



Evelyn Van Til

Evelyn Van Til: [00:00:00] Teachers do an incredible job with what we've given them. And it's a really hard row to tow, something that I think it requires a holistic approach. It requires the industry to be engaged and, certainly, larger players to bring those resources to bear, so that teachers and schools have what they need.

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:22] 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: [00:00:57] So, welcome to the next episode of Learning Unboxed. This is your host, Annalies Corbin. And I am, as always, super excited because I have awesome guests. Everybody gets to hear me talk about how excited I am every single week, but I, truly, am always thrilled with the amazing people that come in to share their journeys and stories with us at Learning Unboxed.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:18] And so, today, we have Evelyn Van Til, who is a cultural architect. And that alone is story-worthy. So, Evelyn likes to connect tech education. She works in apprenticeships as a consultant at Apprenti. She is involved in training. She's incredibly active in the Central Ohio community all around technology, computer science education, lots of work around girls. And quite frankly, she's got her hand in many pots. So, welcome, Evelyn.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:01:54] Thank you so much. I'm excited to be here.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:56] And we're really excited to be able to share a little bit about the integrations of the work that you do, and how, and why those can translate into the world of teaching, learning, and the future of work in particular. And what I love about having you on today is we spend a lot of time talking specifically with teachers and folks in the day-to-day traditional K12 setting. But the reality is a lot of the work that's happening in K12 is being influenced by the work that's happening with our, sort of, folks out there in the trenches, in the field, on the workforce side, trying to figure out

how do we, sort of, change the paradigm we're all living in. And that's kind of the work that you're in. So-

Evelyn Van Til: [00:02:39] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:02:40] ... hundred-thousand-foot view, Evelyn, who the heck are you, and what are you doing?

Evelyn Van Til: [00:02:45] It's a great question. And I'm excited to be here to share pieces of the story. I moved to Ohio, grew up in Chicago. I came here to go out of state. And like many people, didn't plan to stay, but here I am. I got connected, found some roots in neighborhoods, and events, and relationships, and really loved the work that I was doing, and continued to—continue to grow. And, hopefully, we have in front of us the opportunity here to shape our region as a real leader in opportunity making for people of all ages. And technology is just driving a lot of that innovation. We certainly see that at the K12 level. But you and everyone else, we've seen huge shifts in the workforce in the last 20 years or so.

Annalies Corbin: [00:03:35] Absolutely.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:03:37] And the expectations that you can work technology. And whether or not you see yourself in tech is a different thing than utilizing technology, which is touching every piece of the work that we're doing. And that's everything from retail, and food service, and warehousing logistics, to things that we might think of in tech, in development, and the cutting-edge innovation work that you see at startups.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:05] And it's really, really critically important. I think that that's a key spot to really launch, and then dig on this conversation because circling back around to your original comment, like you, I was not a Columbus native; and yet, I found myself here. And I can't imagine myself working any place else. Columbus is an amazing community. It is truly-

Evelyn Van Til: [00:04:31] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:31] ... epically amazing community. And people ask me all the time, why on earth are you guys in Columbus? And my response is, there is not a better place to be in the innovation space right now in our country. In many ways, we are leading the way because there's so much startup, there's so much innovation, there's so much collaboration. And whether you're talking about smart cities or the host of other initiatives that have found their way here, we also have headquarters of some amazing long-term companies here but, also, new startups that have grown and grown really fast and are changing the landscape in their own space. And so because of all of that, this is a community that embraces innovation, and change, and entrepreneurship, and the notion of redefining both teaching, learning, and, ultimately, work in that space. And I think that tech field collectively here are really, really pushing on all sides.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:05:33] Absolutely. It's been an amazing journey to see in the last 20 years Columbus growing up. When I first moved here to go to Ohio State, I confess, I hadn't looked at the city. I looked at universities. I looked at programs. I made my choices based on a lot of those factors, and it just happened to be Columbus.

Annalies Corbin: [00:05:48] Right.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:05:49] And then, I got here. I was immersed in the university. As I graduated and moved into the workforce, I began to find myself in the city. And at that time, 20 years ago or so, this city was still finding itself. And I think in some ways, we still are finding ourselves.

