

Bonni Stachowiak [00:00:00]:

Today on episode number 579 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast, Lessons in Love and learning from Mr. Rogers legacy with Jennifer Baumgartner.

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Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. Hi, I'm Bonnie Stachowiak and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students today. I welcome to the show, Dr. Jennifer Baumgartner. She's a Professor of Early Childhood Education at Louisiana State University where she teaches in the PK through three teacher certification and graduate programs.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:01:07]:

She serves as faculty chair of LSU's communication across the Curriculum program, helping faculty and students develop strong communication skills across disciplines. A dedicated educator, she integrates service learning, communication, intensive instruction, and oral history methods in her courses on early childhood education, child development theory, and stress in educational contexts. She's the creator of the Louisiana Early Childhood Teacher Oral History Project, which documents the experiences of early childhood educators across the state. Jennifer was an Inquiry education fellow in 2022-23 with the Fred Rogers Institute in Latrobe, Pennsylvania and continue study and practice Fred Rogers educational Philosophies. Her work explores how his approach to early childhood education can inform teaching today, emphasizing connection, communication and the emotional well being of teachers and students. Jennifer Baumgartner, welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:02:21]:

Thank you. So happy to be here.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:02:24]:

A lot of times on this podcast I invite people to take us to the past and I'd love to have you do that for us, Jenny, but introduce us to someone. Tell us, who was Fred Rogers?

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:02:36]:

Well, Fred Rogers, as many of the listeners may know, was an American television star, creator of children's programming. He was also a Presbyterian minister. He had many roles that he played in life, but what he's most known for is the Mr. Rogers neighborhood, which ran from 1968 to 2001. And he did a lot of work with early childhood education, child development, as well as working with people in communities through Public Broadcasting Network.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:03:08]:

And we can talk about who he was from a factual basis. But those of us who knew him, and even if our knowing him was in a parasocial way, we have some memories. Tell us about your memories of I don't know if you would have called him Fred Rogers or Mr. Rogers or however you knew.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:03:28]:

Of course, definitely. You know, like many, I watched Fred Rogers as a child at home, Mr. Rogers neighborhood was one of the programs that we consumed. And I honestly didn't think much about Mr. Rogers neighborhood when I became an adult until he passed away. 2003, I believe. And I attended a National association for Early Childhood Education that year, and they did a session where they celebrated his life and work in early childhood education. And it was in an auditorium.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:03:56]:

And we were watching clips of Fred Rogers during this. This moment with, you know, hundreds of other people. And that's when I sort of remembered Mr. Rogers and my own experiences of his show as a child, especially how I would watch him after the death of my father when I was about 4. And he was a very comforting influence as a young child. But I have a vivid memory. And those of you who watch the show know as he leaves the program, he closes the door and says goodbye. I would always turn it off before he would.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:04:27]:

I like to imagine that he stayed in that. That beautiful space on television. I also love the music. I so remember watching him in the music store and I remember wanting making about I was going to own every music and every instrument and be able to play them all when I grew up. Now, I didn't understand how

unrealistic that was going to be. But anyway, those are a couple of memories of Mr. Rogers.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:04:51]:

I got to have dinner with you for the second time in my life a number of months back. And we were, of course, talking about him and with your colleagues and everything. I'm taking ferocious notes because you and your colleagues are so fascinating. You get me so curious about many things. And I took the wrong notes and I watched the quote, unquote wrong, although really, is there a wrong Mr. Rogers movie? But I watched the wrong one. But it started bringing back all these memories of him. And you were describing a little bit about, yes, who he was as a man, but then also the effect that he had on you.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:05:31]:

And thank you for sharing about that comfort that he brought you after the death of your father. I'm thinking about, for me, when I re experienced so many of the clips or recreated clips, and in this case it was a movie with Tom hanks starring as Mr. Rogers. And he just reminds me of the value of slowness to give myself permission to slow myself down. And today I'm getting to interview two people for the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast and got to have a conversation just before this one with Jessamyn Newhouse. And we were talking about stopping or slowing down, you know, when things happen. And what sorts of values do you see him evoking that have really meant something either to you, or perhaps to early childhood education professionals as well. Like, what sorts of things might we draw from him in addition to his reminders to slow down? But what else comes to mind for you?

