



Cindy Foley

Cindy Foley: [00:00:00] Wonder, curiosity, and questioning is the is the force for creativity.

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:15] Welcome to Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. This is Annalies Corbin, Chief Goddess of the PAST Foundation and your host. We hear frequently that the global education system is broken. In fact, we spend billions of dollars trying to fix something that's actually not broken at all, but rather irrelevant. It's obsolete. A hundred years ago, it functioned fine. So, let's talk about how we reimagine, rethink, and redesign our educational system.

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:49] So, welcome to Learning Unboxed. Today's episode is more conversation about the role of arts in community and education and why those are so incredibly, incredibly important. So, I'm your host, Annalies Corbin. And I am, as always, very excited about my guest. Today, joining us is Cindy Meyers Foley, who is the Executive Deputy Director for Learning and Experience at the Columbus Museum of Art. And that is a mouthful-

Cindy Foley: [00:01:14] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:14] ... I want to start with that, Cindy. And so, a little bit about Cindy. She has been in this space for a number of years. I've had the privilege and the pleasure of being able to work with her on and off over the years on a number of different initiatives. And she's done everything from coauthor books, and work on manuals, to be doing TedX events. She's been part of the Harvard Project Zero Classrooms Summer Program, and a number of other things over the years. And so, we're just so very, very thrilled to have you here.

Cindy Foley: [00:01:48] Thanks, Annalies.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:49] Yeah, we're excited.

Cindy Foley: [00:01:51] Yay!

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:51] So, I want to just dive right in. And we've done a couple of episodes now that we're really starting to dig into, sort of, the role of the arts and design thinking more than anything else. And one of the things that I love about what the work that you do at the museum — and I want to talk a little bit about the Columbus Museum of Art, and its role and its philosophy, I guess, if you will-

Cindy Foley: [00:02:12] Sure.

Annalies Corbin: [00:02:12] ... as a community organization. But I want to tie that back specifically to your work around creativity, and what all of that means. So, let's start with the big picture. So, tell our listeners from afar about the Columbus Museum of Art and why it's really taken on a leadership role as it relates to arts education.

Cindy Foley: [00:02:28] So, one of the things I love about the Columbus Museum of Art is I've been at the museum 13 years now. And when I arrived, we were at a crossroads. We were starting a capital campaign. And like many museums, when you go through a capital campaign process, you begin to question, "Okay, So, we're going to change externally. What do we do in the meantime while that's taking place?" And my director, Nannette Maciejunes, asked me a very thought-provoking question early on in this process as we're consulting with architects, and we're beginning to think about this transformation. She said, "What's the value of learning in this institution? What is the value? And by the way, if you could write like a one-pager on that, Cindy, it'd be fantastic."

Annalies Corbin: [00:03:20] And I want it by 5:00 tomorrow.

Cindy Foley: [00:03:23] Oh, even worse. There is a story to this. Even worse, she gives this to me on a Friday. I was about to leave for my vacation, and she said, "You can get it to me when you're back." But of course, I knew I'd be haunted the entire vacation. So, the interesting part of this story is I was going to Provincetown, Massachusetts. And if you've ever been to Provincetown, it's this incredible artist colony on the very tip. It's one of the most progressive places you can ever imagine going.

Cindy Foley: [00:03:50] So, the entire way to Provincetown. I'm trying to think about, "What's the value of learning in my institution?" And here I am going to spend my leisure time, this time off, going to a place where artists gathered to think together, to revel in creativity, because it's what I value. I know it's what artists value. And I had this aha moment on the way to Provincetown where it dawned on me, Nanette.

Cindy Foley: [00:04:21] And when I get back, I didn't have that one pager. [Indiscernible]. I had like the circles, and in the center was creativity. And I said, "Nanette, here's what I'm thinking, that the role and value of learning in an art museum is that if you walk through a museum at any given time, art museums, specifically, you're going to see the outputs of some of the most creative thinkers who've ever walked the planet. People who've challenged our norms, given us places to go that we could never have imagined. What we value is creativity. So, I don't have a one pager, but I think as we go through this process, if you believe that too, we should really regroup and think about it."