Annalies Corbin: [00:06:08] Absolutely.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:06:08] Still a really new city. I'd come from Chicago. I expected certain things, didn't always see them when I got here. But then as I was here, they were emerging, or I discovered them.

Annalies Corbin: [00:06:19] Right.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:06:20] Great coffee stops, [crosstalk], many of the other—farmers markets, and things that really I had missed coming from Chicago. And the tech innovations, I think, follow on the tale of food and drink. We've seen an emergence of food and drink that has, in many ways, both transformed our communities, and the ways in which we connect and share our meals together, and cultural opportunities to have food from all around the world and many varieties of it. The tech innovations and the changes in the workforce are things that are, I think, driving us to this next level. And the analogy I use, and I don't know if it's helpful, but when I got here, I felt like Columbus is like a pimply, self-loathing teenager, full of derogatory remarks about themselves, and still trying very much to just find themselves in the world. And at this point, I would say, we're definitely that strutting 20 something. They found themselves. They're still discovering those next pieces but not in a legacy city kind of way.

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:26] Right, right. That's [crosstalk].

Evelyn Van Til: [00:07:27] So, today, Cleveland and Chicago, like they have enough formed identity, and they've got their own challenges, certainly, and we share some of them. But Columbus's ability to innovate, and embracing of change, and certainly the collaborative spirit is something that when I was finding myself in the workforce, and I said I hadn't planned to stay here, but I looked around, and I would interview in different cities, and look at the culture there, and make the considerations, it's not better. It's just not better than what I have, and I like it, and it really was a revelation for me personally. Wow, I want to stay here. I want to put roots down. I have the potential to make good impacts here. And now, many years later, continuing to see the ways in which we can continue to drive that and open doors for more and more people. And certainly, the startup scene is one that I would say in the last two to three years, it's been a really interesting ride.

Annalies Corbin: [00:08:30] And I think that it's not only an interesting ride, I'll be perfectly honest with you because it was funny, folks don't think of PAST necessarily as a startup, but I push on it a little bit in the sense that PAST is an organization. We've been around almost 20 years since our 19th year. So, next year, I get to plan, hey, 20 years. How "wow" is that, right? But the work at the Innovation Lab, this is, in fact, relatively new, right? We opened the doors in 2016. So, it takes—and even when we opened in 2016, we didn't even have our first full academic year until the fall. So, we're really only on our second full, big, giant year in. And in many ways, what happens here, it's certainly influenced by the startup mentality of this town.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:19] But I would also say that both the work here and the startup mentality of this town has had deep influences in what's happening in the education space in this community as well. And so, part of that comes from the big push and ethos about a decade ago around STEM and STEM education, very applied teaching and learning. But it's been rejuvenated. And maybe that's the way to think about it. I think the startup atmosphere, and environment, and landscape in our

community has reinvigorated the efforts around transformational education, and the rethinking, and the redesigning of educational systems as it relates to "what next".

Annalies Corbin: [00:10:02] And I believe that Columbus is beautifully poised to lead the world in what is next if we're willing to embrace and understand how the influences, right, that are being leveraged here can actually, in fact, be transformational if we allow them to be. And I think that's the beautiful space for me where we think about the tech sector and the work that you are doing plays in directly, whether it'd be K12, or post-secondary, or just the retooling, reskilling, and upskilling - take your pick on the word you want to use, the flavor of the day - for existing workforce or even emerging and new workforce opportunities. But that comes with a caution, right? And the caution being that we have to be really mindful that technology is nothing more than a tool.

Annalies Corbin: [00:10:46] And you spend a lot of time training and helping people and organizations really think about what does it mean to be a tech-savvy endeavor. And so, I want to start with that before we dig into your work with Apprenti because I think Apprenti is a natural iteration of the strength that you bring to the conversation. So, share with us a little bit about the way you think about helping folks explore and understand the power, or the influence, or even the limitations of technology.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:11:15] No, it's absolutely true. Transformation is there. It's happening at every level. Education, startups, and even many of the traditional businesses are very much getting involved in education, the STEM pieces in particular, a lot of good synergy there, a lot of room for growth and transformation, for sure. But in thinking about technology, it is absolutely critical, as you said, to think of that as a tool. And we think about STEM, and I like STEAM or STEMPathy is one of the terms that I gravitate towards because I really like, first one, not seeing them as just content areas-

