



Ashley Price and Laura Bloch

Laura Bloch: [00:00:00] Just like them, I fail too, and that's okay. And I think that's a big part of what I've studied in my research is that the teachers need to be able to really embody that persistence through failure in order to teach that to their students.

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:18] 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: [00:00:54] This is Annalies Corbin. Welcome to the next episode of Learning Unboxed. Today, we are going to talk about fear, fearlessness, and the propensity to shy away from letting our students fail. There is so much learning that can happen when we step back and let our student truly, truly be immersed in the opportunities of how we think about things - the modification, the failures, the success.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:21] And so, I'm very excited today to have two wonderful guests with me. Joining me are Ashley Price, Assistant Director of Bridge Programs at the PAST Innovation Lab. You hear me talk about the PAST Innovation Lab all the time. Ashley is part of the team that does everything tied to student experiences. An amazing teacher, planner, programmer, designer in her own right. And she oversees the Summer STEM Programs at the PAST Foundation. So, welcome, Ashley.

Ashley Price: [00:01:52] Thank you for having me.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:52] And joining Ashley is Laura Bloch. Laura comes to us from the Columbia University. She is a Masters student, and she was very brave to come and spend her summer interning at the PAST Innovation Lab. And Laura is working on completing a master's degree, Instructional Technology and Media at Columbia. And she's in the space where she's trying to decide if she's going to become a classroom teacher in those sorts of math, science, technology spaces or if she's really going to focus more on the technology intersection, and in education, and in

innovation. And so we were excited to have her come and test the waters with us this summer. So, welcome, Laura.

Laura Bloch: [00:02:40] Thank you. I'm also very excited to be here.

Annalies Corbin: [00:02:42] So, as we sort to just sort of get in and roll up our sleeves, a bit of context for our listeners. So, Ashley, we spent a lot of time on this program, and we reference the PAST Innovation lab all the time because, of course, it's our kitchen, right? It's our test spot. And we talk about it as an R&D center, a test kitchen, a think tank. And I think it's all of those things. And the work that you do is really around the creation of summer STEM experiences for students. So, could you give me the hundred-thousand-foot view really sort of what that program does and why?

Ashley Price: [00:03:16] Yeah. So, we have a number of different programs that we run throughout the summer. It can be anywhere from art in STEM, to Arduino robotics, to underwater robotics. And so, really what we do with summer programs is we want to give kiddos a chance to come in and see things that they may not see in the classroom, or experience things they may not experience in the classroom, and find out that there are jobs and things that you can do that you may not know exist until you come to a summer program, and find out that you can do something with underwater robotics, ROVs, and things like that. So, when we look at the summer programs, it's really, what can we give students that they may not get elsewhere?

Annalies Corbin: [00:03:57] And that chance to just explore

Ashley Price: [00:04:01] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:02] To try to figure it out. And that's really key. And so, Laura, I remember the back and forth in the spring as it relates to having a full, summer-long, embedded internship coming out of your graduate program at the Innovation Lab this summer. And so, just before we get into nuts and bolts of the experience itself, how did you sort of think about, should I do something like that? Because that's not necessarily something that folks always find themselves an opportunity to engage in. So, what were you thinking about as it relates to, should I go do this thing as a teacher not yet steeped in the classroom?

Laura Bloch: [00:04:41] Yeah. Well, for me, my background is in engineering. And then, I am now in school studying the intersection of engineering, technology, and education, but I don't have a lot of experience in the classroom. So, for me, there's a lot of theories that I've heard about and a lot of ideas, but I wanted to put those into practice and really see how things worked on the floor in the classroom with the students. So, it was really exciting for me to have the opportunity to take those theories, and test them in action, and gain more practical experience and education.

Annalies Corbin: [00:05:17] And just for clarity for our listeners, we're really talking about, sort of, an immersive pre-service experience but very different than a traditional just if you were to pre-service through your own institution, finding a placement for you, because we were not only asking Laura and Ashley to come in and do instruction. We were asking her to actually design the instructions of the modules. And it's not something that Laura necessarily had a tremendous amount of experience in doing. So, you're the mentor in this case. So, talk to us just a little bit about how you level set both the experience for Laura, which is critically important, and the experience for the students on the back side of it, rationalizing, of course, that this is moving somebody through a collective set of experiences that are going to have a huge career impact.

