

[00:00:00] Bonni Stachowiak: Today on episode number 374 of the *Teaching in Higher Ed Podcast*, James Lang returns this time to talk about *Small Teaching*, the second edition.

[00:00:13] Production Credit: Produced by Innovate Learning, maximizing human potential.

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[00:00:21] Bonni: Welcome to this episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed*. I'm Bonni 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.

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I'm so excited to be welcoming back to the show today, James M. Lang, he's a professor of English and the director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Assumption University in Massachusetts. He's the author of six books, the most recent of which are *Distracted: Why Students Can't Focus and What You Can Do About It*, *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning*, and *Cheating Lessons: Learning from Academic Dishonesty*, and *On Course: A Week-by-Week Guide to Your First Semester of College Teaching*.

Jim also writes a monthly column on teaching and learning for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. His work has been appearing in *The Chronicle* since 1999. Jim's a

highly sought-after public speaker and has delivered conference keynotes or conducted workshops on teaching for faculty at more than 100 colleges, universities, and high schools in the United States and abroad.

Jim lives in Massachusetts with his wife Anne, a kindergarten teacher in the public schools. They have five children ranging in age from their teens to early 20s. Jim and his wife formed and lead the Lang Family Foundation, to which he donates a significant portion of his writing and speaking income. The foundation provides grants to nonprofit organizations dedicated to the alleviation of poverty and homelessness, support for the environment and the arts, and funding for libraries and public education. Jim Lang, welcome back to *Teaching in Higher Ed*.

[00:02:26] James Lang: Thank you. I was trying to think actually how many times I've been on here. It might be the fourth, maybe?

[00:02:31] Bonni: Yes, I think it might be. It's funny, I won't say who it was, but you have a person in our general sphere who feels very competitive about that and always wants to make sure that he's one ahead of you. I'll probably get to have him back now too.

[laughter]

[00:02:45] James: I'm going to have to listen and see if I can figure out who that person is.

[00:02:48] Bonni: Well, I am going to do something today I've never done when you've been on the episodes before, Jim, that I've never done in the history of the show. I'm going to read from a journal. In fact, I'm going to read from your journal and it's from January of 2014. Just to give listeners context, this is a journal that you wrote and you're reflecting just about failed New Year's resolutions, which I think, could there be anyone listening to this show that doesn't need [laughs] some season in their life where they have failed at that? You wrote this in your journal.

"Had a good idea for a book project today." Side note, you really did have a super good idea for a book project today. "The Five-Minute Intervention or Teaching on

the Edges. It's about making brief interventions in a traditional class in order to maximize learning, so faculty don't have to start from scratch and rethinking their technique. Grounded in good cognitive theory, they can make 5 to 15-minute interventions that allow students to engage with the course and increase their learning potential." What's that like to revisit that entry today?

[00:03:57] James: It was really striking for me to go back. I've been keeping journals for a long time and occasionally, I would go back and just pace through them a little bit. It was really striking to come across that entry and realize how well that captured what the book *Small Teaching* ultimately became. I think, as I said, and I tell the story of that journal entry in the preface to the second edition, I don't think, as I say there, I've ever had a book that was that consistent from start to finish. Usually, I have an idea, then it changes as I write, and the book becomes something different, but in that case, it was very consistent from that moment until right through the second edition now.

[00:04:36] Bonni: Robert Talbert has been doing this really fascinating series on his blog, revisiting his Getting Things Done system. It's a productivity approach and all that. Today on Twitter, he was asking about what kinds of questions that we might anticipate people having around something called Zero Inbox, just a way of managing one's tasks and attention, et cetera.

I was writing to him to explain that I noticed that it's very technically easy. Let's say that, Jim, you wanted to declare email bankruptcy, let's just imagine that you had 10,000 unread emails. This is a thing that happens, hopefully, not to you, Jim, but I have known multiple people who just every time they log into their email, it is just incredible stress, but to press the reset button is technically very easy to do. Select all, archive, and then if you ever wanted to see this complete backload of utter shame and angst and all this stuff, it's literally just click on it. It is technically easy to do, but there's a mental block.

