

Bonni: [00:00:00] A temptation has been there for all of us at some point in our teaching venting about our students setting things up in our classrooms to make sure we maximize our already present power. Today I talk with Kevin Gannon about ways to respect our students in our teaching.

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Bonni: [00:00:26] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. This is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to increase our personal productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:53] I'm happy today to be welcoming to the program. Kevin Gannon he's a professor of history and the director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Grand View University in Iowa. And he describes himself as a total geek. And Kevin if you wouldn't mind sharing there are three ways in which you are a geek.

Kevin: [00:01:14] I am a geek for history I'm a geek for teaching and I'm a geek for technology and probably some other things as well. You know I got geek regularly.

Bonni: [00:01:22] And you also talk about in your bio that you love thriving on experimentation and thumbing your nose at convention. What is a way in your teaching just one way the first random one that pops into your mind at which you thumb your nose at convention.

Kevin: [00:01:38] Well I have my own personal appearance probably heavily tattooed and I dress professionally you know shirt and tie in the classroom but I don't look like what my students expect a college professor you know at least a

narrow mind to look like. I tend to run a pretty free flowing given take sort of classroom.

Kevin: [00:02:00] And a lot of times I come in with a broad idea but then improvise or allow the students to improvise as well. So I think giving up control in a lot of ways makes me a little bit more unconventional perhaps.

Bonni: [00:02:11] When I go visit your website which by the way to people listening. This is Episode 52 so you can find the links to all of the things that Kevin and I talk about at teachinginhighered.com/52 and including there will be Kevin's bio and you're holding some sort of creature in your bio. Can you tell us about that.

Kevin: [00:02:31] We had an animal a traveling animal exhibit. Visit our campus was a wilderness preserve organization who go to college campuses in the Midwest and bring you know exotic animals and sort of spread the word about conservancy with students.

Kevin: [00:02:51] So it's a few biologists that bring them around and I'm actually holding a very small alligator which you know he appeared to be pretty nonplussed by the whole situation.

Kevin: [00:03:01] He'd been there before but it was kind of cool. So if I'm if my face looks funny in that picture it's because the gentleman right before he handed me this this reptile's said oh by the way he might pee on you you know just brush it off and that's what you're about to get the hand. That's not exactly what you want to hear. So I looked a little bemused then the photograph.

Kevin: [00:03:22] That's why.

Bonni: [00:03:23] I love having that background. Now I'm going to have to go back and look at it. I can experience the.

Kevin: [00:03:29] Very still.

Bonni: [00:03:32] I don't want that pee on us especially if you have to go on the rest that day and you bring a change to clothes with you.

Kevin: [00:03:38] That was the thought running through my head exactly.

Bonni: [00:03:41] Well it's funny because the last couple of interviews I've done I haven't necessarily planned things this way.

Bonni: [00:03:47] Sometimes we talk about failures and are teaching at the end of the episodes because that's just something we can learn so much. I feel like we could learn more from our failures than we can our successes at least I learned quicker.

Bonni: [00:03:59] I hope that we agree.

Kevin: [00:04:02] I agree.

Bonni: [00:04:02] I want to start out with your failures and I feel like it's kind of a strange place to start.

Kevin: [00:04:07] But I do it a lot. I'm really good at it so that's fine.

[00:04:11] Tell me about a time when you have failed in terms of venting about your students and kind of how that changed things for you.

Kevin: [00:04:20] Well you know when I first started teaching I was teaching my own courses as a Ph.D. student. I had a field in an area of Latin American history where we had some faculty leave and demand for courses I was in the position where I got to offer some stuff on my own maybe a little more quickly than I would have as a Ph.D. student normally.

Kevin: [00:04:42] And so I was teaching a course where you know with Latin American history a lot of college students in the United States come in with little to no background knowledge of the area whatsoever so it's not taught in high schools. And so I would get some you know fairly interesting and creative interpretations of the material on the exams and I kind of kept a running list of them. You know things I've learned teaching Latin American history to freshmen and you know just all sorts of you know the typical howlers in the history exam that you might get.