Cindy Foley: [00:05:09] And here's why I love my director, and it's sometimes challenging because what she says next is, "Great. I'm fully behind this. So, are we actually cultivating creativity now?" And the challenging part of this story is over the next period of time, about three to five years, we begin to evaluate everything we were doing in the museum, any kind of experience we were providing, and realized that 80% of what we were doing was not cultivating thinking.

Cindy Foley: [00:05:44] So, an example I often give, this was a typical, and it still is in probably some institutions, but the typical thing is we'd have a Monet exhibition, and we would say, "Oh, come down to the studio, and we'll have paints set up, and someone to show you how to make something that looks like a mini Monet." But then, the sad part of that story is you didn't get to think like Monet. You didn't get to challenge the norms around how we perceive and how we experience the world and what things actually look like versus what we sense that they look like. And of course, that's the brilliance of Monet. But yeah, we weren't doing much to cultivate that in others.

Annalies Corbin: [00:06:27] Right. And that's really a wonderful sort of segue because that's the moment that I really started engaging with the work that you were doing broadly at the museum. The museum and the staff, you were in the thick of that work. Your capital campaign was going on. We were launching our work, really, to move it, like you, into the next, sort of the way that we might think, and how do we leverage that type of thinking. And that was part of the fun was being able to dig in with you and say, "Well, if we were to take some of those ideas and put them into the community, what might it look like?" And we tried, I remember, many things over the course of the year.

Cindy Foley: [00:07:13] Oh my gosh. Absolutely. **Annalies Corbin:** [00:07:13] Right?

Cindy Foley: [00:07:13] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:13] But it is those pivotal opportunities. And I love the fact that the museum chose to focus on, not just trying the thing, but living the experience of trying the thing.

Cindy Foley: [00:07:27] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:27] Right?

Cindy Foley: [00:07:28] And embodying what that meant internally. as well as externally.

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:32] Right.

Cindy Foley: [00:07:32] So, to kind of give you a sense of what that messiness looked like, we opened in 2010, we opened a Center for Creativity. And that was — it was a space. It's 18,000 square feet, but it was also that philosophical shift, and it was the intentionality that everything we would do, we would try to cultivate these behaviors or dispositions that are intertwined with creativity. And we made a commitment to that.

Cindy Foley: [00:08:01] But one thing we weren't quite thinking about was the fact that we opened a center, and within a month, I started getting calls from superintendents, local principals. And this is the moment, you will remember this, 21st Century Skills. Everybody is talking about them, right. And the principals were saying, "We get collaboration. We get even critical thinking. But what does creativity look like?"

Annalies Corbin: [00:08:29] Really, yeah.

Cindy Foley: [00:08:29] "How do I know that my classes are cultivating?" And the way we define creativity is probably important to insert here. We define creativity as the ability, using the imagination and critical thinking, to develop new ideas that have value. So, a lot of folks began asking us, "How do I do this?" And the crazy part is we knew what creativity looked like, we had a sense of it, we'd been doing this work for a little while, but we realized we were going to have to go on that journey with educators.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:08] Absolutely.

Cindy Foley: [00:09:09] And that's where we reached out to folks like you. We reached out to a lot of different — everything from cultural organizations, but then there were some extraordinary educators in this community who immediately started blowing our minds around, "That's the change that we needed to take on."

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:28] Right, right. And I think, also, there's a little bit of context. And for our listeners who are listening to what we're talking about, could you just very briefly describe the space itself? And I tell everybody, because I get asked this question a million times as it relates to innovative spaces for a whole host of reasons, obviously, and I tell folks all the time that you can do anything with what you have. But the reality is we do know that when there is the opportunity that space does matter. But it doesn't have to, and it's not always the limiting factor. But I do think it's important for our listeners to understand what is that 18,000-square-foot space physically capable of doing because I think it helps put the context in for the next piece of conversation.

Cindy Foley: [00:10:13] Perfect. Well, it was in that space that we — using the word "laboratory," by the way, is the smartest thing anyone can do when they don't quite know exactly what they're going to accomplish. But the one thing we knew is we were going to be incredibly intentional. So, after starting this work, we came up with like nine behaviors of creativity that we were really committed to, that we noticed artists embody. So, it's things like reflection and revision, persistence through failure. A big one was tolerance for ambiguity. So, there were nine on this list. And we realized if we wanted folks to enact some of these behaviors, we had to give opportunities, and use art as a catalyst for it.

