



## Jennifer Lehe, Jason Blair, & Britanie Risner

**Jason Blair:** [00:00:00] We can't just go right back into it, and just slip over, and go, okay, what content do they miss? Because it's not going to get us anywhere. We've got to go back in slowly. We've got to go back in with an open heart. We've got to go back in and help amplify those stories, need to be told, and get ready to go on a journey because it's going to be one.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:00:20] 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] So very excited today to welcome three guests right here from Central Ohio to have conversations with us today on Learning Unboxed about cultivating creative and civic capacities. So, that's a giant mouthful. And we're going to get into the nuts and bolts of what all that means here in just a second. But first, join me in welcoming our first guest, Jennifer Lehe, who is the Manager of Strategic Partnerships of the Columbus Museum of Art, which is a local Central Ohio gem of the very first order, that we're just thrilled and proud to have in our community and very fortunate that we have such an amazing art museum and arts culture, actually, in Central Ohio. Jennifer calls herself a recovering right-answer seeker, which I love, by the way. And Jen is fascinated by the, how to create the conditions for discovery, curiosity, and just basically trying it out around imaginative and intentional agency in the face of ambiguity. So, that's a lot of stuff, Jen, but welcome.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:01:56] Thank you. Thanks for having us.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:01:57] And joining Jen today is Jason Blair, who is an 18-year veteran arts educator, currently teaching elementary art in Dublin, Ohio, which is also one of the Central Ohio communities. And what Jason tells us is that every day, he steps into his art studio, that he learns from the creative geniuses that he teaches. And if nothing else, I want to celebrate the fact that you think of all of your learners as geniuses with so much potential bravo. We don't see that every day. And you get lots of kudos from me for that. So, welcome.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:02:34] And then, also, with us is Britanie Risner, also a 19-year public educator, veteran teacher who claims to have a staunch belief in children's abilities to think and act in ways that move the world to be a better place. And like Jason, I have to celebrate the fact that, that's how you see your learners and you put that out there for the world, so that's pretty darn exciting. So, Brittany, thank you very much. So, let's dig right in. And so, Jen, let's start with you, and tell us about the project cultivating creative and civic capacities.

And I also want to make sure that we sort of speak to that intersection with Project Zero tied to this. And so, why don't you give us the 100,000-foot overview about this program and how exactly then Brittany and Jason sort of key into this?

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:03:26] Sure. So, for years now, CMA, the Columbus Museum of Art, we've had creativity as our big idea. And we've been working with educators and with artists to understand what creativity is, what comprises creativity, how do we cultivate imagination, thinking with complexity, and taking action, embracing your creative agency to make something new, whether that manifests in what you might think of as a work of art or an idea in any discipline, and best yet, in a cross-disciplinary way.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:04:03] And so, we've explored this through this lens of, what can we learn by embracing this idea of thinking like an artist? So, what dispositions and what conditions cultivate those when we look at artist's creative practice, but also, with regard to intentional slow-looking with artworks, and thinking with and through art. So, how can slowing down and embracing ambiguity help us to think differently about things that are important to life?

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:04:32] And we've been on those investigations with highly curious teachers, classroom teachers, including Britanie and Jason for years now. We've collaborated with them as some of our most important and most valued thought partners. And in that process, that has really illuminated this opportunity to say, let's get more explicit. So, we talk about imagination and critical thinking, and generating new ideas as being our definition of creativity, but let's just say specifically, we want to cultivate creativity toward building better lives in a complex world.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:05:06] So, toward better understanding the challenges that we face, and more imaginatively and inclusively addressing those challenges. So, we had an opportunity through the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation and through our relationship with Project Zero, which is a research institute at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. And then, they started over 50 years ago with this question of, what is thinking with them through the arts, but what is special about it?