Kevin: [00:05:12] And I would kind of post them. This was before Facebook really became big so I actually kept the list in the notebook and I'd kind of post them on a bulletin board next to my mailbox anonymously of course but you know it was kind of fun for everybody to sort of look oh my gosh it got a roll or eyes. And so I sort of kept doing that for several years. You know I would post on Facebook

some of the some of the ways in which students misanswered questions on exams and you know from curious phrasing to just outright fabrications.

Kevin: [00:05:44] And there's been some books that have been you know there's one called Non Campus Mentis where history professors collected you know 20 years worth of student created history and they're fairly amusing but I realized that you know as one semester I was posting this stuff on Facebook and you know I thought it was my way of venting but it sort of hit me really weird.

Kevin: [00:06:05] You know why. Why was I really doing that. And if a lot of my students you know had these these howlers and you know errors of fact and all these things you know then that really say something about me in the class that I really want to be broadcasting that you know hey my results are like this.

Kevin: [00:06:22] So I you know caused me to kind of take a step back and realize that you know while it may have been a way to vent and maybe go for some cheap laughs that I was really kind of taking advantage of a situation that were I in the students place.

Kevin: [00:06:35] I don't think I would have been very about it. You know I think it could have in terms of my own student career with a lot of damage for me and my willingness to take risks and challenge myself in class.

Bonni: [00:06:49] I've had a similar experience where I start to think what does that say about me and my teaching and then it kind of goes from being something that mean I'm sure you've got a lot of accolades and a lot of that that you know how funny you are and that's sort of building up your ego that way and then and then there's sort of the when it comes back around and sort of hits you in the face.

Bonni: [00:07:09] Then there's the embarrassment almost of it. Oh gosh that doesn't necessarily say a good thing about me or the students I teach or whatever it is that what does that say about my result. So it's it's tough though because some of the I mean let's let's be candid. I'm sure that still now we both see things that are absolutely hysterical.

Bonni: [00:07:29] And so where do you go where do you go now what's your outlet for when you are just so disappointed and you think gosh I can't care more than you care or whatever where do you go for your source of that venting.

Bonni: [00:07:43] Because you do talk about in your post that it isn't that you don't vent anymore it's that it's just somewhere else where do you think is the right place for us to express those both hysterical things you've got to tell someone. And then the things that are really agonizing as a teacher.

Kevin: [00:07:57] Well I think it's really important you know with any family situation that you have your close friends your support group your colleagues that when you're conversing you know either on or off campus that it's a safe space.

Kevin: [00:08:09] Because we do need that outlet and we do need to whether it's just vent about something or wrestle through some more challenging issues that we're facing either in our own career and the classrooms.

Kevin: [00:08:21] You know there needs to be that space where we can you know have some colleagues have some friends that we trust faculty staff and I'm fortunate to have a group like that where you know we can sort of throw anything out there and it stays there because we all understand that that's the space that maybe it's more appropriate and something like you know oh my got to believe what these students did.

Kevin: [00:08:41] You know you bring up the point about you know the ego boost it's you know social media when you put that up there on Facebook you get all these likes and everybody's putting emoticons with smiley faces and like you know it's kind of addictive.

Kevin: [00:08:53] You know it builds you up if you know you say well I'm taking something crappy that happened in class and now I'm getting some laughs out of it. There's a silver lining but again that's you know I've come to realize that's not the appropriate space. In fact that's a very bad space to be putting that sort of stuff out there.

Bonni: [00:09:11] And to be clear I also read in your blog that by the way I'll be posting all the blog posts that I'm referencing I've really enjoyed Kevin's blog throughout. I guess I probably discovered it maybe six months ago and I know you've been blogging for longer than that.

Bonni: [00:09:25] It's absolutely a wonderful blog so I posted the ones I drew from to invite him as our guest today. So the one I recall you even specify it isn't like you don't put this stuff on Facebook anymore because your students are on Facebook because you have decided for yourself not to friend students.

