

Bonni: [00:00:00] Today on episode number 228 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Laura Gibbs joins me to talk about how to create engaging online classes.

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Bonni: [00:00:22] Hello and welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. I'm Bonni Stachowiak and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating and learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:51] Joining me on today's episode is Laura Gibbs whose work has inspired my teaching since pretty much as long as I knew that she was out there inspiring our work. Laura completed her bachelor's in classical and Slavic languages and her Ph.D. in comparative literature at UC Berkeley. Laura then joined the University of Oklahoma faculty in 1999 and she has been teaching fully online courses at OU since 2002, specifically mythology and folklore and epics of India. She has also taught online courses in Latin and Greek. And she maintains a long running Latin blog at the Bestiaria Latina - home of the Latin lolcats. You can find her online at mythfolklore.net.

Bonni: [00:01:44] Laura, welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

Laura: [00:01:47] Hi Bonni.

Bonni: [00:01:48] It is so lovely to be talking to you. Every time we have a conversation, whether it was that precious time we got to spend in person at the campus conference, the instructor conference, or whether it is on Twitter or whatever way, I just always walk away energized, inspired, and have learned so much. And I know that will be the case today.

Bonni: [00:02:08] Would you start out with a discouraging topic... I already know you're going to already know you're going to inspire us, so let's just start out by discouraging us. Would you describe some of the ways in which many online classes really fail to engage students?

Laura: [00:02:25] I guess one of the themes that is really important to me is the difference between open ended assignments and closed assignments. And to me the reason I love teaching online is because it's the internet, like the most open, interconnected wide ranging kind of space. And what I worry about with a lot of online courses that are conceived inside and offered inside an LMS is that they feel closed in all kinds of ways, closed off from the Internet, closed in that sense of you've designed an activity where there's just one destination for the student to end up at you know the right answer on a quiz that the computer's going to grade for you. Closed off is not how I see the world of learning and it's just not fun for the students. So that's in a general sense the real problem I see is your course open or closed? And I'd love to see online courses that are open to everything. But often you see that it's just the opposite, they're really close.

Bonni: [00:03:29] One of the terms that gets used for the first dichotomy that you expressed is the "throw away assignments" and just for people listening that this may be new to, I know it's not new to you, but the idea that I wrote this paper and the only person that's really going to see it is my professor. And there's really not a value- I don't have any intrinsic motivation to write it. It's something I quote on quote "have to do" for points that all feels very very transactional and not really meaningful, there's nothing that makes it feel like the work I might put into it is going to be significant.

Bonni: [00:04:06] And the last thing that you ended on, I don't want to lose sight of because you said a lot of online- or maybe you didn't say "a lot of" but I'm going to say a lot of online classes are just not fun.

Laura: [00:04:18] Right. And once again this is something that has worried me since my first semester of college teaching back when I was in a classroom. I taught a larger class like 50-60 students, I was in a kind of big lecture hall in the basement of a building that had a bunch of these big lecture halls that were for 100-200 students. And I will never forget the first time I came out of one of those lecture halls and I just finished my class and another class was filing out of their lecture hall and they clearly just been given a paper back from their professor.

Laura: [00:04:55] And there were these big garbage bins, round ones maybe three or four feet high, big metal garbage bins. And the students were just throwing their papers away, they flipped to the back and looked at the grade and then threw it in the trash can. And I saw like dozens of students just walking by me throwing their papers in the trash bin. I've never seen anything like that. And it really shocked me and made me think about what I was doing. This was my first semester of college teaching and sure enough the first round of papers that I had assigned and came back were just not good. The students were clearly bored. I was bored. It wasn't working.

