



Laura: Welcome to the Creatively Connected Classroom with Matt and Laura Grundler, and we're super excited today, because we have our good twitter friend Dan Ryder here in our studio, and also known as our office/ art room/ ...

Matt: Slash

Laura: play room/ [crosstalk 00:00:43]

Matt: Slash, slash, slash ...

Laura: So, um Dan's view looks a lot like ours actually ...

Dan: I was gonna say, I am currently in my geek lair ...

Laura: Yes.

Dan: Which is my office/ design studio.

Laura: Love it.

Dan: Give a quick, quick tour, there's the hair dryer chair ...

Laura: Yeah.

Matt: I have one of those.

Dan: Antique barbers chair, to the oh, it's got stuff in it, 'cause everything always has stuff ...

Laura: Exactly, I know, I was, that's why I was thinking, it looks so much like our studio space, so it's awesome.

Dan: There's an obscene amount of comic books in the back.

Matt: Nice.

Dan: And a original 1979 millennium falcon, sitting back there...

Laura: Wow.



Dan: That's right, that's right. I just saw Matt's face.

It's like ... Right?

Laura: Yeah, we're all in the same world here.

Dan: So, so yes, this is my little nerd cave, and that's where all the [crosstalk 00:01:40] magic happens.

Laura: Were there tears when Stan Lee's death was announced this week?

Dan: So, Stan Lee, the guy was a part of creating so much, that was so important in my life, and, I know enough about comic book history to know that Stan Lee, when Stan Lee was a much younger man was not the jovial, kind, nice dude, that we have come to know his as.

He was a business man, who, when he realized he was going to have to pay people, to admit that he created half the stuff that he created, they co-created, that was gonna cost him, and like really mistreated a bunch of really amazing people, like Jack Kirby, Steve Ditto, to name just a couple of the people, so, Stan Lee, good cat, in his elder years. Can't deny that he was absolutely pivotal to my entire existence, in everything that I love, and sometimes we discovered that you know, as we get older, we discover that our heroes, that we had growing up, maybe had some flaws.

And [crosstalk 00:02:47] he's not

Matt: Well, we're all [crosstalk 00:02:47]

Laura: So do a lot of our comic book heroes, I mean ...

Matt: That's, that's always [crosstalk 00:02:51]

Dan: That's it. I mean Stanley kind of was all of, like, he was all of the flaws kind of came out in him. But you know, since we're in an art discussion, right?

Laura: Yeah.

Dan: Like, Stan Lee, like wrote the words in after Jack Kirby drew all the art.



Matt: Okay.

Dan: Like he wrote the words in after Steve Ditto drew in all the art.

Laura: Yeah.

Dan: And, Steve Ditto recently passed away, and we didn't have this day of like-

Laura: No.

Matt: No.

Dan: -where the whole, I mean the whole internet didn't explode. Spiderman would not exist without Steve Ditto, you know when Jack Kirby passed away years and years ago, the things that exist... so it's not one of those, we shouldn't recognize it, my best friend posted a quote, that I can't remember who he was quoting, but it was perfect.

And it said, "Stan Lee's best creation was Stan Lee." And that just means like the guy that-

Laura: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Dan: -and that just means that the guy that, the guy that we see as the public face is different, and it's the same with Disney,

Laura: Oh, I was gonna say, [crosstalk 00:04:00] the same with artists.

Like I had, I've just read an article, it was funny, in the latest Scholastic Arts edition, there was, the cover is Gustav Klimt, well, I just read this great article about Klimt's wife, and how she was really the artist behind the artist.

Like, just these great like, inspirational paintings, that inspired him to do more, and, like it was really a collaboration, and she was an amazing artist on her own, right. But, we don't talk about her.

We only talk about Gustav Klimt.

And there's, you know, a lot of that in the art world.



Matt: Yeah, people like Andy Warhol, people, you know, [crosstalk 00:04:40] I mean ...

Laura: Oh, yeah he had a whole warehouse full of people working for him.

Dan: I was gonna say, Andy Warhol was right, he was the uh ...

Matt: Henry Ford of, with his...

Dan: Yeah.

Laura: Yeah, yeah,

Matt: It was an assembly line.

Laura: Yeah, it was an assembly line, and he was all about image you know, all about his character, you know?

Dan: Well, if you've seen that documentary, Exit Through The Gift Shop, the Banksy documentary,

Laura: Yes ...

Dan: And it really chronicles that other guy.

Laura: Yeah.

Dan: And there's question marks of like, is it real, is that faked, was that put on for the documentary, which is the whole point of Banksy, Banksy's whole thing is "what's real, what's not real, what's true, what's not true, who, who is it, who isn't it," you know, kind of thing, but it's the same idea, like he created this like warehouse, and people like, that's not art, but Andy Warhol did it, and everybody's like yeah, it is.

