Angela Forino

Angela Forino: [00:00:00] Because they're out there, they're all over the place that you could somehow—even if it is just a persuasive letter to go with it, to send it to someone, but looking for those problems in your community that you can somehow connect to your grade level or other grade levels in your school.

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:19] 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: [00:00:53] So, this is Annalies Corbin and I am super, super excited today to bring you Learning Unboxed. We are on the road again. This time in Reynoldsburg, Ohio. And we are talking with an amazing third-grade teacher at Reynoldsburg City schools, Angela Forino, who PAST has been very fortunate to get to experience in a number of different capacities over the years from taking some of the P3 stuff to leading some of our summer programs to now being a mentor and coach to other teachers going through some of our programs. So, we're really excited that we had the opportunity to come and visit your classroom today. So, thank you very much for that.

Angela Forino: [00:01:34] No, thank you. I'm glad you're here.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:35] So, we want to talk about a really, truly amazing sort of program and program adaptation that Angela has been working on for a number of years, along with the rest of the district tied to something they call the Smart Reynoldsburg Project. So, I want to start very high level. Angela, explain to our listeners, for starters, what is this project?

Angela Forino: [00:01:59] So, this started three years ago here in third grade. And we were looking to make our social studies' activities more engaging and also, more real-world. We had gone through the STEM continuum. We've been a STEM school for a while. And our next step was really trying to make things more real-world. And in third grade in Ohio, our history standards are all around Reynoldsburg. So, they're trying to figure out how can we relate that history to what's going on now or what's coming in the future.

Angela Forino: [00:02:30] And at the same time, we had been doing some cardboard challenges and we also wanted to make those more relevant to the students. And so, we were trying to brainstorm a way to still use the cardboard challenge, but make it go with the real-world problem. And so, we started by deciding to have them make a futuristic Reynoldsburg, but we wanted it to be

something that really could happen in Reynoldsburg, you know, not just aliens and all that kind of stuff. So-

Annalies Corbin: [00:02:56] You took the joy right out of an alien encounter in Reynoldsburg.

Angela Forino: [00:03:01] And, you know, who knows? But it would have gone there.

Annalies Corbin: [00:03:04] Right.

Angela Forino: [00:03:04] And so, we started by inviting residents. We worked with the historical society and honestly, social media. I went out on Facebook to the different Reynoldsburg pages and asked for anybody that had lived here more than 50 years or 50 years to come in. And our students interviewed them about how it's changed. So, we started by looking for trends of how it's changed over time. And that also then covered our history standards. But then, the smart city park came along, because Columbus had just won the Smart City Challenge, the grant, in Reynoldsburg suburb.

Angela Forino: [00:03:36] So, we wanted to kind of get in on that. And so, the future part of it came with smart city. So, we had learned about the history of Reynoldsburg and what's changed. And from that, we could figure out what might change in the future, but we also wanted to talk about what is coming in the future. So, we had Smart City Columbus come out a couple of times and they talked to the kids about the future of mobility and how they're using problems within Columbus and technology and data to help fix some of those problems.

Angela Forino: [00:04:04] And so, we kind of came up with what are some problems within Reynoldsburg, such as traffic or honestly, overpopulate—you know, we have a ton, we're kind of landlocked. And we looked, okay, in the future how are we going to deal with that? So, then from that, the students worked on making small plots of Reynoldsburg, what they think would be like in 50 years, but they had to justify their changes based on either what they think will change, because, you know, it was trending to change from the residence or because Smart Columbus, you know, is bringing a lot of that and eventually, it will trickle down here to us. And so, their changes had to be justified.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:43] It's a car dealership?

Female Speaker: [00:04:45] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:45] That's what we call when we sell cars, right? Yeah. Yeah. But this one is just for electric cars.

Female Speaker: [00:04:51] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:51] Is that what you're telling me? That's pretty cool. So, is this something that exists in Reynoldsburg today or is this something that we don't have in Reynoldsburg and you think we need?

Female Speaker: [00:05:04] We need it, because like we don't want more pollution in the earth.

