**EDUCATIONAL SPEECH**

**FOR**

**SHERRYL OLSON**

The mathematician, William Paul Thurston said, “Mathematics is not about numbers, equations, computations, or algorithms. It is about understanding.” Today, we have the honor and pleasure of acknowledging this year’s inductees into Mu Alpha Theta for class of 2023. I’d like to congratulate this year’s talented group of students. I’d also like to recognize the parents, friends, and family members who contribute their tireless encouragement to making sure that our honorees prevail in an arena that is so critically important to our functioning in this world. Numbers… and math… are essential components of every phase of life.

In my thirty-seven years teaching here at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ High School…. and even more …. if you factor in my years as a student, I’ve accrued some numbers and numeric milestones, and I’d like to share some with you… so let’s see how those statistics and integers add up… in that time, I’ve taught about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ students, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of which have become part of this honor society. In the capacity of co-advisor to Mu Alpha Theta, I’ve counseled and encouraged many more students to achieve this prestigious honor. … and I’m 100% proud of every student that has worked with and learned from, me.

The organization itself has some fairly impressive statistics as well. Since it’s founding in 1957, Mu Alpha Theta can claim well over 100,000 members throughout the United States and globally. Its outreach extends to over twenty foreign countries. There are over 2400 chapters….. and all that tells me that each one of you have **A LOT** of company…kindred spirits throughout the country and world who realize the importance of math and how the knowledge and most critically, the **UNDERSTANDING** of the methods and applications serve us in everything we do.

It was Neil deGrasse Tyson who was quoted as saying, “Somehow, it’s okay for people to chuckle about not being good at math, yet if I said, ‘I never learned to read,’ they would say I was an illiterate dolt.” I’ve heard of instances in which young people, just a few years older than you, have abandoned the ability to understand and apply even the most basic of actions involving numbers. I’ve heard that some recent college graduates don’t know how to tell time on an analog clock or wristwatch. Simple mathematical functions… addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, have become “dinosaurs”…. Why bother when the calculator on your **external brain**… I mean mobile phone… does all that “thinking” for you??? (**Wait for the laugh**). In this day and age, when so much is being done for us in the way of calculating and computing to “crack mathematical codes,” it is refreshing to know that the pure curiosity encouraged by the use of practical math and the understanding of the processes involved has a value that is undiminished over time. Believe me when I tell you that you **ALL OF YOU**  will be better off for honoring and understanding the time proven functions that form unshakeable foundations.

The mathematician John Wesley Young reminds us, “It is clear that the chief end of mathematical study must be to make students **think**.” All of your math teachers have challenged you and shared with you their passion for mathematics..... Students always ask the question, “When are we going to use this”…. If I may play a little bit of a devil’s advocate, some of you may not get this reality TV reference, but here goes, “It’s **NOT** about the **PASTA**!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Life is not so literal and neither is the comprehension of math and it’s increasingly mystical branches. The truth is many of you will never have to use the T-Test on a set of data or integrate an inverse trig function. Duke has twenty-four majors that require one or more semesters of Calculus and more that require Statistics. SO… why are you **really** taking all this math and stressing over the AP tests? What are you learning in addition to all this math...that actually is more important to your future success??? You are understanding [HOW](http://www.apple.com) you learn, the importance of improving reading comprehension … Think of trying to untangle those challenging application problems…you’re learning to distinguish clarity in writing ...using proper notation relevant to the topic, computation, perseverance, creative thinking, problem solving, self esteem.... **REMEMBER**… if AP Math was easy...everyone would take it… There’s also the benefits of learning to focus, paying attention to time management, clarifying and committing to goal setting, being fastidious in how you present your work by being mindful to eliminate errors and typos....making sure to prepare for May 4th and May 8 (AP Exams).    We also cannot overlook pledging yourselves to effectiveness...unless you plan to work in a closet… let’s be real… haven’t we all been isolated enough??? Time to collaborate!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). ... you’re the group primed to exhibiting and expanding interpersonal skills, teamwork, listening ability, leadership...if not you, **WHO**??

So… to **SUM** it all up…while you may be **DIVIDED** as you leave here, your impact in this world will be **MULTIPLIED** by the knowledge you share, the excellence you bring to each task and project in which you participate, and the knowledge that, in **ADDITION** to all the hard work you’ve done, being a proud member of Mu Alpha Theta will remain a part of your unique personal and professional **EQUATION** throughout your lives!!! Congratulations and thank you all!!! We’re all very proud of you!!