I find that my ideas about teaching have changed somewhat over the many years I have taught but one thing has remained constant. I feel that it is my job to see that my students leave my class knowing more than when they entered. My strategies that I use may have changed over the past thirty years but I still have that as my goal. I think that my job as a teacher is to guide my students toward the ability to teach themselves, since learning is a life long activity and the majority of it takes place outside of the school setting.

The previous knowledge the students bring to my class has a definite impact on their learning. By building on that learning I can bridge the gap between the concrete nature of elementary school and the abstract work of upper level mathematics. The ability of the students does have an affect on the strategies I use for teaching. With lower functioning students I will spend more time developing the topic conceptually with manipulatives and less time with abstract concepts. With my higher functioning students I will spend less time with manipulatives and more with reasoning and abstract thinking. I have found that the use of manpulatives is best when beginning a new concept, but once students have learned a method for solving problems they find the use of manipulatives to be less useful. I think that the use of calculators in elementary school has been detrimental to the abilities of some of the students. If students resort to using calculators before they learn the basics it makes it more difficult for them to deal with more abstract topics in algebra. However, calculators can be a useful tool at the middle and high school level.

As students progress through school they should become more responsible for their learning. I don’t think homework is always necessary, but a certain amount of practice is needed for mastery of a topic and that practice tends to become homework for some students.