My Math Journey by Denver N.

Just after completing Algebra I and Geometry, I began math-tutoring sessions with Mr. Larry Whittington of Fort Bend Tutoring in May 2009 for a better foundation in Algebra and to begin studying Algebra II. I took one-hour private in-home lessons twice a week non-stop throughout the year (including summers). I was very poor in math and wished to build a stronger foundation so that I could get higher scores on my math tests. Now, thanks to Fort Bend Tutoring, math is one of my strongest subjects and I have scored well on the Math portion of the SAT and the College Algebra and Precalculus CLEP tests.

I used the Glencoe/McGraw Hill Algebra 2 curriculum from May 2009 to December 2009 to great success. The course provided excellent examples for every type of problem and supplied more than enough practice questions to firmly establish every concept and commit to memory. The course was very well written and easy to understand; definitely an excellent curriculum to use for Algebra 2. Perhaps the only issue in this course is the lack of depth on the topic probability and a small number of practice problems for word problems dealing with algebraic concepts. While the included material on probability is more than enough to satisfy any requirements of Algebra 2, those wishing for more in-depth detail regarding probability - as I was - will have to turn to a specialized college probability text. The added practice definitely went a long way in helping me to understand some of the harder concepts in probability. I also went back to some Algebra/College Algebra texts for supplemental practice in word problems, as they were one of my weaker mathematical points and the Glencoe book did not provide quite enough practice for me. However, if you're solid on word problems, there should be no issue on the Glencoe book's depth on the topic.

Also quite helpful during Algebra 2 were FBT's Simply Math Workbooks, specifically Workbook #12: The Factoring of Trinomials. Trinomial factoring was by far my weakest part of algebra and Fort Bend Tutoring's workbook - consisting of 200 problems of increasing difficulty - not only enabled me to get some much-needed practice, but also gave me complete mastery over the concept. Even if you don't have issues with trinomial factoring, I highly recommend FBT's workbooks for the solidity that they add to your mathematical foundation; not to mention, the workbooks are great reference materials in both high-school and college level courses.

Starting in January 2010, I began using the 3rd Edition of the Pearson/Prentice Hall Precalculus curriculum until May 2010. Each chapter was very informative, containing points and facts on each of the topics of the lesson. With even more practice problems than the Glencoe Algebra 2 book, - at around 110 problems a lesson - the Pearson Pre-Calculus book provides ample opportunity to fully master the material. No problems with this one, a solid textbook and highly recommended for both high-school and college Precalculus.

In May 2010, I began preparing for the June 2010 College Algebra CLEP test with Mr. Whitt. During preparation, I used the REA CLEP Prep book and while this was very helpful, it did not end up providing every bit of knowledge needed for the test. Therefore, Mr. Whitt and I went over several standard

college algebra textbooks, and the combined prep of REA and these texts was more than enough to fully prepare me for the CLEP test. The passing grade can be anywhere from a 50-60 out of 80 (Equivalent to a C - A grade in the course) depending on the college and a solid month-and-a-half of preparation more than equips you to pass even stringent requirements with flying colors. I passed with a 63 and definitely would not have scored nearly as high without the extra review. I do highly recommend taking the CLEP immediately after the Algebra 2 course is finished, as the information needed to pass is still fresh in the mind. I waited a good six months before taking the test and, unfortunately, lost quite a bit of the material and needed to review. Don't wait to take the test! If you take it immediately, much less preparation is required.

Following the June 2010 College Algebra CLEP, I began studying for the Precalculus CLEP. Again, I used the REA prep, but unlike the College Algebra edition, the Pre-Calculus edition did not prove near as helpful in fully preparing me for the test. However, all that was needed was some review of the Pearson Precalculus book. Passing grade is usually 50-55, depending on the college. Thanks to the added review with Mr. Whittington, I scored a 55 on my Precalculus CLEP. Again, no review would have been needed if I had taken the test immediately after the end of the Pre-Calculus course. Looking back, that was the only thing I would have done differently. I would have taken the tests right after their respective courses.

Starting in August 2010, I began preparing to take the October 2010 SAT. I took an SAT prep course to aid me in the reading and writing prep, and I studied with Mr. Whittington for two months straight in order to sufficiently prepare myself for the math section. We used the Collegeboard Official SAT Prep booklet and went through timed math sections in order to get a feel for the test and build confidence. All the SAT needs is a lot of practice and studying to get a good score. Two months of review and dozens upon dozens of practice problems later, the hard work with Mr. Whittington paid off with a score of 710 on the SAT Math section.

Beginning in November 2010, I started the Houghton-Mifflin Calculus course with Mr. Whittington. This book is very well written and the examples are clear. It also provides plenty of practice problems for solidifying any shaky concepts. One thing I'll point out about this book is that the first three chapters are rather easy. To supplement this, Mr. Whitt brought one of his calculus books for the added challenge. While the book definitely provided the challenge that the Houghton book did not, its explanations were confusing and the concepts were not as clear as in the first book. After chapter three, the Houghton book did rise notably in difficulty to match the other book's level of challenge. Definitely a great book to use for your Calculus curriculum, and, as an added bonus, you feel like a genius for the first three chapters of the book.

All in all, I think one of the keys to accomplishing so much mathematically in such a short amount of time is to keep working through the summer. You have no idea how much is lost when you go three months without practicing. After all, "If you don't use it, you lose it." This statement is especially true of math. If math is worked on through the summer, there is no need to waste time going over topics and concepts from the previous year. The time can be spent learning new material and moving forward at a faster pace.