Before we get in to start talking about some of the small teaching approaches, they are all relatively easy to do, in the sense of you don't have to go to a week-long course and complete it, that's the whole premise of the book. What have you

found in all of your continued speaking and coaching and helping faculty? What are some of the blocks that come in to us even being able to access a Small Teaching technique? Where do you find some of those tensions exist from us even being able to tap in to the power of some of these things?

[00:06:10] James: I think the challenge is, there's so many teaching techniques out there that it can be sometimes challenging to think about, why would I choose one over the other? Actually, I don't think the issue is so much people are blocked from trying something new, especially something small, it's more like there's 1,000 things I could do. Why would I do one thing more than the other? I think that's on one side of it.

Then, there's also a lot of us, once you teach for a few years, you get a sense of what works. I have a basic idea of what works from the students on my campus in my discipline. I could just keep doing that same stuff over and over again and get by basically. That's tempting to do because we have so many other things we're supposed to be doing, especially as we get along in our careers and we're being asked to do more and more.

At least in my case, I felt like I was just continually being asked to serve on more and more committees and participate more in the life of the institution, which is great, but when you have all those challenges, then it's sometimes ... "I'm just going to go in class. I know this works, I've done it before." To overcome both those barriers, just being tempted to try something different, tips and tricks and everything, for me, the principles are what's key there.

That's why from the beginning, *Small Teaching*, it's not a collection of tricks, it's actually, here are principles that we know help people learn. Once you understood the principle, then you can identify what strategies are going to be helpful to you, but you've got to think first about which of the principles is most relevant. When you go to that secondary level, then it helps you figure out what kinds of things that you want to do in the classroom.

Then on the other side thinking about just doing the same thing over and over again, for me, the real thing about that is I need to stay interested in myself. I don't want to be bored going into the classroom. Even if I know something's going to work, I still feel there's a value for me trying some different things just to keep myself energized, because the energy that I bring into the room is going to have cascading effects to the students. If I come in and just like, "Okay, here's what we're going to do today," and in my head I'm thinking, "Okay, I've done this 20 times, I know it works," et cetera, et cetera, I'm going to not have that same level of energy.

I think that is what I try to make the case to people. It's worth experimenting. You're going to fail sometimes, but it's worth just doing it to keep yourself energized and interested over a 30 or 40-year teaching career. You have to do some of that in order to keep yourself engaged, and that's going to keep your students engaged.

[00:08:48] Bonni: I'd like to think a little bit more about the failure because sometimes we really are failing. [laughs] You don't have to teach for long to recognize that sometimes we're failing. I find that sometimes people give up a little too soon. One example would be, and you write about this, that the the idea of trying to invite discussion. As I was rereading- I shouldn't say as I was rereading. As I was reading the second edition of *Small Teaching*, it was interesting what I paid more attention to this time. There's a lot of differences and all that, but it was interesting what was really resonating.

I was thinking of myself as I coach other faculty, that sometimes I think with something like discussion, I probably have privileged too much the idea of discussion around things like pausing after you ask a question, because people have to unlearn how many times they're used to educators in their lives asking questions that they don't actually anticipate or desire an answer for. I've talked a lot about that, but you really, it's not that they don't know this.

I just don't think I explore it enough with fellow faculty, the idea of the kinds of questions that we ask to invite discussion. That would be, to me, exactly what you just said of thinking through the principles before I go and use what's the eight-

second rule where I stopped talking brace seconds [chuckles] to invite those answers and get past that discomfort.

I feel like sometimes we give up not realizing how close we are to the finish line in terms of really having the kind of environment. What things have you seen that sometimes we give up on a little too soon before crossing over and that allows enough time, I guess, for people to unlearn whatever it is they've learned in past educational contexts.

[00:10:34] James: The first thing I would say about that is, part of the reason that I advocate for small teaching is because we tend to give up on things when we try to make a big change for the first time and it fails. Those things are the bigger chains that are more likely to fail in spectacular ways than the small change. I'm just making a small change to the first few minutes of class I've given up a few minutes of class. That's not that big of a deal.

If I restructure my entire course and realize that week three, that it's not working, then I'm in real trouble. The problem for me with that is that it might discourage me from making any change in the future. That's why I really advocate for people, even if you want to make big change, do it in increments, get your feet wet and keep going forward. I think small changes can absolutely lead to revolutionary changes. I know you've had Susan Blum on to talk about *Upgrading*.

