

[00:00:00] Bonni Stachowiak: Hello, and welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed, Number 285. On today's episode, Janue Johnson and I, reflect on our experience attending the ESCALA Summer Institute.

[00:00:15] Voice-over: Produced by Innovate Learning, maximizing human potential.

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[00:00:23] Bonni: Hello and welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. I'm Bonnie Stachowiak. This is the space where we explore the art and science of facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our personal productivity approaches, so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students. Today, Janue Johnson and I, are exploring the topic of culturally responsive teaching.

We'll share in a little bit how we met each other. Secret surprise, it was part of an ESCALA Summer Institute we attended. Let me start by telling you a little bit about Dr. Janue Johnson-Seaton. She has a diverse teaching background and she's worked in K through 12 and higher education. Her educational background includes a PhD in urban higher education from Jackson State University.

Currently, she serves as an assistant professor and professional learning coordinator at San Diego Mesa College in the LOFT, that's L-O-F-T, Learning Opportunities for Transformation. She supports the creation and coordination of professional learning and development for faculty and classified professionals. In her role, she collaborates with committees and campus groups to design, develop, and implement professional learning activities that embed equity.

A long-term goal is to support education initiatives in underserved community settings that embed equity and culturally relevant teaching to support student's learning experiences. Janue is married with three children and resides in California. Janue, welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

[00:02:12] Janue Johnson: Hi Bonni, thank you so much for having me.

[00:02:15] Bonni: I have a weird relationship with you. [chuckles] I saw you read this amazing poem. We're going to talk about the context of where I saw that. I just felt such a kinship with you. I'm so glad to have- to started what I think is just the beginning of a great friendship. We both care a lot about teaching. In fact, why don't you just tell us where we met and talk a little bit about that experience over this past summer?

[00:02:38] Janue: Thank you, Bonni. It was at ESCALA Education in Salinas, California, where I had the opportunity to just not only learn all these wonderful things but to meet you and your wonderful team. We learned so much about how to redesign some of our classes and work with instructors on ways to improve their teaching in a culturally responsive way, as it relates to Latinx students or Hispanic serving institutions.

It was such a wonderful experience. I'm so glad that I got to meet you as well. I look forward to all the other things that we'll get to discover and talk about together.

[00:03:21] Bonni: It's really fun when you meet someone and there's just already a grounding, where you understand that you have many of the same values. I will say though, I can remember when we first started to get introduced to what our weeks would be like.

I maybe wasn't my most positive self, because they told us that one of our assignments was going to be that at the end of our week together, we were going to be responsible for-- in our groups or by ourselves, to either write a song and perform it in front of the group or to read a poem or create a poem and read that. I'm normally pretty positive but I thought, "I don't want. This sounds campy."

I think is the best word that I could think of describing it. There were a lot of inside references that they were sharing. They remembered fondly of last year's, and so a little bit inside baseball for me. I'm thinking, "I don't think this is going to be fun." [laughs] Some of my colleagues were shaking their heads. I was so wrong. It really did turn out to be so powerful.

We had a blast practicing ours in the car, on the way to and from the training each week. Then, I think my-- I shouldn't say I think, my absolute favorite part was getting to hear you and the poem that you wrote. Before we talk about the poem, would you share who inspired this poem?

[00:04:41] Janue: Absolutely. Thank you. I was thinking, "I cannot sing." I actually happened to be there alone. I didn't have any of my colleagues with me because I visited by myself. I thought of *Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou. Dr. Maya Angelou, for those who may be listening that may not be familiar with her, but she was an American poet, singer.

She was a civil rights activist and she published seven autobiographies and essays, several books of poetry. One of my other favorite poems by her was *Phenomenal Woman*. She also did the presidential inauguration of Clinton in 1993, where she read, *On the Pulse of Morning*.

I just thought of her when we were talking about the content and just the students. If you're okay with it, I would like to just share my adaptation of Dr. Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise*.

[00:05:42] Bonni: Please.

[00:05:43] Janue: *You may write me down in history with your bitter, twisted lies.*

You may trod me in the very dirt, but still, like dust, we rise.

