



## Bill Manchester

**Bill Manchester:** [00:00:00] Don't get into teaching because you love music. You got to love to teach. And then, you're gonna pull all these other things. But then, if music is one of the mediums that you—that you love to do it in, that's great.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:00:16] 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 re-imagine, rethink, and redesign our educational system.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:00:51] So, welcome to Learning Unboxed. This is Annalies Corbin, and I'm very excited because we are recording an episode once again on the road. And we are, today, with Bill Manchester, who is a 16th year teacher, music teacher specifically, at Bexley at Cassingham Elementary School in Bexley, Ohio. And I'm excited to have Bill with us today. And one of the reasons I'm so excited is because I have been lurking, stalking - I'm not exactly sure which phrase would be best for us to use in, sort of, the public space - Bill for a while now on his Twitter feed because he does the most amazing things with kids in music class. So, Bill, welcome.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:01:36] Well, thank you. I'm excited to be here.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:01:39] So, I want to start just a little bit with some background for our listeners because, truly, I've been stalking you. You know, sort of, full disclosure, had music class been anything close to what you post online and on—we got to spend a little bit of time before this interview. What I can tell you is what you see online is absolutely real.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:02:01] That's good, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:02:02] As the kids say, "Mr. Manchester is awesome." So, that's pretty darn exciting. So, you know, in music class, I—and I had a great experience in music. I, actually, went on to get a degree in Performance.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:02:13] Okay, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:02:14] And so, I have a wonderful memory and background in school music myself. So, it was very, very—well, that passion for me. But I can tell you, it didn't look anything like what you got going on in here. So, for our listeners, when we showed up here today, kids were recording a story, creating the soundtrack, learning the lines, playing the instruments, cutting podcasts, recording, they were doing the whole deal. That's every day here.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:02:43] Yeah, yeah. And I hope, you know, that creativity, it looks different, of course, you know. And not every day, it's the iPads and all the pieces, but yeah. That is what we're wanting to do all the time.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:02:55] Yeah.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:02:55] And then, that mix of, you know, what do I have to give to them? And then, where are they at already? And just kind of blending those in a way that they can get excited about.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:03:06] So, tell us a little bit, what got you here? So, you are, at this point, a 16th year teacher, 12 years in Bexley. What brought you to music education in a school district?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:03:20] Okay, yeah. Well, my mom's a teacher. And so, I think that kind of had a lot to do with it. And growing up, I saw her teaching a lot. And then, she did stuff at church. And so, I was always—you know, she was always teaching, and I always saw what she was doing. And she really made it—you know, was trying to make it engaging. And how do I connect with these kids? And I always liked that. And the other thing was, she was always a leader, and she needed someone to help her out. And so, early on, I was her go-to person, you know, for music. And so, starting really in middle school, you know, I would come up in front at a Bible school. And all the sudden, I'm the song leader, and I'm leading the whole group, and, you know, we're doing these songs and things like that.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:04:07] And I just love that feeling of making music together. And then, just that sense of community and just really creating something. And I was always that really excited kid. I loved to create. I loved to put stuff together. And so, as I was thinking about a career, I didn't really know that music education would look like that either. You know, my—I love my music classes too, but they looked a lot different than this.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:04:32] Yeah, yeah.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:04:33] And so, you know, I thought I wanted to be a performer. I thought I wanted to be a rock star.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:04:39] Everybody wants to be a rock star.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:04:40] That's right. I mean, that's what I really want to do. And so—but, you know, I also knew maybe that's not so practical. So, music education seemed to be the thing that kind of made sense. And as I got into it, I started doing high school band, and then the job, it was high school band, and then it came with some middle school general music.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:05:01] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:05:01] And I had some classes in school, and I liked what I did in my teacher training program with [indiscernible], but I really thought high school band was where it was at. And so, this other stuff, you know, was kind of on the side. I really always hated the idea of wasting

