

Popular Podagogy: Episode 7

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00:07 Nathan Cheney: Hello and welcome to Popular Podagogy. I am your host, Nathan Cheney. This podcast is brought to you by Queen's University, Faculty of Education. We have a very special podcast today on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Queen's University, Faculty of Education. We're fortunate to be joined by the Dean of the Faculty of Education at Queen's University, Dr. Rebecca Luce-Kapler, and the Dean of the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary, Dr. Dennis Sumara. Dennis, Rebecca, how are you doing today?

00:50 Dennis Sumara: We're well, how are you?

00:51 NC: Doing well, thank you.

00:52 Rebecca Luce-Kapler: Yeah, looking forward to tomorrow.

00:54 NC: I bet you are. So speaking of tomorrow, it's very exciting, because this year marks the 50 years of teaching excellence at the Queen's Faculty of Education. So as part of our celebrations, the faculty is hosting a conference on the topic of Teachers as Change Leaders. So Rebecca, can you just tell us a little bit about how you decided on this theme?

01:14 RL: Yeah, when we decided that we wanted to celebrate our 50th anniversary, I wanted it to really focus on our prime work in caring, which is about teachers and teaching and education. And I was talking to Dennis in one of our phone calls and I said, "Well, this is happening, and I want a really important idea, to center what we're doing." And he said, "You know, I've been thinking about how teachers are leading change in various areas," and we talked a bit more about the impact of teachers on kids and society, and out of that I came and said, "Well you know what, why don't we have the theme of teachers as change leaders, you come as a keynote." And then, everything else fell into place.

02:04 NC: So Dennis, tomorrow you're going to be giving the keynote as Rebecca just said. So as a researcher, teacher and Dean, this theme obviously relates to all aspects of your work, so how... Can you tell us a little bit about how your keynote fits into this important theme?

02:21 DS: Well yes, I think that when most people hear that any adult is a leader of change, they have a picture of what that is and usually, it's a pretty big kind of act, political act, marching in the streets, writing to the newspaper, and indeed it could be all those things. But when I reflect back and in my talk, I'll be discussing the more subtle ways in which teachers make profound changes every day in the classroom, changes to curriculum to adapt it in ways that are more suitable for context and for young people, changes to stories, "What story of identity do you have or did you have when you come into a classroom and is that story valued? Is it a more marginal one? Is it a mainstream one? And how does that impact the way you experience learning in the classroom?"

03:20 DS: How do teachers in actually very subtle ways, make profound changes that often aren't noticed except by the person, usually in retrospect as they advance into their adulthood." So that's the topic. I'll be talking about the normative functions of schooling, where it came from, how it's still done, advances we might have made but probably some of the more subtle problematics that we have within the context of teaching that require teachers to be critically aware of their role as

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change agents. That actually is what the job is.

04:01 NC: Yeah, and one of the things that, just to go off of that a little bit, that I find really interesting is the idea that leaders don't necessarily have to be those people who are standing up and giving a big speech, and doing something unique. And this is something that I've had a conversation with a lot of people about because one of the goals of teaching is to build leadership skills amongst your students as well and they always look at your students and they say, "Well, that person's so quiet, how can they be a leader?" And it's not necessarily about being the person that's the loudest in the room, it's about doing the actions that are meant to be there, and I think that's something that is really important about this topic as well.

04:40 RL: Well and just to build on that a little bit, Nathan. When I was teaching in school, one of the ways I knew I was being successful, is if I could leave the room for 15 minutes, and I'd come back and the kids were all doing learning of some kind.

04:58 NC: Isn't that an amazing feeling when it happens that way?

05:00 RL: That's an amazing feeling. And I feel the same way about being a leader of a faculty of education, my goal is to pretty much stay in the background, and give people the space to do what they need to do and what they hope to do, to me that's leadership.

05:18 DS: Yeah and I'll follow up on that. I think it... I'm pretty sure, I'm trying to remember what I actually put in my title, which I won't reveal today. But I'd rather focus on the action and the activity than categorizing somebody as a leader. So I'm pretty sure in the talk, it has the phrase, "Teachers Leading Change" and there is a difference, right? What we believe, certainly at the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary, where I'm dean, and I know what Rebecca believes, is the teacher's primary role, and people who lead faculty's primary role, is to create conditions for other people to be empowered.

