

Bonni: [00:00:01] Dustin Bakkie shares how to integrate effective study methods learning tools and personal management techniques as part of your curriculum on today's Teaching in Higher Ed episode 97.

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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: [00:00:54] I love how I've found today's guest it's because he is a regular listener and to me it just represents the community that's being built through teaching in higher ed and dust and I know that we talked about before we pressed record having you do your bio with me rather than me read it before you get on the phone. So tell me a little bit about what you do now and a little bit about how you got there.

Dustin: [00:01:19] Yeah. Thank you Bonni. I'm excited to be on and my chance to be part of the show. So I'm currently a third year lecturer at California State University Chico. I lecturing museology. And that's been my background a lot of biomechanics with kind of in performance training and technique I've done a lot of running research specifically and going to get a master's degree here on a started teaching classes as a T.A. or GA. And realized I'd love teaching and decided to pursue it a little bit more and as things go with the sciences sometimes it takes longer than you think and so I got some extra time to teach

and my passion has really shifted away from the kinesology background to more.

Dustin: [00:02:12] I'm really interested in higher education and particularly the underlying values system regarding quality instruction and University instructors departments and just university systems as a whole.

Bonni: [00:02:26] And Dustin I know we're going to dive right in now to the topics for today and we have a lot to talk about as you have into this presentation and have lots to share about instead of having us share about study techniques and maybe a first year course that's entirely devoted to that.

Bonni: [00:02:46] Sometimes universities don't offer that. Or sometimes it's hard for students to really leverage a course because it's so separate from the other academic work that they're doing. So your whole focus is to integrate those things and that's what we're going to be talking about today. And as we start out tell me about students as academic surfers.

Dustin: [00:03:08] Right. So that's that's kind of one thing that really has me interested in kind of coming out of being a student into an instructor and not having that big separation. There's rarely that intro to a college course or they don't always take it if there is.

Dustin: [00:03:24] And I don't know who said this quote but they said they go from having to raise their hand to appeal to the experts to responsibly make a life changing financial health and academic choices in a couple of months.

Dustin: [00:03:37] And so who is who's teaching them these academic habits study time personal management those kinds of things generally are other students and upperclassmen friends they have that they see kind of getting through it.

Dustin: [00:03:52] And so I kind of had this idea of academic surfers in my time teaching. I started noticing this in my students and even my time as a student. I would do it sometimes as well.

Dustin: [00:04:04] But students will just put things off until the deadline and yeah procrastination is part of it but the way a lot of our classes and things are

designed is that it's OK to put that off and we have a big project due here and we have a little bit of a break. Another big project.

Dustin: [00:04:25] What happens is students put things off and instead of preparing over time a little bit each day they prepare at the very end until they take this big wave of work and sacrifice and quick rote review that doesn't really lend to actual learning just to get through that exam and then they get through it and they're exhausted and they're tired and they need some personal time and I don't think any of us can argue with that.

Dustin: [00:04:58] But then that can work. If there was one wave system then that's kind of my idea here is that one class that might work just fine. But we all have different classes.

Dustin: [00:05:13] And as you know we don't have a meeting where all of instructors get together and say alright but this time our projects together or make sure they're not coinciding too much. And what happens is instead of becoming like an ocean where these waves are regular and predictable with downtime in-between becomes more like a wave pool.

Bonni: [00:05:34] So how about this wave pool what's the wave pool like.

Dustin: [00:05:39] So I like to think of the wave pool as pretty much just chaos where things are coming in over and over and students who are waiting till the last minute to just get over the hump of that wave never get that time to breathe so to speak.

Dustin: [00:05:56] So what happens is when we do we assume saying well this is the best I can do and this is how it's supposed to be. I see my peers getting through it and they're bruised and battered and broken from this chaotic wave pool but they got through great.

Dustin: [00:06:13] Maybe they need rescue by the lifeguard or Professor Wisner's credit a couple of times. But but they got out and I just think there's a better way that if we can help as instructors teach our students academic habits that will help minimize or smooth this wave pool so that they can do a little bit everyday and hopefully avoid those huge just draining waves that end up being almost soul crushing. There are some suits when I describe it.

