



## **Lori Trent, John Jones, and Tina Pierce**

**Lori Trent:** [00:00:00] But given the COVID events, we have an opportunity to take a step back, and say, okay, this was not good, we wish we didn't have to do this, maybe, but what did we learn from this and what would we change as a result?

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:00:18] 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 reimagine, rethink, and redesign our educational system.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:00:54] So, today on Learning Unboxed, we're super excited because we get to tackle a topic we've never actually talked about on this program before, although we allude to it frequently when we talk about education. And so, today, we're going to talk about, what the heck does it mean to be willing to be a school board member, to run for school board, the whole component of serving? It's a big, giant lift. And we're going to try to help everybody understand, what is it that a school board does? Why is it really important?

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:01:24] And why are folks compelled and willing to serve in their local communities in this capacity? And joining us today, we have three new school board members, and that's the other sort of thing. We also wanted to be able to have a chance to sort of gauge, was this what you thought it was going to be? And so, that should be a fun conversation with all of our guests. And so, we're excited to have with us today, John Jones, who is with Huron City Schools. And John is an experienced business owner with a history of working in marketing and advertising industry, and is also a former Huron City Council member. So, welcome, John.

**John Jones:** [00:02:03] Thank you. Thanks for having me.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:02:05] And joining John is Dr. Tina Pierce, who is with Columbus City Schools as a board member. And Tina is a program manager for the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at the Ohio State University, and is also CEO and Founder of WORTH, which is Working through Obstacles Reaching True Heights Foundation. And we're thrilled to have Tina joining us as well.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:02:28] Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to be here.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:02:31] And joining both John and Tina is Lori Trent, who serves on the Upper Arlington School Board. And Lori is the communications and development guru actually with the PAST Foundation. So,

she's part of our staff, also, an art teacher and active community member, as well as a seasoned business professional. So, Lori, thank you for joining us as well.

**Lori Trent:** [00:02:53] Well, thank you for having me as well.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:02:56] Alright. So, for all of you, I want to start by acknowledging and saying thank you for your willingness to serve. I think that one of the things that lots of folks might not fully understand about the notion of serving on a school board is not only is it an elected endeavor, but it's one that almost always is tied to a personal passion around doing what's best for our community and the kids in our community, and it is not. It is not a small endeavor.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:03:28] So, first and foremost, thank you to all of you for being willing to serve in this capacity. So, I want to launch with that with the same statement to all of you, what was your motivation? And so, Tina, I'd like to start with you, because as we look at the sort of tile of my Zoom as we record this, we'll start with your square, if you would. So, Tina, what was your motivation for running for a local school board?

**Tina Pierce:** [00:03:55] Thank you. This is a really great question. So, my motivation really started because I'm a product of the Columbus City Schools. And as a product of the district, I wanted to give back. I'm also an educator. And so, on the college side, I was seeing our students come in, and I was noticing, hey, if I would have just had the opportunity to work with you in high school or if you would have known about this program and this opportunity or this scholarship, man, it would have made your transition into college a hundred times different and better. And so, that motivation, coupled with the fact that my husband and I had four children at the time who were in the district, and they were in all grade level.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:04:41] So, we had a high schooler, a middle schooler, and two elementary students. And going through that transition from elementary school to middle school, and then transitioning into high school, and again, seeing where I could bring my expertise from the academic side, but also, my insights as a parent, as an active and engaged parent would help to advance a lot of initiatives throughout the district. So, given that motivation, I just thought it was a natural place for me to connect, to build bridges between parents and our community by serving on the school board.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:05:20] Yeah. And I think that for every parent that has kids in a school district, the hope is that they understand the complexities of all sides of that. So, I would imagine that from the parent perspective alone, you've learned a lot.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:05:39] Yes, I've learned quite a bit. And it's just been great to, again, learn more about those complexities.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:05:46] Absolutely. And we're going to get into some of the weeds of those complexities here in a minute. So, John, same question back to you. What was your motivation for running for school board?

