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0:00:02.7 Speaker 1: Talking about innovation in teaching and education, Popular Podagogy. Discussions that are topical and sometimes philosophical, Popular Podagogy, Popular Podagogy.

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0:00:19.3 Chris Carlton: Hi, there. Thanks for joining us and welcome to another episode of Popular Podagogy where we try to bring big ideas in teaching and education to life. I'm your host, Chris Carlton and this podcast has been brought to you by the Faculty of Education at Queen's University. Welcome to our April podcast. For many teachers, one of the important focuses for this month is Earth Day, which we will be celebrating on April 22nd, which marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970. This year's Earth Day theme is invest in our planet, with a follow up question, "What will you do?" One of the Earth Day events is the great global cleanup, which is a worldwide campaign that encourages and supports citizens, businesses and governments to be accountable and take action.

0:01:08.8 CC: This is often the main focus of many classes and schools as they go outside and help clean up the environment around their school and neighborhood. This is a fantastic initiative and does it raise awareness for protecting our environment? But many teachers and students are asking, "What else can we do to make an even bigger impact and continue this "invest in our planet" mindset even further?"

0:01:32.3 CC: In this podcast, I am excited to be speaking with Dan Hendry, who is a champion of promoting Sustainable initiatives here in Kingston for the Limestone District School Board and Loyalist Township and involves himself in many community-based projects. You will quickly understand that his concern for the environment is what drives him to take initiative in promoting Sustainable solutions within the Kingston community and well beyond.

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0:02:03.7 CC: I'd like to introduce our guest to our podcast today. And that is the man known as Sustainable Dan, Dan Hendry. Welcome to the podcast, Dan.

0:02:11.7 Dan Hendry: Thanks for having me.

0:02:14.0 CC: You have received and I checked your website, so you can't lie about this one. You have received many awards and recognition from organizations that celebrate leadership and sustainability. And you are a facilitator, mentor and communicator whose focuses your energy and efforts on making Kingston a sustainable, livable and smart city.

0:02:37.3 DH: Wow. With that intro, it's definitely... When I was in high school, I didn't think I'd get some of that stuff, but yeah. No, thank you so much, Chris, for having me. And for sure, I've been working in this space for a while now and really enjoy it. It makes me be able to get up every day and just be passionate about what I do, so thanks again for having me today and looking forward to chatting with whatever you think you'd like with... Maybe, you can pick my brain about.

0:03:02.5 CC: That sounds great. And I am looking forward to it. I was very excited about this. Now, Dan, when speaking with my teacher colleagues and reading podcast email questions regarding this topic, there seems to be two common themes around the topic of Earth Day and sustainability in general. One was, "What more can we do as teachers besides the important school yard cleanup?" And, "How do you look at your community and find resources and ideas to integrate sustainability into your classroom?" Two very important questions. And I think with the initiatives that you have started, and our discussions around them, we will be able to answer those queries. But I'd like to start off with discussing an impressive photo of you on your website, dhendry.com. And it's a view in front of these two massive city buses. And I personally know the story and my class has benefited from this innovative initiative. But I know our listeners would love to learn more about it. So can you explain a little bit more about that epic picture?

0:04:06.2 DH: Yeah, so this is something. It's a great picture, one of my favorites. I don't have many pictures that like of myself, truthfully, but that's one that I... Every once in a while I would glimpse at and I smirk, and it's... By far, it's one of my biggest accomplishments. But again, not just me, it's something I've been involved in. A lot of people have. Really started off in 2012 in Kingston, when the City of Kingston councillors and the trustees of the school boards decided to allow grade nines to ride for free. So I had a background in sustainability in my role here, and I saw this awesome opportunity to allow kids to use the bus but all I was thinking was, "Well, who's gonna teach them? How do they know how?" We live in a very car-centric culture. So that's when we kind of started an evolution. It did take time for sure.

