

Turner School maths teacher recognised with national award

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For Sam Hardwicke, it's about making maths accessible and fun. The Turner School executive teacher might teach volume by asking students to imagine a swimming pool filled with chocolate milk, and how to make the net of a sphere by cutting up someone's orange.

His year 5 and 6 pupils are expected to run a business complete with a website. Last year, a clever group of students roped in an Australian National University water expert to help them figure out whether Canberra's waterways were safe for swimming.



Turner Primary school teacher Sam Hardwicke with students Shazia Fathraya, William Hughes, and Matthew Ohms. *Photo: Rohan Thomson*

The teacher of 12 years has taught numeracy for the past year using project-based learning methods - and it's paying dividends.

"It's kind of a buzzword at the moment but it's looking at bringing a whole lot of disciplines in through the one project," Mr Hardwicke said.

"[We look at] how does the maths relate to other maths you've learnt, and how does the maths relate to whole big world stuff.

"As soon as they realise maths is in their lives in all these hidden ways, it becomes really, really interesting for anyone.

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"People who don't see themselves as mathematicians or engage in that way, as soon as they do see those links it just makes sense to them."

Students look forward to Mr Hardwicke's maths lessons visits. Turner School student Henry Hillier said his work was "a lot more advanced" than what he expected he might be doing.

"I think he makes a really good maths teacher because he can explain things really, really well, especially really hard questions," the year 6 said.

"He does things that aren't really meant for this grade I don't think and kind of adds onto the things we're supposed to learn."

Year 6 student Sienna Bowman agreed: "He's kind of brought an interesting way of teaching to us, rather than just telling us the concept and saying 'off you go'."

Mr Hardwicke was last month recognised with an Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute teacher excellence award for his work in transforming maths at Turner School.

As well as employing project-based teaching, Mr Hardwicke has introduced STEM clubs and a biennial STEM festival to the school.

He said the past several years had been characterised by trying new things: "The last few years have really been about innovation and it's really so interesting as a teacher and as a team of teachers to innovate and create something new and teach in a way that is definitely not mainstream in its methodologies."