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:05:32] And so, we had an opportunity to collaborate with them, and we said, well, we want to harness the minds of super intentional, super curious teachers to ask, what does it look like to cultivate creativity toward more sustainable and equitable worlds? How can we co-create an understanding of that and develop tools to help teachers in any context, any level to do that? So, that is cultivating creative and civic capacities, and what, I guess, for me counts as a nutshell. It's a big nut.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:06:06] It's a big nut and it's a complex nut, but it's also one, I think, that, like I said, we bump up against this all the time in our work at PAST Foundation, and certainly, in the interviews that we've conducted all over the world. I conducted one on Monday in Finland, actually. And they actually echoed some of the very things that you're talking about, Jen, in the sense of, how do we take in, think about an applied opportunity for students to learn and be fully immersed in the thing that they're learning? Right? And they actually talked about the local community art projects as one of the very early steps to get teachers who were uncomfortable with exploration, are fully immersed-based to engage in, right? By taking lessons from their arts educators to sort of guide more traditional educators down that road. So, I always found that, that makes total sense.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:07:02] Yeah, and that's fantastic. And you mentioned that, in my sort of introduction to myself, I mentioned being a recovering right-answer seeker. And it's not recovered, right? Recovering. And I was one of these right-answer seekers looking for the A, taking the AP courses, gifted kid, and I have had to spend the last 15 years trying to unlearn some of those things so that I can get to a place where I can play with

ideas, I can experiment, I can be okay doing things that I'm not great at yet. And those are all important things that we can learn with our education when done well.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:07:40] Yeah. No, I would agree with that. So, I want to dig in a little bit to your collaborators, sort of in the things that you've learned and the roles, and what is it that you're taking back to your classroom? So, Jason, let's start with you. So, what does this program mean or how is it that you translate it back into sort of, A, your role in the project, the work that you're doing? So, start with explaining that to us. And then, how does that translate back into your everyday practice with those kiddos that you believe to be such great geniuses?

**Jason Blair:** [00:08:13] Sure. So, fortunate enough to work with Jen, and then with Britanie on this and our role that's kind of like the teacher leaders in the project. So, what we're able to do is oversee some of the other groups of teachers and kind of help facilitate, stretching and pulling different ideas and thinking that's coming out of the group. So, we'll have different meetings with them, "groups", where Britanie and I can go to those and kind of oversee what's going on with them, also, then communicate them back to Jen and the Project Zero team, as far as kind of, what are some things that are bubbling up to the surface that we need to kind of think about?

**Jason Blair:** [00:08:45] And going forward to next year, it's going to be starting to develop some of these tools and starting to see how this kind of research in the first year is going to start playing itself out into actual ways to help teachers in the classroom. So, this first year was definitely a lot of experimentation and exploration throughout the journey. For me, when I take it back to my classroom, it's been really impactful. One, it's helped me kind of see my role as a teacher-researcher and being a learner alongside the kids.

**Jason Blair:** [00:09:10] But also, there's been so many major takeaways, as far as just getting kids to learn and experience life through each other and not necessarily through the specific content. So, getting them to think about some of these issues that are around them on the every day, and also, realizing that it doesn't have to be something super complex. Civic capacities doesn't necessarily have to be a lemonade stand for certain cause. It could be something as simple as, how do you deal with conflict on the playground?

**Jason Blair:** [00:09:37] And how do you create space for those students to step back and realize what their perspective was, understand other people's perspectives that was involved? And how it impacts kind of their everyday relationships with learning? So, it's been really interesting. And being able to have some of the conversations and seminars from Jen, from Cindy Foley at the museum, from the research team at Project Zero, and Britanie, the different seeds that you take back.

**Jason Blair:** [00:09:59] And you walk back in your classroom, you say, this is something I want to try now. I want to see what goes on here. And then, the role of documentation became a big part, too. Not only doing those as in experiences, but also, reflecting back on them, and saying, what do we take away from them? Where was the transformation that happened? Where were the aha and oh moments that happened throughout that process? So, that's been been really impactful as well for me in the classroom.

