



Alvin Logan, Jr.

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Annalies Corbin: [00:00:14] 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.

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:37] A hundred years ago, it functioned fine. So, let's talk about how we reimagine, rethink, and redesign our educational system. Welcome to today's episode of Learning Unboxed. As always, super excited about our conversation today. And joining us is Dr. Alvin Logan Jr. of the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture from Seattle, Washington. So, Dr. Logan, welcome to the program.

Alvin Logan: [00:01:05] Thank you for having me, Annalies. I am excited to be here, excited to talk about the Burke and the amazing things that we're doing, especially during one of our most challenging years, not only in the industry, but at the university and to Burke itself.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:17] Absolutely. I think that's a challenge worldwide, right?

Alvin Logan: [00:01:21] Yes.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:22] Absolutely. So, just for a little bit of context for our listeners, Dr. Logan is the Director of Education and Affiliate Curator of African Culture and Education with the Burke Museum. And adding to that, just a little bit of opportunity to sort of highlight, Dr. Logan has a track record of building support systems to catalyze learning from marginalized communities, from middle school to graduate school, and that is not an easy spread to take on.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:52] And Dr. Logan's focus on culturally relevant pedagogical approaches, decolonization, and multicultural curriculum development is the thing that I am most intrigued by. So, again, welcome to the program. I want to just dive right in. First and foremost, because our listeners come from all over the world, just for folks who don't know anything about the Burke Museum, let's start by sort of setting the stage. What is this institution? And then, we'll get to how you found yourself there and what you do.

Alvin Logan: [00:02:22] Yeah, good question. The Burke Museum is the State of Washington's Natural History and Culture Museum. And it's been around for 130 years now. Definitely had deep roots in the community,

started with the wife of Thomas Burke, who was a collector of native art back in the day, and the many stories that go with that, the good and bad. And it's now burst into a large cornerstone for research, for teaching, and for just community building.

Alvin Logan: [00:02:51] I would say, especially for indigenous populations of the Northwest, indigenous populations of North America, but also, indigenous populations worldwide. So, it's been a hub of some sorts in the Northwest for learning, for teaching, and for understanding natural culture and history. We just opened a brand new beautiful museum, which has a very inside-out look to it. And so, from the architecture, some of the pictures that we have online, they don't do it justice.

Alvin Logan: [00:03:18] I implore you all to come on in if you have the chance to, especially if you visit the Northwest. But the design is very grandiose, right? Stares down the middle of the building, you can see all the way to the third floor, all the way down, and the very large windows allow you to see back in the collections, like you see back into our curators doing work. Our education team especially has an office right on the mezzanine, so you pass us on the way to do almost anything in the museum.

Alvin Logan: [00:03:46] So, like I said, I would say, on the inside-out look, really does the museum and the work that we all do a lot of justice. Also, again, a brand new building opened up in 2019, then again closed in 2020 because of COVID, and reopened again, and closed again, and reopened again, so the ups and downs that go with that. But we are the Burke. We are still standing strong. One Burke as we like to say. And it's just a little bit about us.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:12] Yeah. And it is an absolutely amazing place, and I have unfortunately not been able to see the new vision, if you will, of the Burke, but I have been to the numerous times in my career, in my own travels of my own work in anthropology and archaeology in the Pacific Northwest. And so, I would echo what you heard from Dr. Logan. If you get the chance, go see it, because it is actually a really special place. And so, with that, then let's talk a little bit about how you found yourself there. And what is your work? What is your passion about being at the Burke?

Alvin Logan: [00:04:49] Oh, great questions. Great questions. I had a very circuitous path to get to the Burke. And I say that because one of the curators I've had an extensive relationship with for about eight or nine years now, Dr. Holly Barker was the curator for Pacific Islands Asiatic Culture, and my first instance of interaction with her was in graduate school. And I got a chance to see how she conducts work through the park and also teaching, and get a chance to see some of her classes within anthropology and we started to build a relationship that came upon the understanding of how to get students to explore what being critical was, being radical, being decolonial or focusing on decoloniality.