Bonni: [00:06:43] You and I are going to talk a little bit about three different formulas and we're going to do this on audio which is a risk that we're willing to

take this is one of the thinkers that you have connected with in terms of your own research on this is Cal Newport and he shares about this simple math around time spent and the intensity of focus. Share with us with us a little bit about that simple math.

Dustin: [00:07:11] So Cal Newport believes that this intensity of focus or what he likes to called Deep Work is what we as individuals really want to harness and that's going to help us reach our maximum potential. He just wrote a book that I'm really interested in reading I've read his previous work but I haven't read this new Deep Work book.

Dustin: [00:07:31] But ultimately he kind of believes that the work accomplished is a product of the time spent and the intensity of focus and so if you want to minimize that time spent on that task requires maximizing that intensity of focus or really focusing in on what you're trying to do now.

Bonni: [00:07:54] And then there are a couple of other formulas that you share about. And these couple of the second and the third ones are from Thomas Frank who runs a site called College info geek or geeks.

Dustin: [00:08:09] College info geek.

Bonni: [00:08:10] There we go. And the first one has after the equal sign is all about desired preparedness because our students really want desire to be prepared for that exam for that assignment. That is truly their motivation. Talk me through the formula for desired preparedness.

Dustin: [00:08:28] Yes. Thomas Frank runs a blog and advice website really focused on students navigating college and it's actually a great resource and I know our recommendations are at the end.

Dustin: [00:08:40] But I encourage starters who even look at some of those resources for students. Because I mean that's been a huge motivator and kind of light bulb generator for me is OK this is what's great for students. Maybe I can incorporate this into my teaching and work with them as kind of the whole idea of integrating some of this here.

Dustin: [00:09:01] But Thomas believes that the desired preparedness for total learning is basically in class learning which is combined of class time and quality

learning in class. Add it up with self-learning which is study time and study efficiency.

Bonni: [00:09:22] And then he has the final formula we promise listeners no more for me. That's where he rearranges is the formula algebraically to really hone in on the study time and let's talk through this last formula.

Dustin: [00:09:37] OK so the study time formula is basically rearranging their previous formula with a little bit of algebra to really highlight study time in that trying to reduce that we need to increase study efficiency and quality of learning.

Dustin: [00:09:54] And so if we can increase these so what students get out of every class because we can't necessarily control time in the car then ultimately design preparedness is what we want to get out of it.

Dustin: [00:10:06] So if we can improve what they're getting out of class as well as their efficiency study that will lower the time that they have to spend in this study time and hopefully open them up to meeting everything else that they need to do on their busy plates and not feeling worn out and feeling energized to tackle the challenges ahead of them.

Bonni: [00:10:27] Yeah and this is a formula that you introduce to your students and I think it's great. I would love to implement this myself because I do talk about it when whenever we start doing things like retrieval practice in the classroom or things that are really going to change the norms that they've grown accustomed to in college.

Bonni: [00:10:46] And then also just this idea of yeah you're actually in a working class you're not going to go and sit here. That may frustrate you but it actually comes from me caring about you as a person but also comes about me caring about your time.

Bonni: [00:11:00] So many of you work so many of you are athletes so many of you are in the choir in the orchestra. And then if we can be smarter about how we're spending our time and really increase that focus while we're in class and so I think this is just great a great thing to introduce where they can actually see it broken down in this way.

Dustin: [00:11:20] And I love talking to my students about this because I feel so many students just waste their time in class. A lot of times the slides will be

available and will spend their class time just making a copy of something they already have. Hoping that that will help them learn it and actually the research shows that that lends itself to basic memorization but not actual learning.

Bonni: [00:11:44] And you share. Also you actually said this a little bit earlier that they're not really going to have control in their classes on how the professor spends the time but they certainly have control over how they spend their time while the professors chosen to do whatever it is that they do.

Bonni: [00:12:00] So there are a number of note taking techniques that you teach to your students and then actually have them practice that for a class and then teach a second one and have them practice that.