**Jason Blair:** [00:10:21] And then, going forward next year, it's just a lot of trial and experimentation, trying some of these tools out and seeing, how do we create the conditions for this intersection to be made visible? And how do we create it so that we empower students to take that step? One of the things that I keep thinking about is that, as we do this project, it's not necessarily about creating kids that want to solve world problems. It's about developing their dispositions as these curious, empathetic, passionate learners, who then that becomes a byproduct of them doing these larger things.

**Jason Blair:** [00:10:54] So, it's not trying to get these kids to go out, and say, go ahead and start a lemonade stand. It's that, we want to train them to think, what is it like to take somebody else's perspective? What is it like to look deeply within yourself and put a mirror up to yourself? And what is it like, after you do those things to then act on behalf of somebody else, not just yourself, but as a larger community? So, it's definitely had a huge impact on me, just even in this first year alone with this project.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:11:17] And certainly, very meaningful to the world we're living in right in this moment, right? So, I think at no time has what you're talking about been more pertinent than the moment we're living in right now. So, Britanie, let's talk a little bit about, so in the first year, in the work with these teachers, Jason mentioned bringing back the things that come up. I'm really curious about what you're hearing from those other teacher participants about, what are the constraints? What are the joys? What are the ahas. And then, we'll get into sort of wrestling with then as a team. And then, how do you go back and sort of help in the deployment, or the work around, or the celebration thereof, depending on what we're talking about with those pieces? So, what is it that you hear from those groups of teachers that are participating in the project?

**Britanie Risner:** [00:12:07] I think initially, we've talked a lot about where to find that civic, and where to find that creative, and what that intersection might look like, and what do those things mean, the different context. This is a really interesting and complex project, and that there are representatives from kindergarten to high school and all different districts around Central Ohio. So, I think that in itself makes it a very unique type of project or investigation.

**Britanie Risner:** [00:12:36] So, we really talk a lot about where we might see civic happening. And so, that was very interesting, because early on, just like our definition, our thinking about creativity has changed over time, we started noticing that civic isn't something that has to happen like Jason said, as this like service learning project. It doesn't necessarily have to happen in a social studies context or in a social studies classroom. So, what we were noticing are teachers finding those moments, those everyday moments. And we talked a lot about learning around the edges.

**Britanie Risner:** [00:13:07] So, paying attention to when kids come into a space, when they exit a space. What's happening in those down times, we might say? And really leaning in to notice those and talk about those. So, I think a gift this project gives is that time for teachers to share that with each other and with us. That's something we don't get a lot of time as teachers in doing. So, to have that team of curious learners next to us and talking about what we're noticing has definitely been something that resonated with the teachers, that appreciation of understanding where we can see these things and being given permission in a lot of ways to step back, and slow down, and be curious about those moments.

**Britanie Risner:** [00:13:52] We also hear a lot about, we explored some tensions and some blind spots. And I think one of those that really resonated with the teachers is this idea of thinking about the civic, the community as something nearer to us. So, like in our own classrooms or in our own small groups, this is a community, right? This is a junior version of the world we hope to inhabit. And so, what can that look like? But also, the struggle to know when to plant experiences that help kids globally.

**Britanie Risner:** [00:14:27] So, I think that was something we spent a lot of time thinking about and we'll continue to do, just this balance between the local context and the global context. And how to listen and notice the thinking, the questions that the kids are bringing to us to really know how to best react to those situations? So, those are some of the big things that have come up consistently throughout our first year.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:14:49] Those are all very interesting and I love the concept of learning around the edges. That's absolutely brilliant and definitely one of those pieces that we bump up against, again, all the time

as well, right? Sort of helping folks understand where and what learning is, and where it can take place, and who's involved in it, all of those sort of circular conversations to have.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:15:11] So, I'm thrilled to hear that, that's sort of epicenter to some extent of some of the conversations that you're having with your participants. So, Jen, I want to dig in a little bit to, both Jason and Britanie talked about some tools, right? Some tools. So, what exactly are they talking about? Right? And then, how does this set of tools, whatever those happen to be then become deployed as part of what sounds like is your year-two endeavor for the project?

