



## Math Celebration Fair An End-of-the-year Celebration of Learning!



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How many times have you felt that Math suffers from a lack of “fun stuff?” The Social Studies and Science teachers get all the field trips; Math deserves a place in the “awesome file” too. So I decided to celebrate Math in a big way. This is an ongoing project designed to span an entire school year. The great news, however, is that it is easy, fun, and challenging for your students.

### **Audience:**

Math Celebration is designed for top-level students in fourth through eighth grades.



### **How it Works:**

Math Celebration originated as an end-of-the-marking-period strategy. I asked students to create a game (either individually or working in groups) based on the math concept which was taught during that marking period.



These math games quickly became a part of a behavior modification program. In my Math classes, we have Fun Fridays. Since the class typically has thirty students vs. one of Me (yikes!), if they make it through the week with fewer than five “checks” on the board for unruliness, they get to have Fun Friday. During this time, we only play or create math games. It’s a day off from lectures and drills, and it also gives me time to watch students creating and solving problems.

During these Fun Fridays, I realized that we could take the students’ game creating a step further by combining Math with Language Arts. (Isn’t that every teacher’s dream?) Thus, the Math Celebration Fair was conceived.



Children create their games during the first three marking periods based on the material they are learning. They present their games to the class for a grade and for their peers to test, critique, and improve. The real fun begins at the end of the third marking period. At that point, each child chooses a game he or she has created (or begins a new one) and begins developing a well-rounded campaign to advertise, improve, and commercialize that product. The finished games, promotional materials, and related products are all presented in a Math Celebration Fair at the end of the year. During this Fair, I have several outside judges come in to compare and judge the various games. Prizes go to the winners!

## How to Set up Your Math Celebration

1. **Choose a date for your Fair.** (Students should have at least two months for preparation.) Last year, my Fair was assigned March 18<sup>th</sup>, and the Fair date was May 19<sup>th</sup>.

A. Reminder: Check the school and district calendars for conflicting dates.

B. Sign up for the largest room your school has to offer.

2. **Choose four judges.** Outside judges help in several ways. They are impartial, they are immune to parental pressure, and they provide children with a chance to experience interview situations. The judges' scores will help form each student's grade at the end of the marking period.

A. Each judge receives a sheet outlining judging criteria.

B. Our judges are typically district personnel who are not directly involved with the class. The most recent crop included a math specialist, a math supervisor, a computer teacher, and a former principal.

3. **Inform the parents.** I send parents a letter at the outset, informing them of the project's magnitude. Parents sign the bottom half of the letter and return it, keeping the top half as a guide for the project.

4. **Contact sister schools in your district (or nearby).** This is where the fun begins. I invited three other top 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes to come to our fair and try our games. This meant that 60 to 90 other students were trying out games and making their own evaluations. Although their votes didn't count for the trophies, it was interesting to see how their reactions matched those of the judges. (There's a survey and graphing lesson in there!)

5. **Contact the media.** Once the dates were lined up, I called local TV and newspapers and invited them to come to the fair. This might seem a bit much, but the kids love the attention, and several of our local reporters really *like* to do this if they have the time. I also sent them copies of the background information on the fair. I also made a round of reminder calls closer to the date of the fair.

6. **Continue with Fun Fridays.** As the day of the fair approaches, one day a week may not be enough time. Be flexible and realistic. You may have to give up two days a week as the fair draws closer. Make sure your class is using time efficiently. Regular classroom updates should be required. Conferencing will help everyone; children will see if their directions are clear and if their ideas are "do-able" by explaining them to the teacher.

7. **Order trophies or plaques.** My students are allowed to work with a partner, so I ordered two trophies for Grand Prize and Runner-Up. Prizes are a great incentive; my only regret was not having something for everyone. A suggestion: have a Certificate of Participation or a ribbon for each participant. If cost is an issue, see if the school PTO might help out.

## A Letter to Parents

### Announcing: A Math Celebration Fair

**From:**

**Purpose: To celebrate a year of learning and creating!!!**

Each marking period our class was required to create a game in conjunction with the math topics we learned. The class came up with unique and challenging games. To celebrate and congratulate the class, we are having a "Math Celebration Fair."

Judges have been invited to appraise and award top honors to our class. Fifth grade classes from other elementary schools have been invited to play and vote for their favorite game.

The class will use their Fun Fridays to upgrade and create advertisements for the game they will use for the fair. Your child will be developing an advertising campaign: banners, posters, videos, songs, pamphlets, etc. to create unique ways to draw attention to their project. This project is a celebration, an exciting way for students to express themselves and their love of math.

Parents are welcome to help and attend the fair. I could use some help when "crunch time" arrives, so please let me know if you can assist.

Thank you for your help and support,

## Math Fair Setup Checklist

*A little organization and advance planning will help you breathe more easily on the day of the fair!*

### One week before the fair...

Send home a reminder note to be signed and returned. I count this as a homework assignment so I'll be sure to get it back.

Contact the newspapers and TV stations again.

Double-check to be sure the meeting room is still booked for you.

Make sure the children are ready. I have all games due two days before the fair. That allows one day for "Oh, I forgot it..." and one day for practice, review, and setup.

Measure the table space for the displays, so that students can have signs, table coverings, and banners to the right size.

Make sure that judges' sheets (four per game) and ballots (for students from visiting schools) are ready to run off.

### The day before...

Bring the children down to set up. Tables should be out, with help from your friendly custodian.

Have students put all posters, brochures, and finished products in place, ready to go.

Remember that some children will create videos to promote their games. Extension cords and plugs are important!

Give each student or group a large sign with their assigned number on it for easy viewing by judges and visiting students.

## Math Fair Setup Checklist - *continued*

### The day of the Fair...

Students make last-minute adjustments during first recess.

Allow judges 30 minutes to roam and examine the games without energized students to distract them. (Our judges arrived at 12:45 PM.) This will give judges time to formulate questions and perhaps notice a really great idea among all the glitz.

Our students were at their stations by 1:15. They skipped second recess to get “warmed up.” Visiting students arrived at about the same time, and stayed until 2:30. Visitors got to try out the games and vote for their favorite three entries. These votes don’t count, but they make for interesting comparisons. Visitors leave before the final results are announced. I e-mailed the results and a thank you to the visiting teachers.

We collected the judges’ votes at about 2:45, and announced the winners as soon as the tabulations were complete. (Using four judges, I chose to throw out the lowest score on each game and average the other three. Your strategy may vary.)

Present the trophies!!

Clean up and tear down. Students should help with this, but it can be tough. Plan to tackle the last of it the next morning!



# Math Celebration Fair

## Judge's Grading Sheet

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_  
School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student(s) name: \_\_\_\_\_

Game's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Judges, please scale each category from 1 to 10, where 10 is the highest score. Total your points and put the final score at the bottom of the paper.

1. Originality \_\_\_\_\_ (Have you ever heard of this idea before?)

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Organization \_\_\_\_\_ (Are the directions clear and easily understood?)

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Content \_\_\_\_\_ (Does the game help teach one or more mathematical concepts?)

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Promotion \_\_\_\_\_ (Are the posters, brochure, etc. cleverly done?)

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Eye appeal \_\_\_\_\_ (Are the game and related materials attractive and eye-catching?)

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Presentation \_\_\_\_\_ (When asked to explain and demonstrate the game, did the student(s) do so easily and comfortably?)

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Excitement \_\_\_\_\_ (Will the game retain players' interest even after repeated playing?)

Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_