

**STEPHEN CARPENTER:** Part of what I do is work with people who are preparing to be K-12 art teachers. I actually work with artists. I've taught studio-based courses in ceramics, drawing. And I'm also working with grad students who are interested in engaging in research about and through and within art practices, visual cultural practices. So there's this range of folks with whom I'm working.

So one of your-- I'm trying to negotiate a place to enter, Larry. And one of the things that you said was how explicit am I with, as we've been calling it, this hidden agenda, a hidden curriculum?

**LARRY SUSSKIND:** Not as an agenda

**STEPHEN CARPENTER:** No, but it's the same thing, right? In many cases, it's the same thing, right? Because you have an agenda that you're trying to cover, whether it's an official agenda, we can correlate that to the official curriculum. And I'm pulling this term, these curriculum pieces from the work of George Posner and others, where you might consider there are five kinds of curriculum that are happening at the same time, five concurrent curricula.

He says there's the official curriculum, which is what is written down. It's that officially mandated. This is what will be taught. Then there there's the operational curriculum. It's what you put into practice, trying to operationalize it. So it would be the official agenda, then the operationalized agenda. So agenda and curriculum to me, agenda gets a bad rap, I think, just like propaganda. But that's a different kettle of horses.

OK. So then the third curriculum that Posner talks about is the hidden curriculum, what is not official, what is not officially written down and intended, and what also is not necessarily operationalized intentionally. But it is what is hidden and gets learned and taught at the same time. The fourth would then be the null curriculum, what is not taught, what is not intended to be taught, what is absent and explicitly missing. And then the fifth is the extracurriculum. It doesn't happen inside those intentional spaces that we might think is formalized schooling.

So if we think of-- you're on the volleyball team. That's extracurricular, but it's still related to that education space. All five of those things are happening all the time. So the hidden agenda, the hidden curriculum is one that I-- and there's some tension there, because in some

cases, it's operationalized with a conscious awareness that it's hidden. I'm not going to be explicit about it. But then there can be a hidden curriculum where it's being taught and learned without the intention of it being taught and learned.

So when we ask kids to-- for example, there are bathrooms-- when I was a kid, gendered bathrooms, men's bathroom when we're boys and girls, and so it's teaching us certain things about how society is structured. But when we move and have a shift in our cultural and social space where bathrooms don't have to have certain labels, then other knowledge, other ideas are taught and learned through those gestures. But they're not necessarily official. Does that make sense?

**LARRY** Yeah.

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN  
CARPENTER:** OK. So the program where I teach at Penn State for an art education, also at VCFA, we're very explicit about what that hidden agenda might be. It's to the point where it's not hidden at all. It's very upfront. It's very official. And it gets operationalized in terms of a focus on social justice, a focus on the role of artists and art in the world and what matters matter and how we can engage with concepts and theories like we heard in the introduction-- feminist theory or critical race theory or critical pedagogy. Or we can think about anti-racist theory. So we can think about-- or disability studies-- all of these different ways in which society operates are part of the curriculum that I've been part of in these two institutions to look at the preparation of teachers.

So someone who says, hey, I want to go study in this program, it's not a surprise to them when we start talking about feminist pedagogy and feminist issues. What might be a surprise is perhaps the ways in which we approach that and then operationalize it. But it shouldn't be a surprise.

Now in some cases, some people might not always read the [LAUGHS] the fine print. And then there might be a surprise there. But I don't hide those issues. As a matter of fact, I'm very upfront with my undergraduates about, in this course, we're going to learn about learning. And I'm more interested in learning than I am in teaching. And that doesn't make sense to a lot of people who are preparing to be teachers or think about teaching, because to frame it around learning suggests there's a shift from the agency of the teacher as the primary vehicle to the student.

