



Mathcounts students at First Colony and Fort Settlement middle schools have won four of the last five national titles



Equation for Success

First Colony and Fort Settlement Middle School Students Compete at National Level in Math Competitions

Written by Jennifer Heath Photography by Jen Petty

Most people tend to think that complex math is only good for high school math classes, but the Mathcounts students at First Colony and Fort Settlement middle schools know better. This local Mathcounts team has won four of the last five national Mathcounts titles and they are reaching new heights in American math education. The team's coach, Jeff Boyd, proudly points out, "We've become one of the top contest math programs in the country." He adds, "These kids are going to narrow the gap between us and the rest of the world in mathematics education."

Counting on Hard Work

The Mathcounts program is a nationwide program that has been around for 27 years. The goal of the program is to engage and excite middle school students about math. Boyd has been teaching math for 38 years, 18 of which he has also spent helping with Mathcounts. He has seen the program go from an after-school club to an academic elective course with 75-115 kids participating each year. Students study everything from algebra to geometry and take tests during the competition.

Boyd and his students attend anywhere from 16-20 competitions every year, with contests held locally, regionally, and at the state and national levels. Besides winning five consecutive Texas titles and the national competition four of the last five years, Boyd's team has also won the Texas Math and Science Coaches Association competition the last nine years. When asked about the secret of the program's success, Boyd says that his kids put in 12-14 hours a week working on math. "[The students] just work harder than anyone else," he says.

With both the students' and Boyd's dedication, the team brings home more than 1,000 trophies every year and has even been recognized by the U.S. President in the Oval Office several times. The team is eagerly gearing up for the national competition in Orlando, FL in May. "They have a great tradition of excellence to live up to and they make every effort to do so," Boyd says.

Calculating the Benefits

While Mathcounts has helped generate a number of Sugar Land math superstars, the program has helped many other students find their appreciation for math. "I think they just love math, and I think they get that desire from the enthusiasm of their parents and teachers that continue to stress the importance of math education in today's world," says Boyd. Sharon



Joseph Lee concentrates during a practice test



Mathcounts students like Aanandh Chandrasekar study math 12-14 hours every week



Coach Jeff Boyd supervises a timed test



Angeline Rao enjoys a Mathcounts practice session



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Shen, the mother of math whiz Bobby Shen, proudly recounts the benefits of the Mathcounts program in his life. “[Mathcounts] has helped Bobby discover his math talent,” she says. She also believes his strong foundation in math will give him an edge in the job market later on.

Just as Mathcounts offers something valuable to students of all skill levels, it also serves as a valuable place for students to connect with each other. Sharon Shen relates just how important the friendships are to these students, including her son, Bobby. “It serves as a support network for Bobby, and he never feels lonely in a world where most people do not care about math any longer.”

These Sugar Land math whizzes are excellent examples of students achieving great things with the help of a great coach, who believes they will someday be leaders in the many job fields that rely on a strong math background. They serve as an inspiration and a great reminder that all things are possible if you work diligently to reach your goals and never doubt yourself. **SLM**

KATHERINE GOLDBERG is a freelance writer and Sugar Land newcomer who loves learning and writing about her new hometown.



Adding up the Awards

Achievements Earned by Fort Settlement and First Colony Mathcounts Students

2009

- Kevin Chen wins first place on a team of three at the Siemens Math and Science Competition, after solving a 30-year-old math problem. The team’s solution is now being use in internet applications and to help improve international trade routes.

2008

- Bobby Shen and Lily Shen tie for the individual championship at the World Mathematics Competition.

2007

- Bobby Shen competes on the U.S. team at the World Mathematics Competition, earning the award for the best non-Asian team.
- Kevin Chen wins individual national championship and master’s round

2006

- The team boasts seven individual state champions, team titles for each grade, and two national champions, Kevin Lin and Jeffrey Chan, who both earned perfect scores.

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