

It All Adds Up

His graduate thesis was on Chaos Theory, but any appearance of chaos in long-time Upper School Math teacher John Nord's classroom is purely theoretical.

"I do things for very specific reasons," he explains. "Like passing out last year's final for students to review before the end of classes. They will have old finals available at college libraries too, but they need to know that and make the effort to get and review those tests. I want them to be already programmed with successful strategies when they leave here."

He believes particular study skills make students successful in any field. Take good notes, stay caught up, do daily homework—"I favor a maniacal attack of daily homework and weekly quizzes"—and ask questions when they don't understand. "Asking questions is a harder skill to practice in a big lecture hall, so it's good they can practice it with me," he says.

An entire generation of students have practiced their study skills with John, who was honored at Graduation for completing his 25th school year teaching at Saint George's (see page 8). Perhaps his longevity at Saint George's has been a response to his nomadic upbringing. "I was a military brat, so I attended 17 different schools K-to-12," he marvels. "Stick a pin in the map and I lived there. Sixth grade was in Upstate New York; seventh grade we went all the way to Seward, Alaska."

College was at Washington State University, where he graduated at age 20 and immediately joined the faculty teaching Math 101. In 1981, he started at Saint George's and taught three years before going to Ohio State for a year to earn his Master's. While he made more money at OSU as a Teaching Assistant than he had teaching full time at Saint George's, that didn't keep John from returning to Spokane and the

challenge of working math problems with high school students.

"Math is a contact sport," he likes to say. "You have to work the problems and it will come to you sooner or later, but sometimes you have to work a little overtime. That's what the foreman at a carpentry job I had used to say—"Boys, we're going to work a little overtime."

Extra practice also figures into his role as Knowledge Bowl head coach, a position he's held since his second year at Saint George's. "I played High School Bowl for East Valley High School and College Bowl for WSU," he remembers. "It helped a lot to have played before coaching. You wouldn't hire a basketball coach that had never played basketball!"

That experience, and his aggressive style of play—"Ringing in first is good; you could say it's our only strategy"—produced an extraordinary run of more than 20 consecutive State B titles for John's Knowledge Bowl teams. Even today his competitive nature comes out in KB's lunchtime practice sessions. "I love to compete, and I can still beat the kids," says John. "Me and three freshmen can beat any varsity team!"

When he's not teaching or coaching Saint George's students, he's watching them. In plays, basketball games, track meets, and even going to hear their garage bands. "It also helps me remember my students—not just seeing them in class. I think I can still remember every student I ever taught."

"So I enjoy communicating with alumni, probably once every couple days. I'm envious of three or four kids who I taught in the 1980's who got computing degrees and are already retired," he admits with his characteristic smile. "But I'm still having fun. I love when I'm at the board and I hear kids say, "Oh, that's how that works!"

— John Carter

John Nord's 25 years at SGS equals hundreds of successful graduates



John Nord at the board with Knowledge Bowl trophies in the background. He's living proof of his favorite saying: "It takes time to be a success, but time is all it takes."