Bonni: [00:12:10] And one of the ones I really wanted to hear you share a little bit about today because it relates so much to retrieval practice which we share a lot about on the show and having a spaced review is that lightener review and so can you share a little bit about what that is and how it helps students when they're working on some type of specced review and retrieval practice.

Dustin: [00:12:31] Yeah. So the Leitner Review System is a great way. Like you said for spaced retrieval. So the Leitner Review System works with the traditional no cards you have your note cards.

Dustin: [00:12:44] And as you review them you'll want to initially put the ones that you get correct into one pile and the ones that you don't get correct into a separate pile and then so you have corrected an incorrect no cards and the idea that those correct note cards you've got a good grasp on them, the incorrect to need a little bit more.

Dustin: [00:13:03] So if I were preparing for an exam in a week or maybe two I might not look at those no cards that I got right again until tomorrow but later today I'm going to review those encouraging cards again. If I get it correct and move it to that second pile.

Dustin: [00:13:21] And then ultimately what you do is when you go to review that second pile if you get it right you move it to a third pile. If you get it wrong it goes all the way back to that first unknown pile. And the ideas that ultimately you have four piles where the first pile.

Dustin: [00:13:40] These are the ones that need review you're not getting them right. You're checking that first pile three or four times a day. That second pile

maybe once or twice a day that third pile every few days that fourth pile once a week and that's just an example of depending on timeframes and I like to give my students example schedules of Oh God I need to learn this versus I've got this.

Dustin: [00:14:06] And what that might look like in this system a lot of the research shows that almost the best time to learn something is right as you're about to forget it as well as it takes advantage of this idea of we want to be strategic with with our time and not spend their time reviewing and study things that we already have a good grasp on.

Bonni: [00:14:29] And what are some of the ways that you help your students actually build their first Leitner review system.

Dustin: [00:14:37] I kind of explain this question. The evidence conclusion method to them and then we will actually hear it and we've got a big surplus of no cards so I'll actually bring no cards and only encourages students to take 10 and just as an activity that day for this class in particular I will have ten topics that will be on the upcoming exam and I'll ask them to make no cards for these and we'll spend 10 15 minutes making our no cards in this method.

Dustin: [00:15:06] And then after that I will actually explain how to use those little cards with the Leitner Reviews System.

Bonni: [00:15:15] I know that sometimes when I will try something like this for the very first time there is some resistance from students and I would want everybody who's listening today to know that it's often not met with unicorns and joy and happiness and glitter.

Bonni: [00:15:33] My husband's laughing as he listens saying he cant stand glitter. And so how do you deal with a potential where someone says I don't learn this way.

Dustin: [00:15:42] That's a great question for me as an instructor. This is just one thing and I try to hit a number of different types of study reviews and note taking methods and throughout my semester so that people who learn different ways get those different opportunities but it also introduces them to ways that they

potentially never thought of and so I encourage them to give it a try. I'd say hey we're doing this as an in class activity.

Dustin: [00:16:07] You're essentially getting 15 minutes of free study time that you don't have to do outside the class. Why not do that. Give it a shot with these 10 topics.

Dustin: [00:16:16] See how it works. I think we're going to talk about a little later. But then with critical review they can actually reflect a little bit on did that work for me or I give it a shot or it just wasn't for me.

Bonni: [00:16:29] Yeah when we've talked about on prior episodes about for example retrieval practice often that's met with resistance from the students and how could they possibly even know what works for them or not. When you haven't started doing it yet.

Bonni: [00:16:44] And I like you said where you're coming back to me in a friendly way to say hey let's just give this a try and not not responding in a defensive way.

Bonni: [00:16:57] But even when students have had demonstrated to them that something like this works there still may be that resistance to it. So just having a cheerful attitude about it and we're going to give this a go and then I like to you that you are showing them some different methods too and mixing things up in that way because if things get too predictable then that's also shown to decrease the potential for learning as well.

Bonni: [00:17:20] That's I like that you're doing all of that and then I know you have a couple of educational technology tools one that helps you with your own retrieval and then one that helps the students with implementing the Leitner method.