Cindy Foley: [00:11:02] So, we developed something we called — they could be called a number of different things, but we called them connectors. And they were participatory engagements that connected the art, the viewer, and this kind of intentionality we had around some sort of behavior. So, you might enter this space, and I'll give you an example. It's 18,000 square feet, and a lot of different kinds of spaces, gallery spaces, classroom spaces, but one of the galleries might be on the theme of motion. And one of the big ideas might be that artists may make something feel. You're looking at a two dimensional image, but they make something feel like it's in motion. So, we wanted our visitors to think about, "Well, how are they doing that? What does motion feel like?"

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:51] What does it look like?

Cindy Foley: [00:11:53] What does it look like? So, an example would be, then, we know that — we'd interview some of the artists, we'd know about their history. We found out one of them would explore with dominoes, what it looks like, and try to capture that moment of the fall, right, in photography. And so, why not just let our visitors experiment with that same motion and moment? Can they capture that too? Or we might have a board up that says, "What does motion sound like?" So, I remember this is one we had that says, "What does motion sound like?" And then, people would, on sticky notes, have to-

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:35] I remember this. And it was awesome.

Cindy Foley: [00:12:37] Yes!

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:37] It was really awesome because some people's sticky notes were — they were just mind blowing, but they were like, "I would have never, in a million years, said that."

Cindy Foley: [00:12:46] Well, here's a perfect one. I think about this one all the time, especially right now in the summers of Ohio. Somebody wrote that mosquito that's right by your ear, you know. And that's how you know there's-

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:59] Yeah, something.

Cindy Foley: [00:12:59] ... some motion because you can hear that energy without ever seeing anything.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:03] Right, right.

Cindy Foley: [00:13:04] And so, what happens is visitors leave these thoughts, and folks begin to add to them. They, then, can add stories. But a great example of one that our visitors won't let us remove is right before the center opened, we had these little shelves, and we wanted to have some sort of opportunity to use the imagination. And for us, the imagination is the ability to conceive of what is not, right. Can you make something that isn't there out of something? And we were a little desperate. We were running late. The center wasn't quite up, and we didn't quite have materials.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:42] I remember. This is so awesome. Yeah.

Cindy Foley: [00:13:46] So, somebody said, "For some reason, we have a whole lot of twist ties. Why don't we just leave out piles of twist ties?" We'd never really used it as an art material. We put them out. And within, I'd say, days we had this unbelievable structure starting to be built on these shelves. We would have books that people would make out of twist ties. But then, the next visitor would come in and add a fish attached to a line. And then, someone would have a bigger fish about to eat that fish. And these were all just constructed and left behind by our visitors. And one person's imagination would trigger someone else's. And so, once a year, we do take the twist ties down, and we replace them with white Legos.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:31] Legos.

Cindy Foley: [00:14:31] Yeah, but our visitors have said, "This is something." And here's an interesting fact, a couple of years ago, we looked at who participates with all these connectors throughout the — they used to just be in the center for creativity. They're throughout the building now. Something like 70% of our participants, sometimes higher, are adults.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:53] Yeah. No, and I have watched. So, as an anthropologist, many of my listeners know that my background is an anthropologist. And so, we spend, by design, a tremendous amount of time observing humanity. I always like to say we are, in fact, the scientists of humanity. And as such, we watch a lot. And what I can tell you is that without fail, when I am in the Columbus Museum of Art, whether I'm there for a book meeting, or I'm there to go see a new exhibit, and I do, my son and I go to the museum, or I'm there for a thousand other reasons in our community that you might show up at the Columbus Museum of Art, and I could say that just intuitively, by and large, the people actively doing, and all the kids are who are there are actively doing-

Cindy Foley: [00:15:40] Oh, yeah. They're the models.

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:42] Yeah. Well, they're the players, right. But the reality is it's the adults. It's the adults in the room who are almost always the most engaged with the thing, the chance to touch, to explore, to build, to create, whether they realize they're engaged in or not, but they're the ones who — and you can just — you can watch it processing through. And I think part of it is as we get older, we forget the value of just that creative process that's available to us.