people's time and wasting kids' time. This idea that this general music class was just going to be a time filler for kids-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:05:23] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:05:23] ... just did not sit well with me. So, I wanted to really, really do something with it. And so, even some of the things we were doing today, you know, trying to record, now, we've got iPads, and we've got great software programs. Then, we had this little mini disc recorder we were doing. And we would do a soundtrack, and we would play the VHS tape at the same time as we had the computer playing the other stuff. But it works, you know, because it's not about the technology. It's about the creativity and that creation piece.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:05:55] So, I started getting into that. And I really loved doing the general music there at my first job. I got my masters degree. Once again, I went towards band. And I thought, I really want to do band. Just things did line up. And then, the more I got into this general music world, really with middle school, and then coming down to elementary, I just feel like this is where all the pieces come together.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:06:19] I spent a couple of summers here at Bexley teaching summer reading and summer math. And it wasn't music at all, but I felt like I had that same feeling of creativity and really getting the kids engaged. And I feel like at the elementary level, particularly with general music, I'm able to bring in all these pieces. So, it's not just music, it's just everything, but it's through that music lens. And I feel like looking back. I just—I couldn't do that with high school band. And nothing against high school band. You know, it's a great thing. But that's—yeah, it's just been a good fit for me here.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:06:56] Yeah, that's good. Well, and you can tell that is a good fit because you clearly love what you do. It comes out in every single post that you make. And granted, we're all culling, right? We put out there the things we want the world to see, but the reality-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:07:08] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:07:08] ... of it is, you know, you can see it in the classroom. And one of your little kiddos whispered to me on the way out, said, "Well, you know, Mr. Manchester is the best teacher here." So, you know, the kids know, right? And they also know, they know when adults believe in them, and they know when you're not just going through the motions, right? You know. And so, what a great opportunity.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:07:34] So, I want to talk a little bit about, sort of, what's the strategy that you have been utilizing? I mean, the kids are very technologically savvy. You know, to your point, back when you did this as a kid, right, you know, as the VHS, it was the tape that we played, and then we recorded.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:07:51] Oh, yes, yes.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:07:51] And you did it all together. I mean, these kiddos, you know, got to talk to me about how they were recording their podcast, which was pretty darn fun, and what software they were using, and what their strategies were. And so, they're really—they're savvy.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:08:06] Yeah, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:08:06] So, you have to be pretty savvy too. And quite frankly, you know, there are some teachers that are awesome with technology, and other teachers that are terrified with technology, and a whole group, of course, in the middle. But you have to balance a lot because the music and entertainment industry is moving really, really fast, And I would assume that that has the potential to turn up in the work that you do.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:08:27] Yeah. Well, I hope it does. You know, I think we are getting on to other things. I mean, there's been—artists are talking about releasing a track, not as a static thing-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:08:39] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:08:39] ... but, you know, with all these stems that each person can kind of produce. And then, there's been some of that done. You know, I think, the more that gets mainstream. So, just to say, yes, that is happening, I hope to see it more. And it is that mix of thinking about, what particular thing do I bring to them? You know, there are some things that they can play around with on their own, and they can just kind of figure it out. And then, other things where I feel like the technical expertise, you know, the training that I have as a musician, that isn't something they can just pick up messing around with.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:09:13] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:09:14] And so, I have—how do I give them those pieces? You know, with the technology today, you can figure out how do I give them those technical pieces that aren't going to be the kind of learn by osmosis kind of things.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:09:26] Well, then, what do you do with—I mean, even as—in a very young group of kiddos, I mean, what do you do with, sort of, the theoretical component, to your point, right?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:09:35] Yeah, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:09:35] The music itself, you can teach them, and you can teach them to appreciate it. But the musicality components, that's a whole another sort of thing. And so, how do you consciously weave those things at the same time, making sure your kids stay engaged? And your kids are wickedly engaged. So, that's definitely not an issue. But how do you—kind of circle coming all the way back around to the fact that we are talking about a program that's living in a school-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:09:59] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:10:00] It's a deliverable.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:10:01] Yes.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:10:01] It's an outcome that your community, your families, everybody has. It has rigor to it.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:10:07] Right, yes.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:10:07] I don't want folks to think, "Oh, this is just fun," because there's true rigor happening in this classroom at a really high level. So, how do you manage all of that?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:10:15] Yeah. And I think about that a lot, because there is—there can be this tendency that, you know, we have this student-led label on something. And then, suddenly it's okay if it's not that great or not that high quality because like, well, they're just kind of discovering it. but I think we're really doing a disservice to let them stay at this low level just because that's where they're at right now.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:10:35] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:10:36] But I think it's a mix of we find where they are, push them a little bit more. My theory teacher, a guy that I worked with in grad school, his approach to music theory was it's a need-to-know basis. And so, you know, the Neapolitan chord, maybe you don't really need to know that, unless you're writing in that style that really calls for it. But to just be able to rattle that off doesn't really do anybody any good. And so, his point was, you know, as you progress as a musician, there are things like notation and varying chord progressions that you're going to need to know. But until you get to that, you don't.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:11:12] And so, I feel like even at this fifth grade, I have kids that they're reading music, they're playing these instruments, they need to know these things. And so, there's some differentiation there; whereas other kids, it's enough for them to just see, "Well, I put this loop with this loop, and that maybe sounds good," and even challenging them, "How can we find two loops that sound good on top of each other?"

