

Bonni: [00:00:00] This is episode 6 of Teaching in Higher Ed: Eight seconds that will transform your team

Production Credit: [00:00:08] Produced by Innovate learning: maximizing human potential.

Bonni: [00:00:19] 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: [00:00:43] This is Bonni Stachowiak and I am joined once again with Dave Stachowiak.

Dave: [00:00:48] Hey Bonni Stachowiak.

Bonni: [00:00:50] Today we are talking about eight seconds that will transform your teaching

Dave: [00:00:56] Although curiously it'll take us about 25 or 30 minutes to have that discussion.

Bonni: [00:01:01] It is curious but it will help I think solidify one of the things that Dave and I think a lot about when we plan these episodes are try not to speak to hypothetically or theoretically about teaching but really have there be in our minds at least one thing that people might be able to put into practice that would help all of us be better educators, teachers

Bonni: [00:01:22] And so this is one of those things that sounds easy on the surface but it's actually behaviorally hard to do because we as educators have conditioned ourselves to believe it or not to actually condition ourselves not to ask questions and then conditioned our students not to ask them So let's talk a

little bit about conditioning. For those of you who may not be psychology professors or may not remember your own psychology classes

Bonni: [00:01:49] So with conditioning what that means is our behavior has been shaped over time. And so for our students we we want most of us want there to be some kind of engagement. I've never really talked to any professor ever who says no what I really would like is for me to talk the entire time and just be stared at with blank faces. That's what I'm really hoping for.

Bonni: [00:02:13] But sometimes I've had professors who have said gosh they're just there in my case. I teach traditional age undergraduates so people might say oh they're just too young or some people might say oh they're just not interested in learning or they're too uncomfortable to ask questions or whatever and so they've over time just decided it didn't work in the past or whatever it was they were trying.

Bonni: [00:02:37] So we're going to talk about eight seconds that you can use that will really transform your teaching and will break the conditioning that some of us have have made for our students. Break them of that the bad habit that they might have gotten into.

Bonni: [00:02:53] And they also break it for ourselves to help us see the power of being able to ask questions and engage with students and actually have that dynamic working. So let's first talk about how we have conditioned ourselves and our students not to engage in questions that type of dialogue.

Bonni: [00:03:13] So how this typically goes is that a professor might ask a question and then answer their own question. So you've probably seen this not just professors I'm sure you've seen this with lots of public speakers and so someone would say Tell me what is the Fourth P of marketing.

Bonni: [00:03:35] Remember the fourth P of marketing is price. So price says so we ask a question then we end up answering it ourselves because clearly no one knew the answer right.

Dave: [00:03:45] I would go even farther to say this is a human issue more so even a teaching issue because we do tend to a lot of times ask questions we already think we know the answer to or position it to what we want to hear as people. And we don't and when people are other people are talking we're thinking about what we're going to say next versus really listening for understanding.

Dave: [00:04:13] Which takes really a it takes effort and conscious practice to be able to get better at that particularly when connecting with students in front of a classroom

Bonni: [00:04:25] And it can be so awkward. I remember what a big transition it was for me. I had my background in teaching was in the corporate world. And so I was accustomed to that presenting in front of audience. I was in the franchise industry for a lot of my early career.

Bonni: [00:04:42] And so I mean I might have been present into a group as small as 20 and as large as 2000 and I was a hoot. So I would say things and people would laugh you know they'd laugh even if it wasn't funny just to be polite they would laugh and then to go into the climate of a typical if there is such a thing.

Bonni: [00:05:04] Typical undergrad class people don't laugh even if it's funny sometimes they don't laugh or sometimes they if they don't find it funny they're surely not going to laugh. But even if it's funny sometimes that just it just there's sometimes a social awkwardness particularly I've found when I teach freshmen especially early on in their freshman year they're all just trying to figure out what this all is all about.

Bonni: [00:05:29] So it was an entirely different audience. And so it can we just know it can be awkward. It can be awfully awkward. And so we condition ourselves can ask that question again because I asked and I asked a question and everyone just looked at me and it was awkward for all of us.

Bonni: [00:05:47] For me and for them I don't want to do that again. So I'm not going to ask questions or if I'm going to ask a question I'm going to quickly answer it because that's that's the way we're going to roll from here on out.

Dave: [00:05:56] And I think this is also challenging at like the graduate level or in graduate programs where you have more a lot of institutions have more of a cohort model where a group of people have been going through classes together and it has the faculty member who changes over time

Dave: [00:06:14] And some of those groups develop will they all develop their own dynamics and come into cohorts where that dynamic has clearly been set up we are pretty quiet during the class. And so that's that's not an easy thing to overcome especially when a cohort is a year or two in with each other you're inheriting the culture of that cohort as a faculty member.