Laura: [00:05:32] So I had that revelation before I started teaching online about the problem with traditional papers. And one of the reasons it came to me my first semester of college teaching was that in graduate school I didn't teach essay type writing classes. I taught foreign language classes. And foreign language classes, thankfully, don't drift into that throw away assignment mode as much because it's very active learning, you're making things, you're doing things, you're not just writing abstract essays. You're working with the language itself and making things with language is part of what a foreign language class is about. And I realized I needed to take that approach, that idea of making things, and language is important and you're communicating in all ideas to do things with language and use that for my more traditional humanities classes that I've ended up teaching and at the college level.

Laura: [00:06:25] So that's not even about online versus the classroom, that's just about how you conceive your assignments. I'll say one more thing real quickly is that my school participated in something called the meaningful writing project. I cannot say enough good things about this. It's a campus investigation that they did where they interviewed graduating seniors about what their most meaningful writing was in college. Very open ended kind of survey but then they went back and did this really complex semantic analysis to find out what students said about meaningful writing. And the book came out maybe two years ago. So people are curious about learning more about what students say is meaningful and what makes something important to them not throw away a sign that literally or metaphorically.

Laura: [00:07:13] Check out this book called The Meaningful Writing Project. There's the Kindle edition, it's on Amazon. And the students are so clear about understanding the difference, to them, of what's meaningful writing and what's not and how meaningful writing can happen in any kind of class, any kind of discipline, but you have to design the class to make that happen.

Bonni: [00:07:36] I am so glad that you said that last part because one of the things I didn't want to have people think is that the answer to all of these questions is to simply ask people to take that paper they would have written and just turned into you and put it online instead. For this you know whatever the audience might look like and there are all kinds of reasons that someone may not wish to share something online. And that's not what today's episode is necessarily about. But to me, you just called attention to it isn't about put it online, expose yourself in ways that you may or may not be comfortable with.

Laura: [00:08:18] That would be so easy if I all we had to deal with like which switch to technology mode and all our problems would be solved. But unfortunately that's not it at all.

Bonni: [00:08:27] Yeah and I think that for me I know- I shouldn't say I think, I know for me, I have not fully comprehended what I was asking people to consider when moving their stuff online just because I navigate that space so much. And that's been an important distinction for me to make and I don't want anyone listening to miss it. And that sounds like a wonderful wonderful resource.

Laura: [00:08:51] So we said that the answer to making assignments more meaningful isn't simply to move the audience. And the answer to creating engagement is not to put up a discussion board. Could you describe discussion boards gone wrong? And some of the challenges inherent with thinking that is the solution to engage in our students?

Laura: [00:09:10] Right the discussion board I mean once again a sort of general term like what is the problem with a discussion board is that it doesn't belong to any body. It belongs to everybody but nobody. Nobody cares about it in the way that I think work needs to be cared about to turn out well. I mean good work takes time. There's just no shortcut to anything. I mean any kind of quality work in any kind of discipline is going to take time and that's a big challenge. Nobody has lots of time and so in order to spend time on something, you need to to care about it. But it's hard to imagine someone really caring about a discussion board. You know the most likely person maybe to care about the discussion board would be the faculty member and so maybe spend lots of time at the discussion board. But that's not learning for the students.

Laura: [00:10:02] Whereas the approach I take in my class that I really like and I've been doing this for a long time with different platforms and different technologies but it is for the students to have blogs that belong to them, individual blogs that are then interconnected in a network. And how you do

that networking and make those connections that's the technology that's very fluid and changing. But the idea, for me, is that students have something that's theirs, that belongs to them. So it's ownership. It's agency. It's presence. It's individuality. Openendedness. Like I said, because they can design the blog the way they want to. And that's just cool and fun.

Laura: [00:10:43] Again because the first thing they do in my classes is create their blog. And from then on out anything they do it's either happening at their blog or at the other student's blogs and it just grows and changes and looks cool and you learn about each student individually that way and in a way that I don't think can really happen at a discussion board. Maybe it can and if someone has an example that they want to share, that's great. I never figured out a way to make that happen, but with the blogs, it just happens.

