



Sonya Pryor-Jones

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:00:00] One of the things that I think Sherry and Neil did at the onset of the Fab Lab Network was creating a community that makes together, creates together, challenges each other as we all talk about what technology means for our daily lives in the 21st century and beyond.

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:23] 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: [00:00:58] Welcome to the next episode of Learning Unboxed. This is Annalies Corbin, your host. And as always, super excited about the conversation that we are going to be having today. With us on the program today is a long-time colleague and friend who does, quite frankly, truly, truly amazing work. Joining us is Sonya Pryor-Jones, who is a lifelong Clevelander and educator, in her own words. And she's the Chief Implementation Officer for the Fab Foundation and the founder of Fab House. And so, Sonia, welcome to the program.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:01:38] Thank you for having me.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:40] So, for full transparency and disclosure for our listeners, I've actually known Sonya for a really, really long time. Sonia and I got the chance to meet and work together very closely a bunch of years ago, back when the City of Cleveland was gearing up, ramping up and starting implementation around STEM education. And so, that's sort of our long back story. And over the years, our paths have crossed over and over again. So, let's start, Sonia. Today, I really, really want to dig in on the Fab Foundation and the work that you've been doing in that space. So, let's start with the sort of 30,000-foot view about, A, what the Fab Foundation is, sort of the mission and vision. And then, we're going to get into the weeds of the work you guys are doing.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:02:28] Sure. So, the Fab Foundation actually just celebrated its 10th anniversary. And it grew out of the Center for Bits and Atoms at MIT. It originally started there under Dr. Neil Gershenfeld as a research project called the fab lab Education Program. And this ultimately was a set of digital fabrication technology tools and processes that were intended to go into the hands of anywhere around the world and to support people in making almost anything.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:03:04] So, the Fab Foundation grew out of an enormous amount of pull from the global community to have what we refer to as fab lab, or these digital fabrication laboratories with things like

3D printing, vinyl cutters, laser cutters, CNC's, and of course, software. The thinking of the Fab Foundation in our early group from MIT was that we wanted to democratize digital fabrication because we see these technological tools as tools for change. So, we wanted to get them in the hands of as many people as possible.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:03:42] And so, when all of the polls came to MIT, it was more than they could handle and not really, you know, the core work of a research university. And so, they decided to start the Fab Foundation. And the Fab Foundation since that time has been supporting an international network of about 1,800 fab labs in over 100 countries around the world. So, we steward this network of fab labs since they are coming into play. We convene them. We share best practices. And then, we also support the development, procurement, installation of fab lab all over the world.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:23] And just, you know, for our listeners who have a fab lab or a maker space, if you've never seen what sort of happens when you sort of add the strength and power of the MIT sort of back-end program and thinking into a sort of a Fab Lab endeavor, it's something to behold. Now, it doesn't take away from maker spaces in general or traditional fab settings, but it's the resources that you bring to bear, I think, that are the key difference. Would you agree, Sonya?

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:04:59] Yeah, it really is the resources which really stemmed from the expert team of all of the folks who were the original architects of this work in the long line of history out of the media lab in the way that we think about technology and learning. I would also say it's the community. One of the things that I think Sherry and Neil did at the onset of the Fab Lab Network was to ensure that it wasn't just about the machine, but it was very much about these machines being technological tools or people. And so, they've really done a beautiful job with the help of many others all around the world in creating a community that makes together, creates together, challenges each other, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:05:45] Yeah.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:05:45] As we all think about what technology means for our daily lives in the 21st century and beyond.

Annalies Corbin: [00:05:52] And it is one of the things that over and over again, as we've worked in places, schools or communities that had a Fab Foundation, you know, Lab or the partnership and back into that network sort of approach, that is truly, truly the difference, I think, that you can see. And so, could we spend just a couple of minutes, Sonya, sort of talking about that?

Annalies Corbin: [00:06:13] Because I don't know the schools really or communities understand that if you choose to, "Hey, we're going to be part of this network and this offering", what that comes with. Because ultimately, that then gets to how do you train teachers and schools and to be able to use that effectively, which is really the heart of what we're going to talk about today. But I really want to make sure that folks who are listening, who have not seen this or don't have this understand truly what that resource means.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:06:42] Yeah. And so, the way I like to talk about it is in, you know, terms that are familiar to all of us. It's like having a really big family, right? And I talk about this particularly from the perspective of our annual gathering shabbat, which is going on its sixteen year, Fab16 is coming up in Montreal this summer, where we all get together once a year for a week or so at a time to share practice, to learn about the latest, latest research and to learn about, you know, up and coming technology that could be utilized and integrated into our spaces.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:07:21] And I always tell people, "If I go and see your family reunion each year, you find out who got married, who had a baby", right? But in this case, you're finding out what are the latest and greatest technologies and techniques. And you're continuing to make connections to more and more people in the network. And it really is about the connections. There's something really meaningful about technology and the ideas that people have. And that's really employing technology to expand those ideas, right?