**LARRY** Do I need a first course where there's no interference with learning to draw in a basic way?

**SUSSKIND:** And then after that, I can come to a second level drawing class where you can lay on all this other stuff. Or from the very beginning, in even the most rudimentary learning of the medium, are you already insinuating into the design of this curriculum this other set of concerns? I don't even have to know anything about the basics independent of this second concern to start learning this other set of things?

**STEPHEN** No. One can enter with the concerns.

**CARPENTER:**

**LARRY** And that is your plan, most of the time?

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** All of the time.

**CARPENTER:**

**LARRY** All the time.

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** All the time.

**CARPENTER:**

**LARRY** All right.

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** So [CHUCKLES] we start with, let's say, social issues. Or let's say we're grounding the course within a social space. We all live in a social space. We all come with a set of concerns. We all come with a set of experiences. We come to the studio, and then return to wherever we were before that. What we experience outside of the studio is content for art-making. It's content for engagement through art.

So this is a shift where we think of-- so if we take a step back to notions of curriculum, a very basic question in curriculum design, creating theory, curriculum development, I should say, is what is worth knowing? What content do we want students to learn? What is worth knowing?

We might then look through the progression of curriculum theory. And then folks 30, 40 years ago start making a shift in [INAUDIBLE]. What is worthwhile? What matters? And what happens is there's a movement away from a more modernist notion of art as material-based

to art as a reflection and engagement within the world. Not that it hadn't been that way before. But that the world becomes an art-making medium, and in a context that can be not only reflected and depicted, but can also be used as one of the materials within art-making practice. And that art practice can have some sort of engaged and intentional effect within that.

So the kind of drawing class that you're mentioning or describing is not uncommon. These kinds of courses happen quite often. But their titles don't always reflect that. And many art schools are making some shifts.

I had mentioned to a colleague a number of years ago, I said, we really need to change the names of some of these courses. Like, we should have Art with Larry, Art 505, Art with Larry, and then Art 507, Art with Steve. And they would have a sense of what that course was about.

It it's not a materials-specific course, although it could be. But when we move the focus to issues, ideas, concerns, engagements, problems, ideas, that is an easier entry point for the kinds of pedagogy that we're talking about, that lend themselves to the sensibilities of disruptive practices, of social consciousness, of transformative learning.

**LARRY**

**SUSSKIND:**

And what I've taken from your comments on occasion is that I ought to have that objective if I'm going to teach people about operating in their community. Don't just teach the method or the content. But get to this other level and build that into the curriculum. Take responsibility for that. Be explicit about it. Be accountable not just during but even before, although who knows whether they would have let me anywhere near the place if I had said at the beginning, our goal here is to bring about change in this community.

**STEPHEN**

**CARPENTER:**

Well, it depends on your strategy there, right? So if we think about it this way. Now you didn't mention this in your story. But I would be interested in this component, because it also then gets back to one of those parts of the longer question you asked me earlier about my own students and my own teaching. This is part of the social studies curriculum?

**LARRY**

**SUSSKIND:**

Yes.

**STEPHEN**

**CARPENTER:**

Officially, right? There should be some objectives. There should be some state standards or district standards or district objectives that many teachers consider to be the curriculum. And they teach to those standards or to those objectives. I teach my students, put those aside.

Let's build on what you know, what is most important, build on your own politics, build on the-- let's start with the themes and the ideas and the concerns that you have. Build your curriculum around that, drawing on your art practice, your knowledge of art.

And then let's compare. Let's use those standards or those objectives as an assessment. Now how many of those do we address? Usually we can cover all of those. But if we start the other way around, we start with learning Objective 6 and learning Objective 8, and this is the lesson, it's going to be really narrow and tight. And it doesn't-- and you're always going to be interested in we got to kick it back into the center. We got to make sure they're--

But in the way that you did it, I would imagine you could have said at any given moment, when you felt some resistance, well, if we look at the standards, we're covering XYZ, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, because-- and this is a way that one-- I'm not trying to say this is how you do a cover-up story. But this is how you can justify the social practice, social engagement, social consciousness pedagogy is you say, look, we're meeting all of the standards.

