The adjunct academy had specific learning outcomes: To increase the quality of teaching and learning, to provide support for faculty in teaching and learning, to develop a strong community of instructors who share their best practices, and to provide a better managed classroom environment to engage students in the learning process. Throughout the orientation these were highlighted. For my goals for participating in the adjunct academy was to learn how to be a better teacher. I had great instructors throughout my schooling and I loved learning. I had received good reviews in the limited time I had been tutoring and teaching, but I knew I could be better. Throughout the academy I was always thinking of ways to get my students more actively engaged and I hadn’t thought about putting more of an emphasis on technology in the classroom but as that was in the back of my mind, ideas from TV, from friends, from other instructors, kept popping in my head. One thing that I thought was great about the academy is that they had very specific ideas demonstrated of general topics. Although they often weren’t ever directly applicable to my classes, it got me thinking of more ideas and ways to teach these concepts. I think that I have implemented ideas different from how I remember being taught, and my students seem to be responsive. Maybe, I usually teach for people who think similarly to me, but when I go outside of my comfort zone and experiment I can appeal to those who learn differently from me.

The other topic that stood out to me during orientation was the community of learners. I remember the President of the college emphasizing that as a desired learning outcome from the adjunct academy. As I’ve thought about this learning outcome (it had never occurred to me as a reason to participate in the academy) I realized how in the online class portion of the class I really enjoyed reading others’ comments and ideas and appreciated their responses to my posts. That even though we were separated by distance and only interacted via a discussion board I felt there was a bit of a community forming. The second half of the academy I developed more of a relationship with my mentor. In general, I did not enjoy meeting with my mentor, but if I prepared a question specific to something I wondered how other instructors handled their classrooms it was great to hear his ideas. Ideas that I started thinking about from how Todd teaches is

1. On the first day of class he emphasizes that math is the description of patterns. That we use numbers because numbers follow patterns, but that numbers are just symbols representing quantities – like other variables or letters in equations or expressions.
2. He emphasized how he never allows or uses calculators in his classes. He demonstrates how one can break down numbers and simplify without doing the calculations. I thought this technique was interesting, however, I think that the lack of calculators entirely is similar to the students’ dependence on calculators, but I could see how showing this method of calculation would be very useful.
3. He emphasized how he defines sets throughout his lectures, so that the students aren’t unfamiliar with mathematical notation. This comment occurred just at the time when we had a variable in our equations that needed to be part of a defined set, and I think my students appreciated that extra clarity. He also explained certain algebraic properties (like commutative and associative, etc, with the emphasis on the set) with every ideas of things that are important for these properties to be true.
4. I appreciated his ideas of explaining mathematical concepts with situations that we are familiar with in everyday life. For example, he talks about order of operation with building a house. You have to do some actions prior to other actions (although they all have to be done) to build the house correctly). He also uses the idea of cooking to describe functions and function notation. For example, the kitchen is the set of all possibilities. You pull members of the domain (recipe items) and combine them in a specific order (the function) to create a finish food dish (the output or member of the range).
5. His ideas are that a test isn’t too difficult if there is an A earned by a student. So he hardly ever curves tests at all. I don’t know if I agree with this, but it got me thinking about how I assess my students.
6. He emphasized how the students need to do the homework. So for example, since I give a weekly quiz that maybe I could allow the student to bring their homework to the quiz as an extra incentive to do the homework. This was an idea… that I am still thinking about how I want to implement.

Anyways, even though the mentor meetings were probably one of my least favorite, they definitely got me thinking about how I can shape my class by speaking to another instructor who is more experienced than me pertaining specifically to the subject matter I teach.