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## CURRENT WEATHER

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## COLUMNISTS

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## EDUCATION

### Bittersweet end

[Tiffany Tuell](#)

(Updated: Friday, June 19, 2009, 10:56 AM)

"I knew students were speaking, but I could only hear my heart beating."

This is how Kathy Anderson remembers her first day of teaching as she began, a fresh college graduate, with a roomful of junior high students.

Anderson taught her last day of school last Friday to begin her retirement. One chapter has closed, but another has begun.

"It's bittersweet," said Anderson. "After 37 years of teaching, I'm looking forward to joining a reading group and doing things I didn't have time to do before."

Anderson has taught everything from math and history to physical education. She tried to include art in as many school projects as possible. Songs were made up and debates were had. Canons and Civil War re-enactors were brought in.

One day President Abe Lincoln himself was found in Anderson's classroom. Anderson said even fake English accents were integrated into the classroom, bringing laughter and life into classes and subjects that kids might normally see as boring.

"Even when I had cancer I did everything to get back into the classroom. The students were so concerned and caring and giving. It was very difficult to find a substitute for the middle grades. I thought I was going to retire then but decided I had more to give to the kids and came back for 10 more years."

Anderson's career began in Clovis where she taught for seven years. Then she moved on to Coarsegold Elementary where she taught for 28 years, followed by two years at Rivergold Elementary.

Anderson said she found her niche in the middle grades.

"I love their creativity. They know how to reason. They've got a great sense of humor. They are into everything trendy and keep me up to date. They keep you on your toes."

Anderson said her favorite subject to teach was United States history and the Constitution.

"It was important to me to let them know how our government runs. They need to know how to make decisions with issues that will affect their lives."

Anderson told students, "I am molding you into becoming good citizens in our society and you will also get a good education with that."

She said students have come back to her and said they went into law or wanted to teach history later on in life because of her classes.

Students always knew there were two things required of them in Anderson's classes -- homework and respect. At the end of class, Anderson says, "I love my class, wear sunscreen, and be kind." Then her students knew class was over.

Anderson's advice for new teachers: "Never hold a grudge. Every day is a new day. Remember that you're dealing with children, not grown-ups. Kids step up to the plate for you if they know you really care."

At the end of a long career Anderson speaks of her biggest reward: "I love it when the kids come back and tell me of their successes. That is my biggest reward," she said. "If I made an impact on one student, my job has been done."

"I feel that I've also worked for some amazing administrators and worked alongside some amazing teachers," said Anderson. "These last few years have been fun!"



Tiffany Tuell/Sierra Star

Kathy Anderson works with her seventh-grade students on their weaving projects.