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:55] Correct.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:11:55] ... that are distinct in discrete boxes of science, technology.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:59] It's really unfortunate, right, more than a decade ago that that was the thing the feds landed on. We all get stuck living with it. But to your point, it is so much more than that. The acronym is irrelevant. Call it what you want.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:12:11] Absolutely. And borrowing—recognizing the strengths of all of those discipline, scenarios in the industry sectors, and borrowing appropriately for good synergy and the right tool for whatever the challenge is. Oftentimes, the arts gets forgotten in the STEM, which is why I like the STEAM.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:33] We like design thinking. **Evelyn Van Til:** [00:12:35] I do love design thinking.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:36] Yes. So, we actually keep trying to push on folks. They'll always talk about design thinking more than-

Evelyn Van Til: [00:12:42] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:42] It's a little more encompassing. It doesn't leave. There's no letters left out.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:12:45] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:46] But I have to admit, STEMPathy, that's a new one. And I'm kind of rocking that.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:12:50] Run with it. I offer it up. I see it pop up in a variety of places.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:56] I've not seen that.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:12:57] And we have a group here in town that meets regularly to work on uniquely human STEM, uniquely human skills related to STEM education.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:09] Absolutely.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:13:09] And that's where I think weaving behind those content areas and really embracing the full human. And the human development, the empathy, the creativity, the innovation, all of those value-oriented pieces are things that are being built in K to 12 and through the duration of our life. The tech is an add-on. The tech is a tool. And I—also, the thing I would add to that is, oftentimes, when we're talking about tech, when we're talking about startups, it may lean into thinking that the technology has to be developed. It has to be computer science. It has to be coding. It has to be high tech versus low tech. And I think that's really a limiting piece. In the same way that I would push back against hard skills, soft skills, and use that uniquely human skills and technology skills as preferred nomenclature because we get too boxed in. We don't have the ability to grow if there's a binary opposition.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:15] Correct.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:14:16] If there is a I'm in tech or I'm not in tech. And we're not recognizing the various ways in which the human—we've always had technology. I mean, it's kind of one of the things that makes it human.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:27] Human, that's right.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:14:28] From fire forward.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:29] It's one of the tenets, right?

Evelyn Van Til: [00:14:31] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:32] One of the tenets that those anthropologists—we know a few of them. Right?

Evelyn Van Til: [00:14:35] Just a few.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:35] Just a few. But they say, "Hey, there's a difference between this human over here and this not has made it to human status."

Evelyn Van Til: [00:14:43] We know many-

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:45] Tools.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:14:45] ... many—the other animals-

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:46] Absolutely.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:14:47] ... in addition to humans-

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:48] Right, right.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:14:49] ... because humans, of course, are animals. **Annalies Corbin:** [00:14:50] It's one.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:14:50] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:50] One defining factors.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:14:51] It is one of the defining factors. It's a used tool.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:53] But it is an important one to recognize, back to your point, right, that we've always used tools, right? And so, to not lose sight of this thing, but this whole collective set of things are, in fact, just a tool. It's what we do with them.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:15:05] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:06] It matters.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:15:07] That's the empathy part.

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:08] Absolutely.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:15:08] That's the ethics part. That's the creativity, the innovation piece.

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:11] Correct.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:15:12] And that's why it's really important to push back on any compartmentalization of the content areas-

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:20] Correct.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:15:20] ... and the sectors. We're still trying to find our way in how do we talk about things and not get sucked into tech startups versus business, which, fundamentally, if you're a business, and you don't think of yourself as a tech business, we need to think about how you're using technology in your business.

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:42] Exactly.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:15:43] You're not leveraging all of your tools. **Annalies Corbin:** [00:15:45] It's the 21st Century, girl.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:15:46] And tech is not just like the admins in the basement, resetting your password, and giving you devices. Like it's really a driver for every component of efficiency - operations. I don't know a single company from like making popcorn forward that you don't use some kind of technology to track, to pay, to organize, promote. And, really, it's a piece that I think helps open up opportunities. It's to recognize it's not an either you're in tech, or you're not in tech. It's, where are you proficiency wise in technology? And how are you able to use the tools available to

