

# MATHFEST FACT Sheet

## What is the MathFest Initiative and why was it created?

MathFest was created in June 2001 by a group of elementary educators who came together to discuss the merits of creating an extended math initiative that could motivate students, parents, and teachers to raise the standards and expectations in math.

The idea of using competition to foster achievement is not new; however, traditional attempts have been limited to sports programs or encouraged for students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and higher. Many parents and educators worry about pressuring children with competitive expectations. Throughout the country, there have even been movements in some competitive programs to eliminate the “You’ve gotta-win-the-trophy” feeling. Experiments have been conducted where the competitive programs have been eliminated, but the results have created a backlash effect. The United States Tennis Association (USTA), for example, dropped its national youth competitions based on concerns about the value of competition for younger players only to discover a distinct shortage of competitors who could compete with challengers from other countries. It is no secret that our students are losing ground in math and science, thus we have to find creative ways to re-ignite the desire and commitment of our students to compete in math and science. The goal of MathFest is to motivate and push stakeholders to prepare our students to compete by allowing them to participate in the math events that will peak their interest, excite their desire and light a passion for math that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

## Which groups of students does the program serve?

MathFest serves students in grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>. Students may be public, private, or home schooled.

## How does the program work?

Each student receives a dry erase marker, board, scratch paper, and tickets. The problems will be given to the students on sheets called math script. All students will work the same problem during a specified time limit; however students are paired by grade. The students will solve the specified problem within a given time frame and the answer will be written on his/her dry erase board. Each time a student answers incorrectly he/she will surrender one of their tickets. The competition will continue until there is only one student remaining. The level of difficulty of the work may exceed the current grade level expectations. The top 15 students from each grade level will receive MathFest Medals and the Top Student will receive a trophy.

## When has/will the program be conducted and where?

The MathFest program has been conducted for five years beginning in 2004. Our program has served thousands of students in multiple states. Our largest group to compete was over 7,200 students who competed in Atlanta.

## What is the future outlook?

To acquire the funding to expand to 20 states for school year 2009-2010 and conduct the first national championship by summer 2010.

*This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting NSIA programs. For additional information, please contact us at 404 391-0249 or visit our website at [mathfestcompetition.com](http://mathfestcompetition.com)*