

## Wes Maciejewski, PhD student and mathematics education innovator

2012-04-12



Teaching fellow Wes Maciejewski invites students to submit anonymous comments and concerns to him regarding classes via an online feedback form.

Wes Maciejewski conducts every class as an experiment. He is not interested in doling out information, only to have students receive it passively. Knowledge, in his view, is not static, and therefore teaching can't be. It's a collaboration, an investigation, and he enjoys the challenge of making teaching and learning a constant quest for big ideas.

"I really don't care if they learn anything about math. That's not the point. Many of my students are not math majors," says Mr. Maciejewski, a teaching fellow in the mathematics department who will complete his PhD at Queen's this year. "I'd prefer if they learn some transferable skills. And math is a great vehicle for that – for developing skills in research, questioning, investigating."

His philosophy translates into several innovative instructional practices, one of which invites students in his third-year evolutionary game theory course to give feedback via an online form. The feedback is anonymous and sent directly to him, so students can offer honest opinions and concerns about the course with no fear of reprisal.

The online feedback form is more helpful than the traditional evaluation at the end of the course. It gives Mr. Maciejewski the opportunity to incorporate students' concerns into his approach throughout the semester, instead of waiting many months to learn what they liked or didn't like. Mr. Maciejewski is also experimenting with peer assessment. Students work in groups of five and mark each other's assignments, allowing them to see four different ways of approaching a problem.

Thinking about how students learn has been on Mr. Maciejewski's mind for a while, since he started teaching at an Alberta college after finishing a master's degree in mathematics at the University of Calgary in 2007. At Queen's, he works with professor Peter Taylor researching mathematical biology, including evolutionary graph theory and the evolution of social behaviours. He is also involved in JUMP Math, a Toronto-based program that works to boost children's potential in math and provides training to educators.

**Source URL:**

<http://www.queensu.ca/news/articles/profiles/wes-maciejewski-phd-student-and-mathematics-education-innovator>