Matt: Yeah.

Laura: Yeah, right? I mean, it's all interpretation.

Dan: And, it's not like Andy Warhol was hiding the fact that it was pop art.

Matt: No.



- Laura: Right. No.
- Dan: It was out there, and of the moment, and it's like fast fashion. Like I don't, it would be interesting to think what, to know what Andy Warhol would think of like and H&M, or [inaudible 00:05:50] or you know what I mean?
- Laura: I think he'd think it was cool. I think he'd think it's cool [crosstalk 00:05:53]. I think he'd be all about H&M.
- Dan: I do too! I think he'd be like, "This is amazing. You came up with an idea and-"
- Laura: Look you can buy this for 20 dollars.
- Dan: Right, I think that's the only part that he'd be like, not great about, would be the cost of things. But just the idea of cranking it out quickly and it's cool for six minutes, and then the gold lamer jumpsuit goes into the rack with everything else.
- Laura: Yep.
- Dan: Right. Because people would walk in, they go to Forever 21 and go, "Oh, no one wears it except that one day."
- Laura: Yes.
- Matt: [inaudible 00:06:23]
- Dan: It's that kind of - it's ethereal, it lives in the moment, it exists. And then it kind of goes poof. That's okay.
- Laura: And that is okay, that's really what conceptual art is about anyways.
- Matt: Wow.
- Laura: So we've gone already kind of in a crazy direction.
- Matt: Yeah.
- Laura: Dan, you are the co author of Intention: Critical Creativity in the Classroom with Amy Burvall [00:06:51], so tell us a little about - we know



you're a teacher up in Maine, I think you teach English, that correct? I don't know. So tell as a little bit about you.

Dan:

So yeah, I was an English teacher for 20 years at the same high school. Mt. Blue High School in beautiful, sunny Farmington, Maine. Here in the western Maine Foothills. And for people who are like, "Where the hell is that?" If you've ever seen Sugarloaf or Sunday River appear in a ski thing during the Olympics coverage stuff or hear a reference to that during qualifiers, we're about an hour east of those places. Kind of like northeast if you're in one and southeast if you're in the other. Then we're about an hour due west of August, so we're over in what we call the foothills of the state of Maine.

I've been there since I graduated from UMF which is the University of Maine at Farmington where I majored in Secondary Education and I just loved it and stuck around.

What's really cool is last year, actually the year before that we started planning it, but I'm in the second year of a three year grant cycle to work with Gear Up. Gear Up Maine provided us this action research grant to design a multiple pathways program and we could make it whatever we wanted it to look like.

My friend Becky Dennison and I got together. She was the college transitions coordinator for our [inaudible 00:08:33] program and she was doing that for years and has a background in social work, and domestic counseling, domestic abuse advocacy, women's advocacy, so that's her background. Her kids went through the school system. She's local, knows the community really well. Then I've got my English teacher background plus my work with design thinking and my work with art and theater and improvisation and working on the steam side of things. So what we've done is combine the best practices we know of design and art and academics and teaching and learning with the best practices we know of social justice, restorative practices, social work, human centered connectivity and we smash those all together. So what we have is the Success Innovation Center at Mt. Blue campus.

Laura:

Wow.

Dan:

Which is a combination of maker space and social work office.



- Laura: That's amazing [inaudible 00:09:46][crosstalk 00:09:46].
- Matt: For lack of a better word, amazing.
- Laura: I hope a lot of people are listening to this idea. Man, I want to bring this to our school district. That's awesome.
- Dan: We're really excited. Our campus, we're a public high school - regional public high school - so we have about 750 kids on campus. The kids who get on the bus first thing in the morning travel about an hour to get in. So our district is the size... Every day our buses travel the circumference of Rhode Island.
- Laura: Oh my gosh.
- Dan: -the extent of how much mileage we put in. We're a very large school district, just not a lot of people. So we have to maximize the resources. We have a high poverty rate. We used to be a shoe shop industry, we used to be a paper industry. The paper industry really collapsed, the shoe industry is gone. Paper industry collapsed, it's slowly working it's way up for reinvention but it's nothing like it was. So you've got a lot of families that don't have a lot of hope. We've got a lot of families that are working with their first round of multi generational poverty because you talk to the grandparents, the grandparents all did fine. But it's the parents and now their kids haven't, because the parents lost their jobs, their weren't other opportunities. So we're struggling, not unlike a lot of communities across the country.
- And at the same time we have thriving arts community. We have thriving small businesses. We have amazing community connections with people. We have a lot of people who are really struggling and don't know how to make things work. We see that happen with our students, so what we want to be able to do is say to any kid or any faculty member who comes through the door, "How might we help?"
- Laura: Wow.
- Dan: "What's going on? What do you need?" Then we can provide academic, emotional, social, vocational support of any sort. So we do everything from the kid who walks in who just got thrown out of his house is not sure



where he's gonna live, we help connect him to the homeless youth advocate and try to figure that out, so we do that, and then ten minutes later we are coaching up the valedictorian who's giving the graduation speech and scared and isn't sure how it's going to go.

