

Teaching Statement

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I enjoy teaching mathematics and I have had the opportunity to teach students of different ages, backgrounds, and abilities. I have taught semester-long calculus courses to undergraduates, I have designed and taught a summer course to incoming college freshman, and I have also taught sixth, seventh, and eighth grade mathematics in the New York City public school system. I have gained many valuable skills from these experiences and believe that I have developed a very effective teaching style.

One of the most difficult challenges in teaching a mathematics course is determining the proper pace to present the material. An instructor often has to balance his or her desire to satisfy those students with a strong command of the course material without losing those students who are struggling in the course. One way to rectify this situation is to determine at the beginning of the semester what each student should learn by the end of the course, and then develop a detailed syllabus for achieving this goal. By doing so, the instructor establishes a natural pace for the semester and each student knows what is expected of them. This also helps students that have fallen behind in the course by letting them know what is needed for them to catch up. To benefit the more advanced students, supplemental problems can be included in the syllabus.

As a teacher of mathematics, I believe it is essential to place great emphasis on preparing and presenting my lectures. Many students cannot learn from a text alone, therefore a large portion of the success of my teaching depends on my lectures and my lecture notes. I organize my lectures by creating a systematic way in which the material should appear in the student's notebooks. This ensures that lectures are presented in a logical order, and it also make it easier to determine how well my lectures complement the course text. Envisioning the placement of the material on the blackboard and mentally reciting the lecture several times before the class helps me to present the topics smoothly and efficiently.

For many students, mathematics can be an intimidating subject. To help students overcome this anxiety, it is important to create an atmosphere that encourages students to ask questions and be actively involved with the course. I encourage students to attend office hours and I try to meet with each student at least once during the semester to get their feedback on the course. This helps the students feel more comfortable while also giving me more input on how I can improve my teaching style.

The students that attend office hours tend to be the students who are either struggling or who are extremely motivated. This often excludes a majority of the class. For this reason, I try to hold "informal office hours." These take place at a regularly scheduled time in a location like a coffee shop, café, or the group study area of the library. Students often feel comfortable discussing mathematics and

asking questions in an informal setting where they do not feel like they are being put on the spot. I have found that many students, regardless of how they are doing in the class, attend these sessions.

Another non-traditional method that can be used to increase student involvement in a course is to create a course blog. This is an interactive web site where anyone can post questions or comments related to the course material. There are many ways that a blog could supplement more traditional teaching methods. Unlike e-mail, for instance, anyone can view the questions and answers that are posted, and the answers can be discussed afterward by everyone in the course. Since questions could be posted anonymously, a blog also gives students an opportunity to ask questions that they might otherwise not feel comfortable asking.

Although I have always been a passionate student of mathematics, thanks to my years of experience as a teacher, my passion for teaching math has also grown immensely. I find both the role of teacher and student not only rewarding, but intricately intertwined. It is a pleasure to help students mature academically and to share my enthusiasm for mathematics. Because I am always looking for new and better ways to teach mathematics, I believe my teaching style continues to be effective and helpful to students.