



## The School of One & MCPc

**Jalen Baldwin:** [00:00:00] You don't want to be in your 20s and say, "I think I wished I would have done that" or "I wish I could do that." I say you can do anything you put your mind to. So, if you have that mindset that you want to try something new, and you want to see it, you want to try a new career path that's not working out for you, I say try it.

**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:** [00:00:55] This is on Annalies Corbin, welcome to the next episode of Learning Unboxed. As always, I'm super excited about the conversation that we get to have on this program. And today, we're going to talk about a really unique, very cool program that's happening in northern Ohio, up in Cleveland that is a combination of workforce development, creative and innovative education, and getting kids to work early so that they can help them sort of make decisions as they sort of go through their own journeys. And so, today, we have Melanie Lynch of The School of One, which is part of the Cleveland school's ecosystem. And we'll have Melanie in a moment explain that. Melanie is a 25-year veteran teacher who is really excited and passionate about developing hands-on and skill-based approaches to both student learning and student development. So, Melanie, welcome.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:01:53] Okay. Well, thank you, Annalies, very much for having us. That's for sure. We admit everything. We've broken down the barriers, and now, we're here. So, this is it.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:02:02] Excellent.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:02:02] Well, The School of One is a flexible program that provides instruction to meet the student's needs, both socially, emotionally and academically. We work to eliminate student barriers so they can achieve success in whatever it is that they're doing. What makes—there are eight School of One sites within the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, School of One at The Foundry, which is also a rowing, sailing facility, is one of the eight. We are the only one that is outside of a school. Most are in high schools.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:02:37] So, they're a room or a space, whatever in high school, but we, last year, they piloted the program, School of One at The Foundry with the rowing and sailing component, as well as the MCPc job companionship. So, students have the ability to work. They get paid for their work. I kind of like to

look at it like it's school out of a school environment, but set in the real world ... because that is what it is. Their school space, if you will, does not even look like a classroom.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:03:06] We are totally interfaced with foundry and the rowing. Students have to row. They have to learn about sailing. They learn about teamwork and communication. And then, they take all those skills to MCPc. And they learn about computers and computer technology. And it's a starter job, if you will, but it also—the student themselves can use that starter job to turn it into a career path and career opportunity.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:03:33] So, it really gives them the skills and the knowledge to apply to whatever they want to do. It creates within them a lot of possibilities for their future. And more importantly, I would say it establishes belonging. They learn that they're not on the side or they're not just there. They're really active learners within all three environments in which they participate, which again, builds the competence and the outlook, that yeah, we belong here, and we can do this. And so, that's been wonderful.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:04:02] Which is really, really exciting. And it's an awesome program to see. And it's been deployed in a variety of ways in and around the community. So, I'm excited to be able to have the conversation. Also joining us is Michael Trebilcock. He's the managing director and president of MCPc. And Michael, one of the things I really want you to be able to help us understand, first and foremost, the MCPc piece, but then, The Foundry piece because that's the other part of the way you guys have structured this. It's really unique. There's that community asset that MCPc and the work that you guys have done to build The Foundry and the things that it does, which are wicked cool. I mean, it's a fun place to go. I like just visiting. But then, you partner that with the opportunities and the work the MCPc does. So, why don't you share with us sort of those two pieces?