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:15:39] Sure. Yeah. So, some of the big kind of 10,000-foot questions we were grappling with as we were planning this project and building the structure of it was each of us is coming in with hunches, right? This initiative is the evolution of deliberate work and previous research initiatives that we've worked on together. But how do we kind of hold on to those hunches and operate on them, but not lead the teachers too quickly? Because especially when you're talking about working with a partner like Project Zero, you're working with someone like Dave Perkins, who many people are familiar with, you don't want to just throw something out because many people will want to just latch on to it, and say, oh, you've given me the thing, so now, I can take that thing and run with it.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:16:25] But instead, we had to really slow ourselves down, and say, no, we've got questions, we've got some ideas about possible boundaries of the space, but we need to work with all of you to be really close observers of your classrooms to develop your own inquiry questions that you think fit under this umbrella. And through that process, we learned quite a bit as Britanie alluded about the perceptions that teachers were bringing in, about where and when the civic and the creative came together, and where and when there were frictions, and starting to think about things like, when does it serve us to focus on different aspects or to move deliberately?

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:17:10] The phase that we're at right now is to sort of synthesize all of these different types of data that we collected, all these different kinds of conversations, and reflections, and documentation of teacher investigations to say, alright, what are some really high-level ideas that could be really grab-onable? Right? That's a real word. It's a word. I didn't just make it up.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:17:38] Really technical term.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:17:38] Grab-onable. Yeah. And then, how do those kind of filter all the way down to animating move? So, what are things that a teacher could actually do? So, in between those super high-level themes and that, what can I do tomorrow, kind of thing, there's a bunch of other layers. So, what we're doing right now is sort of building the skeleton of the framework. So, from those super big ideas down to the instructional toolkit, and really asking ourselves, what is going to help us to continue to investigate in this coming year?

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:18:13] And what are some things that we could grab on to and test out in the classroom? So, one really concrete example would be creativity challenges that call on us to act in civic and community-oriented ways. So, creativity challenges are something that Britanie, and Jason, and we, at the museum, have done for many years, where it's, how do you create a sort of open-ended, but with generative parameters opportunity for a playful, usually short kind of challenge to take on?

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:18:47] But then, how do you reflect on it? And then, what does that help you to learn about not just your own creative process, but also, in this case, the civic and social questions that are sort of always with us? I think one point that Britanie and Jason really got to is while we will be developing tools as part of this

process, we're urging folks to really think about this as a set of conditions that we can cultivate. Because if we start by thinking in terms of what's the activity or what's the tool, then we're going to kind of hit a lower ceiling. So, designing tools that allow for many points of entry and are also pulling people along kind of continuum of curiosity with regard to the civic and creative.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:19:42] Yeah, absolutely. And we see that frequently as well, right? Where you begin oftentimes dictates where you're going to end up, right? And that's not necessarily the outcome you were looking for, because, again, the bar tends to be really low when we think about it from that perspective. Britanie, talk to me a little bit about the participants themselves. So, how did these groups of teachers actually find their way into this project? And also, the other thing that our listeners are going to want to know is, hey, I'm not an art teacher, but this sounds really awesome. Is this for me or is this restrictive? Right? So, help our listeners sort of understand, who is this really supposed to be for and about?

**Britanie Risner:** [00:20:22] Sure. Well, we're certainly hoping that what we're learning and what is transforming us is going to be able to be widely shared. I think that's one of the ultimate project goals, is to think about what we're learning and how to share that with others. The teachers in general, I think, well, Jen is magical at developing relationships with teachers, yes, you are, all around Central Ohio. So, I think a lot of our teachers that had some relationship with the museum in the past through the teaching for creativity institutes and the creativity summit that we did several years ago.