Laura: [00:11:14] And so for myself that's been the solution that's worked great and once again I think it could work across all kinds of classes, all kinds of disciplines, all kinds of ages of students. There are some elementary school teachers that use blogs in powerful ways through edublogs. So that's the solution I really like.

Bonni: [00:11:33] With the discussion board, you talked about that perhaps if someone was going to care it's going to be the professor about what's happening there. And I certainly don't want to place labels though sometimes-laziness isn't maybe a fair one but just just trying to get the job done. Sometimes what we'll do is say well I want the reading to happen. So I need to come up with a discussion board question. And then I need some way of measuring that they got the job done, so the common thing is reply to three other people and your answers should be between 200 and 300 words long and it needs to be substantial, don't just say "I liked what you had to say," there's all these criteria. And then it sometimes becomes overwhelming for that person so oh my gosh there are these 200 to 300 word posts and I don't have time to read them all and reply to them all and have that Professor as the central hub of engagement such that they start to feel like it's transactional, the students the whole time has felt like it was transactional because you put all these roles down for me.

Laura: [00:12:37] And so now I am so excited to transition out of these depressing topics of what goes wrong with many of our online and as you said in person classes to a class that focuses on engagement. So tell us how do you engage learners in your classes?

Laura: [00:12:55] Well and it's so funny that you talked about the rules just now because I struggle with that too. You know that I have procedures I guess you could call them for my classes. But every time I put a procedure in place, I try to think why are we doing this? And for me it's about, like I said, the students creating something that is theirs, that they care about, that they're proud of, that is somehow an expression of them, of what they're learning, of what they want to learn and share with the other students in the class.

Laura: [00:13:27] And for that to happen, yeah you need to do some reading, and you need to do some writing, and you need to think while you're reading and think while you're writing. But I like the fact that the reason I have those procedures in place and things to read and things to write about is so that we can do stuff we're really proud of and really want to share with the other students in the class through the network. Nobody is just writing anything for me at all. You know it's all in the blogs. And I read some of the blogs and some of the stuff I just see go by and my blog reader and I don't read it, I sort of skim it. And then other students are coming to your blog and they're reading some things, you're reading things in other people's blogs and it just is very active and also changing in a way that like a discussion board that has that kind of routine that you described can quickly become pretty monotonous.

Laura: [00:14:18] I try to make sure that there's a structure in my classes. In fact, they're highly structured. But I also try to avoid the monotony by giving students lots of choices. So yeah there's a weekly routine and there's a sort of workflow but there are also lots of choices built in. And so the students choose what they read and their writing style and other activities they do. And then when they visit each other's blogs, it's really cool because they see what the other students are choosing to do. So different things that the other students read, different designs that they're using at their blogs, different kinds of activities they did and they reported back in their blog what they learned from that activity. It just it has a kind of escalating, expanding, energizing feel to it. That I know I like a lot. And I think it really helps the students too because they're struggling with time. They're struggling with motivation and these are the kinds of things that I found over the years really can help with time and motivation is something meaningful, something they care about, something they get to choose, and share with others.

Bonni: [00:15:23] One of the things that you just described in terms of this weekly routine mixed in with lots of choices reminds me of the episode with Alan Levine. And I know that he has been someone who has been inspiring to you.

Laura: [00:15:37] Oh yes, DS106 is really how I created everything I do. So yes, absolutely.

Bonni: [00:15:42] Yes. So remind people who maybe haven't been listening for a while, remind them of what DS106 is and then how that's informed your approach.

Laura: [00:15:51] Well DS106 is this long running storytelling digital creation experience that exists as a class. But I benefitted from the fact that it was also this open thing on the Internet that people participated in who were not doing the class for credit that was originally offered I guess at Mary Washington. Because of Jim Groom and Alan Levine became his partner in crime. I'm not even sure how that happened because I knew Alan Levine from when he was at Maricopa in Arizona and the stuff he was putting online then. I honestly can't remember how I first found out about DS106.