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:04:58] Sure. So, The Foundry is a very unique place. As Melanie had mentioned earlier, it's dedicated to getting students and youth, really, it's 100% youth-focus. So, its primary goal is to get youth out on the water and experiencing the City of Cleveland and our natural resources of Lake Erie and the Cuyahoga River just from a different perspective. A lot of those kids have never even touched the water before in a rowing or sailing boat before, so it's definitely a new experience.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:05:31] Both of the sports bring in a lot of aspects of teamwork and critical thinking and just kind of they're seeing a brand-new activity for the first time. So, it's a really good opportunity for the coaches, instructors and teachers to help them through that experience, and make them more adaptable and capable with other things they're doing. So, The Foundry was established about five years ago. MCPc was the primary donor at the beginning. So, that was where that relationship started.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:06:05] About maybe 18 months into it, MCPc saw a great opportunity with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, and potentially getting those students into a joint program between The Foundry and MCPc, where the students would go to school, working with Ms. Lynch here for about four hours in the morning, and then in the afternoon, they have the option to take a ride up to MCPc, which is a couple of miles away. And they're working all afternoon at our ITS, the disposition center up there.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:06:42] So, to give you a little background on MCPc, we're a data protection company, and what that means is we're helping large companies with large exposure to cybersecurity vulnerabilities. We're helping them minimize those risks. And a lot of these companies are operating on a global scale with hundreds of thousands of employees. So, their exposure to risk is pretty massive. So, we do that primarily from the perspective of end-point devices.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:07:14] So, think about your laptops and tablets and phones, any IoT devices or sensors, medical devices. So, all of those, if they're connected to the internet or a corporate network, those are access points for cyber-criminals and bad actors. So, MCPc has kind of a holistic life cycle approach to managing those endpoints, the vulnerabilities associated with them. So, we engage with the students. Right now, at only one phase of that whole life cycle approach, and that's at the end, we call it STAD, which stands for Secure Technology Asset Disposition.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:07:55] So, that means that when a device reaches end of life, as we call it, it's being retired from active use at a company, MCPc takes that device back to our facility. And now, a lot of CMSD students are the first receivers of that device. And it's going through a number of different pathways within that facility depending on the agreed motion of how all of the data is going to be destroyed. And so, students could be doing anything from just sorting devices on pallets, depending on the type and form factor of the device.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:08:36] It could be literally unscrewing components of the device and sorting them out to be recycled, breaking them down. They could be running the device through certain programs that are wiping the data or further sorting it so that downstream from our facility, it could be sold. It could be refurbishing the device so that it's a factory re-certified and it's coming in, getting wiped, refurbished, and going back out the door to another user.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:09:07] So, that's kind of the—we do a lot of high level cybersecurity, very involved in sophisticated things at MCPc, but about three or four years ago when this facility started, it was a chance for us to engage a more entry-level type of role to MCPc where we could teach the fundamentals of what we're trying to do to give opportunity for students or anyone working those jobs to progress upward through our organization.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:09:41] And so, that's sort of then where the sort of the students enters into this picture. And Jalen Baldwin is joining us as well. And Jalen is a student in this School of One MCPc Foundry program. So, Jalen, thank you for joining us.

**Jalen Baldwin:** [00:10:02] By the way, I'm a senior at the School of One at The Foundry. This is my second year. And the time I've been there, it was amazing, like a traditional school setting, I know it was not for me. My grades wasn't there, but making that effort, and then making the choice to come to the School of One, it was like one of the best decisions. But when I was there, the opportunity came about with The Foundry, and that was kind of if you're about it, but I was eager to try a new setting for a School of One.

**Jalen Baldwin:** [00:10:36] And so, when I first got there, I was like very hesitant about the water because all I knew about the water was that, it's bad, not to go near it. If it's not a pool, do not get in it. And so, my first time getting in the water, it was like a whole different—like my mind switched on, it was just like I've seen Cleveland at a whole different angle than what I was used to on land. And so, now, I like to be on the water more than on land now.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:11:03] Now, that's awesome. We're going to dig back in, in a few minutes, Jalen. We'll circle back around because I want to talk about some of the decision making that you sort of went through as it relates to sort of the opportunity around choosing a path. But, Melanie, help us understand and our listeners, because the School of One is fairly unique in the education landscape, the way Cleveland School District decided to sort of take this on. And so, what's the primary premise component, Melanie, of School of One as it relates to why some kids and not others being moved into or opting into that particular option for K-12?