Ashley Price: [00:06:12] Right. And like you said, it wasn't just coming in and running a program. It was being able to create the programs as well. And that's different than when you're a teacher

because when you're a teacher, you have an entire school year to kind of, like you said, level set, and learn who the kids are, and things like that. So, it's really each class is a week long, and some of them are only half a day, some of them are full day. And so, you have to really be able to figure out what kind of kiddos do you have in your class that first day to figure out how best are you going to teach them and how best are you going to give them that experience through a summer program.

Ashley Price: [00:06:44] And so, going into it, it's a different mindset than maybe you have if you're going into a year-long teaching experience. And so, I think that was really the level set is this is going to be different. You're going to have different kids every single week. It's not—you might have one or two that are the same, but you're going to have different kiddos every week, and you're going to have to figure out what is the best way to reach those kids, and how are you going to be able to adjust according to which class you're teaching?

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:10] And that's not easy. Laura, you know. I saw you over the course this summer with everything from, you know, big giant smiles of elation from the [indiscernible] to looks of, "Oh, my gosh." Maybe this is a little overwhelming every once in awhile. And that's fair. We all have those in the summer at PAST, I must admit. So, I want to talk a little bit, Laura, with you about, how did you think about transition from traditional to the problem-based or applied classroom setting, which that is exactly what we're advocating for at PAST, and that was the program and the immerse of this we wanted to put you in. But how did you—coming to PAST, how did you rationalize all of that?

Laura Bloch: [00:07:51] Yeah. Well, I think, again, this concept of putting theory into practice. In theory, everything made a lot of sense to me. And I had a really good idea of exactly how I was going to take these kids through a problem-based experience. But as Ashley was saying, like things change based on the students you're with, and you have to adapt your class to the different types of students that are in the classroom and the different needs that come up. So, I think that introduced some challenges for me that maybe I hadn't anticipated. But it was a really interesting and challenging experience to try to take those, that problem-based learning, and apply it to a classroom where all of my experience in a classroom has been on the other side of things in a very traditional setting. So, it was an interesting experience to try to adapt that classroom, what I view as a traditional classroom setting, into a more problem-based environment.

Annalies Corbin: [00:08:53] Yeah, and it's not easy. And I want to be really, really clear with our listeners. Laura did an amazing job.

Ashley Price: [00:08:58] Absolutely.

Laura Bloch: [00:08:59] Thank you.

Annalies Corbin: [00:08:59] We're here to talk about how hard this was, but I—and very deliberately, I had to coax Laura a little bit to come to this episode, in part, because it was a tough—I won't to say it's a tough curve, but it was steep. There were moments when it was steep. And I just think that there's such a great opportunity for others to hear about Laura rolling up her sleeves, digging in, not giving up, immersing herself in the opportunity, in the mentorship that was available. And again, just a phenomenal, phenomenal job this summer still.

Laura Bloch: [00:09:32] Thank you.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:32] But on that note, Ashley, one of the things in my conversations with Laura had been about, sort of, the reflections on the opportunity around the chance, I guess, if you will, to really push the modify aspect of the work with students. So, set the stage for us a little bit, Ashley, about why modify, in particular, in the work that you do, and the training, and the teaching,

and the designing of all the modules. You create so many different activities in any given year. Why? Why so much focus at modify?

Ashley Price: [00:10:06] Modify is such a big part of the design cycle, and everyone uses it every day whether they realize it or not, and it's huge, especially for us in the bridge team to be able to go back and say, "Okay, what did we do that we can do better, or what can we change?" And we really use the kids to help us with that, especially with the modules that we run. We ask the kids, "Okay. So, did this work for you?" or "What would you do differently? What do you think we could make this better for the next group of kids?" And we love getting their feedback, and they love giving their feedback.