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:11:33] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:11:33] And that's a very basic theory. So, you know, I think there's a lot of differentiation to that. Also, I guess, I think about I have this piano student now, and it's been the best like piano teaching experience ever. And I've taught piano lessons, kind of, on and off since a teenager. He just comes in, and I'm like, "What have you worked on?" And he just played some stuff he's worked on. And then, I show him, "Well, here's how you get on to the next measure with it," you know. "Well, I've got the first fifty measures. And well, here is measure 16."

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:12:00] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:12:01] And sometimes, they'll have an idea about how to play. You know, he's doing some dramatic tempo shift or something, you know, on a very classical piece. And then, I said, "Well, you could do it like that. That's not—you know, that's not the given thing. And you just want to make that choice consciously."

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:12:17] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:12:17] And so for kids too, you know, at this level, especially, they're not afraid of anything.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:12:21] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:12:22] So, they put out this crazy stuff. And I think, my first step is, are you making this choice consciously? If you're going to go outside of the bounds of what is normal, theoretically, I want you to understand it, and then make a conscious choice.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:12:36] So, as you help kids sort of work their way through that process, that is very much design thinking, right?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:12:45] Yeah, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:12:46] And it's definitely the design cycle.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:12:49] Yes.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:12:49] Not just an action, but put to music.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:12:51] Right.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:12:51] Pretty good day, don't you think?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:12:52] There you go, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:12:54] Yeah, there you go. And so—I mean, so where or how are you able to sort of bring some of those components back in? And I guess, really, the crux of the question that I'm asking you is, so music class for the sake of music class is awesome, in the same way that art class for art class is awesome.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:13:11] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:13:11] But the best music and the best art often are the things that are tangible. I can touch them in the sense that they actually have meaning for me. They're tied back to something else I'm doing. So, within a school setting, how is it that you sort of interplay? Well, you have an entire building full of colleagues-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:13:32] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:13:32] ... all teaching everything under the sun because the building that we are in for our listeners is a K-12.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:13:38] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:13:38] And so, this particular setting has all the kids, all the teachers, all the content, all the requirements on the back side. And so—so, how do you as the very engaging music teacher—and in many ways, what's happening here is the best illustration of a problem-based environment. A very, very wise music teacher that I met many, many years ago out on a project I was doing out west, and we were talking about problem-based learning, and why it was so important. It didn't matter what your discipline was. So, it's just—it's that transition from, you know, kids in a row to an applied teaching and learning environment, which is (A), what the kids love; but (B), what the teachers love; and at the end has much better outcomes. We know that it does, but it's not what we traditionally often identify as school.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:14:25] And it was the music teacher who stood up in this mix of these—you know, all of these teachers that this big giant workshop. Thank goodness, we don't on like that anymore. And who said, "Look, you know, I'm the choir teacher. And as the choir teacher, I am here to tell all of you that we've been living in this problem-based world for a really long time. And I can prove it to you. Because if we were still doing Christmas carols at Easter time, you would all point out to me that I failed."