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:11:52] Well, first of all, the School of One is we're a school of choice, we're an application school. So, students have to apply to the school. We provide a flexible learning program for the students and specifically geared, again, to their social, emotional and academic needs, right? So, a student is definitely interfaced with the program. So, in, let's say, a traditional school, you would sit all year maybe in junior English or senior English.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:12:21] But if you already knew what you wanted to do and you say, "Well, gee, either I'd like to go to college or I want to spend more time, you know, learning about computers, I want to do all this", but you can't because in a regular school program, it's very stagnant for the most part. The curriculum is set. The student fits into the curriculum. At the School of One, the curriculum fits into the student. And I think that's the biggest draw. We are computer-based, but at the same time, clearly, I function as, you know, kind of guide on the side.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:12:53] Students have the ability to get college credit plus for, you know, credits. You know, they still have to take all the state tests as required, but it definitely molds itself to the student's goals and to the student's—not only academic goals, but also personal goals. And some students, the reality is, too, some students cannot do a full day of school, whether they have obligations, whether they have to work, thank you MCPc who built that in for that reason or whether they have to stay home and babysit, whatever they may have to do.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:13:23] And these are very bright kids, but they are—you know, the system itself is being very detrimental to them because they're failing out of necessarily no fault of their own. So, that is one of the things that brought the School of One into CMSD, is to help the students remove the barriers that would prevent them from succeeding and to graduate. And to do that, again, we offer a flexible—it's a flexible academic environment, and it's interesting that because more and more, and I think you could ask Jalen this also, what does he see the difference between a traditional school and the School of One?

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:13:57] Because I know myself, I've had many students say one reason why they really like it and they can flourish here, and again, not only the rowing and the sailing and the job component, but it sees them. It sees who they are and it sees what their needs are and it meets them. And so, it puts them in charge of their own learning. And I think that's a real big plus. They are active learners. There's no doubt about that. It's not an easy—people would think, "Oh, gee, to sit at the computer all day, that's a lot of fun." No, it doesn't work like that.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:14:26] And that's where the site locations sort of come into play. And so, how many different School of One site locations like The Foundry, for those that are listening from—they're listening from all over the country and around the world. And so, we'll circle back to The Foundry piece specifically, but, Melanie, how many School of One sites around the Cleveland ecosystem are out there?

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:14:51] Well, CMSD has eight, and that's it. Other districts have—I don't even want to say it's comparable, but they have a program, sometimes they call it credit recovery, sometimes they think that's what we are. We are not credit recovery. We're a whole different breed of cat. But the CMSD has eight sites. We're going to open the ninth site, which is specifically—that also is going to be out of a high school and it won't be in the high school. We'll be in a community type center and that will be specifically LBGTQ site for students that don't see or find belonging within, again, the traditional high school, but that will definitely be geared towards that population.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:15:32] Yeah, I'd love.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:15:33] So, that would make a site nine.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:15:33] Yeah, that's really exciting. And one of the things that has always appealed to me about School of One and the way the School of One concept works is the fact that it's so highly personalized to that individual student. So, Jalen, sort of tossing this this back at you, you had a choice, you know. And at the end of the day, it's not necessarily your personal backstory that we want to necessarily share with the world, but please share what you're willing about why did you make this decision. You said that regular school earlier wasn't really working out for you. But when you look at the ecosystem, I guess, of the options you had, and School of One was not the only one that Cleveland School District made available to you, why choose School of One?

**Jalen Baldwin:** [00:16:20] I chose the School of One because I'm the type that I like technology, so I like being on computers. And at the time, traditional school wasn't offering it. And so, I've seen it impact my grades really bad. And so, when School of One gave me an opportunity, I was like hesitant about it because I didn't want to like put all my eggs in one basket, but I also wanted to try something new. And so, when it came about, I was like, "Hey, let's try this." And so, by the time I was at School of One, entering School of One, was like, I want to say, grade point average of like one-point-something.

**Jalen Baldwin:** [00:16:56] Now, my grade point average is like at three-point. And I made up half my classes within a week that I was behind in and like our teacher, like it was there for like emotional support. And the administrators that's there like they go out their way, rather with the traditional school settings, they only can offer you directly. You can't be singled out because it's like a large school. And so, the School of One, like Ms. Lynch said, it caters to the student instead of the school catering to the student. It just made it much easier for me to make that decision. And yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:17:37] So, it's a great fit for you, obviously, is what it sounds like. So, that's awesome. Michael, why The Foundry? Why add in to this mix this program? Why add the sailing and rowing component into this? It has nothing to do with cybersecurity or computer science or the things that, you know, Jalen was talking about that appealed to him, and yet it's really, really not just a unique piece in this case, but it's a very tangible, foundational and fundamental piece of the whole puzzle that you guys have put together here with this partnership. So, why sailing and rowing?

