

☺ *You've Got Potential Ding* ☺

“You know Petela, freshman year when I began to talk to you, I remember one phrase distinctly to describe what you thought of me. You said, “You've got potential Ding.” Now, I was ecstatic that you knew my name, let alone thought I had potential, but then again I was a naive freshman. I was ready to accept any compliment. Then sophomore year rolled around, and I went to two conferences and yet still no awards. But still you said, “You've got potential.” I was beginning to question it. Maybe I wasn't as great of a debater as you thought I was. Maybe I wasn't living up to what you thought was my potential. Then came junior year, a busy year to say the least. But junior president? I was confused. Here I was, a veteran of three years, with not an award to my name, and you not only made me junior president but still held, “You've got potential Ding.” I thought it was a mistake. I thought I couldn't be what you thought I was. I was no great debater, I was merely a sheep in wolves clothing. And finally, senior year arrived -- I had fully given up on being a successful debater when... “and the gavel goes to Chen Ding.” I was dumbfounded but somehow, Petela, you weren't. You just stood there with your camera and said, “I knew you had potential, Ding.” And here, now, Petela, I admit it, you were right. I don't know what it was that helped you see something in me that I couldn't even realize. Maybe it was your many years of experience, or just overall insight into Model Congressors. Or maybe, you created my potential. You believed in me and I knew I couldn't let you down. Whatever it was, it worked, and I couldn't be more grateful. And now, as I move on to UPenn, I know I'll succeed because you told me that I'll do great, and as if an echo from the past years you said to me one last time, “You've got potential, Ding.”

Petela, I don't know what I would have done without Model Congress. Honestly, graduation wasn't as sad as I know the MC banquet will be. I knew graduation was coming, I always knew that I was going to complete high school, but all that I've learned and accomplished in Model Congress will be hard to let go. I owe so much to the club and you. Sometimes I wish I could have another year in school just to experience Model Congress again, it has become such a large part of my life, and there will definitely be a void next year. No more meetings, no more pictures, no more Petela letters, no more schedules filled with game faces and smiley faces, no more room drama, no more bus bonding, no more conferences... I feel as if I'm losing something by moving on. I know that I'm on to bigger and better things but I don't think anything will surpass the experiences I've had with Model Congress. They've truly changed my life.

I don't think that I can even put into words what I have learned from Model Congress. The experiences have given me lessons that are far beyond the range of expression, but I will try anyway. Debate, the art and the practice itself -- Freshman year, would I have even dared to think about standing in front of a few hundred of my peers and voice my own opinion. I think not. However, through the past four years of practice, I have worked my way up and now I can persuasively and passionately debate and support my own views confidently. World Awareness, its necessity and importance -- Arriving in high school I would have asked, what is renewable energy? Now, I not only know what it is, I have thoroughly researched its manufacturing, usage, cost efficiency, and created my own opinion on how it should be used. If you told me that I was going to be doing this much work, research, and debate freshman year, chances are I would have laughed, laughed and walked away. But the thing is, it wasn't work at all. It was passion; it was no longer a burden to write bills, but a curiosity quenching learning experience; standing up to debate was no longer just to impress Petela when he walked into the room, but became a chance to voice my opinion, sound my own ideas and make them count, to make a difference; and helping underclassmen was no longer just a duty, it became a want, a want for all the next years' students and generations afterwards' to experience everything we have and appreciate them the same. The most valuable experience however, has been more personal. What I really define Model Congress as is a club that teaches you lessons in love and friendship. Friendship, one word that holds worlds of meaning. Model Congress has you make friends, build friendships, and keep them. Sounds pretty simple, but not when your new friends are all from vastly different places, have different political view, religious affiliations, and seemingly nothing in common. This is truly when the word friendship holds meaning, coming together despite our differences for a common cause, making the conferences the best learning and fun experiences they can be. Friendship, however, holds yet another meaning in Model Congress. Between your classmates, you strengthen your friendships even when they may be strained. Spending five, long, never ending days together may appear to be a teenager dream come true, but it is barely that. For an experience Model Congressor, we know that it means five days of dealing with each others' pet peeves, eating, sleeping, living with each other, and of course a