06:03 DS: We don't empower anybody directly. I don't give that to you. I create conditions where you're able to find a way to achieve it for yourself in the way that you find meaningful. And if we do that successfully, it's exactly what Rebecca has said, "We're no longer required, we can fall away from that." And we need to. You have to be able to leave knowing that you have the capability, the ability and the confidence to do things that we would never have imagined for you.

06:31 NC: Right. And that's something that can go even outside the field of education as well, as it's creating an environment and creating an ecosystem where people can thrive, and enabling them to have that opportunity to empower themselves and giving them that so. It's evident that we see that at the Faculty of Education at Queens and I'm sure that your students would say the same at the work on school.

06:56 DS: Well everywhere. So everywhere I go, I talk about... Now, I'll do it very briefly.

07:00 NC: Of course.

07:00 DS: How it came to be that we became the Werklund School of Education. I met David Werklund, a very successful entrepreneur, in Calgary a number of years ago. And at a lunch meeting in a food court, I said, "Well David, how is it possible that someone who did not finish grade 9,

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from northern Alberta, from Valleyview, Alberta, could have achieved so much in business, been so successful?" And he said, "You know what, I made a lot of mistakes, and early on, I was the boss who had to know everything, who told people exactly what to do, and if they didn't do it, I fired them."

07:36 DS: And he said, "Guess what? My businesses failed." And it's a longer story than this, but eventually we came to the point where he said, "I've learned you hire really good people, and you create the conditions for them to learn how to do the job in new ways. And you listen, and you do it. And when you do that, you have the most amazing businesses because you've empowered them to build your business for you, all you have to do is keep on creating those conditions."

08:02 DS: I said, "Well David, that's good teaching, that's what it is." So how was it that a business person gave us \$25 million to name the school of education? It's not about the money at all. It's about the value, the idea of empowering other people to achieve in ways that they could never have predicted. That works in teacher education, engineering education, medical education, arts, science, business, everywhere. It's what we hope for our children, right?

08:34 NC: Yeah, absolutely. And it's a good lesson for anyone to keep in mind, whether you're running a school, whether you're running a university, whether you're running a small business in your own hometown. So it's nice...

08:47 DS: But it starts in the classroom is though, right?

08:47 NC: Absolutely.

08:48 DS: I think if those kids leave young people a classroom not having had that experience, if they leave feeling, "Well, I wasn't able to achieve that on that exam," or, "I'm not as good as Nathan was in Math and Science," that's not good.

09:05 RL: No.

09:06 DS: Right.

09:07 NC: That's definitely not good if you're not as good as I was in Math and Science [chuckle], but that's another subject for another day.

09:13 DS: We don't have to know everything, Nathan.

[laughter]

09:16 NC: So, in the idea about reflecting, and going back a little bit for the history between the two of you, you both did your PhDs at the University of Alberta. Can you tell us about how the concept of teachers as change leaders influenced the way that you view education?

09:36 RL: Well, I think this idea of teachers as change leaders wasn't really there as the way you expressed it, but both Dennis and I were in secondary education at the University of Alberta, they're departmentalized, like we're not... And that department had a long history that started with Ted Aoki who was a chair who led the department into new ways of thinking about teaching and learning, and

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had he had been teaching in Taber, Alberta, in a school, and he took those lessons of teaching where he realized what's important is you have to see who is in front of you, what they're doing, who they are, how they engage, not just how they do the workbook.

10:31 RL: So he really brought phenomenology to that department, and infused that department with the importance of that. And not only the phenomenological piece, but also the hermeneutic, interpreting what you see, how you read situations. And everybody in that department in some frame or other did think that and do that kind of work. Do you wanna pick up there Dennis?

10:55 DS: Well yeah, I'd forgotten of course, Ted was from Taber. I'd never taken a class from him, but I've been almost everywhere he's been. So his parents and he were in the lower mainland, post World War II, the internment, where the Japanese Canadians were removed from the lower mainland, their land was taken from them, they were sent to different places. Lethbridge, Alberta, where I was born, had an internment camp for Japanese-Canadians. New Denver BC had another one. And that's where Ted went with his parents, and they worked the sugar beet fields later around that area. He ended up finishing a Teacher Education degree. He did teach in Taber, he did teach in Lethbridge, at the high school across the street from me.