Then ten minutes after that, member of our GSTA come in, our Gay, Straight, Transgender Alliance. And they keep getting their name wrong, because their name, like their identities is fluid and that's cool it's just hard to keep up with sometimes. So members of that group will be in, and those kids will come in and they're dealing with something, and want some help doing this other thing.

And then I might have a teacher come in saying, "Hey I'm teaching Great Gatsby next week I just want to change it up a little bit, what can we do?" And I sit down and we map up a plan and we come up with a unit and I say, "Do you want me to come in and work with you?" "Oh that'd be great!" So I go and push out, so it's sometimes - sometimes I go out into the classrooms, sometimes Becky goes out into the classrooms, sometimes the students come to us as whole classes. Sometimes they come in on a one on one basis. We really try to be as flexible to the needs of whoever's coming through the door.

The only thing that's hard about it, managing the - not bureaucracy that's not the right word for it - but just managing the organizational systems and the infrastructure in order to maintain a space like that and keep it alive because we are 100 percent grant funded. So we need to find some money.

If anybody out there is listening like, "Oh hey I happen to have ya know, like a hundred grand for this year, for next, and for the year after that..." because all of it goes to just pay our salaries. It's all to keep the district from having to add more to the roles in terms of more hiring. We are actively right now trying to figure out a sustainability model moving forward that allows us to keep moving forward.[crosstalk 00:14:16]

Laura: It's so amazing to me, it's almost like you're a non-profit at this point, too.

Dan: Yeah we're trying to avoid doing that. Cause that is its own set of nightmares.





Laura: Yes.

Dan: I am really good at a lot of things, but one of them is not book keeping. And, so we're both - and she's not going to mind if I say this to the world but - neither is Becky. So we're really good at working with kids. We're both big picture thinkers who figure out the little pieces that we have to do to make the big picture happen. We're not great with the, "Okay, routine. Numbers numbers numbers."

Laura: You might be speaking our language, possibly.

Matt: Yeah.

Laura: Yeah... we, there's a basket of paper that need to be dealt with currently. We understand.

Dan: Only one?

Matt: Well... no [crosstalk 00:15:14] [inaudible 00:15:16] started organizing it and uh now it's randomly streamed around the house [inaudible 00:15:19][crosstalk 00:15:19].

Laura: Yeah, so it sounds like you're a coach of everything, too.

Dan: That's kind of a great way to look at it. My official title is Education Director of the Success to Innovation Center and her official title is Resource Director of the Success to Innovation Center. And that's just trying to speak to, her kind of angle in is to connect kids to all of the opportunities that they have available to them in the community.

Laura: Awesome.

Dan: And all the resources that are there. Both the school community and the community at large. And my kind of angle in is, how do I make sure you're getting the academic pieces of your life fulfilled in a way that's meaningful and purposeful but is also speaking to - you're a kid that struggles in a class. And I go, "Why are you struggling?" "because I hate public speaking." Like, well, "Is public speaking, is that one of the standards for you class?" And sometimes it is, and often it's not. It's just, the teacher has kind of laid out the expectation that everyone will



present. And the student doesn't know how to advocate for themselves other than to get mad and yell, and get upset, or get stressed out, or shut down, or these other ways of... because they don't know that there's these other options. That they could ask, that we could find a way so that the teacher feels like the student is presenting their information to a broad audience and that student can feel like they're not being put on the spot in the moment.

Laura: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Matt: Yep.

Dan: So there's a lot of advocacy work around that. But also, the advocacy is to try to make sure that the student is still achieving all of the content knowledge, developing all of the skills, that there's nothing that's getting pushed off to the side because things are hard. Well yeah, things are hard, but there's solutions to all of this. There's solutions to everything that's challenging. We just have to figure it out. And sometimes that requires a couple different parties that may not be used to being flexible becoming more flexible and when they're not, that's okay, too. We just work with - we just know, okay, this is an absolute. There's nothing we can do around this, so if that isn't going to bend, what else can bend? We know this is made of steel, we're not going to be able to turn it and make it do this thing we want it to do.

We don't have the tools, but we do have is the ability to change the materials that we're working with on the other side. And that might just be as simple as, "Let's talk about breathing. Let's talk about how to manage anxiety in the moment. Let's talk about mindfulness. Let's talk about the things that you can do. Where can you look in the classroom to just give yourself a centering?"

