

Somerset PTSA Math Adventure Nights Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What is Somerset PTSA Math Adventure Night?

Somerset PTSA Math Adventure Nights are fun themed team-based non-competitive events where teams solve sheets of math problems, use these answers to decipher a clue, and then use the clue to complete an action at a station to release their next problem set. For example, in The Chocolate Factory event, when the Oompa Loompas went on vacation, Willy Wonka asked the students to help keep the factory running. In one problem/puzzle, each page of numbers was turned into a letter; putting the letters together made a word; that word was the clue used at the station to retrieve a key piece of candy that then could be shown to get the next problem set/puzzle.

2. What is a Math Adventure team?

A team consists of students (ideally 4, 3-5 OK) of the same math level, a parent coach, and a volunteer 7th grade or older. The coach remains with the team during the entire event. The volunteer is assigned to a station to assist with running the event. Volunteer roles include checking people in to the event and stations, acting in a station, directing event flow, answering questions, and clean-up (limited number of spots). Each team must have its own coach and own volunteer for each event.

3. How do I get on a team?

Team formation is the responsibility of participants. Teams generally have 4 students of about even math ability as they all must play at the same level. Teams of 3 or 5 students are OK. Students often ask their friends to be on the same team. If you are new to the school, have your child ask his/her classmates and friends to see if they want to do Math Adventure, or know of a team that has room. You can give your child a note to give to the other parents if you do not have access to directory information yet (you need to join the PTSA to get a copy). Although you can let the registration coordinator know you are looking for a team, there is no guarantee that we have a way to help or place you unless someone else also contacts us, so we highly recommend you continue looking for a team on your own.

4. Why are teams of 4 students recommended?

Teams of 4 are recommended because each problem set has 4 pages. This gives each child something to work on. Teams of 5 manage often by having students take turns "leading" a problem set/puzzle by reading the directions, keeping the team on task or helping one team member, deciphering the clue and reading the map to find the station to get the next problem set. Teams of 3 manage by having the fastest student do the extra sheet or relying on the coach. Note, there is no particular time limit to each problem set, although the event does end after 2 hours. If not all problem sets are completed (there are usually 4), that is OK.

5. What if my team has more than 5 members?

You can all train together (if you train), but register as two (or more) teams for the event.

6. What if my team has fewer than 3 members?

Teams must have at least 3 members. If you have fewer than 3 members, we cannot guarantee you a spot, or you may be combined with other students during the event.

7. Can non-Somerset students be on a team?

Priority is given to Somerset teams (Somerset students and Somerset Staff's students). Teams with a mix of Somerset students and others will also be considered on a space available basis, with preference given to those with more Somerset students.

8. Does my team need to prepare?

Teams range in the amount of preparation -- some meet only at the event, others meet weekly or monthly. Some teams follow a plan such as using the Singapore Math workbooks while others use a game-based approach. Teams, especially older teams, may also want to practice communication and leadership skills such as who will read the instructions for each problem set/puzzle. Somerset PTSA does NOT provide materials for training beyond an introductory meeting and an opportunity to check out math based games at the PTSA Family Game Nights. It is recommended that as you form your team, all the parents and students are in agreement as to the approach you want to take -- if you want just to do the event, you may not be a good match on a team that intends to train weekly and enter other competitions. Sample problems from past events can be found at MathAdventure.org under the home tab. Training materials, schedules, and locations are the responsibility and discretion of each team.

9. What level is my team?

Levels 1-6 are offered, corresponding roughly to grade levels. For the most part, teams participate in the level of their math grade level (e.g. third grade math does level 3). Some teams play up for additional challenge and some choose a level down to keep the emphasis on having fun. Please be aware that in the event atmosphere, many kids are excited or distracted to the extent that they lose speed or memory with even basic math skills. In addition, Math Adventure may offer an "A" and a "B" -- these correspond roughly to first and second semesters of math. If you use the Singapore books as a guide, there levels A & B as well. If you are interested in trying a different level, Singapore Math offers a placement test on their website: http://www.singaporemath.com/Placement_Test_s/86.htm. If a student scores above 80% on a level, that may indicate the next level up is needed. Additionally, sample problems from past events can be found at MathAdventure.org under the home tab. Please indicate the level of your team on the registration form.

10. Why is Singapore Math referenced?

Singapore Math is mentioned because when Math Adventure was developed in mid 2000s by the Somerset PTSA, the Bellevue School District was using a math curriculum that many felt did not emphasize enough basic math skills. Families began using the Singapore Math books and creating these events for students as a capstone to their math training. As such, many of the events use the content of the Singapore Math levels as the guide for the material used in the problem sets/puzzles. Teams are not expected to use Singapore Math nor is it endorsed by the Somerset PTSA. See #8 above "Does my team need to prepare?" for more information. It is up to each team if students will train, and if so, how to do so and with what materials.

11. What does the coach do at the event?

The coach is responsible for the team members during the event. Beyond that, s/he may guide or assist the students as much or as little as needed or agreed upon. Again, some team members may need a little extra help or reminding of math principles; other teams may be using this as a practice event for one where no coaching is allowed. One coach per team -- you cannot coach more than one team at the event. The coach must stay with the team members throughout the event.

12. What does the team volunteer do at the event?

The volunteer is assigned to a station to assist with running the event. Volunteer roles include checking people in to the event and stations, acting in a station, directing event flow, answering questions, and clean-up. Volunteers should plan to arrive an hour before the event and stay for the whole event. Many of the jobs involve role-playing (acting) at stations where students must the

answers from their math puzzles to do something to earn their next problem set/puzzle. There are a limited number of clean-up spots so do not count on that as being available; clean-up is at the end of the event until 9pm.

13. Where do students solve the problem sets/puzzles?

Generally teams have a table or half-table in the cafeteria area. Teams surrounding yours will be a different level to minimize overhearing answers. They may also be working on the problem sets/puzzles in a different order. After deciphering a clue, teams will go to a station elsewhere in the school to use the clue and retrieve their next puzzle. Then they return to their work area in the cafeteria. Please note, the cafeteria can get noisy, so please limit conversations to those related to the event. If you do not have a role at the event, consider leaving until is over to decrease the crowding and noise at the event.

14. What should we bring to the event?

You will be instructed what to bring. Generally, pencils and scratch paper; no calculators. Some teams get matching shirts or dress-up for the theme. In terms of food, please be aware that this is a shared space – this means being sensitive to others and for those with allergies being aware that there may be food around. Snacks are fine if your kids need them. Some teams bring dinner because of the timing of the event, but we encourage you to eat before arriving to limit distraction and trash. Each team needs only one coach and one volunteer, so extra people in the cafeteria are not needed and tend to make the cafeteria too crowded and noisy.

14. How many Math Adventure Nights are there?

Somerset PTSA is looking for volunteers to run Math Adventure Nights this year. We need people to help coordinate hosting an event with mathadventure.org as well as creating an adventure from scratch. To create an adventure, people with a range of skills are needed – from math whizzes to no math needed: people who can create problems, review problems, or find props are all important. Contact SomersetMath@gmail.com to volunteer.

15. How do I sign-up?

Somerset PTSA Math Adventure Night registration will be announced in the Somerset eNews. The registration fee will be posted. Scholarships are available from the Somerset PTSA for students in need by contacting SomersetMath@gmail.com . Please fill-out one registration form per team and include the total fee for the team and put it in the PTSA box in the Somerset main office. We strongly recommend that the coach, volunteer, or preferably both are members of the PTSA to meet the requirements for hosting this event.