11:41 DS: He did go to UBC, and started a whole curriculum department, focused on; curriculum isn't the document, curriculum are all the relations that people have, their history, their context, their language, their culture, all of it. Well, nobody was thinking about curriculum that way. When he had the opportunity to be department head, he did what all good leaders do, he had a vision for the future of education and how we should change our conception of what curriculum is, what teaching is.

12:13 DS: And he hired a lot of people, including Max van Manen, who brought phenomenology to Canada, and said, "We will be the place that has a more interpretive cultural historical understanding of curriculum and teaching," more of a path laid while walking the course, not the course of studies, but the running of the course, very, very different. So we... That was where we did our PhD. And I think you leave those experiences conceptually understanding the possibilities in education, in very different ways.

12:47 RL: I remember thinking when I first started in that department, started my graduate work there, I thought, "I finally have found a place where people think about teaching, the way I think about teaching." I was tired of the instrumentalist, "Here's your curriculum document. Check off, check these objectives off as you do them," because it was so much more about the rationality in the classroom, between students, between the students and me, between us and the school, and that's where the real learning happens, it's not what's in that curriculum document.

13:21 DS: Yeah. Well, it is the thing I say ever since, that we're trying to close the gap between education and schooling, and they are two different things. Whoever thought it would be a good idea, the industrial model applied to literally preparing people for a particular way of being in the world? Why is it a good idea to divide people into age group categories? It makes no sense. Or to divide knowledge up into the subjects we have. It makes no sense really, not at all. We wouldn't do it that way anywhere else, and nowhere else do we do that except still in most schools. There's still a lot of the work to be done to rethink what education is, and should be, how that relates to what happens in school.

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14:07 RL: We were just talking yesterday about our career as we were thinking about doing this, and how things have come some distance since we started teaching, but there's so much farther to go. And how when you're looking at something as culturally entrenched as school, how difficult that is to even move the needle a little bit on those things. But if we really care about kids, if we really care about our future, we have to keep working towards that goal.

14:39 NC: Yeah, well, and I think just going back to the idea of the relationships and the relations, and how that goes back into school, and you think about even from when I was in school, the differences that I see now in the education system and it wasn't necessarily one big monumental change, it was little things that teachers started to learn and do as they went along. And that's I think what is an important part of this topic is finding the things that teachers can do to make things special for their students, and I think that that is something that clearly comes out in that story there.

15:17 DS: And going back to not just teachers, so young people, even children can make profound changes to school and curriculum, they do. They can be very activist. And it's when two things meet, right? All social movements start when people who are marginalized, and that, for sure, is children and young people in schools, not taken seriously, not treated as complete human beings, when they start to mobilize, which they now do on social media. One of our colleagues, Linda Laidlaw at the University of Alberta, has children, and she studies subversive uses of digital technology by children.

15:57 DS: She told me her daughter's first experiment when she wanted to know the power of social media, when she was in grade five, somehow she organized digitally all the kids in the school to stand up at a certain time and turn backwards in the classroom. And guess what? They all did it. At that moment, she knew that she had some kind of power. A way to get attention, a way to possibly motivate some change, in the schooling context. So it is both, it's not just teachers. Young people are very active in thinking about the ways in which schooling still might not be a place where they can maximize their own idea of the future.

16:41 NC: Right. Do you think that the school environment, just as a thought to that, do you think that the school environment is related to setting up those students in the power that they now have? Because when I was teaching, I saw that a lot more as well is that students felt more empowered in class, to make decisions about what they wanted to do, and I think with constructivist education, and the rise of that and social constructivism, in which we're allowing students to choose a little bit more about what they wanna learn about, I feel like we're giving some power to that.

17:19 RL: Well, I mean I think what really does make that change where people feel empowered, is not so much constructivism, that might lead to it, but I think it's more children and young people now are noticing the impact that they can have, and it's not about school, it's about their own social connections and they're thinking about what's going on in the world. So if you think about all the students that walked out of secondary school a few weeks ago to protest the Ford government rolling back what everyone calls the sex ed curriculum incorrectly.

18:06 RL: But it was a very powerful moment for those students to realize that they could make a difference by doing that. And this time with the Me Too movement and things, I think we're seeing groups that have typically not thought they had power, or not thought they had the mobilization to change, are gaining that, or are hopeful in doing that. And so I think in schools over the next few years, my hope is that we'll see more of that.

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18:36 NC: Yeah.