**John Jones:** [00:05:58] I don't have the depth that Tina mentioned. I believe I bring a unique perspective, was born and raised in here, but then I was gone for 46 years. But during that time, I visited at least once a year, almost every one of those years, so I've maintained a lot of friendships. I know a lot of people that have students, have kids in school. And with my background in business, and obviously, the fact that there was an opening coming up, I had already had the opportunity to serve a short time on city council and just looked and thought, what can I do? I'm retired, what can I do to improve or I shouldn't say that because that infers that

there's something wrong, but I mean, just look again at the school system in the area and do what I can the very best for the city that I moved back to, to retire in. And so, plus I love challenges. I got it.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:06:58] Thank you for that, John. Lori, same question to you. What was your motivation for running for school board?

**Lori Trent:** [00:07:04] So, mine's, I guess, a bit more personal. Those of you who know me, I like to call the family meeting, right? So, we all have input into whatever the topic of the day might be. And so, when I was considering whether to run for school board, I called such family meeting. And we have twin boys that are juniors at the high school, so I feel it's really important to have kids in the school system, at least some of the board members. So, I called this family meeting, and my one son said, well, you talk about making education better all day long, so I think it's time you do something about it. And so, I was kind of taken aback. And then, my second son said, yeah, what Skyler said. So, the other member of our family, my wife, Kelly, was not quite so forthcoming, but we got her on board.

**Lori Trent:** [00:07:56] And besides that, it was three to one. So, off we went. That was part of it. We're in the process of building some new buildings in Upper Arlington, which is wonderful. But you'll hear a bit of my past experience here, PAST, the institution I work for, buildings are great and wonderful, but what are you doing inside the buildings? And so, I really wanted to be a part of that change. And quite frankly, that's what I thought I would be spending the majority of my time on. And then, we had this little COVID thing. So, it's kind of shifted the process a bit. But nonetheless, I'm there for the kids. If we didn't have kids, we wouldn't have schools. So, that's my primary focus.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:08:41] Yeah. Thank you very much for that, Lori. And I think just a bit of context for our listeners because we have listeners who come to this program from all over the world. So, we're very fortunate in that case. But not everybody is necessarily going to understand where these places are that you each represent. So, again, just for a bit of context, so the Upper Arlington Schools, which Lori, who was just speaking with us, that's about 6,000 in pre-K-12 environment.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:09:10] And there are five elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school in Upper Arlington, which is a suburb of Columbus City Schools. Columbus City Schools, on the other hand, is our state's largest school district with approximately 51,000 students. And I believe currently, about 109 school buildings in a variety of different configurations stretch across a pretty broad metropolitan area. That's the other thing about Columbus. We are a very spread out city. We're not a dense urban like many.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:09:44] And so, the complexities of a giant urban, which Tina is serving on the school board is very, very different, obviously, than Upper Arlington, and yet different again with Huron City Schools, where John is talking with us from. And there are about 1,400, in four facilities, a high school, a junior high school, which is a seven-eight configuration, an intermediate school, a three-six, and a primary school, which is a pre-K-two. So, we had this nice diversity of different types of school districts on this call today. So, without question, you all were going into serving on school boards, not just different districts, but I assume a different sort of sets of, hey, here's what I know about school boards and what I anticipate being doing.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:10:35] And we're going to talk about the pandemic in a minute, so I'm going to set that aside and really sort of circle back around and ask each of you, when you decided to run, and then were elected, and suddenly, find yourself on the school board, so what was the what was the onboarding process? I mean, how do you know how to be a school board member, Tina? I mean, when I stand back and think, oh, my gosh, I want to run to be a school board on Columbus City Schools, that is not a small thing to even

contemplate, much less being willing to serve. So, how does the institution that is serving on a board, a school board, actually get you ready to do that?

**Tina Pierce:** [00:11:13] So, I have to give kudos to our school district because we take part in a number of different organizations that provide excellent professional development. One of those organizations is the Ohio School Board Association. So, very early on, I want to say, maybe a day or two after the election, our current leadership, which included Gary Baker sent information to us and suggested that we take various professional development workshops, attend conferences that were offered through the Ohio School Board Association.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:11:52] He also met with myself, along with Carol Beckerle. She was the other new person elected to the board. And he gave us a stack of books. And it included a book on Robert's Rules. It included a book on school board governance. In addition to that, we were also given this 400-page kind of our policies, onboarding manual, names of individuals, programs, committee structures. So that was a quite daunting to play through all of that information.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:12:28] But in addition to that, we're also members of the Great Council of City Schools, and through that, we can also partake in various professional development. And so, what I can say is that our district and the outgoing leadership really did a great job, even though it wasn't in person. We didn't have these six hours, our 8-hour sessions, where we sat down, and asked questions, and went through detailed information with them. They did make it accessible to us various opportunities to understand what our role was as board members.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:13:03] That's excellent, and at least help sort of set the stage for you to be better prepared. And I assume, Lori and John, same sort of thing. There was an ongoing process. And obviously, because we're all schools within Ohio, so the ability to tap into the Ohio School Boards Association or whatnot, and those professional development opportunities, similar experience, different experience. And I toss it out, Lori and John, either one of you to chime in here.