Cindy Foley: [00:16:12] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:12] I have an ancillary with your story on the twist ties. For many, many years, I struggled with how to teach my grad student in my world archaeology or anthropology courses, how do we know what we know when there are no words left behind, right? And it's this ongoing issue is, prior to a written text that tells me in words or in graphics specifically what my messaging is back to the world, how do we really know and how do I deal with the interpretive value of what I know, or somebody's creativity, or is it fiction, or is it real, is there a story that they're trying to tell, right? And we'd use a process of interpreting public art by creating public art.

Cindy Foley: [00:16:58] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:58] And I saw very similar things. It didn't matter which method I used to do this experiment with my students. The reality of it was as soon as you put it out there, a blank slate, a set of twisty ties, a piece of butcher paper, and you ask people to engage with you, suddenly, the creativity of the story. And it's iterative, right?

Cindy Foley: [00:17:17] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:17] It's amazing.

Cindy Foley: [00:17:18] Yeah. It feeds. It reminds me of one of the early partnerships that we started that, of course, I was not expecting, but makes total sense today. I got a call from some folks at the medical school, and they wanted to figure out — they had they'd learned that we offered a program for fifth graders, specifically, around critical thinking. And I ended up in a conversation with the dean of the med school. And he says, at High State University, "Cindy, the incredible thing about med students today is they have done so well in the education system that we have produced. They are incredible test takers. They can memorize like crazy. They are brilliant human beings. But by second year of med school, they get introduced to patients." And he thought that they were floundering. And in a lot of ways, part of that was because they (1), didn't love collaboration; (2)-

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:22] Well, they didn't know how to do it.

Cindy Foley: [00:18:22] Right. They had never experienced what generative collaboration could look like.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:27] Correct, right, right.

Cindy Foley: [00:18:28] And two, they had — they did not have a tolerance for ambiguity. They wanted things to be black or white.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:34] They want to be able to pass the test.

Cindy Foley: [00:18:36] Right.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:36] Right. No matter how you approach that. Right.

Cindy Foley: [00:18:39] And let's think about, you could take any human being who has any ailment, and walk into three different doctor's office, and get three different diagnoses, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:48] Exactly.

Cindy Foley: [00:18:48] And he said, "But what we know is that diagnosing a patient is far more like interpreting a work of art than it is about taking a test. And the-"

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:01] It's brilliant.

Cindy Foley: [00:19:01] "... more voices that you get, the more thinking that you have to do around that work of art, the more you come to the right conclusions." So, that was when we started creating like a three-hour experience where we would go into the galleries with med school students. And, now, we work with everything from the medical school to the veterinary school. But we have a large swath of med students who are pushing that thinking. And it's helping them think differently about the practice of medicine by using a work of art as a catalyst.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:39] It's reminding them about their humanity. And I think that that is one of the things as we've tracked this a journey, if you will, through modern education systems. And I talk about that a lot on this program. We got to a point where we sterilized something that should have never been sterilized, right. And because we did that, we created an entire generation, I would argue, at least, to maybe 2.5 generations — a whole another episode, right-

Cindy Foley: [00:20:11] Yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:12] ... of folks who are capable but have no idea how.

Cindy Foley: [00:20:17] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:17] And I think it's because there's this disconnect somewhere along the way where we've taken knowledge, and we've said it's not connected, not just to the world, but even to you as the user or the purveyor of that thing, right. And so, you've lost touch with your your world and with humanity as a result of that. And so, when we toss folks — and the medical students — and I remember the first time you told me this story, actually, and I was, "Oh, that is brilliant," for starters. "It's just brilliant." And second — and, of course, brilliant, but meaningful because it was going to have the potential. And, now, there's enough years in, and you know how well it works. And I've talked to folks over at OSU, at the medical school, who — and I've talked to participants have gone to that program, actually-

Cindy Foley: [00:21:06] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:06] ... and they remember it vividly. And they remember how that experience reminded them to think about what they were looking at very differently. And so, it does, in fact, work. And it's one of these wonderful tools, if you will, that any teacher, and any school, any community, whether museum or otherwise, you can do this every day with students from little ones to full-grown adults. You can run this exercise a thousand different ways and have the same meaningful impact.