One of the things that people that contributors to that book on grading advocated for, there are small ways to start on ... Everything revolutionary that we want to do in higher education we can walk our way to it more gradually, and that is going to make it less likely to have these spectacular failures that then just, you just turtle back in and say, "I'm just going to keep doing it the way I always do it."

The other thing I would say about this is, students have to be introduced in condition to accept different kinds of teaching approaches. They have to be normalized, if I come into this semester-- If I'm in a department where everybody lectures and I want to do off the classroom, the students are going to have a

negative reaction to that not because necessarily that's wrong or they don't like, it's just, this is not what we're used to.

For me, it's also really essential that whatever change that you make, you come in very transparently about it and say, "This is how things work in here. I realized that you might do things differently than your other classes, but this is the way this class runs, and here's why, and I think you're going to love it." I think you have to do that very much when we're doing things that are new or different.

What I have found is that students are very willing when you do that, say, "Oh, okay. That's how things go in here and that's fine. I signed up for this class and you've been clear about it, so off we go," but if you're not like that, if you just come in and make an unexpected change, you don't explain it, it's not something they're used to, that's really where the problems arise. Being very transparent about it and letting students know that this is how it goes in here, I think that's the way to go.

[00:13:08] Bonni: Yes. I think that's important for a few reasons. One is just to normalize it like you said. I'm thinking about all the work that you've done and sharing so much of the research around retrieval practice. Like you said, instead of me trying to pour information into your head, I'm going to be giving you lots of invitations to retrieve the information. Sometimes I'll join in the game. It depends on the game. If I'm [laughs] certain that I'll, "Win the game," but I happen to be not like I use these flashcards called Quizzlet and there's a fun game called Quizlet live, I am not a help if I'm on your team, I know what the words mean. I made the flashcards. I'm just not as fast as some of these people are.

It's like what I used to be a camp counselor in college. The kids always thought I was playing the sports really bad on purpose. No, this is just a natural gift and that thing, but anyway, so if I feel like I'm an even-level player, I'll expose myself to that level of vulnerability so we can have the metacognition of how does it feel to be wrong or not as fast. I'll even share a little bit of some of the research on just because you're fast doesn't always mean you're going to be as right. There's more to just being the first "Winner" in much of the fields of work and research that we might enter into, et cetera, et cetera.

I'm thinking about ways to even--You said you were talking about experimenting and not giving up too soon in terms of the small teaching retrieval practice is a huge place where we can find opportunities to do that. One of the ways that you invite us to do this is even just thinking about if it feels too much to be, "Oh, my gosh, what could I possibly do in this 50 minutes or this hour and 15 minutes to just look at just the beginning or just the end?" What are some ideas that you have for us to even shrink down small teaching, to even smaller increments, just to start to dip our toes in.

[00:14:55] James: Actually, it's funny, this gets back to the hardest small teaching, how it developed was. My original idea for the book it was going to be like on the clock, it was going to go through that time periods of their class and say, here's the great things that can be done in the first five minutes, the first 15 minutes then. What I honestly realized was I really loved at the beginning and ending, but the middle was just there was too many possibilities, but I do love thinking about actually the beginning and ending of class as being these really ripe opportunities for trying new things. Again, part of that is just because the normalizing thing. Coming in and say, "Okay, this is how we start class every day."

That's a great way to just introduce some engagement activity. For me, activities from the first three chapters of the book, prediction, retrieval and connection, opening and closing minutes of class are like the perfect opportunities to do these small things. At the beginning of class to ask students, instead of saying, "Here's what we did last time," to say, "What did we do last time?" Keep your notebooks closed for a minute or keep your devices for a second. I want you to just see if you can remember it.

I usually will say to students, because at a certain point, you're going to have to be able to do this on an exam. Let's just practice it now for a minute and see, what would you be able to remember from the last class? If you do this every day, they get used to it and they get better at it. At the end of class, I love using these connection notebooks where students write a short paragraph, explaining how something that we talked about in class that day connects to something outside of

the class, something they learned in another class or something that they've experienced in their personal lives or something like that.