**Lori Trent:** [00:13:31] Similar experience, a lot of support from the OSBA. In addition, in January, our board went on a retreat at a local state park. So, we did an overnight together. Part of that was training for us, some part of it was to develop some synergy, get to know one another. And they had a-day-and-a-half day jam-packed. I mean, it was just one after the other. And I'm very thankful that COVID was at March so that we can kind of have this foundation because it really kind of got us off on the right foot. We had some marketing folks there, communication, legal, of course.

**Lori Trent:** [00:14:08] And the thing that really hit me throughout this whole process, I don't know why I didn't stop to think about it, but there's a lot of legal stuff in this role. And so, that was a majority of the training that we went through. And it's very nice to have the OSBA to support as well. And there's another new board member and I attended, it was an all-day session, I guess, for new board members. I think, Tina, you did that, too. Maybe John, you did in your area as well. So, that was my experience.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:14:36] Yeah. John, if you want to share anything for our listeners.

**John Jones:** [00:14:41] I had actually attended board meetings for several years. Because of the intimacy and the size of our city, I knew all the board members. I obviously had some good knowledge of how they ran, how the meetings ran, because I was present. I was also on the Finance Committee for the school for a little over a year before I became a school board member. And again, I think the experience on city council and the fact that I do know quite a few people, and I will definitely echo, the OSBA has been a big help. I found that, and I might have the title wrong, but New School Board 101, I found that to be a really good experience.

**John Jones:** [00:15:25] And actually, I stay in touch with several people that were in my little table at that session. We didn't really have any formal kind of training, but I think I'm the only new member that might have had some. Plus, again, I think we were all pretty comfortable with, that I had a knowledge of how the meeting was supposed to run, so I never felt like, oh, I need this, this, and this.

**John Jones:** [00:15:50] And if I did have a question, I would call OSBA, and they are really wonderful about answering questions and helping me make sure I don't do the wrong thing. We did recently have the governance workshop, which I think was really, if you haven't done that, I would suggest you do that. I think that was really helpful for our treasury superintendent and all of us. I learned some things and I think all the board members at least got something out of it. So, that's how I approached it.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:16:18] Yeah, it's excellent to know that universally across our state, that as folks do school boards, that there's a variety of resources that are available. And I can't imagine that we could contemplate a year where having resources available to you as a school board are more important than what we are all living through right now. So, Tina, let's circle back around, because when you agreed to run and were elected, none of us had any idea that a global pandemic was headed our way or the impacts that it was going to have, not just on the district at large, but right down to the individual child and the families.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:17:07] And it's different from neighborhood to neighborhood. And so, I really want to start with you and the complexities of a district that is so large trying to sort out. And as a board member, let's talk a little bit, because I want folks to understand that the role of the board versus the role of the rest of the district administration as it relates to making decisions, right? And sort of who and where are sort of the piece? So, from Columbus City School Board perspective, what's the board's role in helping the district effectively manage what's happening inside of a global pandemic as it relates to all the participants in the district?

**Tina Pierce:** [00:17:46] That is a great question. I mean, spot-on question. One, as a parent and product of the district, I have served on site-based counsel for Dominion Middle School, for Clinton Elementary. So, I have my parent hat on as a parent. And I knew how I had to go through the principal, and then through the directors, and to get various things for our schools through. And then, my service kind of evolved. And I served on our policy review committee for a number of years.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:18:22] And I understood the complexity of policies. Policies relating to, for example, what would be our discipline policies? How would we handle students who are gender nonconforming? Right? And so, with all of that in my toolkit, I was like, okay, what can happen? What are you going to hit me with? And COVID happened. And what's really important to know is you're so right. There is an administrative role, and then there's a school board role. And as much as I want to as an educator to come in, and say, here's what we need to do in this particular situation, for example, here's what OSU was doing and here's how we've responded to the six feet distancing.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:19:10] And we have hand sanitizers on every floor at every elevator, and that's really the role of administration to say, here's our planned response and they present it to us as the board. What I have found so critically important in my service as a board member is to ask the right questions. And in asking those questions, I'm able to challenge our administration to think out of the box, to do more, to push themselves just a little further. So, I'll give you a great example.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:19:47] One of the things that we're dealing with when we came to the COVID situation was, we left schools abruptly, that I can remember the day it happened. Our youngest son was at class. It was a normal school day for him. And we were told, hey, we have this pandemic that's kind of hit and we don't know