0:04:51.5 DH: Sometimes there are little things you don't know about. You got to find out and sometimes that just... You learn it by just doing it. And that's how I've learned a lot of things in my life and I've created a lot of mistakes in the meantime, but learn from those mistakes. But that bus going back to that, Chris, is really... It was this opportunity where all kids in grade... Or all students in the City of Kingston got a free bus pass in grade nine. And we worked out a way to figure out how to teach them and train them. And we evolved that program. So now in the City of Kingston, grade nine, 10, 11 and 12 all have no cost passes. And it's more complex than that but it's really simple in that way. That's from the student and staff point of view. That's what they know. I helped with a lot of the back-end stuff, but it's led to a transformation.

0:05:32.8 DH: And I think in a lot of times in our schools, in our community, when it comes to ridership, it's a bus. Yeah, when I was a kid, I didn't think I'd love buses this much. But it's a connection. It's A to B, it's getting to school, it's getting to sports, it's staying late for homework, it's meeting friends, it's your first date. It's volunteering, it's work. It's all these things. And by normalizing at a young age before 16, the automobile really is what we all go for at that age. It's given schools and students the autonomy to make decisions and travel and that's just opened up so many rich educational opportunities, I would say, because of this route of getting passes into hands and training students.

0:06:14.0 CC: And the one step that has been taken further by you as well is because I'm an elementary teacher, we also are... My grade seven, eights traveled for free as well. So was it brought down to that level or?

0:06:29.5 DH: Yeah, so it started with... And again, it was, and this is not something that was started and people said, "Oh, here's how it's gonna work." It was like, "Oh, let's start it and change, oh, we'll figure this out," and as people poked up their hands, and what about this, or can we do this,

or Teach my kid this about health and safety. Like what happened was, we realized that... Well, transit realized, not myself at all, but they said, "You know what, there were very few under 14, it's limited. I think of my daughter who is 13, and she's just getting at that age where she can travel a little bit more independently, I would say. And so it opened up an opportunity where we were talking to transit, "Well, if kids are riding for free, like under 12, why don't we just make a pass where the school board will chip in a bit of money based upon an average amount of adults, we would assume would be on a trip, usually about three, like EAEs, ECEs, teachers or parent helpers.

0:07:18.4 DH: And every time that we made a one-pass, just to make it easier. So a field trip pass was created for each school based upon the fact that kids were riding free anyway, so we just had to reduce the mechanism and make it easy for adults, and field trips. So we created a field trip pass, and it's first year, there were at about 600 field trips, this is before COVID, it's been harder since a little bit, it's gonna been getting going to get more. The second year, just before COVID there were 900 field trips, and that's things like the Farmer's Market, renting a yellow bus costs money, and it's the barriers, some kids, you gotta track them down, you gotta do the parental forms, you gotta pay for the bus, you gotta have the bus the exact time you have to wait for the yellow buses to get to school, and then you have to get back before the yellow buses have to pick up the bus riders themselves.

0:08:03.0 CC: So there were all these barriers and all we did was streamline some of it and give transit passes. Of course, it's not the same in every part of the community because it does fall within the transit system, but it does open up a lot. And in those 900 field trips, if you try to equate that to a dollar value, I think it's something like almost like \$250,000, that it could have been representative of renting yellow buses. And some people say, "Well, what about the yellow buses?" The reality is, when talking to teachers, because of the reduction of barriers, this enabled way more than they would ever have maybe one field trip a year. It was a standing thing, some classes, they had the field trip and they just, because the parents had signed off that they'd be allowed to do small trips in the area, it just became part of the normalized culture in that school, so yeah, it started with high school students and then moved into elementary, but I guess part of this... And I know this sounds complex, trust me, it's been a decade of my work in this, some of this, but at the same time, I think it's about looking at our surroundings a bit differently, like that is sustainability, connected transit is better than single occupancy vehicles idling and driving and creating traffic around our schools. So it's about normalizing these things that we do exist and amplifying them, I think in our communities.