As a matter of fact, if we were to do, let's say, three units like this over the course of the year, we could hit all of those objectives each time. If we do it in a more conventional approach, we might only address one of those objectives once or a few of them very superficially. So this becomes an even more potent way to make a case, because you're using the-- you were talking about values.

**LARRY** Use the objectives against them. [LAUGHING]

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** Yes, I call it playing judo. You use your opponent's strength and speed to your advantage.

**CARPENTER:**

**LARRY** Right.

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** Yeah.

**CARPENTER:**

**LARRY** When I teach graduate students who are in a professional degree program, all of this is easily talked about. It's layered into the social objectives, the social change impact. It's all easily included in the conversation. And there's explicit reflection on the social impact, social

implications, social change, or who wins, who loses if you do this, and so on.

It's just fascinating to me that you're teaching teachers or teaching kids in elementary school. And you're, in a sense, teaching the same thing. And you're not really modulating that much. You're still saying, there's biases here. Everyone has a bias. And you learn what you're including, what you're not including. And it sounds like you would say that to every level and to the teachers teaching at every level. And that was surprising to me, that all of this was as explicit in your curriculum in your teaching for K-12, as it is in teaching professionals.

**STEPHEN  
CARPENTER:**

Yeah. Let me give you a couple examples to say, yes, to support what you're saying. So there are a number of courses that one might find in an undergraduate or pre-service art education curriculum. You can imagine, there has to be a 101 or Art Education 101, Intro. And then there has to be the student teaching at the other end. And somewhere in there, there's a practicum course. Many places have methods courses. There's usually a history course or a cultural practices or a cultural foundations course.

And there's also a curriculum course. And it depends on what institution where I'm teaching. But usually if it's the curriculum course or the cultural and social foundations course, the first day of class, this is how I start the class. Now we've known each other for almost two years now. And we've sat through these conversations. So you know what I look like. You know what I sound like.

But imagine students who are just showing up to class for the first time. And this is how I start the class. (BRITISH ACCENT) Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Carpenter, and I'll be your instructor this semester. So for the next 16 weeks, we'll be engaging in curriculum and cultural and social issues related to art education.

Now some of you come to the course as artists and others come as-- and I continue in just this way. And we start to read the syllabus. And at a certain point, I just can't do this. I cannot find different regions of the UK to move around my accent. And certain students start saying, look.

And then I say, (NO ACCENT) well, now the next thing that we're going to do, and I change my voice like this. And they're looking at me like, oh, my goodness. What's going on? And I stop them right there. This is the first day of class, Larry. You haven't blinked in a minute. And your mouth is wide open, and you're giggling. And what's going on here? And I make them talk.

I say, what's up? Well, you sound different. I sound different than what? Well, you sound

different than you did before. Well, what did I sound like before? Well, you sounded-- you had an accent. Oh, I did? What kind of accent? I say, well, if I'm someplace else, I have an accent there. But when I'm home, I don't have an accent. People who sounded like that at home don't have an accent. It's only when they leave. And so what else is different?

And they also end up talking about, well-- I move them to the space to say, faces that look like mine, in most people's conception, at least in the institutions where I teach, don't sound like that. Or the conception of someone with an accent like that looks different than I do. But I put it on the table, and I draw attention to what this pigmentation looks like and what it sounds like (BRITISH ACCENT) to talk like this. Or if I talk like this or have a-- so the idea of how accents inform and influence--

**LARRY** Biases.

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** --biases. That's it. Day one. I say, so how do you sound when you talk to your students? How  
**CARPENTER:** does your language-- how does the way you dress speak to your students? And also, how do you respond to your students based on what they sound like and what they-- day one.

**LARRY** And you wouldn't-- I mean, that's not keyed to the age or level of the students.

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** Yeah. So this becomes part of what it means to be a teacher. So if you're interested in  
**CARPENTER:** teaching learners, you have multiple identities in that space. But if you're going to assume that all learners are learners are learners, it's much easier. You just deliver stuff and expect it to come back in the same way. It's not messy at all.

