



joe's pic

Joe Rusinko's Teaching Philosophy

To do math is to learn math. My goal as a teacher is to get each one of my students to do math. Most students will do math once they feel comfortable. I encourage this by having a very friendly and open classroom environment. A student wrote in an evaluation, that they looked forward to coming to class and wondered over the weekend what sort of jokes or stories might be coming up. Once students feel comfortable they feel free to ask questions, and this leads to a very active learning environment.

I try to combine this active lecture and discussion with daily opportunities to do math in the classroom. I usually give brief quizzes almost every class period, which forces students to do math almost daily. To temper the harshness of daily quizzes and to encourage an exchange of ideas, I occasionally have group quizzes. This allows students to hear each others explanations which often have a way of sinking in better than any teachers.

With the students actively doing math in class, the goal shifts to challenging them to think deeply and appreciate math. I work hard outside of class to keep my lectures interesting. A student once stopped my calc class to announce how surprised he was that the rate of change of something didn't depend on a particular variable. We had finished the example a few minutes earlier, and I was quite excited to have one of my weaker students really understand what we were doing on a deep level.

I am always trying to improve and expand my teaching. I think my teaching has improved greatly by simply listening to what the students suggest. For example, I've always struggled with handwriting, and a student suggested that I write capital T's because they were confusing them with plus signs. I've done so ever since.

For the future I'm challenging myself to improve and expand my teaching. One of the major problems calculus students face is not knowing enough algebra coming into the class. I've been working on coming up with a fun review program that they can do one their own outside of class. This will give students a chance to catch up. In the spring I'll be teaching a math content course for elementary school teachers, where I will have the opportunity to encourage future teachers to think precisely and deeply about elementary school math in a manner in which they can in turn impart on their students.

I'm always looking forward to improving my teaching. I have a great opportunity to do so this year by working with other winners of the Graduate school's Outstanding Teaching Assistant award to improve teaching throughout the university.

[Please email me at rusinko@math.uga.edu](mailto:rusinko@math.uga.edu)