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:07:53] When we think about technology in its most basic form, I love—someone said a few years ago, a pencil at some point was a form of technology. It was a way for us to expand our ideas and our thinking. The digital fabrication technology is the same. But when you are doing that with a group where you can challenge each other, where you could share practices, it becomes extremely powerful. And, you know, it starts to create an opportunity for you not to just connect in your local geography, but because it's an international network, you also have the opportunity to connect with people all over the world live at that conference.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:08:35] And then, when you're not at the conference by way of the technology that's in your spaces. I mean, this morning, I spent a few minutes on a call with one of my favorite fab labs in Iceland and talking with them about some of the things that they're up to and they are doing. And just because of those connections and conversations, were able to exchange ideas, exchange resources. And that really create—or I think technology to do far more than it can do when it's just the one single space.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:09] Absolutely. And that's definitely the thing that, you know, over the years as I've watched the work of the MIT fab labs that have been deployed and then, ultimately, the Fab Foundation and sort of the roll out of the resources, I guess, if you will, that have come with that that I have seen over and over again. And, you know, one of the things that's fabulous about the endeavor is the way in which, you know, users are able to connect into that network and not just share ideas and resources, but share best practices and lessons learned and, "Hey, we did this", but, "Hey, don't try this" or "If you try this, make this modification."

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:50] And at the end of the day, the network itself is the accelerator of the knowledge. And that's the thing that I've always truly loved about it. And add to the fact that the network is global, right? So, back to your point about, you know, you got to have a conversation this morning with Iceland, but, you know, these sites and these nodes, if you will, within the network, they're all over the world, a truly global endeavor.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:10:13] Yeah. And it's funny you talk about accelerating the knowledge. I think the beautiful thing about the network and where we are in our maturity right now, the network is also able to create some new knowledge and new approaches and direction as well. And so, when we think about it, you know, you really do have the graph, you know, pop, then the graph roots all coming together to converge. And I think that brings a really different perspective about why research, you know, why technology?

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:10:45] Because we really get to connect in with the practitioners, who are doing the work on the ground every day, whether it's working in a school with students, trying to engage them around STEM or doing community-based works and trying to give people access to technological tools for social change and justice. So, it's really powerful.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:06] It is. It's incredibly powerful. And quite frankly, the potential is endless. So, I love that aspect of it. So, Sonya, let's dig in a little bit because, you know, I'm a teacher, I'm an administrator sitting out there in the world. I'm listening to this thinking, "Well, I would really like to be part of that." So, let's say I go down the road and I engage in and be part of this endeavor and this network. So, talk to me a little bit about

how we go about on-boarding the folks who are going to be using and teaching in this amazing technological space.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:42] But how do we ensure that it's not something that just gets used here and there and it only gets used, the learnings and the teachings that are restricted to the build space and don't actually sort of filter through all the day-to-day teaching and learning in a place? Because in my mind and you and I have had this conversation many times before, the true value of all of this is how it changes the day-to-day practice. It's a cultural shift that happens in learning environments when you tackle some of these pieces and you make it part of your every day. So, how is it that the Fab Foundation makes that happen?

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:12:22] Yeah. And, you know, I always say we are a community. So, the Fab Foundation is not doing it alone. We steward this network. But there is—so, I think one of the best things that a school or an education community could do if they decided to take this journey is to truly opt in. And so, don't just go buy all the stuff, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:46] Right.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:12:46] But to truly opt in-

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:46] Yeah, don't do that. Please don't do that. Because then, you're going to either have to sit there or you're going to go, "Who can help us?" And we're going to say, "Call Sonya."

