

"Oh, that's a pity. By the way, how was your new math teacher Mr.Huo in grade 9?"

"To be honest, Mr.Huo is not as good as you in teaching. I have to say, some of your math tests in grade 7 and 8 are downright crazy!"

She looked up, her eyes twinkling with understanding. "Yes, I admitted. They were difficult. But, you have incredible potential in math." she said warmly, her words wrapping around me like a cozy blanket.

"In fact, two years ago, I was trembling at the thought of your tests, and I felt like they were devils. But as time went on, my ability to solve these problems became stronger and stronger, and my mind became as sharp as a freshly honed blade." I said.

"Yeah, I truly understand you. Don't shy away from these challenges. Dive deeper into math. You're capable of so much more than you realize."

"I agree. Now, whenever a math test comes, I am not nervous, but on the contrary, I become excited. The once daunting questions have become familiar friends, actually." I answered

A smile crept onto her face, illuminating me just like a lantern in a dim room. "It's only when things are challenging that we truly grow, math are like frenemies, not only to you, but also to every math lover."

"Good bye!"

"Good luck!"

Before leaving, Mrs. Li asked me to give her my math problem book as a gift. Perhaps, I became a role model for Mrs. Li's future students.

Failure - Halifax, Canada

Fast forward to senior high in Canada, where the air was unfamiliar and the landscapes I've never seen before, it was a memory where I was preparing for the Euclid contest.

It was Christmas break in 2022. I sat at my desk and took out a few dozen printed Euclid contest questions from previous years.

"How can Canadian contests be so easy?" I muttered to myself who was only in grade 10, not believing that the contest questions I was working on were actually for grade 12.

"Oh no, I'm done. I don't have any ideas for these questions." I racked my brains to try to solve the last two questions, but still had no ideas.

"Let me look at the analysis," I thought to myself, and took out the analysis. Somehow, my brain was refreshed, and suddenly I understood the solution to the problem...

Over time, solving mathematics problems has gradually become my hobby. Whenever I do math problems, I can always immerse myself in it. I felt my brain start to become extremely active, and every equation I solved was a step towards liberation and a rebellion against the limitations of height.

Despite this, I still failed the first time I actually participated in the Euclid contest. I got a 74, where I didn't make it onto the official uWaterloo honor roll. But I didn't lose heart. Instead, I became more and more courageous.

I felt Mrs. Li's words echoing in my mind.

Whetstone

In fact, Mrs. Li not only ignited my passion, but also set me on a path to freedom. "You're capable of so much more than you realize." I felt as if the conversation with Mrs. Li had just happened, and it was still like a compass, guiding me in the right direction.

During the Christmas holiday of 2023, when I picked up the Euclid contest questions from previous years and studied them carefully, I felt a sense of déjà vu.

"Isn't last year's preparation for the Euclid contest just like the first time taking Mrs. Li's math test? I underestimated my opponent at the beginning, but in the end I found that it was not easy." I thought, "This may be due to lack of experience."

I picked up the Euclid contest questions from 2022 again, which were the questions I used to practice at this time last year, and analyzed them carefully. It was as familiar as meeting an old friend.

"I should use a clear mind and allocate the time for each question. I should not treat the questions as a task, but immerse myself in it and treat it as a pleasure." I thought, "Now, my brain is a knife, and the past questions are like a whetstone."

With a solid math foundation, I was confident enough, enjoyed enough, and had enough experience.

On April 3rd, 2024, I stepped into the Euclid contest for the second time.

Sure enough, unlike the last time, this time with a high score of 88, I not only made it to the honor roll (Group IV), but was also invited by the University of Waterloo to participate in their EMACS workshop.

At the same time, through my journey of mathematics, I realized the power I have in my hands - and these are what my elementary classmates do not have.

I discovered that I am a logical thinker, someone who navigates things with clarity and calmness, which is something I didn't have before. I began to use the same logic that I applied to math to deal with challenges in life, instead of being nervous and flustered like my previous self - this is what they do not have.

At the same time, I had a clear understanding of myself - I learned to present my opinions elegantly and calmly, instead of letting others' opinions overwhelm me - this is also what they do not have.

Moreover, nowadays, I began to plan for my future career based in math or computer science. These abundant job opportunities were obtained through my love for mathematics, and are what they do not have as well.

Standing at the edge of the Rideau Canal, I looked down at my reflection, the sparkling water reminding me how far I had come. I remembered those days being called the shortest kid, and how those judgments had weighed me down. But now, I was the one who laughed at the end—I had become who I was and gained confidence.

For me, numbers do matter, but the more important thing is the standard I set for myself. In some ways, I am “taller” than all my elementary school classmates who mock me.

I’m ascending beyond the numbers.