lot of built up animosity from committee (which leads to room drama and many other problems that Petela has patiently dealt with for many years, thank you Petela). As friends, though, we learn to deal. We learn to realize that we are all human, we all make mistakes, we may fight but it can only make us stronger. Thanks to Petela and his many built in "bonding" sessions we can always remember to have fun. Through the good times (bowling and yoga) and the bad times (failed bills and embarrassing speeches) we stick together. Why? Because we are BHS Model Congress, it's who we are. Which leads me to the last, but definitely not least, thing Model Congress has given me. Through the past four years, Model Congress has earned a well deserved place in my heart. I now love many things I thought I was indifferent to. I have grown to love debate, current events, and expressing myself. What's more though, is that I have grown to love the club itself, my fellow Model Congressors (especially my fellow presidents who I have grown close to through many long and late nights of Model Congress labor), and of course, Petela. MCongress has made these past four years the most amazing years of my life, thanks Petela ☺

Underclassmen, I have a made a bit of a rule list for you. Somewhat like a "Guidelines to Succeeding in BHS Model Congress." Hope they will help you as much as they have helped me in my experience. Some of them may be tough love, but you're in Model Congress now, be tough, Game Face ☺

- Listen to Petela. The Golden Rule.
- Respect. Yourself, peers, officers, Petela, chair. The Golden Rule 2.
- Believe in yourself. Corny, I know, but attitude is everything.
- Don't second guess yourself, don't be reluctant. Have confidence in yourself.
- Get back on the horse. MC is not long enough to let yourself wallow about a failed bill. Fight back.
- Be nice. Make friends. I'm not saying be a pushover, but be nice and firm. Chairs love it, plus you'll get automatic supporters for your bill.
- Be likable. Sometimes it pays to be the always rebel pain. But in the chairs eyes and in your committee members' they want to like you, so help them out a bit.
- When in doubt, play devil's advocate. Trying to debate the other side may help you be less bias and is a telltale sign of a good debater to chairs.
- Be flexible. Sometimes, chairs and rules aren't fair, and sometimes you can all them out politely. But sometimes you can't. Deal.
- Try to be punctual. It makes everyone's lives easier. I know its hard but try. Try not to be on "Petela time" – That's reserved for him only...he's earned it ☺
- Be social. Get outside opinions, talk, and casually express opinions. In meetings, at the conference. It's like testing the waters before jumping in.
- Focus. Committee time is game time. Concentrate on what is going on and you'll do your best. Leave the fooling around for let loose time afterwards.
- Don't overpack. It just makes your trip more burdensome when you have to pack up and on your back.
- Thank Petela. He does a lot more than you may think, so stop in once in a while and talk to him. He'll appreciate it, and will remember it when he's deciding presidents ☺
- Have fun. You knew this was coming. But it is very necessary. The Model Congress atmosphere is very demanding and absorbing. But stop. Smell the roses once in a while. Enjoy the time you have. Trust me, it'll be over before you know it ☺

With Love, Chen Ding, BHS Class of 2008, University of Pennsylvania Class of 2012

P.S. I'll be looking forward to seeing you next year at the Penn conference ☺ [And we'll look forward to seeing her too, as chair of the Blue Senate Judiciary B Committee. BHSMCers beware & be on best behavior!]

Chen's MCareer -- Freshman year: Columbia - Foreign Relations / AIDS relief; **Sophomore year:** Yale - Foreign Relations / Avian Flu Prevention. Harvard - Energy and Commerce / Airport Gate Monopoly Prevention; **Junior year:** Yale - Energy and Commerce / Decreasing Chinese Imports. Penn - Energy and Commerce / Increasing Renewable Energy; Princeton Moot Court – Court Cases; **Senior year:** Princeton - Energy and Commerce / Ceasing Research Money for Corn Ethanol (**Gavel**). Harvard - District Court Trial Team 2 / Pappas & Cromwell Cases

☺ **Needless to say, Chen is one of our all time best. She is missed** ☺