**Britanie Risner:** [00:20:59] So, there are certainly teachers that have shown an interest in understanding creativity more, and that belief and imagination, and critical thinking, and the fact that we're learning more about creativity and really believe that it is the foundation for learning, hopefully now and in the future. So, I think a lot of teachers started from that. There are different levels of participation right now. So, we have had like a core group of teachers who have kind of led those three groups that Jason, and Jen, and I get to kind of go and be a part of as well.

**Britanie Risner:** [00:21:33] There are all different mixes. So, there are teacher groups from one particular school, or there might be teacher groups from the same district, or teacher groups that might do similar jobs. So, we have some art teacher groups. We also have some mixed-grade groups. We have some high school science teachers. And so, that's one of my favorite parts about this, is that we are investigating a lot of really interesting notions, and hunches, and puzzles with entirely different groups of people.

**Britanie Risner:** [00:22:03] So, it kind of reminds me of a classroom itself, right? Like the strengths and needs are all coming from different layers and context. So, I think that is pretty important. To get to your question about, is this for art teachers or is this for everyone? I certainly believe it's for everyone. My background is, I'm actually going to teach fifth grade, but I've taught first, second, third, fourth, and really used to say words like, I don't think I'm creative or I'm not necessarily artistic.

**Britanie Risner:** [00:22:33] So, throughout my transformation, I've brought in my sense of what creativity means, and certainly spent a lot of time with the thinking like an artist rubric in content discussions or in the general classroom. So, I certainly think that what we can learn from artists are things that we carry on as people. We can learn a lot about humanity and hope in that way. So I certainly think that what we're learning sparks joy, and wonder, and hope. I think teaching in general is a place where we can show our belief in a more equitable and sustainable world.

**Britanie Risner:** [00:23:10] So, I would invite everyone to participate. We are at the second year kind of thinking about the ripples that the project might have. So, while we have a core group and that's kind of the research component part that we need to have a core group, we are going to be inviting people to share some

of our tool prototypes, and get feedback, and try things out. So, I think we're always looking for curious learners who might want to engage with us on some level, to try to do that.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:23:37] That's really great to hear because I have no doubt, actually, that we'll hear from folks saying, hey, I want to be part of this or I want information about it, so that's wonderful to hear. And always we love to sort of see very, very broad, diverse groups of participants, both in their own experience in the classroom, with all their content areas, their successes, and their constraints. That's wonderful to hear. So, Jason, I do want to dig in a little bit and talk about the notion of how K-12, if you will, and an entity such as a museum, whether it be an art museum, a science museum, you name it, how do those partnerships work in such a way that they are more than just a field trip site? Right?

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:24:24] So, how much museum art has done a beautiful job of this over the years, but our listeners don't know that. And so, from the sort of the teacher perspective, what are the things that make those kind of relationships more than just a field trip, I guess, if you will? Right? So, I'm really trying to get in because lots of schools report to me that they struggle with finding external, meaningful partnerships that are more than just, A, come into my classroom for show and tell, or B, a career day or a field trip, but there's no connection back into my everyday practice of teaching and learning. But that's not the case in the relationship that you, as an educator, and the museum are experiencing. So, help folks understand how or why.

**Jason Blair:** [00:25:14] Yeah. So, I think the museum has been just such a beacon of progressive thinking over the last couple of years since they've had their kind of refocusing on creativity and thinking like an artist. And I think for me, what's made it meaningful is that it shifts it away from the products of a museum to the process of what the creative aspects are in the museum and the process that got those products there. And so, when you go to a museum like that and you go to a place for a field trip like that, it's not about a one-off.

**Jason Blair:** [00:25:42] It's learning about the dispositions behind the artists that are displayed there and from every little aspect of the museum, whether they have their join the conversation spots, which are interactive spots in the museum, to go and join in the conversation in different ways. Even getting inspired by that and bringing that back into my classroom to say, okay, well, here's one thing the museum is doing that's a quick, easy tweak that we could bring it back in the classroom or into the hallways of the classroom to make learning not just within a classroom space, but everywhere, just like the learning and thinking about an artwork is not just when you're standing in front of the painting or the sculpture, but it's also in how you're processing, and walking away, and then making connections between all the different artworks that you see in the museum.