Angela Forino: [00:05:09] And then, when you put all their small plots together for the whole third grade, it makes an entire alphanumeric grid of Reynoldsburg. And so, then we could use that alphanumeric grid with our geography standards, too. That's where it started.

Annalies Corbin: [00:05:21] Mm-hmm. And this is a third-grade-wide project or is this a Ms. Forino project?

Angela Forino: [00:05:27] This is third grade here at Herbert Mills.

Annalies Corbin: [00:05:29] Right.

Angela Forino: [00:05:29] And I cannot take credit like there, I'm very quick to jump with ideas, but my team is very awesome at grounding me, but also like figuring out, you know, how long it's going to take in helping me lay it out. And so, they've been helping me. And every year when we do this project, it improves either because Smart Columbus has changed and we're learning more about it. We did an actual third grade over the summer. My third-grade team went to Smart Columbus, you know, to see what's happening, because we want to make sure we're also bringing that information back to our students. And we've got to ride the autonomous shuttle.

Annalies Corbin: [00:06:02] Yeah.

Angela Forino: [00:06:03] And we wanted to be able to say we did that and be able to speak to, you know, what's actually happening.

Annalies Corbin: [00:06:07] So I want to focus on just a little bit on the piece that you started with around the sort of cardboard challenge. And the reason I want to sort of key in on that is because that is very low-hanging fruit. So, the cardboard challenge has been around for a number of years and we've done it with you guys here at Reynoldsburg a number of times. It's all over. We use it a lot in Ohio, but many, many places around the globe have utilized the cardboard challenge. And so, I think that it was it was an opportunity for you to take this thing that you're existing and you're doing and you want to give it some real-world relevance with your students and teachers make that sort of leap all the time.

Annalies Corbin: [00:06:48] But sometimes, really difficult to get your community to join in with you. I love the creative factor of you being able to go out to your community and say, "Hey, if you've lived here 50 years, come and tell us what's different." So, as you sort of thought about making that shift and that iteration, sort of in that first year, was it a tough haul or was it kind of an easy haul or somewhere in the middle? Because I can just see folks staring back, saying, "Oh, yeah, I'd love to do this, but, man, that sounds-" I mean, you're going on and on. There are so many pieces. How do I do the baby steps to get there?

Angela Forino: [00:07:22] From the cardboard challenge?

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:23] Yeah, or any similar thing that a school may already be doing? I think the point was that you adapted a thing that was already sort of ingrained in the community instead of white piece of paper, blank slate, let's start something new, you said, "Hey, we have this thing"?

Angela Forino: [00:07:41] And I would say like for me, also being from Reynoldsburg, I feel like I'm constantly looking and a lot of it is on social media, I see things, looking for those problems, looking for those ways. And then, look, thinking about things we already do. Because you're right, you don't want to recreate, you know, thinking about what we already do and how can I take those problems that are happening right now and moving back into what we're already doing.

Annalies Corbin: [00:08:04] Yeah. And so, let's talk a little bit then about, so year one, great success and now, you're thinking about year two. And at this point, at Herbert Mills, a STEAM elementary, you

are in the third year of this project. So, what's different between year one implementation and year two?

Angela Forino: [00:08:22] Year one, so there's a couple of more steps and we've advanced it. Year one, one of the things, a simple thing we did looking back is we made the alphanumeric grid, Reynoldsburg is not a perfect grid. It is not a perfect square rectangle. And so, we came up-

Annalies Corbin: [00:08:36] Most communities are not, right?

Angela Forino: [00:08:38] They're not. You kind of let them build, you know, wherever. And then, when we put the classrooms together, we realized, oh, the streets did not—like we had them with their main streets, but my Broad Street in my classroom connected to another classroom and they didn't necessarily connect, you know, little things like that. When we looked at our entire grid, we realized we really want them to have to be confined to the Reynoldsburg space, not the communities, even if it's on our grid, as well as we want them to have to connect to the other rooms.