To me, the heart of the class can stay the same. I might whatever be doing whatever mix of lecture and discussion and small group activities that I might normally do, but to really think deliberately about, how do I draw people in and get them engaged and thinking, and then how do I seal up the learning and send them off knowing that I learned something new here today and it's going to be useful to me.

I think those are absolutely crucial moments. I often will say to people to think about like films and television shows, or plays or whatever. How much weight is on those opening and closing? The opening is like, Okay, am I going to devote my time with this? Or am I going to change the channel or watch something new? Then the ending is like, That's what leaves you thinking, that's the part that you continue to think about typically is what happened at the end and it can make or break your evaluation of the experience. I just think those two periods are really crucial.

[00:17:25] Bonni: I enjoy listening to my husband Dave's podcast, and I love the question that he asks on almost every interview, and that is what is something that you've changed your mind about in your particular field? I'm curious between the first version of *Small Teaching* and the second edition, what have you changed your mind about?

[00:17:43] James: There's a lot of smaller changes along the way, new introductions to some of the chapters, new conclusions, some new models. The two big changes though are, there was a chapter called self-explaining, which was about inviting learners to speak aloud their processes, their learning. You might think about, for example, this is most easily taught or used in maybe studio-type classes or when people are doing skill-based development.

Having people talk out what they're doing as they're doing it, and then responding to that and trying to guide them through the process. I ultimately came to believe that self-explaining is a smaller version of explaining more generally, and explaining

your learning, what you have learned to another person is actually the bigger category there. That chapter has been expanded now, which allowed me to go into the literature on learning through teaching.

There is actually a great set of experiments and studies about helping people learn something by teaching it to someone else. I just love that idea. I love having my students try to teach things that they've learned to another audience. That really resonated with me. Now there's a bunch of research and some models for learning through teaching in that chapter and especially learning through explaining your learning to sell and what else. Some explaining I still think is relevant. It's still in there, but the research based on that one was never quite as strong as it was for some of the other principals, but once I expanded it, then that base became much stronger.

The other one was on mindset. Since the book was published and even shortly before ... really started to hear a lot, a lot of stuff about mindset, and about the power that mindset had when students believe that their intelligence can be improved, I'm going to have a growth mindset when they believe their intelligence is fixed or is a stable entity they can't really change. That's a fixed mindset and Carol Dweck's book *mindset* and her research and research teams and collaborators, there a lot of experiments and studies showing how the positive impact of growth mindset and negative impact of the fixed mindset.

Of course, anything that's popular gets pushed back. There was a lot of some pushback that has happened in recent years saying, look, there are actually systematic barriers to people succeeding. You can't just change people's minds then assume that that's going to solve everybody's problems and that's, of course, true. ... However, there is still even very recent research in the last year or two, some very large-scale experiments, which I think have shown the potential positive impact of growth mindset, including one on the teachers, how the instructor's mindset actually has an impact on students. That's when instructors have a growth mindset, it has these positive impacts on student performance and retention, especially on students who may have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

I still believe in the power of mindset, but I ultimately came to believe that mindset is actually also like a subset of a larger thing, which I wanted to address, which was cognitive belonging. In other words, to what extent do students feel like they are belong in the class and on campus at an intellectual level? Do they believe they're capable of succeeding in my class?

I think mindset is one thing that can help with that. If I had a growth mindset, then yes, I probably believe that I'm going to be able to succeed in any type of class if I put in enough effort. There are other things that we can do to show students, no, you belong here, you've made it this far in your education, which means you have talents and skills that you have brought here that you can use to help you succeed. That chapter two got expanded to include more recommendations for how we can support the cognitive belonging of every student, including students who may still face those systematic barriers, discriminations based on race, or other factors.

How we can help all students feel like they belong on campus no matter what other barriers they might be facing. That's one thing that we as faculty members can do in our classes to say whatever it might be also be going on in your life, you belong here. You belong here in this class with me and I believe you're capable of succeeding here. To me, that's a really powerful message that we can send in a lot of different ways. Mindset is one of those ways, but it's not the only one.