Cindy Foley: [00:21:39] Absolutely. Well, and I think what you're getting at is we, as an institution, as we shifted gears, realized we had to cultivate and think about how to be creative thinkers ourselves, and how to work with our community to begin designing these experiences. What also began to shock and almost make us like wondrous is when we started working with educators specifically, we had — the first summer, we had 15 educators in the Teaching for Creativity Institute. And these were educators who found out we were doing something like this and were so hungry. They knew they wanted to change their practice. And we both know these educators. They were ready for someone just to catalyze them, to light that ignition. And after about two years of working with educators, it dawned on us that our job wasn't just to encourage. And we use — we often talk about the Columbus Museum of Art has a soft power that we underestimated for decades. And that soft power is when a principal hears, "Oh, the Columbus Museum of Art is interested in what you're doing? Well, then, I'm going to give you a little bit more space to do that."

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:01] Right, yeah. Exactly, yeah. Yeah.

Cindy Foley: [00:23:02] So, we decided we're going to capitalize on that. But we, also, realized, why don't we do a little bit of research? We've seen what's happened in our own programs. We've evaluated some of that thinking that the doctors, or our preschool programs, or even our teen programs, we were seeing what was happening. But we said, "What does that look like, sound like, and feel like in classrooms around Central Ohio, where there are engaged educators that are pushing us to even think differently?"

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:31] And can I quantify that for somebody else, right, because that's going to be on the backside of all these, right?

Cindy Foley: [00:23:36] You bet. **Annalies Corbin:** [00:23:36] Yeah, yeah.

Cindy Foley: [00:23:37] So, we actually started a project called Making Creativity Visible. And I had a very small role, but my favorite role in the project — one, I would talk about it, but my favorite role was I was assigned to a particular classroom. And Emily Reiser is a teacher in Bexley, and she was the one I got to go sit in. And I would just pay attention. I'd have my rubric there, and I would listen. And what I realized she did as an educator that we could all learn from is I remember the morning I came in, and she, in her palm, had a box, and she said, "Cindy, I'm scrapping everything I told you we're going to do today." And she opens the box up. And you may remember this time. It was May. She said, "The cicadas are coming."

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:26] Oh, yes.

Cindy Foley: [00:24:27] So, these juicy, 16-year cicadas or whatever they're called, had started to emerge. And she said, "So, I'm going with it." And what she realized is that wonder, curiosity, and questioning is the force for creativity. And so, she would bring this object. And I remember we were in there with kindergartners, and she said, "Okay. You all will not believe what I've got in my hand. Over the next couple of days, this," — and she opens the box, and there's that wonder face, right? "Oh, what is that?" And she said, "These are going to start emerging from the ground. They're going to be coming up in the hundreds, and we're going to see them everywhere." And the kids are just full of wondering. And then, immediately, that turns to curiosity. And they're starting to ask questions. And she says, "Okay, but here's our challenge. What's going to happen to them once they all get here?" And she begins to ask questions like, "Where are they going to

live? What are they going to do?" And the kids, then, riff off that. They're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. There's going to be babies." Who's going to take care of the babies? Are there going to be schools?" And she's like, "I don't know. I think we can help."

Cindy Foley: [00:25:42] And she lets go of the reins, and they begin to make — some of the kids took cardboard and made high-rise story, little houses for all the babies. Others would make buses and transportation devices. They just started to not only embody that imaginative space, but they have empathy for these. And I remember some of them were like, "Oh, we have to find something, so the mamas and the babies can stay together." And it was this glorious moment where they were asking lots of questions. And during the class, she would Google and find out more to answer their questions. But she allowed for that emergent curiosity-

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:23] It's organic.

Cindy Foley: [00:26:24] ... to take over her classroom. And I realized, "Okay, that's trans-disciplinary learning. That's the learning, I think, we all got to be focusing on is when our curiosity, and that wonder curiosity, and questioning is sparked. Then, we lead the learning. Educators get to just be the facilitators of that moment, and they play a role, but we are the ones activating.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:51] And that's the best moment, right? Because that truly is the embodiment of that learning unboxed, right?