Dave: [00:06:40] And so I've found that to be a struggle on the on the opposite end too of. Now we have a norm that's been established in this group of how we're going to process information the class and how we're going to dialogue or not.

Dave: [00:06:52] And if that Norm is different than my teaching style I have to adapt and I have to think of what am I going to do to meet them halfway but also to challenge them to dialogue and interact in a way that I know will be helpful to them in taking the theoretical material in the classroom and be able to apply it practically in their work and in the research

Bonni: [00:07:14] I'm cracking up I don't think I told you this day. But speaking of cultures that cohorts can create one of the things that the doctoral class I just finished the way it was structured was there was some face to face experiences.

Bonni: [00:07:27] And then there were also asynchronous meaning at their own pace modules they would go through different weeks but then there was also live synchronous sessions online. And if you've done that anyone listening that's done those synchronous live sessions.

Bonni: [00:07:44] I mean these people are educators and so they're working all day all day are superintending all day or all of that and then to come for almost two hours to an online session.

Bonni: [00:07:55] It can be pretty low energy. So I had been reading an article about Dave and I are really into our fit beds. The pedometers we use that track our steps and things and so I had been reading an article just about how we were not designed to sit down. And so for them we would in between each one of their presentations when they would present to each other we would do a quick stretch break and you can see each other on video camera.

Bonni: [00:08:18] I mean they're on Web cams and I'm on a Web cam so in between every presenter ever would stand up and do their big stretch and they really did say what a difference that made just bringing their energy level back up.

Bonni: [00:08:28] And then we did it again when we came to our face to face session when we closed out the class a couple of weeks ago and it cracks me cause you're speaking and I'm thinking I broke the cohort for the next professor is going to be what is going on, why are these people standing up all the time

because there just would be really kind of random if you didn't know that that was the case.

Bonni: [00:08:49] Although actually the woman who's teaching the class after me did go and sit in my half day so she'll know but in the future other people are going to be thinking what on earth just happened here. So funny how we can create these little subcultures and cohorts.

Dave: [00:09:03] And someone will say well there was that crazy while midway out as a professor back a little while ago.

Bonni: [00:09:09] So at any rate let's talk about what I want to look at the process and then by the way this is going to get back to eight seconds right. So I want to look at the process. What has to happen before a student will answer a question in a class what actually has to transpire. So first of all I ask a question right.

Bonni: [00:09:32] Then the student has to process what's just been asked and communication models. This is called encoding. No sorry. This is called Decoding what I do is encode it and communicate it and then the student has to decode it. We hope by the way they're decoding in somewhat of a similar fashion of what we had meant to ask.

Bonni: [00:09:52] But there's lots of room for miscommunication there too there always is. Communication is messy. So they are decoding the question they're actually processing it in their brain. Then the student has to see if he or she can formulate an answer to the question. So actually figuring out what is the answer for themselves. That takes some time right.

Bonni: [00:10:19] Then the student has to formulate an answer in his or her head. How will they convey their answer. And of course this can really really depend on just how comfortable are they with themselves and with their answer and how they want to say it.

Bonni: [00:10:35] There's so much thought that needs to go into that and particularly for me working with the 18 to 22 year olds they're discovering their own identities. And there's still some insecurity there I mean all of us at any age can have insecurity by the way this work. The same model works doesn't matter the age of the students

Bonni: [00:10:53] But I'm just trying to give examples of different types of teaching. You might be doing. Then the next thing is key. The student has to

decide if it's safe to answer. Am I going to look foolish in any age We don't want to look foolish we don't want to get the wrong answer. we don't want to embarrass ourselves.

Bonni: [00:11:17] And then depending on what the cultural rules are in the classroom they either have to raise their hand or just actually speak out their answer.

Dave: [00:11:26] So all of that takes more than instantaneous and some good grammar. It takes more than instantaneous but I think that that's the thing is that a lot of instructors faculty and otherwise. Aren't comfortable with silence.

Dave: [00:11:46] And so we get we this is all happening. It takes a couple of seconds. And that's where we end up answering our own question because we hear silence and we go hmmm guess no one knows. I'm not really comfortable with silence because I don't know what to do with that so I'm going to answer my own question and move on to my lecture

Bonni: [00:12:05] And since I asked the question I didn't have to decode it because I'm the one who encoded it in the first place before I even asked it so I skipped that step as the person who asked it. I don't have to formulate an answer. I already know what either the answer or an answer would be to the question.