0:09:15.4 CC: Dan, I'm glad you mentioned the idea of it just becoming part of your classroom procedure because that's what happened in my class. We actually were doing a woodworking program at another school, and it was just part of the day. We came to our normal school and then we got on a city bus and we traveled to the other school and came back, and the great thing that not only did we were able to access a lot of more of our city, but I was able to watch those social interactions between my classes and the people that were on the bus. We talked about bus etiquette, we talked about being polite, being respectful to other bus riders, and what an incredible teachable moment every single time we got out on the bus. And so to me, it changed the way we looked at how we could access our community, and we went out a lot more because of that. And you're right, The yellow buses were expensive to be able to organize and get done. Now, just really quickly, do other cities do this? Or have you heard this in other cities?

0:10:17.0 DH: More and more, of like I've done a TEDx talk on this and other resources I've helped

create because it's not always the Transit Authority and the education system, they don't talk to each other regularly. It's not that they don't like each other necessarily, it's just that they're in different businesses, education and transit as a whole community, but because of the work we've done here in Kingston more and more, I would say I've talked to 40 or 50 communities across Canada. I'm actually working really hard on my own time to try to figure out how to scale it to other communities, because the amount of spin that created so many good things and you just heard from the education point of view, but I'm talking about getting kids to work and volunteer as part of high school, or just so many really neat things I've heard about other agencies like Pathways to Education being able to save money now.

0:11:02.8 DH: And instead of paying for transit, they buy food checks to entice students to come for homework help, that type of thing. So there's been so much good. For sure, I've heard Victoria, and British Columbia, Charlottetown PEI, Halifax Nova Scotia and Brockville, Peterborough. They're not all doing it, but I've seen in their papers or we got notes from people... In the last month, I've spoken to people from Edmonton, Quebec City and Winnipeg. I'm always willing to speak about this with anyone interested because I wanna watch it go, I've seen it do so much good, and I want other communities to do it because I know they can, it's just... It's a little complex because of the moving parts, but all it takes is a bit of effort and in trying to figure out, and I think I really do think across Canada, I'm hoping that I'll be able to help spur this movement and get other communities to see the same value and then create a plan to make it work in their community, 'cause every community is a bit different.

0:11:55.9 CC: And that Dan is why the accolades and awards are with you, so congratulations on that. That's amazing.

0:12:03.0 DH: Oh, no problem.

0:12:03.2 CC: And Dan, I've also spoken to you about in-school initiatives that can be started that will make a big impact on the environment, and understanding that aspect of sustainability a little bit more, and you told me about a marker drive that you had done the initiative, and I'd love to our listeners to hear a little bit more about that, please.

0:12:24.1 DH: For sure. So I think it's like you said, something could be super complex, it's a multi-year... And that's my job, I'm not a teacher, and I have to say that, and like my wife is a teacher, my parents were both teachers. A lot of respect for this. And I have taught actually. I taught in Korea for four or five years. Four years, but at the end of the day, I don't have to be in the day-to-day in front of the students, that's a lot of work. A lot of marking. A lot of parents. So my job, I wanna say that because some of the things I get to work on, I don't have that during the day too, so those are realities, so you only have so much time and energy and what you do. But I think it's good at kinda looking at all of the breadth of different things that you can. As big as they seem or as small as they seem and to work on things, so one example is a marker drive.

0:13:05.3 DH: This came to... It's not my idea, just... We get a lot of markers in the school system. And I noticed that Staples is partnered with, I believe, TerraCycle. So Staples or other box stores out there have different programs in which they have different ways to take certain things that don't truly get recycled. And that's the thing, and I... We can go all over the place, Sustainable Dan for a reason, I can talk about a lot of this stuff. But at the end of the day it is... They're designed, we're taking things that are designed that way, they shouldn't be designed that they can't be broken out

properly, or... We live in a world that has a lot of design pushed on us in which we can't properly recycle. I always thinking that's unfair that things are made a certain way, but then they can't be easily recycled, and I don't think that makes sense firstly, it should be more holistic where it kinda easily break down and come back. But there are some that, with specialized process, but it's about getting those markers somewhere.