Bonni: [00:09:46] So it's because I think some people I shouldn't say I think I know some people say well it's OK for me to do it on Facebook because my students aren't on Facebook I don't or the people I'm talking about aren't Facebook so it's OK to do it. Why would you still say that's not OK at least with you?

Kevin: [00:10:01] Well I think for me it's not so much that students might see it but it's the effect that it has on me in my outlook. You know continually engaging in that. You know I'm a, I mention in that same piece you know what I was in graduate school there was another Ph.D. student teaching his own courses as well and he would come into the grad lounge after being done and just unload all my students are awful.

Kevin: [00:10:23] This is what they think are horrible they're stupid they can't write. I mean just sort of. And we'd all sort of stare at you know just kind of stalling like mad you really hate these people. It was really it got to the point where as uncomfortable a couple of times and you know if you go into the classroom with your weapons up like that.

Kevin: [00:10:41] I just don't think you can be an effective teacher. I know I couldn't. You know I can't go in already expecting silliness or failure or them not to get it.

Kevin: [00:10:50] And so if I'm regularly reinforcing my own opinion in the ways that I engage with social media and friends then you know the battle is already over. You know I've gone into the classroom. I'm not going to be able to accomplish what I want to accomplish.

Bonni: [00:11:05] Daniel Goleman in Social Intelligence the New Science of Human Relationships talks about that very thing. The contagious nature of our conversations and our dialogue and it's almost I don't want to oversimplify his work because it's groundbreaking.

Bonni: [00:11:19] But it's the idea that I can start venting to you and then I've sort of left some it's like it's the pig pen character in entirety here in this little ground for only it's a pig pen left some of his dust behind and like everybody started to have their own little cloud of the mess above them.

Kevin: [00:11:37] Yeah. Becomes a question how much of this do you really want to carry around all the time and I realize that you know I was carrying a lot of this stuff without realizing it.

Kevin: [00:11:45] And once you put it down you know and that's a very intentional act I think to put that kind of stuff down and sort of reboot and re-approach things that can be really freeing just for me as a teacher.

Kevin: [00:11:58] My favorite quote is from Abraham Maslow who says that if you if you if the only tool you have is a hammer you tend to see every problem as a nail. Now I use tools as a metaphor a lot I told my students you know I want to put tools in your toolbox. Build what you need so that it really appeals to me if I just go around carrying a big ole hammer.

Kevin: [00:12:15] You know what am I going to build. That's sort of the place that I got to in this process sort of reflecting on you know what was I really doing and you know this larger culture of student shaming and some of it gets pretty pretty over-the-top and it's just it's a pretty negative space and I can't stay in that space for very long.

Bonni: [00:12:32] Before we leave the subject of shaming and onto something more cheerful like failure. Before we leave there you do actually recommend that we do a little bit of shaming in a particular area. So while we shouldn't be shaming our students who do you advocate that we should be doing a little more shaming of?

Kevin: [00:12:49] This actually I've been doing a lot of thinking about this lately. So I'm glad you asked that question I think a lot of the student shaming that we do is faculty you know when we're just sort of raging against how you know kids these days don't learn and nobody reads it.

Kevin: [00:13:01] And yes our students are pulled in a lot of different directions maybe more than they have been in the past. I don't think they're necessarily I'm a historian so I've seen this right.

Kevin: [00:13:08] I don't think that faculty complained about students is anything new. But you know our students are working hard tend to be working more for the student body of today is much more diverse both demographically socially economically than it was a generation ago.

Kevin: [00:13:22] And certainly the pressures that we face as faculty with kind of the neoliberal attacks on higher education I mean look at what's going on in North Carolina Louisiana and especially Wisconsin.

Kevin: [00:13:31] We are squeezed in a number of different ways and sometimes it's easy because we feel enormous pressure faculty workload. I don't think it's ever been more difficult and the circumstances in which we're asked to do it.

Kevin: [00:13:42] Especially for those of us who are contingent or non thing attract faculty by the majority you know there's so much pressure that we tend to take that out on students. I think in a lot of ways without really thinking about it when the real targets are you know who are creating these conditions.