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:18:16] Yeah, I think, you know, if you're anywhere around the country, kind of looking at this from the outside in, it does look, you know, kind of wild. Why would a technology cybersecurity company get involved with water sports, in any way for any reason? But I think if you're part of the Cleveland community, even the Ohio community, you understand how tight-knit these cities are. Down in Columbus, it's very similar, Cincinnati or any of these Midwest cities, Cleveland's very tight-knit.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:18:52] MCPc was started in Cleveland about 30 years ago out in Strongsville, Ohio. We moved into—we moved deliberately into downtown Cleveland about seven or eight years ago with the full intention of investing into this city. You know, we went through going back before I was even born through kind of the industrial explosion in the Midwest and kind of the height of manufacturing in the Midwest. And Cleveland benefited a lot from that.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:19:27] But in the years, kind of post-industrial era, the City of Cleveland has lost a significant portion of our population. We tried to kind of reinvent ourselves a lot. So, MCPc saw the move into downtown Cleveland as not only an advantage to our business, but investing in the City of Cleveland and the future that technology will bring and those jobs associated with it. And then, you know, looking at the lake and

the river, there's a good analogy to draw there, and that they've been sort of neglected resources of ours for a long time.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:20:05] Everybody, you know, whether you know the City of Cleveland or not, you know the story of the Cuyahoga River and it catching on fire. And, you know, the Environmental Protection Agency kind of being a birthing of all of those catastrophes. And so, the river kind of had a bad rap for a lot of years. In recent years, it's kind of flourishing with wildlife and recreation. And so, kind of it's turning a new leaf and creating a new chapter for itself.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:20:37] So, taking the river and the lake and just getting people using them, that was kind of the first intention. Okay, we have these incredible resources, what other city can say that—you know, there's a lot of cities that are on coasts and everything, but Cleveland was never using the lake and the river in a way that was benefiting the community in a major way. So, that was really the premise of The Foundry, is okay, so there is a location of The Foundry on the river, down in the flats, which is kind of a comeback neighborhood of sorts in the city. And then, there's another second location out at the mouth of the river that's sitting on the shores of Lake Erie.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:21:21] So, it was really kind of split up. Okay, let's just get access points to the river and the lake. Let's focus it on students and youth and kind of see what grows from that. And so, it's about five or six years old now. And we've had a lot of success, I think about five to seven thousand students a year are going through The Foundry either through a school program, a field trip. They're at the foundry everyday like Jalen or they're just after-school rowing teams, sailing teams that are using the facilities. So, you know, that's kind of the story of The Foundry a little bit. It was born out of a need for access to the river and the lake and the benefits that that could bring for the city.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:22:10] And it had the added benefit in the case of kids like Jalen, and I'm sure many, many others in the community, not only to experience an environment they've never seen before as Jalen pointed out, he was really uncomfortable with the water. He had this mythology that he probably had his whole life about. I'm not supposed to go over there, it's dangerous, and all those sorts of things. And so, to get to learn and become comfortable in and around your environment, that's a huge, huge bonus and benefit.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:22:40] How do you then—and the kids are going to get a tremendous amount of team building and cooperative experiences, you know, rowing and sailing, you know, all of the skills that come with that, especially around the collaboration, one of the things I always particularly love about that particular sport. But Melanie, how do you ensure that as the kids go through the School of One, the school, the traditional or non-traditional, in this case, school program, the curricular pieces that you have a responsibility to help the kids get through towards their graduation requirements. And they have this amazing experience at The Foundry, where they get to learn all these new skills, problem solving, teamwork, all of those opportunities as they get to grow in that piece of the program. How do you ensure that they are ready then to go and do the work part of MCPc? How does that work out?

