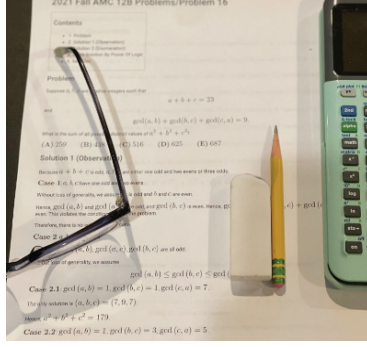


Assistant Editor Column

Math On the Next Level



Jeremiah Chun
Grade 11
West Ranch High School



Problems at the 2021 American Mathematics Competition were challenging but also very beneficial.

[Source: Author, Jeremiah Chun]

Technology is becoming a vital part of our lives every day. Everywhere we go, we are exposed to the wonders that electronic devices bring us. Behind all this madness lies the basics of computer science, and even more fundamental than that are the dreaded principles of mathematics. Many students in the world often struggle with math, intimidated by its complicated concepts and confusing problems. However, it is important to note that math can be extremely useful

in many situations that are relevant to our society today, and because of this, there are many opportunities to raise awareness of math and logic deduction. One of the more ambitious events that promote advanced math is the American Mathematics Competition.

The American Mathematics Competition, or AMC, is a series of exams in which students solve various math problems that require both common sense and proficient problem-solving skills. One may think that this sounds easy and simple, but there is a catch; each problem is extremely difficult, requiring insane levels of comprehension and quick analysis skills. None of the test sections allow a calculator but instead offer “puzzle pieces,” which are tiny snippets of information that lead to bigger clues and patterns. There are a total of 25 problems to complete in 75 minutes, approximately 3 minutes per question. It may seem that you can just make

educated guesses to get around 25% of the questions right, but guessing is highly discouraged on these types of tests. This is because each correct question grants 6 points, and each unanswered question rewards 1.5 points, but a wrong question actually rewards none. Because of this, a test that is not answered at all generally yields a better score than a test filled with guesses.

An example problem in the AMC follows: there is a list of five positive integers. The unique mode is two greater than the median, which in turn is two greater than the mean. The question then asks you to find the least possible value for the mode. The choices given are 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13. To find this solution, you would have to determine the mean - the sum of five consecutive numbers divided by five - with the median being the third-highest number in that group. From there, you have to test configurations that satisfy the requirements above, and only one

choice works out of the five options. The answer, 11, was a challenge to get to within the allotted three minutes.

Overall, this competition is extremely beneficial for students to at least attempt. It opens you to a wealth of potential real-world mathematical applications and offers a taste of the number skills necessary for specific jobs and industries, from architecture to accounting. With proper training, a student's problem-solving and common sense capabilities can greatly improve in regard to math, and AMC is a great testing ground for that progress. This competition teaches not only math but also general concepts that require precise and logical thinking, increasing a person's overall intelligence. In fact, anyone naturally gifted enough to get 18 questions right can move on to higher levels of AMC and even score a chance of competing nationally!! AMC is a great way to assess your current math skills and explore the potential that math can bring to the world.

Student Reporter

The Quest for Freedom



Annette Je
Grade 11
Redondo Union High School

Once again, the Los Angeles Youth Orchestra, LAYO, successfully ended another semester. This time LAYO performed two nights, with the first night at Barnum Hall and the second at Ambassador Hall. The concert first started with the performance of the Ruth Borun Concert Orchestra and was conducted by Jorge Padron, the Assistant Conductor. After an intermission of 15 minutes, the Symphony Orchestra, directed by Russel Steinberg, Conductor, founder, and artistic director, performed 3 overtures: An Outdoor Overture by Aaron Copland, Leonore Overture No. 3, Op. 72 by Ludwig van Beethoven, and Diminished Resistance by Russel Steinberg.

This experience was special due to the fact that LAYO played, for the first time ever, an overture that was personally written by the conductor, Russel Steinberg, Diminished Resistance. When Steinberg first introduced his piece, I personally was a bit disinterested. It was mainly due to the fact that it was going to be con-



After the performance, we took a selfie with Russel, the conductor of LAYO and composer of Diminished Resistance.

[Source: Author, Annette Je]

temporary, which is one of my least favorite genres to play. In my experiences with contemporary music, it is always rhythmically hard, has very complex messages, and there is always a theme of minimalism that I don't find tasteful. Because it was a world premiere, there was no recording anywhere that members of the orchestra could refer to, making it hard to imagine the full

picture. There were also many sections where I was confused, one example being a portion where, for 21 seconds, different sections of the orchestra at a certain time would improvise and do their own thing. I was genuinely confused about how this technique was relevant in conveying Steinberg's message because, to my ear, it sounded like a blob of notes. Another challenge was learning to flutter tongue. As a woodwind player, there are many techniques that can be performed by utilizing the breath and tongue, and these ways can add unique factors to music. To use this technique, one would have to roll their R's and, at the same time, push air. Due to the time shortage, I had to turn to a different technique that would give a similar result, which was learning how to sing into the flute.

