



## The Math Kids: The Election Calculation

**David Cole**

**Shannon O'Toole, Illustrator**

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(189pp)

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*Four determined friends learn to speak truth to power in The Election Calculation, an engrossing addition to an educational series.*

*The Election Calculation*, the tenth volume of David Cole's Math Kids series, combines strong characterizations with brain-twisting math problems and involving storylines hinging on elections.

The brainy foursome of Stephanie, Catherine, Jordan, and Justin are taking their first steps into the brave new world of middle school, only to find it much rougher than anticipated. Local bullies Buzz and Kenny, who accused Justin of stealing comics in a previous book, now control the school's math club; they are determined to bar the Math Kids from joining the group. Meanwhile, Stephanie struggles with writing for the school newspaper; she's handed boring assignments like covering school board meetings. But when a mysterious trio of candidates vie for positions on the board in an upcoming election, she suspects that a sinister plot is afoot.

Just as her friends did in previous series entries, Stephanie takes center stage in this volume, carrying out impressive detective work to discover the identities of the school board nominees and their true motives. She and her friends are empowered when they learn to speak truth to power despite obstacles. They follow a trail of subtle clues that includes a random phone number, mailboxes stuffed with days' worth of mail, and a budget item on school board meeting minutes. Their investigation is suspenseful, including when Stephanie is trapped in an apartment when its shady residents show up. And all is humanized by the fact that Stephanie and her math buddies are both clever and fallible: they deal with insecurities and challenges throughout, feeling inadequate in an unfamiliar school, struggling to fit in with new classmates, and straining to make it to their classes on time.

In addition to its tense mystery, *The Election Calculation* features stimulating and educational puzzles, including problems utilizing the Fibonacci sequence, a series of interconnected math riddles, and a rundown of the different methods used for voting that factors in which method best favors an underdog candidate. It also includes charming illustrations with abundant details, as with a view of a photograph being snapped on a phone camera and an image of Justin gazing upon a painting of an English garden that provides key inspiration.

A clever mystery novel populated by a warmhearted friend group, *The Election Calculation* proves that when it comes to wholesome, brainy entertainment, the Math Kids are tops.

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