Angela Forino: [00:09:05] So, instead of my classroom doing it and the other three classrooms doing it and then, we put them together, this year, we slowly started doing that last year and then, this year, what we did is when we did that, we had all the third graders come together and we looked at amenities and restaurants, as simple as that. And we realized that in two of our quadrants, we don't have as many. And, you know, that's something to think about.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:28] And that's real-world Reynoldsburg?

Angela Forino: [00:09:28] It's real-world Reynoldsburg.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:31] Okay.

Angela Forino: [00:09:31] Yeah. And so, that's something when they were trying to decide what businesses they might put somewhere, you know, they really wanted to make sure that people in every location at Reynoldsburg had amenities and had restaurants available to them.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:42] And so, is this a new place or a redesign of a place that already exists in your—because you're building, this project is around thinking about Reynoldsburg in 50 years, right?

Female Speaker: [00:09:51] Yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:51] That's the gist of your project?

Female Speaker: [00:09:53] Yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:54] Okay. And so, is this family fun place here already or this is a new place you're designing?

Female Speaker: [00:10:00] New place.

Annalies Corbin: [00:10:01] New place. And why did you choose this place?

Female Speaker: [00:10:05] Because we didn't have a lot of amenities.

Annalies Corbin: [00:10:11] Okay. So, you can see your city of the future or your city right now?

Female Speaker: [00:10:16] The city right now.

Annalies Corbin: [00:10:20] The city right now. Okay. Yeah. All right. So, you're saying, "Hey, these are things we need."

Female Speaker: [00:10:24] Yes.

Angela Forino: [00:10:24] The other stuff that's changed since the first year we've done it is on the first year, we did talk about Smart Columbus. We did talk about the autonomous cars and those things, but we were not using the United Nations global goals as a school. And last year, we started connecting all of our anchor assignments, no matter what grade level to a global goal. And so, this year, we connected it to the sustainability as well as innovation and industry and even infrastructure.

Angela Forino: [00:10:52] And infrastructure stuff for third grade, but they get it. We had to talk about, you know, what is infrastructure and how can we improve it and how are we going to make sure it's sustainable. And so, this year, we also, as a grade level, looked at, okay, one thing they thought would benefit is as a shuttle. If we had a shuttle, which they want to make autonomous in the future, what would make sense? Look at Reynoldsburg, where would the stops be? You know, and things like that.

Angela Forino: [00:11:16] And so, again, they had to communicate with the other classrooms to make sure our roads connected. And then, this year, we had a little robot that went up our Broad Street. And they made him a code of us, an autonomous code of us. And he was able to connect from one classroom support to another that way, too. So, we're trying to make it every year is real-world, but also, advancing the project a little bit more and improve them.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:39] And the kids do get, largely, infrastructure, so, you know, woven into the interview, you will be listening to the kids talk about the work. I came in early to the classroom so that they could tell me what was going on. And it is really clear to me that they have a very solid, fundamental, and foundational understanding of the infrastructure, but you could also sort of watch them sort of struggling and, okay, and I got to be thinking about this. And the interactions amongst the kids, I really, really loved to be able to see that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:13] So, keep walking me through your sheriff's department. So, what are you going to do next?

Female Speaker: [00:12:19] After I am done with this, so I'm going to draw a bubble plan.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:25] So, can you explain this to me? Because the folks who are listening, they can't see your bubble plan. So, tell us what a bubble plan is.

Female Speaker: [00:12:33] A bubble plan is when you draw something. It's sketching. And then, you label it inside. But you kind of do it accurately. You make it how big it is.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:47] All right. So, it's like really rough architectural drawings based on things?

Female Speaker: [00:12:52] It's like your rough draft for architectural drawings.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:57] That's pretty awesome. And then, what happens next? So, after you do that, then what are you going to do?

Female Speaker: [00:13:02] So, you will do this after work.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:05] And what is this?

Female Speaker: [00:13:07] That is your final plan.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:09] It is your final plan, like an actual space or architectural drawing or is it more like the bubble drawing?

Female Speaker: [00:13:17] It's more like your architectural drawings.