Does my high context connect with you?

How are you participating in school?

Because I talked about what concerns you in the classroom.

Just like moons and like suns with the certainty of tides.

Just like hope springing high, still, we rise.

We want to see you thriving, lifting up your bald head and lowered eyes.

Stand on the three-prong ladders strengthened by goals and a clear mind.

Does school challenge you? Don't believe the lies.

Laugh like you've got gold mines springing in your mind.

You may practice your vocabulary words.

You may use text and visuals to learn with your eyes.

You may design with the end in mind and still, we rise.

Does growth inspire you?

Does it come as a surprise, that you have eight types of cultural wealth to offer during class time?

Out of the guts of history's shame, we rise.

Up from a past that's rooted in pain, we thrive.

We are a community redefined.

Growing and changing the time.

Leaving behind the deficit thinking, we fly.

Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear, we guy.

*Bringing the gifts that our ancestors gave, becoming the dream that HACU names,
we rise, we rise.*

[00:07:20] Bonni: That brought tears to my eyes then, and it still brings tears to my eyes now. Thank you so much for that. That's such a gift.

[00:07:26] Janue: Thank you.

[00:07:27] Bonni: Such a gift. I've read all seven of her autobiographies. I have read, read several of her books of poetry. It's just so special to me that you would base it on her work. I just can see all the connections. I know that some people won't be able to necessarily make all the connections unless we help them with that a little bit.

Let's spend a little bit of time talking about the three areas you said in your poem, the three prongs of culturally responsive teaching. Those three prongs just as an overview are going to be around relatedness which you heard as a theme throughout the poem, trust, also through many of the strands, and then competence.

In terms of relatedness, these are the aspects that foster supportive and positive relationships between professors, students, and rigorous content. In terms of trust, these are assessments, strategies, and policies that demonstrate the professor believes all students are capable of successfully learning rigorous content. In terms of competence, cultivating student's cognitive abilities to organize, study, and learn rigorous content. Just as a quick note, the term rigorous is coming up here twice.

It is something that I have seen people be critical of that sometimes rigor or rigorous things are sort of they-- I'm not sure if I'm going to argue this very well, but that they mask things that we try to keep our disciplines more at a distance from the learner by saying they're just not capable of rigorous content. I think if I can just put the words in the mouth of people who aren't here to defend themselves.

I think what they are trying to do with using that word is saying, "We need to have that mindset that our students are capable of rigorous content. They're capable of

doing this. They need, in some cases, a different type of teaching approach and they need that support from us."

That's really what you and I are going to be looking at. I don't know if you have heard some of these criticisms around the word "rigorous" in terms of thinking about our disciplines and our content.

[00:09:29] Janue: I have, and I'll just throw something out there. When I came to California because I was in Hampton, Virginia. I was Assistant Dean and over online learning at the time. Hampton University is a historically black college. When I came back to California, there was this strong push for equity.

I remember I call it the street committee because that was something that I heard used to refer to the word on the street. Sometimes there would be this position that equity and vigor could not be achieved as if the students weren't able to do vigorous work and that equity created hysteria to creating that rigorous type of classroom.

I just disagree with that because I think as you just stated, it is more about how you can structure the learning experience in a way that it allows them to make progress and it's not necessarily about if they're at a deficit or not, it's more about how to reach them where they are.

[00:10:40] Bonni: We are going to go through each of these three areas. We had already agreed that we could talk about this all day. In fact, we know we can talk about it for an entire week [laughs] and still have more left to say, but we agreed that each one of us would in these areas talk about one area that stood out to us.

It might stand out to us because it really resonates with us or it might stand out to us because in some cases it was a surprise to us in our learning. Let's begin with relatedness. This is where we foster those supportive and positive relationships. We bring in that rigorous content again. Janue, what really stood out in this area of the learning for you?

[00:11:19] Janue: One of the things that I really enjoyed during the session when we talked about this was something that they referenced about cultural wealth or cultural assets of students. It was in an article that was written by Laura Rendon.

