Teaching Statement

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There are three themes to my teaching philosophy. These are variety of teaching methods, class participation, and feedback. I find that by employing the first, the second comes easily and has a positive effect on the third.

First of all, it is my goal to present material in a way that is interesting and approachable to the students, while preparing them for future classes or jobs that require mathematics/mathematical thinking. To this end, I employ several different teaching styles in the classroom in order to add variety to my instruction. More specifically, besides the necessary lectures, I use small group and discovery learning, and when appropriate, incorporate computers or graphing calculators into the classroom. Not only does this variety help in presenting the material and keeping students’ attention, it also seems to encourage class participation.

When in front of any class, I urge students to interact with me concerning the material I am presenting, but I usually like participation to be voluntary. Because I see the classroom experience as a cooperative effort from teacher-to-student and student-to-student, whenever possible, I have students come to the chalkboard to demonstrate mathematics. In addition, at the first opportunity, I circulate around the room, asking and answering questions, so that everyone stays involved. Unless I am lecturing, I am not at the front of the room. Instead, I am constantly “working the room” and interacting with my students.

I view feedback as falling into two categories, namely formal and informal. One example of the latter is the verbal communication in the classroom mentioned above. Another example is the short written comments from students which I request in the first few weeks of class. This is very informal and anonymous, so that I can assess my teaching and make the necessary adjustments or explanations. Asking for feedback in this way helps my relations with students because they are pleased that I care about their opinion of the class and my teaching so far. For more formal feedback, I use the structured university evaluations at the end of the semester. Finally, in terms of formal teacher-to-student assessment, I believe in frequent, equitable, written feedback to my students. This takes the form of regular homework, quizzes, and tests, all of which are graded and returned to students in a timely fashion.

My students have described my courses as “tough, but fair” and I am pleased with this description. They must work hard to earn an A, but it is also clear that everyone has an equal opportunity to achieve this, or any, grade.

Courses Taught:

A. University of Illinois: Intermediate and College Algebras, Business Calculus and Calculus I and II
B. Saint Louis University: Intermediate and College Algebras, Business Calculus, and Basic Math
C. Parkway School District: High School Geometry, Math Analysis, and Calculus