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:23:36] The space that we are in at The Foundry, I can't emphasize this enough, it is not a traditional-looking class. I think one of my former students said, "Oh, my gosh", he felt it looks like Google. Okay.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:23:48] It does a little bit.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:23:50] So, yeah. There you go. So, again, it sets a different tone.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:23:53] Right.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:23:54] All right. And that is very important. Really, I will say this, I underestimated the impact of the environment, what it would have on the students.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:24:03] I know that well. And you are obviously right, yeah.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:24:06] Yes. And so, part of all of this is, you know, they have to demonstrate self-management skills. They have to be open to listening and communicating. Trust is a huge, huge factor. Most students, as any students anywhere would come in. And particularly here, because there's so many different unknowns with the water, with just the environment itself, because we are interfaced with The Foundry staff, they're dealing with adults all the time.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:24:33] So, there's a lot of fear factors, if you will, there's a lot of very high trust barriers, if you will. So, that all has to begin to come down. And they really have to begin to be open to everything in the environment. They have to, again, establish, you know, self-management skills. Part of the rowing and the sailing, you know, that's teamwork, that's communication. So, these are skills, more personal skills that you want to see the students begin to not only develop but own. And that's really the beauty of all of this because their growth is incredible.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:25:07] They learn to see things differently. They learn not to be afraid. They learn that, "Hey, I belong." And it's that sense of belonging that automatically establishes equity. And that's just so, so important. And when you see these kind of fall together, it's like, yes, now, you're ready to go off to STAD, let's say, yeah, and see what's there, and explore other options because it's like anything, they have to be ready to be open to all the different experiences, so they can learn and they can begin to direct their own learning process and begin to take ownership of it.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:25:41] And that's one of the things that I love the most about it, right? A lot of the programs that I do interviews on for this particular podcast, I hear a very, very similar thing. So, that's a trend that clearly happens in those very successful programs, is, A, the kids have to have ownership in what's happening. They have to believe in what's possible. And then, they have to be ready to take that step where there's so much independence.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:26:10] And, Jalen, I can only imagine what it felt like the first time you went to STAD. I remember the first time I got to go, that Michael took me back and I got to see and meet some of the School of One students and what was happening there, and I thought, "This is one of the coolest ways I can imagine to get comfortable moving into a work environment every single day." And so, tell us a little bit, Jalen, about what is it that you like the most about the STAD piece of this program.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:26:40] And, you know, granted, it's awesome that MCPc has made available, that that's actually paid work. So, A, we'll start with that's really cool. Thank you to Michael and MCPc for that. But, Jalen, what's the primary thing that you get out of that outside of the paycheck piece of it? Because we know that part's always important, but what else comes to you as the sort of key components of that aspect?

**Jalen Baldwin:** [00:27:07] Obtaining like more information about technology that I would never think I would have to get. And so, as last year, again, like I really was interested in it. But this year, like I got more serious about it and like I learned so much more. And with that, I was able to like go around the facility and do different jobs in different components in it. And so, seeing that, it opened more doors for me. And like after I graduate, it was—I have like couple more months, and they say I'll be able to work there full-time.

**Jalen Baldwin:** [00:27:45] It actually like helped me a lot because like I want to go to college, but I want to go college part-time. And so, MCPc, is like helping me and it helps like—it helped a lot because I was like over-thinking. I didn't know what I was going to do after, but with this being full-time, like I got more comfortable and like I could eventually go onto a different part outside of the facility, but it helped a lot.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:28:14] And that's an amazing opportunity because I think that that's one of those big disconnects that collectively the world of industry and certainly, in education that we often would have, right? That you go through K-12, and then you're supposed to go to post-secondary of some description. It can be trade. It can be on the job training. It could be, you know, community college for your college, so on. None of that really matters.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:28:36] But there is this expectation that somehow along the way, you're going to graduate, know exactly where you're supposed to be next. And I think that that's an intriguing thing because humans don't really like to learn that way. We like to learn by doing stuff and experiencing things. So, I love—that's one of the reasons I like this program so very much and want to highlight it as a great case study, a great example of education being done well and being done right.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:29:04] Michael, when you think about the Jalens of the world who are coming both through the School of One, and then ultimately into MCPc and the potential of that person continuing on beyond their high school experience, what's the value of that? And even if they don't stay, they understand the industry and move on to other things because I know you and I've had that conversation as well. But what's the value of this, back to the industry partner?

