**Analyze a conversation between Keith Jackson, a struggling, first-year, middle school math teacher, and Jan Davis, a four-year “veteran” who has become his confidant. As you read this case study, think about the teachers’ approach to teaching and how it might influence their students’ learning.**

As Keith walks into the work room at Lakeside Middle School, Jan looks up and asks,

“Hi, Keith. How’s it going?” “My last period class is getting to me,” Keith replies. “The students are okay when we just stick to mechanics, but they simply can’t do word problems. . . . And they hate them. . . . They just try to memorize formulas and enough to get by. “I have a good math background, and I was going to be so great when I got here. . . . I’m not so sure any more. . . . I explain the stuff so carefully, but some of the kids just sit with blank looks on their faces. Then, I explain it even more carefully, and . . . nothing. “And, there’s Kelly. She disrupts everything I do. I gave her a referral, and I even called her mother. . . . The only thing that seemed to work was taking her aside and asking her straight out why she was giving me such a hard time.”

“Sounds like you’re becoming a teacher,” Jan smiles. “There are few easy answers for what we do. . . . But then, that’s what makes it both the toughest and the most rewarding work in the world. “Like working with Kelly. She might not have another adult she can talk to, and she may simply need someone to care about her. “As for the blank looks, I’m taking a class at the university. The instructor emphasizes involving the kids, and he keeps talking about research that says how important it is to call on all the kids as equally as possible. “So, here’s an example of how I’m approaching word problems now. We’re working on decimals and percents, ultimately to help the kids reach this standard,” she says as she shows Keith a lesson plan: CCSS.Math.Content.6.RP.A.3c Find a percent of a quantity as a rate per 100 (e.g., 30% of a quantity means 30/100 times the quantity); solve problems involving finding the whole, given a part and the percent. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014v). “So, here’s what I’m doing. I brought in a 12-ounce soft drink can from a machine, a 20-ounce bottle, and a 6-pack with price tags on them. “I put the kids into pairs and told them to figure out a way to determine which one was the best buy. To figure it out, they needed to apply their understanding of decimals and percents, which helps us reach the standard. I helped them along, and we created a table, so we could compare the groups’ answers. They’re beginning to see how math relates to their lives. . . . Some of them even said they think it’s important. And, now that they’re used to being called on, they really like it. It’s one of the most important things I do. “When I think about it, I realize that I sometimes jump in too soon when they can figure it out themselves, and at other times I let them stumble around too long, and they waste time. So, then I adapt for the next lesson.”

“I hate to admit this,” Keith says, “but some of my university courses suggested just what you did. It was fun, but I didn’t think it was real teaching.”

“You couldn’t relate to it at the time. You didn’t have a class with live students who ‘didn’t get it.’ Hang in there,” Jan smiles. “You’re becoming what teaching needs—a real pro.”