



Mary Schneider and Erika Reeves

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Annalies Corbin: [00:00:14] 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: [00:00:49] Welcome to the next episode of Learning Unboxed. This is your host Annalies Corbin. And as always, I am super excited to be back in the studio at WOSU with two amazing guests, two ladies that we are going to chat about what does it take to become a problem-based teacher or better yet, a trans-disciplinary problem-based teacher. And so, we're going to talk about what that means and what that journey looks like. Joining us today are Mary Schneider. Mary is part of the PAST Foundation's lab team. She is one of our school design coordinators and comes to us from rural South Dakota. I've known Mary for, oh, man, I don't know, nine years maybe at this point.

Mary Schneider: [00:01:38] Nine years.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:38] And I first met Mary as language arts teacher in a small rural community in South Dakota. And after many years of working with Mary and in numerous capacities, in everything from coaching and the training and leveraging of other teachers, helping students discover STEM and opportunity and careers to coaching teachers and post-secondary embedded in a university program and then, most recently, relocated to finally come back to the mother ship in Columbus, Ohio, as part of our team. So welcome, Mary.

Mary Schneider: [00:02:12] Good to be here. And joining Mary is Erika Reeves. And Erika is a teacher at the Metro Early College High School. In particular, she is the coordinator for the Metro's Early College Bodies Pathway Program. And we're gonna let her explain to us a little bit about what that is. But Erika comes to us from a background in biology who came to teacher. So, biology and biochemistry, I think you told me once.

Erika Reeves: [00:02:43] Yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:02:44] She is now leading an innovative pathway program and she's also working on some alternative certifications within sort of a state where lots and lots of teachers are doing. And so, taking advantage of an array of professional development programs, in particular, something at PAST Foundation, we

call P3. And I'm going to let these two ladies sort of talk about what it is and how it impacts your teaching. So, Erika, welcome.

Erika Reeves: [00:03:07] Welcome. Thank you.

Annalies Corbin: [00:03:08] So, Mary, let's start really quickly with you. Since we're going to talk about this thing called P3 and we haven't really talked about the way that PAST Foundation trains teachers, but we make reference to it frequently on the program. So, this is really sort of the first time to sort of dig into the weeds of that. So, what the heck is school design at PAST and what is it that you folks do?

Mary Schneider: [00:03:32] So, school design is the way of integrating what teachers do in the classroom, what students do in the classroom, and helping teachers get to the point where they can let their students drive the instruction, they can let their students drive what's going on in the classroom. P3 is a series of online courses. P3 stands for problems, projects, and products. And it's a set of online courses. We have P3 Applied, P3 Design, and P3 Delivery. And each of those integrates the teacher into creating coursework and learning about design thinking, learning about how to do a problem-based classroom while integrating all the different topic areas.

Mary Schneider: [00:04:20] We do a series of three to four weeks depending upon which course you're in. P3 Applied is a three-week course that will allow for the teachers to listen to podcasts, integrate themselves in a message board, read material, develop some coursework. And then, we meet once a week virtually, where they get to share out their information, they get to talk to each other as professionals, and they get to then practice what it is that they're learning in their own classrooms.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:53] So, Erika, to sort of piggyback on that, before we actually get into the nuts and bolts of the work the two of you have been doing together, just give our listeners a bit of a sort of high level overview of the bodies program. So, we've had an episode or two that we've really kind of dug into a lot of some of the components of Metro and its sort of original ideation, but tell us specifically about what it is that you are doing there so that we can then circle back around and understand why you're hanging out with Mary.

Erika Reeves: [00:05:28] So, the bodies program is created to provide a rigorous early college programmatic option in biomedical sciences. It's for accelerated juniors and seniors. And the mission is to engage, challenge, and develop high-achieving young professionals through the exposure to the biomedical science field. And so, this program is a partnership between Metro Early College High School and the PAST Innovation Labs.

