

Students, parents, staff, and faculty,

This is the 14th time I am addressing a MathPath Closing Ceremony. In these talks I have never addressed themes that would be good for the common man, ... such as the chimeras of success, happiness, and the like. For you will hear these in the many commencement addresses you will attend in your next 15 years.

This camp sequestered you for four weeks. Shielded you from the cacophony of current events, social media, consumption, and other ephemeral things. Gave you instead high things. You tasted what it is to be a mathematician. You had a glimpse of life of the mind.

You were a rough-hewn marble. You still are, [Pause] but the sculptors here have chipped away on you and your form is becoming visible. We discussed math concepts with you. We gave you homework you were barely able to do. And in doing them you did real math and also learned quickly the proper way to express in math.

[Pause]

“Dip him in the river who loves water,” said William Blake long ago. MathPath dipped you in a river of math courses. Surrounded you with peers and teachers such as you never had. Beyond explaining concepts, we believe we were able to

inspire you. [Pause] Inspiration is a change from within and so it lasts.

There is a law in physics called the Hook's Law which states that the amount of stretching is proportional to the tension applied. But we have stretched your mind beyond the elastic limit. You will never return to your original state. You will not only never forget what you learned here together with the teachers but you will teach it to others. You are now more capable than before of doing new things, not just repeating what others have done. You will use your logic to get from one point to another, but with imagination you will do so from any point you care to choose.

It was my intention all along that this camp and the others I created be national gatherings not only for math but also for character. My hope is that the math instruction has been the kind that enabled you to see beyond what is said and savour the mystery of what it is rather than what it is not. But the greater aspect of this camp shall be character building. For it is that which will last you to the end of your days. It is that which will allow others to work smoothly with you. [Pause] Yes, decent men and women who love math and who are kind, easy to get along with and who are beyond the prejudices of the common man. In combining character and the pronounced ability you possess you become valued productions of Time. And as William Blake said, 'Eternity is in love with the productions of time.'