Laura: [00:16:28] But anyway, it had a bank of activities that was run with Wordpress magic by Alan Levine. It was just spectacular where students could go there and get ideas for Digital Storytelling things that they could do, and they could also contribute new ideas for new kinds of assignments into this bank of assignments and activities. That really resembled the classes that I've been teaching and evolving over the early years, like I started in 2002.

Laura: [00:16:59] So when I finally intersected with DS106 it was kind of like this doppelganger thing of like wow that's so much like what I'm doing. Different kind of technology, different student audience, all kinds of things that were different but that fundamental emphasis on creativity and choice was exactly what I was aspiring to as well. And then I saw a range of things he had in that bank at that point, all the things that he and Jim Groom had embedded and the things that students had contributed over the years.

Laura: [00:17:29] So that was a huge boost to my class. That's when I realized wow, I thought I was giving the students choices, I could give them so many more kinds of choices about styles of storytelling, and tools for storytelling, and on and on. So that was just a great gift to me to connect with the DS106 and boldly go where no digital storytelling is gone. Before I learned so much from from watching that whole DS106 thing happened and evolve over the years.

Bonni: [00:17:59] You talked about styles and tools of storytelling that sort of thing- when you come up with this list of choices, how do you organize this database if you will or this grouping of the choices? Is it by topic? Are there

other ways that you group things together to make it easier then to come up with this weekly routine?

Laura: [00:18:20] Well and that's the thing. This is where what I do is a little bit different from DS106 because it was originally conceived very much around what are the digital tool possibilities, like what are the digital things we're going to do. I started out originally teaching writing and I realized like I said back in my first semester the traditional expository writing is just not going to work, I'm going to switch everything to creative writing.

Laura: [00:18:44] And so I switched over to creative writing with the idea that here I am teaching humanities, I'm teaching the storytelling arts of the world instead of having my students write essays about the stories they read. I should have them write stories that are inspired by the stories they read. That was my fundamental shift.

Laura: [00:19:03] And so obviously I needed to help people learn about ways of telling stories. And the first way I got at that, this was back in 2002-2003 when there weren't all these cool digital tools online to use other than images and text and you put those online and HTML and that's a web page. And so I focused on things like getting them to understand what is the difference between first person narration, third person narration, what can you do with timelines and narratives? What are prequels and sequels and flashbacks? And how do you do dialogue? And if you want to do first person, what are the ways that you're going to contextualize that first person voice so that it works? You can do interviews or diaries or letters. And on and on. So it was basically this huge collection of storytelling style and also language styles, like what are you going to do on a sort of word by word, sentence by sentence level to make your narrative effective?

Laura: [00:20:05] And so I had this list the things and sometimes supporting blog post to document how you do it. And I would put a randomizer in in the assignment. I would say, you're going to tell a story. And gosh there are all kinds of ways to tell a story, refresh the page to get a new idea at random. Random different ideas would pop up. And I don't use the same kind of databank that Alan does but I do use a tool that a student built for me or randomizer so they're all I have to do is put a bunch of ideas into an HTML table and presto, you can get an idea coming up at random every time the page reloads.

Laura: [00:20:45] And so that was a way to start inspiring students just about different ways of writing. And then as I built up an archive of student work, I had

hundreds of student projects. Like for example here's a project, the fairy godmother thief and it was a storybook project a student had done about how the fairy godmother is this kleptomaniac and she steals people diaries just for fun. And so look at this, she has a collection of diaries, of Cinderella's diary, it's Snow White's diary, Sleeping Beauty's diary because she's a kleptomaniac and she has these diaries.

Laura: [00:21:19] So between my ideas and then the examples of student work, it was just about putting up all these ideas and just trying to inspire the students. So just heaping up those kinds of ideas and tools and examples of student work over the years means that I now can share that with the students so that they can find ideas and get excited and go their own way.