**Bill Manchester:** [00:14:52] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:14:54] Right? So-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:14:54] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:14:55] So, where the intersection in a setting like the one that you're teaching in as it relates to the way you teach and how everybody else teaches?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:15:07] Yeah, yeah. And then, that is a challenge. Yes. I'd often—but, like, if I go to a school where I just thought everything, it would be so much easier to integrate. But the reality is we've got teachers with great math ideas. We got teachers with great reading ideas. And now, we want to bring those all together. And the skills, you know, that far exceed what I have in this discipline. So, there is some—you know, some general things that we're trying to—you know, we're trying to do and think about, even talking to the kids about how does this apply, you know, the kind of design cycle. We have some specific things. So, it's interesting. The scene that we were acting out today in the class, it's from a book called Front Desk. And that's part of the Global Read Aloud for this year. So, you may have heard of that.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:15:53] Yeah, yeah.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:15:53] And so, the kids, it's interesting because the first class I had today, they started reading the book. The other class hadn't started it yet. And so, for the second class, it was a preview-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:16:04] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:16:04] ... of kind of putting it together. And so, getting to explain some of those characters, I think, was good for them. And then, when they go to read that book, they've got these memories. The kids got these thing. And then, for the first class, it's a review, and it's kind of putting some emotion behind, you know, what they heard. And so, I do feel like our building is the best I've seen at, you know, having these overarching themes that we can all kind of connect to. And it's something that I've seen that I really like to share is this reciprocity. I feel like at some buildings it's—you know, they approach the music teacher about teaching some reading concepts, but they're never going to the reading teacher to teach music.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:16:47] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:16:47] But here, the fifth grade, which we had today, they also do a unit on sound after winter break, and they build instruments, and they're taking hours of class time to build these instruments that the kids will play. And they bring in a guest artist. And I'm supporting that in my classroom and giving them examples, but that's taking out of their curricula thing. And there's-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:17:09] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:17:09] There's science principles there.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:17:10] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:17:11] There's math, and there's plenty of things that connect to their disciplines. So, it makes it very comfortable for me to say, you know, part of what we did today was reading, was reading comprehension, but that works because I know that they're doing music, you know, with their units.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:17:27] So, it works when everybody plays?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:17:29] That's right? Exactly.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:17:31] Right?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:17:31] I mean, that is the key. And certainly, at Bexley, we have the luxury of, you know, kind of a legacy of succeeding in those ways that people measure, you know, which are not always useful or the most-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:17:45] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:17:45] ... reliable, but, you know, other schools that don't have that track record of success, I think it is harder to trust each other. And then, we have—that can be a curse too in its own way.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:17:55] Sure.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:17:55] ... but it is easier to trust each other and easier to get everybody to play.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:17:59] Yeah. And just for our listeners who are coming from, you know, all over the country and around the world, this is a suburban school district and Columbus urban area. It is a well-regarded school district. It's been high performing for a long time. And it's a fairly well-off district. So, full disclosure.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:18:21] Right, right.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:18:22] Right? So, it's a beautiful environment. It's conducive to lots and lots of things. But all of that said, what's happening in Bill's class, and the reason that we're here today is really around that level of engagement. And that's something that lots of folks struggle with. Even great teachers struggle with how to be meaningful, and timely, and rigorous, and relevant, and still be able to do and produce for our students in such a way that they stay engaged with you.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:18:58] Right, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:18:58] It's not easy.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:18:59] No.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:19:00] So, what are some of the strategies that you use on a regular basis that you think are successful as it relates to engaging the students?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:19:09] Yeah, well, I think the idea of really existing in a community is huge. And it's funny. I remember, I—well, when I switched over to middle school, I had a really tough class. And the principal told me, "I think you should go get some work done with classroom management," which is always a humbling thing to hear. So—and I thought, "Gosh, it's just these kids." You know, but let's get some ideas. I went to this workshop, and they were really talking about group work, but it was from a non-musical standpoint. And it's just crazy. I felt kind of embarrassed because, as a musician, we're working in groups all the time.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:19:47] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:19:47] And when I think about my favorite musical experiences, it was when we were really working in a group. I mean, so that's something that I've taken back. And that looks like different things. At the elementary level, something that we do is we do a lot of dances, and folk dances, and even, you know, modern dances, but doing it in a way that you're together, not, you know, a line dance where each person's doing their individual part but where you really have to look at the other person in the eye. You have to depend on them to know their part, or else, you're going to run into them. It's not going to work if not everybody follows directions.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:20:23] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:20:23] And I've noticed even with the toughest classes, they come together when they're doing that. They want to do it, they enjoy it, and they feel that synergy. And so, that's the thing. And a very specific thing that I do, and then I try to—you know, what does that look like when we're playing instruments? How do I build that same kind of community and really working together? And I found that the more we do, you know, sometimes, there are things that don't have as high of a, you know, curricular focus, but that social emotional piece allows us to do so much more later on. And we want to—I have this microphone set up. And I love to get kids up and singing. And I feel like singing or talking, that is the skill to be up in front of a group and presenting-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:21:10] Absolutely.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:21:10] ... universal skill.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:21:10] Absolutely.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:21:11] So, I want to get them up as much as I can, whether it's singing, talking. And I've noticed after we have those experiences where they're—you know, they have to hold hands sometimes, they have to, you know, go underneath somebody else, then it's so much easier to get somebody else in front of a microphone if they feel more comfortable. And that builds those skills, even though those don't look connected on paper.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:21:32] Yeah, but those human skills are the skills that will last them a lifetime.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:21:36] Absolutely.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:21:36] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:21:36] Yes, yes.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:21:36] And they will—quite frankly, you know, whether you loved school as a kid, or you hated school, or you're someplace in the middle, the reality is most of the memories as adults that we have of school aren't necessarily school itself, but it's a particular activity, or it's a particular teacher, or mentor that you identify with maybe your friends. But even oftentimes, if you ask adults, especially as they get older in life, that's not what they will tell you. It's about a thing I did.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:22:03] Yeah, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:22:04] Right? And it's that thing I did in those human skills they will carry with them forever. And they will-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:22:10] Right.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:22:10] ... certainly carry them with them as they leave K12 or the experience of emerging workforce, as I like to think about it, right?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:22:18] Yeah, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:22:18] When we—when you talk about what the heck are we preparing these kids for, it's not to be here.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:22:23] Right. Yeah, absolutely.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:22:24] And let's be really clear about that, right?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:22:26] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:22:26] Because it's not to be here. It's to move on from here. And so, this just becomes part of that human journey. And so, one of the things that I do love, and I was able to observe this from stalking you online is that, you know, a lot of what I see happening with your kids is they are learning those skills. You can see them work collaboratively, especially if you start look at your posts over the course of an academic year because you see the same kids repeating, right?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:22:54] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:22:54] And so—and I don't know if you've bothered to take a look at what you've posted over the course of a year from a single class. If you haven't, I would encourage you to do it. You will actually see from the beginning of the year to the end of the year in some things that you've posted, you'll actually see individual student growth.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:23:08] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:23:08] It's awesome. It's awesome. And, you know, you can see those moments of confidence in those kids. At the beginning of the year, you're coaxing them to that microphone.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:23:20] Yes.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:23:21] As the year goes on, you're now having—they have to take turns-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:23:25] Right.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:23:25] ... because they want to go to—and I saw them do that and some of things you've posted. So-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:23:29] Yeah, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:23:29] ... those—that's huge.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:23:31] Yeah. And it has been neat. Well, you know, what I post on Twitter is a small part.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:23:36] Yeah.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:23:36] And we have a Seesaw, which is another sharing platform for parents. And so, that—there's a—you know, I post a lot more volume-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:23:45] Sure, sure.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:23:45] ... you know, for the parents there. Yeah. And it is neat to see it. Even occasionally have a parent say, "Yeah, my kid, the video I could see in the beginning of the year, they just weren't that into it. But now, they want to join choir—"