Annalies Corbin: [00:13:21] I want to circle back around a little bit just in case we've got folks who listen from all over the world, who don't necessarily know or familiar with United Nations global goal. So, give us a little bit of an overview about that and then, talk to us about Reynoldsburg as a school district's decision to run down that road.

Angela Forino: [00:13:42] So, in general, the global goals, United Nations global goals are 17 goals that the United Nations say that by 2030, we need to be working towards so that the world as a whole can be a better place and sustainable. And so, as a district, we're looking at the sustainability piece, the innovation, and we're constantly trying to make things as real-world as possible so that when our students graduate, you know, like even we're in third grade now, but when the time they graduate, they've been exposed to those things.

Angela Forino: [00:14:13] Because 2030, only 10 years from now, you know, these goals have been around for a while. But exposing them to that, they're part of that solution. And I honestly feel like kids are more creative. Sometimes, they can think outside the box a lot more than adults. And so, that's one of the things, is we need kids to be thinking about that in our district and in other districts so that they can start coming up with those creative solutions that we may need in the future to help us reach those goals.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:38] Yeah. Absolutely, without question, and I say this on this program all the time, and I know you've heard me say it as well over the years in the building or whatnot, kids don't have the same set of constraints. And because they don't have the same set of sorts of innate, pre-built, and constraints, when you ask them to solve a problem, you know, A, you have no idea what direction they're going to go. And they are the most creative nuggets in there. They may not be able to solve the big, hairy, audacious global problem right there in that moment-

Angela Forino: [00:15:07] Right.

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:07] ... but I would almost bet that nine times out of 10, there's a nugget of what those kids come up with that is part of the solution.

Angela Forino: [00:15:16] Oh, for sure.

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:18] And I see that every day as well, it's one of the things that I love so much about really moving kids into design thinking and design process and using that as one of the platforms for one of the ways they do their teaching and learning.

Angela Forino: [00:15:28] And there's little things they can do now, too.

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:30] Yeah, absolutely.

Angela Forino: [00:15:30] Like with me, the goal, right now in economics, we've expanded our Smart Reynoldsburg project to economics and right now, the goal we're working on is global goal 12, which is responsible consumers and producers. And right now, we're working on the producer side, but we talked about the consumer part and we did some of the global goal there, online lessons that go with the global goals that are easily adaptable as well as some for younger grades.

Angela Forino: [00:15:56] And we did some of those, where the students talked about what they had had for dinner that night and they talked about some of the questions. They took a survey and the questions were like, do you know if, you know, gender, where your food comes from, if the people are treated fairly in that country? And gosh, I was like, I don't even know if I know that we were talking about it. It's like those are things that as they get older, they're going to learn about different things like that.

Angela Forino: [00:16:19] And we talked about as simple as like cutting back on plastic. Because if you really think about everything you're eating for dinner, every part of it probably comes into plastic or straws. And so, it was as simple as having the kids kind of come up with things to just talk to the parents about or things that they could do. One of them said, "I just need to close a fridge more often", you know.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:38] Right.

Angela Forino: [00:16:38] Something as simple as that that they could do now that would still help.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:41] Yeah. And they pick up on that stuff very, very quickly. And it was really interesting, because as I was going around the room, talking to all the different kids, that came up over and over again. They kept wanting me to know about what was the sustainable part of what they had done. That was very—clearly, they had gotten that message as part of the project. And the other piece that I thought was really intriguing. So, for our listeners and we will post some artifacts of this as well, so you can sort of see it that the kids we're working on doing their planning around creating a business, an infrastructure a thing.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:18] Either because it wasn't in Reynoldsburg and that was an intriguing question that I had with the kiddos, was the thing here or you recognize we need it or it's already here and you want to modify it? So, that was a fun conversation. Then, within that, they had to be thinking about, well, what do we need for this thing to be successful? So, how do you wrap that into the fabric of your day-to-day? Because one of the things that we often hear at schools are making that transition into more PBL as an ongoing everyday thing. And elementary teachers are natively good at that.

Angela Forino: [00:17:53] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:53] But that's not always the case as we move up into the grades. But as a district, Reynoldsburg has really made an effort to try to make that more of the norm. And so, within that space then, how do you roll that into the fabric of your day as it relates to, we're going to stop and do this project and we're going to go off and do something else?