Dustin: [00:17:32] So there is a system called the Anki review system that's Anki. And this is electronic flashcard builder and the great thing about this is they can build their flash cards in it and they will automatically put them into those boxes and remind the students to review them at the proper time. So it kind of streamlines it a little bit.

Dustin: [00:17:59] So they are more digitally inclined to give them that option and then I will actually use it in combination with my attendance to app which is

the app I use to quickly take attendance at the beginning of class and use it for cataloguing and assigning points to courses through semester.

Dustin: [00:18:15] But part of that is I have to save all the pictures of my students to that app and when I do that I use those same pictures to create flashcards of the students and their names on Heikki and in the first few weeks I can do my own spaced repetition with their names and those pictures.

Bonni: [00:18:37] You also have taken away a technique from Susan Ambrose who wrote How Learning Works of what are called exam wrappers.

Dustin: [00:18:45] Can you share about those yeah exam wrappers are one of my absolute favorite things to do surrounding the exam and what an exam wrapper is is it is a guided reflection or de-brief upon the return of the exam that I actually asked my students to take. Ten minutes no questions are allowed to be asked and just reflect by themselves using this guided worksheet and the purposes to review and analyze their performance with an eye toward adapting to their future and learning. That's exactly how Susan Ambrose puts it.

Dustin: [00:19:24] So the question that I like to put on there are things like what study resources did you use so again and tying it back into that plan. But it's also giving me an opportunity to understand what my students are using what's working for them and with them I'd say which ones are particularly helpful.

Dustin: [00:19:44] I'll ask what classroom activities were particularly useful in preparing you for the exam. What could you have done better on the exam. Things like that. So I was a little hesitant on first with these wondering just how seriously students will take it.

Dustin: [00:20:02] And. Reading through them every time I'm blown away since usually expect to get a little bit of a higher grade. So that's one of the questions that I'll ask is when you left the room after the exam how well did you think you did. And that's always an interesting one. I also like to kind of see how much time they spent.

Dustin: [00:20:23] For me if a student spent 20 hours 10 plus hours dedicated specifically to my exam and got to see that's a big red flag for me as an

instructor that OK something isn't working well for this student and we need to kind of look into that.

Dustin: [00:20:38] And another question we might ask is What do you plan to do differently for the next exam and what this does is it gets is actually slowing down when they get that exam back and taking time to think about how did I do what worked what didn't work what worked in class what what do I need from the instructor.

Dustin: [00:21:00] That's another thing I like to ask is What can I help you do more and that when I get the most surprising answers on the last question of my rapper and I say What can the instructor do to help support your learning in preparation for the next exam.

Dustin: [00:21:16] And I see a lot on there is I really enjoyed the study review and they might say something like thank you for these kind of things are these have been helpful but it was on me. You know I didn't study quite as much as I'd like to and I want to take advantage of this next time and get some really honest answers in there where they actually kind of step up and take that responsibility.

Dustin: [00:21:40] I didn't study enough. And next time I'm going to offer that kind of thing. And so it's it's a really powerful reflection activity that you get students thinking about this rather than just diving into. Oh no I don't get this strong. Did you grade this right. Did you have your points up and you just kind of slows down and gets that reflection going.

Bonni: [00:22:04] One of the last things I wanted to ask you about is another way that you are preparing your students for success and that is you require your students to meet with you for 30 minutes between the exams. Can you share about what kinds of things that you talk about there and what your philosophy is behind that.

Dustin: [00:22:23] Yeah absolutely. This is by far my favorite practice and it's something that I tell a lot of instructors and they their eyes bug out 30 minutes with every one of your students in a four week timeframe.

Dustin: [00:22:36] And it's a lot of work. But it gives me an opportunity to have a conversation with them soon. If I didn't quite know with him before hand now I do what I get the chance to review the first exam. We'll have a game plan that we talked about. We'll have the exam. We'll have the exam wrapper and so

that's kind of how I like to start those meetings is coming through it and say oh this worked really well for you.

Dustin: [00:23:02] This didn't quite work well what what wasn't working there. And then we'll go over kind of their course standing and what it looks like the rest of their semester projected out might look like.

