

Final Reflection on My 2018 Summer Enrichment Experience at the AwesomeMath Summer Program

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This summer, thanks to support from the Garwin Family Foundation, I spent three weeks at the AwesomeMath Summer Program at the University of Texas IN Dallas. The program attracts students from all over the world.

Specifically, AwesomeMath only accepts about 150 students. A lot of the students qualified for the American Invitational Math Examination, and some even made it past that to the USA (Junior) Math Olympiad. Given students' abilities, classes are separated into three levels, and four different subjects are offered at each skill level: algebra, combinatorics, geometry, and number theory. I selected geometry and number theory, both at level 2. Geometry is my favorite topic, and number theory is the subject that I need to work on the most.

A Day at AwesomeMath

Every day at the program we would have two class sections, one for each subject. After breakfast, we would walk to our first class, and, for 90 minutes, the professor lectured and then we worked on assigned problems for 90 additional minutes. In the problem-solving portion of the course, both the instructor and the teaching assistant would be available to help. At any point, students could ask questions about the problems. We were also free to work together on the problems. The second class was structured in the same way.

Social Activities

Of course, we didn't just do math all day. Every day, after the second class, we had free time. There were organized soccer, basketball, and Frisbee games almost every day. Often times during this part of the day, I would find myself in one of the work rooms with a couple of friends, doing problems on whiteboards. We would try to convince one another to use a different method to solve the problem. This was really enjoyable, as working in that environment created a lot of interesting discussion.

On Sundays, we did not have class. Instead, AwesomeMath would organize events. On the first Sunday, "Sunday Funday," every residential group competed in various activities, including Ladder Ball, a knockout math competition, and a sponge water game. I had a lot of fun. Being the first Sunday, the event forced students to interact within their residential group, creating a strong bond between the students in the group for the rest of program.

After the first Sunday, we had more free time to socialize and participate in things like karaoke, a chess tournament, a poker night, and a dance. My favorite event was karaoke. We spent an hour singing our favorite songs and watching others sing, and the best part was when our resident advisors and teaching assistants got up to sing.

My Experience

After just a few days of classes, I could tell that my approach toward solving math problems had drastically changed. We covered content very quickly, and I almost couldn't keep up. This made spending time studying even more beneficial. I thought the classes were challenging. Even though I studied, the problems we were assigned were much harder than I thought they would be.

While I was at AwesomeMath, not only did I learn a lot about math, but I also grew as a person. There were many things that contributed to this. One such thing were the people who surrounded me. I enjoyed having meaningful conversations with the other students, and everyone shared a lot of the same interests. For example, the students were also engaged in math competitions, and most could solve a Rubik's Cube and knew some degree of computer programming.

Conclusion

After three weeks at AwesomeMath, I can gladly report that the program was my best academic experience so far. Because of the students, the instructors, and being away from home, I feel that I learned a lot about math and became more responsible and independent as this was my first extended stay away from my family. This camp benefitted me greatly in terms of math ability, I have been introduced to proof writing, and I can now confidently solve some proof problems. I learned a lot in each subject and have a good baseline to continue studying.

AwesomeMath was an experience that I will never forget. I am thankful to the program staff for providing a great math-studying environment and to the Garwin Family Foundation for sponsoring my wonderful opportunity.