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:06:31]:

Well, I think that moving slowly or taking your time is a very key theme of Mr. Rogers neighborhood and also Fred Rogers life and the way he lived it. The first value probably, though, would be love. And that's really where his love for children, for people in general, and his desire to respect them and understand them was at the root of a lot of what he did. In fact, there's a quote about love, or the absence of it is the root of all things that he said. And the way he talked about love or experienced love was not, you know, a romantic love, but it had more to do with sort of an understanding of the individual and entering into a relationship with them as the foundation for everything that would happen and come from it later.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:07:15]:

And the movie reminded me, or perhaps told me for the first time. I'll never really know, will I? But that he did some pretty controversial things on his show. Despite

his peaceful demeanor, he had some things he wanted to tell us as a society. What were some things that come to mind for you when you think about his potential controversial things that he would have done at the time?

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:07:36]:

Absolutely true. He didn't shy away from talking about difficult subjects. In fact, one of his favorite things of his mentor, McFarland was that, you know, anything that's mentionable is manageable. And the idea that we would shy away from important conversations, important questions that children would have was something that he very much disagreed with. Instead, we thought if we could talk about something, if we could address a question a child brings to us, then we should be able to help it be less difficult for them, help them to be able to really interact with that concept. And so he. He did take on very controversial issues. In fact, his very first episode of Mr.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:08:15]:

Rogers Neighborhood that first week, he took on several related, very political. If you watch them now as an adult, you can really see this idea of King Friday wanting to build walls around the whole neighborhood to keep everything out. Then there are the more well known about the swimming pools and putting feet in the pool. There's a lot of subtle to us maybe, but they were very clear statements about things that were going on in the country and things that he knew children would have questions about and families might want to be able to talk to their children about.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:08:48]:

I mentioned getting to talk to Jessamine the Newhouse earlier today. And one of the things we were Chatting about was the value of scripts or frameworks in our teaching. And I imagine that we might draw some frameworks from Mr. Rogers in how to handle those difficult conversations. What comes to mind for you of patterns of how he did it and what we might be able to draw from his influence there?

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:09:16]:

It's interesting you mentioned that and I'm going to share. One thing that was talked about in one of the recent biographies of Fred Rogers. Maxwell King talked about how to speak Fredish is what he called it. There was a, was actually a way that they address things on the show. They took information and were able to talk about it in very clear ways for children by dissecting it. And so if you want to, if your listeners want to sort of look at talking Fredish, there's actually a whole pattern for this. It's sort of rephrasing everything in a positive, positive

manner. So you can get hurt running indoors, but you rephrase it to running outdoors is safe.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:10:00]:

Or you phrase the idea, bearing in mind that they don't quite understand those distinctions. So you talk about things like asking your parents whether or not they can run. So there's a whole series of steps that are gone through in order to reach the point where you might say something more like instead of don't run, maybe your favorite grown up can tell you where you can run. Listening to them is important. Listening to is an important part of growing up. This comes from that blog post of speaking Fredish. But I think it would be really interesting for people to go into that. And just as an aside, they've created an AI for this too.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:10:33]:

So you can, you can put in something and have it speak. Go through this process to speak Fredish, which is kind of a fun thing to play with, I would think.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:10:41]:

Oh, I'm going to have so much fun doing that. How delightful. And I, I asked you, I invited you to start the episode thinking about the past and I invite you now to think about the future. If we to infuse higher education with the values and the practices of Fred Rogers and we were to look at it in the future, what would be different? Tell us what a college or university might look like and what examples come to mind of what that future could be.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:11:15]:

That's such a fascinating question. I think that's a question I took with me when I went to study the archive, but I don't think I could have phrased it as well as you just did. When I went and studied a little bit at the Fred Rogers Institute archives, I learned a little bit more about some of the work he'd done. And the institute works hard on what they call the six fundamentals of learning, which are outlined in a book that Rogers wrote with Barry Head back in the 80s for parents. And it identifies six fundamentals that he felt like were really important for learning to occur. And when I was studying and reading and learning more about him and his, his own life as well as his work, I really was beginning to see that maybe these six things we could, we could think about as a framework for bringing into our classrooms and as somebody who studies, you know, teaching, but also well being. These were really. These really resonated with me.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:12:11]:

So the six things I'll just. I'll label them quickly are like self worth, trusting relationships, silence and solitude, curiosity, deep looking and listening and play.