[00:21:54] Bonni: Something that comes to mind from past guests when it relates to this there's a couple of things. One is just thinking to the work that BG, Sathi and Kelly Hogan have done. I'll put in the show notes, a link back to the episode in case people miss this one, but that some institutions now are starting to put together dashboards so that we can see the disproportional ways in which we create or participate in systems that might have detrimental effects based on factors.

We would not want to affect people's grades, et cetera. Then even just some of the same small teaching techniques that you talk about. Again, it starts with principles, like you said, it's not just technique, but I have to understand those principles first before I get into finding out what the right practices, but just the market differences that can show up there. But it has to start with this awareness that actually the

things that we do in class can be exclusionary, can create that lack of a sense of you don't belong here. We've heard so many stories, or some of us have experienced this ourselves of the look to your left, look to your right.

[00:23:00] James: Actually, Kelly and ... book, it should be coming out next year from West Virginia University Press, the series that I added and it's an a fabulous book. Of course, they have an article in the Chronicle of higher education, which is a guide to inclusive teaching. What I love so much about it, it's very compatible with small teaching is what they call high structure. Putting high structure on the things that we do in class to make sure that everybody is included and feels like they know what they're doing.

I'll give an example of this in the book that when I used to give instructions for students to do something in small groups, I would be like, "okay, here's this thing to do", and I'll get to work. Then variably 30 seconds, or a minute later, someone raised their hand and say, what are we supposed to be doing again? Then I would tell him, but inside I'd be like, "come on", why didn't I just like Kelly, would you point out that there are students who have challenges with attention might have hearing problems.

There may be all kinds of good reasons why a student did hear that structure in the first time. There's simple recommendation for a high structure thing. When you're going to assign students to do something in groups, put the instructions in writing and put them on a slide, put it up somewhere where it's visible so that students can look up and see them at any time. A Student who may be missed my 32nd explanation can still get those instructions at any time. It's tons of simple things like that they argue for that I think are under the category of high structure.

In my mind are one of the best things we can do for inclusive teaching, because there are students who know how to do school. Like my wife's a teacher, I'm a teacher. Our kids know how to do school. They can come in, they know what it's like. They've been seeing teaching parents their whole lives, but there are plenty of students who don't automatically know how to do the things that we take for granted. Yes. This is what we do. Students should know how to do that.

The more we can be explicit about here's what we're going to do, here's why, and here are the steps you need to take. Of course, the students who didn't know how to do school, that's fine for them. Maybe they don't need that, but it doesn't hurt them. It helps everyone else. All the people who might not have that same level of experience or competence suddenly now they are included into that activity in the experience in a way they might not have been otherwise.

[00:25:16] Bonni: Another aspect that you bring up regularly is I think it's both matter, but also ties to the sense of belonging. I know that in my own failures and teaching, I'll put too much pressure on myself that I need to be the one creating the sense of belonging and first of all, there's a scale issue there, [laughs] but there's also a context issue there that I'm not going to be able to relate to everybody's context in the ways that I wish that I could.

Could you talk about some of the ways that we can evolve our thinking that we have to put so much on ourselves and then a sense of belonging can take shape student to student and even thinking about external audiences as well. What are some other, instead of having everything have to land on our shoulders to help people really feel like they belong?

[00:26:03] James Lang: We can do lots of simple things. My favorite example of helping students feel like they belong. I've written about this both in *Distracted* and my last book and in *Small Teaching* too, is the values and strengths affirmations that we can do at the beginning of a class where we invite students to say, tell me what you're good at, essentially. I mean, there's lots of different ways to do it, but what do you care about and what are you good at?

Inviting students to share with us and with one another what their strengths and talents are. There's very good research on values, affirmations, which show that just inviting students to sort of one time at the beginning of a semester, to tell you the things that matter to them or the things that they're good at that can have a significant, positive difference on retention and performance in a class.

It's a classic example of Small Teaching. It's not like I have to be up there doing a lot of stuff. It's just an invitation at the beginning of the class in a face-to-face class, I have them fill out an index card, you could do it on a discussion board. You could do it in private emails, however, you want to do it, but just invite your students to say, look, here's what the class is about, and going to be all set. I'd like to know a little bit more about you.