Alvin Logan: [00:05:28] And it opened my eyes to a brand new world of how you can influence young minds. At that point, I was completing my Master's, then went away to University of Texas at Austin, where I had my PhD in education. Culture studies and education, did that. And I knew immediately, I wanted to return to Seattle and I wanted to work at the university. I came back. I started teaching just part time one-offs and I remember Dr. Barker email me one day, and said, hey, we have a position open at the Burke.

Alvin Logan: [00:05:56] I would love it if you reply. I remember at that moment, I got very excited just because, one, Holly is a great mentor. So, when she brings something to me, it's exciting. Usually, everything that just comes to me, being able to do something with something positive and something that had a big impact on a community. So, I was just delighted when she told me about the opportunity. I remember right then and there, preparing my materials, getting ready to do it, and feeling anxious about the position, because I was like, I don't know, are you going to choose me? Like this is my first time I've ever worked in a museum setting.

Alvin Logan: [00:06:29] And I've been an educator for about seven years, going on eight now, been teaching teachers in the pre-service teacher pipeline, also, seasoned teachers. So, my background is in education. My background is in sports as well. So, it's really a kind of shift to work in this kind of role, but understanding where I come from, understanding my connection within the education community, it made sense for me to apply for this role. And just again, knowing that I have the ability to touch between 70 and 90,000 kids ideologically a year, that is a beautiful thing. And I don't know too many folks that are educators at heart that would not jump at an opportunity like this.

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:09] Absolutely. And there's something really special, powerful, magical, take your pick of the words, about informal education, and the power that can happen in museum and other informal settings. And on this program, we talk about informal frequently. And the reason we dig into it, I always come back to it on this program, and the reason we come back to it is because I would argue that the world of formal education, formal K-12, can learn so much from our informal partners about inspiring, and engaging, and helping kids, family, community, take your pick, find their passion that could one day be a career very much like what you just express, because you're not necessarily watching yourself in the mirror as you were sort of sharing that backstory with me.

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:59] But it was really, really clear that the excitement that you feel every day about being part of this environment and being part of the Burke, it's just clear that you are like, this is the place I was destined to be. And there's something to be said for that and helping kids find their way there. So, let's just dig right into the helping kids find their way. So, talk to us a little bit about, first and foremost, because teachers and community members listen to this program, like I said, from all over the world, and we get an awful lot of questions about, oh, my gosh, I just heard this thing on Learning Unboxed.

Annalies Corbin: [00:08:32] It was awesome. Dr. Logan's sharing all these amazing things, but how can I emulate aspects of what he's talking about, my own community, with my own resources, or even tap into theirs? And so, I think a lot of that is tied to folks' natural inclination of, how do they grab hold of the pedagogical philosophy that you're employing every day at the Burke and build that into their own teaching?

Alvin Logan: [00:08:54] I would say, at the basis of it, it's inclusivity, and inclusivity based on the populations that are around you and the populations that are a part of the community that the Burke serves, right? So, not just the Pacific Northwest, not just the State of Washington, not just Seattle and larger places like that, but across the world. The amount of collections that we have from across the world are our chance to engage with different ways of knowing and being. And when I said inclusivity, it underlines every piece of what we do.

Alvin Logan: [00:09:24] And we take it from a position of inspiring joy in learning, especially with children. And when we infuse joy and inclusivity, it brings about a certain level of self-efficacy and empowerment within students that it's almost not seen in a lot of different places where learning takes place. And that's, again, because we're connecting heritage, we're connecting culture, and we're connecting ideas that have not been fathomed before. And as any good educator knows, when you see the light bulb go off in a child's head, it's one of the best visceral reactions that you can get.