18:38 DS: I mean, public education is so fraught. My last doctoral student, Patrick Rouble, who just finished a dissertation from Whitehorse. He was a former minister of education, years ago, did his doctoral work with us. He interviewed a number of former ministers of education right across Canada, on their experience of being the minister responsible for education. Long story short, the conclusion is, it is fraught. It's where so much anxiety lies about the future, about young people about what knowledge is dangerous and what isn't. It's all there.

19:22 DS: So when you've got that kind of a situation, teachers actually have a limited amount of power. I changed that directly in the classroom. Let's be honest, there are some things that simply cannot be done. We know that, that's why my argument is a lot of subtle appropriate changes, empowering young people to think more broadly, giving them the opportunity, through the work they do, to imagine differently the way things are, not all of it has to become represented or visible. We still have the mind that can do a lot of work. And then we see what can happen. So there's no doubt in my mind, there is no teacher that told those young people to walk out, however, something about their education created the conditions for them to feel they could do that, and that's the difference, right?

20:14 NC: Yeah. So we're just gonna transition here a little bit, and go back to the idea of the conference. So the 50th anniversary conference reflects on the past through the lens of teachers as change leaders, and we're gonna have a panellist representing each decade from the '70s to the present. So is there a decade that really stands out to you as pivotal, when thinking about teachers as change leaders?

20:36 RL: I would say that for both of us, we did talk about that a little bit. I think it was the '80s.

20:44 DS: Mm-hmm. In Alberta.

20:44 RL: In Alberta. So this is an Alberta experience, I'm not sure if it would be true across the country. But the late '70s and early '80s were a time when teachers had a tremendous amount of input and autonomy and were being asked to guide the curriculum, they were being consulted by the Ministries of Education there was no standardized testing to speak of yet, and there was a lot of professionalism, we felt like professionals, we made decisions, it was the best time of my teaching career. And then things started to change. And in Alberta, I would say it's when Ralph Klein came in, maybe, or even before that.

21:30 DS: It was a whole bunch of things, right?

21:32 RL: Yeah. And we started to see, all of a sudden, standardized testing was coming, but they weren't calling it that, they were saying, "We're just checking to see how the curriculum's being enacted in the classroom. It won't really count, it won't count." And then there were curriculum changes that were happening that just happened. So slowly, those things started to close in a bit.

22:00 DS: Well basically, I agree with Rebecca. And that's, when I taught all through the '80s, it was fantastic. I taught in a rural school division. Teachers were trusted. Let's put it that way. We were trusted to teach the curriculum. It was a very bare bones, built on a few principles, values, a

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number of concepts. And you taught it in context, it differed. There was no standardized testing. The mark I gave the students is the grade they got at the end of the year.

22:31 DS: No interference from government or from anyone. No attempt to standardize, I think that's very important. Well, how did this all happen? In Alberta, in the '20s and '30s and '40s, we had some of the most progressive curriculum in the world. A number of the school leaders and people working in ministry did their PhDs at the Chicago School, with John Dewey. If you look back at those documents, it is amazing, amazing. They had courses called Enterprise. The curriculum was very small, basically the instructions to teachers were, "Create conditions for learning." That was it, and they did it.

23:06 DS: And then the '50s happened, it was Sputnik and the science, a whole anxiety of, "Are we science-y enough? Are we gonna keep up with the Soviets?", and so on. We started to see the beginning of that then. And here we are today, where I would say our biggest problem is we do not trust teachers. We don't. We make sure that we, at the end of the year, test all those students to ensure they've learned what they're supposed to learn, and be who they're supposed to be.

23:35 DS: This has to be the revolution. Teachers have to mobilize and get that control back, and say, "Look, we are more than professionals, we understand how relationships work, we have a vision for how young people can be empowered to do all kinds of things that we never could have imagined, but you have to give us some degrees of freedom, it has to be true that in that classroom with those students I need to be able to make some judgments and some changes about what you need and what you need, that might be different from what Rebecca needs. And at the end of the term I don't want all of that work, which is diversity work, really, to be ruined by all of us having to be funnelled through the same little silo."

24:21 RL: Well, years ago, Michael Apple wrote about the de-skilling of teachers, and that word has stayed with me so strongly, because I've seen it grow and grow and grow, that more and more professional judgement has been taken away from teachers. And that's sad, that's very sad. And it's harmful to the education system. I think we're reaching a point though, at least I see it in Ontario, where teachers are starting to push back.