Kevin: [00:14:00] Let's let's look at elected officials. Let's look at university administrators let's look at people with power and money who are making decisions that are creating a circumstance that really undermines the very ideal of higher education in a democratic society.

Kevin: [00:14:14] Feeling squeezed as faculty like that we may punch down instead of up because it's easier the punching up using the voice that we have in the intellectual resources we have to call attention to these things and if we need to do so in a in a shaming sort of way or snark on social media or satire or manifesto you know I'm all in favor of that. Just make sure we aim it in the right direction.

Bonni: [00:14:37] One of the places that you are critical of is the trend that's starting. And it's one of the places where it's shown up as the Chronicle's website. And that is the "dear student meme.

Bonni: [00:14:49] And you point to Jessie Stommel's response that he had to that hold dear student this dear student. You young whippersnappers I don't know how else to describe it but he talks about that it's derisive it when we giggle as part of our work mode because this is something that's read by tens of thousands of people that we do need a safe place to vent like you talk about.

Bonni: [00:15:13] But that's that's not the place to do it is on a site like that. And one of the things that he talks about and you talk about is the fact that we have seemed to in those cases forgotten that we were once students.

Bonni: [00:15:24] And I love your revised dear student post and said Dear Students you're really dumb and I'm really smart. Your revised goes: Dear Student you'll get better at this. So will we. Faculty aka former students and I'd just love your revision.

Kevin: [00:15:40] When I feel really strongly about that and Jesse's piece was a wonderful piece and I think that dear students series was disappointing for Jesse and for myself and for others in that you know the Chronicle's VITE section has some really great stuff.

Kevin: [00:15:55] It publishes wonderful articles they have some great writers: Kelly Baker is one of them. Lee Skallerup - some great voices on there and in this piece just sort of it's a very jarring sort of discord.

Kevin: [00:16:07] And again I just it's a toxic sort of thing. I think for us to engage in given the pressures we face as faculty and given the current landscape and higher ed if we start embracing this we're taking our attention away from.

Kevin: [00:16:20] I think it's really important our students are our allies not our adversaries and higher. And we need to be more mindful of that I think.

Bonni: [00:16:27] If we are respecting our students in this way showing them the high regard that we have for them and their potential then we can sometimes build this fertile soil where we can begin to try to counteract some of what our students may have experienced in their lives of parental figures or teachers trying to steer them away from failure and to helping them embrace a little bit more.

Bonni: [00:16:50] What are some ways in your teaching that you either try to help students or other faculty or yourself learn more about discipline or about themselves through failure.

Kevin: [00:17:02] And I've tried a lot of different things some have worked well some not so well they failed if you will but one of the things that I think it can be as simple as sharing with students times that I've fallen short of what I've tried to do.

Kevin: [00:17:18] You know I was an indifferent student at best my first three years of undergrad and I made a ton of mistakes and I made decisions that engaged in activities that were certainly not beneficial to my education.

Kevin: [00:17:33] And it got to the point where you know I had goals that I wanted to accomplish and I was putting myself in a position where those goals would be impossible if I continued down that road. So I share with students you know look I did some of this stuff I was in college I get it you know.

Kevin: [00:17:46] I'm not I'm not unaware of the range of choices that are out there. And what I'm very aware of is that not all those choices are going to help get you where you want to go even if they seem like you know the better choices at the time.

Kevin: [00:17:57] I failed several classes in college often in the same semester. I used to skip class all the time. My priorities were way out of whack.

Kevin: [00:18:04] I almost dropped out for them. I think to see that someone who's gotten to the academic position I mean come from that sort of story I think can be helpful that I tell them you know don't do what I did and I did the experiment.

Kevin: [00:18:17] So I can give you the results you don't need to run the same experiment yourself and it just gives them more information and maybe it takes sort of abstract you know sort of very kind of and you know do these sorts of things to be successful and it makes that tangible makes it real it makes it personal. You know we like stories stories resonate with us and so I think my story resonates with some students.

Kevin: [00:18:38] And I think even as well letting students or faculty know that failure failure is okay that it is part of learning. I think we know that in the abstract but we don't always acknowledge it on a real day to day level.