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:23:56] Yeah.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:23:56] "... and they want to do this, and they want to do that." And that's—yeah, that's really cool to see.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:24:00] Well, and that's the win. And again, that's that experiential piece that those students will take away with them. And there's gonna be meaning for them down the road in so many ways that we can't even comprehend right now.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:24:11] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:24:12] Especially when you roll into the fact that the world that these kiddos that were in your fifth grade class today, you know, these clearly Gen-Zers, no question-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:24:23] Yes.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:24:23] These Gen-Zers, the world that they are going to be adults in, we can only contemplate.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:24:31] Right, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:24:32] It's gonna be so very, very different. And so, you know, oftentimes, I think that we spend a lot of time—and the reason I ask the question often with my guests is, what exactly do we think that we're preparing these kiddos for, is because the rate and pace of change today is just astronomical compared to what it's been in previous iterations.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:24:54] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:24:54] And so, as we think about the work that we're doing with these young kiddos to get them ready for sixth grade, or high school, or beyond, it's very different than what your teachers were preparing you for.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:25:06] Right.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:25:07] Certainly for me. And so, you know, as we sort of think about that, and the opportunity that you have, you know, I would like to spend a couple moments, you know, what is it that you imagine for these kids? I mean, you've been at this 16 years now. You're a veteran teacher. You've had kids get all the way through, right? They're often to the world. What do you hear back, whether directly or indirectly though, from these broad groups of students that you're now sending often to the world of our community? So, I mean, when you think about—when you think about that a little bit, I mean, what is it, today, when you walk into your classroom, and you say, "Hey, I have to

