

- 1.) To what extent is teaching dependent on the level of the student's ability?
How does one adjust (if at all) one's pedagogy with this in mind?

Teaching depends largely on a student's ability level. In a college bound class, the focus is to gear students toward what they will encounter in a college setting. In a collaborative class, one tries to teach what is required. In an average class, the goal is to get them to reach beyond what is simply required. In all classes, the teacher tries to challenge all students to reach beyond what they feel they are capable of doing without frustrating them in the process. This is especially true for the extremes- the gifted and the special needs students. If students are not challenged, they become bored. If they become frustrated, they oftentimes will give up.

- 2.) Do the Teacher Mentors believe that students build knowledge on previous knowledge (a constructivist approach)?

Absolutely.

- 3.) What is the nature of classroom interactions between students and teachers?

It is a fine line and a delicate balance. Teachers need to be able to talk to their students to find out their aspirations, their thought processes, and what is going on in their lives. They need to be someone that a student feels comfortable coming to with a problem; whether it is a math problem or something going on in their life. However, there always has to be an understanding that this is a teacher-student relationship, not a friendship. That is a line that should not be crossed. Students should see the teacher as an adult that they can come to, but not as a peer.

- 4.) To what extent do you use technology/Should one use technology?

Technology, when used appropriately, is an exceptional tool in a teacher's arsenal. It is vital that both teachers and students utilize technology, given the vast usage of it in society.

However, I strongly believe that technology should only be used to enhance or promote learning, not take the place of true learning. The exception to this rule would be for special needs students or students that were incapable of learning the material otherwise. The use of technology in my classroom comes in a variety of forms: videos, webquests, web-based activities, Power Point presentations, graphing calculators, etc. The goal in using the technology is to enhance or promote learning in my students.

5.) To what extent do you use manipulatives?/Should one use manipulatives?

Manipulatives are a wonderful tools in their place. They are phenomenal in teaching abstract ideas to concrete thinkers. However, they should only be used as a vehicle to get your concrete thinkers/struggling students to the abstract ideas. They should never be fully relied upon because they simply are not feasible to use in college or in the real world.

6.) To what extent does the existence of a state-wide assessment (or NCTM standards) bear on style or pedagogy?

These standards are our dictates. They are what we are required to teach and what students are required to learn. There is a large push to use inquiry learning in classes and that is playing out in classrooms across Kentucky.

- 7.) To what extent should students be responsible for their own learning? (For example, should students be assigned much homework out of class? Does this depend on the course (ALG I for College Bound vs. slower moving ALG I)?)

My job as a teacher is to make learning for my students as appealing as I can and to convince students that they are capable of doing more than what they believe that they can. However, if my students do not want to learn- and as heartbreaking as it is- there is honestly very little I can do. Practice makes perfect. This is especially true in a math class. Students need time to process what they have been taught and revise their learning if it is faulty. Homework is the perfect avenue for this. I do believe that homework should be limited. Practicing the wrong thought process repeatedly is ineffective.. This holds true regardless if it is a regular class versus a college bound class.

- 8.) To what extent does parental involvement change the pedagogical approach of the Teacher Mentor?

Parents'/guardians' views of the subject matter and their child impact the learning process enormously. A teacher will have a harder time convincing a child that the subject matter is necessary for them to learn or that they are capable of learning if the parent/guardian does not believe that the subject is important, or they do not believe that they themselves or the child is capable of learning the material. Therefore, it is vital that a teacher tell a student why they need to know the material and the real world applications of the material. It is also important to bring in guest speakers from time to time to talk to students about the importance of the material they are trying to learn.

9.) What role does the textbook play in your course? What role would you like it to play?

It is more of a guideline. It helps lend structure to the courses that we teach. I prefer using it this way.

10.) What is the role of structured time in learning? (say individual vs. group work)

It depends on the learning goal that one is trying to achieve. Group work is a fantastic tool to use in activities such as inquiry, peer tutoring, games, etc. Group activity learning goals can range from obtaining new learning, discovery learning, or reviewing. Individual work is best used when a teacher needs to find out the individual needs of his/her students.

11.) How does the tension between student discipline, attitude, and learning play out in the approach of the Teacher Mentor to pedagogy?

Teaching hinges on the level of discipline a teacher has in his/her classroom. It is the single most important key that unlocks the door to learning. Without discipline very little learning will occur. The level of discipline a teacher has in his/her classroom depends on two things: backing from administrators and the consistency the teacher brings into his/her classroom. If either dynamic is missing, the level of respect a student has for the teacher diminishes and the number of discipline problems that teacher has rises monumentally. Without discipline, the teacher goes into survival mode instead of being able to actively engage his/her students in true learning.

12.) Is there a “rural nature to math pedagogy”? Answer anyway you like. For example, for those teachers who have taught either in suburban or city schools, do you see a difference in your approach at Bath or Powell County to your approach at an urban school? {There is debate in the literature as to whether there is a true meaning to “rural mathematics education”}

No. Students are basically the same regardless of setting, the only difference perhaps being that one may find a greater percentage of people with a particular mindset. A teacher will encounter the entire gamut of attitudes regardless of location.