My resoponse:

Once I found the true beauty of the math

There was one significant event at the University of Waterloo that changed my point of view toward math and people in a similar circumstance that I was in. The event also led to my transfer from University of Waterloo to Simon Fraser University.

When I was in grade 12, I believed that teamwork and working with people was useless, for any subject area. I believed that there is no need for communication between people, including teachers and students. In addition, I solely relied on my own skills, which I thought exceeded what was considered to be the average. Sometimes people would ask to work with me, and even one of my teachers said to me “Matthew, go and work with people or get out of my class!” When I heard this, I felt like the teacher was forcing me into something rather than negating with me. So, I became really mad and denied the offer of teamwork by saying “It’s better working by myself rather than working with other students. I do not need any help from other students. I am doing well by myself and I think it is a waste of the time and I will get out of this class”. Then, I left the classroom. I had shown a lot of ignorance towards other peers. I was not fully aware of my abilities and the importance of cooperation. Moreover, I was so exceedingly arrogant from receiving acceptance from numerous universities with scholarship offers including University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, University of McGill, and University of Waterloo, which are the top universities in Canada. This made me behave like a narcissist and a non-cooperative group member.

In fall 2015, right after I received my high school diploma, I went to Ontario and began my studies at the University of Waterloo with honors in mathematics. Since the university was widely known to be strong in mathematics, I was very proud to be a student there. I wished to prove the best of my ability in mathematics and I truly believed in myself and that I would be at the very top someday.

One day, I attended the Korean meeting which was for freshmen. People were sitting on the tables, separated by majors. Before the event, we got to introduce ourselves to each other. For most of the people, they introduced their names, their majors, their birth, and where they came from. Some people also mentioned their hobbies and favourite food. However, I was different than most of people. Once it was my turn to introduce myself, I started off by saying, “My name is Matthew Lee, I am the king of the math, I am the savior of the math, and I am the lord of the math. I will be the greatest mathematician in the world. If you want to get math help from me, obey me and praise me by calling me Lord Matthew please. If anyone else is more confident in math than me, I will make you obey me!” After my words, there was a complete silence in the meeting. Then one tall guy with actor-like looks challenged “You really are? I do not think you are the best! I can prove that you are wrong since I am better than you!” Then I replied “oh yeah? What is your name?”. He says “My name is Jung Hoon and I am the winner of 2014 Euclid Contest was that held in Waterloo! I was 1 of the 8 students who got 100% on this contest. Did you ever win the contest? Probably not.” I was mad about what he said. Then I replied “Well, I will show you why I am best. Next week, let’s have a math competition”. This event led to a significant situation which changed my life.

After a week, we met in the glass hall to find out who is the best mathematician. We sat on the table and a referee was ready to give out the questions. I was eager for the match and I wanted to prove that I was better than him. I started my magic to win the battle. The first question was a calculation game. The rule distinguishing the winner was whoever calls out the answer first. The referee asked, “What is 729 \* 1872?”. I knew I could calculate this within 10 seconds but while I was still thinking, he just yelled the answer out, “1364688” in 2 seconds. I lost the first game. It was way too sudden. I was shocked about the results, but I believe this was just an accident. I knew I could overwhelm him easily. I brought out divinity to punish human creature. However, after all the rounds we had, I lost on every single game against him. After the game, he came up to me and said, “This is the difference between you and me. Real mathematicians are here to help people who suffer from math and torture the people who bully people using math like you! The true beauty of the math is when you admit the truth and respect people.” I was petrified. Believing that I lost in math to somebody is difficult, but it was more difficult to admit that my perception on math that I believed for more than 22 years was wrong. However, in order to be a real mathematician, I needed to admit the truth of math. I did not realize my problem at that point, however, I began to analyze my problem after I dropped out from the University of Waterloo. It took nine months for me to go back to a different university. During that nine month break, I finally got to find out the solution: Accepting one’s thoughts are significant. After all the tough times I went through, I got to attend Simon Fraser University, where I began to walk away from the fake beauty of math to the true beauty of math.

Many years later, I enrolled in one of Education course at SFU and I got to prepare a presentation for Education class. The professor asked me after the presentation, “What if everyone did not understand the math question (activity)? Everyone is not a math genius like you are! There are stupid math people like.. me” and she continued in saying that “Is there any second plan for your activity?” Honestly, I did not have a second plan. I believed everyone could understand the mathematics because I respect and accept everyone for the math skills which they have and believed they would understand my activities. Even if their math is not beautiful today, it will be more beautiful the day after. Moreover, I knew there would be fellow students helping each other out to understand the activities and overcome the problem, which was the way I learnt in the past from Junghoon, my role-model. I consider this the true beauty of the math: being aware and respecting myself and others. I believe have changed from this experience and become more educated than before.

**Recommendation:**

If I were Davies, Hogan, and Clandinin, would believe that a teacher needs to understand the students feelings and try to negotiate with students rather than using hierarchy as a teacher and bully the students. If a teacher nicely negotiates about that situation, I could rethink about cooperation and know the importance of cooperation and true beauty of the math that I did not know for a long time. I think a great high school teacher is not just good at teaching, but influences students and motivates in the class and prepares students to do well in university.

Reference:

Davies, A., Hogan, P., & Clandinin, J. (1991). CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: Restorying our relationships. 141-156.

Response to other:

Hello Victor, the story was interesting. I was also write the experience with my grade 12 experience. As an introvert and thinking I was best like you, I can understand how you feel about that situation. I also think I was best and I was not able to understand how teacher treat me when I was not working as a group. Thanks for sharing your experience.