Laura: [00:21:44] And so just start collecting stuff like that in your discipline, whatever it is, that can inspire students to do the kind of work you'd like to see them doing, whatever that is. I mean that varies obviously from class to class and discipline to discipline, but if you start collecting that stuff and find a way to get that in front of the students. I use daily announcements, that is a big part of how I get stuff in front of them. Then it will just grow and grow and get better and better every semester cause you'll be heaping up stuff and the students will start bringing you ideas once they see what you're collecting. I get lots of ideas for tools and styles and stuff from what the students themselves come up with.

Bonni: [00:22:23] I'm curious on the daily announcements, to what extent do you carry those over from class to class? And to what extent are those unique to that particular semester or a term that you're teaching?

Laura: [00:22:34] They are very much carried over. So I have a giant Google Sheet with different sheets there and the sheet where you know here are all my little cute graphics about writing and so I've got a couple hundred graphics about writing and here are all my cool tools, here are all my great videos about writing and creativity. And so each day when I prepare the announcements, I just go through and pick one from column A, one from column B, and assemble the announcements. Sure I had news stops periodically like I get to find new things in the students blogs every semester, or new tools that I find from poking around on Twitter or following people like Alan Levine and Kevin Hodgson and the people who are really just out there experimenting with all kinds of great digital tools. And so some new stuff, but almost everything is recycled. But to the students it's new, ight so it's old for me. I've seen this graphic a hundred times, but they've never seen the 69 rules of punctuation poster before and it's really cool. So I'm able to dabble them with recycled goods. It's pretty easy.

Bonni: [00:23:44] We've talked so much and woven in so well. Your vision for teaching them you've talked about some of the approaches that you use. One of the things that I know as we start to try to emulate some of the things that you've done is that it can start to feel overwhelming and I wonder if you would tackle this from two different perspectives. One is, how do we dip our toe into this just to get started and start to experiment? And then after that, I'd love to hear about any practical techniques that you use to make this kind of teaching more doable for us? As we can't press a button and all of a sudden we're to where you are. So let's start out with how would we just start a little bit too to emulate some of this?

Laura: [00:24:28] Well I think that the principles I use, I apply them globally to my classes. I really believe in everything being creative, everything being open ended, everything being student choice. But there's no reason why that has to be applied globally. I mean you could do with something as simple like you said you would sort of dip into DS106 and it would just be this this one off thing that you did. And then you can reflect on and say wow you know what did I learn from that? How was that useful to me? If you can build in just one open ended activity with some kind of reflection that goes with it into your course, not only will you be giving your students an open ended learning activity. You can also get feedback from them about well is that the right way to go about it? As I make these changes in my class, find out from the students, is is this a good change or do I need to try to go at this a different way?

Laura: [00:25:28] Like right now I implemented a change in my classes this semester where I had this story writing thing they did every week because gosh it's great, you get to be creative every week and write a story every weekend. Isn't that fantastic? But some of my students really did find that exhausting and sometimes we just skip the story for the week and that's fine. Skip an assignment, make it up with extra credit. No problem.

Laura: [00:25:51] But I realize enough of them were skipping this story writing assignment just because they were kind of exhausted. And so I built in a new thing this semester where they could do a story lap every other week if they wanted, if they'd done a story the week before where I gave them a bunch of choices of things you can do to learn about storytelling and language and stuff like that. And so far it's going great. You know but there's a blog post that goes with it so I can see it is this useful to them or not? Are they glad they had this option? So as you tinker with classes, make sure you build in something you get

some kind of a good, articulate, useful feedback for yourself from the students to find out if what you're doing is a good change in your class.

Bonni: [00:26:36] Yeah and one of the other things is to be prepared for that once you do start experimenting, you're going to have some failures but also you're going to have some wild successes. And when you have a wild successes and you see what's possible it is going to make you want to tweak things in your classes and then you'll never stop.