I'm going to ask these simple questions, but what I really want to know is what are you good at? What do you care about? There parts of that that might help you succeed in this class. Just reminding students about the fact that yes, you've been successful so far, you have talents and strengths. That seems to be, have a really positive impact at the beginning of a learning journey when you get a reminder about that, yes, I can do this.

We were talking earlier about sometimes getting nervous before we speak in public or something like that. For a while, actually, I had a little notebook with me and I had written down in the notebook, some of the most challenging speaking things that I had been in when I had to speak to a convention in Mexico when they were like 600 people and an interpreter.

Then another one where I had to speak to a thousand people. I just had the names of these things. Right before I went on to speak, I would look at him and it just reminded me, "Okay, Jim, you've done this before and you were successful, so you can do it again." It was a great little simple thing to help me. I think the values and strengths affirmations can have that same positive impact on students.

[00:28:13] Bonni: I didn't even realize that I do a version of that. I didn't make the connection until you said that. For me, I tried to shrink the audience. I tried to think about A person. Would there be A person that I might be able to help in some small way, be more effective in their teaching, which ultimately then trickles down and I have to just shrink it down. It's too much to think hundreds and hundreds of people. What if there was just one person would that matter? then you multiply that person times, however many classes that they take that thing. I have my own small speaking [laughs]--

[00:28:44] James: Yes, there is little things that we can do definitely, absolutely, that help you feel more confident and that's going to translate into a better conversation you're going to have with people.

[00:28:50] Bonni: Oh, I really like that. One the areas where I think people sometimes have a little bit of difficulty embracing is the idea of motivation. I've heard some people share that should really be the onus on the person to bring that to their ... you were talking about knowing how to do school. Expecting that someone else should dial up or down their own sense of motivation, that that responsibility shouldn't be placed. How do you think about that in terms of principles of-- Where does the responsibility for motivation lie? I'm sure it's not a binary answer, but what are some of your-

[crosstalk]

[00:29:28] James Lang: Two ways. First of all, it obviously is something to think about both the teacher and student responsibility. The other important nonway in which is not exactly a binary for me is the customer we think about extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. My view on this has actually evolved over the past year. Eight years ago, cheating lessons came out and I was really made it a pretty strong argument for really trying to focus on intrinsic motivators.

I think there's good research that shows that that's really important, that we need to have those intrinsic motivators and a lot of school-based motivation is extrinsic in the form of grades and degrees and all that other stuff. We do need to pull up those intrinsic motivators in any way that you can. I have to say though, over the past few years, as I've continued to look at that research and think more and more about this question, I've come to believe that actually we need both and that we really do need to have both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in order to be successful.

Again, I can look at lots of places in which people do that. As I always say, you should want to get in shape and as far as a result, you should want to exercise. You should be intrinsically motivated to that, but many people don't seem to be. As a

result of that, they sign up for 5Ks. They engage in these social things where they post what they've done and their accomplishments and badges and stickers and all that stuff. Both of those things, once you do that, then maybe you start recognizing how good it is for you feel good and so then it these two things can support one another.

I know too, for my own writing, I read in a journal and everything and I liked that. If I don't have a contract or I don't have something that I knows, I can be very lazy about my writing, but when you give me a contract, I'm going to get the book in on time. I need the two, I need both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Even though I love writing and can do it every day for the rest of my life and be happy, to get it out there and get it published and get it out to people, I need a little bit of extrinsic motivation.

My view about this is that we need to think a little bit about both, how are we using extrinsic motivators, like raids in compassionate and effective ways. There's lots of research on that and good thought-provoking stuff and on grading and other places. I do believe there's a place for that, but then, of course, we also want to make sure that we're trying to help them foster intrinsic motivation, pointing to the purpose of what we're doing, trying to highlight the emotional content of what we're doing. These are all ways that we can use to foster intrinsic motivation.

You'll see now in that chapter on motivation, it is a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic things and I think like I always say to people in terms of my most fundamental principle about teaching is very what you're doing because people are in all kinds of different ways and so if you only do ever do one thing, you're probably going to be excluding some people. Everybody should have a time when they feel comfortable, everybody should have a time when they feel challenged.