Ashley Price: [00:10:41] And so, just in everything we do, that modify portion, it's because we have to set the base of it's okay to fail because we can go back, and we can change what we did, and we're going to make it better, or we're even going to just tweak it a little bit to add something onto it. Maybe not make it better, but tweak it to make it—to add things to make it deeper, to have the kids think a little bit more, just things along those lines. And so, I think modify is kind of the start of the being okay to fail portion of the design cycle because everyone's going to fail, and everyone's going to have to go back and modify what they do. And so—and for me, it was a challenge when I first started at PAST because I come from a background of traditional teaching as well.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:22] Yeah, I remember.

Ashley Price: [00:11:22] So, that modify portion, it was kind of like, "Oh, I can go back, and I can change what I was doing, and I can modify this, and make it better for the kids, or make it better for myself, or for my co-workers, or for teachers." So, modify is just such a huge part of that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:39] And it really sort of sets up the notion that at PAST, failure is not failure. Failure is the single greatest opportunity to learn. And in a traditional classroom setting, Laura, and I want you to put this into context for us from your experience, in a traditional classroom setting, one of the things that we see—and PAST has tons of data on this and happy to share it with anybody who's interested. You know, what we see happen in a traditional setting is we get up to the point, often, not always, but often, a lot of standardized curriculum gets all the way to the point. They test or evaluate, if you will, the student's progress, whether it be they write a paper, or they they do a written test, take your pick, but we never allow them to go back and truly, truly rethink, redesign, not just revise, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:33] That's the point that we often stop our teaching. And conversely, that means we stop to learning. And so, for us, we truly, truly advocate, "Oh, no, no, no, we have to get all the way through." And, in fact, we have an expectation that there will be some gigantic catastrophic, "Oh, that didn't work," in the middle. So, Laura, how did you really work with and rationalize this as you sort of came into the environment? And maybe give us an example if you have one.

Laura Bloch: [00:13:00] For myself or for the students.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:02] Let's start with you, because I think that's the most meaningful place. That was your foundational mindset, I guess, if you will, as you came into the experience. And I assume that over the course of all these weeks, it changed.

Laura Bloch: [00:13:14] Yeah, definitely. Well, I can give an example from when I taught techno fashion. And so, I put together this whole design thinking notebook, and I was really excited about taking them through the design thinking process, which includes the modification phase. And I was excited to teach them all the different phases. But I quickly realized that a workbook was not

something that these kids wanted to do during the summer. They felt like they were being put back into the classroom.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:40] Exactly.

Laura Bloch: [00:13:40] So, I had them sitting there filling out these worksheets, and they were totally not interested, and really pushing back on me, and I was at a loss. I didn't know what to do. But I, actually, spoke to Ashley about it, and Ashley gave me the modification to pose the questions to them without the worksheet, and have them simply just write the answers on the windows, use that resource that we have that you can write on the windows to take them into a new context. And just that small little modification helped break them out of their shells, and made them not feel like they were in a standard traditional classroom, and gave them the ability to be more creative with their thinking.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:23] And I remember that day that all the kiddos writing on the windows. Yeah, that was pretty awesome. And so, Laura, then, how did you take and translate that into programs after that?

Laura Bloch: [00:14:35] Yeah. So, moving forward, I don't know if I did many worksheets after that. I think I might have taken those out completely after that. And it was—it kind of reminded me to take a step back, and look at, and get to know the kids in the classroom a little more, and try to understand what connects best with them, and what would resonate with them. So, it's more about having conversations and having more authentic discussion and authentic discovery of activities that they would enjoy doing.

Laura Bloch: [00:15:07] So, it wasn't as prescriptive, and it wasn't—sometimes, it made me uncomfortable because I didn't come in as prepared because I had to use them to help me understand what I was going to do. So, sometimes, that made me uncomfortable. But I think it helped make the class flow in a way that they helped determine the direction, and it wasn't just me.