I teach a lot of deep breathing techniques to kids. They know it when they're stressed out but they forget that they can just do it when they're about to take a quiz, or about to take test. All these kids talk about their test anxiety, and I go, "You know the answers and you've already gone in saying I'm not gonna do well because I don't do well on tests, well how about this, I'm going to do the best I can on this test. Let's just start there



- I'm going to do the best I can do today and I'm going to breathe between every question."

Matt: Wow.

Dan: Right, like, "Let's just start there. It doesn't need to be a bigger lift than that, to start. And let's just see how that goes." Those are the kind of conversations I have with kids every day. The kind of conversations that Becky has with kids, every day. And then two minutes later we have robots out. And we're building stuff, we've got hand tools. We took over a faculty lounge and we filled it with all the stuff from my old classroom. So we already started with [crosstalk 00:19:15] robots and we started with two 3D printers and we started with a few tools and a whole bunch of maker's space kind of arts and crafts stuff. And we were able to add a ton of hand tools, we were able to add an air compressor, we're able to add some raspberry pie and some [inaudible 00:19:37]. So we've got some stuff to do micro computing. We were able to add some art therapy supplies. So we have some book binding materials, and some journaling materials.

About the only thing we don't have that kids ask for regularly, and I refused to go down this rabbit hole, is acrylic paint and Tempra paint. And it's only because it's such a mess.

Matt: No...

Laura: At least give them water colors.

Dan: And you know what kids do, you know what happens.

Laura: Do you have water colors?

Dan: We have watercolors. You know what happens. [crosstalk 00:20:12]

Laura: [inaudible 00:20:12] we lived it.[crosstalk 00:20:13]

Matt: [inaudible 00:20:14]

Dan: They have no perspective on how little material they need. I do theater, too. I do a lot of tech work in the theater. I see how much wasted paint there is.



- Matt: I would agree.
- Laura: There is. [crosstalk 00:20:28][inaudible 00:20:29]
- Dan: We have great art program, we have great art teachers. So when kids come in and ask for paint, I go, "Why don't you go check out the art program, why don't you go [inaudible 00:20:36] see how they're doing."
- Matt: Oh you're that person who says...
- Dan: I'm that person.
- Matt: Go to the art teacher for the paint.
- Dan: Because we get asked for literally everything else and we always say yes, and we always find it. So I mean, I've even got PVC pipes that we acquired and picked up. We have an amazing campus that has tons and tons and tons of programs because we have a tech center integrated in.
- So we have a plumbing program and a welding program right next to my classroom.[crosstalk 00:21:07]
- Matt: What's so amazing is the fact that you started out with seeing a problem. You started out seeing a need which is...
- Laura: Innovation.
- Matt: Which then leads to those other solutions. I like how you said that. We see where the main problem is, and then to find the solutions, or other solutions around it. You're pulling in the whole design thinking philosophy. So how did you come across design thinking, [crosstalk 00:21:42][inaudible 00:21:43].
- Laura: For teachers especially.
- Matt: Yeah. How did you come across finding that philosophy and being able to use that as an English teacher? Because you wouldn't really think about that.
- Dan: Right so in a word, Twitter.



About so let's see, I'd say six years ago, I forget which year it was. But DTK12 chat, it was toward the end of their first year of existence and I found them in the middle of summer one night. I was doing theater at the high school late in the summer and I was running team theater camp. And my buddy and I had a podcast called Wicked Decent Learning at the time, and we were thinking about rehabilitating it and getting it going at the time and I had read somewhere that Twitter's a way to market your stuff. And I'm like okay, well I'll go on to Twitter.

That same night I discovered that, oh my gosh, there's all kinds of stuff on Twitter. There's all kinds of educators on Twitter. And then I saw, it was purely by random chance, I came across the hashtag DTK12 chat, and I'm pretty sure it was a tweet from Mary who put it out there. And I'm like, "Whoa, what is [inaudible 00:23:01] design and [inaudible 00:23:05] thinking. I like design. I like to think. This might be a good thing."

And then I did that one chat and I was all in. It just spoke to what I was desperately looking for, which was greater purpose in the project based learning that I was doing. I'd founded a couple of different programs at the high school. One kind of flopped, but one did really well. We started a humanities program and it was going really well. And we had shifted to fully embracing project based learning. The problem was, we were still getting a lot of dumpster projects.

Matt: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Laura: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Dan: And that's where the chapter of the books called 'No More Dumpster Projects' comes from.