Laura: [00:26:54] But honestly that is so true. And sometimes the things that you think are going to be the best experiments, they fail completely. Like I love Flip Grid. And so I was going to build in this whole Flip Grid dimension of my classes last year. I couldn't get any of my students interested in it. Like even my students were up for all kinds of experiments I asked them did you see this Flip Grid thing? Doesn't that look cool? I got literally no takers all year.

Laura: [00:27:29] My biggest ever failure. And it was clearly somehow I didn't find the right way to blend it into the class or whatever because Flip Grid itself is absolutely cool. But you know that that was that was good. I got the message and if I'm going to do Flip Grid again I need to rethink it and not do it the way it did last time. And that's cool . I mean and I think sharing with students that idea of experimentation, telling them when something's an experiment and getting their feedback, that's a great way to build you know trust and connection with your students.

Laura: [00:28:02] And I've never really had any problems with it. And I have to say it because we haven't mentioned the G word. I don't grade and that's a huge part of of how my classes work and how I can be really honest with my students in my feedback to them about their work and how they can be really honest with me back about the class is because we've set that all grading authority, who's in charge thing aside as much as possible in a college class. And if you are using traditional grading, then you have to spend some extra time thinking about how you can set up feedback from your students like anonymous feedback or something like that so you can get some honest feedback that you do need improve your class.

Bonni: [00:28:46] I'm so glad that you brought that up because I was actually going to be sort of my final question, which is if we're going to do these amazing kinds of things that you're describing, there's going to be some things that we don't do. And you've piqued people's curiosity I'm sure and we had some episodes about the ungrading movement and specifications grading and I'd

love to have you back to talk even in more depth. But just for now to wet our whistle a little bit, you do enter in a grade that to your University, correct? But it's just the grade that gets entered isn't derived from what traditional grades are derived from, is that right?

Laura: [00:29:20] Right. And in a sense I don't even enter the grade, the students do it. But it's not A B C D. Yes I did well. Yes I did poorly. It's all based on completion. And so I've got this huge array of what I call micro- assignments. I don't know if other people use that term or not but it really describes well what's going on in my classes which is this huge array of micro-assignments, at any given week students would probably complete six seven five six seven at these micro-assignments. And they record their completion of them, each assignment has an objective checklist. There's not a rubric. There is not of this subjective and meets expectations stuff. I published a blog post it has an image in it. There may or may not be a word count for the text, I linked to my image source, checklist of things. And if the assignment is complete, they say true in a quiz that I set up in Canvas. And they get the points right. Because true is the correct answer. And so they get how many points that quiz is worth and then at the end of the semester their grade is based on how many points they've got.

Laura: [00:30:29] So I don't enter anything into the grade book. I mean I pay attention to students who are on the edge of failing class because I worry about that. Beyond that, beyond hoping that everyone will pass the class. I honestly couldn't care less if they get an A or B or C because that's all about what's going on in their lives, how much time do they have to spend on my class, really not important to me and they don't need to ask me anything about it. You know they do the work. They record the points. Then at the end of the semester, I look at their total points and I put the grade into our Student Information System. So that's all the grading energy I spend, basically none. And instead I get to spend all my energy on interacting with them about the work that they do. And everybody is doing some kind of project in the class. And that's where our interaction takes place, is my feedback on their project.

Bonni: [00:31:23] And you have shared with me that you do, on occasion, it doesn't happen as regularly as we might think. But on occasion, you'll have someone who entered points for themselves and didn't meet that objective criteria. And you treated as an exception basis, not as that you have to go through every single one of them, you do but you'll go back to them and say oh you checked this off and I noticed that you didn't actually do this one thing that was there. And most the time you said it's a mistake and then they go back and they fix it.

Laura: [00:31:49] Oh and it's always a mistake. That's a thing. You know is that we all make mistakes. I'm a total believer in this growth mindset of learning from mistakes kind of thing. I make mistakes all the time, do something stupid it's like oh I can't believe I did that. And students make mistakes too. So you know they thought they put an image in the post and they didn't or they started the post, forgot to publish it, whatever. I mean mistakes, they happen. And so I just point out to them just like you didn't finish this assignment, you need to finish it and so they finish it.