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:26] And I think that's incredibly meaningful. And I'll admit, I'm thrilled to hear that we got rid of those worksheets there. There's no place for worksheets at PAST. So, that was awesome. But it was really important for you, as a teacher in that space learning, to have that experience. And I know that that was one of the things that we talked about, Ashley, the whole team, prior to Laura even coming, how do we best support this young professional? But we can't be too much of a crutch. But at the same time, we can't allow Laura to get crushed under the experience as well, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:00] And so, let's talk a little bit, Ashley, about the sort of mentality about—because this is a tough one. It's probably one of the hardest things that we see teachers, schools, communities, even parents wrestle with when you are transitioning from that, sort of, transitional experience to a very applied. And that is the notion that the perceived instructor, that facilitator of learning is also able, willing, and allowed to fail and to modify. And actually, Ashley, you do this all the time, but it's really tough, right? And so, let's talk a little bit about that experience of learning with the kids and how the kids relate to that, right?

Ashley Price: [00:16:46] Yeah, I think that was a huge learning curve for me when I first came to PAST as well as being okay not knowing everything, and being okay, being up in front of the kids, and saying, "Wait, they have a question, and I don't know the answer," and saying, "I don't know. Why don't you help me find it?" And as I've moved along through different programs and taught different programs, I've realized that it makes the kids much more engaged in their learning when you are okay saying, "I don't know that answer, but I want you to help me find it." And they're like it—at

first, they're taken aback. It's like, "Wait, wait, the teacher doesn't know the answer? Wait. What am I supposed to do?" So, they're taken aback at first, but then, they say, "Okay, let me dig deep and let me find this. I'm going to help find this."

Ashley Price: [00:17:27] And so—and it teaches them how to use technology to their advantage because they have all the answers right at their fingertips. They don't need someone standing up in front of them lecturing the answers straight to them that they can find right at their fingertips. It needs to be that deeper understanding of figuring it out, "How do I figure it out? And then, how do I present it out?" So, I think it's really important to show them that it's okay, not everyone has all the answers, even though you think that they should. So, I definitely think it makes them more engaged in what they're learning, and to go and find those answers.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:02] It's definitely a deeper experience all the way around. You know, the kids get the opportunity to see that you're not perfect, right, and that you have flaws.

Ashley Price: [00:18:10] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:12] And you are suddenly a thousand times more approachable to them, right? We see that all the time.

Ashley Price: [00:18:16] Yeah, absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:16] And I actually had several occasions this summer, actually, Laura, to watch you and the students struggle with this very same thing. One of the ones that I'm thinking about was sort of the work that you did the first time you ran Minecraft. So, tell us a little bit about that same experience because you are vulnerable in that space with those kiddos. And together, you came out on the backside, and it was epicly awesome. But what did it feel like in that space?

Laura Bloch: [00:18:42] Well, yeah. I mean, just like the kids have to fail, we have to fail, too. And so, I think I came up with an idea for a curriculum that I thought was gonna be great, and really helped introduce these concepts to the kids, and I thought it would be really engaging and authentic, and it just wasn't. And that was really hard for me. And we talk about so much how it's important to have let your kids fail, but we don't always recognize that it's important for us to be okay with failing as well.

Laura Bloch: [00:19:12] And so, I think that experience was really difficult for me, and I had a hard time acknowledging that, "Hey, this thing that I thought was gonna be really successful and really work out so great with the kids just didn't," but it was kind of a moment for me to reflect, and like we talked about earlier, modify. And then, I was able to kind of pull in some of the resources from previous classes, and understand what had worked in previous years, and modify based on that. Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:46] And this is a topic that's actually a bit near and dear to you. You know, part of your research in your graduate program around girls and failure?

Laura Bloch: [00:19:55] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:55] You've actually written about that. You've done a number of pieces on that and, certainly, something that we think about often at PAST. But I think that your background in engineering gives you a bit of an awesomely unique perspective as it relates to helping girls understand when they move into technology fields that it's okay to fail. And so, were you able to dig in and utilize some of the research and the work that you had as it related to interacting with your students in those moments? Did you draw on that?

Laura Bloch: [00:20:25] Yeah, I think so. So, we—I mean, I acknowledged to the students themselves. Like I told them, "This, I thought this was gonna work this way and it didn't. And that's a failure that I had, and that's okay." And I explained to them that that's just part of the design process. So, I helped them to understand that while they're going through the design process and what they're doing, so am I. And just like them, I fail too and that's okay. And I think that's a big part of what I've studied in my research is that the teachers need to be able to really embody that persistence through failure in order to teach that to their students. So, that was a big part of how I communicated that to the kids.