Alvin Logan: [00:10:02] And that is something that happens multiple times during whatever interactions that our educators have with students, with teachers, with just community members that are going to come in, because again, we are an institution with a vast amount of knowledge. And that knowledge, again, if we're folding inclusivity and I would also say decoloniality within it, we're talking about ways to censor indigenous knowledge, and indigeneity, and that understanding of how our world has come to understand.

Alvin Logan: [00:10:34] STEM has come to understand culture from a very Western perspective, right? A very Eurocentric perspective. So, being able to say that there's knowledge in other places, to say that the Tulalip tribe has traditional ecological knowledge that can tell you how to take care of the land to be one and a part of the land and understanding STEM is something radical to a lot of folks, but it's something very home, I would say, for a lot of folks as well, and very, very loved, and very passed down, and very sacred, right?

Alvin Logan: [00:11:09] This is the knowledge that we all want for our kids. We all want our kids to understand our heritage. We all want our kids to understand culture. We all want our kids to understand how to push forward their gifts in the world. And we're giving that chance to the Burke four kids that normally don't see their culture, normally don't see or are able to develop STEM identities within formal education, because they have an adverse relationship with STEM learning.

Alvin Logan: [00:11:33] Maybe because of the environment, whatever it may be. But again, in inspiring joy and really the fun parts of learning that I'd like to say through informal institutions like the Burke, we get all of the fun stuff. We get all the laughs. We get all the joy. We get all the, oh, wows. We have none of the testing. And that is where the learning takes place.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:53] It is. Absolutely. And I love that. And I love the passion of it. And at PAST, our vision, our mission statement, I guess if you will, will link learning to life, right? We believe that. Absolutely. And what I love about what you're talking about is that you have really you, the Burke, but your own work within the Burke really leads with that community component, right? The inclusivity of saying, hey, we are not just this local community, like you said, a Washington community. We are so much more than that. And again, there's so much power in that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:12:31] So, for some of our listeners who may be struggling with some of the words, I do and I'm so thrilled to have you on the show, because I very much want to be able to dig into the weeds a little bit about this notion of decolonization decolonialism, right? And it's popping up all over the world in a variety of different ways, but the last year or so, schools are getting more comfortable with having this conversation. So, let's talk about that just a little bit from the perspective of your work in particular. Help our fellow teachers understand what they should be, or better yet, what they could be doing with this moment to help their kids.

Alvin Logan: [00:13:12] Alright. So, I would be remiss to talk about decolonization without talking about colonization, right? Just kind of talking about like race without having to talk about race, right? Colonization is a system that was built to foreground a certain perspective, a certain set of behaviors, a certain set of cultural understandings, which we know to be Eurocentric or White supremacist in some instances, right? And our focus on decoloniality is in tandem with the focus of inclusivity.

Alvin Logan: [00:13:40] And decoloniality, what it does is it forcefully jars apart that centralized understanding of one culture system, one culture behavior, one culture's understanding of the world ontology [indiscernible] would also say to be more inclusive of other understandings, of the understandings that bring the beauty of diversity across our world to the forefront. And in that focus, we've been able to connect to communities and build relationships that we have an understanding of your knowledge is going to be protected.

Alvin Logan: [00:14:11] Your processes, your understanding, your heritage is not going to be benefited from in light of wanting to center again the pieces of understanding that have been centered for centuries, right? Now, we're looking at bringing different ways of knowing to the forefront to influence young minds to understand that it's not just about one set of norms, one set of behaviors, one set of culture, but it's about a vast amount of culture that builds into who we are as humans, who we are as educators, who we are as students, who we are as people in general, right?

Alvin Logan: [00:14:47] And that is the beauty of decoloniality, because the process in itself is rooted in love. The process itself is rooted in figuring out a way to have everybody feel empowered as to who they are, where their knowledge comes from, their history, and heritage, as opposed to really foregrounding a standard or a norm to which everybody else from that standard of norm would be deviated, right? You know how many different ways and arms that go in through, we talk a lot of times about settler colonialism, which is what a number of indigenous American groups have been, that settler colonial rule they've been under, right?