what's going to happen, but we're going to send the kids home for a little bit. And in my gut, I told him, bring everything home that's in your locker. Bring your instrument, bring everything home.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:20:22] And he was kind of taken aback by that. But again, that response for me was, we don't know what's yet to come. And so, even in that response, as a school board member, I could not call my superintendent, and say, hey, I know they're leaving, because we tell all the kids to take all of their stuff. I can recommend that the kids take all of their stuff, but it's up to the administration to release that ball rolling. And so, things, when I ask the question the other day about hand sanitizer, out when we do go back to school, how do we ensure that families have the right information about what types of hand sanitizer to bring into a building? Is it the 60% alcohol? What's the level of alcohol? Where would those hand sanitizer stations be?

**Tina Pierce:** [00:21:18] We have to ensure that kids aren't sharing hand sanitizers. One can have a fragrance. One could not. And so, asking those questions around, what is our response going to be and how are we going to respond, is so critically important. I've been fortunate enough to be in a position where, because I color outside of the lines, as some people would say, and because I think so outside of the box, I do get my colleagues and the superintendents to think about the questions that I ask, and say, okay, maybe there is a different route that we can take. Maybe there is a different road to resolve this particular issue. But knowing, again, what my role as a board member is versus what the administration's role is critically important.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:22:06] It is absolutely important. And, John, I want to transition the same question back over to you. Tina, representing the biggest district in the state, and as you've pointed out already, you are in a more of an intimate scenario, so what is the same sort of relationship in the lines around that relationship look like in a tiny district by comparison?

**John Jones:** [00:22:30] It's the same type of thing that it's probably one of the more difficult ones coming from a business background for me to comprehend completely is that chain of command, because you do sit on the edge of your chair sometimes, go, why don't they do this? Why don't they do that? To go back to the beginning, like back in March, I was visiting our four schools. I was on my last school, I don't have 109, so it was pretty easy for me. I was at the intermediate school the day that it was announced that we were going to close the schools.

**John Jones:** [00:23:12] And they originally asked me if I wanted to still come, and I said, if you don't mind, I would like to come. So, I was trying to meet the teachers and meet people, and I'd say, it gave me a unique opportunity to see kind of in unusual circumstance, how everybody was reacting. Please don't get me wrong, I wasn't there to do that. I wasn't on a mission. But I stayed out of the way, I offered to help any way I could. A couple of times, they asked me to do a few things, I mean, get a book or something, whatever, but I never once even thought about telling the principal what to do.

**John Jones:** [00:23:48] He got everything under control. Everything was going smooth. The kids, there was no panic. Everything was handled. I was there until the last child left. I saw him get on the bus. I saw the parent pick up and I was really proud of what I saw. And I remember telling the superintendent, I was there in a very unique time, like Tina kind of alluded to. We didn't know that they were going to be gone the rest of the school year. What was the original plan, 30 days, or I mean, it was kind of time bound initially.

**John Jones:** [00:24:20] Yeah. And it just worked for me that I just had arranged to be there on that day. And I'm really happy I did because I did, I think I saw more in a very short period of time, than unfortunately, that I've been able to see like since. Because again, as you kind of alluded to, is, well, I was only in office officially for two months. And then, bam, there's nobody in the schools and we're still trying to operate, Zoom meetings,

very unique. Many times, I feel like I'm behind the eight ball because I haven't been—I didn't get to participate in graduation.

