Two Issaquah High School Students Give Back to the Community through Math Mentoring at Issaquah Middle School

At Issaquah Middle School (IMS), the math team has a duo of passionate mentors: Issaquah High School students Henry Dai and Isaiah Kim. Together they have been helping coach the math team for almost two years alongside IMS math teacher Traci Brewster.

“I’ve been coaching the IMS math team since September 2014,” shared Henry. “Prior to my involvement, I attended IMS for three years and participated with the math team during that time. I have a tremendous passion for math, and my purpose is to motivate and excite younger students who have similar interests as myself.”

Both Isaiah and Henry previously attended IMS and had participated on the math team. When they expressed an interest in mentoring students to Traci Brewster, she jumped at the chance to have two students, passionate about math, share their expertise with younger students.

“I want to encourage an enthusiasm for math,” explained Isaiah, “I know many students these days tend to dislike math as a subject and I’d like to change that.”

During meetings, Henry and Isaiah spend a portion of time speaking about specific mathematical topics and discuss challenging math problems with students. Along with Traci, they also plan out lessons and find different practice tests that will help challenge students.
Although being a mentor takes a lot of time out of their schedules, Henry and Isaiah wouldn’t have it any other way. “My favorite thing about volunteering is the feeling that I contributed to the betterment of the school’s students, and thus the community,” shared Henry. “For myself, the experience has taught me all the challenges and advantages of being a leader. I have seen my teaching ability improve, as well as my public speaking. Many students are very passionate about math and I am very proud of the significant improvements they have all made. Every Sunday, I email Ms. Brewster about the lesson plan for the Monday meeting and often spend hours during the weekend preparing material. It takes me a while to prepare for some meetings, but I enjoy every second. I enjoy math, and I love the opportunity to use my strengths to give back to my community.”

“My favorite thing about volunteering is knowing that I’m helping out students in some way,” explained Isaiah. “With the IMS math team, I get to work with and help various students who have differing interests in math. I think volunteering is beneficial for me because it gives me more experience working with people and I get to reinforce my own math skills while helping others. I’ve seen the students really benefit from the help Henry and I provide. Since we’ve started, most students have shown a gradual increase in enthusiasm for math.”