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:09] Yeah. And so, Ashley, this ties directly back to that sort of notion that we have at PAST that we really, really need to give students the space to explore. So, we hear often in the common literature about, you know, that students need exploration time. But what we don't often hear that we sort of at PAST always try to add to that is also the exposure piece. And these two things are very different. We think about career exploration versus career exposure.

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:45] And so, I want to talk a little bit about how the notion of pushing into going from just truly exploration into full-on exposure, how do you balance that or how do you will help teachers balance that in a traditional classroom setting when they get so focused on set curriculum or standards in a particular order? So, how do you coach that? Because I've watched you coach that many times. When these teachers come in, much like Laura, right, we have all these teachers who come in in the summer to be part of the PAST STEM summer programs. And many of them come in just thinking, "I've got this." And then, they're suddenly hit with, "Oh, my gosh, maybe not." And they survive. Can I use that term?

Laura Bloch: [00:22:32] Yeah, I think so.

Ashley Price: [00:22:33] I think so.

Annalies Corbin: [00:22:34] Right? In part because you coach them through it. So, what's that conversation?

Ashley Price: [00:22:38] So, we definitely want kids able to explore, but like you said, we want them to push those boundaries and be able to have that really in depth, I guess, learning experience. And so, like you said, a lot of times, the people we bring in, our teachers, I mean, some of them do an awesome job, and some of them are still in that mindset of classroom experience, "I'm going to lecture to you in the front of the room, and then you're going to do an activity. And then, I'm going to lecture to you in front of the room, and then we're gonna do an activity."

Ashley Price: [00:23:04] So, really having to get them out of that mindset of, "We want kids hands on. We want them to get the chance to explore, and really push, and ask questions that you may not have thought of." So, how do you do that? How do you get them out of that idea of standing in front of the kids, and telling them what they're gonna be doing, and then handing them maybe a worksheet, or just giving them an activity on a PowerPoint?" So, it's really having to talk with those teachers and saying, "This is a little bit different. This is going to be different than a regular classroom. You need to let the kids explore. You need to let them answer these questions. You can't give them all of the answers. They need to find them for themselves, and you can be there as an assistant to help them, but you shouldn't be the one that's leading the conversation. It should be the kids that are the ones leading that conversation."

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:56] Yeah. And I hear often from folks, but I have—if I'm to translate the experience for the summer, and we're talking about summer, but the reality is that the way we do things at PAST is that these summer programs, ultimately, become—not all of them, but some of

them, the really awesome ones, right? We actually build them out into full semester-long opportunities for students and teachers. Teachers could pick up with it, run with it as we build them over time. And when we do that, we are letting go of the standardized curriculum, but all the programs are, in fact, standard aligned, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:39] And, often, what we have found, when you move from exploration and an activity tied to a question you may, fortunately, have asked in your classroom, to a full-on exposure, to a career opportunity that, in that moment, we are now linking projects to bigger problems. But most importantly, and I think this is sort of where the crux of it is, that it's driven by industry. So, it's not just that we created a question. We dug into and found partners in that content area, that expertise, and we said, "What are the driving problems you, as an industry, are trying to solve?" which, then, gets us to a whole another level of experience, and therefore, exposure. And that's the career piece that kicks in to that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:25:29] So, Laura, as you think about the journey that you've made, and you understand where we're trying to get ultimately was all these programs, how does that influence the decisions that you make moving forward, both in your own theory to practice but, also, the research and the decisions that you make? Not necessarily what you're going to do, but how does this influence the way you think about the opportunities in teaching and learning for you as you go down your journey?