Kids were making stuff that was gorgeous, and it's not a dumpster project because it isn't beautiful, it's a dumpster project because when it's done, what do you do with it? How many trees, based on Laurie Hall Sanderson's Speak can you make? Like, we had forests of trees and they were amazing, they were made out of all these different materials and it was wonderful and it was great. But why'd they make it out of the different material? It's because it's what they had, not because it added meaning not because it was adding any vitality to a conversation about



the ideas in the book. It was just stuff to make a thing to answer the questions.

And all my rubrics were all around quantifying things. Does it have H? Does it have seven? Does it have six or less. When I start getting in this space where I start getting critical about how people are doing things, it's because I've done them all. And it's because I did them all for years. And it wasn't til like I realized, not that I was being harmful but that there was a better way to do things, that was more intentional, more purpose driven, and a thousand times more meaning driven.

What shifted was learning about design thinking, learning about empathy fueled, human centered problem solving. And that turned my classroom toward a place where we made projects to where we solve problems. And that's what I want to see all schools do. I don't want to see all schools teach the way I teach because that would be weird and that would be a mess. That would not be good for America. That would make America really wonky again.

We have to teach to our own style, we have to teach to our own strengths. [crosstalk 00:25:47]

Matt: We have to teach to our own students, too, because they are so different.

Dan: Right.

Matt: So, the book of intention, purpose, and we hear that every interview, every podcast that we do.

Laura: Yeah, we were just looking at each other because there are certain... it's amazing how our community is so, it's almost like we're in tune with each other's brains or something because we hear these same words over again.

Dan: Right?

Laura: Purpose came up in our last interview, yesterday. And it's something we've been talking about for years. I did a whole conference around this idea about your passion and your purpose, and it's so important.



- Dan: It's so important. And so many times kids say, "What's the point of us doing this?" And how often, if we're honest with ourselves, about the things we're asking students to do, we don't have very good answer. Because we haven't really thought about it.
- Matt: Well, it's funny I was listening a while back, through suggestion of Laura, but I was listening to the Bernie Brown Vulnerability book. I don't know if you've ever read that, and you know some of it is allowing ourselves, or not allowing ourselves, to be vulnerable. To see ourselves as what we're not doing well. Nobody wants to see what you're not doing well, so when you were speaking about that's where my mind what. Having that, they call it the hard conversation, but having that conversation with yourself and being able to really reflect on - is this working? What's not working? And, how do you make it better? Or do you just scrap it all and start over? And so there's so many times I've had to do that.
- Laura: And I think that the challenging thing for, especially veteran teacher, is that it seems like it's working and it's what's easy and it's what's on that status quo. It's moving, it seems to be moving. I think it's really challenging for teachers to take that hard look and that deep dive in to, is this really what's best for kids? With all the demands on them, it's really challenging.
- Advertisement 2: Hi there! This is Susan Reilly. Founder of Education Closet. If you love these conversations with Team Trundler and friends, please be sure to check out K12 art chat on Twitter. The chat is held every Thursday at 8:30 P.M. Central, and it's a great way to continue the conversation. Just go to [Twitter.com](https://twitter.com) and search hashtag K12 art chat. Now let's head back to the show.
- Matt: We interviewed Amy Burvall, who's your co author.
- Dan: Yes.
- Matt: And I'm curious on the story of how you guys met each other, and it was just a Twitter connection or it was... How'd you guys meet?
- Laura: Because currently she's in Hawaii and you're in Maine, so how does that all work?



Dan: And that's been true our entire friendship. So it was surreal, it goes back to DTK12 chat a little bit, because of DTK12 chat and getting into design thinking, we proposed a panel, a bunch of us. And I just started doing design thinking in my classroom. And they're like "Hey we should put in to South By" And I'm like, "What?" I didn't even know that South By was a thing.

Laura: You didn't know what South By was?

Dan: This was only the third year I think of the EDU side. So I know South by, I didn't know there was an EDU portion of it.

Laura: Yeah.

Dan: So I know South by Southwest. But I was like, "Wait, what?" And I was like, "Sure, yeah, put me on a list." Boom. We get in, so I'm in South By, my first year South By.

Some friends of mine said "Oh my gosh we just saw this guy speak. He was amazing. You need to meet him. I'm gonna text him right now and see if he'll go to lunch with us." Bloop bloop bloop bloop.

Brad Carter. I don't know if you know Brad. He used to be pretty active in the Twitter sphere and stuff. But he's focused more in - he's up in like British Columbia, he's in Vancouver, he goes between Japan and Vancouver a lot. I don't know why. He works in a private school up that way and does some really cool work. But anyway, he does a lot with sketch noting and visual note taking. Neat guy.

Anyways so my friends are like, "You gotta meet him." And we're talking outside, he goes, "Let's go eat, let's go get some lunch." And he goes, "Can you just - oh hold on a second. My friend Amy, can she come with us, too?" "Sure!" We're all just like, my friends that were with me were Alyssa Gallagher and Candy Thornson who just came out with a great design thinking book for administrators and school leaders as a matter of fact, so you should check that out.