0:13:54.9 DH: So noticing this, the Staples with the different bins, I talked to the manager, and said, "Listen, I work for the school board, and we have all these different schools, could we do something?" And he's like, "Oh, that would be great." Because also for them, a lot of times you'd have to double-check with, depending on what initiative you might wanna start, but they see value because that store, the more markers they recycle, the better they look between other stores. You know what I mean? Because there's so many stores collecting this stuff. Anyway, so I talked to him and said, "Well, listen, part of what we did was looked at the internal mechanisms, whether it be within your school or the board or the community, and our school board has an internal courier, so we have 60-plus sites, they have to get things from different areas or different packages from the board out. So that's someone's job that goes and delivers, it's kind of like a mini FedEx, but just between the schools and our board.

0:14:45.1 DH: And so we created a very simple... And again, it evolved. Staples gave us a bunch of boxes for markers and we pushed it out and helped communicate it, sure enough they start coming back. But the boxes, they were falling apart and they were falling over in the courier truck. So what we came to, which was really simple, was just a clear plastic bag. A lot of schools have janitorial recycling bags or custodial recycling bags, and all we did was collect them, and so those are easy, light, they get thrown in with my name on it to the board. And I take them myself. Every once in a while when they add up, I get enough bags, I go and drop them off at Staples. But I guess... I know it's small, but it's not. When you think about 60-plus schools and thousands of teachers and students, and the fact that it's a collected approach to... There's a lot of markers in the system or writing utensils, and so I couldn't even tell you how many...

0:15:38.2 DH: I was measuring stuff... But this has been hard, this one I just do. Because it's nice to measure things to help tell stories different, which could come up in our conversation. But at the end of the day, this one was more about just getting the markers in the proper spot, and it's been working well. You gotta institutionalize things, the school systems are very transient. You have teachers moving around as they're looking for different positions and people retiring, and administrators moving every couple of years, and students move and parent councils move. And so, breaking down things simply and making sure that just a certain... I always just try to keep certain balls in the air with all my initiatives, just to make sure that they keep on going, because a lot of what I find in the break down and some of these things that I do is just communication because so many people move around, and making sure that you can institutionalize and normalize some of the initiatives that you create.

0:16:25.5 CC: And it's amazing because it is true, I've worked at I think six or seven different schools now, and something that you've done at one school doesn't always happen at the other school, or hasn't been sort of instilled in it, so I love the idea of keeping those things going and hopefully passing them around the district. I can't even imagine after 20 years of my teaching career, how many markers, unfortunately, that I've thrown out because I did not recycle them but I think that's a wonderful, wonderful idea. Now, when we hear the theme, this year's theme is "Invest in our Planet," we often think of greening our outdoor spaces. And I love this quote, it says, "The

best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, the second best time is now." And this really hit home for me because I had the privilege of planting two dozen maple and oak trees with my class at the very first school that I taught at, which was 20 years ago, and I want my current students to have that same experience and privilege to invest in our planet, so that some of the ideas that we can continue on about greening. So what are some things that we can do as teachers and students to, in our classroom or in our school environment to help green it?

0:17:42.8 DH: I think the first thing, honestly... And I do work at the board level part-time, and I've been here for about 10 years into a lot of schools, and as I said, my daughter and my wife are in Limestone in the system. But the one thing is to take a look at, if you're new to a school or even to start looking around at what policies or procedures are there, and I know... This is not my favorite part of my job, but I do do it, because there are a lot of reasons why, I think... And it doesn't mean they can't be changed, but I've seen a lot of things over the years. It's always this time of year, May in the fall, where people come in with a lot of energy to do certain things, plant trees, for example. But it's not what size of tree, what type of tree, is it the right spot for the tree, who knows about it? There's things, there's so many stories I've seen over the years, and it seems like it's bureaucracy, but it's also about learning from the past. And what I mean by that is things like... I've watched trees and not...