Cindy Foley: [00:26:56] Yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:56] We have said we're going to let off the shelf go away. We're going to let what we think we know go away. We're going to completely empower and entrust.

Cindy Foley: [00:27:09] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:09] We're going to entrust this group that we're immersed in with figuring out the next question.

Cindy Foley: [00:27:17] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:18] Right? And they did not need her to do anything more than provide the opportunity and the environment in which it was safe to just run.

Cindy Foley: [00:27:28] Right.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:28] Right? And we see that, certainly, at PAST all the time. And the most successful teachers and the most successful programs are, quite frankly, the ones who are teaching less, listening more, and engaging with their audience whether that means in a preschool classroom, you're sitting on the floor with your kids, or your elbows deep in the sandpit with them, or the cicadas, or with your high school students, you're fully admitting, "I have no idea. Let's find out," and everything in between, obviously, right.

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:04] And the other thing that she did so beautifully — and I've also met that teacher. The thing that she does so beautifully, I think, circled back around is she allowed those kids to draw from their own experience, and then catalyze that experience into what was possible next, even though they didn't have the experience to know the next. You could watch it.

Cindy Foley: [00:28:27] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:28] And you could even see it in your expression as you're telling the story when you recognize how she was doing that so effectively. And once again, these little human beings fully in touch with their humanity in that moment, right?

Cindy Foley: [00:28:40] Yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:40] Because there was no constraint.

Cindy Foley: [00:28:42] Yes. But to give you another example of what that looks like, even with a sixth grade class, is Emily had a project once that I was observing where she gave the kids a light bulb and that cord that you could plug in. And she said, "Over the next six weeks, all I want you to really do is create..." Now, this was not a simple challenge for six graders.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:06] Sure, yeah, yeah.

Cindy Foley: [00:29:06] "I wanted to create a light fixture that would shine a light on a social issue that means something to you." So, in that first week, what they had unpacked is, what are your social issues, and what are ones that mean something to me?

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:24] Right, yeah.

Cindy Foley: [00:29:24] So, the kids went home, interviewed parents. They had conversations about social issues. They came back, discussed those, and then they had to start like researching. "Well, what if these resonate with me? It might resonate with dad, but maybe it's not my thing." And there was a point where my colleague and I got to go in, and we started interviewing some of the students. And I remember a young girl. She said, "Yeah, I'd love to show you what we're working on." And she said, "Well, I started — at first, I knew I wanted to have a shadow. And that shadow would be actually projected over top of a pill., oh, because the social issue that means something to me is mental health. And the more I learned about that, often, people with mental health issues need medicine, but they also need therapy, they need all these sorts of — but I couldn't get the shadow to encompass all that. So, then, I thought --" and she kept saying, "And then, I thought. And that made me think. And then, I did." And just her language, the language of questioning and the intensity of what she was discovering through that process was unbelievable.

Cindy Foley: [00:30:47] And what we end up learning is — we come back to the last visit, she had not finished her project. She had gone so deep, and so curious, and had tried so many projects that hadn't quite worked that, at the end, she had not completed a final project. And I remember talking to Emily, like, "Okay, what are you going to do because they're going to have the showcased for the parents?" And with an art project like that, you're going to have to show something. And I think we were all somewhat concerned until we said, "Well, wait a minute, we have the video of her talking."

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:29] Thinking, yeah.

Cindy Foley: [00:31:29] "Her thinking was what was so incredible." That power of her ideas and the way she was investigating something that was meaningful to her was, then, what she ended up showing to her parents. And it even makes me-

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:46] Even today, yeah, I could see it. It's all exciting. **Cindy Foley:** [00:31:49] I know. I'm so emotional.

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:50] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Cindy Foley: [00:31:50] But I think that's-

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:51] Yeah.

Cindy Foley: [00:31:51] That's learning that matters.

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:53] It is learning that matters. And it's learning that incredibly powerful and transformational — and I just literally, today, had the opportunity to have an experience that was very similar in the sense that we have a student at PAST who's going to be a senior this coming year. So, the student is in and around us all the time, who very, very much wants to have her background be some type of graphic design something. She hasn't quite figured out what that's going to be, right. But maybe it has something to do with on the production side of graphic design.