Laura: I will check that out. Cause I'm gonna buy a copy for every one of my principals in the district.





Dan: It's fantastic, it's really good. I'll hook you up with links later.

Laura: Yeah definitely.

Dan: I don't want to miss appropriate the publisher, I'm pretty sure I know who it's through, and if I'm wrong.. awkward. But they just came out with this amazing book. And they're amazing people. So anyways, Brad's like, "Can you wait for my friend Amy?" And he turns to me and he goes, "You're gonna love her." And I had known this dude for two and a half minutes so I'm like, "I don't know, okay sure."

This woman walks out the door, walks up to us, she has this mane of platinum blonde hair. She has these amazing lace up to the knee boots with these huge heels, she's got this gothic Lolita skirt thing going on, these giant sunglasses, this coat, and I'm like... she just walks up and I'm like, "Okay it's Austin so, right?" [inaudible 00:32:20][crosstalk 00:32:17].

It's just awesome, she has all the look. This is amazing, I don't know who this person is but I'm just like, that's cool. Walks up and she goes, "Hey, thanks for waiting for me." And I'm like, "Wait what? Whoa"

And she goes, "Yeah I was just presenting." And I'm like, "Wait what?" Like, holy cow. So we go out for mediocre Tex Mex but we're at this table, and she and I sat across from each other with Brand and whatever. We just hit it off and just started talking and talking. I don't know if you know, I'm good at that. So is she.

Laura: Yes.

Matt: Oh yeah. Very much.

Dan: So, you put the two of us in a room together, you can imagine. We just hit it off from there, and we became fast friends, and we just started collaborating on little things. We did a thing with our students called hash mash, which involved writing poetry, and remixing, and making visuals out of the poetry, and then reinterpreting the poetry as another visual. It was this whole layered thing, but it was between student in Maine and students in Hawaii. And we called the project Aya Aloha. So if you hashtag Aya Aloha you still might find fragments living in the interwebs of this, because this was like five years ago now. Those kids



have all graduated from college. My crew that participated in that project.

But it was just this really cool synergy that we had and that eventually led to a book. We'd talked about all sorts of different projects to do together, and the opportunity to pitch a book presented itself to us. So we wrote a pitch in like, an hour or something.

It was like, "I have a meeting, we could potentially do a book" "Okay, what are we going to do a book on?" "All the things!" "Okay!"

It was a little more than that, but not really. It was crazy.

Laura: Sounds like perfect design thinking actually.

Matt: Right? Giving that time constraint and then all of the sudden creativity just bursts out of that.

Dan: Yeah so it was great.

Laura: I have sat and drawn, and that's one of the things I love about your book is like in the very first part it says draw all over the book. And so I have done that, but I think it's, first of all, it's for any teacher at any grade level, any subject area. I think that's more of what we need, is not being in these silos of grade level or subject area. And I just love that you're bringing creativity into all classrooms at all levels.

Is there anything about the book that you especially are proud of, or love, or feel like is just a really amazing tool?

Dan: Well what you just said, you just spoke to what I'm most proud of about the book. Like thanks, I got nothing.

Matt: And we're done.

Dan: And scene. It was good talking with you guys.

But truly, the thing I am most proud of about it is its flexibility. We initially didn't plan on creating lesson plans so to speak. We call them pathways. And maybe that might be the thing that, it's a little thing, but I'm really glad we came up with that name for it because we don't want people



feeling like they're prescriptions. But at the same time we want people who need something that's more linear to be like, "If I look in this book am I going to find things I can do and things I can use?" And the answer is yes, and you don't have to spend six hours thinking about, "But how am I going to do that with my students?" There's a pathway, that if you want to just follow that line, do it.

And we tell you which disciplines it's probably going to work well with, and we give you three or four suggestions of how to integrate it into different disciplines, and we have a little index there to help you navigate and find things. That would be the little nugget within it that I am so happy that we came up with that way of thinking about everything in the book. And we really are trying to get people to realize you can do it in any classroom. You can do it with preschoolers and you could be working with grad students. It's not that there's one or two things in the book that could help you. You could potentially use 75 percent of the activities in the book.

If you don't have technology, if you don't have a lot of tech access, you can do a lot of things that are in the book. Where Amy and I are both now consultants with the Office of English Language Programs at the US State Department. And Amy's been working on doing these cool versions of the book to help with English language learners all around the world.

Laura: That's awesome, wow.

Dan: And the most important part of that is a lot of these classrooms and learning spaces, I know you call them classrooms, they're learning spaces. So it might be a classroom, but it might be somewhere else. Their learning spaces are typically a resource. So even though we publish at Tech Team, there's all different ways to look at technology.