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:12:58] So, I think to truly opt in is to first learn about the community, right? And then, learning about the community, what will happen for you is shining examples will be listed up in terms of people who are similar to you trying to tackle the same kind of problem or issue. And there are—you know, when you look at our work, I would say the most rapid growth that we've seen has quite frankly been US-based labs focused on education. But some of that is K-12 formal and some of that is informal.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:13:33] But because we are all still pushing at improving STEM, you know, for academic or career for just citizenship in this country, we have seen a ton of investors and individual, schools and the teachers, even say, "Okay, maybe this particular faith can be the opportunity for me to go from theory and give my kids some real hands-on practices and ways that they can learn what it is that we're trying to teach." And so, I think it's about opting in. You know, you investigate the network, you get to know other schools who have been there, done that, definitely learn all of their failure.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:14:13] And then, I think it becomes about going through the proper design, you know, experiences. And the Fab Foundation can help you with that in just figuring out, "Okay, how do I design the space and our principals around this space and our curriculum on instruction, how we're going to support teachers in adoption in order to maximize the use of the fab lab?" And this is how it works. It's heavy-lifting, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:39] It is, yes.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:14:40] And so, for people who don't want to make the investment long term, they're not going to see the benefit.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:46] Right. So, let's talk a little bit about—so, we've made the commitment, we've made the investment. We're running down that road. And now, I want to sort of pull apart the piece that you're talking about, the professional development component. You know, when folks go and they take a look at the

Fab Foundation website—and we will have all these links and resources for our listeners are posted. But, you know, some of the things that they're going to see when we get there is something called the Fab Academy and the Bio Academy and the Fabric Academy, which that one, I truly love, by the way, and you know, the SCOPES-df.

Annalies Corbin: [00:15:22] And so, how do I, as a teacher or a school, sort of unpack the breadth and depth of what that offering is or even the academy piece of the career lab, right? So, how do I unpack that and then, start to apply it into my community? What is the professional development component that look like? Because I can tell you, Sonya, when I get asked about Fab Foundation all the time or putting in a fab lab, the first thing everybody asks me is, "Okay, but what's the professional development for this look like?" Because to your point, I think people, especially folks who haven't lived for a period of time in that sort of making space, and I use that term very loosely, they're terrified of it.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:16:07] Yeah. You know, you raise a really good question and quite frankly, something that we're getting better at in terms of how do we really invite others in who aren't in the know, right? And, you know, you referenced it at the top of the call. You know, people like myself and you, we've been having these conversations about STEM, about fab labs and maker spaces for over a decade. And so, it's easy for us to have sort of tunnel vision and forget that there are thousands of school teachers, thousands of students and thousands of people, even people in my own family who still don't quite know what we're talking about, right?

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:16:46] And so, what I have found, just in general terms, to be the best way to bring people in is to show them. Sometimes, it's a simple demonstration, right? You know, you don't have to have all of the things, but maybe you've got a small R. Dimino or maybe you've got a 3D printer or maybe you've got that an artifact that you're wearing. You know, right now, today, I'm wearing a pair of 3D-printed and assembled earrings because it's a conversation starter, right?

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:17:19] It's a way for people to connect with something that's familiar to further understand. So, that's just, you know, in general terms about how we bring others in. I think we also have to do a better job of finding the champions that are parts of other networks that we can help to educate. And then, they know how to take it back to those communities or how to build the bridges. And that's something that, you know, we've done a lot of time thinking about and talking about.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:17:51] There are some great examples of this. I also had a chance to talk with one of our board members, Blair Evans, who's in Detroit, who does a lot with his fab lab as it relates to social justice issues. So, he's bringing the community organizers in and teaching them digital fabrication and putting them through Fab Academy. And so, now, that technological tool landed with their social justice expertise, allows for them to go to those communities and bring them on board.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:18:25] Now, when it comes to the professional development, taking advantage of some of our organized opportunity is as simple as just raising your hand and saying, "Hey, I'm interested." Fab Academy runs every year. In fact, it just started a couple of weeks ago. It runs about six months. And, you know, people are able to take Fab Academy in as long as they have a local space, where they can also do the hands-on work. The rest of the work happens online. Fabric Academy will start again in September. So, all of the academy options have a regular calendar and people can just go to the website, sign up and participate there.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:06] And you don't have to—to be clear, because I know folks are thinking, "Oh, my God, that sounds awesome", but I don't have an official MIT-set up fab lab, but I have a fab lab. I have an

advance or maybe not so advanced maker space. But you don't have to have that to opt in. You can still be part of one of these various Fab Academy opportunities to sort of up-skill yourself and take that into your community, your school. You don't have to have the big full versions, correct?