Alvin Logan: [00:15:21] We talk about internal colonialism? Specifically with my work, I work against what's called a [indiscernible]. And that's basically the murder of knowledge systems, right? And the centering of the single knowledge systems, where everything else, again, becomes deviant. So, to re-decenter what is happening there is, again, a truly beautiful process that is rooted in love, because it brings in different knowledge systems.

Alvin Logan: [00:15:45] It forces us to build relationships that are ones that are rectificatory, ones that are reciprocal and not ones that are really transactional, which has been done in the industry for years. And it was about, what knowledge can we take from you to package and put out. Now, we're worried about building platforms for communities through the privilege in the platforms that we have with the Burke to be able to share knowledge, to share history, again, to empower students, to empower communities to fill like themselves. And that is okay. And that is a beautiful thing.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:16] Yeah. And it's an exciting thing as well, right? Because there's so much opportunity in that very process and in the understandings that will come from that. So, let's dig into that just a little bit and talk about the specifics about sort of the virtual object-based learning that's happening at the Burke. And I want to talk about how and what the pivot looked like for you during this global, and we're going to call it a global endeavor, right? It's been awful in many ways, and yet I've said repeatedly on the program over the last couple of months, it has also handed us collectively an opportunity or a lot of opportunities, actually.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:54] If we really want to dig into them, and say, hey, we get this moment maybe to have sort of a restart or a reset maybe is even a better way to think about it. And take your pick about the topic, but there are very few conversations that we've had where you can't find an opportunity to say, let's do things very, very differently, rather than going back to what was, let's imagine something completely different. And so, share with us just a little bit about what that work has looked like at the Burke during the pandemic. And how do you keep going and delivering all of these great, essential needs and content back into the community?

Alvin Logan: [00:17:32] Great question. And I think great, great framing of the year that we've been through, just the challenge is that everybody has faced it. As I explained, I would be remiss if I did not give credence, and really, a lot of kudos to my team. I work with amazing educators. I work with amazing, intelligent individuals, not only in their sector of knowledge of the museums, but just great people. And it's very hard to build things without great people that are intelligent, that are passionate about what they do. And I've been blessed with a great team. When I came in, my first day was actually the day before the Burke closed doors.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:09] Really?

Alvin Logan: [00:18:10] Oh, my gosh.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:11] Oh, my goodness. I have no idea. How tough was that?

Alvin Logan: [00:18:15] It's been very difficult. And I would say that because the entire time I've been working at the Burke has been remote, not any relationship and such, but again, I would double down on, I have a great team. And the fact that I'm able to work with such a great team made this experience, especially during such a tumultuous time, that much easier. And it sounds a bit weird to say it made it easier, but that was really the fact.

Alvin Logan: [00:18:39] Like my team has been running very put together, very organized, very top of the line programs when we were open for years. And the pivot became a chance of adversity to where it not only tested the team, but it tested the entire museum. And when my team was put to the test in terms of what to do, where to pivot, it was immediate, brainstorming, you're figuring out ways. We tried to research what other institutions are doing, and quickly realized, we had to just make a choice.

Alvin Logan: [00:19:08] We have to do what we have to do. And we decided to create virtual learning, virtual learning opportunities. We began with free curriculum practice that we would put out for students, especially during the first couple of weeks where our students didn't know what to do. They were home with no things to do, so we put out curriculum packets for teachers, for proxy teachers, as you say, parents, that were definitely at home.

Alvin Logan: [00:19:30] So, we try to support them, because we knew this time was difficult and we had the resources to be able to do it. So, we said, let's just put out free curriculum packets. But as we were doing that, we were working and building, and I would say, it took a couple of months to be able to put together our school field trips, our virtual live sessions, and then to revamp our boxes and to make sure that everybody knew that they were safe to be able to use.