Annalies Corbin: [00:32:29] And so, she's interning with us this summer, and we've asked her to look around and observe, right. And she's one of her kids on our robotics program. And she's very, very creative. And she's been immersed in lots of things. But we said to her, "We want you to tell our story." That was the full — that's the breadth and depth of the instructions. You tell our story. We want you to tell it in a series of vignettes, maybe connected, maybe not. But we want you to look around, take what you know, take what you think, take what you see, and recraft our story. And a

whole series of these buckets that we gave her, here are some lenses through which we want our story told. And so, this morning, I got to watch the one that she — she literally did this on Friday because somebody said to her, "What are these STEM Bridge Program things? And why should I sign my kid up?"

Cindy Foley: [00:33:21] That's great.

Annalies Corbin: [00:33:22] Right. And it's the exact same thing. And it is a narrative of her explaining to the world what she perceives those definitions, those components are. And it's her thinking it out loud.

Cindy Foley: [00:33:37] Yeah, yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:33:39] And it — I was blown away.

Cindy Foley: [00:33:42] Yeah. Doesn't it make you think? Because even with the story of the young lady in Emily's class, when I've shown that to teachers, one of the questions that comes back around that we always end up asking is, does the product even matter in the end? And where is the role of the product? Because that's what we celebrate. We celebrate, how well did you do on the test? What was the final product? What was your concert? Did you do well in the concert? But we don't say that thinking that happened, that grappling with ideas, the failure, and that persistence to the failure doesn't get highlighted. So, how do we grapple with the system we've created that really puts all the emphasis at the end?

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:35] Right. And in the product, I would argue, because we — through our process that we constantly are talking about P3. I think you've heard us talk about it before. And for us, that problems, projects, and products. And we do believe that the product is important, but only because you have to click a box that says, "I evaluated something." But the reality is the space between the project and the thing you produce at the end is where the greatest learning takes place.

Cindy Foley: [00:35:05] Right.

Annalies Corbin: [00:35:06] Right? And so, yeah, I've got to check the box because I have to report to the state. We have all these requirements. But the reality of it is, and you proved it so many times, that her product was supposed to be this thing to show her parents, and the product ended up being the demonstration of her thought process, which was a thousand times more powerful than had she done anything else with that, right? At end of the day, in many ways, the journey there was incredible.

Cindy Foley: [00:35:33] Well, it reminds me of this story about art, which is that, often, people say, "Ugh, the most creative artists are the Picassos." Well, actually, if you look at the history of art, the Picassos produced a lot, and they typically produced them young and early. But some of the artists that are the most revered today, the Renoirs, some of the ones we think about for decades, they worked on perfecting and thinking about one thing. And it's a long game that their products didn't emerge early, that they were grappling with the way culture, and society, and how their work fit with it, and that we have to start thinking about learning in that different paradigm. Is it the Picasso paradigm or is it this other paradigm which is far more about a life of learning?

Annalies Corbin: [00:36:36] Yeah. And I think if you think about the ceramic folk artists from American Southeast, for example, right, there's a rich, rich culture of amazing folk artists involved in a variety of different ceramic trades. And think about how many times they made the pot, right. It is iteration, and iteration, and iteration, and iteration of this little functional thing, right, that over time, when you put out the collection, you can see the growth-

Cindy Foley: [00:37:06] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:37:06] ... of the artist, the skill. But the other thing that you see when you lay them out like that, very archaeologically — that's how I define that. When you lay your pots out there, the other thing that I always tell my students that you can see is, not only do you see the iterations of skill from point A to point Z, you see the iteration of the way they're thinking about that thing, right, because it becomes more decorative, less functional. It becomes — there's all these different permutations-

Cindy Foley: [00:37:36] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:37:36] ... that you can literally watch. And I think your example is spot on. It's the ongoing repetitive fashion of thinking about the thing that I'm trying to do via a story I'm trying to convey, right, which I think-

Cindy Foley: [00:37:54] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:37:54] ... brings you back around, then, to the making creativity visible in the program and the impact. So, I'm a teacher in Arizona, let's say, and I just heard this, and I'm just enamored with Cindy Foley, and I so desperately want to be part of what's happening. How do I do that? What does that look like?