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:19:38] Well, actually, let me kind of go back into that. You can opt in to be a part of the Fab Lab Network and the fab lab community. That is open. We are open. We look for people to opt in. And we understand that everybody can't do the full inventory at once or they may have some slightly different needs at their community level that requires them to think differently about the inventory. Now, with Fab Academy however, you do need access to all of the materials of a fab lab because that's the protocol that's followed in that course curricula. Because the goal of that course is to teach you how to utilize and take advantage of every tool and every capability that makes—that's available in a fab lab.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:29] Perfect. Perfect.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:20:29] And so, in that particular case, you do need to have access to a fab lab.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:34] Correct. But it could be your local community fab lab if one exists. If you don't have one in your school, but you want to learn all these pieces, it doesn't have to be—you can get access in a variety of different ways, depending on what your local resources are.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:20:50] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:50] Perfect.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:20:50] I mean, at this point, we've got 1,800 fab labs around the world. There's usually something near you, a fab lab near you. Now, the fab labs that engaged in Fab Academy, they go through a process to become eligible to teach and support Fab Academy students because it is intensive and it is something that you have to be prepared to do. You have to be—you know, the instructors have to be prepared. The local community has to be prepared. And you, the individual student, has to be prepared. Now, one of the ways that we're thinking differently about that specifically for teachers is not by way of Fab Academy.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:21:32] Now, we have several pieces that have taken Fab Academy. And that population has grown over the last couple of years. But our sub-project with fabrics that I mentioned earlier is all focused on supporting cases. So, educators are integrating digital fabrication in the classroom. And that looks a little different. It's not a standalone course that you go, hey, but instead, our portfolio of services is really about coming to you, understanding your space, understanding your student community. Quite honestly, you and I have both worked in schools, some of it is understanding your school policies, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:22:11] Absolutely.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:22:11] In terms of how you can get this—how you could best introduce this and begin to adapt it. It is not always wholesale. And so, we think about our work with teachers a little bit differently. Some of that's a little bit more organic. And our sub-project is newer versus Fab Academy, which has been around and you know, a little bit more tried and true.

Annalies Corbin: [00:22:35] Yeah. No, absolutely. Because those are exactly the sort of questions that, you know, I have schools, teachers, community members asked me from time to time. And so, you know, I would thank you for that because I wanted to dig into a little bit of details because I know that's what people are

saying and they're thinking, so I thought, let's just grab that and run with those answers to those questions. So, I have two follow-up questions to the piece we just talked about. So, the first one is, how do you know this works?

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:04] I mean, what and how do you actually measure the tangible impact for a school who says, "Hey, I want to do this thing, we're going to invest in the infrastructure and the technology and we're going to commit, we're all in"? Because I know you've been doing a lot of work in this space, so I really want to give the opportunity to sort of talk about what you've learned. So, there's always this question around fidelity to process and how do we know that the endeavor is actually working? So, how is it that Fab Foundation is tackling that? What does that look like for you guys?