Alvin Logan: [00:19:52] Now, Burke Boxes, we have used in the past, absolutely, but as the understanding about COVID, and how the bacteria, and virus, and stuff was going to live on objects, as that continued to evolve, we understood that if we brought a box back to Burke and we froze it for a number of days. We had UV lights. We did everything to be able to kill the virus on surfaces so that we can continue to send it out. And that has been one of our biggest hits.

Annalies Corbin: [00:20:20] The boxes themselves.

Alvin Logan: [00:20:23] Yes, have been one of our biggest hits, because you have learning school pods, or homeschool pods, or just parents, again, that have maybe three, or four kids, or they have the neighbors' kids that will come over, they want that object-based learning that they weren't able to get over our 2D world, our 2D learning classrooms, if you will. So, it made it a step that was doable, because our live sessions are built off of what we already do in person.

Alvin Logan: [00:20:51] So, we had a stock foundation of just the knowledge which we want to part on kids, just the experience which we want them to have. And then, we were able to interface that with FlowVella, which is a wonderful tool to be able to bring a PowerPoint kind of setting, but it's more embedded where you have a choice to kind of like when you read novels back in the day.

Annalies Corbin: [00:21:15] Yeah, absolutely. Your choice.

Alvin Logan: [00:21:16] It's a tool that gave that tour-like feel through your own portal and your own interest based on where you wanted to go. So, it made engagement over this 2D world a little bit more interactive. It gives us a little bit more agency versus just being able to sit there and listen. But I would say the same thing for our live programs. Now, our educators, Katherine, Pamela, Andrea, and Mary Jane do a wonderful job of being

able to engage with children over this 2D space, like to really see where they have the most joy and the most interaction to capitalize on that.

Alvin Logan: [00:21:52] And we do it in our classrooms at the bottom of the Burke, in the west classroom, if you will, and it's object-based. So, we look at different specimens, whether it be birds, or whether it be dinosaurs, or no matter what the piece is, we take those objects and we work with them. We tell them about the different pieces. We tell them about rock sediment. We tell them about, I would say, a number of different areas within STEM, and within science and culture, again, that they would get when they came in.

Alvin Logan: [00:22:20] And the fact that our educators also are still able to have that level of engagement and this 2D world again has been an amazing feat. And it's been one of the reasons why folks like to plug into our live programs, because we're able to still give that energy, and that learning, and that passion to this 2D space. So, those have been three of our major offerings during this time. We've also been able to create what we call our fossil finder packs, which is basically a microfossil sorting pack that gives information about dinosaurs.

Alvin Logan: [00:22:52] It gives kids a chance to really feel like they're a paleontologist. And I can personally vouch for the joy that happens with kids with that, as my son, the first one that he did was a couple of months ago and he's asked for one every week since, because he likes the process of just digging them out and understanding what he finds. He's like, dad, look at what I found, look what I found.

Alvin Logan: [00:23:14] And just knowing that of the four programs that I've just talked about, and the joy that comes from it, and really, the engagement, and the engagement level that happened during such an arduous year is just amazing. It's an amazing pivot. And again, kudos to my team and kudos to Burke as a whole for really fostering us and allowing us to move into this space to continue to help kids learn.

Annalies Corbin: [00:23:38] Yeah. And that's a remarkable feat that the team has been successful with that, because that's not the case. We have, on this program, talked to a number of museums throughout this, and I can say that it's kind of a mixed bag. Some institutions and some of their staffs, everybody trying really, really hard, right? Some with more success than others. And I think that part of those that are seeing success versus those that are not if I were to distill it down based on all the different pieces that I've been hearing and my sort of listening tour, if you will, has really been the places that were really in tune with and plugged into their communities.