Bonni: [00:12:22] I know what my viewpoint would be if it's an opinion question or so I got that part covered. I don't have to formulate an answer because I already know again what my answer would be and then I already know that I'm safe because I'm the one presenting I have the power and the control in the room.

Bonni: [00:12:39] I don't have to go through that process in my head so it seems agonizingly long to me as the one asking the question so I'll just answer and go right on.

Dave: [00:12:50] And so we don't let give people the space to be able to go through that process. A lot of the time and be able to respond in such a way that you know perhaps adds a lot of value to the quiet to the conversation.

Dave: [00:13:04] But we would skip over and there's been really interesting research done on the you know the male female dynamic especially in primary

classrooms of how much time. You know teachers give for people to respond to questions

Dave: [00:13:19] And I know a lot of the research has shown that boys will tend to jump in faster than girls but girls will process things longer and sometimes give richer answers. So it's really in a way oversimplifying a lot of the research but that's what some of the things have shown.

Bonni: [00:13:37] Then there's the extrovert introvert dynamic that comes up to where the introvert a lot of times going to have something really great to say but especially going to need to process that longer internally before offering an answer. If they were even inclined to offer an answer

Dave: [00:13:52] And think longer about is it safe to answer too. So those kinds of things all become dynamics that are challenging as well.

Bonni: [00:13:58] So introducing the eight second rule. The eight second rule says we ask a question and then we start counting eight seconds in our heads and I'm actually going to do eight seconds of silence on this recording so we can see just how long eight seconds is. But let me go over to my clock app so I can actually do this.

Dave: [00:14:21] Are you going to pose a question as well or just to respond to.

Bonni: [00:14:26] Sure. Why don't you ask me if I'm going to pose a question and then I'll wait eight seconds to answer that. So you're going to say or you can ask a question. It's a play within a play it's like Shakespearean.

Dave: [00:14:43] Wow. I wasn't prepared to ask a question

Bonni: [00:14:46] So just ask me if I'm going to ask a question

Dave: [00:14:48] Are you going to ask a question.

Bonni: [00:14:59] That was eight seconds. That's a long time

Dave: [00:15:01] It is a long time.

Bonni: [00:15:03] So if you're listening you might be thinking oh that was just agonizing to listen to you and I know what you were doing. Here's the key

though you hardly ever are going to get to eight seconds. I have been using the eight second to rule for longer than I care to admit.

Bonni: [00:15:22] And it has worked in every instance except for one when students know about the eight second rule because I've taught it to them and they're messing with my head because what's happening is yes we are leaving time by the way so we're leaving time for those processes to take place that I described earlier

Bonni: [00:15:42] But we're actually manipulating students too. I'm going to be really forthright about that you are manipulating them, students or whomever you're presenting in front of; people don't like that silence. They don't like the silence more than they don't like risking speaking in public.

Bonni: [00:16:03] So you'll actually be able to manipulate them say oh this is not comfortable. Awkward. I'm going to answer the question and it helps them free up that feeling of risking saying an answer that might be wrong or might embarrass them in some way.

Bonni: [00:16:20] But you've started to condition them that you actually want an answer and then you reward them for answering. And we will be talking in future shows more about types of questions to ask and how to approach that. But I want to start here with the eight seconds because it works.

Bonni: [00:16:39] Even if you asked a bad question it really does work. And so. But the key is counting the eight seconds in your head and not answering your own question, not asking the question again in a different way but and maintaining the eye contact to cause that does a number to it by having eye contact with different students.

Bonni: [00:17:00] You'll just see them that will be the most that they'll have that fearful look oh she's looking at me.

Dave: [00:17:07] As opposed to turning around and looking at a PowerPoint or glance into your computer or your notes or something like that.

Bonni: [00:17:13] I would not advise staring at the same student the whole kittens. But to do maybe two seconds to one student two seconds to another student and not be afraid of that by the way. If you wonder if you have stared at them for too long.

Bonni: [00:17:29] Human behavior is they'll actually look away when you've looked at them too long so you don't have to really worry about that too much because kind of just a natural thing that happens.

Bonni: [00:17:39] So the eight second rule you ask a question and you wait the seconds and you will start to get a response from students and then you'll start to condition them that you really do want to engage. And then you're not even going to have to get even close to the eight seconds because they're going to start to learn behaviorally without you even being outward about what you're doing.