Angela Forino: [00:18:09] So, we relate throughout the whole day. Here at our school, just being a STEAM school and having worked with PAST, we do the design challenge. We do it with writing, because that's editing, that's all of that. Our math teachers do the design. They talk about the design cycle within, even word problems.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:23] Yeah.

Angela Forino: [00:18:23] And so, they're pretty used to that part of it. But some of what we were able to do, like for example, in a reading, there are a lot of articles that go around the ideas that we're working with within this project. So, they could get some of that background knowledge and all that prior knowledge before from those articles. We also had done some persuasive writing where they were reading about plastic and the effects in the ocean. And so, by the time we get to this project, they have a lot of that background knowledge as well and already.

Angela Forino: [00:18:48] And so, then it's just exposing them to, you know, the constraints of the project. And we've been having some experts come in as we call them, because, for example, we had our architectural design teacher come in from the high school and that is not something I could do. I made an example and he would probably not—I didn't take his class, so it would not be a super awesome example. But I can't teach that, but he can. And having all those residents from Reynoldsburg, I've been here, but not 50 years.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:16] Right.

Angela Forino: [00:19:16] And so, having those, it's as simple as having those people come in, too, and speak to what you're learning about, but also trying to mix it within all the different content.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:26] And it made an impact, too, because I heard about your architect from the high school coming in.

Angela Forino: [00:19:31] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:31] Yeah, from the kids. So, clearly, that stuck with them.

Angela Forino: [00:19:34] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:34] And the thing that I loved about that particular conversation was the kiddo who was touring around with me, Eric. He was a wonderful, young man. Yes.

Angela Forino: [00:19:45] Yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:45] He was very excited.

Angela Forino: [00:19:46] He's awesome.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:46] Yes, he is awesome. And so, he recognized that as I was asking the questions that it would help me as the ignorant adult he was talking to in that moment, right? If you could show me an example.

Eric: [00:19:59] Most fun part is going to be CoSpaces, we're going to make the business in CoSpaces.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:03] What does that mean, a CoSpace?

Eric: [00:20:05] A CoSpace? I'm going to show you.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:09] Okay. You're going to show me. All right.

Eric: [00:20:11] So-

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:11] So, you're going to a place called cospaces.edu. All right. So, it's a web-based program that you're going to use as part of this process.

Eric: [00:20:21] Yes. And this is where we're going to make the final part of this plan, I think. So, these are your CoSpaces. So, I'm going to show you one of mine.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:32] And you just work all around inside this space and I can see you added people and television screens and all types of artifacts, including a dog in your CoSpace.

Eric: [00:20:47] This is what we're going to be using to make a project.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:51] That is very cool, Eric. Thank you for sharing that with me.

Eric: [00:20:55] Thank you for coming here and meeting me.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:57] Yeah, you're very welcome.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:59] For just for you, those connections are clearly being made.

Angela Forino: [00:21:03] I didn't even do that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:04] Yeah, I know. It was really wonderful. So, what are some of the aha moments for you as you have been working not just on this project, but I think in your own personal teaching journey as it relates to this really applied approach with your kiddos?

Angela Forino: [00:21:22] I would say the first time I made it real-world. So, we've been on—we're a STEAM school now, but that's been—in my ten years I've been here, you know, we've had five principals, we've had common core a thing. Then, we were a traditional school. So then, we became a STEM. And now, we're STEAM. And so, things have changed a lot. And one of the things we went through the STEM continuum, including myself, you know, when we went through starting STEM, you know, with some of the more basic things, you know, having the kids use a design challenge, you know, to make, you know, how many books can you hold, you know, on Popsicle stick with, you know, and that kind of thing.

Angela Forino: [00:21:58] But one of the first things we did and I think it's one of my favorite aha was I had seen on Facebook that Reynoldsburg was considering having a community center. They had not been voted on. Reynoldsburg is definitely split between if they wanted it or not. And it would be partnered with the YMCA. And so, for writing, I talked to my students and I said—the YMCA come in and I said, "Okay, do we think this is a good thing for Reynoldsburg?"