0:18:35.6 DH: Unbeknownst, nobody told that they went in the ground, and then they got cut by a lawnmower because they were just this big, just this small... Less than a foot tall. And there's one small challenge, every year it's a new... Because it's public dollars, there's a new contractor and a tender going out for those that cut the school grounds. I've seen community members complain about the trees they donated, not getting watered in the summer because it wasn't someone's technical job. My point is, is to look over some of the pre-existing policy at the board and the school level to learn more about it, 'cause I think that it's really important, but I also think that it's gotta be done well. Who's taking care of them at summer, if that's the case, for these trees? Where is the water coming from? Do you have volunteers? Do they have... Are they signed off on a volunteer form or have their C-Picks, that type of stuff, depending on what you're working with.

0:19:26.0 DH: So by all means, when you're talking about greening, I think it's a very important thing, but I also think it's a thing that has to be involving more than just you. It doesn't mean... Even one tree, just learning a bit more of how to get it in properly and creating plans, because what I have seen over the years too, I see a lot of... It's emotion, right? "Oh, I planted a tree," and they just let it die. Who's they? And was it part of someone else's job? When there is a drought, which is even more important, with climate change we're gonna have more fluctuating weather patterns.

0:19:57.0 DH: So taking the emotion out of it, it's about looking at... Setting it up for success. And some of these things take a little bit more time than you would like, I would say, but I've learned a lot in the process, and by investing and communicating and working with a good process, I actually found we can get way more done and better stuff because it's the right trees in the right spot, it's the right shrubbery. For example, with Limestone, we've been working with Evergreen, which is a school yard naturalization charity out of Toronto. They run Brickworks down at Toronto, beautiful charity, amazing, and they've helped just create a guideline, 'cause little things, I've seen parent councils on that we can go and buy a gazebo from Costco, well, that's good for your house, but it's not okay to be on public ground, it's not safe, it's not insurable from what I know, but my point is, there's standards that I wasn't aware of before I started working in it, and then other things like accessibility, if you're talking with school gardens, accessibility is very important.

0:20:53.1 DH: Well, you have to make sure the path... So there's all these other things, I guess, I wanna say. So the first thing I recommend is starting to look into maybe the process currently your board would have, whatever board you're in. The other thing is then sometimes things take a while to change, so look at best practices 'cause it's always good to look, "Hey, look at what they're doing, they're pretty cool." You know what I mean? Why can they do it? But it's about working and try to creating good processes because those things... Yeah, I've watched them emotionally not blow up, but people get upset, and I think learning from that, it's about kind of seeing where you're at, looking at best practices and then getting others involved to kind of work through it and being realistic with yourself too, because I find if you're realistic with that, you can kind of build on more success quicker than having a lot of barriers pumping against, because there are things that maybe you weren't aware of, that like, "Oh well, I don't know where we're gonna get the water from." Well, that's a pretty big thing that should be factored in early on.

0:21:52.5 CC: I agree, and I think that goes back, Dan to, when we talk about invest in our planet, it isn't just a one-time investment, this is looking at the long-term, with my kids, they were in grade three and they actually had to maintain those trees all the way up to... It was up to a grade six school, so we had three years of adopting a tree and making sure it was successful. The nice thing was, we had a small community as well, so the parents would come over during the summer time, and it was through a program like Evergreen, it wasn't that one but... Where we, I would say 90% of the investment in my time was just getting ready for the planting.

0:22:29.9 DH: Yeah, exactly.

0:22:30.9 CC: And then the planting happened, and then from that point in there's the rest of your time as well, but wow, how rewarding it is when you do like you said, again...