24:54 RL: And I think the whole thing around the Sex Ed curriculum was a good indication of that, where they're realizing how the reach of the government is getting right into the very heart of what they care about and what they do. So I hope, sometimes when bad things happen in a province or in a school district, it helps mobilize people to realize their situation that what was transparent becomes really obvious to them and then they begin to push back.

25:23 DS: Yeah, they wake up. Yeah, they wake up. In Alberta, it always goes back to, whenever there seems to be an economic or a social problem, "Let's get back to the basics on math." If only, if only those elementary school teachers, by the way, most of them are still women. So, "If only those women would teach math better to those kids, we would have a better economy." I know that seems like a bit of a stretch, but really?

25:46 RL: That's the message.

25:47 RL: That's actually what's going on. There's no research whatsoever, anywhere, that would support going back to that arcane way of teaching mathematics. However, it's very easy for

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politicians to pick up on social anxiety around achievement and make that the issue.

26:06 NC: Well, and that's one of the conversations that we've had previously with other guests on this podcast, is the idea of everyone has an opinion and everyone has gone to school, and so when we're talking about changes in education and changes in school, and even if it's supported by research, it's very difficult to get the larger population on board with that, because they've had an experience with school, and it's a different... If it's a different experience than what they had, then it makes it more difficult to speak. And I think that's a little bit of what that speaks to here, with the changes in government and government entering into the... Well, continuing to enter into the education field.

26:44 DS: Well, they don't do it with medicine. And why is that? Well, because the stakes are pretty high and immediate. We need medical practitioners and professionals to be experts so that we survive a heart attack or whatever. But there's also been a problem, I think, in education. We have not, until quite recently, been very clear about the language we're using to describe phenomena, we've not really positioned ourselves to be experts in learning.

27:14 DS: Teachers, that's our field of expertise, human development and learning. And we have to know the research, the current research in those areas, so that when challenged or asked, I don't rely just on my experience or opinion. My experience and my opinion, rests with a body of research that is current and relevant, not something from 30 or 40 years ago. So we have some work to do in education, in order to earn the trust of the community, and of government, to be able to respond to those challenges, to, "We think we should have a back to the basics curriculum in math," or, "We think we should change the... Whatever."

27:58 RL: Sex Ed.

28:00 DS: Sex Ed. It cannot just be, "Well, you're wrong," or "We know that we're right." There has to be some evidence that we're using.

28:09 NC: So the last question touched a little bit, and we're starting to get into it now, on the past of education, but at the conference, there's also gonna be a panel that discusses the future of education, and specifically looking at themes of gender, indigeneity, at-risk youth, international education, diversity and equity, digitalization and technology. I know that's a lot, but from your perspective as university administrators, what do you see as the challenges and opportunities for teachers, teacher education and education research, looking to the future of education?

28:46 DS: Well, yeah, there's a lot there, but a couple of things. I would say that we have, not an opportunity, but a responsibility, in the context of teacher education, to ensure that we are closing that gap between schooling and education. So what are we doing in-house, within the context of our work, to literally change the subject and the topic and the tone and the opportunities for people to succeed within teacher education. So who gets in, how are identities able to represent themselves and participate in teacher education. And here we are, still talking about challenges with sexism, with homophobia, ableism, racism, you name it, we've got it. And nothing... You think that schooling is normalizing?

29:45 DS: Think about teacher education, it is absolutely the most normative, normalizing experience, I think, of anything, given the way in which cultural anxiety about the future is lodged

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within schooling. So we have that responsibility to open up those discourses, to ask questions about how we're going to be more inclusive in very specific ways, in indigenous education and working with indigenous people with the calls to action, out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we have some obvious, not just challenges, but responsibilities, to think very differently about our historical connection to indigenous people.

30:30 DS: So it's a big new exciting challenge, and it has to be handled in a very practical way. With the way we're offering courses, what they're called, how people get in, how we assess them, and how we support our teacher-candidates when they get into schools, and the experiences they have, because, of course, that's when it gets very difficult.

30:54 RL: And I think one of the opportunities that I would see for us as the university administrators, is to lead by example. It's very powerful. So one of the things that I try to do as dean, is express my thoughts about all of those issues, be really clear about where I stand. I set them as priorities for my office, and for the faculty, "These are the things we care about, this is what we wanna do." And then I follow that up by action.