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:29:33] It's been fun to watch Jalen and some of his peers who have—Jalen has been with the School of One program at The Foundry really since the beginning. He's been with MCPc since we were kind of taking this program off, trying to get it started. And so, he's sort of a veteran of the program at this point. And it's been fun to watch him grow and not just his capabilities to learn things and experience new things, but his confidence in doing so.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:30:03] So, I think that one of the big takeaways for the students, you know, whether it was intended from the beginning or not, was just okay, we're going to introduce them to all these new things, whether it's rowing, sailing, in some cases, the water even, but then, technology and cyber security and that whole industry that's big and broad. They gain a lot of confidence the longer they're involved in that, and they take that with them after they leave.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:30:32] I think rowing and sailing both teach definitely teamwork, discipline like Melanie referenced earlier, just ownership and managing your own schedule. They also teach you kind of sense of agility almost in how you approach new things. So, they're learning how to learn in a way, which is an important skill. And I think when you talk about anything, you know, life after this program for these students, whether that means they work in MCPc for the rest of their life, their entire career, that would be amazing or they go on to college.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:31:12] They go on to completely different industries. Maybe they start a business of their own. You know, any of those things. It's extremely valuable to have a sense of agility and how you're approaching those and be able to, you know, change direction and be a little bit malleable. So, I think from our perspective at MCPc, it wasn't, you know, a home run the first day we turned this program on, it was a challenge. We're a 30-year old company. We're a mid-sized company.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:31:45] There's about 450 employees at MCPc. But before the School of One, none of those employees were 16-year-olds. So, it was a challenge just from the management perspective. And I remember some conversations with our HR leadership around an interaction that a 16-year-old finds completely normal is not an interaction that someone who's been working at a company for 20 years finds normal. So, there was a little bit of disconnect, but I think a lot of that was first seen.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:32:21] And, you know, we worked through it. But, you know, from our perspective, we kind of see it as, you know, if a student does decide to go to college, that's great. But if they don't, there aren't a lot of extremely reputable and sort of confident choices if you're not going to go to college. So, that was really one of the founding pillars of this program, is, okay, let's just establish some type of pathway for the students that aren't going to college, and let's make it meaningful.

**Michael Trebilcock:** [00:32:58] That kind of led us into, well, it doesn't mean that this is MCPc's pipeline for new talent and employees. We're not hiring them so that they work here for their entire careers. We're hiring them so that they get fundamental skills in technology that, you know, the world today and as it's progressing, those skills are applicable in any industry now. So, we're really trying to set them up for success later on if that's with us or if that's with somebody else.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:33:28] Yeah. That's, again, what I love about this program so much. Melanie, what—I'm a teacher somewhere in the world and I'm sitting there listening to this and I'm thinking, "Oh, my gosh, this would be the most amazing thing for my students. I can just name off the kids that are sitting in my classroom or in my school that I know, that if we had something like this, would benefit greatly." So, what do you say to those teachers or to those schools that are contemplating, "Hey, should we do a program like this?" And if so, what are the things that I've got to have top of mind as I start to think about the benefit or the rational reasons why I should proceed as it relates to those end goals for our students? What are some of the high-level things that you would toss to folks who are thinking about doing this?

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:34:23] Well, first of all, if they're really interested, they can apply to the School of One at The Foundry.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:34:28] Yeah.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:34:28] That's first and foremost. And they can live the dream, so to speak. So, that would be good. First of all, I would say, don't be afraid. That, for people that's learning at its best, is an active process. And I think too many times, both teachers and students get very comfortable and set in their ways and everything becomes stagnant. At the end of the day, you want any individual. I don't care who it is, students, adults, whatever, that wants to learn and that can—and that has that desire and motivation to seek things out and to discover new things, and to be able to carry the confidence with them to do that, to create their future.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:35:09] I mean, at the end of the day, it's about them creating an opportunity for themselves. And to do that, they need not only social emotional skills, but also obviously academic skills. And as I said earlier, this is a school that takes school out of the school and puts it in a work environment across the board. It addresses 360 the needs of the student. And to see any student or any individual grow and change and succeed in the sense that they now know I have opportunities I didn't have before, I know that I can learn this, I know I can go out in the world, and that I belong in that world, and I can contribute to that world.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:35:45] And I think that's as good as it's going to get for anybody. Because then, they see who they are, and they can grow, they can develop, and that's how they change the world, it's through themselves. And I think that's the biggest, if you will, bonus point or end goal for anybody. And again, this whole process, it reduces—because they're so immersed in all the time, it really reduces that fear of discovery. And not only discovery for self, but discovery for, again, computers or academics or anything. It really reduces that and it makes them open to growth and to learning and to becoming who they want to be. And that's all anybody wants for anybody as a goal, I think. So-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:36:25] Yeah, you're teaching them to be fearless, and that's going to be a primal life skill, right?