0:22:38.0 DH: A hundred percent.

0:22:39.0 CC: Take a process and looking at other schools and not reinventing the wheel, other people are doing it, so just see what's happening with them and make that effort, but I tell you, going back 20 years later and seeing those trees now, it almost brings me to tears.

0:22:53.5 DH: I wish there were more planted 20 years ago, and that's what we have to do now for in 20 years from now, being a part of that, but you're 100% right, it's just looking at making that plan, I've heard that saying before, where if you had a problem, think for 55 minutes and act for five, maybe not all the time, sometimes there's more urgency than that, but at the same time with this. Sometime there's a lot of moving parts, a lot of variables, you're never gonna hit them all, but give the respect and try to understand some of them because... I always would just say I'm kinda lazy. I like not reinventing the wheel. Let's build off other people's, the shoulders of the giants that we stand upon. The learning that is there and learn from others, so 100% Chris, I wish we could have more, and that's what we gotta do, but it's about doing it right to make sure it is successful.

0:23:42.8 CC: Exactly. It's definitely not lazy, it's doing it right and learning from other people's mistakes.

0:23:46.8 DH: A hundred percent.

0:23:47.8 CC: So Dan, we're coming to the end here, and I always add this question at the end, and you weren't prepped for this on purpose. It's one final tip that you would give, and I said, what advice would you give to new teachers or teachers that haven't really had time to look deep into Earth Day and sustainability projects, what would you give them in advice to make a difference and help promote sustainability in their own classrooms? Just one. Do it in two sentences, if that's possible.

0:24:17.5 DH: If you wanna get other people involved, go back to look at organizational and strategic plans, look at what other people have already said they want to do, and come up with solutions that complement that, that's the easiest way, 'cause then you get other resources, you get other people bought in, it's part of another direction, so again, looking at your school, your school community, or your board, or even your city or municipality and say, "Oh look at this, this is where they say we wanna go." And then create solutions that fit into that, 'cause you're already on their page, people have already said they want to go in that direction, so it's easier to build off what somebody's said because it's pride. So I always just build off what others have said by looking at those plans, take a bit of time, but yeah, that something's a bit of secret by Dan, don't tell anyone else okay? I'm just joking, spread it far and wide.

0:25:02.7 CC: And it goes back to work smarter, not harder?

0:25:06.0 DH: Yeah.

0:25:06.2 CC: Looking at what's already been there, and like you said, from the shoulders of the giants. Dan, thank you so much for taking the time and being with us today, we are going to include a lot of resources on the site, so they'll be able to access your TED Talks, your Twitter account, and your website. And I really encourage teachers and just community members to reach out to Dan, because his life is about sustainability, and I've worked with him before, it's just an incredible opportunity to tap into a resource that is there. And Dan is one of those people, as we've been told, as we heard, he just works tirelessly towards this end. So Dan, thank you so much for spending the time with us, and I know that we'll have you back in for another topic because there's just too much information we missed this time.

0:25:57.7 DH: Thanks for having me. I look forward to coming back on.

0:26:00.9 CC: That does it for another episode of Popular Podagogy. Again, thank you to our amazing guest, Dan Hendry. Josh, as always, where can our listeners subscribe to make sure they don't miss any of our Popular Podagogy podcasts.

0:26:15.7 S4: Yeah, you can find this podcast on Apple Podcast, Google Podcast, Spotify, the CFRC website, the Faculty of Education website, and pretty much any other place you get your podcasts.

0:26:27.4 CC: That is exciting, and I look forward to reading some of our listener's suggested future topics. Please don't forget to check out our Queen's Faculty of Education website and search for Popular Podagogy for additional resources and information. Well, that is it for myself, Chris Carlton, our podcast team of Josh, Aaron, Carly and Becca, stay healthy, stay safe and stay connected. And we'll see you next time for another episode of Popular Podagogy.

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