you? And are they available to you because that's certainly another piece? It's having WiFi, having adequate bandwidth, digital access. There's definitely divide issues that help reinforce other social components that divide us, but recognizing that it's not about either you are or you aren't. It's about building those technical skills on top of the existing skills that you have accumulated in your life. Meet people where they are.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:49] Right. And that's critically important, right? Because there's a lot of folks that are terrified of how to get themselves savvy enough to effectively and efficiently use this thing. I know I need to use it. I know it's now part of my everyday life. But what do I do with that? And we certainly, certainly see it across a wide array of stakeholders. And we bump up against it on an ongoing and regular basis in school, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:19] So, I want to talk a little bit about sort of a K12 space before we move on to how that been has an impact or drives against the future work stuff that we've got going on right now because the two are linked, right? And the reality of it is that until we can get our K12 to think about this transitional moment, that they're all sitting in a little bit differently, and embrace it for the potential that it has and not the set of switches that we perceive it to be in a very old school analogy, but what I'm thinking about is the fact that we still see what we do in the classroom, oftentimes, as the day-to-day. And then, the technology is something that's floating around quite literally in the air around us, right? But it's not something that we're using as a guiding principle in many ways to inform the way we are actually delivering education. And we could.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:18:19] We absolutely can. I guess, I would start by validating that it's completely understandable that people might be afraid of technology or-

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:25] Absolutely.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:18:25] ... resistant in certain pieces, in part, because it's not always appropriate. I mean, just because it's cool and shiny does not mean we have to make an app about it, that that educational outcome is best delivered through an app, through some other technology means, but rather to think about, how do we integrate the capabilities that we already have? How do we enhance? How do we bring efficiency? And how do we support our schools in communities and break down this—well, the school in real life-

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:00] Right, exactly.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:19:01] ... kind of mental divide that happens that makes it seem like what we're doing in schools isn't real life because it should be and it is. And the students in the schools are very much living their lives. It's really, I think, something that, in part, is a larger challenge of education, and funding, and access. And some people have it. Some people don't. And addressing some of those pieces. And, I think, also, the last 20 years have brought a lot of change in technology and in education. And we constantly—teachers are doing a lot. Teachers are doing incredible job with what we've given them. And it's a really hard row to tow, something that I think it requires a holistic approach. It requires industry to be engaged, and, certainly, larger players to bring those resources to bear, so that teachers and schools have what they need.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:52] So, when you think about as Evelyn Van Til on this journey, when you think about the future work, and where and how K12 intersects with that, what's the thought bubbles?

Evelyn Van Til: [00:20:07] It's a great question, and it's something I do think about a lot. I am very worried about people in their 20s, their 30s, 40s, 50s who have a lifetime ahead of them to work, but I also think about the foundation that we're building and the need for there to be a solid foundation.

And one of the first things that comes to mind is those uniquely human skills and how important it is to not just push technology into the classroom, but to validate the very real human development that we are sculpting, fermenting, and shaping, growing, and to do it in really more empathetic ways and more empathetic with the teachers, more empathetic with the systems. And certainly we've seen some shifts in how we're talking about assessments and how we're talking about social emotional. Certainly, that's been a real shift, I think, in K to 12, certainly in Ohio-

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:00] Oh, absolutely. Nationwide, it's a real push the last two years, in particular. I mean, it's always—it's been there for a long time, but I would say because of changing landscape of legislation, in particular, we are seeing additional push and recognition that, somehow or another, we have to take a step back and not lose sight of that.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:21:17] Absolutely. And building that emotional intelligence. **Annalies Corbin:** [00:21:19] Right.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:21:20] Because the tech is going to change, and like an insistence on-

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:23] By the moment.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:21:24] Yeah, as I talk, right? So, as we think about where technology belongs in K to 12, I think it's less important to teach specific tech and more important to teach lifelong learning, teach empathy, teach these uniquely human skills, and encourage people to see it as, "I'm not working towards graduation," which is often one of the limiting-

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:51] Yes.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:21:51] Yeah, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:54] We're cheering. We're cheering over here for our viewers, but like, "Yes! Yes!"

Evelyn Van Til: [00:21:59] Yay! Because—and I've been involved in higher ed as well for a long time, where graduation rates was a big focus of much of my work at OSU. It was improving the graduation rates. And with that, though, comes the cost of deferred thinking.