Overall, the only thing I could reference to was Steinberg's email about how and why he created his overture. He states, “I write this before midterm elections, as people

sense that democracy itself hangs in the balance. My new dramatic overture Diminished Resistance is an abstract work, but it reflects my struggle with our quest to preserve freedom.” This concept of freedom was why our concert was named “The Quest for Freedom.” He continues, “In every phrase, two distinct diminished chords sound against each other. They approach each other, they recede; they confront, they flee; they fret, they exult, they lament, they battle. It is not an easy thing; rather, as Mahler said, it is a spiritual struggle.” After reading his explanation many times, I was able to understand a lot more of what emotions he was trying to convey to the audience. Playing the piece continuously for 4 months, even though some parts were confusing, made me appreciate the music and the genre a lot more. Overall, this semester in LAYO has given me a new perspective and experience with contemporary music, and I am looking forward to learning more in the next semester.

Student Reporter

Visiting New York with Model UN!



Sean Kim
Grade 11
Los Alamitos High School

Recently, I traveled to New York for four days with the Los Alamitos High School Model United Nations team. I had never traveled out of state with my schoolmates, and I couldn't wait to see the East Coast of the United States.

The reason we were flying so far from home was due to the Empire MUN conference hosted by New York University every year. For Los Alamitos MUN, Empire was easily the farthest event we participated in, and it is always a great opportunity for California MUNers to gain experience with competitions out of state. We weren't about to let this chance go to waste, and we spent two weeks before departure drafting papers and researching policies in preparation for New York.

When we arrived, the first thing I noticed was the cold. People back home in California had warned me countless times about New York's sharp winds, but I was still surprised at how chilly the air was. I'm sure to the locals, we looked a little funny wearing parkas and snow gear for just a ten-minute walk from the hotel to the university.

The committee rooms at New York University weren't all too different from the schools back home. Aside from the people, MUN was still MUN; everyone was just as comfortable standing at the podium and delivering their speeches. When we weren't competing, we visited all the famous tourist attractions of New York. First, we went to visit the United Nations Headquarters in Manhattan. It felt so serious checking in, as we had to undergo numerous security checks, including a full body scan like the airports used. Seeing the General Assembly and the Security Council, where official meetings took place, was a fantastic privilege I am so thankful for. I learned amazing historical facts about the headquarters from the passionate tour guide who led us through the facility.

Next, we walked the Brooklyn Bridge and ate at the Brooklyn Heights Promenade. Many vendors sold beanies, gloves, and jewelry along the bridge. One vendor even sold guitars and harmonicas! At the Promenade, we took way too many photos and ate hot dogs from a food truck. New York hot



The United Nations Headquarters was truly breathtaking! Standing in the General Assembly room was a great honor for us Model United Nations students.

[Source: Author, Sean Kim]

dogs really do live up to the hype! We also saw the 9/11 memorial. It truly was saddening to see the names etched into the black marble commemorating where the towers used to stand. I am grateful for the beautiful museum at the memorial, serving to remember the lives lost that day.

The final place we went to was Times Square. To our luck, a dance crew was getting ready to perform as soon as we arrived. The dancers—in the freezing cold—did flips and handstands to entertain the crowd. The funniest part was when my friend got pulled into the act as a “volunteer.” He had to dance in front of so many people,

and it was hilarious to see him so embarrassed. I'll never forget the mortified look he had while he danced so rigorously to Gangnam Style.

All in all, New York was an incredible experience. I genuinely loved everything about the trip, and I don't regret a single thing. The famous New York definitely didn't let me down with its amazing tourist spots and delicious hot dogs. Additionally, meeting the competition from the East Coast was eye-opening. Though our school couldn't quite defeat these schools, it was still incredible to learn what we needed to improve if we wanted to put up a real fight next year.

Student Reporter

My First “Friendsgiving”



Seanna Kim
Grade 11
Granada Hills Charter
High School



My friends and I had a great time eating and talking together in such a comforting and warm environment.
[Source: Author, Seanna Kim]

I was very excited when I received an invitation to my first Friendsgiving. After making new and meaningful friendships during my junior year, I was eager to spend time with my friends to celebrate this Thanksgiving.

In preparation for our Friendsgiving feast, every person who was invited was asked to

bring some sort of food or drink to contribute to the dinner. I brought different sodas, while other friends brought dishes like pasta, various Korean foods, chicken, pizza, salad, pumpkin bread, and even sushi. It was truly a cultural potluck! We had dinner in our friend’s backyard, where we watched her siblings play basketball as we ate and discussed our

plans for the rest of the Thanksgiving break.

After dinner, me and my friends went inside to play games and sing karaoke. It was my first time playing “Unsolved Case Files.” In this game, you are given folders with investigations and clues for an unsolved crime case. With these pieces of information, you work as a group to solve the mystery of the case. After playing this game for some time, we picked up our mics and started to do some karaoke. We sang typical karaoke songs like Bruno Mars’ “24k Magic” and “Treasure,” and we also sang songs like “Die For You” by the Weeknd. It was such a great atmosphere, singing with my friends in a dark room with disco lights dancing across the ceiling.