have a game plan for this kiddo 10 years from now," what is it that you would say to yourself of that game plan is? I guess, maybe that's a better way to ask a question.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:25:54] Yeah, yeah. No, I mean, that's a big. And, actually, I have a 16-year-old daughter. And so, I think about it a lot for her too. You know, she's starting to transition whatever it is after high school, college. So, I find myself thinking about that, you know, on a very personal level. And I think, even for me, you know, it's not the thing where I'm going to do the same job for my whole career. And I think for these kids too, even if they wanted to, you know, the world's gonna be changing. Things are gonna be coming in and out. And until—I guess, I think about experiences that we don't have to wait for.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:26:32] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:26:33] And when I was—when I was a teenager, there was music that I was writing, and things that I was producing, and I had no outlet to publish it in any kind of formal way. You know, any kind of exposure. And now, kids do.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:26:48] Yeah.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:26:48] And you don't have to get a journalism degree, or you don't have to have some kind of connection. You know, you can start wherever you are.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:26:54] You can start your own YouTube channel.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:26:55] That's right, that's right.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:26:56] You can be that rock star, even if it's in your own mind. It doesn't matter.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:26:59] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:26:59] But you can literally put yourself out there.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:27:01] Right. And I think, you know, something that I think a lot about is just this iteration. And it takes over and over again, you know, to really get to that quality level-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:27:12] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:27:12] ... of anything. And there was a point when I felt it was kind of—it didn't feel like it was worth anything when I was a teenager to pull all this work. And, you know, I did the tapes, like you talked about. And I would rerecord, you know, record the track on top of the tracks.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:27:28] Yeah.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:27:28] But it didn't sound that great.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:27:30] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:27:30] And, you know, what's the point? Who's going to listen to this? Maybe I pass it to my friends.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:27:33] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:27:34] But the—you know, we could—even burning a disc, you know, was a big deal. So, yeah, it's just teaching them. There's this point of getting at that now, so that you can do all the iterating. You can develop those skills. And there's an audience. There's a feedback loop where you can grow, and that can be—that doesn't need to be inside of a formal structure-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:27:57] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:27:58] ... either. You know, I think there's so many skills that there are some universities that are trying to be, but I'm not even sure. And I'm sure they're made to do that. Well, they're not made to do that.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:28:09] They're not made—that is a good point there. They're not made to do that.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:28:12] And I'm not sure they could be retrofitted to do it.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:28:14] Nor should they.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:28:15] Right. And so, I think, you know, that's—you know, with these podcasts, with the recordings that we're doing in class, you know, I'd like the kids to learn, "Hey, I can do this now. I can start figuring out how to make these things happen. I can spend my time. And even, you know, be the creator and sort of just the consumer-"