Annalies Corbin: [00:05:53] And like all of the pathway programs or those emerging workforce development programs that we talk about all the time on this program that are happening at the PAST Innovation Lab, the bodies program that you lead really integrates a number, it's almost more than I can fathom and it changes from year-to-year of community partners, industry partners, career opportunities, and placement sites that students get to participate in, correct?

Erika Reeves: [00:06:23] Correct. We work a lot with Ohio State to give them the opportunity to learn about the different biomedical pathways that they can go into because most students think, "Oh, I'm going to be a doctor." They don't think that, "Oh, I might be interested in radiology or integrative medicine or optometry or dentistry." So, it just gives them the opportunity to further look into careers that are biomedical science careers, finding their niche so that they can really look at where they're strong and where they can have their career and be successful. And it's not just medical school. So-

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:02] Right.

Erika Reeves: [00:07:03] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:03] And then, to that point, you know, kids have no idea with the breadth and depth of any careers. We talk about that all the time. I've got all kinds of industry guests that come on this program and that is a common theme. And we can almost, every episode, circle back around and say, "Yeah. And the kids just have no idea what's possible", because they don't.

Erika Reeves: [00:07:20] They don't. And I'm a perfect example. I went to school, I got a degree in biology and biochemistry and thought, "Oh, I'm going to go to medical school." And then, I didn't get into medical school. So then, I had to make a decision. And teaching was not something that was on, you know, my idea board. However, I love it because I get to teach the future of biomedical science students, those people that are going to impact our world.

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:51] So, let's talk about that a little bit, because that's a pretty daunting responsibility on some levels, right? And obviously, the program that you're in is creative and it's innovative and it would have to be highly adaptable or it's not going to be successful from year-to-year. And that is one of the things that we've had, Mary and I, the privilege of being able to watch that program sort of as it's become adaptable over time. But I want to dig a little bit into the idea as it relates to the way we think about this P3 program, if you will, Mary.

Annalies Corbin: [00:08:25] Because one of the requirements, I don't know if I've mentioned this before on the program, but, you know, for a teacher to come in and be a teacher in residence in our school and residence partner is the metro schools, which are across the street physically, for those who are not from this part of the country or part of the world. So, we are literally across the street from the school itself. But we are not the school. This Innovation Lab is a specialized place. Students have to sort of earn the right into. And every teacher, though, that comes to be an in residence partner with us, part of that requirement is that they have to go through P3. Why do we do that, Mary?

Mary Schneider: [00:09:04] It's a good way for instructors to really dive deep into not only what they're teaching, but to really change their insight as to how their students learn. Oftentimes as teachers, we deliver content and we deliver it in the best way we know how. And we believe that our students are truly learning the material. P3 allows those teachers to look at it not only from the teachers perspective, but also from what is it that my students are learning and how are they learning. And sometimes, that can be as simple as changing a question from how is this done to why is this done? It opens up the door for the teacher then to give those students the freedom to look at what it is that they're actually learning and how they can apply it, how they can use it.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:58] So, let's dig in a little bit. So, P3 Applied. So, I want to ultimately go through each one of these sort of offerings and sort of understand what it is that you get for us. So, P3 Applied in particular, Mary, that one changes from time-to-time because it's topic-specific and we have shifted, we have modified ourselves, right? So, P3 Applied was not originally where we started.

Mary Schneider: [00:10:24] Correct. Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:10:25] So, explain to us what is P3 Applied. And then, Erika, I'm going to tag you and we're going to talk about the experience.

Mary Schneider: [00:10:32] P3 Applied is all about design thinking. It's all about getting the teachers to think in that design cycle mindset. How does the mind work? How do we learn? It also brings in that aspect of community partners. How do we get those people who are outside of our classroom to be inside our classroom with our students? How do we get that expertise that is out there to be used in our classroom? And you're right, it's content-specific in terms of, we do aviation, we do smart mobility, we do connections and habitat. We-

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:14] What does that mean, though? So, give me an example.