Annalies Corbin: [00:22:17] Right. Graduation is great, but it is not enough. And it shouldn't be the bar by-

Evelyn Van Til: [00:22:22] Correct.

Annalies Corbin: [00:22:22] ... which we are trying (A), to measure; or (B), where our attainment is. It's just the thing I do along the way.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:22:30] Absolutely. And in some ways, again, I think about shifting our visual mindset of, are we marching along a timeline, a narrative of, "I was born, I went to school, I get a job, I die," or some kind of very-

Annalies Corbin: [00:22:46] Regimented.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:22:46] ... regimented, prescriptive, limiting, time-oriented progressive lens, but to one of more of the casserole of really building, and adding layers, and day two lasagna.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:01] I was going to say, you're a lasagna maker at heart, aren't you?

Evelyn Van Til: [00:23:08] It's like the best.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:08] Yeah, yes.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:23:08] Right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:08] More flavorful.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:23:08] Tastes good. Exactly.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:09] Day two, the sauces, everything, absolutely.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:23:12] Yeah. I mean, any sauce maker, that once—when the flavors can come together.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:16] Yeah.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:23:17] And one of the challenges that I know I share in my educational journey, K12, and I hear it, echoes of it in all kinds of people is the disconnect between the thing I'm learning and why I'm learning.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:31] Exactly, exactly.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:23:33] And that's a-

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:33] And The understanding of the learning, right? And that is where that disconnect happens. And a lot of what we believe here in the foundational basis of why we even started this crazy thing way back when, right, almost 20 years ago now is that recognition that there was a tangible and fundamental disconnect in the kiddos that were coming to me in grad school and my colleagues who launched the PAST Foundation, who are showing up in our programs capable. There was no question about capable. Great test takers, fabulous test takers, no clue about why or a willingness to understand and learn. It was a disconnect between, "I'm gonna do this thing. And to do this thing, I have to engage in the act of learning. And it's a willingness to constantly learn new things and to recognize I never have a complete answer."

Evelyn Van Til: [00:24:32] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:33] That is really, really tough for folks to wrestle with in our traditional, as you pointed out, very linear perceived progression.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:24:43] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:44] How do we change that mindset?

Evelyn Van Til: [00:24:47] I mean, there's no silver bullet. So, I mean, I wish I-

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:50] Oh yeah.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:24:50] ... Like, "Oh, buy my product," and-

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:52] Wait. You come here? Or we have—you're supposed to come with silver bullet, Evelyn.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:24:56] But one of my things that I have seen in working with people is that mental shift, often, happens with those visual components of really flipping the timeline, and being like everything that you've ever done matters, and your degree matters, the TV shows you watch matter. Like all the things - the components, the conversations, the food you've eaten - all of it matters. It's all a cumulative value because it all contributes to the flavor that is uniquely you. And that unique you-ness is something that I think we're still finding our way towards in education. I think the trend still from long ago is that normalization.

Annalies Corbin: [00:25:35] Right.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:25:35] That forming of like an industrial product. We want to produce workers. And so, as we talk about workforce and education, I want to make it really, really clear, like that's not what I want. I'm not trying to produce widgets, but rather that every single human has value, and they're valued simply by being themselves, and that the things that make them uniquely themselves and that make me uniquely me are, in some ways, common, and in other ways, a matter of perspective because we all experience things in slightly different sequences, and in different ways, and different triggers, have different tastes, have different interests. Those interests shift over time. And engaging that lifelong learning and that sense that you're not fully baked or done until you're like ready to check out. I mean, my grandma is a hundred, she's got plans. Like she has the things she wants to do.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:33] [Crosstalk].

Evelyn Van Til: [00:26:34] And that interest, that engagement, that sense that like I matter, and my voice matters, and my leadership matters is something we have to instill in everyone. And it's not about following leaders, or being a widget, or stamping people into a particular consumable format. It's about helping them see themselves as an ongoing growing person with value and finding their way in their community to make that impact that they know they can. And that impact will shift over their lifetime. But everyone plays a part, and I think no stone soup.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:16] Exactly.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:27:16] Well, as I come back to you all the time is we may not—each in our ourselves have everything we need, but together, you've got cabbage, I've got potatoes, you've got some chickens, we'll make some delicious, delicious, and very nutritious stew.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:32] Yeah. No, absolutely. And it's ironic that you you pull that example. I vividly remember that from school.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:27:41] Right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:41] Yeah. So, one of those lessons that sticks with.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:27:44] It's a leadership. It's one of those things I would give it to every person who thinks of themselves as leader.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:49] Yeah.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:27:49] And urge them to think about the people they manage and the people that they oversee, whether that's their classroom, [indiscernible], every one of those students has something to bring.

