

# BIRS 2005 Math Fair Workshop

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This was the third BIRS Math Fair, previous ones being held in the spring of 2003 and 2004. The focus of these workshops was Mathematics Education, and the participants were teachers and educators elementary schools, junior high schools, colleges and universities, and also people from other institutions and organizations that have a deep interest in Mathematics Education.

As with the two previous workshops, the purpose of this workshop was to help teachers learn how to run a successful math fair, to exchange information about math fairs, and to put the members of this diverse group in contact with each other. The deeper purpose is to change the mathematical culture in the classroom, and we believe that this is beginning to happen. For the most part, the math fairs have been held in Alberta. The BIRS math fair workshops have helped in spreading the word about the success of our type of math fair (which is radically different from a traditional science fair) and now such math fairs have been held several provinces in Canada, in some states in the US, in Sweden, and reports have been received that a math fair based on our principles has been held in Africa.

As just one example of the local effect of this year's BIRS math fair workshop, the Edmonton Catholic School Board is involving a large number of schools in presenting math fairs in the 2005/2006 school year. Schools in other districts are doing similar things, and teachers have reported evidence that the math fair has changed classroom attitudes to the extent that students' success rates in mathematics have dramatically increased.