

# Expert or one-time-struggler as a teacher?

I have often reflected on teaching a particular subject I was good at in school- math. Face it, either you're good at math or you're not- it's just one of those subjects. If you get it then you're well on your way to high grades, but if you don't...

As a great student in math I have struggled to teach it sometimes. It's like, "Why don't you get it? I just showed you how to do it!" Even now, with all this sub experience, I often either go too fast and leave some students struggling or I take too long to teach it as if I'm afraid of going too fast. It's difficult to find the right balance. Okay, to be fair as a sub I don't know the students, so getting the right balance is just not possible, but it doesn't stop me from wondering. Today I subbed in 6th grade, but this kind of goes back to last week too when I was in that 3rd/4th grade class for a few days and only taught math. Then, the teacher wanted one section taught per day if at all possible. Four days, didn't quite finish two sections. Well, three days really since there was no math on the last day.

Today was a little different- she assigned five journal pages out of **two sections!** Well, I guess she didn't really want me to teach it. I wound up just going over a few examples on the board from each section and letting them work, asking questions or work with a partner as needed. I think in this case working with a partner was almost mandatory since I didn't have time to teach full lessons. Did she want it done this way? I'll never know.

This makes me think of a proof that I am slow at teaching math: the University of Chicago math program. This seems to be used *everywhere*. Well, at least in elementary schools. This is a very structured program meant to be taught in about

one hour. This includes a game included in most lessons, but I rarely have time for when I teach the program for some reason. It starts off with a "math message," which is a math problem that will lead into the lesson. This is followed by a full-group lesson that often involves some sort of manipulative which aids kinesthetic learners (touch), which believe it or not is most people. True, many can learn by seeing or even by hearing, but touch really makes a difference in many people. A Chinese sage once said after all:

I hear and I forget.

I see and I remember.

I do and I understand.

In any event, following the full-group lesson there are small group, partner, and/or individual activities (one of which is the aforementioned game). I think I need a full 90 minutes to get through all of it sometimes!