We try to emphasize the idea that sometimes technology is there to amplify, sometimes that's why it's there. But at the heart of it, you can do most every one of our activities without tech, it's just if you have tech, like that's the thing you can now do that you couldn't do before. That's where the technology is value adding and allows students - it might be helping them to find a bigger audience, it might be helping them



connect dots between ideas, it might be helping them collect ideas, curate.

Laura: I love it.

Matt: That's really awesome.

Laura: That's really our whole intent with, obviously everything Brad started with K12 art chat, but our mission is to bring creativity into all classrooms because we see kids thrive when they have opportunities to interact with content in a variety of ways.

Dan: Yes.

Laura: I really appreciate that, especially as a curriculum writer that you've given a linear pathway for those that need it. But then as a creative, I appreciate that it's an entry point, and you can take it anywhere you need to for your own classroom, your own content, your own kids. So, thanks, for creating that for everyone.

Dan: Oh well, you are welcome. And thank you for being, you two have been such great champions of the book, and we really appreciate that. It's not like we are professional authors.

I have like a 60 hour a week job already, and I feel like four other jobs. You guys know. So sometimes it's hard to do the things to let people know that this is out there. No idea is too precious. I often cite to my students the Stephen King quote that I'm going to destroy horrible somehow, but it's basically, "Sometimes we have to murder our children."

We have to take our ideas that we love and think are great and we have to let them go, and sometimes we have to let them go by putting them in the bin and just, it's gonna be okay. With the book it was really important that, we had some ideas that didn't make it in the book because we had to let them go, and we had to do some killing of some lovely ideas. They were growing up so fast. But it was their time, they just didn't know it.



And at the same time it's the same thing about, you put the idea in there, we have to be... I read some things and I don't stay with them very long, but when I read a book on teaching or a book on education and I feel like they're saying "If you are not the most fidelitous to our vision, then this won't work. If you do not do this and exercise absolutely extreme rigor to our system it won't work." Then I go, "Then what are you doing? That's not human, that's centered on something different. And that means that your idea is so precious that there's no way anybody could possibly improve upon it. Or adjust it to make it work better for their environment in a way that is still successful and effective." I have such a hard time getting inside that mindset. It hasn't been my educational story. And I don't see how it can meet a world's needs that's changing faster than we're even able to put to words.

Laura: Yeah.

Matt: We've had conversation, today, that's been so expansive and it's been informing and...

Laura: That's a great term. And thought provoking.

Matt: Oh absolutely.[crosstalk 00:41:59][inaudible 00:42:00] And nerdy, and sci-fi, and everything. So what is probably one last bit of... word of wisdom that you could share with the people that are listening to the podcast?

Laura: Ryder's Words of Wisdom: Deep Thoughts by Dan Ryder.

Sometimes I like to put honey on my hands and invite bears into my yard.

Matt: You do live in Maine.[crosstalk 00:42:38][inaudible 00:42:38]

Laura: Could actually be true which is terrifying.

Dan: Which is terrifying. We actually had a bear living in our neighborhood that we're trying to figure out exactly where. But - [crosstalk 00:42:50] [inaudible 00:42:50]

Laura: I think you should [inaudible 00:42:50]

Dan: It's amazing, right?



I guess the thing that I challenge everyone to do, is to just try to be more intentional with their words, their choices, their actions. It's not hard to do. It just requires a mindset of pausing, and just saying "Why am I doing this again?"

And when the go-to, when the knee jerk is, well because it's important, you've got to ask why, why is it important? That's the piece - we can easily layer so much more intention into everything we do with our students without it becoming a massive nightmare of "I've got to throw out everything I do."

No, you can just start by changing the font on your hand outs. And people go, "wait what?" Well, yeah. Just choose a font that reflects who you are as an educator. That reflects the way you want students thinking about your classroom. It's a little thing. And then you go to the next level, and so they change it, and they invariably change it to something terrible like Chalkboard or Comic Sans. And then I yell at them, and I say "Okay..." No, but they might change it to something that's difficult to read you know? Because it doesn't look great. And I go, "Okay, now you've layered in one layer of intention there. So now it's difficult to read. How do you find that happy space between the two? Where it reflects who you are but then it's more usable for your students?"

It's one of those little things. In the space of 15 minutes, you can start redesigning how you approach your classroom, your teaching, your pedagogy. And then you start finding those other places where it's the colors you use, or you're always using non fiction? Hey this week, find one poem. Hey math teacher, find one poem that uses repetition because you've been studying pattern, and you've been studying number sets, and you want kids always having stronger number sense. And show them that number sense shows up in words. Just find one poem that uses repetition. Go to the sonnet if you want to talk about structure. Everyone talks about that math and literature don't share commonalities and it's so not true.