For the younger ones, I'm also spending this year as an artist and learner in residence at an elementary school in my town. So I visit a class of first graders just about every Friday. And then I'm working with the entire third grade team.

**LARRY** [INAUDIBLE].

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** No, that's OK. Yeah. Well, it's funny you say that, because one of the things I've been doing  
**CARPENTER:** with the third graders is looking at the water crisis. And I know some of you are interested in the global water crisis. So in third grade, Africa is one of their social studies units. It worked out really quite well in connection with the African diaspora water curriculum that I've been working

on that was funded by the Africana Research Center at Penn State.

And so to talk to them about the water crisis in Africa, there's a moment in which, for some learners and for some teachers, there could be a moment where you equate Africa, no water. All Africans have no water. Right? I have to call that out.

There's also a moment where-- and this happens beyond third grade-- it happens in the news. It happens in TV shows. It happens in textbooks. It happens in daily conversation, where people will say, I'm going on a trip, multiple places. I'm going to fly to France. And I'm going to go to Germany, and I'm going to go to Africa.

Really? You're going to go to a country, country, continent, where we frame Africa as an entire country. And for those third graders to learn that, to learn what I mean by that, to learn that Africa is a country? No, Africa is one continent made up of multiple countries. Somehow, that doesn't always happen. And so the message then in society is one that needs to be attended to. I mean, it certainly then lends itself to biases or misunderstandings about the continent.

So I make it clear to the third graders. But this how I do it. And I put a map of Africa and say, so here's the country of Africa. And we're going to talk-- no! What do you mean it's not-- with a little bit of joking, with a little teasing, to make sure. And I enable them and allow them to make explicit what they're hearing. And to continue to do that is quite important.

There's a book by Walter Bateman. He wrote, I think, after he retired from the College of Education-- I think it was at University of Minnesota-- it's called *Teaching Through Inquiry*. And one of the strategies that he uses that I borrow, or he writes about in this book, is based on the Socratic method. But it's also based in this notion of inquiry through the process of asking questions one can reveal.

But to make sure students are paying attention, you can provide information as factual, factual, not factual, factual, and see when and how they pick up on it. And I love doing that with the younger kids. Or when it's time to share-- so then another component is I've been sharing with the students design challenges that are drawn directly from lack of adequate access to water in different countries in Africa, as exemplified from different places. So whether it's the water filter or pumping water or piping water or transporting water or collecting water out of the air through the moisture.



So I say, look, here's an example. Imagine you live in a rural town. And you have an amazing access to water, but it's filled with disease and mosquito larvae and all this. I'd like you to design a way to filter that water. But you can't use any electricity. And you can't use any oil or any gas, no motive of motion or power, other than the human body. Divide into a group of two, three, four and draw this. And I give them 10 minutes. These are eight- and nine-year-olds.

And they go away and they draw it. And then when they share these things-- this the same challenge that you give that designers are dealing with in the world right now. Their drawings are incredible. Their design-- the conversations they're having are incredible. But the way frame it is, imagine you lived in a town, blah, blah, blah. I don't say, imagine you lived in this African village.

And to take it away from that-- although they are studying Africa, I take it away from that and make it a more generic space for them to think through. Then I say, well, in certain countries in Africa, this is the case, just like in certain states in this country, just like in other countries in the world. So I don't just leave it there. Making it explicit with the students is very, very important. And they get it.

**LARRY**  
**SUSSKIND:** I'm still on this idea that there's this special quality about being a socially disruptive artist or being a teacher who's trying to take this into account. And all the other things that we try to help people get better at teaching or better at doing something doesn't get at this core quality. I think it is different and special and scary and other things.

**STEPHEN**  
**CARPENTER:** Yeah, I think it's all of those things. I also-- maybe you recall, I said, when I'm doing the water fountain work, I still get anxious to approach people.

