

Chloe Parke
11th Grade
West High School
Utah

What Drives Me?

I am driven by a belief in the importance of a robust mathematical education for all children. Students often have a dismissive attitude toward the subject due to its negative portrayal in media; math is commonly viewed as impossible, boring, or useless. However, it is essential for students to succeed in mathematics. Studies have repeatedly found early math skills are better predictors of future academic success than reading skills, attention skills, or socio-emotional behaviors. By building students' math skills from an early age, I am committed to providing all children with the tools to succeed academically.

To that end, I have volunteered at various math competitions. I experienced the transformational effects of these programs myself during elementary school. A passing interest in the subject soon became a passion after I competed in several introductory competitions. Competitions offer generous prizes and apply math to real life situation in easily digestible word problems. When I first competed, I realized that math is more interesting than just formulas- it requires creative problem solving. It has been really fulfilling to return to these competitions not as a participant, but as a volunteer. I hope my hard work volunteering at these competitions leads to young children also being able to have an early positive experience with math.

I also work for a tutoring service called 'Kumon' that aims to help students develop both academic ability and work ethic. I grade homework as well as tutor elementary to high school-aged students. I strive to provide my students with simultaneously clear and rigorous explanations. My commitment to providing this high quality education has led me to concurrently enroll at the University of Utah to take advanced math courses.

Finally, I am currently the CEO of a STEM-based nonprofit called Mission Math Utah. Our goal is to create awareness and a love of math among elementary and middle school students in our local community. We host math competitions, summer camps, free weekly group lessons, as well as private tutoring. During my tenure at Mission Math Utah, I personally introduced a needs-based financial aid program. Now, any student who qualifies for free or reduced lunch can receive free weekly tutoring lessons. We also raise money and donate it to classrooms around Utah as well as local education initiatives such as the Utah branch of Mathcounts, the Utah STEM Action Center, and Head Start, a free public program that provides early childhood education to low-income families. In 2022 alone, we raised over \$12,000 for these organizations.

I hope to one day attend a college with a strong STEM background, where I can study applied mathematics. This scholarship would let me take one step closer to that dream. But however my road ends, I know I will continue to be driven by my passion for equitable math education.