31:23 RL: So our 1 Million Teachers project, for example. Our work with Sistema. All of the kinds of different projects and activities and advancement work we do, it lives that, it lives that out. And then we also, you give people in the different units to set their own priorities, but within those parameters of caring and attention. So we have to lead by example, and our faculty have to lead, and our future teachers have to lead by example. And it means always questioning yourself, paying attention to things you're doing. And it's uncomfortable sometimes, and sometimes it's horrifying. You'll realize you've been doing something for many years, that seemed fine and normal, and then someone brings it to your attention, that there's an issue, what you're doing or how you're thinking.

32:15 RL: And that's happened to me a number of times the past few years, as I've opened myself up to make those changes. And it's a bit horrifying sometimes, but it's so important. I was telling Dennis on the way here, that as you think about these things, as you attend to them, as you make them a focus, then you begin to find more and more often you default to the equitable way of being and understanding, but it takes a lot of work. And you're never done, you're never done.

32:48 DS: Well, I'm gonna add to it, because I think it's true, actually, that 10 years ago, when I interviewed to be Dean at Calgary, and Alberta's considered to be, and it's not anymore, a very conservative, socially conservative province. Not... We have some of the most advanced legislation anywhere in Canada, however there's still a feeling about it. So when I went to interview, I interviewed as a completely out gay man doing research in a particular area, "But how will that go?" There was some concern about it, there was actually some worry. How would I do in the community, with fundraising and things like that? It all worked out fine, except I will say, it still is shocking to me that the groundwork for decisions is still made in places that are not the official spaces of decision-making.

33:42 DS: People will get together, who are part of an affinity group. Let's put it that way. And they will talk things through. And you find, you get to a meeting and realize, "Wow. Well, when did that happen? How did people all come to agreement on that?" And you realize you weren't there, you weren't invited, you're not part of that group, you're an outsider. It never ends.

34:03 DS: I think it's an advantage having people in leadership roles, who have lived in those

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liminal spaces, in both identities, figuring out, tactically, how to move into a position where you have more opportunity to lead change, and to restructure. And still, even there, I notice all the ways in which we can be excluded. Look, if that's true for me, a male, privileged, white, economically advantaged, educationally advantaged, if that's still true for me, imagine what it's like for many of our young people and many of our teacher candidates.

34:46 DS: I think it's important to be able to talk about that. And start to notice, "Listen, when we teach that course that way, it is making the students, for example, the site of contestation." That's a real problem. When we're teaching inclusive education in this way, it's actually reproducing the problem. In Canada right now, I think our biggest issue is that we have some of the most advanced social policy in the world, right? We do.

35:16 DS: But that actually hasn't taken care of, what I would call the mostly gone underground forms of insidious non-inclusivity that is everywhere. We have to be careful. We look south of the border and say, "Wow, we're so much more progressive and evolved." And it's not true, a lot of it's gone underground. So we have to, I think, as leaders and teachers in schools, pay attention to that and start to address it at that level.

35:48 RL: 'Cause it pops its head up when you least expect it.

35:51 NC: Exactly.

35:51 RL: Then you go, "Oh, it is still here."

35:52 DS: It is.

35:54 NC: And it's always at the time that you don't want it to pop up, for sure.

35:57 DS: Well, it's always there. I think that's the issue. Let's not pretend it isn't. We have a lot of work to do.

36:04 NC: We're gonna take a quick break, but we'll be right back after a word from our sponsors.

[music]

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37:11 NC: Welcome back to Popular Podagogy. We are joined here by Dr. Rebecca Luce-Kapler

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and Dr. Dennis Sumara. And before we leave you today we just wanted to think about this weekend which, again, is the 50th anniversary of the Faculty of Education conference, and the conference and our questions so far and our talk has been a little bit about reflecting on the teaching field, and reflecting on the past, and where we've come from. And so on that note I just wanted to see if you had any anecdotes or stories about teaching that you think would be valuable to share to our listeners?

37:54 RL: Well, we thought that one of the nice things to talk about was how our friendship actually began. Yes, we were in the same doctoral program together, but it turned out that we both got assigned to co-teach a course my first year there, I think it was your second.

38:14 DS: My second, yeah.

38:15 RL: And the course was called Ed Sec 200.

38:20 DS: Curriculum and Instruction.

