

Students present projects at Math Open House

By Irina Potapova
ART EDITOR

Digital projectors, laptop computers and countless colorful posters filled the gym on May 24 when math teacher Abby Brown held her fifth Advanced Math Open House. Brown's Calculus D, Linear Algebra and Advanced Topics classes presented projects that demonstrated their accomplishments from the year.

"[The open house is] a true celebration of academics here at school," Brown said. "It's so fun and exciting to see students excited about math ... [It] was one of, if not the, highlight of my teaching career."

Students were able to give presentations about a section or specific problem they studied earlier in the year but also had the opportunity to explore topics outside of the curriculum. They spent the night giving two-minute presentations to peers and parents. Brown said it was a challenge for the students to explain the concepts to an audience with a limited mathematical background, but it was just as tricky explaining them to those in the audience with an advanced mathematical background.

In addition to creating a project for the open house, Calculus C/D student Carolyn Johnson

(12) was a technical coordinator for the event and created a lasting memento of the night by interviewing the students about their projects and filming their responses with her partner Will Chenneveau (12).

"I've never seen a group of people so excited about math," Johnson said. "The night was a celebration. [It was] to show our parents what we've done all year."

Brown spent most of the night speaking with parents who she said were amazed with their children's accomplishments.

One ambitious project that strayed far from the curriculum was presented by Brandon Carter (11). Carter used number theory in combination with other concepts to find the number of prime numbers less than a certain number.

"I own six different books on [the topic] and ... it's probably what I want to study in college," Carter said.

Like other students who used projectors for their presentations, Carter received many visitors at his table. According to Carter, other students sent their parents to listen to his presentation, and he spent the greater part of the evening explaining his work to at least one audience member at all times.

Other students used costumes or allusions to pop culture to attract an audience, like Anthony Neuberger (12), who designed his poster after the movie "The Matrix." Several students used food to enhance their presentations; baked goods like brownies and cakes served as both a visual aid and a treat for audience members.

Calculus C/D student Amy Jacobson (12) and her partner encased a three-dimensional model of a graph in a glass box to help people visualize the ideas in their project.

"For me, presenting was a challenge—to be able to talk to somebody and be able to put something that's really complicated in a way that they could understand it," Jacobson said. "It involved some on-the-spot creativity."

Jacobson said that although she did not have much free time to look at other students' projects, the open house gave her a glimpse of topics she would be learning in the future, like those covered in Linear Algebra.

"I really liked looking at what the other students had done," Jacobson said. "[The project topics] were things that I would be doing eventually, so it was cool to see what other students would be able to do."

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BREAKING IT DOWN: Amy Jacobson (12) explains her math project to Jeff Green (12) at the Advanced Math Open House. Students in Abby Brown's Calculus, Linear Algebra and Advanced Topics classes created projects on problems or topics that they had studied during the year.

Calculus AB student Matt Wagner (12) and others like him went to the open house to support their friends. Like Jacobson, Wagner was impressed by the presentations he saw.

"I was ... kind of floored that students, many of [whom] are younger than me, are better at a subject that is alien to me," Wagner said.

The open house, in addition

to being a celebration of a year's worth of work, was a demonstration of achievements that captured the attention of administrators, parents and students.