Laura: [00:32:24] You know in all the years I've been teaching, I've had students make all kinds of mistakes, sometimes colossal mistakes. Whatever they just weren't thinking because I've honestly like thousands of students. I've never had a student who was a cheater. You know in that sense that I hear people talking about in academic misconduct and this that and the other. You know and I don't know if I'm just lucky or what. But at this point, after all that experience, my assumption is that this is just a mistake. Like why would I assume this is anything other than just a mistake?

Laura: [00:32:57] And the way it works with the blogs as I see everything that goes into the blog network through my blog reader. And so I see things go by and if there is like a post that doesn't have an image in it or something, I notice the image is missing. Or if there's a post that way short that should be longer. I notice. It's not a big deal. And the same way with the comments, there is a comments stream that comes out of the blog and so if somebody leaves the comment that's just like "hey this is really good." That actually never happens. But whatever, if there's something wrong with a comment, I will notice and contact the student and we figure it out. It's one of those things where I don't feel like I need to be a policewoman and I kind of resent the idea that university wants me to be a policewoman. I'm a teacher, so I'm trying to help students learn. If they make mistakes, that's a learning opportunity.

Bonni: [00:33:53] I'll never forget when I had James Lang all the way back on episode 19 and he talked about his book *Cheating Lessons* and that was one of the things he said in that episode so early on in this podcast where he said, if you really wanted to be a police officer, this is really not a good career choice.

Laura: [00:34:12] I love that book. I swear everybody I think at the campus community is so tired of me doing this, but there are these you know endless discussions that go on about the TurnItIn whatever LTI integration, blah blah blah

at Canvas community and I always chime in and say "you know, if you haven't read James Lang's Cheating Lessons, you really should."

Laura: [00:34:34] I really believe it, I just wish that schools would take all the money they spend and TurnItIn and take that money and buy a copy of Cheating Lessons for every instructor. Because I learned a lot from that book and I already have this very let's all trust and learned together attitude. But just the research he did and the ideas that he brings to bear there for all kinds of teachers and all kinds of classrooms it's really powerful.

Dave: [00:34:59] Hi it's Dave Stachowiak here. Thank you so much for listening in on this conversation. Bonni has often discussed the work of James Lang here on the show and has welcomed him several times in the past. And his work is one of the many examples of great resources out there that we want you to know about to support you in your teaching. One of the things that Bonni and I care a lot about is creating more peace in our lives so that we can be more present for others. And in Bonni's case, for her students. You hear Bonni mention that at the start of every episode.

Dave: [00:35:33] And the sponsor of this episode is aligned with that goal of creating more peace in all of our lives as well. I'm pleased to tell you today about EveryPlate, the sponsor of this episode. EveryPlate allows you and your family to enjoy amazing chef designed meals for just 4.99 per serving. That's one of the advantages of EveryPlate over all the other meal kits services out there. Think about it this way, one meal is the same price as one cup of coffee.

Dave: [00:36:03] Speaking of bringing peace into our lives, it is not peaceful in our house when we don't have logistics ready for dinner or didn't get to the store, any number of reasons that we're sometimes planning dinner last minute. EveryPlate does the meal planning, shopping, and prepping for you, taking the time consuming guesswork out of cooking. They also solve that annoying problem of buying too little or more often in our house too much of what we need. Never buy more ingredients than you need because EveryPlates recipes come with everything already pre-measured. EveryPlate dinners are the cheaper, healthier alternative to takeout or delivery. With EveryPlate, you get to spend less time deciding what to cook and more time enjoying good food with family. EveryPlate has a special offer for you to benefit from this as well. For 50% off of your first box of EveryPlate, go to everyplate.com And enter promo code THIE, that's for Teaching in Higher Ed. 50% off is like getting two dinners for one cup of coffee right now. So again go to [EveryPlate.com](https://everyplate.com) and enter promo code THIE for 50% off your first box. And please let us know how you enjoyed your

meal. We'd love to hear. Thank you so much to EveryPlate for supporting today's episode. And now a few more recommendations from Bonni and Laura.