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:00] And I tell people all the time because I get asked the question frequently, what is the magic, right, that led to the building of this organization, this endeavor, the work that you do? And my response is always quite simple. There's no magic for starters. But I think it lends itself from recognizing all of the skills or the qualities, whatever label you want to put on it, that every individual in that organization doesn't have, right? And recognizing your own. So, for me, as a leader, "Hey, I'm great at X, Y and Z, but I really stink at get A, B and C," right? "So, I'm going to I'm gonna staff this place with people who rock at A, B and C because I don't."

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:43] And that is a very different way to think about the way that you lead, or you impart knowledge. And whether it'd be in your classroom or your organization, that's a big step back. And I think, K12 is in that amazing precipice space about thinking about, what's the job of a teacher? It's not what it used to be by any stretch of the imagination and nor should it be because, back to your point earlier, we don't live in that time in space anymore. And so, what we're doing has to shift.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:29:18] It has to shift. And I don't know if it's helpful, but when I wrote my teacher philosophy many years ago, the title of it was Welcome to English 110: How May I Take Your Order? And I was very much pulling from my background at waiting tables. You don't get to pick who comes into your classroom. You don't necessarily control all the things that are on the menu. You still have outcomes you need to achieve. You need to flip that table, so to speak, in waitress' terms. You get them through that process. And as a teacher, you're facilitating that growth.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:52] Exactly, exactly.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:29:53] And I think shifting that perspective from, "I have to be in charge. I have to know all the things," to want to facilitation and igniting the passion, the resources, the interest, the uniqueness in each individual child is a critical piece of what teaching means. And that is a big shift, I think, from, as you said, where education was philosophically in the past.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:20] Yeah, absolutely.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:30:21] And I think it leads us, as we think towards the future, of really valuing teachers as people who are setting foundation for the rest of people's lives-

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:36] Exactly.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:30:36] ... in many ways. They're sort of the shapers. I think about ceramics. And I go, "When you're making a pot, and you're spinning on the wheel, the motions that you make at the base, if you don't have a good base, it's off." And it's so critical, those early formative years. That early learning experience is-

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:55] It's forever. **Evelyn Van Til:** [00:30:55] It is forever. **Annalies Corbin:** [00:30:56] It's forever.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:30:58] And you can certainly intervene. You can certainly correct and have lots and lots therapy. But kids who aren't getting access in those early years, it's something we need to confront and address. And we can't do it in schools alone. It takes an entire community.

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:13] It does take a community. And the thinking in the future of work space is that community-led endeavor.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:31:27] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:27] And at the end of the day, right, that's really what we see happening is that business industry, our community, our civic associations, our volunteer groups who are out there in our cities and our countryside, providing the services, or lending expertise as folks really shift and think about the stuff that they've got going on are really kind of working in that ethos. And so with that, community wins. Talk to us a little bit about the work that you're engaging in with Apprenti. And just for our listeners, as a reminder, we spoke with Kevin Gadd in one of our earlier episodes, and we touched just just briefly on the work with Apprenti. But I think that it's a beautiful segue from the journey that you've had and where the impacts and the inputs in terms of what we're talking about really of come to play. So, tell us a little bit about Apprenti, in particular, about how your mindset and your experience inside of the Apprenti group is going to matter.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:32:35] Absolutely. So, I had been running a tech boot camp, and I've seen this need to connect to education and applied experience. Big believer in education, but it needs to be connected to applied experience for folks to get traction. And in particular, given the changes in the workforce, we have a lot of folks in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s who have many years left in the workforce and whose previous training has not prepared them for today's jobs and future jobs.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:33:05] So, Apprenti really sit in this great space where we're working with people 18 and above who are work-eligibles in the united states, have a GED high school diploma, and who are interested in increasing their technical skills. We have an assessment online that it looks at people's aptitude. You take it up to three times to improve your scores, but the amazing thing, we're moving those barriers of you have to have a college degree, or you have too much experience, or the experience isn't "relevant" to what we want you to do over here in technology, when, in fact, many of the questions that we're really addressing in future of work is related to human skills. It's related to those customer service skills, the patience, the ability to work with people and teams, the creativity, the ethics of things.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:34:00] And most of us, I think it's like 1:5 or 1:3, have worked in food service, started our careers, I worked 4 years and McDonald's and learned a lot of really important life lessons about how to work, how to work with people at McDonald's that I continue to carry with me through my entire life. And as we look at changes in workforce, many of those jobs are going away. Those front cashier order, Wendy's, McDonalds, other employers have announced they're launching nationwide kiosks to replace.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:32] Right, right.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:34:33] So, we look at, how are we going to continue to prepare people with these human skills for emerging work when a lot of the entry level work that people have been doing is getting automated out? Whether that is in retail, or food service, and many other sectors, we're seeing that shift. And so, we need to confront that and think about how do we retrain, how do we continue to allow for that human growth? We can't just once-and-done it like, "Oh, you graduate from high school. You're done."