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:23:35] Yeah. Yeah. And that's evolving and changing as well because we truly are a living, working organization. And, you know, I like to tell people when we think about our work, it's always about continuous improvement, how we know it's working, show that in a couple of different ways. You know, we're very similar to many other organizations where we are doing, you know, a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative data collection.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:24:05] We actually did a significant project with the PAST foundation with our sub-project, where we went in-depth with teacher interviews and feedback, doing interviews and feedback, also activation in the actual classrooms to see what shift or change would take place, what teachers and students had been introduced to. Not just the digital fabrication tools, but also some of the theoretical background and approaches that we believe best situate the fab lab work. So, we've done some of that work.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:24:40] And then, there are also just tons and tons of individual stories of success, you know, from the student, you know, at the first school to have a fab lab who fell in love with it at 14 and is now traveling all over the world, opening up fab labs and seeking other educators. From the rural community in Pennsylvania, where we've got now a whole body of young people with learning differences that have just done a tremendous amount of work with integrating the social work support for those young people and their academics in the fab lab. And now, these kids are seeing behavior changes, attendance changes, and also post-secondary changes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:25:29] That's fabulous.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:25:29] And so, a lot of those kinds of rich stories for young people in classrooms. And then, also financial investment. You know, there's something to people continuing to invest in digital fabrication for K to 12. And we're starting to see more and more state-provide investment for their public schools as well as school districts almost investing their entire district resources to support these kinds of spaces as well. So, those are just some of the pieces of evidence that we have that it's working.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:07] Yeah. And it's absolutely fabulous. And I didn't ask that question because we were going to have you, you know, sort of necessarily tap on to the PAST piece. But, you know, in full transparency for our listeners, yes, we did some work in that space with Sonya, but I really—but it is important because, you know, to your point, as communities or districts start to, you know, make the financial investment, they want to understand how they know that it works.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:33] So, I want to circle back around to a statement that you made earlier about one of your practitioners in Detroit and the relationship between the work happening in digital fabrication and social justice. This is going to be something that I think folks are really, really intrigued by. So, can you tell us a little bit more about that connection? Because I think that that's going to really resonate.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:27:01] Yeah. And so, I think a lot of the social justice work that we're trying to do in communities across the United States ties back to some of the very early elements of even the civil rights movement, right? Some of the thing that, you know, go as far back as Dr. King in terms of making sure that there are work opportunities for people, their housing, right? And, you know, Dr. King, one of my favorite quotes from him, he talks about the role of technology in making change, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:36] Yeah.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:27:36] And we don't really think about him as a technologist or someone has thought about STEM. I think the same with the Stokes brothers of Cleveland, you know. Our Congressman Louis Stokes actually did a lot of the early work to ensure STEM opportunities and funding for people from all backgrounds in the United States. And so, I think a number of our civil leaders and social justice leaders have thought about the role that technology could play. And I think in the current times where we see people who work in the social justice way in using digital fabrication, it really is about equity, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:16] It is.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:28:16] Like how do we ensure that this is not just one other area where people who are typically marginalized are left behind, right? And then, also, how do we equip people with understanding these technologies and tools so that they can start making changes and improvements in their lives right now today? And a lot of that, you know, is being prepared on the work still by, right? It's something unique when you can show up somewhere and have this design software in the screening skill set that a lot of other people may not have yet.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:28:52] Also, how can you create opportunities for yourself through entrepreneurship/ And we're seeing that not just in the United States, but also in Mexico. There's a great story that our CEO likes to tell about the number of female entrepreneurs actually changing the trajectory of their entire family in Mexico, the small business incubation that's being supported by the fab lab.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:20] Yeah. And we see and hear those stories over and over again as communities are wrestling with those very issues. And I'm thrilled to hear and have the opportunity to talk with you about it specifically as it relates to digital technology and maker spaces and that opportunity because I see the exact same thing as we travel through and we work in schools that have deliberately put pretty robust maker opportunities in communities and open them up to families and other community to be able to come in and participate in programming tied to that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:01] And it is very, very powerful. And it can be a game changer. So, I think that that's one of those pieces that is really easy, quite frankly, to celebrate and for us to collectively figure out how can we do more of. So, I also want to touch base a little bit. And one of the other pieces, when you were talking about the students with learning differences, I was really fascinated and I hadn't heard you share that piece before. So, thank you for that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:29] But as the sort of nation, so within the US and certainly, other parts of the world as well, are really sort of struggling and pushing more emphasis, much needed emphasis on social and emotional learning and opportunities for our students as it relates to not just students with learning differences, but students that are struggling in a whole host of varieties and ways. I think it's fascinating that there's a tangible tie that you can point to that's related to the notion of making and learning these digital tools. That's awesome.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:31:05] Yeah. And it's really exciting, it's new. And our fab lab in rural Pennsylvania, IE1 is really leading the way on this. One of their campuses specifically focused on students with the range of IEP, right? Including some of the SEL components. And they started to integrate some of the therapies and work with social workers in the fab lab because they were finding this from some initial introductions of the space to the student population that they we're automatically seeing behavior changes around those students as to what they were instructed.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:31:43] And so, they're in the middle of a significant research project around all of this. In fact, they'll be speaking at some of our upcoming meetings, our Fab16 conference to share the learning that they have for this. It's also through our SCOPES project, one of the things that we develop—and all of these resources are free and available from our SCOPES project. You can go on to our website, scopesdf.org, and you can find standards online, digital fabrication lessons for you. And you can also find some instructional materials there for you.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:31:43] All thanks to the kindness of our funders that have been made available to educators. And one of the resources that we developed our Fab I Can Statements to give people a formative assessment framework that they can utilize in the classroom. And one of the things that we've been playing with is how to refine those statements with some of the SEL works that we know. And so, for young people as they create and make in a fab lab or maker space.