Bonni: [00:37:28] Well speaking in recommendations this is the point in this show are we each get to give our recommendations for the episode. I want to just quickly share about- Mike Taylor is more in the training and development field, he is not necessarily in academia, but I get so much out of his resources. And he wrote great- it's not a blog post, but it's on the on a website called ZEEF. And ZEEK is just a way of sort of bookmarking and collecting things around certain topics and so he has a ZEEK page on free design resources. And it's just a great collection for all of us says we're working to improve our own design skills and putting that into practice in our teaching and it is just a fun little set of resources to go check out. So my recommendation is to check out Mike Taylor's free design resources on ZEEF. And Laura, I get to pass it over to you now for yours.

Laura: [00:38:19] Well I want to recommend a book that I read pretty recently which is called Timeless Learning, and it has a really cool subtitle to which I should have looked up and memorized. But it's a book by Ira David Socol, Pam Morgan, and Chaf Ratliff, who are teachers and then Pams an administrator I guess now former administrator at Ablemarle schools in Virginia. It's about K through 12 learning that I wish everyone in higher ed would read this book. It's about what we can do to unshackle ourselves from all the kinds of things that we talked about earlier in the show about disposable assignments and transactional for the grade top down kind of learning to trade that in for timeless learning, which is inspired by stuff from the maker movement, Csikszentmihalyi's flow and the idea of when you're really learning something that is meaningful to you, you get into this timeless space, student autonomy, student agency, with example after example after example of all the things they've done in the schools to open things up for their students to learn, and make, and do, and explore. And it's honestly the most inspiring book about education that I've read in a long time.

Bonni: [00:39:41] It sounds phenomenal. You had me at the maker's spaces because I was intrigued on ways that can ignite my own imagination for how teachers can use that. And the subtitle by the way is How Imagination, Observation, and Zero-Based Thinking Change Schools. And it sounds amazing.

Laura: [00:39:59] You said ignites so I'm going to use that as an excuse to share a quick anecdote from the book which is that at one point they've had a lot of people come in to look at their schools and see what they're doing. So they have observers coming in. And at one point an observer team had come in, I

don't know if other teachers or whatever and they were doing something Ira's class that looked like it might be dangerous. It involved fire. And the observer person asked Ira, "it looks like they could set something on fire here." And Ira said "well that's why we have the sprinkler system" and I just thought that was so great. You know it's like yeah we know things are risky and you need to take risks enjoy count but you can't shut stuff down.

Bonni: [00:40:52] Oh my gosh that sounds amazing. You are truly- speaking of igniting, you ignite my energy, you ignite my imagination. Every time I get to talk to you, thank you so much for your time not just today but always you've just been a true inspiration for me and I so appreciate this chance to get to talk with you today.

Laura: [00:41:10] Well absolutely my pleasure. And I'm online all the time since that is where I live professionally. So if people have questions or whatever, just track me down, I'll be glad to brainstorm and chat.

Bonni: [00:41:22] Every chance I get to talk to Laura Gibbs is such a pleasure, I just leave the conversation feeling invigorated and inspired. Thank you Laura for being a guest on today's podcast and also just for being such a source of learning for me since I discovered your work years ago.

Bonni: [00:41:38] Thanks to all of you for listening. If you have been listening for a while and have yet to leave a review or a rating on whatever service it is you use to listen, that's a great way to help other people discover the show. And I did discover the other day if you're listening on overcast, that's an iOS app, you can even just press a little star right when you're listening whether that's on your phone or if you've got an Apple Watch, you can do it there too. So however you want to rate/ review, spread the word about the show. Thanks so much for listening and I'll look forward to seeing you next time. We've got some great guests coming up. Thanks for listening. See you next time.

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