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 is dependent on the level of the student’s ability. Instruction is provided at a slower rate and in smaller chunks to regular ability students. The mathematically gifted students are taught at a faster pace. As a result, the gifted students often get more concepts taught to them than the regular students do.

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

Students do build knowledge on previous knowledge. However, often one must revisit concepts previously taught before the building takes place.

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

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

Technology is not used to a great extent. Technology should be used whenever the opportunity arises.

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

Manipulatives should be used frequently. However, because of time constraints manipulatives are not used as much as perhaps they should be.

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

State-wide assessment determines the content taught in each class. As for teaching style, the state-wide assessment has an impact on instructional practices. In an effort to improve test scores and to make learning fun for students, our school leadership plays a large role in driving our school’s instructional strategies.

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)?

Students are assigned homework out of class. There isn’t enough time in a class period for the students to get the practice they need to master the concepts.

8.) To what extent does parental involvement change the pedagogical approach of the Teacher Mentor?
There is very little parental involvement. Therefore, parents don’t have much of an impact on classroom instruction.

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

The textbook is not used very often in the Algebra classes. The Geometry textbook guides the Geometry classes. I would rather the textbook be used as a resource as opposed to guiding the course.

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

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

In classes that are difficult to manage, there is a reluctance to try strategies in which students are in control of their own 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”}

The way I teach is different now than when I first started teaching in city schools several years ago. I don’t think this has anything to do with rural versus suburban schools. I think times have changed and teaching strategies have had to change with the times.