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:18] In a very powerful and meaningful way prior to the pandemic, families immediately looked to them, and not with suspicion, and not with reticence, and not with a whole host of other things, right? But familiarity makes you comfortable, as we know, right? And so, that would be one of those things that, clearly, the community had fully embraced the Burke prior to lend itself into some of the success that you have.

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:44] So, on a pivot and go a little bit off-script and ask you a question you may or may not know the answer to, yet as everybody in the world is opening up, there's a tremendous amount of conversation, certainly in the US, but around the world as well, about the year that we've lost, and especially for kids, and for schools, and for learning. And yet, like we talked about earlier, we've learned a lot in the space. It's not just necessarily the standardized stuff that shows up on tests, but we've collectively learned an awful lot.

Annalies Corbin: [00:25:14] But what, if any, specific role is the Burke sort of planning as it relates largely, I guess, to the summer, but even into the coming year, or is that an internal conversation that's happening about

what could your role be IF, and I'm using the if in all caps here, IF the need or the decision is made locally with the Burke, that filling a gap is the right thing to do, or maybe, the conversation is, no, we're going to pivot and do something else? And out of fairness to you, have you guys even decided these things yet? So, I apologize if it's premature, but it's one of those things that's turning everywhere I talk to folks, okay, what are we going to do about the summer? So, what are we going to do about the summer, Dr. Logan?

Alvin Logan: [00:25:56] Great questions. Great questions. And again, kudos to my team. Like we have been thinking about this for a while. We're really waiting for a chance to plug in as an educational institution, as a place where we want people to come and to find that love for learning that maybe they wouldn't have had in their school, especially during such year like you had. But also, we wanted to find that place of, you can come here and you can explore. You can say, I don't know much about this, let me try this.

Alvin Logan: [00:26:26] I can do anything from archaeology to paleontology to animalogy. Like I want to just go explore and see what I want to do. And that curiosity is why we want folks to plug in and why we want to be considered one of those institutions that can support all types of learning that come with the natural history and culture. And this has been something that we've been working on and brewing for some time. Now, this summer, we do have camps coming up.

Alvin Logan: [00:26:53] So, they're individual learning camps, obviously, with smaller numbers, being able to engage with our educators just about the different offerings that we have during the year. It's another chance for, again, parents to kind of trust us in the knowledge that their kids during the summer when schools aren't in. We also have relationships with the library systems. So, for students that are going to the libraries during the summer doing their reading challenges and they want an additional layer of learning, we plugged in with the library systems.

Alvin Logan: [00:27:21] We have a number of different relationships also with some other, I don't want to say child care, but community centers, I would say, like the girls' clubs and even cultural community centers. We're building relationships with a number of different levels to be one of the places that they can turn to when events like the past year happens. And to say that we're still there, we're still supporting you, and we want to make sure that you have a platform, again, to center community knowledge, right?

Alvin Logan: [00:27:46] And this is something that's very important to a lot of communities, because it's not something that's done out of museums a lot of times. And for us to be that, and to still quest to find a way that we can plug into education or any way that we can plug into education, because we feel that we have a beautiful model, one of healing, one of love, one of decoloniality, as I has mentioned before, but that model is very supportive of positive academic, educational, and personal growth of those students, of children.

Alvin Logan: [00:28:17] So, we've been looking for every instance we can to plug in. We've been trying to tell people, these are the choices we have. We've been creating the relationships. We've been trying to do everything we can to support community, to support learning. Like I said before, we put out free curriculum packets. We've done a number of different, or actually, we did, in February, our first time ever, it was called Community Story Time with Mr. D. and School Story Time with Mr. D., two different programs, where we engaged with our African collections.

Alvin Logan: [00:28:43] First time we've ever done it in over six years. We had a chance to do that for the first time and during Black History Month, which is a very important month, obviously, and it makes for another relationship to build for the community. There was a lot of groundwork laid into it. There was a lot of relationship laid, especially within the Pacific Northwest, and that, to come to fruition, is just one of the ways in

which, again, we're trying to plug into different places to be a responsible platform for learning. So, we just continue to look for every single way that we can plug in, every single way that we can support.