**Jason Blair:** [00:26:22] So, it's been really powerful there. And especially with the thinking like an artist rubric and thinking about these dispositions, like come forth ambiguity, Plato's process, questioning over answering, valuing influence, like those dispositions are so key in our world today on so many levels that it makes a partnership with the museum that is focusing on that to learn from experts, to say, okay, here are some artists that kind of make visible those very dispositions and highly intentional ways.

**Jason Blair:** [00:26:48] So, if I'm going there for a field trip or with my students, I can focus on this disposition, and say, okay, when we're going to this, let's look at the curiosity and let's look at how the artist is being playful. But also, the way the museum set it up with the wonder room, having a place to have hands-on activities. So, it very much serves for me also as a thinking ground. We just say, okay, what aspects of this can I bring back to my classroom? Where is there elements of play?

**Jason Blair:** [00:27:14] And they've done a remarkable job with that. The other thing, I think, is important when I'm thinking about them is this idea of, with the teachers as well. They put on highly intentional and thoughtful professional development. It's been some of the most impactful in my career, because again, they're focusing

on these dispositions from an artist that can transcend to all disciplines and really go more into life. And they're really starting to spark that conversation about, thinking about thinking and making that visible, and thinking about creativity in ways that we maybe didn't think of before.

**Jason Blair:** [00:27:45] So, kind of erasing totally the misperception of, this museum is a high-art space that only certain people have access to. They're working within the education format to kind of re-imagine that, and say, look, this is about a space that is about rethinking how we're approaching, viewing, and interacting with the world on a larger scale. So, I think that's the benefits of this partnership, has just been stepping back and seeing what kind of dispositions can I start fostering on my own kids and my own students that are going to prepare them for anything.

**Jason Blair:** [00:28:21] I think about it even more so when we go to remote learning this year. When we went to remote learning, there's a lot of talk about some of the slides and things like that. But if we truly focus on the remote learning as an experience to cultivate dispositions such as curious thinkers, playful learners, collaborators, they could come back to us almost better than when they left us, because they've been focusing on those imagination, and creativity, and those dispositions that are going to transcend all disciplines.

**Jason Blair:** [00:28:46] They're going to be at the root of what we need. And we need to have these problem finders, these creative, insatiably curious kids. So, that's kind of where I feel like the museums helped me to see that, too, is that in those situations where these kids were in remote settings, it was like, okay, it's not necessarily about my specific one-line content statement, it's about a bigger picture. How do I get them to harness the world where they're at right now in their home and going through all these emotions that we're all going through?

**Jason Blair:** [00:29:13] How do I get them to harness that into a way that creates this disposition that they're going to come back to with a furious amount of passion? Because they're like, this is what I was spending my time at home doing. So, it's the idea of focusing when they come back, not on, what did you miss? What did you miss out on? But what can we celebrate? What was the learning that took place?

**Jason Blair:** [00:29:30] And even if it wasn't specific, like content standard 3.2, it was something else where they were learning how to engage in playful opportunities to help their baby brother or baby sister, or how they went and experience to walk with their mom and dad that they haven't gotten to go on for a long time because everybody has been so busy. All of a sudden, now, we're walking around the neighborhood and we're noticing things. We're doing those things, the thinking like an artist is really champion. So, the partnership with them has just been amazing and helping me, at least, to rethink my perspective on what teaching learning could and should be.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:30:02] That's awesome and exactly what we're hoping to hear. So, that's beautiful. We're going to talk towards the end a little bit about this whole virtual learning piece, but I want to dig in just a little bit before we get to that. Basically, to ask the question about scale. And any of you can answer this. And, Jen, when you hear Britanie and Jason talking about the impact, and what they're doing, and the things that they're learning from the other teachers that they're interacting with on an ongoing and regular basis, at the end of the day, there always becomes a question of scale, right?

