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The Accidental Teacher

Mathematics has always fascinated me and I have always wanted to talk about it, explain it, and share it. However, until I had a tenure-track university position and complete autonomy in the classroom I had no interest in being a teacher. Following someone else's rules about what content to present just was not interesting to me when I had a fascinating mathematical puzzle waiting to be solved.

In 1994 I joined the brand new University of Northern British Columbia and, among many other things, had the responsibility of designing and teaching the upper year algebra courses. This was interesting to me and the first Abstract Algebra class with three students went well. By January of 1995 I had a repetitive stress injury in my right hand and had to limit the amount of writing I did. The same three students and I had another class together in which I wrote almost nothing and we started an exploration in communicating mathematics that I continue to this day.

Since then I have spent much time thinking about the meta-level of communicating mathematics, that is, the analysis of what worked and what did not.

In this talk I will highlight some of the (funny, successful, and disastrous) approaches that I have used to try to communicate mathematics. I will also explore my version of analyzing what it is that I do.