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:36:30] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:36:31] And I loved—yeah.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:36:32] Yeah. They'll take this—and I think Michael said it a little earlier, the skills that they're learning here, they can take with them and will take with them and apply them to so many different situations in their lives. Not maybe tomorrow, but maybe five years, 10 years from now, whenever. I don't even think that they themselves realize how much they've grown in this process. And, you know, like I see it and I look at, I said, you know, I mean, in my own mind, I'm like, you're going to look back on this in a couple of years, you're going to say, oh, my gosh, I did this, oh, I learned this year, oh, I did that. Because again, they're so immersed in the whole process. They don't see it. And that's okay. They don't have to. I see it. Michael sees it. Other people see it. So, it's-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:37:13] Yeah. The rest of us outside looking in, we're not even questioning it, you know. And not only is it that sense of fearlessness that happens because I also think it's that empowerment that comes with that confidence, I can do anything. And at the end of the day, it's their world to save, right? It's that next generation that it's theirs.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:37:40] And if I can add to that for a moment, and, again, kind of what you just said and what Michael said, all of this helps them develop ownership within their community, but it establishes belonging for them. And that can't be underestimated. I mean, I'll give you an example. Like for them, most of my students come from the east side of Cleveland. So, they get on a bus and they come down here. And this is foreign territory. This is territory that is, you don't go here, you don't do this, you stay away from the water, I mean, you know, put it on the list.

**Melanie Lynch:** [00:38:10] And then, after they've been down here for a while and after they learned and that fear dissipates, then what's happening is once in particular, they bring their friends down here on the weekends and to the city or to do what else. In here, it is—maybe they only thought a block or two blocks was their world. What? It's opened up the whole city now. They realized, you know what, this is mine. I didn't think we could come here. I didn't think we could do this. I didn't think I had anything to offer here. So, it really establishes belonging in a community and within the city. And that, in itself, creates ownership. And then, yeah, they are the future because they have to have a vision and they have to have an idea for how they want to shape things. So-

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:38:49] It is. It's awesome. And so, one of the things that I love that Michael also said is, you know, what's happening through the whole program, whether it's at the piece of The Foundry or when they get to STAD at MCPc is the learning to learn. And I talk about this concept all the time. And so, Jalen, I want to

make sure that we wrap this actually with you and with your voice. And so, you know, you've spent two years now learning to learn.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:39:21] And you said earlier that you obviously not only learned, but you learned a lot, you bridged the gap that you started with, and it's related to being ready to graduate, but that love of learning and that learning how to learn plays out every day in the work that you're doing at STAD. And so, as the same question that I asked of Melanie, you know, there are kids out there that are contemplating, should I stay in my traditional school? Should I take a chance on doing this other thing? And what if that other thing includes the opportunity for me to go and learn to work in a work environment all at the same time? What do you say to those kids who are wondering if it's the right thing for them to do?

**Jalen Baldwin:** [00:40:04] Don't miss out on the opportunity that's presented to yourself. You don't want to be in your 20s and say, "I think I wished I would have done that" or "I wish I could do that." I say you could do anything you put your mind to. So, if you have that mindset that you want to try something new and you want to see it, you want to try a new career path that's not working out for you, I say try it.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:40:25] Thank you. Thank you very much to all three of you for taking time out of your day and to share your story with us. I appreciate it. 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.