Dustin: [00:23:12] But it also gives me a chance to talk about why are you in this class what what are you taking out of the what are you enjoying what's once maybe not working for you and one of the big parts of this and why I love it so much is it actually opens up that just the relationship door between a student and an instructor there.

Dustin: [00:23:33] There's often semesters that will go by where a student you'll never speak more than probably two minutes with them if they're just in and out of class every day and they never come by office hours or never stop to ask questions. Post class or something like that and I get to actually have a conversation with every one of my students.

Dustin: [00:23:54] And it really gives me a good understanding of where my class is at and what this group of students needs in Helsing kind of nailed down meeting those kind of red flags students who maybe didn't do too well or their attendance hasn't been great than what I've found.

Dustin: [00:24:11] And it is very anecdotal. And one thing that maybe like to look into the future is the most impact of this is I have more students coming to office hours so I get more e-mails about hey I didn't quite understand what we talked about in lecture today. Could you help me understand this concept.

Dustin: [00:24:29] And my attendance goes up and I see the effects after this first exam between the game plan and the reflection. And this meeting really kind of trendily throughout the rest of the semester to make a very collaborative back and forth type of environment with my students.

Bonni: [00:24:50] And how do you actually. I hate to even use this word but how do you enforce it. What's the what if I don't meet with you. What's the consequence.

Dustin: [00:24:59] The consequence is they don't get to take the exam two which is a big one. And it gets it gets them all in and you know there might be a better

way of getting them in or not. I'm not a big fan of necessarily the idea of threatening something that big.

Dustin: [00:25:20] And of course I've had students in the past not make it in and we worked with the students and got them through. But really just the idea of oh no I don't get to take the exam two get in the door. And then once they're in the door I can be like oh Dustin is a real person he needs a life and he's invested in me and wants to know how I'm doing and then they're not as adverse to getting him through the door in the future.

Bonni: [00:25:46] One of the things I've thought about in my teaching I also teach a lot of students are in our athletics programs and I teach at a teaching institution not a research institution and I also the athletics department there is incredibly focused on academics so I know I'm fortunate with both of those things.

Bonni: [00:26:05] And we are asked to give a grade check to many of the students that are early in their academic career or ones that are at risk of needing some extra support and it always feels so transactional to me and I have actually thought about and this would be I would not.

Bonni: [00:26:21] This would not be something that would be praised for by the students let's just say that but I've thought about if you'd like a grade check. Set up a time to meet with me. I no longer do them. It's nice they have it where it's set up on a online forum.

Bonni: [00:26:33] They make it easy for us professors to do it but I want to make it harder on the students in the sense of I want them to be also as interested as I am in assessing their performance and I think that will be something that would be a way I could implement what you're talking about and have there be a little bit more in. There's always email them and say I didn't want to just fill out this form but not also share this with you.

Bonni: [00:26:56] And that's where they can get an update on their attendance and things like that but I think I would so much rather have those face to face conversations with them and I think I can help them better succeed and use my strengths and get to know them better and be able to support them more effectively.

Dustin: [00:27:11] Yeah. It's amazing how powerful they are and I encourage everyone to. Maybe if you don't have the time and we know how busy a whole

can be as instructors maybe even those at risk students that aren't attending class or maybe didn't do as well on that exam as he would like maybe require that you can meet with them and even outside of the academic realm.

Dustin: [00:27:35] A lot of times students are just looking for someone who is on their side and who's got their back. And I've actually had students come up to me with really serious deep personal issues from family members passing away to mental health strongholds and those things have come up after these kind of meetings.

Dustin: [00:27:56] And it's a very humbling experience to know that you are in that students trust enough that they are willing to share what's going on outside of the classroom with you and I think one of your really early podcasts you mentioned something about a student who declined kind pay them.

Dustin: [00:28:17] Oh he's not interested. He's kind of got a bad attitude and then when you finally were able to meet with him you found out that wow there's really some big ass instructors if we can support them and work with students. That just helps them ultimately get what we want them to get and knowledge and education.