Mary Schneider: [00:11:16] Sure. So, connections and habitat, we really tie it to environmental-type things. So, we investigate poop and we go out to waterways and we look at pollinators. We look at how the environment itself can be utilized within the content that they're already teaching their classroom. So, an English teacher can use a connections and habitat idea in their classroom and teach two different subjects at the same time. And they're just simply using that material in the material that they're already teaching.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:48] In an innovative way.

Mary Schneider: [00:11:50] Correct.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:52] So, Erika, you've done P3 Applied more than once, I believe, right? Is that correct? You went sort of-

Erika Reeves: [00:11:59] Just once in its full capacity, but different components at different times.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:04] Yeah.

Erika Reeves: [00:12:04] So, it was nice to see it all come together.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:06] So, tell us about what your experience with P3 Applied. And so, specifically, from the sort of a practicing teacher in the classroom right now, Mary used to be in the classroom and now, she's teaching teachers. So, for you, being a teacher in the classroom, what was the thing that you got out of it? Why is it beneficial to you?

Erika Reeves: [00:12:27] So, I was thinking about it and this was the analogy I came up with, we have all these standards and these standards are like our backpack. But how do we know what to put in our backpack? So, if we ask a question like the question that I worked with as I was going through the classes, why do we need a laboratory? My goal is, is that students learn basic laboratory skills, how to streak a plate for bacterial growth, how to pipe that for a PCR lab? And so, why are they important?

Erika Reeves: [00:13:05] And that allows me to use my backpack or my standard and then, unpack it. Because when we ask students to pack for a trip, we say, "Okay, here's a suggested list of items to bring", but somebody that has short hair might need a comb and somebody that has long hair might need a brush. So, it gives them the opportunity to have this overarching question and then, peel it back in a way that is interesting to them.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:32] So then, how does that translate into your actual practice?

Erika Reeves: [00:13:38] Well, it allows me to ask different questions. So, how do I want them to find out about the importance of a lab or lab practices or the 21st century lab skills that I want my students to develop to be in the biomedical sciences? It allows me to give some freedom to the students, kind of what questions do

they want to know about. Because I can let them unpack it in ways that are of interest to them so that everybody doesn't have to have exactly the same experience.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:15] And that's okay.

Erika Reeves: [00:14:17] That's wonderful.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:19] Yeah.

Erika Reeves: [00:14:19] That's wonderful. I might want to look at it from a biochem aspect or somebody else wants to look at it from a microbiology aspect and somebody else might want to look at it cellularly. So, I don't know, it makes me excited because I can meet the interest of the students just, you know, with a general overarching question because-

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:43] All while meeting the standard you needed to teach to begin with.

Erika Reeves: [00:14:46] Right.

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

Erika Reeves: [00:14:47] What it does to a teacher is makes them uncomfortable because they might not have all the answers and they might be developing skills right along with their students because at least for me, I haven't done a lot of lab work since I was in college. I know a little bit here, little bit there, but I've spent the last five years in middle school. And I'm sorry, I'm not streaking plates with middle schoolers or letting them use expensive pipettes. I mean, that's not where I was at. So, now that I have students that are ready for those kind of things, you know, they can do things differently than, you know-

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:34] Mary then, so the thing that as a teacher listening—and just to be really clear, it is not a sales pitch around the PAST P3, we're utilizing it as an example of how we really change practice. That's really what our conversation today is about. And what are the different opportunities or exposures that teachers can find either deliberately or because they stumble upon that changed practice? And so, my question, Mary, is that Erika could have taught and probably did, you know, teach how to streak a plate before, so when you walk in and watch that lab, what's different now?

Mary Schneider: [00:16:24] The freedom she feels, the excitement she feels. No longer does she act like everything that has to be done in the classroom is completely on her shoulders. She knows that in order for her students to get to the depth of level of understanding that she wants them to get to, she had to allow them to play in the content exactly like she did when she was finally going through probably college. And that's usually where we used to get all of this.