Angela Forino: [00:22:20] And of course, a lot of them, you know, think yeah, because we just—they wanted more things. We had had a pool that had burned down a community when they need this to bring a community pool. And so, we said, Okay, how could we convince people at all ages that this is a good thing? And how could we make it a good thing for all ages? So, they had to really think about children, you know, babies, seniors, you know, adults, teenagers, and what would this YMCA need to have?

Angela Forino: [00:22:46] And then, they went and presented at a city council meeting, as well as presented at a meeting where the community could just come in to discuss this. And then, it went up to vote. And the night that it was voted on, I got a text before even the votes in the news were saying that it had passed from the YMCA partner that I had had. And he came in the next morning and told

our kids and they lost it. For me, that was like the coolest thing of like something that they felt like they had been a part of.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:14] Yeah. Yeah.

Angela Forino: [00:23:15] And some of them were at the ribbon cutting, which was really cool. And actually, the grand opening is this weekend. And I think what's cool about it is some of their ideas, partly because these ideas are in the why.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:26] Right. Right.

Angela Forino: [00:23:27] Like they're going to be like, I want it, I had an indoor pool in my plan and it's there, too."

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:31] Right. Yeah.

Angela Forino: [00:23:32] Or I had—and so, some of their ideas. And so, I think that these kids that are now like seventh or eighth graders can have some ownership within that. That was realizing that how real-world that was and how much of an impact it had on them was probably my biggest aha moment. And that's been from then on, I've been trying to make it as real as I could. But that also can be difficult, because that was a one-time project.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:52] Right.

Angela Forino: [00:23:52] Once it was voted on, you know. And so, there is, you know, it's constantly looking for new, new little problems or new little ways to make it as real as you can.

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:01] And that's a—quite frankly, that's a really beautiful story, right? And, you know, you lived it and I'm hearing you tell me about it and it sort of gives me chills in that same sense, right? And we had a teacher in a community, you know, years ago in another state who told me a very similar story about kids getting involved and having being able to watch their voice matter. And that it was really a powerful thing. So, that's pretty amazing.

Angela Forino: [00:24:30] Our economic, I told you when you came in earlier that part of how we're advancing this Smart Reynoldsburg project in third grade this year is we're taking what we have done for economics, which was a PBL, but it wasn't in real world, and trying to connect it. We're trying to connect as much as we can back to this Smart Reynoldsburg, this sustainability piece. And so, the kids have chosen, you know, a business that had been on their plot, that they had made their grid. And they're having to explain and make a business plan as if it's a new business or if it's not, how do I know this will be needed in 50 years? And then, they're doing the plot plans. Well, part of what they had to think about.

Annalies Corbin: [00:25:13] It's all right. So, as the kids start working on the connecting of all of these pieces, right?

Angela Forino: [00:25:21] Yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:25:21] And so, they say, "Hey, I've got this plot plan and I've got this business." And then, they ask, "What next?"

Angela Forino: [00:25:26] Yes. So, part of what they've done is I had the city developer come in. And he's come in a couple times. He comes in actually all the time because of this project. And he kind of

laid it out for us of, "If you are a new business and you wanted to be in Reynoldsburg, here's what you'd have to do." And actually, I learned a lot. The project has expanded since we talked to him, because I was like, "Oh, we need to then have plot plans", and, "Oh, we need to-" And he said there was a project they were working on in Reynoldsburg where they were asking residents if they wanted to do a face lift project. And so, they called it.