Bonni: [00:18:00] You are teaching them your conditioning them to engage.

Dave: [00:18:05] I thought of one other thing that goes along with this Bonni that I've used over the years and it's been helpful. I think I learned this as a Dale Carnegie instructor years ago, one of the things that I was taught is to do the best you can to not allow someone to be alone in a negative.

Dave: [00:18:20] So if someone says something or contribute something in a classroom format and it is wrong, like if there's a if there was a yes or no question or a black or blue or you know black or white question and they end up being wrong or they give an answer that isn't correct for whatever reason is to cushion that in some way of say something like I could see how you could come to that conclusion.

Dave: [00:18:44] Or that's a common that's a common perception about this or even if you've once believed that too. You know that's actually something that I thought to at one point.

Dave: [00:18:56] So that way you even if someone gives you don't give some sort of contribution that isn't accurate or is false for whatever reason you give them a space where they're comfortable saying Yeah I wasn't correct in my answer.

Dave: [00:19:09] But I also know that it's that's OK that I gave a correct answer. Now obviously you want to be engaging the kind of dialogue that you know there could be lots of different opinions too.

Dave: [00:19:21] But on things that there are actual right or wrongs about I found that that's really helpful to even if someone does give a wrong answer that they're comfortable again contributing to the future of giving an answer again

because they haven't been shot down just because they gave an answer that wasn't right.

Bonni: [00:19:35] And when you do that you're not just helping that one student engage in the future but you're teaching the entire class that you're going to be a trustworthy person for taking those risks because if they're the ones who are wrong the next time they see how you've responded to another person who is wrong.

Dave: [00:19:51] And I think that is that is something that a lot of leaders and I put faculty into this category to as leaders. They really do set the tone in the classroom. You jump on one student for a wrong answer or something that maybe didn't sound as intelligent as they wanted it to sound.

Dave: [00:20:08] And all of a sudden you've taught the other 20 people who were watching that interaction. Don't risk don't risk saying something that may not be perfectly thought through or may not be perfectly accurate.

Dave: [00:20:19] And then you'll end up killing dialogue in that class as long as it goes on and you will never know why. But that will be the kinds of that will be the kinds of things people see and remember

Bonni: [00:20:30] We would love to hear from you. If you have tried the eight second rule or something like it or if you test it out after listening how it goes the show notes are at [Teachinginhighered.com/6](https://teachinginhighered.com/6).

Bonni: [00:20:43] This is the time in the show when we share our EdTech finds. And I've actually been thinking about perhaps broadening this part of the show. I love talking about educational technology tools but I also love just great finds in today's tool you'd have to really make a stretch that it's actually related to education. Other than that we will often bring one of these with us when we teach.

Dave: [00:21:09] It's kind of got a technology component to it as well.

Bonni: [00:21:12] So Dave was so kind. And instead of bringing me flowers which I do like when he brings me flowers. But even better than flowers for me are some of the other gifts that he gets so he got me a gift to celebrate the launch of this podcast. He's been nudging me for some time to launch it.

Dave: [00:21:28] Such an amazing gift that so many people out there are clamoring for... just thinking about it.

Bonni: [00:21:34] wishing they had one...

Dave: [00:21:36] Wishing. It's a water bottle.

Bonni: [00:21:38] It's a water bottle and it's a water bottle that's put out by a company called Evernote which we've talked about a couple of times on the show and we do plan on. And I use it so much as a part of my teaching and my personal knowledge management system called Evernote.

Bonni: [00:21:52] It's a cloud based notebook system but they're really broadening what they have to offer and it includes different types of office products including these really neat looking sticky note holders.

Bonni: [00:22:03] Don't get me started some really neat bags a wallet and including a water bottle so when I opened the gift from Dave my first thought was A water bottle we have lots of those but this one's beautiful it is beautifully designed. Oh it's gorgeous. The Evernote green it's really cool.

Dave: [00:22:21] It's stunningly beautiful

Bonni: [00:22:23] But the technology inside makes it like a thermos. But without carrying the weight of a thermos so will keep cold beverages cold for up to 24 hours. And hot beverages hot for up to 12. I've not tried it with hot beverages yet because it's really hot these day.

Bonni: [00:22:41] But with cold beverages I've tried it out and it is believable how long it keeps them cold. I'll put a couple things of ice in there a little bit of ice and water and it's the whole entire day just freezing cold just like the moment I put it in there it's amazing. It's probably even colder because the ice gets really really nice and cool and it sounds so simple.