That only happens when we vary our methods. I think the same thing is true for motivation. Only emphasizing extrinsic motivation is going to leave some people out, only emphasizing intrinsic is going to leave some people out. We want to be able to maybe try to have a mix of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators.

[00:32:45] Bonni: Before we switch over to our recommendations segment, I'd love to hear you talk a little bit more about that whole idea of just changing things up because that is another aspect. It is a really low-hanging fruit, pretty easy thing to do, but not something that I see very many of us take the full advantage of just what a gift it can be to helping to redirect attention.

[00:33:06] James: We tend to lock in a three or four teaching things that we like to do. Then in the book *distracted*, I read it. I'll one of my favorite things that I ever experienced to help me think about this differently was this workshop I went to called *Inspired By Index Cards*, which was, came to my thinking, a workshop that Kimberly Tanner had done in biology.

The facilitator had us write down, she said, I want you to think about everything that you do in class, all the different things like mini-lectures and discussions and worksheets, et cetera. When you write down all these things, there's 10 or 12 of them on different index cards. Then she just really encouraged us think about your next class and start like playing around, pulling in different cards and like ordering them in different ways.

Really trying to think about what does this mean for attention and learning if I did it like this, but what if I flipped three of these cards and pulled in two different ones? What does that look like? This is really great and simple way to like. First of all, think through the logic of what you're doing, but also, to mix it up right? I know all these things are good, but maybe I try many different order now and again?

That's going to appeal to a different set of students or that's going to promote learning in a different way, I really love that. Something I always encourage people to try, get yourself a pack of your next car to do it online, write down everything you do, pick an upcoming class and then try three or four different sequences and see what they look like. Do that for a few weeks and then they'll start to become ingrained in you and you'll be able to do it maybe without needing that prop. It's really helpful thing to do.

[00:34:37] Bonni: Before Jim and I get to the recommendations part of the podcast I wanted to share briefly about today's sponsor and that is SaneBox. I didn't realize it until now, but it actually relates to the story I shared earlier about having such a overwhelming inbox and they can be so difficult to manage and can cause so much stress and not be a very good use of our time.

A service like SaneBox helps address that and help sort things out very intelligently between those things that really should require our attention and those things that could be left for a time when we had the opportunity to read those newsletters or look at the emails that aren't directly something we need to take action on on a given day. What happens is you can set it up with a Gmail account or Office 365. You can use an iCloud or really any email address and get it set up and running.

It trains your email and it looks at just the headers. It doesn't look at the entire body of the email and it sorts them according to some default folders. Over time, you can also set it up where you could retrain something. If it put a newsletter in, but you really want to see that newsletter every time it comes out, you just drag it over to your inbox and you train it that simply and it remembers. By the way, I hardly ever have to train it because it gets it right so often that it just sets it up really well. There are other features that you can snooze emails or email someone and have it remind you if they don't get back to you by a prescribed length of time.

It's a wonderful addition to email, makes it work for you much more in terms of thinking about our time and attention and how to use them wisely. If you head over to sanebox.com/tihe as in Teaching in Higher Ed, you can get a \$25 credit toward a SaneBox subscription and try it out for a while and see how it works for you. Again, thanks again to SaneBox for sponsoring today's episode, and head over to sanebox.com/tihe to check it out. This is the time in the show where we each get to share our recommendations and I want to recommend the second edition of Small Teaching. On an episode about, four or six weeks ago, my husband and I did a episode about advice to a new professor.

In that, at the end, we talked about what books we would recommend that if you've just going to start out on your bookshelf and I hope this doesn't affect your

publisher too much, but I said, wait until August. What's after August, it's a great of course, *Small Teaching*, the first edition was a wonderful treasure for me as well and always will be, but the revision is beautiful and wonderfully done. I love just it's it is a book I will take out and take out and take out and the index card, I didn't really realize that maybe you should sell an index card versus **[inaudible 00:37:21]**

[laughter]

[00:37:24] James: Baseball, hats and index cards with small teaching on it.