Kevin: [00:18:50] So I think it's empowering to be able to hear that to be able to recognize it and for someone who is an instructor to tell students Look it's not always going to be unicorns and rainbows. It's not always going to be that or you know there's hard stuff here and you will you know maybe experience setbacks or difficulties. That's all right. The question of are we going to do to get through to the other side.

Bonni: [00:19:09] What about a seemingly small failure of just a student getting a question wrong in class. I don't know what size classes you typically teach.

Kevin: [00:19:17] Well I teach right now my class sizes are anywhere from 10 to 30. And I teach a small liberal arts school. In the past I've taught lecturer sections of 500 and just about everything in between.

Kevin: [00:19:28] So I've got experience in multiple class sizes. My classes tend to be pretty discussion based and so yeah there are a lot of times where a student will have an answer to a question that I ask that is wrong or at least not optimal.

Kevin: [00:19:42] Maybe we can put it that way that they're getting there but maybe aren't quite there yet and I think sort of reframing that is OK you know that's that's maybe that's one answer here but then turning a question back OK we'll have you thought about this instead of then throwing open the class you know.

Kevin: [00:19:57] So a question following an answer with another question rather than saying oh no no no no no. You don't want to. You don't want to close off a conversation. I think that's it's hard enough to get a good discussion going sometimes without closing it off if somebody throws an answer out there that doesn't quite work.

Bonni: [00:20:15] I've had students compliment me on that before. It's a funny compliment. You do a really good job of telling someone they're wrong without making them feel stupid.

Bonni: [00:20:23] Oh but do you think it is one of those things where because the other thing students really don't like is when they're not told that the answer's wrong or the other person isn't told because that doesn't help the person who said it or the other people who heard it too and I think sometimes there's this sense of tentativeness that oh I don't want to insult them. And this isn't going to go well but turning around to a question is really a smart approach.

Kevin: [00:20:48] And I think there is an art to that. You know letting someone know they're wrong without telling them they're wrong. You know helping guide or move them in another direction and then engaging the rest of class and perhaps helping them do that to make it a collaborative process. You know I think sometimes you know people who tend to be very critical of students and they don't know stuff and they should know the consequences of not studying because they never studied.

Kevin: [00:21:09] You know that kind of thing. You know they look at an attitude like the one that I'm espousing and say well you're really just you want this touchy-feely New Age classroom where anything goes and nobody's wrong and everybody gets a participation trophy and you all sit around and sing Kumbaya all period and you know that's not it at all. People are wrong I'm wrong all the time. Right.

Kevin: [00:21:28] I don't see what the point is in not acknowledging that and not creating spaces where that can happen but not derail what you're trying to do

in the classroom. I think you can have academic rigor in fact I think you can have better academic rigor if you respect students as colleagues in a mutual scholarly enterprise.

Kevin: [00:21:45] And I actually use that phrase a lot. You know we're we're engaged together in this life of the mind and the work that we're doing. I'm going to treat you like that and I want you to treat each other and me like that and then you can have some very good rigorous high level analytical discussions and other classroom activities because it comes from a place of trust where people know that it's okay to take risks that it's okay to maybe fall short.

Bonni: [00:22:07] What are some things that you do at the beginning of the class to try to set up that environment and specifically you have written some about your policy of not necessarily having a policy around technology in the classroom but I believe we have other ways to.

Kevin: [00:22:22] I let them know that you know I don't have a cell phone policy because I think it's important to be able to be decision literate as I call it. You know you've got this powerful machine that can do all sorts of things. We're going to use it in class in our work.

Kevin: [00:22:38] You want to look something up or go online and pull down a document that we're talking about we do a lot of source analysis in my class for example if you want to check Wikipedia for some larger context on a name or an event that we're talking about great.

Kevin: [00:22:50] But you have to know you have to be able to decide when it's appropriate to use this device and when it is it then you can only really learn that by experience.