In the summary page that they gave they talked about, how could we consider different types of wealth that students offer within a classroom and then leverage that as something that we can show us their strength. I'll just give a couple. They were seven but one of them was resistant wealth, another was linguistic wealth and so oftentimes, some students are bilingual and how could they leverage that in a classroom?

Another was familial wealth that they could draw upon the strength of their community and their support systems. Another was social capital and how students capitalized on friendship and networks. I thought that was a very interesting take because I had not considered that as far as even just myself or even just working with students and so I really enjoyed that particular module that we learned.

[00:12:26] Bonni: For me, one of the things that really surprised me, I think people wouldn't have to listen to this podcast for very long to know I relish the opportunities to support our students when it talks about these relationships.

This is what really brings me life, brings me energy, brings me a sense of purpose, but they identified an area that I had not thought enough about, being specific in the support I was offering through those relationships. That is through the academic validation. This is the importance of helping our students and naming for them, you can do this. I believe you can do this.

It's specifically around their academic success and thriving. I think for me, it comes from that I didn't [laughs] work very hard when I was in school. I gave up somewhere along the way and I don't have a lot of recollections of doing really any homework in high school, maybe I did but I don't have recollections of it but I could have gone down two paths.

I could have stayed with the GATE programming that's for the, I don't even know what GATE stands for [laughs] but for our international

[00:13:33] Janue: I think it was gifted?

[00:13:35] Bonni: Yes.

[00:13:35] Janue: There was a gifted something, something.

[00:13:38] Bonni: I just decided to not do that and to not work very hard but I always had this belief that if I really wanted to learn something, if it was interesting to me or important to me that I could do it and this is what really helps me recognize our students didn't grow up with that belief.

They've been told time and time through educators, through their parents, through all kinds of sources that this isn't for them and since, of course, I've heard stories of students saying, "Oh, yes, they told me I need to pick a different major because I could never do this.

I couldn't cut it here." Not that I didn't know that before this past summer but it was just really striking to me to go like, "This is something I need to get better at, I need to

be very specific in terms of the relational aspects to help those students who really need that academic validation," because you never know what our words might be able to do for a student.

Just one small act of encouragement might help them pursue a master's degree. It might help them continue on in a major that they don't think that they're cut out for. That was something that really stood out to me in this area.

[00:14:42] Janue: Took it.

[00:14:43] Bonni: Yes. The next one is trust. I'm just going to read the first part again, assessment strategies and policies that demonstrate the professor believes all students. This ties in nicely, doesn't it? Believes all students are capable of successfully learning and here's the word-- I just realized the word rigorous is in here three times. [laughs] Rigorous content.

We're back to that again. They can do it, they can achieve this academic success. We just need to provide them with different things, in this case, trust. What stood out to you in the area of trust?

[00:15:14] Janue: One of the things that stood out to me was aligning learning activities with learning goals and assessments. I think that is so critical to the process for a student. One of the things that I could share that I remember in my own research that I had to do where students were taking online courses and they had to talk about discussions.

A lot of times they would reference that they wanted feedback loops from their instructor to ensure that they were on task. That they were absorbing the correct information, that they were following in line with what they were supposed to learn. I think that in aligning the learning activities with the learning goals in the assessments, it's very clear to the student what is important for them to learn.

There may be a lot of supplemental information and activities and materials, however, when the learning goals are stated in the beginning and they're clear, then it allows students to see a pattern between the activities and the assessments so that they know that they're acquiring the knowledge that is expected of them. That's very important key thing.

I know some instructional designers. I work with a wonderful instructional designer named Katie Palacios. She's an advocate of backwards design and so I think that's a way to approach it but that was one that I got out of building trust.

[00:16:42] Bonni: Yes, this comes up to me in terms of students asking questions like, "Is this going to be on the test?" Some of us can take real offense at that, you know, "How dare you ask me? Isn't it everything that I have to share of value?" That really is not very helpful in the conversation and just that transparency actually relates to my example is around transparency as well and it's related to the example you gave.

That is the importance of showing examples whether this is from prior student work or if you're teaching more of an open class perhaps it's work that lives out there on the internet and how we can see examples from other students from even other institutions or people that are working in that field, et cetera.

