

In Praise of Elementary School Teachers

If you can read this sign, thank your second grade teacher.

-- bumper sticker seen on the back bumper of an automobile

The fact that you are viewing this web site indicates that for one reason or another you want to learn more about mathematics. In that sense you are a teacher (who may have only yourself as your student). Thus this web site is for everyone who would like to understand more about basic mathematics.

However the target audience for this web site is the unsung hero of the battle in the trenches -- the elementary school teacher!

There is a reading teachers' motto that says "You learn to read in grades K through 2; and the rest of your life you read to learn". There is an order of the Catholic church whose slogan is "Give me the boy until he is seven and you can have the man thereafter". and in this vein we believe it is true that far you will progress on the road to mathematical success is determined by how your experiences in learning math in the elementary school.

Yet through no fault of their own, too many elementary school teachers enter the classroom without having sufficiently internalized it and hence use mastering the computational algorithms as their coping skills. they teach students to know "how" but rarely, if ever, to know "why". These teachers are required to teach all of the academic disciplines while their counterparts at the higher grade levels need only excel in one area of the subject matter (for example I attended MIT for 5 years as a graduate students just to become more knowledgeable with mathematics). They work long hours, attend numerous workshops and often use their own money to purchase needed resources for their students.

I once met a fifth grade teacher who proudly showed me his "business card". Aside from his name and the fact that he was a fifth grade teacher, all that it said on the card was "A dealer in precious commodities". With this motto in mind, this web site is devoted to presenting these "guardians of our next generation" with an additronal tool to use as a supplment to what they are already trying to accomplish in their classrooms.