Cindy Foley: [00:38:15] Yeah. For me, I would say that if you're from away, there are resources that you can find on our website, everything from the rubric that I've mentioned that's specifically for educators. We have had educators come from Boston, and Pittsburgh, and different places to be a part of our institute. I think one of the best things you can do, though, is if you're really interested in creativity having a place in your classroom is to get a sense of how do you cultivate your sense-

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:50] Exactly.

Cindy Foley: [00:38:50] ... of developing new ideas. And I'm not going to take a moment just right here to kind of put in a little commercial break. And it's funny. It's not a commercial about what we're doing, but I need to separate the mythology that's often attached to creativity and just say if you Google children in creativity, you often get these horrible images of kids with paint all over-

Annalies Corbin: [00:39:15] Yeah, correct.

Cindy Foley: [00:39:15] ... whereas, what we found from the Making Creativity Visible is that creativity is often ponderous. It's thinking. It's mapping out our ideas. It's in dialogue with people that you trust. So, first off, I think, all of us have to get comfortable

that we are creative humans, we develop ideas, and we do something with those ideas. But how do you do that? Is it through cooking? And do you have ways of communicating that to your students? And do you bring that sense of experimentation and play into your classroom? And I think that's one of the things we really put a lot of emphasis on is we can't expect it of our students if we can't embody it ourselves.

Cindy Foley: [00:40:02] There was a really early experience with a group of gifted educators, and they had told us in the morning, "We're really having trouble students. They can't stand open-ended questions." And so, they go to lunch, the educators. My team and I, we thought, "Oh, okay. Let's give them some sort of experience they might be able to do with their students when they get back." They come back after lunch, and we've given them this challenge where they all had a small little container of Legos, and they had to make what the idea of metaphor would look like out of Legos. Okay, granted, that is very challenging-

Annalies Corbin: [00:40:42] Very abstract.

Cindy Foley: [00:40:43] Incredibly abstract. I don't think we ever gave it again. But the idea was to push them. Within minutes, though, we had — I, probably, had two educators that needed to use the bathroom at that exact moment. Another group that indicated, "Oh, I need to leave early today, so." And then, another group that just refused to do the project altogether.

Annalies Corbin: [00:41:07] Yeah, yeah.

Cindy Foley: [00:41:07] I think what we have to understand as educators is that creativity is difficult. That ambiguity, the not knowing what's on the other side. **Annalies Corbin:** [00:41:18] That white wall is terrifying, right?

Cindy Foley: [00:41:19] Oh, it's terrifying. It's not just terrifying to us sometimes. Stepping over that threshold into that new space, it's terrifying to our students. And I think one of the most important things we talk to educators about right now is the

transparency. When you feel that, just be honest with yourself, maybe those around you, like, "This is scaring me a little bit. I don't know where this is going to go. I'm not super comfortable. But I know if I want to practice these behaviors and dispositions of creative thinkers, I'm going to have to step over the threshold." And we've found that's really helped teachers because it is very challenging to say, "I'm not sure where my class might go. But I need to do it if I wanted them to think that way too."

Annalies Corbin: [00:42:14] We need to not lose sight of the fact that we all benefit from time to time in being scaffolded in our experiences.

Cindy Foley: [00:42:22] You bet. Yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:42:24] Absolutely. And we see that with classrooms, with teachers, with the experiences all the time. We collectively benefit from the chance to try to fail in a safe environment, but to scaffold our level of experience all the way through. So, thank you so very much-

Cindy Foley: [00:42:42] Thank you for having me.

Annalies Corbin: [00:42:44] ... for joining me today and having this conversation. For our listeners, we'll have all of these resources that you heard Cindy talking about. It will be available on the website. So, please download them. And as always, reach out. Columbus Museum of Art is an amazing gem, not just within our city, with our entire region and, quite frankly, has a lot to offer for everybody else. So, thank you.

Cindy Foley: [00:43:04] Thank you. Thanks, PAST.

Annalies Corbin: [00:43:08] Thank you for joining us for Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. I want to thank my guest and encourage you all to be part of the conversation. Meet me on social media, @annaliescorbin. And join me next time as we stand up, step back, and lean in to reimagine education.