

From the career ladder: How I got here

Know what you're there for

When Carmel Schettino was in graduate school, she spent one summer as an actuarial intern for an insurance company.

She considered it to be a solid career path.

"It was high-paying and very secure," Schettino said.

By the end of the summer, she realized that she could not spend the rest of her life sitting behind a desk and working with spreadsheets no matter how much the job paid.

"I made the decision then that the rewards I would get in teaching would definitely keep my life much more fulfilled," she said, but she knew it would be a sacrifice financially.

Schettino can still remember how nervous she was when she was asked to give a mock lesson to a calculus class during her first job interview at Convent of the Sacred Heart in Manhattan.

The principal and three math instructors were all standing in the back of the classroom.

"I recall being filled with anxiety," she said. "The minute I saw

the students and knew what I was there for, I forgot I was being judged."

The students applauded when the lesson was over. Schettino knew then that she was meant to be a teacher.

She got the job and worked at Sacred Heart for three years.

For much of her career, Schettino's classroom and lesson plans have been focused on problem-based learning.

"A lot of colleges today are changing what they think the perfect student is," she said. "They want students who can problem solve."

Employers are looking for the same skills.

Teaching math with fewer lectures and more hands-on course work encourages students to become more resourceful.

And hopefully it will encourage more girls to pursue careers that involve math, Schettino said.

—Robin K. Cooper



About Emma Willard

Type of school: All girls boarding and day school, grades 9-12

Location: Troy

Enrollment: 317

Full-time teachers: 40

Total staff: 138

Name: Carmel Schettino

Title: Mathematics instructor, Henry L. Thompson chair in mathematics, Emma Willard School

Age: 42

Years in current job: 10

Education: Bachelor's in math, Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY (1990); master's in math, Boston College (1992); working on doctorate in curriculum and instruction at University at Albany

How she got here: Went to graduate school right out of college not knowing where it would lead. Ended up earning a teaching fellowship, and received an award for undergraduate teaching. Before joining Emma Willard, she taught at Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire, where she began to focus on problem-based learning.

Schedule: School day runs from 8 a.m. until 3:20 p.m. Regular schedule for Emma Willard teachers include four classes, advising, extra-curricular assignments and dormitory duty. Also is an adjunct instructor for SUNY graduate students who are student teaching in the Capital Region.

What skills helped her land the job: "I think it's pretty clear when people talk to me how passionate I am about mathematics education and gender equity. I think it just comes across in my demeanor and that probably helped."