I used to really have a very limiting perspective about showing other students' work from past classes. I thought it made it too easy for students. I thought it was a form of cheating. I ascribed an intent to their requests to see examples that I don't think is there. I think they're trying to do well but if you've never been exposed to anything like something like this, why wouldn't it be helpful to see examples.

I think that my past experience would say, "Well, if you see one then you think all of them should look like that. Well, okay, great, then show more than one so we can quickly get rid of that objection" but you talked about scaffolding and just that importance of building up and you were mentioning feedback loops.

This is another feedback loop that's early on and perhaps could even trigger even more ideas for them beyond if they were just worth a blank slate wouldn't really have ignited much in their own imagination but seeing a few examples then they might be even able to take it further.

I think my past resistance to this fades in comparison to the value that we get by being more transparent. I'm going to link in the show notes to the website for TILT. That is all around being transparent in how we measure teaching and learning.

That'll be helpful for people to not only be transparent in the general sense but they have a lot of specific assignments and they give examples of how we can be transparent in that, so it will help people put this into practice a little bit more.

Our final area that we're going to explore has to do with teaching and it's teaching to build up competence. We want to cultivate students' cognitive abilities to organize, to study, and to learn rigorous content. What stood out to you in this area?

[00:19:11] Janue: Okay, cultivating confidence. Again, one of the things that I really enjoyed that we had to do that I have not done and I felt like honestly my visual was trash but I'm just going to still [laughs] describe, one of the things we did was a

cognitive compression. We did an activity around cognitive compressions and then I believe we did--

I wish this was visual I could show examples, but I took pictures of a lot of the different visuals that some of the instructors that were in ESCALA created as a graphic organizer so that the students could see the patterns and connections in content so that they're able to develop their own expertise. I thought that was a really unique way because I've always been, I write outlines and lists and so to have to visualize it in the form of a drawing or using some type of art that was a good way for me to expand my own brain.

Then also consider how I could simplify that if I were to use that in a different activity for students and sometimes I work with a lot of faculty, but even communicating that to them as an option that it doesn't always have to be a list. No, but that they could do it so many different ways.

[00:20:27] Bonni: I've mentioned this previously on the podcast, but it's been at least a year and I think it's worth repeating. I am in the middle of teaching a class and one of the things they're doing is reading the book called *Getting Things Done* by David Allen. *Getting Things Done* has five components to it.

I promise not to go through all five because unless you're listening for that, and I might lose some of you on this. Then there's examples of those five things. One of the five components of *Getting Things Done* is actually doing things. So you're engaging with the work. You've done your planning, you've figured out what's most important, then now you're actually doing the work. I had slips of paper that would have the five components of *Getting Things Done* and then also other slips of paper that had, what are examples of these five things?

It was a sorting exercise. They had to sort out which one of these are the categories of things and then which one of these are examples of each one of those categories. Then they had to take all of those and tape them or somehow adhere them to a big piece of butcher paper that each of the groups had.

They had to come up with a visual analogy. Speaking of examples, I gave them some examples of past classes. It might be a garden, you're using *Getting Things Done* and you're going to use a garden analogy or you're going to use a travel analogy. You're going to be packing your bags up. It was amazing to me. I didn't tell them they couldn't use those examples by the way but all of them came up with something unique and distinct.

One that really stands out to me is one was kind of a detective mystery of solving a crime. It was amazing what they came up with. The other thing is that the entire group

of people, all got the same thing wrong. They only got one thing wrong. They sorted one thing incorrectly. That was for me, gee, haven't spent enough time there.

I wasn't too worried by the way because we're not really diving into that aspect of getting things done for a couple of weeks. I didn't worry as a teacher. These kinds of exercises can really inform where there is a gap in learning and where we might need to be concerned in terms of as teachers, have we done a good enough job?

I really liked that example of the graphic organizers and like you, I wish I had an example, "Here, look at this because I did such an amazing job." It's so much fun.

[00:22:43] Janue: It was so much fun.

[00:22:44] Bonni: Yes. Then the example I wanted to give is that as part of our certification where we're each earning a certification through this ESCALA, we were asked to record ourselves teaching for 45 minutes and then analyze it through the lens of their classroom observation instrument called TOPSE. That stands for Teaching, Observation Protocols to Measure Student Engagement.