Dustin: [00:28:36] And sometimes we need to be flexible with that but we don't have a good sense of who our students are and what they're going through it's hard for us to draft.

Bonni: [00:28:44] So true. This is the point in the show when we're each going to give recommendations and mine requires a little bit of audio as I explain it. This is by a group called Playing for Change and they are doing a cover of the song Higher Ground that I'm sure will be familiar to many people listening and what you are hearing and if you follow the link in the show notes what you will see are musicians from all over the world that are playing together this song.

Bonni: [00:29:20] There are musicians from Italy, from Senegal, from Mali, Brazil, France, South Africa, Japan, United States the Netherlands. And it keeps going on and on. And I love watching this video just thinking about what technology and collaborative networks allow us to do. It's just really fun. It's fun to watch the joy on the musician's face and how the song connects them all from all around the world.

Bonni: [00:29:49] It's a really fun list and courage everyone to go take a listen and actually see the musicians in their respective locations. And if you also go

look at the nonprofits link I'm going to only play 30 seconds of this one. It's playingforchange.com which will be on the show notes as always. And he starts to tell the story of how he started this organization.

Playing For Change: [00:30:21] "One day I was going to the recording studio and I saw this one musician and I just thought this guys unbelievable all of a sudden and I just had this epiphany. The best music I ever heard in my life is on the way to the studio and not in the studio and that's when I sort of had the idea for Playing for Change which was to bring the studio to the people."

Bonni: [00:30:44] He really tell some great stories about the musicians that they've worked with some of them are unknowns or I should say as of yet unknowns and all the way up to some of the really big names in fact he's got a quote from Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones. He says playing for change that's the way music was meant to be. Dustin what do you recommend today?

Dustin: [00:31:08] My recommendation is that I have been kind of experimenting with recently and looking forward to fully integrating into my future semesters. But it's called Soccrative and it allows me to do is it sounds pretty similar to your poll everywhere that you use song that it's an app that my students can download and that I can have pulled up during class and I could simply write who was feeling comfortable or comfortable moving on from this topic again.

Dustin: [00:31:39] They quickly answer and without giving way. Who is who it tells me. All right 50 percent the class is still kind of struggling with this we need a little bit more reflection on it then. And that's just one. One way to use it. My mentor here she goes state he actually uses it with an exit ticket and he likes to have three questions at the end of every class. What did you learn today. What did you struggle with today and how did how do you feel you engaged as a student today and to answer these questions and he's actually able to review after each session.

Dustin: [00:32:19] The topics that they are struggling with and maybe didn't quite get across and he needs to touch a touch on again later and there's also some games where you can make a game out of a quiz to see who can answer the most questions the fastest and things like that. And so it's a really great tool for getting that instant feedback from your students as you go through each class and then even potentially afterwards.

Bonni: [00:32:46] Dustin thank you so much for joining me today on Teaching in Higher Ed and I think even more so though I've really enjoyed our conversation

very much. I just really appreciate you being a part of the community and I know we've exchanged e-mails and I hope that that is just the beginning because this is what this growing community is all about. So thank you for your time today but also your time collectively.

Dustin: [00:33:07] Yeah thank you for facilitating this great community and excited to be a part of it and continue learning every day as I walk to work.

Bonni: [00:33:16] Now I have the song Waiting for Change stuck in my head in a delightful way and it's going to get ruined by this jolting change in musical genre.

Bonni: [00:33:29] If you have not yet subscribe to the weekly update. With that I'll get to you every week is a link to all the things that we talked about in the show and Dustin had so many great resources I want to make sure you get access to.

Bonni: [00:33:40] You can get access to them directly on the link for the show which will be teachinginhighered.com for you can also subscribe to the weekly update and receive them in your inbox and you can do that at teachinginhighered.com/subscribe.

Bonni: [00:33:54] And you also get an article about teaching our productivity from me. He tweek most weeks. Yes and thanks so much for listening. As always if you have feedback on the show you can do that at teachinginhighered.com/feedback and I love hearing from so many of you on Twitter too. I'm @Bonni208. Thanks again for listening and I'll see you next week.

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