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8 Darien High School Girls Divided Into 2 Teams Saturday = Yale Math Competition + Advice

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Eight Darien High School girls divided into two teams entered the first ever “[Girls in Math](#)” event Saturday, which featured math competitions plus advice from a college professor on entering a math- or science-related field.

Participation in the event, which took place at Yale University, was sponsored by the DHS chapter of the [Mu Alpha Theta national math honor society](#).

"This was a great opportunity for our female math students to learn more about what it is like to work in STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Math] fields from other girls and women those currently in those fields," said Matt Buchta, DHS Math Teacher and Mu Alpha Theta club advisor.

The day included a math competition that had an individual and team component. Schools were allowed to send a maximum of two teams of four, and Darien fielded a full complement.

The teams participated in a particularly challenging math competition which included a team round and individual test, Buchta said, with each question required new learning before it could be answered.

"Our girls represented DHS and it's math program very well," considering it was their first exposure to this type of competition, but did not place in the top three teams out of the 20 competing, Buchta said.

Students heard about the career pathway of Yale Physics Professor Adriane Steinacker, whose career took her from Romania to Germany, NASA, and the University of California-Santa Cruz before coming to Yale, as well as her research in planet formation.

Her biggest message was that there is no one pathway in STEM fields, not to give up, be comfortable with spending a lot of time working on something — and then being wrong. Be confident and share your discoveries when you know you're right.

She was also very clear that mathematics is the key to any STEM field, with a secondary background in statistics and computer science.

About 60 students from 11 schools attended the event, divided into 20 teams, according to Buchta. (That means the Darien students were 13.3 percent [rounding down] of the total, Darienite.com calculates.)

Students came from 10 schools across Connecticut and Massachusetts, and students from another flew in from Georgia. Some schools did not field full teams, so those students were combined to form teams, he added.

Summing up, Buchta said that through sponsoring the girls' participation in the event it was "a pleasure to support our strong and motivated girls in their interests in math and related fields."