Angela Forino: [00:25:55] And there was a website where they were asking residents to pick a place in Reynoldsburg and just give some ideas of how it could have a face lift on this website. And so, when he said that, we kind of showed him some of the CoSpace, the programs that we're working towards. And he said, when your kids are done with this, like I want to put this on that website. And so, the kids know that like when they're done with this, their face lifts of what they think Reynoldsburg needs are going to be on that website, again, for people to see. And so, I think that will be another aha of them, it actually being out there and then, presenting it.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:24] Yeah, it's meaningful then. And that's the other thing that I really love about the work that you're doing and the way that you're doing it, these kids have a tangible thing on the back side. And, you know, that's one of the two key components that I see in my travels around the world talking with folks about whether problem-based or applied, I don't care what label you put on it, it doesn't make any difference. But the place where I see people stop over and over again is at the modification phase, right? And we know that's where the greatest student learning takes place, is when we don't get it quite right or we got it right, but we could do more with it.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:58] And we have the opportunity to modify. But the other place that oftentimes, we forget to give students the bandwidth they need and the opportunity is that presentation, that moment of sharing with the world, "Hey, I not only did this thing, but I own this thing." And that was one of the things that was absolutely readily apparent to me in my conversations on my travels around your classroom today. So, bravo to you. Those kids own the process they're in.

Angela Forino: [00:27:31] And that can be—the share part can be as simple as if you have someone that does come in and having them come back in.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:37] Right.

Angela Forino: [00:27:37] It doesn't have to be at the website or YMCA, it could be as simple as, you know, having those, an authentic audience for them to present to, people that are actually invested and would know what they're talking about, you know. And so, we started that way. And sometimes, that's where they go to.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:52] And the kids have obviously picked up on that, because several of them asked me, "Will you come back? Can I show it to you later?" Right? So, they clearly want to be able to share that. And that's a huge, huge win. So, that's awesome. So, one of the things that I know from many conversations, folks are listening. They're sitting back in their own classrooms or even in their living rooms saying, "Well, this is really awesome, but it can't possibly be that easy."

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:19] You know, you make it sound easy, because you're living it and you love it, but the reality is, I assume in the same way you have these wins, these aha moments, there have also probably been some intriguing constraints or obstacles along the way. And I always want to make sure that folks understand that we talk about the good and the bad together, because it takes both of them to do two great things. So, what are some of the things, the struggles in doing the work that you're doing right now the way you're doing it?

Angela Forino: [00:28:48] I would say for me, one of the things, I do work outside of my hours. I do, you know, like I'm constantly—one of—a comfort thing for me is not calling people, reaching out to people. And so, I'm having to get over that in order to get those experts and those partners to come in, although that's getting easier, as well as just finding who the right people to talk to. Sometimes, it's a struggle. We need a lot to talk about these things, to talk about the different anchor assignments we're doing and how we can improve them and how we can continue to make them more real-world. But also, I think like I was saying earlier, like just realizing, oh, there's more steps than what my students are doing, like if I want to make it real, we probably should do it this way.

Angela Forino: [00:29:30] And just being flexible enough with it that this part of the project we're working on right now was going to be done in December. It is now an 18-week project. And just being flexible with that part of it, of just knowing that time, you know. And that's okay, because in order for it to be the end result that, you know, we want it to be and they want it to be, it's going to take more time, especially with third grade. I have to keep telling myself it's third grade, because what I picture in my mind is the end result, you know, may not be what a third grader can do, but their version of it will still be awesome.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:03] Yeah. And I also think it's also important that folks don't lose sight of the fact that you are doing this in place of not on top of, right? And so, your product then becomes 18 weeks, right? So, you weren't doing that in all your other more traditional load.

Angela Forino: [00:30:21] Right.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:21] You're literally modifying your entire experience, because you are able by doing work this way with your students to grab everything that you have to accomplish in the third grade and weave it through.

Angela Forino: [00:30:33] Yeah, because I still am required. I still have the same mandate, it's the test.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:37] Exactly. Right.

Angela Forino: [00:30:38] Especially in third grade.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:39] Right.

Angela Forino: [00:30:39] And I had somebody ask me earlier like what social studies curriculum. And that's the thing, is I don't do the curriculum.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:46] Right.

Angela Forino: [00:30:46] But I still have to teach all the same social studies standards that everybody else does.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:51] Right.