**John Jones:** [00:25:00] I didn't have the opportunity to volunteer to go to—All of those things have come and gone, and I don't have knowledge other than the outside knowledge that I had. So, I'm not complaining. I mean, I definitely learned a lot. And I have voiced my opinion. I am good at that. And I have questioned things, but I feel like when I'm questioning something, it's, I'm not trying to be critical, I'm trying to learn and I'm trying to do what I think a school board member needs to do and what the community is looking for me to do. I hope that answered you.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:25:36] Oh, absolutely. And thank you for that. Absolutely. And Lori, so the district in between these two sizes, right? And also, of suburban district versus an urban and rural. And so, what is that sort of intersection between your role and work, and what's going on in a suburban school district from a leadership standpoint? Where do you sort of see that same sort of balance point?

**Lori Trent:** [00:26:07] Well, similar to what Tina was saying, I ask lots of questions as well, because I think just different viewpoints and perspectives, and trying to build consensus, and to collaborate with people, and maybe I have a ridiculous idea, but somebody else feeds off of it, and says, well, maybe let's think about this, right? But I also agree with both Tina and John, in that you kind of have to know your place in a way. So, yeah, we are the bosses of the district. Someone has said that over the years.

**Lori Trent:** [00:26:40] But collectively, we're a board, right? So, I don't have any more say than any of the other board members. And so, that, I think, was something I had to get a little bit used to. Not that I don't know what I expected. I just hadn't anticipated that it would take a lot of nurturing, and connecting, and maybe cajoling at times, and making sure that you're not coming across as that board member, like that parent at the sports event, just won't keep under control, I don't want that, but it's more of a, did we think of this? And what if we tried this? And you kind of have to pick your battles a little bit and figure out which bill you're willing to die on.

**Lori Trent:** [00:27:30] And the community in which I live, we have very opinionated, very strong, a very well-educated community. And everyone is somewhat accustomed to getting what they want. And so, there's no one answer right now. I mean, if you pick this solution, then these people are upset, and it's an interesting space to be in because I'm clearly not a health official or a health professional. And so, having to try to make these decisions for all of the students, it's problematic. And all of us, I think, care very deeply for the students in our community and don't want to see any one of them suffer, but there's no one solution that works right now. It's just a totally crazy situation.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:28:24] It is. It is. And I think that rather than started getting into the weeds about each of the different districts' response to COVID because the reality is none of us were planning on this pandemic. It hit, it came, and every single one of the districts scenarios that you're living with as it relates to your students, and access, and options, and alternatives, and scenarios are as broad as the state is, right?

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:28:53] And so, I think that I would really love to hear from each of you as we sort of close out the program today. What is your message as a school board member to your local community, sort of your parting shots about the work, A, that you, serving on the school board, are doing, but more importantly, the work and the effort that the school board that you represent as a body is doing, as it relates to doing what's always in the best interests of the kids during a really, really trying time?

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:29:32] And whether it's a pandemic or anything else that comes along within our communities, the work of the boards is always central with that in mind. So, John, I'm actually going to toss back to you first, sort of, what would you like your community to know about the work that you as an individual are doing on the board, but more importantly, the work the board is doing in the middle of a global pandemic?

**John Jones:** [00:29:55] I would say that we really are dedicated to get the whole story before we make a decision. For instance, when we did vote to go to hybrid instead of remote at the very beginning, and now, a new issue has come up, I really do feel like we're trying to get, what do the parents think? What do the students think? And really importantly, where do the teachers find themselves in this? Have we done a good job keeping them healthy or at least let them hope that they feel that we're doing what needs to be done, when I say we, I mean our district, that we do care about their health and safety?

**John Jones:** [00:30:39] And so, their opinion on what we do here on depending on how we're going to deliver instruction, whether we're going to go full time or go remote, whatever it is, that we're taking all these things into consideration? And we're not knee-jerking, reacting if it appears that most of the community want us to open full time. Well, that's part of the story. And as I've tried to relate to a couple of people recently, why do they feel that way?

**John Jones:** [00:31:13] To me, it's got to be a valid reason for all five of us, not just me. If we're going to change a method, we have to make sure it's the right decision from as much information as we can get, and not just because everybody around us is doing it. Because if we make a decision and we find out later, the teachers, we didn't want to do that. We can't have all those people in the room. To me, that's important for us to know. I feel confident that's what we're trying to do.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:31:42] Excellent. Excellent. Thank you for that, John. Lori, back to you on that same one. What is the message that you want to send to the community as it relates to the work that you as an individual board member and as the board as a whole is doing, as it relates to finding themselves in a crisis? And this is a case, I assume, for all three districts, but it's not been smooth sailing for anybody. Let's be completely honest, right? And it has not been, for anybody, controversial-free because that's just the nature of the beast, right? So, Lori, what is it you want to share with us?