Mary Schneider: [00:16:59] All of a sudden, you're thrown into a lab course or you're thrown into an English course and you're actually asked to do that real material. This changes the mindset of that teacher from being the knower of all and it passes it along to the students to allow them to do that same thing. It's like driving a car. You don't drive a car by reading a manual. You get behind the wheel and you give it a try.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:27] Unless you're Sheldon Cooper, he studied it, right?

Mary Schneider: [00:17:30] He studied it really well until then. But it just changes that mindset. It creates the idea in the teacher's head that they don't have to know everything. They have to walk the walk with the students. And they have to help that student get to their own understanding, make those own connections.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:50] So, Erika, what's hard about that? As you will know because I'm always lurking through the windows, right? So, for folks who've not been there, the Innovation Lab is a series of glass box labs, is what we call them. And they're based on the notion that in industry R&D, everybody has to be able to observe everything all the time, right? That's part of the R&D process. And so, we built these glass box and we said, "Voila. Erika, here you go. It's the bodies lab." So, I get to lurk at Erika from outside a lot. Sometimes, go in, lurk inside, too. But what's hard about this, Erika?

Erika Reeves: [00:18:28] It's hard to train the students to change their thinking because they're used to, "You just give it to us", instead of, "Oh, I have to find it myself. Oh, I get to find it myself."

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:43] How long does it take the kids to make the shift, to turn the corner?

Erika Reeves: [00:18:48] I think a lot of it depends on the student.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:49] Sure.

Erika Reeves: [00:18:49] There are some students that are naturally more curious than others and that curiosity hasn't been squashed. But for some of them, it takes a little bit of time. And I think one of the big things that I have noticed is that we all were afraid to fail. So, there's an element of rising above that, I have to get it right the first time and it's okay to make mistakes and, you know, the greatest part of that is I get to learn from the mistakes. And having the students get to that point where they can just be at peace with that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:28] I mean, it is a remarkable thing. I mean, you're living it every day. And I often will hear a teacher say, "Well, I didn't realize." And Mary and I have the advantage, I guess, if you will, because we're constantly looking in, right? We get to sort of see it with a slight bit of detachment. And I wouldn't say that you could say, hey, you know, on Tuesday, the third week of September, right? We're gonna see X suddenly happen.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:54] But we've been at it long enough to see the signs. So, you can tell when a teacher, a classroom of students and, you know, that endeavor is getting ready to make a shift. And they do. The kids do. And the first way, because I've been working with Erika, we've got a project we're actually doing together this past term. And so, part of it's student comfort, like you said, right? They get used to something, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:21] You know, at the beginning of the semester, I would watch them come back to you repeatedly and ask the same question, thinking, "If I ask it enough time, she'll finally either tell me or she'll change the answer", right? And eventually, they stopped doing that, right? And as an example, there are other plateaus as well, you know, Mary. So, as you think about this sort of tell tale signs that not only has the practice of the teacher started to change, but the practice in the classroom is also changing. What does that look or feel like to you?

Mary Schneider: [00:20:57] It's almost a shift from you have 20 students looking at a teacher and now, you have 20 students who are looking to each other. And you have 20 students who are asking very different questions rather than asking if this is what you want or does this look right. They're asking a more deep, a deeper question. They're asking, "Where can I go next? What can I change now? What does this lead to? Oh,

look at this." Sometimes, from people looking outside in, it looks chaotic sometimes. It looks like everybody's doing something they're not supposed to be doing. They're talking to each other. They're up and they're moving around. They're on their phones calling people that they want to ask questions of. It looks more like a place of learning than our schools ever did.

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:57] It does. I completely agree with you. And I have had many people saying, "I can possibly teach like this" or "This can't possibly have learning happening." Oh, it's epic learning that's going on. And it's a level of controlled chaos. There's no question to some extent. I think that's a great way to sort of think about it. Yeah, absolutely. So, you know, Erika, before we move on and talk about, you know, P3 Design, because that brings in a whole another level of things that you're getting to do and sort of apply, you know, from the teacher or practical ways that you're thinking about your planning and your development.

