Thomas Jennigan

“\textit{I wish I could understand this stuff faster. I don’t really need Math, I just want to get through this course.}”

Thomas grew up in a strict family, and his parents had high academic expectations of him. His parents insisted him to take piano lessons and tennis lessons. In his spare time, he truly enjoys basketball and skateboarding with his friends. He plays Playstation 2 video games a lot. Sometimes on weekends, he just wants to sit around and watch movies and go out with a couple of buddies.

As he moved on from elementary school to middle school, he found himself falling behind in Math classes. He had problems concentrating on his homework, and he noticed that other classmates seem to understand the concepts quickly and not have the same questions that he has. As more concepts were introduced in class, he gradually accumulated more problems in Math. He became reluctant to ask questions in class or request help in after-school remedial classes.

He finds that he relies on the calculator to give him answers, but his strategy tends to be hit or miss, because he doesn’t truly understand the math concepts. Whenever Thomas gets a correct answer, he assumes that he understands the concept. This makes him extremely frustrated when he gets other problems wrong. He just wishes he could just press a buttons and get the right answers. Thomas wants to get through problems as quickly as possible. When he gets to word problems, he often just picks out the numbers to put them in an equation without reading the question. He gets really thrown off when numbers are spelled out or when some pre-calculations must be done before plugging the numbers in the equations (such as changing the time in terms of the same units).

He just wants to understand the minimal amount of material to get through the course. He has certain students that he turns to for help in the class, because they will try to help him, tell him what buttons to push in order to get the right answer, but they won’t be mean to him or make him feel stupid. He likes doing homework in groups with these students in class, but he does not like to expose his weaknesses in Math and he doesn’t like to feel that he is slowing other students down when they have to explain concepts to him. When his Math teacher, Mrs. Barry, or his classmates explain to him solutions to problems, he would pretend that he understands, so that others don’t think he is “stupid”. Thomas tells his friends that he doesn’t get high grades because he is not a nerd.

\textbf{Goals}

1. To get through his problems as quickly as possible.
2. Finding out how to do problems
3. Not feel stupid
4. Understand concepts immediately with minimal effort