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:28:32] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:28:33] "... I mean, I can start to develop these skills. And it can be what I love." You know, like my daughter, she's very into Instagram and those videos. And so, even this summer, working with her, I had some little social media projects that I was doing. You know, she loved it. I take a video, I make a post on Instagram, and that's a job, you know.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:28:51] Right, right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:28:52] And that's—you could develop those skills right now in a very—it's fun and it's useful. So, I think that's what I want to show kids is we don't—you don't have to wait to start doing these jobs.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:29:05] Yeah, absolutely.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:29:06] Yes, it's not-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:29:06] Do it right now.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:29:07] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:29:07] Yeah, do it. Do it right now. That is awesome.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:29:09] Yeah. And from the practical—I mean—and I think for me, there's so much that if I could do it now, you know, if I didn't have to make a living, I could do all kinds of stuff now. And you don't have—you don't have to pay the rent.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:29:21] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:29:21] You know, do it now. What you love, you love. Do it and, you know, do it in a way that moves you forward.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:29:29] Yeah. And definitely, I would tell people all the time, teachers in particular, teach your passion. And I-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:29:37] Yeah, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:29:37] ... also, I have a 15-year-old son.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:29:38] Okay, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:29:39] So, I totally understand, right? And you know, when we have the conversation, and we never at my house have a conversation about what you want to be when you grew up, because I don't think that's the right question to ever ask children, but we have the conversation about, what's your passion? What is it that you love right now?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:29:55] Yeah, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:29:55] Right? And could we explore what you love right now? And I don't express it to him in the same terms that you just laid out for us, but that's really sort of the intent is, let's explore this thing that you love, so you can figure out, do I want to love this thing forever, and as a potential career, or do I want to love this thing, and I know how to do it, and it's always been part of me, and I want to move on, and try something else.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:30:15] Yes, yes.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:30:16] That's a tough thing. It's a tough thing for kids. But I think it's also, oftentimes, a very tough thing for teachers to feel enough freedom and space, right? And I use that word very deliberately because I think that, you know, as we sort of wrap what we're doing on any given day, and even in this podcast interview, I always ask, "What's that last job?" And oftentimes, what the feedback that I get from folks who listen, a lot of teachers is, "Gosh, I just wish I had the space to do what Bill is doing." And the reality is what I often will tell teachers is, you have to find ways to make the space for yourself-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:30:59] Yeah, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:30:59] ... because if you wait for the permission, it may never come. And not because nobody wants you to do it, but because it may or may not ever occur to somebody else to help you find your own space.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:31:10] Right, right, yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:31:11] So, what's the last law that you would give to teachers who are sitting here listening, thinking, "Wow! That's really cool, I want to do that," or somebody who's young, who's contemplating, "Should become a music educator?" because the reality is we need more teachers, and we need great teachers.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:31:26] Yes.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:31:26] And there is room for more teachers.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:31:28] Right. And I guess I would—maybe I'll take that last part of it first. And I just—yeah, so many people, you know, people will say, "Well, you wouldn't recommend somebody being a teacher?" And I said, "Yes, I would. Absolutely." Yes, if somebody wants to be a teacher, I think they should be a teacher. And even that, you know, when my mom went to [indiscernible] and got a degree in Special Ed, you know, what somebody will do now is going to look very different than that.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:31:56] Yeah.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:31:57] And I think what I'm—what I'm doing now looks different than what I was trained to do. And so, what I would tell teachers is, or people that want to be teachers, you know, it doesn't mean you are a teacher like what you've seen before. We're going to need teachers that really, I don't know—we may not have a lot of just music teachers anymore. You know, we're gonna need people that can do music, and math, and reading. And we can integrate things-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:32:24] Yeah.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:32:24] ... and that that design cycle and that—you know, the big picture.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:32:28] Yeah.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:32:28] And so, I really encourage people, you know, don't get into teaching because you love music. You know, you've got to love to teach, and then you're gonna put all these other things. But if music is one of the mediums that you love to do it, then that's great. I mean, I think that's—yeah, that's my biggest advice is we need teachers that love to teach and love that process of creation, and iteration, and all those things, and in some ways that aren't tied to a discipline.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:32:53] Right.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:32:54] And it could be more broadly. So, yeah. And then, as far as like doing that, wherever you are, I have taught—I mean, I've been at Bexley for a while, but before that, I was in very different districts. And I do think I've certainly grown as a teacher, and I do different things now. But it—what I'm doing now. I feel like I've always done some flavor of this. And there were schools that were very concerned about how are our students progressing academically. But when they saw what I was doing, there was never any pushback because there is a value there, and we can see that this is still getting us where we want to go, and maybe even more and faster on those other things that we measure that this is gonna get us there too. And so, yeah, I think that there's probably more freedom than a lot of people realize. Like you said, if nobody is going to give you the permission to go out there, and that looks different for everybody and wherever you're at.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:33:54] And the industry, as a whole, is changing, right, because-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:33:56] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:33:57] ... because the needs, the outcomes that we must have, they're not even just needs. When I think about those, sort of, global scale and what's happening-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:34:05] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:34:05] ... whether it'd be our global economy, the environment, you know, take your pick. The reality of it is the flip side of this K12 or even the PTA-16 experience is we have a very different need than we've ever had before.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:34:20] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:34:21] And because of that, it is causing or should cause the industry to change pretty radically, right?

**Bill Manchester:** [00:34:27] Yes.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:34:27] And to your point, what we are looking for are amazing facilitators of learning.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:34:33] Yes. Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:34:34] Right? And that's a very different thing than just being a teacher. It's more.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:34:41] Right.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:34:41] And it's not more and more work. It's more in the—your own internal skills, I think, that you draw on to bring to the daily activity-

**Bill Manchester:** [00:34:51] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:34:52] ... is being a teacher.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:34:53] Absolutely.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:34:54] Yeah. So, lots of great things to come. So, thank you, Bill, very much for sharing part of your journey with us, in particular, your classroom, your students, but most specifically your passions. So, thank you.

**Bill Manchester:** [00:35:07] Well, thank you.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:35:11] 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.