Annalies Corbin: [00:22:36] So, before we shift into sort of that planning and development phase, what's the biggest constraint from the application side? So, you go and I hear teachers say this all the time, "I went, I did this great PD." Doesn't matter what it is, right? It could be about STEM, it could be design thinking, it could be basket weaving, I don't really care. "Had a great experience. I loved it as a teacher. I learned so much. But I can't do this in my classroom" or, you know, "I'm not gonna be allowed" or, you know, "It's Tuesday. I have to be on page 34 in my scripted curriculum guide." So, what are the constraints, the primary constraints that you find sort of at that phase in your work, even in an innovative place of teaching and learning, that you bump up against because they're real, they're in every environment.

Erika Reeves: [00:23:28] Probably the first one is time. I have a benefit that I have my students usually for at least a three-hour segment. So, that's unlike a teacher in a traditional school who may have 45 minutes or 50 minutes or even a block would be what, an hour and 15 minutes or something like that. So, I think that time is a constraint. I think a lot of times, teachers think they have to change everything right on the spot instead of taking those baby steps.

Erika Reeves: [00:23:59] A couple of small things that they're implementing and it changes the students' thinking, it changes their behaviors, and it changes the way they're able to do things in their classrooms. So, it's almost like changing procedures. And as you change the procedures and the students get used to it, then you're not practicing the procedures anymore, you're just doing them. And then, they become a habit.

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:27] Right. Right.

Erika Reeves: [00:24:28] So, I really think that that, I think, is a big constraint for teachers thinking, "Oh, I would like to try this or I want to implement this", is that it doesn't have to be something that takes tons of time and it doesn't have to be something that's a heavy load, you just have to make a decision to change one thing and then, like a snowball, it will allow other things open the door for other aspects to be added in.

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:59] Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. So, Mary, that's a great segue. So, let's talk about P3 Design, because in many ways, it was set up specifically to help step one through. So, tell us about P3 design.

Mary Schneider: [00:25:14] So, P3 Design really puts the planning section into the teachers' hands. They get to either plan a semester, two-week unit, a year-long unit, whatever they might want to do, but they're truly taking the curriculum that they have in the classroom. And they are turning it into a problem-based approach as opposed to doing what they might have done before, which to Erika's point, that time element kind of goes away once the teacher starts doing an actual activity in their classroom.

Mary Schneider: [00:25:47] P3 Design allows them to figure out that that time element isn't on top of their existing curriculum. This problem-based approach becomes their curriculum and it becomes what they're doing. So, it's not over and above, it's part of. And then, they start to figure out what standards are being touched, how are they aligning, what they're doing, what projects are they doing, how are they doing the curriculum that they're doing in their classroom in a different way, looking at it in a different way.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:19] And I want to be really clear with folks. So that is, some schools or some teachers take an existing curriculum and they make the modification to turn it into a problem-based.

Mary Schneider: [00:26:30] Correct.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:31] Ultimately, we hope to get them to be trans-disciplinary. But again, to Erika's point, was a really, really important one, and I tell people all the time, it is not all or nothing. And in fact, please don't do it that way because it will fail.

Mary Schneider: [00:26:44] Correct.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:44] But it is small steps to get you where you're looking to be. And so, you can do that with existing programming, right? We can teach you how to do that. You can utilize the design thinking, those systems approach and get yourself there. But you also, through this particular program, get the opportunity, if you are so inclined, you can create and develop entirely new.

Mary Schneider: [00:27:05] Correct.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:06] Right? So, you have that option. So, Erika, when you were working in P3 Design, so tell us what you worked on. What was it that you did?

Erika Reeves: [00:27:14] So, I have to go back to listen to—and I was listening to Mary talk about this. She's talking about the students doing, doing, doing, doing, doing. They're always doing something instead of it just be the basic, "I'm memorizing", you know, they're analyzing, they're creating. They're doing those higher blooms that, you know, we talk about in education. What did I do? So, in bodies currently, we teach anatomy.