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:30:47] For example, Jason and Britanie in particular, so how do you ensure that every teacher in your school has the same experience or opportunity to think about teaching and learning in the what that they're doing very, very differently? How do you manage that? And I get this question all the time about all the different programs that we highlight. That's really great. It's awesome for this cohort of teachers, but it's really a scale, that transformative way of thinking about my role, for example, as a teacher, as a facilitator of

learning, as somebody fostering the future of my community. How do you do that piece? And that's a loaded question. I realize that. And I ask it all the time, so no worries. But somebody want to jump in and help us sort of think about what that might look like for this work.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:31:38] Yes, I have some top of mind thoughts. So, Katherine Prince, I'm sure you've had Katherine Prince on here from KnowledgeWorks, she talks about spread instead of scale. So, instead of feeling overwhelmed by this idea of scale, think about spread. And then, that also invites you to think about customization. And realistically, there is not one size that fits all, and there shouldn't be. So, how can we do something bold and capture the stories of what can happen when you embrace the things that teachers really believe.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:32:12] I mean, if you ask teachers, do you want your students and you, as professionals, in this building to be encouraged to imagine things as if they could be otherwise, to do so with a sense of interdependence with the world and to harness the agency that you have for your lives today and in the future right here and anywhere in the world? They're going to say, absolutely, absolutely. That's the kind of thing that gets teachers into education.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:32:42] And I think often, we let perfect be the enemy of good. And I think often, we succumb to a sort of hopelessness that I think is pervasive right now and I think that our school systems are built to isolate, to render anxious and territorial the adults that work in them. And then, we are surprised when our children are unhappy. And our adults are unhappy, guess what. So, when Jason talks about the things that inspire him about the art museum, I just want to say, that is an iterative partnership in the best possible way.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:33:25] And it comes about because the teachers that we work with and we, the museum, try to be transparent and to model that we are working on things, we are trying things out. But we're also modeling just what Jason said, that we can think in different ways about how we interact with the world, how we understand the world and interact with it. And so, the most important part of the work that I do, in my opinion, is the work that I do to change the minds of adults who are in the school systems about what is possible.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:33:55] Which is hard out of fairness, right? I do want to pause there because it is hard when the systems that we are all functioning within are, in many ways, dysfunctional, no longer truly relevant to the world that we're living in, and yet back to something you said earlier, that I heard from several of you is that this is the space that we have to work within. So, how do we find the balance for ourselves? Right? Because the reality is, as the adults in the room, if we're struggling with finding our own meaning and relevance in what we're doing, imagine how hard it is for our learners. But our systems are not as flexible as our aspiration.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:34:38] Absolutely. And what you're talking about right now is a creative and civic challenge. That meant creative and civic thing. And I don't say that in a flippant way at all, but I completely agree with you. We live in deeply inequitable systems that are designed to self-perpetuate by making you think that something different is not possible. And even if it were, you can't do it. So, how do we harness the energy of these amazing, curious educators that you will find in every single school and help to grow that, help to inspire and support them, connect them with one another so that we can move toward a tipping point?

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:35:21] Absolutely.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:35:21] So, that's what I think. When I think about scale, those are some of the things I think about.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:35:25] Yeah. And I think that that's a beautiful space to sort of think about as we close, because that is, in fact, the reality, right? And we are in a really, really intriguing moment, and we've alluded to. So, I do want to sort of toss back to Britanie and Jason. So, Britanie, let's start with you. So, as teachers are getting ready to go back into the classroom, having just gone through a spring that we could have never imagined as an educator, as a facilitator of learning, and there's so much debate that's going on in our world right now about virtual-only, hybrid, in-person, other options yet to be imagined, and realities we don't really, really know.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:36:10] But one of the things that folks really struggle with, I think, no matter what, is how do I take the experience that I want my students to have, whether we are looking at it completely, just purely from a content or standards-driven to the aspiration and the opportunity that is afforded to us. How do I, for example, go into a virtual or hybrid environment in the fall and be both relevant, and curiosity and compassion-driven? So, for you, if you were to give one piece of advice to a teacher who's struggling with, what am I going to do in the fall, what would it be? Jason, you're getting the same question. So, Britanie's on the, yeah, I got to go, and Jason's going to think about it.

