetings to help them prepare for competitive mathematics contests, either individually or as members of a team. Some of the past participants in this program have gone on to represent Canada at the International

Mathematical Olympiad, the most elite and prestigious of these competitions. A generous grant from Angoss Software Corporation will allow some of the participating students to take part in competitions outside of Toronto. Refreshments will be serviced at a break in the afternoon.

Math circles are free to attend and no pre-registration is required. Join us each Saturday from 1-3 pm at the Fields Institute for interactive mathematics sessions led by our esteemed leaders.

Ontario Government Celebrates Excellence in Education

September 30, 2009

Nominations are now open for this year's Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. View full text at:

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2009/09/nominations-open-for-top-educators-in-ontario.html>

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Campus Happenings

Private School Entrance Exam Preparation Day and Parent Information Session

On Friday, September 25th, the Willowdale campus held our annual Private School Entrance Exam Preparation Day. Our academic staff spent the day at Newtonbrook United Church working with our students and parents. Many of our Grade 6 students participated in this 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 25th, 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 8 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 \$2,700 was donated to the program.

Spirit of Math Conference

On Saturday, October 17th, SMS staff from around Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg and New Jersey will be gathering 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.

NEW CAMPUS OPENINGS

Central Toronto

We are thrilled to announce that there is a new campus in Central Toronto. The new owners are Ted and Heidi Winick. Many of you may know this couple from your associations with any Chess Institute of Canada tournaments. Although their classes have started, their **Grand Opening** event is being held on October 12th from 4:30pm to 7:30pm at their location: The Howlett Academy, 15 Madison Ave., Toronto.

Edison New Jersey:

Spirit of Math America ran its first summer program this last August in Edison New Jersey. We had lots of fun trying to beat our drill scores from the day before, and answering all the creative problems. The picture on the right was taken on the final day. We would like to thank the parents for all their support.



If you know of anyone in Edison who could benefit from this program please let us know. Our campus location is the Jewish Community Center of Middlesex (JCC), 1775 Oak Tree Road, and our telephone number is 732-983-9960.

OTHER CAMPUSES

Brampton

We wish to thank all parents for your continued support and encouragement to help in your child's education. From finding any means to get them to class on time, helping them with homework, and constantly communicating with teachers. We also want to thank you for your continued support of the campus and for referring your friends and family.

Mississauga West and Oakville

Thank you to all parents and friends who have spread the word regarding the Spirit of Math program. This year both campuses have seen significant growth and its due to your dedication and support through out the years. This year will also be filled with great successes and accomplishments. On behalf of the teachers and myself, we look forward to working with your children this year and appreciate your commitment to the program. Thank you!!

Willowdale, North Toronto, High Park, Richmond Hill, Winnipeg and Ottawa

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.

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.

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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

Sundays at the Willowdale Main Office

Research suggests that early childhood music plays a substantive role in mathematical readiness. Families Makin' Music, is now renting space at the Willowdale Main Office on Sundays. It is Toronto's 1st integrated-age Music & Movement program for kids (birth – 5 years), accompanied by parents, grandparents or aunts/uncles sing, move, dance, laugh & learn real musical concepts in a big fun way.

For more information, please call Helen Bauer at 416-225-5655 or visit their website at www.familiesmakinmusic.com.

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