Erika Reeves: [00:27:42] And it's coupled with the rotations that we talked about, where they go to a higher state or to community partners and learn about different curves in biomedical science. So, currently, we're teaching anatomy. And we want to move away, not that anatomy is not important, but we're making a prereq to our students that are coming into the program. And next year, we're adding, our course is going to be medical interventions.

Erika Reeves: [00:28:06] So, we're working with a professional from a high state who is an engineer. And so, we're adding in engineering components. So, when I was talking about why is a laboratory important or why do we need laboratories, we're bringing in a lot of those innovation things and interventions for our students to really integrate science terminology with engineering terminology. One of the things that this professional says is that we have doctors and those people that work in medicine and we have engineers, but we don't have somebody in the middle that can speak both of the languages.

Erika Reeves: [00:28:56] So, it's really important to be giving students the opportunity to learn the languages on both sides. So, maybe adding in a little bit of coding. One of the things we're thinking about is making a prosthetic hand or arm or something like that where the students, they're able to apply the anatomy that they

learned in the prereq course and bring it into this new course. So, you know, the lab skills, the engineering, the prosthetics, those kind of things.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:26] All the modification.

Erika Reeves: [00:29:29] Yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:29] Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. So then, Mary, how does that then sort of piggyback into the next P3?

Mary Schneider: [00:29:36] P3 Delivery allows those teachers then to really deliver that material in their course. So, now, they're practicing it as they are involved in their own class.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:50] Yeah. And I actually see Erika do this because one of the things really intriguing to me is I asked somebody the other day to watch, somebody that we had on site for a visit for two to three days. And I actually pointed out two of the labs and I said, "I want you to watch these two labs. Every time you go by, I want you to think about whether or not you can tell or is there a lecture happening? Tell me what's happening in that classroom", right? And so, this was a three-day visit that this person was around. And they said they couldn't figure out that you ever lectured to your kids. And I said, "Great. When?" That's the win, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:32] That's exactly what I want to hear someone coming, you know, if I send them into any school that is really sort of making that transition into a problem-based environment, you know, it's the rare moment where I can truly, truly say I, as the random stranger, fully understand what's happening in there. Because otherwise, it's a fully engaged, to your point, students doing, doing, doing, you know, as it relates to how you're doing the instruction. And again, I want to circle back around on one of the earlier questions that I asked you, Erika, because it's critical to sort of watch and to see, but shifting to that real problem-based, and you've been in it for a while, but I think it's been different this year.

Erika Reeves: [00:31:19] Correct.

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:20] Right? I think I've heard you say that on numerous times. What is so different?

Erika Reeves: [00:31:26] Well, I've never been a heavy lecturer in general. But you're right. If you come by the classroom, it's not really a lecture, it's conversation. So, given the instructions are more of a conversation piece, just giving them the necessities that they need to be able to engage in the lab and bring an element of success without giving away all the secrets of the lab or the secrets of the activity. I think part of it is different because I have a different group of students. And because they're juniors and seniors and not middle schoolers, there's a level of maturity that you see just naturally.

Erika Reeves: [00:32:08] But these students are so inquisitive, they are so engaged. And bringing back to the point of what changes after the course of, you know, as you start this problem-based in this community, it's a community builder and they do rely on each other instead of relying on me. And so, I mean, there is an element of absolute freedom in that knowing that they will go to each other. It really runs like a business. You don't go to the CEO every time you have a question.

Annalies Corbin: [00:32:48] One would hope.

Erika Reeves: [00:32:49] You would hope. You would hope. But it's nice that they have built a community of communicators. They trust each other. They value each other's opinion. They are collaborators, which I can't wait to see the PSA that's coming out that they've been working on. And really, they're a community of learners. It's not just a classroom with students, it's a community of engaged learners. And there's a difference.