**LARRY**  
**SUSSKIND:** You don't know who's going to haul off and belt you.

**STEPHEN**  
**CARPENTER:** They might do this. Watching all these YouTube videos tells me other people, this happens to folks all the time. But it's the social engagement that is an important part of the materiality of that work, just like clay is an important material part of ceramics, obviously. And not everybody is as able with all media as they would like to be or teaching and learning certain content. So that's just an understanding.

**LARRY**  
**SUSSKIND:** Yeah, but this is different in kind than learning another medium. I'm terrible, terrible, terrible at watercolor. But watch me go when I do something else. OK, I can get better at it. You can

teach me to get better at it. It isn't I'm not great at it. I've never been good at it. But OK, if I put enough effort in and you give me coaching, and I try it, and I watch it, I'll get better. I just have a sense that being ready to commit to engage in public spaces in something aimed at changing the way people think about things that are challenging their identity is not something that you can build the capacity in the same way.

**STEPHEN  
CARPENTER:**

So this is how I want to answer this question in another way, because I think we're going around on this on the same question. And I appreciate the provocations. So if I think about the most recent semester where I taught the participatory inquiry course, a range of students in this course-- one student from I believe she's in sociology or comparative literature, perhaps. Comparative literature-- was not about to perform, to do the reading in public. But was very interested in graphic novels, comics, visual representation. And the issue she was interested in was this conversation on campus about unionizing graduate students.

And so I was kind of concerned about, well, how do I perform unionizing and the political issues there. And so we talked about her interest in graphic novels and comics. And what she ended up doing was, essentially, it was a survey of sorts asking people to provide her with feedback, their perspective on this issue, on unionization of grad students, and with little drop boxes where they could-- it's almost like those suggestion boxes.

And she put them in strategic places, collected them, and then made the graphic visual representation depictions, almost like cartoon on these squares, panels. And then with the speech bubbles as was the content from the anonymous suggestions that people gave her.

And then she would post these on bulletin boards. So you could see this public display of comments. She physically put this in the world. But she didn't physically put herself in the world. Does that make sense?

**LARRY  
SUSSKIND:**

Yeah.

**STEPHEN  
CARPENTER:**

So we're playing to strengths that way. And that's why the particulars of what she was about when she was interested in and what she was capable, that's what that went.

Another student who was in architecture was interested in-- so on our campus, I don't know how it happens around Cambridge and around MIT, but we have different representatives from different religions or different beliefs who will set up in different parts of campus. And

they're allowed to do that. And they'll pass out literature. And they'll engage people in conversation.

And so what this one student did was, he wanted to emulate their-- he wanted to borrow their mode of their presentation, but not their message. He wanted to actually substitute out their message of religion and spirituality with concepts from architecture. And so he [CHUCKLES]--

**LARRY** Sounds a little strange.

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** It is very. It was, yeah, exactly. So imagine, you're walking down the sidewalk and someone  
**CARPENTER:** says, oh, may I talk to you about being saved or may I talk to you about spiritual enlightenment or whatever? And then instead of doing that, you say, well, do you have a moment, because I'd like to talk to you about the differences between concrete and cement and their uses in architectural structures. I'm thinking, what? But he's dressed as if--

**LARRY** It sounds like a really MIT thing.

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** Right?

**CARPENTER:**

[LAUGHTER]

But he's dressed as someone that you might see on campus in the guise of a spiritual or a religious practice. So in that way, he felt very comfortable doing that. But it was about, well, how do you take on that persona without-- he wasn't trying to [INAUDIBLE]. He was trying to use that visual as momentum.

**LARRY** Until you play to his strength--

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** You play to their strengths.

**CARPENTER:**

**LARRY** There a lot of ways of doing this. You're playing to people's strengths.

**SUSSKIND:**

**STEPHEN** That's what it's about. Yeah.

**CARPENTER:**

**LARRY**            I like that.

**SUSSKIND:**