

## **Slide 1**

It starts with a love of math, an affinity for solving problems, an intrinsic desire to meet challenges

## **Slide 2**

It is a deep-rooted and hard-wired love, a love that colors every experience the student has with the world.

It is a love with limitless potential.

It can manifest itself in thousands of ways.

It can be channeled into a discovery that will make us more efficient, more sustainable.

It is a love that can change the world.

## **Slide 3**

For this student, math classes are a sanctuary, a place where she can be herself, where she can succeed and shine and lead by example.

Math classes are a place where her hunger for solving problems is welcomed, encouraged.

## **Slide 4**

But math classes are never quite enough.

She leaves energized but wanting more.

She hasn't been sufficiently challenged, not by any fault of her teacher's, but because she has a special kind of love for numbers that needs extra time, attention and care.

Where can a student like this turn?

In a society that shrugs off mathematical deficiencies, where an inability to do math can be laughed off, where the importance of math has been diminished or underestimated, where can she turn?

## **Slide 5**

At the urging of her math teacher, she attends an afterschool meeting of the MATHCOUNTS Competition Series team.

She finds complex problems to solve and a mentor who can help her work through those problems.

She finds a support network of students who are wired like she is.

They are curious, inquisitive; they are fixers and problem solvers.

## **Slide 6**

The problems she solves are not detracting from her schoolwork or serving as a diversion.

They are making her a better problem solver.

They are making her more confident in her abilities, more sure of her passions.

With her newfound confidence, she is eager to see how she stacks up against the best in the country.

Although she might not know it, as she advances to the chapter and then state competition, she is competing against the minds that will one day lead the country.

## **Slide 7**

The experience of competition cannot be replicated in the classroom.

Even during a high stakes test, the thrill of solving a problem in a race against both the clock and also other brilliant minds cannot be simulated.

It's the kind of activity that changes the shapes of brains, the trajectory of lives.

## **Slide 8**

Maybe she makes it to the nationals, maybe she doesn't advance past state, maybe she competes in a rigorous chapter bout.

It doesn't matter how far she goes, because now she knows what it takes.

And once she knows what it takes, there's no turning back.

The world becomes a problem to solve—a problem that *can* be solved.

## **Slide 9**

Challenge-hungry and seeking new ways to solve problems, she turns to the Math Video Challenge.

She partners with her teammates from the Competition Series and they use their collective intelligence and creativity to solve the most difficult MATHCOUNTS problem they can find.

The problem is hard; finding ways to express the problem-solving process visually is harder.

She immerses herself in the project.

She is challenged. She is happy. And when she shows the finished product to her classmates and friends, she is proud.

## **Slide 10**

Her journey began with a love of numbers, but where will it take her?

To Google?

To the Pentagon?

To a laboratory at MIT?

To an after-school meeting of problem solvers at an inner city school in New York, helping students with a love of numbers realize exactly what it is about them that makes them special?

Helping students like herself realize that their love of numbers should never be compromised?

That it can take them anywhere?

There is a place for students who love math.

## **Slide 11**

It starts with a fear of math, a fear of failing, a fear of feeling inadequate.

## **Slide 12**

It is a deep-rooted and hard-wired fear, a fear that colors every learning opportunity a student has.

It is a fear that, if unaddressed, will severely limit a student's possibilities.

It is an unnecessary fear, one that must be extinguished.

### **Slide 13**

For this student, math class is a place of anxiety and ridicule— one more avenue through which he might display his inability to make the right decision, one more place where he might execute his ignorance.

### **Slide 14**

But one day, all of that begins to change.

Through the Math Video Challenge, he is presented with a new “in” to math.

The Challenge provides him an opportunity to approach math from a position of strength—his ability to tell a story visually—rather than weakness.

He partners with a few classmates and together they shoot a video that solves an interesting math problem.

He is energized by the project and his fear of math begins to diminish.

Over the course of shooting and editing the video, he forms a strong friendship with his classmates, who help him understand that math doesn't have to be a source of anxiety.

### **Slide 15**

The video is selected as a finalist and will be shown at the MATHCOUNTS National Competition.

He has been *chosen*.

He and his family and his three teammates fly out to Orlando. It is their red carpet premiere, their hour in the spotlight.

It is an experience that is impossible to replicate in the classroom.

It doesn't matter if their video wins or loses. He has made it.

And once he has made it, there is no turning back.

### **Slide 16**

His pride in his accomplishment and his excitement at having his talents recognized give him a newfound sense of confidence, one that he has never associated with math before.

The barriers to engagement in math for him have fallen, replaced with an intrinsic desire to build on what he has accomplished, to make up for lost time.

## **Slide 17**

When he returns to school he joins The National Math Club.

He is welcomed by students of all skillsets, all of them bonded together by their enthusiasm for solving problems.

Week by week, month by month, he becomes a better problem solver, a more confident student.

His love for problem solving and his fearlessness are a potent combination.

He is no longer defined by his deficiencies or his fears, but by the fact that he overcame them.

## **Slide 18**

Where will his confidence and problem solving skills take him?

To Hollywood?

To a career as a graphic designer or an engineer?

To a television studio or a news organization?

To a middle school classroom in the Midwest?

To a student that needs someone to say, "You can do this; you don't have to be afraid"?

## **Slide 19**

Some students (like the boy I've described here) fear math, others (like the girl I've described) love it; still others are indifferent or apathetic or have been told that math doesn't play an important role in everyday life.

We understand that there is no single type of math student, and there is no single path to math.

**MATHCOUNTS** provides a place and a program for every kind of math student.

## **Slide 20**

Because in the end, it all comes back to the student. – END STORY