**Lori Trent:** [00:32:22] So, what I'd like to share is my constituents are the students, plain and simple. I kind of set it a little bit earlier. If we didn't have students, we wouldn't have schools. So, I think it's critically important that we really, really focus in on what do the students need and want? And how are they different from we adults, especially some of the baby boomers like my generation? Because education has been delivered the same for 150 years, and that doesn't meet the needs of all of our students, a percentage, perhaps.

**Lori Trent:** [00:33:02] But given the COVID events, we have an opportunity to take a step back, and say, okay, this was not good. We wish we didn't have to do this, maybe, but what did we learn from this and what can we change as a result? Right? And I just think having—kids are very resilient. I mean, they embrace change a lot better, quite frankly, than adults do. And so, let's just kind of rally around that, understand that it is not an optimal situation. I can guarantee you, every board of education is doing the best they can possibly do, and we'll get through it, and we'll be stronger on the other side, but people don't like living in the gray. It's difficult.

**Lori Trent:** [00:33:49] And there are so many unknowns. So, it's hard to tell, there's so much information, you can refute any argument out there with another piece of news, or an article, or something. And I really mean that in my very heart, that it is about the students and it is about the teachers to some extent, too, but they're formulating our students and our leaders for tomorrow. So, that's why we're all there and I think that's where the focus needs to be.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:34:19] Yeah. Thank you for that very much, Lori. So, Tina, we're going to close with your thoughts because it goes without saying that large districts, many, many buildings, many, many students come with added complexity. It doesn't diminish from the experiences or the work that's happening in any of the other communities of variety of sizes around the State of Ohio, it's just the realization that it's multiple layers, I guess, if you will, of complexity, right? Maybe that's a fair way to put it. So, what is it that you would like folks to know about the work during this trying time?

**Tina Pierce:** [00:34:58] So, what I would like folks to know is that our Columbus City Schools, administration, board, and entire community, that's including our families, our staff, and our students are rising up. So, during this time, I'm thinking about a children's book and film that I absolutely love when I was younger, The Red Balloon. And that red balloon really captures what we're doing as a community right now. We were moving a little slow because we didn't have the technology.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:35:29] So, we had to leverage our partnerships with the City of Columbus to get additional chrome books for our students. We didn't have hot spots for our students. So, through AT&T and Verizon, we were able to get hotspots. Our community then partnered alongside of us because we have a very engaging public engagement committee that has meetings every week with community members. And so, even though there are times where parents will question our curriculum that we're using online, will question our plans to return back to blended learning, that engagement helps to fuel that balloon going up.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:36:10] That engagement helps our district become stronger because we're able to be agile, and flexible, and respond to those parent and community concerns in ways that meet the needs of our students and families. Our staff is rising up again by having additional meetings. I mean, when you think about some of our teachers putting in their normal eight-hour day, working with students remotely, and then turning on their computers for additional six-hour days with our students in the digital academy, they're working 12 to 14 hours.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:36:47] We have bus drivers, custodians, secretaries that are calling families and calling students to make sure that they're getting online. So, everybody's pitching in. We have food service workers that are providing not just one meal for the students when they come, but actually, a week of meals when our students come. So, they have the fuel that they need to do their best in the classroom.

**Tina Pierce:** [00:37:12] And so, that's the central theme that our Columbus City Schools, though we're dealing with uncertain times, we are rising up to the challenge. And like that red balloon, we might sway a little bit every now and then, we might stray from our owner, but we're committed to our owner. That friendship, that relationship is genuine and true, and we are here to meet the needs of our students and families as we rise up.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:37:38] So beautifully said. Thank you for that, Tina. And I want to thank all of you. I want to end on that note because such an amazingly positive note in the midst of something so, so hard. And again, thank all three of you on behalf of everybody for your commitment to your schools, your willingness to serve, and your perseverance to continue on. So, thank you so much for joining us.

**Lori Trent:** [00:38:04] Thanks for having us.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:38:08] 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 @AnnaliesCorbin, and join me next time as we stand up, step back, and lean in to reimagine education.