38:20 RL: Curriculum and Instruction. So it was an overview of how to think about teaching, and what curriculum meant. And not a specific curriculum, not the Math or English curriculum, but the whole idea of curriculum, and what it meant to have that kind of guidance in schools. So Dennis and I, we realized that our minds were on very similar planes, we clicked immediately, and we both felt very similarly about teaching.

38:56 RL: It was like he could finish my sentences, I could finish his. So we decided to try something different with that course than what was usually done, we decided we were going to choose one text, and use that text to address all of the questions about teaching and learning that we wanted to talk about in that course. And that text was John Dewey's *Child and the Curriculum*. And it's a tough read. And these are new students right there, this is one of their early courses, they're just...

39:29 NC: I remember being assigned that text in my teacher's college program, and having to go through and read that. It was...

39:36 RL: It's dense.

39:38 NC: It's definitely... It's.

39:38 DS: It's dense.

39:39 NC: It's a read. That's for sure.

39:43 RL: And it's a struggle. But one of the things that happened through doing that, is that we had to go through it again and again, as a class, and as instructors, and talk about how perhaps just even this one sentence, the meaning of it and the depth and how it connected to education. It was a hard course for the students, but they loved it, don't you think?

40:07 DS: Well, they didn't start loving it.

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[chuckle]

40:10 RL: No. No.

40:10 DS: I mean, here's what I remember, here's what happens. And these are university students, who have read much more difficult texts before coming in to teacher. They have. Not true that it's too difficult for them. But this is not what they expect, or what they expected back then in teacher education. It was... They expected everything to be practical. If you would just tell me how to manage the classroom, or how to plan those lessons, everything will be fine. Well, that's not true, everything won't be fine. In fact, we might be able to tell you that but you would be merely reproducing what we already know without paying attention to the context.

40:52 DS: So that particular essay is a philosophical thought experiment, and discussion of the relationship between who the child is, their context, and what is considered to be the curriculum and the other things that are the curriculum, everything, when we talked about earlier. So we did go through it. I think we required them to read it three full, complete readings addressing every single question. What is classroom management? How do you think about that differently? Do you remember we wrote an article that came outta that?

41:31 RL: Yeah.

41:31 DS: It was called... I remember it now, with brackets around the "un", Unbecoming a Teacher.

41:38 RL: And that article is still cited.

41:40 DS: A lot.

41:40 RL: People still read it.

41:42 DS: Well, what came out of that? The purpose, and I still believe this, it's in my talk tomorrow. The purpose of teacher education should not be to normalize schooling, the identity of the teacher. It should be the opposite. It should be the opposite. That should be the place in which we are willing and able to question everything. Absolutely everything. Interrogate everything, before anyone ever walks in the classroom to meet young children and young learners. So that's how we bonded on an intellectual level.

42:17 DS: And I think at the end of that one, Rebecca, I remember those students, I have never had more interesting reviews and comments from students. Most of them said it was difficult, it challenged their thinking. But I would say, in retrospect, my memory of it, is the majority of them felt that they were in a better place, intellectually. They could think quite differently about what it meant to be a teacher and to teach.

42:45 RL: And when I was thinking about that course, thinking back on it, what I realized is that most of our future research that went from that place, and our practices in teaching, really found their foundation in that one course, so much of the literary research that Dennis and I did since is based on that going back to the text, reading closely, responding, writing about it, the commonplace book we used in that practice, in that course. There were so many things that laid the groundwork

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for our future work as teacher-educators and administrators. It was one of those times it was just transformative, I think.

43:30 DS: Yeah.

43:30 NC: Well, I think that that's something that we can keep in mind any time we're in a classroom, whether it's a Faculty of Education, or whether it's a classroom in a high school or an elementary school, is that when you're questioning everything and you're challenging the students to do something that's a little bit different, it's beneficial not only for you, but also for them too, because it's something that's a little bit different from that. So thank you for sharing that story. And thank you for joining us today. We know that you're both very busy, and we appreciate you coming on here, and hopefully we'll have an opportunity to do this again. So thank you.

44:10 RL: You're welcome.

44:11 DS: Thank you very much.

44:13 NC: That does it for another episode of Popular Podagogy. If you like what you hear, be sure to subscribe. You can find us on iTunes, Google Play, or Stitcher, as well as on the CFRC and Faculty of Education website. See you next time.

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