Annalies Corbin: [00:35:07] Right.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:35:08] "You graduated from college, you're done," because you're not. And how do we maintain that access for people to have work in retail, have work in food service, have serve in the military, have done various different occupations, and be 27, and need to get a job and support themselves but, also, have access to training that makes their skills relevant to the work needs to be done. And so, that's what Apprenti is really doing. It's working in that great in-between space of sourcing applicants who are high-quality, work-ready people, and working with industry to identify places for apprentices to be, connecting them with training partners and providing a wonderfully structured, deep experience, where we're not just graduating people and being like, "Well, good luck. Good job. We're over here in career services."

Evelyn Van Til: [00:35:59] I mean, I've done that work, and you're bailing out an ocean in many ways because you haven't done the preparatory work long way. They're just now waking up to, "Oh, my goodness. I should've been networking this whole time." And Apprenti provides a recipe that's proven in apprenticeships, that we've seen work in the trades to do micro-credentialing, short-sprint education, and pair it with on-the-job training.

Annalies Corbin: [00:36:26] And it's becoming a trend that, I think, for the better is now coming back into mainstream education, right? We got rid of it for many years. We were so much of modern industrialization. It was based on that apprentice model from way back then.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:36:43] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:36:43] And then, we we kind of got rid of it, right? And-

Evelyn Van Til: [00:36:45] Well, there is a whole glorification of college.

Annalies Corbin: [00:36:47] Absolutely.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:36:48] I have to go to college. And we got rid of woodshop. We got rid of home ec. And that space in which we made things with our hands, applied that knowledge, used mathematical principles to measure-

Annalies Corbin: [00:37:02] Right, right.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:37:03] ... and cut and look.

Annalies Corbin: [00:37:03] Yeah. We we shifted away from the applied into the theoretical. We made this massive pendulum swinging, right? And the pendulum, they always come back.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:37:13] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:37:14] It's the beauty of the physics of the pendulum, right?

Evelyn Van Til: [00:37:16] Always.

Annalies Corbin: [00:37:17] And so, it is, in fact, coming back. And what I—the beauty of what I see in this particular pendulum swing is that I believe and it is my hope that K12, high school, in particular, and that really emerging space will see the value of reintegrating apprenticeship principles, whether traditional apprenticeship in the way you think about it, or a school or community might opt into it, but

to see the value in exactly what you're talking about, the short sprint, the learning that's multiple credentials, the stacking of an experience because you're giving young people tangible wins to feel confident and good about (A), the progress that they're making in a real sort of setting, but more importantly, the contribution that they're making into what they're learning because in the apprenticeship model, the apprentices are making as much of a contribution as the mentor and the teacher.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:38:09] Absolutely. I think there's a lot of lessons to be learned. And I think that pair programming is a great way to think about that. And for anybody who's not familiar, it is where you're pairing up literally one or two people, teaming up, it could be three. But oftentimes, you're learning no matter where you're coming from. So, you may have been working in a language and programming in a language for a long, long time. But if you pair up with someone who's relatively new to their language, not only will they learn from you, but, oftentimes, you learn from them. There are often shortcuts, different ways of doing things, or even just questions that people might ask that cause you to rethink. "Why is it that we have done that? Maybe that isn't the best way." And I think it's important to give all people options to choose and continue to reinvent themselves. And one of the challenges that I know I face, many other people face, is you really are only picking things from things you see. Whether you're a kid, an adult, most people pick from a box of crayons they see.