**Britanie Risner:** [00:36:55] I think it all comes down to looking and listening at our kids or to our kids. I think the first thing I would do is enter with what you're saying. We have to enter with feeling courageous, and loving, and having that respect for our kids, and being able to throw out to them, hey, what are some problems you care about solving? And then, listen, and think, and build, whether it's virtual or real-life communities, for them to talk about what they care about, knowing that we're really going to listen, and pay attention, and puzzle alongside them.

**Britanie Risner:** [00:37:26] And I think one of the many things this project does for us is allow us that time to just talk about what we're trying and what we're learning. And so, modeling that for our kids is going to be just so, so important. So, I think go in knowing that they can do amazing things, even if they're tired and they're scared, like all of us, and really show them that they have a choice, and agency, and someone who loves and cares for them.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:37:54] Yeah, absolutely. Our kids are infinitely capable of so many things. So, Jason, same question to you. So, I'm that a teacher out there feeling alone, and isolated, and terrified about what I'm about to have to endeavor for the fall, what's your what's your one piece of advice to those folks as they get ready for this?

**Jason Blair:** [00:38:15] The one thing that kind of helps me, I guess, to look at it is, and I've said this before in PAST, but this idea of looking for stories. I think when we go back into the classroom, you've got to look for the stories and help create an environment where the kids can share their stories because there's a lot of stories that need to be told right now. And yours as the teacher is a story that needs to be shared as well. So, not going in feeling like you have to necessarily be completely guarded, but just to say, like I've experienced these same things, too, with my family, with my friends.

**Jason Blair:** [00:38:43] And then, this idea of thinking about it as a journey. So, realizing that this year is going to be a journey, and that we are going to have highs and lows, and that we're going to scale the peak of a mountain and we're going to fall down a little bit. I mean, we can't beat ourselves up and try to create perfection. We go back because it's just not attainable. But I think if we focus on this idea of kind of uncovering and looking for stories that need to be told, and then realizing that those stories can fuel a journey that we can take together, and we can share together, and grow together, I guess that's where I'm going to start. With my own kids being home here, it's shown me, firsthand, how many things that maybe I didn't see before this all happened.

**Jason Blair:** [00:39:25] Like I think this is a real window of opportunity for me into—I shared with Britanie and Jen one example of how there are kind of silver lining moments. And one was, for me in our family, we didn't have breakfast, really. When school was going on, things were the same. Because we were just busy, we had to pack the lunches, get the kids, make sure they didn't miss out and everything like that. And so, one of the things we did was we started having breakfast together.

**Jason Blair:** [00:39:51] And it's like creating an environment in your classroom to have kids share those kinds of stories, and to value those, and to lift those up, and say, that's an important moment. I mean, we can't just go right back into it, and just slip over, and go, okay, what content did they miss? Because it's not going to get us anywhere. We've got to go back in slowly. We've got to go back in with an open heart. We've got to go back in and help amplify those stories, need to be told, and get ready to go on a journey because it's going to be one.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:40:17] I don't think anybody could have said that any better, Jason. And so, so perfect. And so, we're going to stop right there because that was beautiful. Thank you to the three of you, not only for joining us on the program, but for the work that you're doing together, and separately at your own institutions, and on behalf of all of our children. So, thank you so much.

**Jason Blair:** [00:40:43] Thank you.

**Jennifer Lehe:** [00:40:44] Well, thanks so much. This has been a delight.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:40:48] Thank you for joining us for Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. I want to thank my guests and encourage you all to be part of the conversation. Meet me on social media @AnnaliesCorbin and join me next time as we stand up, step back, and lean in to re-imagine education.