

Editorial

Math Workshop and the PTC

Visiting the PTC on a Thursday night can be a hectic experience, but if you go there on a Saturday morning, you will see a calm room filled with probably just the tutors and a few students sitting about the tables.

The first thing I noticed when I visited was the cordiality and friendliness of everybody in the center, including the people at the front desk, who walk you through every step of the sign-in process.

They really understand how it feels for a shy, stressed, and fearful student to come into the center for the first time, unsure of whom to go to for help.

I navigated to the math workshop, one of the bigger tutoring areas at the school. I expected to sit down and wait for a while because there were many students there, but the exact opposite happened.

As I entered, tutors came up and introduced themselves to me, and I sat down immediately and received help with my problems.

I took out my calculus homework. I was having trouble with integration by parts and a sophomore tutor came over to help me. I explained the problem I was facing, and he quickly showed me a way to solve it.

Hearing his explanation, I actually was still very confused, but the tutors explain things in a multitude of ways and from many different angles. They really have a knack for explaining problems and their solutions.

They take very complicated subjects such as series in calculus and simplify them for anyone to understand. I really mean anyone -- because the PTC helps to tutor high school students in an

enrichment course, as well as master's students about to graduate.

After the tutor explained integration by parts, I asked him many questions, so many that for anyone without the passion and brilliance those tutors demonstrate for mathematics it would be an overwhelming and annoying experience. But for each question I had, I received an answer, and after each question, I was feeling more confident and clearer about the subject. The tutors also helped me in other ways that went beyond what I expected. They helped me correct my test problems and explained where I went wrong.

In addition, after seeing what I did wrong, they brought me up to the white board and gave me sample problems that they thought of on the spot. In each step of the learning process, they helped me with seemingly infinite patience, walking me through every tiny step.

As I tried to solve the problems on the white board, the tutors gave me some good-natured ribbing and kindly pointed out my mistakes. Although I was a bit embarrassed, I came out of that session better at solving calculus problems.

Other times, the tutors acted as personal motivators. If I was feeling down or unmotivated, they found clever and inspiring ways to motivate me and keep me on task. I remember once slacking off and playing hang man, and one of the tutors sent me a message telling me to do my homework! Other times they would criticize my techniques, but in a constructive way. I went through many difficulties there, but I came out better at mathematics.

The atmosphere in the

PTC is friendly and relaxed. Between working on problem sets, I could take breaks, and the tutors are incredibly down to earth, so much so that talking to them just comes naturally. Tutors would share with me what they were working on and would discuss topics other than the ones they tutored. These chats really put students at ease and create an environment where the fear of failure is taken away.

Since the first time I was tutored at the PTC, I went there a lot more. You can probably find me in the PTC every day now. The environment in the PTC is unique and warming. It is a beautiful niche in NYU-Poly. The people in the tutoring center range from senior professors to future Ph.D. candidates. Despite the multitude of personalities, they all share one thing in common, which is a passion for the subject and an innate curiosity. The tutors are working always to help students and, to the last hour, are willing to stretch out a hand to a new undergraduate with a confusing problem.

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