

2019 Ted Lewis SNAP Math Fair Workshop

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1 Introduction

The SNAP Foundation is a non-profit organization whose mandate is to encourage the development of mathematics learning resources at the classroom level with very little retraining of the teaching staff, with very flexible budgets, and by utilizing the energy and natural curiosity of the students themselves.

The main theme of the BIRS workshop was, “What is a SNAP math fair and how to organize a math fair in your classroom”. The presenters mostly consisted of teachers/educators who shared their math fair experiences and success stories. We also had talks about some current research that is taking place in Alberta (University of Alberta and University of Calgary).

This year, two math educators (Maria Omar and Trent Worthington) who hosted their first math fairs in the past two years were able to share their experiences. Maria Omar helps to coordinate a homeschool network called SHiNE (Society for the Homeschool Network of Edmonton). It was great to see how Math Fair could be implemented with this group of very diverse students. Both teachers had marvelous comments about SNAP Math Fairs and are now promoting the idea to other teachers in their respective communities.

2 2019 Workshop Highlights

We saw a myriad of presentation topics and presentation styles, the only constant was the passion. Two of the main ideas taken from the workshop are the following:

1. Teaching, especially in elementary years, is a very complicated and complex job. Teachers are obliged with the overwhelming task of educating our youth in several curricular subjects, fine and gross motor skills, dealing with emotions, and the list is enormous. In fact the job of a teacher is getting more complex every year and this, as well as increasing classroom sizes and diverse students clearly contributes to the high attrition rate of the profession.

There is an enormous amount of resource material (in math alone) available for teachers and they do not have enough time to sift through it. It sounds like teachers, especially ones that are early in their careers, would appreciate a primary detailed resource that could guide them through the programs of studies.

2. Play is vital for young learners, this is a big selling point of Math Fair. Another benefit is the cross-curricular opportunities that Math Fair can promote. Thirdly Math Fair promotes opportunities for students to learn and practice communication skills - which seem to be diminishing in our youth.

3 2019 Workshop Feedback

"I thought the workshop was very good. Some of the presentations covered material that was broader than I expected and did not deal specifically with math fairs. It showed what some people were interested in - namely what ways of presenting or teaching math might help teachers."

"I appreciated Trent's presentation and conversations about how incredibly useful he thought math fairs were. They tied math fairs in with the rest of the curriculum, and they came directly from a school teacher."