Finally, towards the end of the night, we watched the hor-

ror movie “It.” Although this is a movie typical for a Halloween party, everyone was in the mood for some scares. In this film, we followed a group of 7 friends who were trying to discover the truth behind the mysterious disappearances of children in the town of Derry. They discover that the culprit behind these disappearances is actually a clown named Pennywise, who kidnaps and kills children. The movie had quite a number of jumpscare, but it was incredibly funny seeing everyone’s reactions to the movie.

Overall, my experience at my first Friendsgiving was as much fun as I had imagined, and it’s become a cherished memory for me. Having a not-so-Thanksgiving meal for Friendsgiving ended up being just as delicious as a classic one, especially since I enjoyed it with my friends.

Student Reporter

Homecoming; A Day to Remember



Dion Jung
Grade 11
Larchmont Charter School
Lafayette

The start of December calls for many celebrations. On December 3rd Larchmont Charter hosted an event special to all high schools throughout the world, homecoming, more widely known as Hoco! It is an all-grade involvement event that takes place outside of school, typically involving a football game or a dance, where alumni are welcomed back to see their old high school campus and relive the moment. People mainly mistake Hoco for prom, as both are usually events filled with events and excitement, but prom is a more formal occasion, whereas Hoco is more casual. This is a tradition that dates back to 1911, when high school students, alumni, and all sorts of neighborhood people came to their local high school to make new memories and spend time watching sporting events.

This year, Larchmont focused on involving two basketball games rather than a typical foot-



The Homecoming Dance is a great time for students, alumni, and others to enjoy a night with dancing and music.
[Source: Author Dion Jung]

ball game. Both basketball games took place on December 2nd at the gym in Lafayette park, with girls basketball taking place at 2 PM, and after, the boys at 3:30 PM. Both teams ended up taking the win and further moved up their league. With the audience cheering loudly and lots of applause, it was one of the best games this year! A new system allowed outside guests to come in and enjoy this special moment with LFP students for the low ticket price of \$20. This year, we were also given the opportunity to nomi-

nate Homecoming Court Royals. From freshman to seniors, there were a total of fifteen nominees, 5 from each year, with seniors excluded from the voting poll of other grades. This poll took place online, where people could vote for up to two people to be part of Homecoming Royalty, a gifted status for just one day of nobility.

When one walked towards the gates of Larchmont Charter during homecoming, they were met with a long line stretching from the doors to down throughout

the block. Larchmont took safety to another level, bringing metal detectors to check every student to ensure the utmost safety of all attending guests. Along with the metal detectors, LFP provided frequent staff members that patrolled the area to enforce moral conduct. After they were checked and deemed safe, guests were then separated into two lines, those who had bought tickets and those who had yet to purchase them. Immediately after obtaining a wristband as proof of payment, guests were greeted with multiple tables full of games, from poker, to ping pong, pool, and much more. The main focus was the dance floor, an outdoor luxurious area dazzled with bright lights dangling from the canopy covering the floor. Loud, exciting music blared throughout the night, played by the student DJ of LFP. Homecoming was overall a place and time where all could come and enjoy their lives while talking to friends and dancing happily!

Student Reporter

For the Sake of the Recovery



Hannah Lee
Grade 10
South High School

Summer break, winter break, spring break, and more breaks in between, to students they’re similar to the weekends and one-day holidays. From vacations to just sleeping in, teens all over the world wait patiently for the next break in the school year to come. Of course, meeting friends, experimenting in your science class, and playing team sports will be missed during the days off. But these days, sleep seems to be one’s best friend.

On average, many of my sophomore friends seem to get a range of four to eight hours of sleep on the weekdays. This unhealthy sleep schedule continues to get worse as you climb the ranks of the grades in life. Junior year, senior year, and then college. Responsibilities pile up and up.

Since there’s less than a month

until Christmas, let’s cue the Christmas music. Currently a sophomore at South High School, Zuzu Jenni enjoys spending time with her family and listening to Christmas carols while making delicious treats and painting Christmas presents for those around her. As she says that she “recovers from stress by not giving school a second thought during the entire break.” There are those who sleep in, and there are those that use their break to the best of their ability, such as spending all their spare time studying or going out with friends. While Zuzu Jenni uses her time doing all her favorite activities, another sophomore, who wishes to remain unnamed at South High School, replies in a different fashion. “The importance of school break is to give the students a chance to rest and

help them recharge when they get back to school,” she says. But are we recharging physically or mentally?

Actually, it’s both. It’s important to recharge physically because when you’re busy on school days, it’s hard to let yourself out of your desk seat and get dressed to go for a workout. And without enough sleep, it’s hard to keep your eyes open and listen in class. Mentally, an overload of work is definitely unhealthy. Similarly to my thoughts, Mikaia Tweedie, a junior at South High School, says that she wishes she didn’t get over-exhausted from school activities and recovered by getting more sleep.

Regardless of the different activities that high school students perform to maintain themselves



Some cookies that my friend and I were able to decorate together during winter break of 2021.
[Source: Author, Hannah Lee]

in school when they get back, it all results in people starting to feel better, even with only a day off. Of course, that doesn’t mean that we’d pick a one-day break over two months of summer break!