Bonni: [00:23:04] But the other water bottles I have don't do anywhere near that good of a job of keeping beverages cool. And but then it's so light too. It's amazing. It is on the priceier end so I'll put a link to the Evernote waterbottle in the show notes but you probably only one click that link if you really like cold water and you really like it. It's going to be worth it because it's on the priceier end of water bottles

Dave: [00:23:27] But it's the kind of gift you want to give someone. It's the gift that at first seems kind of unassuming. But then as they get to know it better like wow this is an amazing gift.

Bonni: [00:23:35] Yes I've been thinking of you every time I drink from it in the fall when we go back to Teaching.

Dave: [00:23:41] Aye if you're going to get your best friend a water bottle. You're going to get her the best one out there.

Bonni: [00:23:45] Nothing but the best. So Dave your EdTech find is also not kind of quite an EdTech find but un-find.

Dave: [00:23:53] Yeah I think I'm reading this book right now called Essentialism and the author really challenges people to think about not only what it is you need in your life at work but also what are things that you don't need.

Dave: [00:24:05] And at the same time I've been thinking and a lot about just how I use technology and how I present especially around our kids and even other people too but especially with her kids and what kind of message I send.

Dave: [00:24:17] And while I'm very good overall of not being one of those parents that's on the phone all the time with the kids. There are definitely times where there's downtime especially with our toddler. He's doing something. And I will because we're busy I'll say Oh I've got five minutes here where I can check out e-mail and see what's going on and see what's happening

Dave: [00:24:35] And I'll pull out the phone out of my pocket and I'll look at e-mail and and then that those three or four minutes are gone and I'm back with Luke or doing whatever. But just by glancing at what's going on I am getting my mind into something that's going on an e-mail or a work related thing or a student related thing that then I'm thinking about even after I put the phone away.

Dave: [00:25:02] And so I'm physically there with him but mentally I've already now started to think about something on or something urgent that's come up. And the reality is is I'm not in the kind. I don't do the kind of work either our consultant or training business or anything like that where it's exceptionally rare that anything of urgency comes over email and even when it does someone would call or something like that.

Dave: [00:25:26] And so I really started thinking about it last week. Like what real benefit is there to having email in my pocket. Because I don't ever respond. So it's not like I'm going to do anything with an email I'm seeing. It's just more of that kind of that constant wanting to be stimulated by what's going on in the world. But the reality is I don't respond I don't do anything with that information other than think about it in a place that I can't do anything with that and with that knowledge.

Dave: [00:25:52] And so I turned off e-mail on my iPhone about four days ago and I just turned when all the counseling I just off off off off I can turn them back on if I really needed to. Actually we are somewhere this weekend that I did need access to email I needed to get access to something so I turned it on briefly just to send something. And I have found that it has been such a freeing experience.

Dave: [00:26:15] I find mentally I am so much more focused so much more present just with the kids. The past few days and again I'm not a crazy person on on on the iPhone with e-mail but I realize how much I did look at it now and how much mentally that would take me away from where I was and so I'll report back on that.

Dave: [00:26:34] Right now it's just a one week experiment my class I'm teaching right now. We all made some commitments on things we were going to do different in our communication this week and this was my commitment. So I will report back on what happens with that. But for now I'm really happy to not be tied to email on my phone and to sit down when I'm at the computer and using the time when I can actually respond to it.

Bonni: [00:26:56] That's so great. What a wonderful gift to giving to yourself and to our family and your students modeling that for them.

Dave: [00:27:03] We'll see what happens with it.

Bonni: [00:27:05] We would love to hear from you about any EdTech finds or finds that you want to share with us at teachinginhighered.com/6. That's where you'll find the show notes and where you can comment.

Dave: [00:27:16] And speaking of gifts you could get a gift right now at this minute and this second you could go onto e-mail. No no go on there. Go to teachinginhighered.Com/subscribe. You will get the weekly updates for this

podcast, all show notes and articles, but you'll also get Bonni's guide to 19 different essential tech tools right.

Bonni: [00:27:39] Yes

Dave: [00:27:40] And it's a great guide goes over a lot of the things we talked about on the show but a whole bunch other stuff too. So check it out. [Teachinginhighered.com/subscribe](https://teachinginhighered.com/subscribe).

Bonni: [00:27:48] Thanks for listening.

Dave: [00:27:49] See you soon.

Teaching in Higher Ed transcripts are created using a combination of an automated transcription service and human beings. This text likely will not represent the precise, word-for-word conversation that was had. The accuracy of the transcripts will vary. The authoritative record of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcasts is contained in the audio file.