Literature is full of mathematics, it's just not full of computation. It's just not full of adding this to this and saying this. But the sonnet form alone is beautiful for exploring the mathematics of literature. Novel structures, and I mean I could go on and on and on [inaudible 00:45:41].



But the idea is just do one little thing, it doesn't have to be this massive change. Just do one little thing to be more intentional about what you're doing with your students, and the rest of it starts to just naturally come along after just by getting in that mindset.

Thank you for going on that mental journey with me.

I'm off to emcee a Lego league qualifier here post our interview, and I appreciate you guys being just, awesome.

Matt: I think you're probably one of the first ones that we've had like right after having the chat. It's kind of neat to just re hash all of that and see and dive in a little bit deeper.

Laura: Yeah.

Dan: Oh can I say one thing about the chat?

Matt: Sure.

Laura: Yes.

Dan: I just want to challenge people a little bit.

Matt: Okay.

Dan: Because I noticed a trend, I don't want to like, hurt the chat.

Laura: No.

Dan: I just want to like -

Laura: I like to challenge the -

Matt: I want to challenge it.

Dan: I'm gonna push in a little bit. I was trying to do it that night and I was like, "Okay this is not working so I need to find another angle in." And it goes back to, what's that one thing, that intentionality. Intentionality is also about specificity. And what I was noticing during our chat where like, big picture, fantastic. And then I was trying to push the people to say, so,



"What's one thing, what is an innovative practice in art that you're seeing?" And then they'd say, "Well all of our-" And it's like, stop trying to make everybody happy.

And I saw that happen with multiple people in the chat. It's like we want to be all inclusive because we don't want to let anyone feel left out. And what aspects of art, central principals of art, could you use to enliven change in our spaces? And it was like, "they're all important. Look at all these."

Well that's just like a kid giving an answer, and you're like, "Could you please give an example from the book?" "Yes, chapter one through six." And you're like, "[inaudible 00:48:24] Yes it's Of Mice and Men there's only six, like what are you doing to me?"

Laura: Oh my gosh[crosstalk 00:48:33] I just loved -

Dan: So that's just a challenge for listeners and for chatters, just put one specific out there. Like I saw a couple that were great when people were like [inaudible 00:48:44] put out their minimalism. Like oh, just strip things down to their essence and try that. Or someone was like, mixing medium. Taking from this and smashing it with that. So I was like, "great idea."

So anyways, that was something I was thinking in the back of my head today. That chat we were gonna have today. Like, what's the thing that I want to make sure I said? Like, "Oh yeah, I might come across as a jerk."

Laura: Oh no.

Matt: No.

Dan: And I just want to push people to be okay with going out there on a limb and saying, "This is a thing that is really really helpful to helping make transformative change happen in art."

And I'm glad the slow chat is all about what are those innovative practices that we're seeing.

Laura: Yeah.





Dan: Oh, is it working in virtuality spaces and digital art forms that are more tactile? Is it the rising prominence of installation art and performance art? Because that's growing. It's not all just Laurie Anderson. There's a whole world of performance art that takes on different looks.

Laura: I will say that the good and the bad thing about our audience and the participants in the chat is they are the kindest group of people on the planet.

Dan: Yes!

Laura: Like you were right, they never want to - you hit on something there. It's something we're very proud of it that it is a really positive, optimistic group of people. But there are times when they're a little afraid to step on someone's toes. So I'm happy that you're challenging them a little bit to be just a little bit more out there.

Dan: Just a shove. Not like throw you in the deep end.

Laura: Right, yeah.

Dan: Just giving you a little shoulder and maybe knocking you into like, the middle end. It's gonna be okay.

Laura: We know you have to head off to Lego Robotics.

Matt: And we have to go re assume our role as parents.

Laura: -as parents.

Dan: I was gonna say, you have much more difficult job.

Laura: I'm gonna let you...

Matt: Okay yeah, your voice is dying here all the sudden.

So we just want to thank you again, and hope you have an awesome weekend and enjoy your Thanksgiving.

Laura: Alright.



Dan: You too. Thank you guys, I really appreciate it.

Laura: Thank Dan.

Matt: Thank Dan.

Susan: Heads up seven up friends. If you've been enjoying these episodes, be sure to subscribe to the Creatively Connected Classroom podcast. You'll get a notification every time we release a new episode each and every week. And, take a screenshot and put it on your favorite social media. Twitter, Insta, Facebook, you name it. Tag Education Closet and K12 art chat, so we can reach out and say thanks. And if you really love us with all the feels, give us a review and/or a rating over on iTunes. It helps other find the show and connect with our incredible community. Thanks for all your support.