



Central Florida Freethought Community - Making a difference with us since we started in 2015!

2026 Goal: 1,000 Gifts!

Math Games: Learning Beyond the Lesson

By Derek Premo

During my years as a math teacher, some of the most meaningful learning happened after the main lesson was over. I often used strategy games as extensions to strengthen skills such as logic, spatial reasoning and strategic thinking. Students enjoyed Chess (shout out to @Chessintheschools for equipping me and my classroom with everything we needed to start a Chess Club at our school), Connect 4, Battleship, Racko, and my personal favorite, Blokus. However, the overwhelming student favorite was always Mancala.

Mancala is one of the world's oldest board games, originating in Africa and the Middle East more than a thousand years ago. The name comes from an Arabic word meaning "to move." Played with stones, seeds, or beads in rows of pits, the game requires careful planning, counting, and anticipation of an opponent's moves.

While students thought they were simply having fun, these games helped develop critical math thinking skills that supported learning far beyond the classroom. All of these games are available on our [Amazon wish list](#) if you'd like to donate one to a student!



An experiment worth trying.

STEM begins with curiosity—a willingness to ask "What if?" So here's one for you: *What if we had chocolate ... for breakfast?*

On November 14, we're finding out at our First Annual Chocolate Breakfast, a deliciously unconventional kickoff to the 2026 STEM Gift Drive.

In what may be the most decadent potluck you've ever experienced, guests will bring chocolate creations to share as we gather, connect, and launch another season of supporting future innovators. Sometimes the best ideas begin by

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[Find a Math-Based Game](#)

questioning the usual way of doing things—and this one happens to involve cake, mousse, brownies...

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Sandcastles, Physics, and Structural Engineering

Playing is learning.
Learning is playing.

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Capillary bridges between grains, strong foundations, and carefully engineered arches—a sandcastle may feel like simple beach fun, but every part of it offers a hands-on lesson in science. Even the smallest tower depends on the interaction of water, gravity, pressure, friction, and design.

Inspired by Sandcastle Day on August 1, our latest article explores arenology—the scientific study of sand—and the structural engineering behind building with it. The right combination of sand, water, compaction, and creativity can transform loose grains into an impressive structure.



We updated our [Amazon Wish List](#) with some sand-related STEM gifts - and there are many physics & structural engineering gifts there as well!

Some of What We're Celebrating in September

- Biodiversity month
- 9/11 - Cloud Appreciation Day
- 9/16 - International Day of Science, Technology and Innovation for the South
- 9/16 - World Ozone Day
- 9/17 - International Microorganism Day
- 9/27 - World Rivers Day
- 9/28 - International Day of Scientific Culture
- 9/29 - World Heart Day



Find more STEM observances on the [NISE Network](#)



[Sign up today](#)

Turn your workplace, business, organization, or community into a collection point for future innovators!

Becoming a STEM Gift Drive Collection Host is an easy way to bring people together around a meaningful cause.

Simply sign up, set out and decorate your collection box, and invite others to donate STEM toys, games, and books.

Help us grow the impact of the 2026 STEM Gift Drive.



[STEMGiftDrive.org](#) | 407-608-9242

STEM Gift Drive | PO Box 677693 C/o Tee Rogers | Orlando, FL 32867 US

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