And so some of the things that I've done since is think a little bit about how acknowledging these six fundamentals and building both models in my classroom, but also experiences that help students be able to engage with these ideas might help not only facilitate learning, but also help students be really well in the process and maybe all of us well in that process as teachers and learners.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:12:50]:

In preparing for today's conversation, this word phrase of well being kept coming up for me. And I found myself even thinking, I don't even know if I know what that means anymore. What comes to mind for you? Or either maybe in some more scholarly way of phrasing it, what actually is well being? How do we get at that?

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:13:12]:

Yeah, so well being is usually used to talk about a kind of quality of life, the ability of. Of individuals to do their life. And, and when I, when I write or speak about this, I often, I even talk about how that word has a hyphen in it because I think that that gives us a bit of a clue into how to. How to define it or how to use it. And so I really think it's important for us to think about being well in our being, being well in our. In our bodies and our environments, being well, where the practice of being well. So it goes both ways that, that we have to do some things in order to maintain that wellness.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:13:54]:

And so there's not like we hit this space where we're suddenly experiencing well being, but that there's this process that happens. And I think there's a lot of beauty in the fact that, that the word we use actually has, you know, this, this hyphen right in the middle.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:14:09]:

I'm. This phrase, this sentence, the practice of being well. I realize that Fred Rogers would tell me to say that in the positive, but we'll maybe end with that. Could we do the negative? What does it look like when we are practicing being unwell?

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:14:28]:

Oh, I think that that's a really critical question and because until you can understand what it feels like to actually to be unwell versus be well, you can't make any change. You have this imagination of what it might be. I do think that there are symptoms that are probably individual to each one of us about when we are in a state of being unwell. But there are some things that might be

common and I think that the work, Fred Rogers might speak to these and one of them you already mentioned, it's just the state of being in a hurry. I think many of us are recognizing that we are in a constant state of motion and hurriedness. And as I mentioned, one of the fundamentals of learning is that ability to have silence and solitude. If you're in a space of where it's constantly noise and you're engaging in lots of, lots of things around you all the time, without any space for silence and solitude, that's probably a sign that you may be living in a state being unwell. And I think that there's many more, more related to sort of how you show up in the world.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:15:31]:

If you feel like you're, you're not able to be the person that you want to be in the spaces that you live, that might be a sign as well. But I think, I think this connection and the stop and, and stop and hurriedness is a really big symptom, at least right now in our society.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:15:49]:

And, and then. So if that's what being unwell looks like, what are some descriptors that come to mind around being well?

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:15:59]:

Well, I, I do think that these fundamentals are really key to talking about wellness as well as learning. And I have found, as I've tried to practice some of these things in my own life, but also embedding them into my work with, with students, that when I am engaging in a practice of silence and solitude, when I have a practice of play in my life, when I am being curious about many things and take time for deep looking and listening, and I spend time with trusted relationship with people that I have a trusted relationship with, then I am in a state of wellness or well being.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:16:39]:

And do you have any sort of practices that you do to do a temperature check on those things to help you reflect and maybe know when the dial needs to be turned up or down on particular practices or mindsets?