Kevin: [00:22:58] And so if I tell my students you know put all your cell phones away and never use these devices I'm creating an environment that they'll never experience when they get out of college they'll be in meetings they'll be in situations where they're going to have to decide.

Kevin: [00:23:11] You know do I give into the temptation to go onto Twitter or do I focus on the work at hand and if I don't give them opportunities to practice that from first year brand new students all the way up through seniors then they're not going to have develop those skills.

Bonni: [00:23:25] In what ways then do you attempt or do you attempt to guide them back when they have made what would constitute the wrong decision and they are on Twitter and it's not part of the class or what have you.

Kevin: [00:23:36] Well one of the things that I share with them you know there is research out there that talks about how device usage or law you know the students on Facebook going during a discussion for example the real damage comes from the distraction for the students around her or him.

Kevin: [00:23:50] So when I share that research up front the implication and I make it very clear is you know if you've made the decision to do this not only are you missing something but you're also stealing everybody else's attention around you you're stealing their time.

Kevin: [00:24:03] I think build some accountability where students haven't really thought about it before when they see this research that shows the real distraction that occurs around a student who's using a device or surfing on Twitter or whatever.

Kevin: [00:24:15] Not all of this sort of reframes the consequences into well I bought Dr. Gannon to Ok I'm kind of screwing my classmates here and I think that that can be a powerful way to reframe the conversation.

Bonni: [00:24:26] Will you say something to them and confront them. It's still happening.

Kevin: [00:24:30] I do. I do I try to do it you know again a lot of the times we're in discussion or I do team based morning and one of my classes so a lot of the other with their teams doing work and all you know if I see someone on the cell phone and I go over and I say what you checkin' on or you know what you what you what you look it up if they're not checking on or looking up something they tend to just kind of put it away and very sheepishly and usually I only have to do that once.

Kevin: [00:24:53] And I do it casually and I do it so it doesn't draw attention while everybody else is engaged in work and then I build and other things. And you know if I'm doing group work I have groups assess themselves each member of a group assesses their teammates as well as their own contributions to the group and then I average those you know they give a point value to it they grade themselves in their team.

Kevin: [00:25:11] I average those and those are actually class points that are part of their grade. So there are a number of ways that build these expectations into the course that it incentivizes them to be collaborative to be focused and to be on task.

Kevin: [00:25:22] Now not every student is you know always going to be doing the right thing on their technology you know that's have I stopped know texting back and forth no.

Kevin: [00:25:31] But have we ever stopped every student from you know staring out the window or staring off into space or you know doing other homework in class. You know if you try to shoot for 100 percent of that all the time it's just unrealistic.

Kevin: [00:25:43] But you know I think I've been able to create an environment where students are clear what the expectations are. It doesn't take much to nudge them back towards it.

Bonni: [00:25:51] I still remember so vividly in elementary school it was all about passing notes. And of course we even would have mailboxes on our own desks.

Kevin: [00:25:59] All right. And then there would be like me check Yes check No.

Bonni: [00:26:03] And then there were these things that I wish I actually called different things and different regions of the country and I even forgot what the names are.

Bonni: [00:26:11] But you fold up the piece of paper and then it's like little triangles that you move back and forth with your finger in your pointer finger. And so that you can figure out who you were going to marry or how many kids you're have.

Kevin: [00:26:22] You know I was a military brat so we moved around a lot and in every elementary school I went to and I went to like five bills things were there.

Bonni: [00:26:33] And then there was this be called home slam books out here in California. But then you'd fill out this whole diary of all your answers to different questions.

Bonni: [00:26:40] And that was you are always number 7 throughout the entire book and then someone else was number eight throughout the entire book and

then you'd need a little book of all the information is not like time-wasting didn't exist before the Internet.

Kevin: [00:26:53] Exactly. Exactly.

Bonni: [00:26:55] I think probably is some better time wasters in fact I have to just mention this real quick I. Do an aerobics class and there's a really fun song that's called Shut Up and Dance.

Bonni: [00:27:06] And they did a mash up of all these dance scenes from everything from The Sound of Music to Footlose to oh gosh what was the other big. Oh my goodness I'm losing my 80s movies references.

