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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I believe that it is the responsibility of every person to serve and encourage others. We are to help others to recognize and develop their talents. I strive to prepare my students for the future. Hence, the core of my teaching philosophy is to understand the way my students think, to show them respect, and to encourage them at every opportunity. As a teacher of mathematics, I train my students to think logically, providing them with lasting problem solving skills.

I believe that interaction - between teacher and students and between students and other students - is the most important aspect of teaching. I thrive on student questions and answers. Not only do they facilitate learning, but they also indicate what my students do not understand. I ask questions regularly, and I praise my students for asking questions and for providing answers. I get excited about this collaboration, and I express that to my students by making eye contact and smiling. When students give incorrect answers, I look for the logic in what they have said. Then, I can express an understanding of their thinking, correct their errors, and commend them for their efforts. In addition, student-to-student interaction also provides students with additional opportunities to explain and defend their methods and understanding. Working in groups strengthens student knowledge and mastery of the material. I also demand that my students treat each other with respect.

During lesson preparation, as in class, it is my priority to place myself into the position of my students. I consider what my students should know by that point in the course and what they might not know. I am mindful that most of my students are unfamiliar with the new material. I build the lesson using small steps, elucidating on new terms and ideas. Certain key words act as triggers for students, enabling them to piece together the methods they need to solve problems. I work to predict student questions, and I prepare to answer those questions.

We often forget the topical material that our teachers cover in our college courses; however, the methods of thinking often endure. In mathematics, problem solving and logical thinking are those methods. The solution of each math problem provides insight and resolves issues. Each step builds on the one before, using tools we have already learned. Even if students do not enter into a scientific field, these reasoning skills will serve them throughout their lives.

As I cover the material in the course, I emphasize conceptualization and motivation. I incorporate everyday language and analogies whenever possible. For example, we know intuitively that an object has a particular speed every moment that it is in motion. The derivative empowers us to quantify this instantaneous speed. With further differentiation, we know when the object moves the fastest and when it is slowing down or speeding up. The derivative eliminates the need for approximation.

My mission is to impart tools to students that they will use inside and outside of academics. I teach my students to be self-confident and to be aware of their individual worth, regardless of the grades they earn. I wish for each of them to have a successful and fulfilling life.

Please see my short movie for reducing test anxiety and my sample lesson videos at www.gallowaysoftware.com/steve.