Annalies Corbin: [00:32:49] Yeah. Fabulous, fabulous resources. And again, we will make sure that we capture all of that and post those links to make it really easy for folks as well. So, I would be remised, Sonia, if we wrapped before we had a chance for you to share just a little bit. I know it's really early on, but I really would love to have you just give, you know, a couple minutes of the work you're doing with Fab House because that's one of your new things. And it is very, very important and meaningful to you.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:33:21] Yes. Thank you. And, you know, when I was on that spread about social justice, I get so excited. Sometimes, not worrying is one thing, you know, my mouth is moving faster than my brain or the other way. But it is another, you know, element to that. So, Fab House is a project that I started working on last year. So, it was established in 2019. And the goal of that particular project is to bring digital fabrication to the heart of the neighborhood. The neighborhood is Glenville and Cleveland, Ohio.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:33:56] This is a community that has all the stats, you know, in terms of that loss, in terms of the housing crisis that happened in Cuyahoga County, in terms of, you know, not having enough people born into some post-secondary opportunities and experiences. And this is the neighborhood that I actually grew up in. And so, my family decided that we would donate a home that we have in Glenville to the Fab House project.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:34:24] And in this home, we'll be bringing a fab lab. And we will also maintain the residents in quarters upstairs so that I can invite all of my amazing colleagues from the Fab Lab Network to come to Cleveland periodically, live in the neighborhood, be a part of the community fabric and teach digital fabrication. And the goal here is neighborhood stabilization, but also bridging that technological divide.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:53] And, you know, I know that, you know, in that vein of being humble, I'm going to put a call out on this one. So, it is as amazing as it sounds. And so, for those of you that are contemplating doing something that can be absolutely earth shattering for a community, I would recommend you look to Sonya's work in the Fab House project. It has infinite possibilities and it is so scalable and can be so meaningful for communities. And so, I, for one, am super, super excited to sort of see how it all unfolds. And I

know it's a passion project in part for you specifically. I saw some photos for the first time get posted in social media the other day and I was celebrating, I was cheering for you. So, I'm really, really excited about that.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:35:50] Thank you. Thank you.

Annalies Corbin: [00:35:52] It's amazing. And I know that's very meaningful. So, I can't wait to see what comes from that. And I'm just super thrilled about the piece about having those network folks come in and do some time in residence, you know, as a give back both to the community but also to the bigger, broader community and network of learning. So, I think it will prove to be incredibly powerful.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:36:16] We're really excited about the teaching and learning, but also the cultural exchange that's going to take place. You know, I always want to make sure I underscore that the people who come will have something to teach, but the Glenville residents will also have something to teach them. So, we're really excited about that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:36:34] Oh, they will. It'll definitely go both ways. So, I can't wait to talk to you about it after, you know, it's been doing its thing for a while. So, as we sort of wrap up, I always like to leave our listeners with sort of a last bit of advice that comes specifically from our guests. So, Sonya, if you're a teacher or administrator or somebody from a community out there who doesn't have, you know, fabrication or a digital technology maker spaces in their community, you really want to see that happen, what's your one or two pieces of advice as folks get started? What do you think is the most important steps for people to take to get them down this road?

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:37:16] Yes. I think, you know, that this is some of what we've even been doing at the organizational level and I often do for myself. And that is the first part. Understand your vision and your values, right? As a classroom teacher working with a group of kids, wherever you might be in the world, you enter that profession for a reason. There was something specific you wanted to give, a goal you wanted to accomplish.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:37:42] So, stepping back and reflecting on the vision you have for your students and the values that are driving that vision, I think, are a really important first step to the road map. And then, on a more practical side, do your research. There are a number of organizations out here working to support educators and bringing digital fabrication and making into the classroom. Go search the website, read, follow people on social media and look for individuals who are out there doing the work.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:38:17] Not just in exact situations like your own, but I think also situations that feel really uncomfortable and out of the box because I think in those places, you can learn new ways to think about how you might incorporate this in your keeping and in your classroom. The other thing I would say is don't feel like you have to know and understand all this technology on your own. That's a really important piece of advice for classroom teachers in particular. Understand that there are people in community that you can partner with.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:38:53] You are the expert at teaching and learning and they might be the expert in that particular piece of technology. When you partner together, you will get what you need to move your students toward. So, don't feel like you have to have all the answers and also be comfortable in struggling and fumbling with your student because we are living in a world where our young people have tons of food, equipped with a lot of baseline knowledge that will help get through some of this technology as well.

Annalies Corbin: [00:39:21] Absolutely. That is so very, very true. Well, Sonya, thank you so very much for joining us today and giving us your time, your expertise, and we look forward to all the great things yet to come. So, thank you again.

Sonya Pryor-Jones: [00:39:35] Thank you, Annalies.

Annalies Corbin: [00:39:38] Thank you for joining us for Learning Unboxed, 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.