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:16:53]:

Yes, now that's a really, really good question. I'm not sure I have perfected. In fact, I'm sure I have not perfected that yet. I do think that one thing that I do begin to notice is if I am in a constant state of having to have sound around me, that's prob. A symptom that I am not. I'm not. It's not taking time to do these other things like be curious or to deep look listening or have time for play if I'm. I'm constantly in motion and not taking time for silence and solitude or if I am



always, always having to have something to stimulate me from, from outside like, you know, your phone, your music, your, you know, a conversation, all can be really lovely and wonderful things.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:17:40]:

Things. But if there's never a break from that, that is probably a symptom from me personally that I may be avoiding something else or that I need to do a check in.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:17:52]:

Yeah, I've mentioned a number of times on the podcast that I have finally found something that works for me to get me to be doing regular stretching. And it sort of cracks me up because it feels a little bit. I don't know. I don't know. I don't want to be mean to myself. I want to be kind to myself. I'm very motivated by streaks. And so it's just a.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:18:13]:

The fact that, that the, the app, it's called, it's called Bend. I've mentioned it before on the show, but the Bend app has a streaks feature to it and there's something that scratches a particular itch for me there. But also that it's such a small lift so that the, it's. I mean you can set it for as little few minutes as you want, but for me a minimum number of minutes that counts for that streak is four minutes. And Jenny, there's no way I can't squeeze four minutes out of any of my days. So I really find that as something that can invite more silence and solitude and that more, I mean, self worth. And once you kind of settle into those patterns, then they become self reinforcing. But you kind of have to trust yourself or trust someone else or something else in order to actually be.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:19:04]:

Begin the practice. It doesn't generally start with the belief to me, at least in my experience, it starts with the practice.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:19:11]:

Oh yes, yes, most definitely. And I, I think what's key from what you just said is it doesn't need to be a long period of time. I think, you know, even, even thoughtfully setting Aside, a minute, a few times a day can have a big impact. But I, it is difficult work. It takes practice, especially if you haven't done it before. I, well, remember when I was, I was at the institute in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, done some work, you know, studying there for a day. And then across the street from. It's on the campus of St.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:19:42]:



Vincent College, it's across the street is this beautiful nature reserve, Winnie Palmer Reserve. And I've been there before, so it was a beautiful day. So I went over there and I had just read about how Fred was practicing silence and solitude and was really like, okay, I'm going to, I'm going to do this, I'm going to try this. And I, I went over there to experience and it was, was one of the most difficult things not to pull out my notebook and make notes because my head was full of all of these ideas. Not to try to produce a list or something, but to just sit there. It was an absolute struggle at first, but when you settle in and when you practice, it's just like anything else. It gets easier and easier to do.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:20:21]:

And the. We've talked about perhaps cultivating these practices for ourselves a bit. I find it much more challenging to try to cultivate these practices in others. Is the same case for you harder to try to facilitate with others than for yourself? Or is that maybe a different experience for you?

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:20:42]:

I don't know that I thought about it as easier or harder, but I do think they're very different because once we've experienced it for ourselves, we may want to share this experience with others or we think that there might be value in bringing this into, to some in a learning, a learning space. And I think sitting back and considering how you might embed some of these practices into the work that you do in a classroom setting can be a stretch. But I do think it is a possibility at least to start with students as well.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:21:16]:

Yeah, I'm thinking about the. I mean, obviously it depends which one we're talking about, right? But perhaps if we just take the silence and solitude. That may not be something that students in a college classroom have ever experienced before. And I used, I used to. In fact, I shouldn't say I used to. I still do this. I have something I learned from others. But the eight second rule where you ask a question and then you start counting quite literally to yourself.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:21:46]:

But 1100-021000-31000 and you will just so rarely get to eight seconds, especially if you're teaching an on campus class. And so in that case, I am, of course, manipulating students using silence and their discomfort with it to invite participation. But there would be other ways that we might want to use silence. And this could be very jolting for students. I mean, you talked about sort of nourishing yourself with. I mean, I'm saying nourishing, but feeding yourself with the noise and the busyness and all of that. So when we get off that train, even for a moment, that can be very disorienting.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:22:25]:

What kinds of things come to mind for you to try to anticipate that disorienting feeling when we do invite others to slow down, experience silence, or even some of the other characteristics that you mentioned? Get curious about something, begin to trust someone else.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:22:41]:

Yes. So I think, you know, I love that you had that example about the eight seconds, you know, after you ask a question. And I. I suppose I wouldn't have thought of it as manipulating.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:22:51]:

Oh, I'm kidding. I'm kidding. It works so good. I'm a. I'm an evil mastermind over here. It's so much fun.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:22:58]:

I do think if we pull back, you know, if there's a routine practice in the classroom setting where there are spaces where silence is practiced, that that could be a very meaningful way of bringing this into that space. But I, you know, just this semester I was last, that we just ended, I was facilitating a faculty learning community with some faculty members who teach communication intensive courses. And my colleague Melinda Suter was working with students in her class doing nature notebooks. And it was part of noticing things in nature and documenting them as part of course goal. And she shared that she decided to give the students time in class, but even more time than it was probably they would immediately thought was necessary. And she found it really interesting that when students came back to her after they thought they finished and she sent them back out right. That they also discovered they noticed more. They did more deep looking and listening.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:23:50]:

They were able to understand more about the time and space. They took things in at a deeper level. And when she shared this in our learning community, another colleague shared something I thought was really profound. She just looked at. She said there's great value in giving students timed assignments when the time feels long because it's in contrast to their typical experience of time pressure. And it's encouraging students to sit in a task, which I think is something that's so needed that it's not just about producing, but the time and actual consideration of a new subject, a new idea is where learning can occur. And we often do not leave enough space for that to happen.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:24:34]:

I'm thinking about what it was like for so many of us to watch Fred Rogers from a distance. And I think about, like, for people who have cultivated a practice of curiosity or a practice for self worth, the ability to foster trust within interpersonal relationships, that sort of thing. Once you've done it, you trust the other side, the fruits that will be there. And yeah, it's going to be messy along the way, but like, you trust because you've seen it so many times, but if you've not experienced it, many of our students who may not have experienced that kind of solace, it can be really hard to trust. There is a certain type of vulnerability that has to happen in order to, you know, participate that way. Are there other techniques that you use to try to cultivate that trust for students to try something a little bit different or actually could. I mean, doesn't need to be students could be faculty. I know you work with them as well.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:25:33]:

Things that tend to help cultivate that trust along the way and maybe perhaps in even smaller ways.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:25:39]:

Yeah, there's. Oh, there's so many ideas here. I think. I think that. But what you're saying about persisting towards something that's more keep going until you actually hit that mark before you discover sort of the gym that's. There is a really critical part of the process. I think one of the things I've done to build kind of curiosity in the classroom, and it relates back to this as well, is I actually have students engage in a curiosity exercise where we. I give them two or three minutes, which seems like a very long time for them to make a list of as many questions that they have that they want, things that they wonder about.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:26:17]:

I said, I don't care if it's the sky is blue or why is my shoe feel tight today? I really just want you to not stop and keep writing down questions. And I will tell you that I found that students struggle with this task. And as somebody who I'm pretty curious. I walk through life, I have lots and lots of questions. I was completely amazed when we first got these iPhones that we could Google and ask. Ask all these questions in a moment. You know, I love the fact that I can find out answers to all my wonderings pretty quickly. But I think that now that we have, you know, lived with this for this long, there's sort of a tendency to maybe not be as curious about things.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:26:58]:

And one of the things that I think is helpful about this sort of activity and especially if you can repeat it or come back to what happened in, in that little

exercise by saying, now I want you over the next week to sort of notice if you are able to answer any question, these questions, because now that you've identified that this is a question you're interested in, you're going to probably seek out some things to answer it, maybe without even really meaning to, but you're going to begin to notice things that may help you to be able to answer this question. And I think that that's just one practice that, you know, Fred really was very curious. He talked a lot about curiosity. He sang a song about did you know it's all right to wonder and marvel. A lot of his gems and truths are in the songs that he wrote for the program and this is one of them. So I think that's one practice. And, and then when it comes to like building sort of trust and those sorts of relationships, I think again, this ability to make your own experience a bit transparent in front of the classroom and I'm not talking about sharing your life history, but, but being able to be a real person in the room with, with students and also recognize that they come to you with their own experiences and backgrounds. You this past year just finished relationship rich education, which I know you've had Belton on as well.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:28:15]:

I don't know if you've had Lambert on, but they just wrote and I think that there's a lot of things in there about how we can build sort of these relationships with students, how we can help them to enter into this learning experience feeling really grounded. And this was a key principle of Fred Rogers as well. You know, that when we interact with students we need to remember that the essential parts of them are often invisible to our eyes. One of his favorite quotes that he had in his in his office, you know, the central is invisible from little prints. And I think that's a key part that we enter this space too, that we have to know who we're teaching in order to be able to meet them, where they are and to be able to assist them in this learning process and learning journey.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:29:01]:

There's so much I want to ask you and I'm thinking about your experience there in the archives and I know the archives can look so different across so many different sorts of disciplines that I would just love to have you reflect though on maybe anything surprising that came up from that method of learning that you were able to draw back in your classes even though you're not necessarily going to be able to take all Your students to get to go have the same experience. But anything just from the. The experience of learning through that that you were able to bring back into your teaching?

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:29:40]:

Oh, that is a beautiful question. And I had not thought about that. I think, well, besides my own personal experience and my own growth, that happened as a

result of reading more about his work and about these fundamentals, but also how he just how he lived them in his own life and doing a lot of deep reflecting on how I can maybe model that in my classroom space. I think that's one thing I took back. I have at times brought Fred, if you will, into the classroom specifically. So I might, you know, bring an episode that I learned about as a part of the, you know, the educator's neighborhood. Or I might, you know, share a song or a lyric I routinely, in my online class share. I have what I call Winston Wednesdays.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:30:24]:

They get an email from me. Fred Rogers corporate quotes make a very clear, clear they occur there all the time. And I do think that the idea of learning from what people have written and left behind is a really. It's an important part of our scholarship too. Right. And I think valuing the notes we take, the thoughts we have that we happen to draft on paper, the letters we write people, is something that I bring into my work in the oral history project as well. So I think there's a few ways that I probably bring it into the classroom.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:31:00]:

There's one last question before we get to the recommendation segment I wanted to ask you about. You invited me in to catch this glimpse of cultivating curiosity in a recent class, and that was through little suitcases that were out on the tables as they came in. And I believe it connected in with your syllabus. But my memory's a little bit fuzzy other than you had curiosity all over every single picture. I was imagining myself in class. So maybe paint the picture, since listeners won't be able to see this picture of your first day of class and some of the techniques and approaches that you use to get them really beginning to wonder and be curious from the very beginning.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:31:39]:

Yes. So I. I was inspired actually by some of the work that you shared, Bonni, when you are on our campus, and really decided to start the semester in my Introduction to Early Childhood course as a journey, like we were going on a trip. And so when they came into the classroom, I had it sort of set up with some maps and some, you know, some things at the door, and students were given sort of itinerary which might be called a syllabus. And Each of them was given an envelope that was, you know, made to look a little bit like something you might receive from, you know, a travel agent in the old days, but that held these materials and a brochure for the class that had an overview of what we were going to discuss. And those envelopes had their names on them, like, you know, they were there prepared for them. I use those envelopes, envelopes the entire semester as a mechanism. I don't do this usually.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:32:30]:

This was sort of new, but it was a mechanism for sharing feedback both ways. So students were welcome to put notes in there or what they wrote reflections in class. And then I could write notes on those, and they could pick them up at the beginning of class and review them. Also, if there's anything I wanted to hand out before class, it just saved time. They picked those up at the beginning. But the thing I wasn't, you know, also gave me a quick check as to who was not in the room, was to be able to easily separate those and make sure I could send an email to those students later, later on. And each day of class, they received a little sticker, like a stamp on their envelope, so that at the end, those who attended a lot of classes had a lot of stamps, which is kind of reminds me of your badging or your, you know, closing your rings kind of thing that motivates some people to think about attending because they. They wanted those stickers.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:33:18]:

But we really, as in early childhood education, one of the values is play and helping to. Helping younger children to learn through play. And so the class was really, really did focus on exploring and experiencing some play. For many students, maybe the first time, or at least the first time in many years, some of them had never explored some materials that we think of as being very traditional. But we had a lot of those materials in the class and practiced a lot of play. And while it fits closely with my subject matter, I do think there are playful ways we might address a lot of the work that we do in the university classroom as well.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:33:54]:

You had talked earlier just about the. Sometimes the challenge of trying to evoke out of humans our inherent quality to be curious. And unfortunately, sometimes in educational context, that can be stifled. I do think it is inherent in human beings, but my goodness, does it ever, you know, can we turn this whole educational experience into far too transactional of a thing to evoke as much curiosity as we might desire? But this is one of those things where it seems, I mean, you, of course, what you've just described is, is extravagant and dripping with just absolutely gorgeous perfection, you know, but even like I think back to a much less labor intensive was that we had a guest speaker come in when I was getting my doctorate, come into one of our classes. And he came in and he just set a little gift bag up in the front with little tissue paper peeking out the top of it. And I mean, that was so simple at the time. It was probably a \$10 book. We didn't know that, though.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:34:54]:



We have no idea what's in there, right? Like, it's like, like, oh, we've had many guest speakers in our doctoral program, but no guest speaker has ever brought a colorful bag with tissue paper. It's just, of course, begging you to ask what is inside. And I'm thinking to Peter Newbury, who was on the show a very long time ago and introduced me to the idea of. In his classes, he would have some sort of an astrological photograph up in the front. And so he took advantage of the moments before class had even began. And he'd ask, you know, what do you notice? What do you wonder? And that in that, I suppose it's both not a heavy lift to select a photo and to, you know, have template that says, what do you notice? What do you wonder? But then also what we talked about earlier, Jenny, of getting students used to that cadence, and at first it might have been weird, he said he totally noticed a dramatic change in those moments before class where it would be no one speaking to anyone and, you know, or all used to coming into our class and, you know, going to our seat that we like to sit in that feels real comfortable, that, you know, depending on the context, is far enough away from everyone else to have my bubble, you know, going for me to like that people would actually, uninvited, uninstructed, I suppose, you know, begin to have far more engagements with the other people in the class. So you've done that. But, I mean, I'm.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:36:19]:

I would. I loved seeing the photos. And you've added even more nuance to all of this. Getting to hear you tell the story here. So fun to just imagine that curiosity that you cultivated through that entire class. What a wonderful example for us all.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:36:34]:

Well, thank you. I do. I agree with you. I think setting up routines is a really important part of the work that we do. We probably don't spend as much time thinking about it as we should in the university classroom. It's something we do a lot of in early childhood, but setting up some sort of expectations from the very beginning to create these spaces for Curiosity for connection and even for play, if it's appropriate in this setting.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:36:58]:

Yeah, I'm thinking about early childhood. I'm certainly a novice over here, but even just the idea of place. And in an early childhood classroom, there would be a place for circle conversations, right? And often a round rug. And that's where we're gonna have these sorts of conversations or that's where we're going to sing these sorts of songs. And then I'm even thinking about cleaning up. You know, that cleaning can be a task that we might dread. But not in, in an early childhood classroom can we, you know, find ways to create meaning and



good habits out of even that sometimes perceived as mundane task. Well, this is the time in the show where we each get to share recommendations.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:37:42]:

And I have a cartoon that I would like to share and the cartoonist, he's a cartoonist and illustrator. His name is Tom Gall, G A U L D. And he has weekly comic strips in the Guardian and News Scientist. And his comics have been published in the New York Times, the Believer, and on the COVID of the New Yorker. And here's how the cartoon, which I know is going to be so relatable to so many of us. The cartoon is titled how to focus on writing your book. The first box says, turn your devices off, put them in a drawer. Lock the drawer, throw away the key.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:38:27]:

Leave the house. Do not look back. Keep tobaccos and hedgerows, feel your old life slip away. Sleep by day, forage in the evening, right by the light of the moon. And the very last panel says when you have a passable first draft, commit a minor crime and use your phone call to contact your agent. Speaking of slowing ourselves down, Jenny, and carving out time to write and create such a beautiful illustration of how challenging it can be to write and do other forms of creation. And I did want to mention I haven't seen it yet because it's not out, but Tom Gauld also has a book, a graphic novel called or full of comics. Physics for cats.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:39:19]:

Find out why every scientist worth their sodium chloride has a Tom Gauld cartoon taped to their electron microscope. This new batch of hilarious gags will be as important to every self respecting scientist as a lab coat and goggles and oversized rubber gloves. So especially for those of you in stem fields, that might be a fun book when it ends up releasing to go check out. So that's my recommendation, Jenny, and I'm going to pass it over to you for whatever you'd like to recommend.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:39:48]:

Oh, that is so wonderful, Bonni. I'm already Going to put that in my cart because I know some people who have to read that book. It's going to be very great. Other than I would encourage people, if you're interested in Fred Rogers and you really would like to know more, to visit Latrobe, visit the Fred Rogers Institute that's there at St. Vincent's campus. It's a beautiful little town and you can go find the statue in the square and sit with him. And it's just, it's a lovely place. As well as Pittsburgh where there's some sites if you're really interested in seeing

parts of the make believe neighborhood and the clock and the tower and all that.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:40:24]:

That's something that you can see. Aside from that, I was going to share a game, I think I shared this with you, Bonni, when you're with us, that I use in my classes to do some of this work. But it's called We See, which is yes, in French and Spanish. These comes as a card game, comes with over 200 photo cards that can be used in different ways. And there's a few different versions, some that are just natural items. There's a mix and then there's some that are just items from images from the Getty Museum. But I do think that these cards can be used for all sorts of different types of games. Whether it's sorting, doing language work with them, just kind of a dominoes kind of game.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:41:06]:

But there's lots of different ways to use it. It's one of my favorite things to use even in a classroom setting, deep looking and listening. And then another thing I was going to share are the Thomas Danbo trolls. I don't know if your listeners know about. Thomas d' Ambo is a Danish recycling artist. I discovered him sometime probably during the pandemic. Was following some of the work he does, particularly as he builds these giant trolls. What I think is fascinating is he co creates this art in the communities in which he builds using recycled ice items.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:41:38]:

And they're usually found in nature spaces that when you look at the troll map are marked with an X. So you are actually going on a troll hunt. X marks the spot if you remember the old. So I've had so much fun searching and finding trolls, taking advantage of when I'm at a conference, seeing if there's one that's nearby. Over the last few years I've been able to see about eight trolls so far. And I have plans to go view a few more hopefully this summer. So that's just another recommendation.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:42:08]:

Is this a geography graphic specific recommendation, I'm assuming, based on what you they're.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:42:13]:

All over the world really, so you can look. And there's several in the United States if you're in the United States, but they're all over, so you have to travel to go find them. But it's a fun little pastime.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:42:24]:

I cannot wait to go explore more. And I have some family, my brother's family is in Pittsburgh and I'm wondering if they have ever gone to the Fred Rogers Institute. So I'm kind of thinking maybe I could live vicariously through them until I have a chance.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:42:41]:

Probably been to the Heinz Museum to see some of the exhibits there and there's some very nice exhibit right there in Pittsburgh that's worth, worth seeing as well. And you mentioned movies I do think that people haven't seen Won't you Be My Neighbor. That's if you're looking for a movie about Fred Rogers. It's probably, in my opinion, probably the best and most complete, you know, modern documentary of Fred Rogers work. And it's a fun movie to watch.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:43:04]:

Well, we'll definitely include all of that in the recommendations and in the show notes. And Jenny, it's so great to be able to have this chance to connect today, record ourselves. We've been able to connect without recording ourselves, but I'm so grateful for you and your generosity to me personally and then also now to the teaching and higher ed community.

Jennifer Baumgartner [00:43:23]:

Well, thank you so much, Bonni. It was just a joy and a privilege to get to speak with you today.

Bonni Stachowiak [00:43:30]:

Thanks once again to Jennifer Baumgartner for joining me as a guest on today's episode. Today's episode was produced by by me, Bonni Stachowiak. It was edited by the ever talented Andrew Kroeger. Podcast Production support was provided by the amazing Sierra Priest. Thanks for listening. And if you have yet to sign up for the weekly email updates, head over to [teachinginhighered.com](http://teachinginhighered.com) subscribe. You'll receive the most recent show notes and some other goodies that don't show up up anywhere else but in those emails. Thank you so much for being a part of the Teaching in Higher Ed community and I'll see you next time on Teaching in Higher Ed.

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