

February 24, 2016

Dear Math Challenge Coach,

Thank you for supporting Math Challenge 2016! We are anticipating another high-energy day filled with interesting mathematics. This year, the contest will be held in the Arts Building of the University of Saskatchewan on March 12th, 2016.

We are excited to build on the growing momentum of the challenge, and are introducing some **major changes** for the 2016 version. These changes are based on the options available to Saskatchewan students throughout the province and on the opinions and feedback of numerous coaches, executive members, and mathematics teachers province-wide, and are in accordance with our vision of encouraging students to pursue excellence in mathematics through an engagement with compelling and challenging problems in collaboration with peers.

The Saskatchewan Mathematics Teachers' Society exists to provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with mathematics to both teachers and students. In doing so, we have always offered the Saskatchewan Math Challenge as a capstone event for our students. We are very proud of the history of the Math Challenge, and we know that many of you have played an important role.

The more things change, the more things stay the same. The day will still have some familiar elements, but will also take on a new flavour. You are still required to group your students into teams of three to five members. These teams will be enrolled in one of two levels: the grade 7-8 level or the grade 9-10 level. Given the new structure of the day, it is very important that we solidify teams prior to the morning of the Math Challenge. If students (or coaches) begin to shift their teams around, there may be confusion with regards to in which room and at what time they are participating in certain portions of the Challenge.

The day will be divided into four 1-hour blocks. Grade 9-10 students will write two group exams, work as teams on a longer problem, and have the opportunity to present some of their solutions to a panel of judges and to their peers. Grade 7-8 students will write a single group exam, participate in two blocks of stations, and engage in a mathematics activity. Lunch is still included in the registration cost, and will be provided by Marquis Hall on campus. However, there will *no* individual exams this year. While keeping the spirit of *challenge*, the individual contest has run its course. There are multiple other options within the province to participate in such an exam. The focus of the Math Challenge, however, will be on collaborative group exams.

As noted above, Grade 9-10 students will be given a block of time to work as teams on a longer problem, and will then have the opportunity to present their solution to a panel of judges. Teams may also choose to present, to an audience of their peers, a solution to a problem from a group exam that they are particularly proud of. At the closing of the Math Challenge, the judges will announce and award the teams with the most ingenious / creative solutions as assessed by the panel members and their peers, respectively. We are excited to introduce this new aspect of the Math Challenge, as it will give participants the opportunity to communicate mathematically in a new way, to make their creative ideas public, and to connect with other teams.

The group exams will be mailed out to the schools after the Challenge, with the final results attached. Coaches will then have the opportunity to discuss solutions with their students. No grading of exams will occur on the day of the Math Challenge. This also means that the awards ceremony for achievement on the group exams will not take place. Students will receive a grade for their work, but will not be ranked against their peers. However, students will still have opportunities to be rewarded for their work in other ways: as explained above, Grade 9-10 students will have the opportunity to win a prize for their presentation of a creative solution to a given problem; Grade 7-8 students will have the opportunity to win a prize during the mathematics activity, which will involve some friendly competition with their peers.

We will be asking you to submit the number of teams at each level and the names of your team members **before** you arrive so that we can divide the teams evenly throughout the activities.

Thank you for your continued support of the Math Challenge!

Sincerely,
The Math Challenge Team

 Saskatchewan
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