Annalies Corbin: [00:33:22] So, Mary, you actually work with teachers and schools all over the country, taking them through the various P3 programs and everything from new programs to wild crazy hair ideas and everything in between. And Mary's also spent a number of years training pre-service teachers at the university level as well. And so, same question back to you. So, practice changes as a result of, I would argue to some extent, one of the pieces we haven't talked about is we're really re-engineering an environment. So, it's not just your teaching and the learning, but literally the environment shifts. And I think Erika's lab is a really great way for us to think about it, because for our listeners, she is not like a 1 to 12 ratio. How many kids are in the course that I come into? How many kids are in that group?

Erika Reeves: [00:34:17] I have 37.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:19] Thirty-seven kids in advanced pathways doing a variety of different things. She's differentially instructing on the fly every moment, every day. And it is not just manage, but in many ways, you don't have to manage it at all.

Erika Reeves: [00:34:36] No, they manage themselves because you set the expectations and you give them the tools and the freedom to make the environment a success.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:49] So, Mary, is that really the way it works that we see?

Mary Schneider: [00:34:52] It is really the way it works, yeah. I've seen this work with even involved in more, right? We had, you know, upwards of 80 students that we were working with at one time. It works that way because no longer are the students just simply sitting there waiting, they're now involved in what it is that they're doing. They're driving the bus. You hold the license. You are figuring out where they're going. You're telling them how soon they have to get there. But they're really driving the bus. And as soon as that occurs in the classroom, it truly is—

Mary Schneider: [00:35:29] I hate to go to that business because I'm not a big equator of business and education, but you don't sit around waiting for me to do stuff and make sure that I get it done, you expect me to get it done. And that's really what this does for our students, is it allows them the freedom to get to their destination in the way they need to get to their destination in the time frame you tell them that they have to get there. And that really changes behavior. It changes outcomes. It changes everything about the way that student believes education is. Now, they're in charge. And as soon as you give them that power, little bit of power that it is, it changes that manner in the classroom.

Annalies Corbin: [00:36:19] It does. It's remarkable and kind of fun to see. And of course, you know, every teacher who goes on that journey does it a little bit differently. It's very individualized and it takes on to some extent, I would argue, the personality of that facilitator of learning, right? It truly does, right? So, absolutely no question. So, one of the ways I always like to wrap this program is that, you know, what was that thing?

Annalies Corbin: [00:36:43] So, I often use the rural teacher, just channeling my inner Mary Schneider here, you know, so I'm this teacher listening or I'm this community saying, "Gosh, we want programs like that to come here" or I'm a workplace like, "I want those young adults to actually becoming my employees", right? What's the thing I need to know, Erika, from the teacher perspective or something that you wish you had

known as you started that journey? I always try to leave folks with sort of that high lob. So, if you're gonna do this, this is what you need to know.

Erika Reeves: [00:37:22] Don't be afraid to ask. Because as much as you want partners to work with you or you want the kids to take ownership, the answer's always no if you don't ask. So, you know, asking the community partners to be involved or asking student parents, like the parents of the students are more than willing to get involved. And they know people. It really is a networking opportunity and everybody wins, the teacher wins, the partners win, the students win. I think that's probably the biggest thing that I have gained from this, is, you know, just changing your thinking and not being afraid to ask.

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:08] Yeah. Yeah. Mary, what would you leave folks with having been on multiple sides actually of this question?

Mary Schneider: [00:38:18] What I used to tell my pre-service teachers, take a leap of faith, trust that you know what's best for your students and that they know what's best for them and that together, you'll get to where you need to get.

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:30] And do it over and over again.

Mary Schneider: [00:38:32] Absolutely. Don't give up, do not give up.

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:37] Yeah.

Mary Schneider: [00:38:37] Do it again. It doesn't work, try it again, modify it. Doesn't work then, try it again and modify it.

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:42] And eventually, pick up the phone and call you.

Mary Schneider: [00:38:45] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:48] Well, thank you, ladies, very much. We appreciate you making time for us today.

Erika Reeves: [00:38:53] Thanks for having us.

Mary Schneider: [00:38:54] Thank you.

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:59] Thank you for joining us for Learning Unboxed, 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 at Annalies Corbin. And join me next time as we stand up, step back, and lean in to re-imagine education.