

Teacher invites world into math class

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Mathematics can seem like a foreign language to many students. Some students just give up, saying they are incapable of understanding math or that they aren't getting enough help at school. For those students, Yay Math was created.

Yaymath.org is an online tutoring Web site that aims to make learning math fun. Its tutorial videos feature a real teacher and his students in a Los Angeles classroom. Math teacher Robert Ahdoot, 30, created the site in spring 2008 to help high school students and college students realize that math, albeit complicated, can still be fun.



In the videos, Ahdoot's creativity runs from ballads and silly antics to hilarious costumes. Sophia Holloway, 41, of Spring, Texas, stumbled across Ahdoot's site via You Tube, which offers shorter versions of the tutorials on his Web site. "He was dressed in a magician's robe with a hat to match," Holloway recalled in an e-mail. "I looked puzzled at first and then decided to click on the site." Holloway said Ahdoot's students were "laughing and seemed to be enjoying themselves. I laughed and listened and for the first time ever, I enjoyed learning math. I understood clear as day."

When it comes to students not liking or not understanding math, Ahdoot said teachers are sometimes at fault. "If students regularly complain that they can't understand a teacher, or if students regularly complain that a teacher won't answer their questions ... then the teacher is not doing their job," he said. "I blame the teachers, and I blame them openly." Ahdoot acknowledged that there are good teachers who think about their students and put them first. Many teachers "find fulfillment in the success of their students," he said. "So if a good teacher is reading this, I got your back."

Mariah Williams, 17, of Detroit said Ahdoot explained math better than her teacher and that the lessons were broken down well enough for her to understand. "The instructor took his time and explained the lesson," said Williams, who will be a senior at Mumford High School in the fall. "When a student didn't understand something, he went back and explained it. I like the fact that he helped me with my math step-by-step."

Judith Brandt, 41, of Brazil said Yay Math is the best online math tutorial she's found. "In searching the Internet to try to find something challenging, I stumbled upon Yay Math," she wrote in an e-mail. "I had found different videos from all over the Internet, of course, but Yay Math seems to stand out in the crowd."

YayMath.org, which celebrated its one-year anniversary in the spring, boasts of having more than 200,000 hits on YouTube. At least one algebra tutorial - about simplifying radical expressions - shows more than 25,000 hits.

Ahdoot said he plans to post geometry tutorials starting in the fall. And his online learners are ready. "Mr. Ahdoot, keep up the good work," Williams said. "Continue with your lessons, so I can continue to learn."