It's based off, of a widely used, one that's used in STEM called COPUS, Classroom Observation Protocol Undergraduate STEM. They wanted to add in components that would look at culturally responsive teaching and specifically that student engagement.

After the Summer Institute, I got to go through and use that tool and analyze what percentage of people talked during the class and you look at it in two-minute increments. You're really analyzing who's talking and then what kinds of questions are being asked, whether by students or whether by you.

It's really a powerful process. I think it could be really helpful to make part of one's regular practice. I'm looking forward to using them even more with my own teaching and also to having that cascade further across our organization.

[00:24:02] Janue: That's amazing.

[00:24:04] Bonni: It's really cool. As you think about these three parts, relationship, expectations, and teaching or the relatedness, trust and competence, is there anything that we left out that we want to make sure that we mentioned about our experiences or any other points that we want to bring out before we go into the recommendation segment?

[00:24:22] Janue: I cannot think of anything.

[00:24:24] Bonni: I'm looking.

[00:24:27] Janue: There was so many good things we could keep going but that's it.

[00:24:32] Bonni: It's come up on our podcast before. I'd encourage people to start and I'd encourage myself to start including in your signature lines and also in your profiles, on your learning management systems, a recording to how you pronounce your name and then also asking your students to do the same thing.

The one that's been shared previously by Michelle Pacansky-Brock is called Name Coach but there are others out there. In fact, you could just even record an audio and store it on a cloud service somewhere and have that audio available. Although services like Name Coach make this easier, but that's one way we can foster supportive relationships.

Then also, we're actually doing some work on my campus. One of my colleagues, Jackie Park, who joined me at the Institute as well. We're working on some issues around creating an inclusive welcome statement. They did have some examples of how to do that. We're working on doing that and then we're going to test it with our students and see if we actually accomplish our goals of having a real inclusive welcome statement.

[00:25:31] Janue: One other thing since you mentioned that; that reminded me that there was also something that they mentioned about having a survey, a sample student survey and even though they provided. Theirs was pretty in-depth and long but they mentioned too that students could be anonymous, but it's a good way to learn about the students.

If they're working full time and they may encounter some barriers and challenges in completing course work, you may know that. Then when you check in with them, you can discuss that with them. It could be a variety of things, but I feel like it's a great way to learn about the students.

[00:26:08] Bonni: Yes. You shared earlier just about the importance of these different kinds of capital that we can bring into the classroom and including that cultural capital. How can we help our students do that better because as someone who is not educated about every culture that exists out there.

Part of that can be through the use of a student survey, where we can help to understand more about their lives and the kinds of capital that they're bringing into the classroom and help encourage them in that and identify it even. This is the point in the show where we each get to share our recommendations.

I have two of them today. They are completely different from one another. I will begin with Allison Horst's Statistical Illustrations. She stores them on a place called GitHub. Don't let GitHub scare you. Yes, a lot of geeky people hang out there, but it's also just a place where you can store things. She does have stuff that goes beyond my technical capabilities but, in this case, it's graphics that she allows us to use.

It's through a Creative Commons License and it's graphics to help people explain statistics better. She's got everything from the statistical language called R. She has R related artwork. I only know enough to be dangerous about R. I'm going to scroll past that stuff and move on to stuff that anyone who's taken an introductory statistics class might remember.

I remember from my statistics classes about Type I errors and Type II errors. She does has some really funny graphics around that and the things that the little creatures say are so cute. Then she's got things around continuous data and discrete data and a little chick, a little octopus, and then nominal, ordinal, and binary data.

She's got little turtles and butterflies and bees and sharks. It is so much fun and again allows us to use this on our own teaching as we're explaining some of these concepts to our students. I highly recommend a visit to Alison Horst's GitHub Stats Illustrations.

Then my second recommendation in a completely different venue, I have shared before on the show. In fact, I think this has come up a few times over the five years since we've been on air, the idea of saying no to things. I've mentioned books like *Essentialism* by Greg McKeown and how we really when we say no to things that help us be able to say yes to the even more important things.