Angela Forino: [00:30:51] And I also have language arts. So, I'm teaching reading and writing and all of those, too. And so, I think that's a hard part, but I think that that's part of what you have to do, is try to fit it all in. In that way, you're not also then having to do some sort of curriculum or, you know, I was able to teach the social studies standards and I was able to do it. And we hit geography as much, too. And that doesn't mean that at the end of the year, we might not wind back around.

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

Angela Forino: [00:31:14] Because there was something that we didn't cover, you know, or something like that? But trying to find it where, you're right, it is also doing what we needed to do, so we're not having to do because we don't have time.

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:24] Right. And I think that sometimes, that becomes one of those first barriers. Oftentimes, when I start these conversations or the PAST team starts these conversations with schools, I can almost guarantee you there's like a list of 10 things that in the first three months we are going to hear. And you always hear that one is, "Yes, but I have to do all the stuff over here, how could I possibly do this, too?" And it does get easier over time to be able to know how you weave those things together. And at first, it takes a lot of time, the planning, the thinking, how could I do it, the modification. But over time, as teachers and schools get more and more comfortable in that space, it actually ultimately takes less time or it's a different kind of use of your time, back to your point.

Angela Forino: [00:32:06] Yeah, I would agree. And we do a lot of the back maps.

Annalies Corbin: [00:32:08] Yeah.

Angela Forino: [00:32:10] You probably saw from the hallway.

Annalies Corbin: [00:32:10] I did. I love them.

Angela Forino: [00:32:12] We use them all the time.

Annalies Corbin: [00:32:14] That's a win.

Angela Forino: [00:32:16] Yeah. I think like the hardest part for me is coming up with that question that will cover all of it. And then, I feel like after we do that, if you have what you want at the end, just figuring out how can I incorporate as much of my content within that reading, writing so that you're using it within that time, you know, that reading time, that writing time. So that by the time you get to that project, you don't have to teach, you know, all of that.

Angela Forino: [00:32:38] One of our things we changed this year is we have a Reynoldsburg history project that we do or a field trip we do at the end of the year. And we realized, well, if we did it now, then that would save us time for another, you know, things we're doing at the end of the year. But also, it goes with this. And then, they could really see that. And so, little things like that and just being able to be flexible with moving, you know, some things around and when you do things.

Annalies Corbin: [00:33:01] Yeah, that's an awesome, awesome journey. I always try to wrap the program up for folks with sort of the high lob in the sense that, you know, again, folks sitting back and thinking about the journey that you've been on. And, you know, what is your one piece of advice to a new teacher in a school that's not gone down this journey yet, contemplating, "Hey, I want to be like Ms. Forino"? What piece of advice would you give to folks as they start their journey?

Angela Forino: [00:33:33] I would say start small. Really, for us, the design cycle, really getting the kids comfortable with the design cycle. It's been a lot easier when kids come to me already having learned that. But getting them use the design cycle, getting them used to not one solution at the end, getting them used to not getting the solution, you know, from me or getting hints from it and being more like a guide or a facilitator. But I would also say just as small as just looking for those problems, because they're out there, they're all over the place that you could somehow—even if it is just a

persuasive letter, to go with it, to send it to someone, but looking for those problems in your community that you can somehow connect to your to your grade level or other grade levels in your school.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:14] And that's always possible.

Angela Forino: [00:34:15] Always.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:15] And it doesn't—it takes being brave enough to make the leap, but it's not hard once you actually roll up your sleeves.

Angela Forino: [00:34:21] Yeah, they don't have to be a huge leap necessarily.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:22] Right. Please don't.

Angela Forino: [00:34:24] No, please don't.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:26] I think that's also good.

Angela Forino: [00:34:26] I'm still good, yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:26] Yeah. Please do not do that.

Angela Forino: [00:34:29] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:29] Don't make that mistake, right?

Angela Forino: [00:34:31] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:31] Absolutely. Well, thank you so much for allowing me into your classroom today, but also, over the years, sharing your journey with us, we truly appreciate it. And you're doing amazing stuff in your classroom. So, thank you.

Angela Forino: [00:34:44] Thank you. Thank you.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:47] 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 at Annalies Corbin. And join me next time as we stand up, step back, and lean in to re-imagine education.