Bonni: [00:27:24] But I'm going to put that in the show knows just in case someone needs a little bit of an upper. The Internet has been depressing to me this last week. So I need to write so fine. But lots of ways we could waste our time before technology and.

Kevin: [00:27:35] Well we all know the Internet was created for cat pictures and everything else.

Bonni: [00:27:40] Absolutely. So anything else we should talk about before we go to recommendations as it relates to creating this culture of respect for our students.

Kevin: [00:27:51] Well you know the one thing I would mention is again you know some of the pushback I get when I talk about this is you know I'll have people tell me well you just don't understand you know you're you know we need to have control in the classroom we need to you know we need to teach them all this content and if they don't learn it here they'll never learn it.

Kevin: [00:28:09] And if they don't learn about it in my class are going to go through life being ignorant about whatever subject it is and then Western civilization will collapse it will be anarchy.

Kevin: [00:28:17] Dogs and cats living together old you know and it's easy to get carried away with that. You know as you mentioned before there's a power dynamic and it is about control and it's very scary to give up control and the way we're trained in graduate school is you know pursue an argument relentlessly defended against all comers and keep control of it right. And so now we're supposed to go collaborate with other people as academics.

Kevin: [00:28:39] You know what could go wrong. You know it's I think it's very much a part of our academic culture. And what I'm really arguing for is a collaborative attitude where you know students are colleagues.

Kevin: [00:28:51] You know maybe not equal colleagues or not in a mastery level like we are but they are on the same journey that we are they have the same goals that we do to make this a good successful class you know. The key is to make sure that we all talk about a good successful class meeting the same sort of thing.

Kevin: [00:29:04] And they need to be on board for that. So you know I'm not advocating you know your lecture class should be a commune and you will have a love in.

Kevin: [00:29:12] But what it should be is a space to create a space to learn a space to innovate. I mean if you go in armed for combat that's what you're going to get.

Kevin: [00:29:23] So I think it requires a lot of reflection on our part and some on learning of some habits that maybe we didn't realize that we had learned to be able to get out that into success you know to be successful reflective practitioners.

Bonni: [00:29:37] And there are some ways to have even more influence than when we only rely on our ability to influence or power when we can.

Kevin: [00:29:46] Absolutely.

Bonni: [00:29:46] Other ways. It's incredible because as you described earlier then I'm not the police you know I'm not the law enforcement in the classroom that's not my role. That's a really hard role to play at a court level then.

Bonni: [00:30:00] I imagine it's hard to play at any time my kids are young in preschool. It's also very hard if that's your only method of influence seems reasonable access through law enforcement.

Kevin: [00:30:10] But if it's not I don't you know I didn't go to grad school to be cell phone cop. Yeah yeah no I didn't go to grad school to be the tone police or the behavior police.

Kevin: [00:30:18] And you know if you if you complain about students who are acting immature in the sense that they're not acting as adults you know autonomous intellectual folks but you treat them like they are immature and expect them to be immature.

Kevin: [00:30:35] Well you you've created I think the conditions were you know you have shown them you know it's not what you say it's what you do. So you've shown them what you expect them to be.

Kevin: [00:30:45] So if you have a draconian policy where you know thou shalt not thou shalt not thou shalt not you know they know what you think of them or at least they have a pretty clear indication of that and they're going to act accordingly. I think.

Kevin: [00:30:57] So you know what are we conveying what kind of environmental kind of space are we creating with our students not just by policies but by actions. You know again it's the only tool you have is a hammer every problem is a nail. Well you know I think students are pretty attuned to that as well.

Bonni: [00:31:12] We're going to move on to the recommendations segment and mine is to go check out your blog. I don't do this often but it's so good. And I really don't want people to miss it. So if you go to teachinginhighered.com/52.

Bonni: [00:31:24] I have a link to Kevin's blog in the recommendations segment and then also a couple of articles that might be a good place to get started if you like this topic of creating more respect for our students and just thank you so much for all the writing that you're doing and I love to see it spreading and getting a lot of traction on Twitter. It's been fun.