What I have never mentioned until now is to create a yes filter. I do want to thank past guest Pooja Agarwal, who posted about this on Twitter. This is an article by Alison M Vaillancourt, *Create a "Yes" Filter*. Instead of just the no filters, we could ask ourselves whether not we should say yes on the following criteria. Is it relatively easy to fulfill? It seems appropriately novel or fun or energizing.

It gives me an opportunity to highlight my strengths and professional expertise. Meeting the request would not significantly detract from other existing priorities. Doing so would fill a reservoir of goodwill I might need to draw upon later. It would expose me to new people who might be interesting or helpful.

Tackling the challenge would enable me to learn something I had wanted to learn anyway. The last one, the recipients are likely to appreciate my time and effort. I think I've played such an emphasis on the "no" filter. I think I probably use a healthy dose of the "yes" filter.

I realized that I was actually using the "yes" filter and that I agreed to be a judge for a couple of social media contests around things, issues that I care a lot about. It didn't take a lot of the time. I did decline going to the gala where the award winners get announced and things like that, but I could sit in front of my computer and I could give my feedback and there are again issues that I care a lot about. I can make that tiny, tiny, tiny, minuscule piece of difference and I like that. I'd suggest that people go think about creating a yes filter instead of only focusing on the no filters. Janue, I get to pass it over to you for your part.

[00:30:20] Janue: My recommendations are one is a book by Bell Hooks and the title of the book is *Teaching to Transgress*. It was published in the '90s. It is a phenomenal book. It really gave me some insightful things as well as it just transformed some of the ways that I was thinking about education as a practice of freedom. She quotes a lot of Paulo Freire.

I'll just give a short quote. It says, "*All of us in the academy and in the culture as a whole are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institution and society, so that the way we live, teach and work can reflect our joy and cultural diversity, our passion for justice and our love of freedom.*" It's phenomenal. I love it.

Please check it out and Super Soul Sunday which probably does not connect but I'm learning a little bit about contemplated pedagogy and digging deep and self-actualizing and how all of that can play into our learning process. Super Soul Sunday is a great way to listen to wonderful interviews.

I feel like Oprah does a wonderful job of having all speakers from diverse backgrounds, diverse beliefs, but they all have these universal themes of love and way to nourish your soul, I guess I should say. That's it.

[00:31:42] Bonni: It is such a good podcast. I'm so glad you've recommended it because I don't think it's ever come up before. I'm going to have to go back and see if I can find this. It was such a long time ago, but she had an episode. Occasionally it's- mostly it's her interviewing someone else but occasionally, they'll give her giving a speech somewhere.

They'll record her and then use that. It was such a good speech having to do with confidence that actually would tie in with a lot of the things that we were talking about today. If I can find it, I'll put a link to it in the show notes and if I can't I send the wish off to the winds to see if anyone else has any idea what I'm talking about.

That would be a pretty deep cut for listeners [laughs] This is great. Well, thank you for both of these recommendations and Janue, I'm just glad this is just the beginning for us because we both care about teaching well and helping others to do that and in

addition to our own work of crafting what we do. Just thanks so much for your time today and your time over the summer and the conversations we're going to have to come.

[00:32:42] Janue: I appreciate you, Bonni. Thank you for all this wonderful work that you're doing. I just look forward to connecting with you more. Thank you for having me.

[00:32:52] Bonni: Janue Johnson, I so enjoyed our conversation. Thanks to you, for being a part of this special episode, a time for us to reflect on our cultural responsive teaching. Thanks to all of you for listening and I hope you'll go to the show notes @teachinginhighered.com/285 to have a look at some of the things that we linked to.

Also, if you'd like to receive regularly, emails in your inbox, just once a week, with information about the most recent shows, show notes, and also an article written about teaching or productivity by me, head on over to teachinginhighered.com/subscribe and you'll be able to get those emails and have even more reminders of what's out there on the Teaching in Higher Ed website for you.

Thanks so much, for listening to this episode. I will see you next time on Teaching in Higher Ed.

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[00:33:47] [END OF AUDIO]

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