Laura Bloch: [00:25:55] Yes. So, I think it kind of—there is an alignment there between my background and where I'm trying to go. And instead of kind of pushing against like, "Oh, well, I come from an engineering background, and that's not education, and I need to do something different to get into education," I think it would be great to kind of pull in that background that I have in engineering and the experience that I have in the industry to give more authentic problems for the kids and to kind of stage lessons in a way that are authentic to what I—the problems that I would be solving in the real workforce.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:40] Well, and education is desperate. And I mean, I repeat this education is desperate for amazing women to teach engineering, right? We see this across the math and sciences. But, you know, every time I go to an engineering education conference, or we hold a series of workshops, it's 90% men. So, I would champion that idea for you, if you are so inclined because we desperately, desperately need to change the diversity outcome as it relates to teachers engaged in teaching engineering for our kiddos.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:16] So, Ashley, as you sort of think about the work that you do in that mentoring space with folks learning how to really roll up their sleeves and do applied teaching and learning, I want to talk a little bit about the commonality of the constraints that you hear. So, tell us a little bit about the things that you hear from teachers when you engage in the workshops that are the easy, low-hanging fruit things to let go of.

Ashley Price: [00:27:45] I think one of the most common things I hear is if we bring in a teacher that might teach high school that's going to be running a middle school program, "Oh, these kids are too young to understand this. Oh, these kids are too—"

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:54] The concepts.

Ashley Price: [00:27:55] Yes, yeah. They're not going to be able to do this. And my argument is they'll surprise you. If you push kids, and if you give them that chance, and you get that creativity, they'll surprise you, and they won't be too young. I mean, kids surprise me on a daily basis. I work

with kids almost every day, and every day, they shock me. So, that's one of the ones I hear consistently across the board.

Ashley Price: [00:28:17] I think the other one is, how am I supposed to bring my subject matter into this main problem, this big problem that we're asking? So there's a big problem that we always ask students or that we—and we talk about bringing in all math, science, reading, writing, social studies. And you often hear the math teacher say, "How am I supposed to tie math in to talking about a global problem?"

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:42] Well, like energy policy.

Ashley Price: [00:28:44] Right, exactly. How am I supposed to tie math into that?

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:46] Yeah.

Ashley Price: [00:28:46] Well, it's easy.

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:47] Yeah.

Ashley Price: [00:28:47] You just have to—you have to sit down and think about it a little bit more. It's not going to be right at your fingertips. It might not be something that is right on the surface. It's going to be something that's a little bit deeper, but doing that is going to give the kids an authentic problem to try and figure out. And it's going to get them more involved. And they're not even going to realize that they're doing that math, or doing that science, or doing that reading and writing because they're gonna be so immersed in, "I'm helping solve a problem."

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:14] And we see that all the time. And I would also like to point out there is, in fact, math in everything.

Ashley Price: [00:29:18] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:19] I can't find or think of a single question or problem that does not include math.

Ashley Price: [00:29:24] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:25] That is one of the big myths. We get that one all the time.

Ashley Price: [00:29:27] All the time, yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:27] They're going, "Oh, no, no, no, there's no math in that."

Ashley Price: [00:29:29] Yep.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:29] Oh, yes, there is.

Ashley Price: [00:29:30] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:30] Sort of step back and think about what and how. And I think that that gets sorted to the crux of part of our conversation, right, that part of what we're talking about when we think about that sort of applied teaching and learning approach is to let go of what we believe about

content, right? We have to truly let go of what we understand, and we'll circle back around, you know, energy policy, and what does that have to do with, you know, all the different content or subject matters that we have to teach, whether it's in middle school, high school, elementary school.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:06] And the reality of it—or the content expertise of the teacher in question. And the reality of it is that these big global problems actually lend themselves to being far more collaborative than your traditional sort of sets of the questions that you might ask because it's no longer questions being asked about the thing that you have to teach, and it's more about questions you have to ask about the thing you need to know. Big difference.

Ashley Price: [00:30:31] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:32] Big difference. So, Laura, let's talk a little bit about sort of that change in mindset. The whole notion of a fixed mindset, for example, is very popular right now. I can't—I bet I've got a dozen different schools is the thing on top of my head, but that was their summer reading for high school kids this year was fixed mindset. So, student reading it, teachers are reading it. It's happening all of the country. It's been out for a number of years. It's not a new volume by any stretch of the imagination, but this idea of changing mindset. And I bring this up because you, specifically, sent that to me. So, what do you mean by changing your mindset from beginning of summer to the end of the summer? And what's that journey for you?