[00:37:26] Bonni: Yes. I also think to the index cards that there's this tension that's really healthy, I think, between structure is helpful. You talked about having high structure classes and the inspiration that you draw from ... and Kelly Hogan yet also mixing it up. I can't walk in and know exactly what I'm going to get, but I can't walk in and know-- It's exactly what you said of some comfort level, like a beautiful piece of jazz or something like that. The beat is there, but then there's that break and you didn't know the break was coming and--

[00:37:57] James: We need structure and routine, but we also need to have it mixed up now and again to relate in our attention to the experience of being in the class.

[00:38:06] Bonni: It's a really good book. I could seriously say, just recommend all of your books you talked about, *Distracted* and just been a wonderful treasure for me and for my colleagues as well. Then *Cheating Lessons*, it feels like we just had a conversation, which, of course, we did have conversations way back when, so no wonder it feels like that, but your books really are very much like a dialogue with things that we're challenged by and you both empathize with us and the things that we struggle with because we get the sense that you have struggled with them as well and that you don't probably have perfect glasses, whatever that might look like.

[00:38:39] James: Definitely not. I always say to people, I'm a great observer and thinker about teaching. I'm a pretty good teacher. My actual best skill is observing and thinking about and noticing what other people do. That's really great.

[00:38:52] Bonni: I hope people will pick up a copy of *Small Teaching* the second edition and I'm going to pass it over to you to whatever you'd like to recommend.

[00:38:58] James: All right. I already talked about the explaining and belonging chapters, of course, the other chapter that was majorly revised with the final chapter, which was about how we can grow and learn as teachers, continue to grow and learn all new updated resources in there, including, of course, this podcast, which was one of the things that was recommended in both. The couple of things from that chapter, one, is there's a new series of books from Princeton University Press called *skills For Scholars*. They're very short, compact books. There's one on the syllabus, for example, which is great.

Take a look at that book series and there's new stuff coming out all the time. I think there's a half dozen already out and plenty more coming. The other thing that I recommend there was 180, which is a faculty development organization from the UK, which is actually using *Small Teaching* as a model and creating these 20-minute courses that people can take and learn more about all kinds of different topics.

I'm actually helping them put together a series of courses called invitation to university teaching, which will be like these 10, 20 minute courses that people can take just to get the basics on all kinds of different stuffs. They're doing good work as well. One other fun one, I recently read Edward Slingerland's book *Drunk*, which is a great, gorgeous example of what non-fiction writing can be. Slingerland argues that our love of intoxication in general, whether that's through drinking or drugs or other forms of ecstatic dancing and all this stuff, that this has actually been a significant cultural driver in human history, both for the creation of culture, for the establishment of our communities, and for our creativity.

He looks at those three things, culture, creativity, and community. It's a really fascinating-- He draws from all kinds of other disciplines. He's a philosopher, he draws from anthropology and psychology and biology and history and looks at all these arguments to really argue, to make the point that this has actually been a neglected and important thing that has driven the advancement of human civilizations.

Whether you're interested in the topic or not, it is a master class in non-fiction writing. If you're interested in doing that kind of crossover writing, you're an academic and you want to try and write for a broader audience, this is a great book to read in order to learn more about how to do that effectively.

[00:41:12] Bonni: James Lang, I'm so delighted to get to have the continuing conversation with you, both through your books and through the times when you're so generous with your time to come and share with us on *Teaching in Higher Ed*. I've learned so much from you. I'm just full of joy that that gets to continue. I know you've got projects percolating, and I just can't wait till we get to have the next conversation about whatever you've been observing and documenting.

[00:41:36] James: All right. Thank you. I'm looking forward to doing it again soon.

[music]

[00:41:42] Bonni: Thanks once again to Jim Lang for joining me on today's episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed* and sharing about the second edition of *Small Teaching*. Thanks also to each of you for listening and to being a part of the *Teaching in Higher Ed* community. I keep encouraging people to sign up for the weekly newsletter because that is a continued conversation with the kinds of things we talk about on the show.

You can subscribe at teachinginhighered.com/subscribe. You'll get the show notes from the most recent episode, along with other recommendations that don't show up in the show. You'll also get a short e-book that has some of the tools that I use in my own productivity and in my teaching. Thanks once again for listening to *Teaching in Higher Ed*. I'll see you next time.

[music]

[00:42:43] [END OF AUDIO]

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