Kevin: [00:31:43] Well thanks I appreciate the blog has been a great space for me to to work a lot of these ideas out and to get a lot of great feedback and conversation about it. So it's been really helpful for me as as both a teacher and a writer. So I appreciate the shout out.

Bonni: [00:31:57] You're welcome. And what recommendations do you have for people listening.

Kevin: [00:32:01] Well in terms of some of the reading that I've been doing in my faculty developer role lately you know kind of foundational books here. I'm a history professor.

Kevin: [00:32:12] I'm a total dork so of course I'm going to recommend books because you know I'm an absolute bibliophile. But one of the books that's had the most influence on my approach is by Maryellen Weimer called Learner-Centred teaching.

Kevin: [00:32:27] And it's just it's a fantastic book. It's one of those books that when I read it the first time it just it affirmed a lot of what I was doing and what I was thinking it affirmed a lot of the directions I wanted to move and she just articulated it so well that you know I'm reading into that.

Kevin: [00:32:42] Oh yeah that's absolute oh man she said that great you know. So it it really resonated with me and just has a good mix of kind of theory and practice.

Kevin: [00:32:51] But I would certainly recommend anything by Stephen Brookfield who is very you know critically engaged and reflective scholar he's been writing for 20 or 30 years in the area of teaching and learning and he wrote a book with Stephen Preskill called Discussion as a Way of Teaching that has some really good concrete stuff to kind of create the type of environment where students are you know collaborators.

Kevin: [00:33:16] And where it's safe to take risks and it's safe to critically think about you know assumptions and things that students brought with him into the classroom it's very important to create that environment so so Brookfield and Preskill's discussion as a way of teaching I think is a really good text to help get started with that.

Bonni: [00:33:34] And we back on so 15 I was able to interview him about discussion as a way of teaching. And I couldn't believe I mean that just I was naive. I was young I didn't know any how much that he could get into 30 minutes of just the richness. I mean to me. I had not realized the richness with which he could talk about discussion.

Bonni: [00:33:58] He is just incredibly powerful so if people haven't been listening to these episodes for that long episode 15 is one of the ones I say go back and listen to that one his incredible episode.

Kevin: [00:34:08] Yeah I saw that on your page and I've got it bookmarked because his book the Skillful Teacher is also a really good sort of personal growth and development book that's really had a big influence on me like he's

probably one of my favorite writers and teaching and learning he says got a range of insights.

Bonni: [00:34:23] Yeah I didn't know a lot about him and someone else had recommended him being on the show and he was gracious and agreed. And it's been fun. The Skillful Teacher. I'm not sure if I'm remembering this right it might be being rewritten right now.

Kevin: [00:34:37] I think it is. I think he's working on a new edition of it.

Bonni: [00:34:39] Yeah I was going to have him back on the show when it comes out and he already agreed to that. So that's the good news.

Kevin: [00:34:43] Awesome well then I'll tune in.

Bonni: [00:34:46] Well thank you so much for being on the show and this important idea of having more respect for our students. And what I love Kevin about what you said Throughout today's episode is that it isn't something that we're done and we can just check the box and move on. But it continued discipline. We need to be cultivating in ourselves so thank you for challenging me and for everyone listening.

Kevin: [00:35:08] Well thank you for having me. I really enjoyed it.

Bonni: [00:35:12] Thanks again to Kevin for being a guest on this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. As always if you'd like to comment on the episode or start a dialogue with Kevin or myself you can do so at teachinginhighered.com/52.

Bonni: [00:35:26] If you'd like to subscribe to the weekly update where you'll automatically get one e-mail no more every week with a combination of the show notes with all the links of the things we talked about plus a article about teaching or productivity.

Bonni: [00:35:40] You can do that at teachinginhighered.com/subscribe and one of the ways you can help people discover the show is by whatever service you use to listen by either rating the show, or giving it a review. Their algorithms that just helps bring it more to the attention of other people who might have an interest in Teaching in Higher Ed thanks in advance for considering doing that and I will see you next time.

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