Annalies Corbin: [00:39:13] Right. You can't do what you don't know.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:39:15] Most people can't see that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:39:16] Right.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:39:16] Yeah?

Annalies Corbin: [00:39:17] Right.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:39:17] I mean, like there's some people, really creative, innovative people who see things that don't yet exist and make those things happen. And that's fantastic. But the majority of us, even those who are doing that, are inspired by other people doing that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:39:29] Sure.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:39:29] We're always pulling from tradition, from the past-

Annalies Corbin: [00:39:32] Absolutely.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:39:33] ... from our cultural sense of what's possible.

Annalies Corbin: [00:39:36] Our cultural baggage is with us.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:39:37] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:39:38] It's guiding.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:39:39] And if you haven't seen people who are cloud architects or who are doing quality assurance, debugging, if you haven't seen robotics drones, if you hadn't seen the capacity of those things to transform industries, you haven't paid attention to gamification, what's happening with video games, and your only thing about video games is, "Oh, that's what my kid annoyingly plays,"

and you're not thinking out the ways in which it's changing health care, and manufacturing, and conferences, and event planning, and all kinds of people are seeing how, let's say, this is basically a game. It's really a boring game, but as in the race for eyeballs, if we can make that game more interesting, or sticky, more engaging, we will get more return on investment out of that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:40:24] Absolutely. And I love that race for eyeballs. Perfect. Here's some great one to go in today here, Evelyn. So I always love to end these conversations, and I always hate to end them because they're such so engaging, and I learn as much from my guests in the conversation that we're having, but I also know that as our listeners are sitting back there, having spent time with us in this conversation, thinking about, "Okay, how can I take what I heard and make use of that in my day-to-day setting, either in my job, in my contemplation of a new job, wanting to to train, or do something different, or as a teacher thinking about sort of the things I have to offer to my students, what's the big lob?" What's the one piece of advice that you would give folks were out there thinking about very meaningfully the future of work?

Evelyn Van Til: [00:41:17] Social, emotional empathy. That emotional intelligence piece. As they were thinking about the future of work, the tendency is to gravitate to tech. The tendency is to see the shiny. But the shiny is going to keep changing. The social emotional foundation, the ability to connect with humans, to care, to grow, to be nice to yourself and others, to create, and to have space to create, that energy that you put out and that you facilitate, whether it's as a parent, as a teacher, as a manager, as a community member, or in whatever role you were in, you're creating your reality by the energy that you're bringing. And there's external factors you can't control, but recognizing the control that you do have of the way that you're thinking about things, the way that you're framing things, the words that you're using, the potentially limiting

beliefs that you may have for yourself or others and challenging them. Being nice, I guess, is sort of the core to yourself, to others.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:42:19] Having that empathy with yourself and others is one of the ongoing growth of my life. And as I think about the growth in organizations, whether those are schools or industry, the ability to create culture that connects and grows with people, that's where the value is. If you're simply following the rules, people may comply, you may get results that appear to shift, but long term, people aren't engaged. They don't feel like they matter. And if people stop feeling like they matter in your organization, they're going to look for places where they do.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:42:59] I think that's one of the shifts in Columbus that started to broad is as the stars have risen, they're attracting workforce. And that's changing the dynamic of where long-term employers have thought about things, and making them more open to apprenticeship, and looking at schools. Schools are becoming more open to innovation, in part, because they see what's going on. They are empathetic and wonderful people often. But that direct connection in recognizing the importance that culture plays is the most critical piece that I would leave you with.

Annalies Corbin: [00:43:38] And I would wholeheartedly agree. We need to channel our inner STEMpathy, absolutely. So, thank you very much, Evelyn, for making time and joining us today. We appreciate it.

Evelyn Van Til: [00:43:49] Thank you so much.

Annalies Corbin: [00:43:51] 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.