Laura Bloch: [00:31:17] Again, I think that journey has been that embracing failure. And that's really what growth mindset is all about is knowing that you're going to fail, and being with that, and not allowing that failure to be a reflection of yourself and your self-worth-

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:36] Exactly.

Laura Bloch: [00:31:36] ... but to say, "I failed at this because I do not have these skills yet," or "I do not understand this concept yet, but I will." So, I think that's been a big part of my journey this summer. Like I went in the first week, and, of course, I didn't know everything about teaching because I hadn't been in front of a class before. So, for me to expect to succeed that first time would be kind of silly. So, I think I've developed my growth mindset over the summer in terms of expecting that I probably will fail, and that's okay, and that's how I will learn, and adapt, and become a better teacher.

Annalies Corbin: [00:32:19] Yeah. And I suspect you will be a fabulous teacher-

Ashley Price: [00:32:23] I agree.

Annalies Corbin: [00:32:23] ... one day because you are so self-aware. And that was one of the things that I think on a journey along with us, and that's definitely that shift from fixed to growth mindset was being self-aware of where you were in any given moment and, sort of, the implications of where you were. So, that was a really fun thing to see. I always like to wrap our programs up by coming back around and talking about the big sort of gifts, if you will.

Annalies Corbin: [00:32:49] Folks that are sitting out there, that are contemplating either becoming a teacher or transitioning from one career to another, going into the classroom, or folks who are already fully entrenched in teaching, but looking to make a shift. So, what are, you know, a couple of things that as somebody says, "You know what, I want to go down that path," that you just really wish that when you started on that path, someone had told you, or just, you know, either a great success to build on or a constraint don't lose sight of. Ashley, I want to start with you. Same question to Laura next. But what are those, kind of, lobs? What what advice would you give?

Ashley Price: [00:33:30] I think, first and foremost, like we've been talking about, don't be afraid to fail. You're gonna fail, but it's how you bounce back from that failure and how you figure out, "Okay, how am I going to adjust what I'm doing to make this work for the kiddos, to make this work for me, to make it work for the people around me?" And I think that's a huge thing. And the other one is just expect the unexpected. You never know what's going to come out you. Kids can surprise you. People can surprise you. So, just be ready. Be on your toes, and be ready to modify, and do those things as needed.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:03] Absolutely. Laura, how about you, what piece of advice would you have?

Laura Bloch: [00:34:07] I think the biggest thing is just to let go of what you think teaching is because whatever you think teaching is, whatever you experience as a kid is not what you're going to be doing. So, to just kind of let go and let yourself be open to the possibilities of what you can do. I think that's a really big one.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:28] You know, just letting go of what you know, that's a huge thing. And I think that all of that circles back around—I get asked all the time, why did PAST build the PAST Innovation Lab, this giant education R&D prototyping facility? Why would you guys do that? And I explained, and I think that it ties in very nicely with what the two of you have been talking about. You know, over the course of more than a decade, at that time, I had the wonderful opportunity to travel the globe and see some of the most amazing innovations in education, just things that just inspired me, blew my mind, gave me hope. But I also saw some epic, epic failures.

Annalies Corbin: [00:35:16] And I think it's really important to classify them as epic, just as great as the successes, some really amazing failures. But it's the space in the middle that intrigued me the most because those great successes, those epic failures, and just some really catastrophic near misses that didn't need to be near misses if they had been, you know, uncontained, desiloed, and quite frankly modified before they were that miss.

Annalies Corbin: [00:35:48] And so I appreciate the time, the attention, and the care that the two of you put in all summer long to ensure almost 800 kiddos in one form or another got to not just explore but to experience the power of of what was possible. So, thank you both very much for joining us today and for all that you do.

Ashley Price: [00:36:11] Thank you.

Laura Bloch: [00:36:12] Thank you for having us.

Annalies Corbin: [00:36:17] Thank you for joining us for Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. I want to thank my guests 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.