Alvin Logan: [00:29:18] We do have plans of which to be more part of the pre-service learning pipeline, to see in formal institutions as place of learning, places where you can bring students, places where you can lean on in terms of curriculum. So, since time immemorial curriculum, STI as it probably would appear, is learning about the different indigenous populations and their experience with traditional ecological knowledge, the cultural traditions, heritage since time immemorial. And this is a beautiful piece of curriculum that, again, students don't get nationwide, but we have a distinct focus on it.

Annalies Corbin: [00:29:51] Which is fabulous, because it's really, really tough. There are places, certainly places within the US, where there's almost zero knowledge of native cultures. And it's not taught. It doesn't show up in the standard. It's not even an afterthought, which is to your point, absolutely, for starters, not appropriate by any stretch of the imagination, but it's also very unfortunate, because there's so much opportunity that is lost in that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:18] I wonder, as I was thrilled that you were talking about pre-service teachers, and one of the things that I have always found, to be perfectly blunt, really, really remiss, I think it's an opportunity that we have collectively lost. When we talk about pre-service teachers depending on where you're a pre-service teacher, whether it's a semester, which is unfortunate, a full year or more, that sort of student teacher or early teaching experience, and yet we plug people into traditional schools.

Annalies Corbin: [00:30:46] And I would argue we've missed this great opportunity. Let's plug these folks in first to an informal setting, or at minimum, to make sure that part of their pre-service teaching journey includes learning how to teach like the informals. Is there any chance or possibility that some of those components are being rolled into the work that you're doing? I want to dig in just a moment into some of the pre-service, the way the institution's thinking about the pre-service work that you're doing.

Alvin Logan: [00:31:16] The reason we want to do that again is to give pre-service teachers a home. They feel that learning is going to take place outside of a pressured system. It happens with standardized testing, with the different environments about school funding. Those sort of pieces. We want to make sure that have a place where they feel solace, to where learning and education is the forefront. And that's the baseline interaction relationship that they want.

Alvin Logan: [00:31:42] We want them to have with the Burke as an informal institution or informal education institution, because again, if you have a positive relationship with learning and teaching, which we think we're building, and we foster, and we continue to expand and develop, if you lead with that, if you start with that, everything else seems like, I can do this, because you found a purpose. You see yourself and why a lot of folks do become teachers is to have that relationship, the interaction, the education and learning, is to want to see those light bulbs go off on students' heads.

Alvin Logan: [00:32:17] It's to want to see them plug in, and love, and to be critical about pieces of our world, to understand more about the heritage, history, and culture. And to be able to do that is to create a relationship early on in the development process of that teacher. And this is something, as I was teaching at the University of Texas, I taught, of course, called social and cultural influences on learning.

Alvin Logan: [00:32:39] And we delve deeply into race, gender, class, coloniality, a number of different forces within education, not just schooling, but in education that can be remedied through certain informal institutions, that could be remedied through community centers, that can be remedied through elders within a community,

understanding knowledge transmission, and how that learning process needs to be replicated within schools. Because again, that is a positive process to learning. A lot of students, especially from marginalized communities, have an adverse relationship to learning because of the process of it, because it's pedagogical, because of the curriculum, because of the high-pressure bits of testing.

Alvin Logan: [00:33:15] We eliminate all of them and really get to the basics of what it is. So, to have teachers really engage with us, and that type of role and understanding that education is not just about being in a school, is an amazing feat. And it opens up, I would say, teachers' minds to the roles they can take to continue to educate in the community. And it doesn't always have to be in a school, right? So, plug in, in there is two-fold, right? We want teachers to see us as a space of learning, space of positive learning, but we also want folks to know that in your journey, you can learn how to teach not just in a school, but how to educate through the Burke.

Annalies Corbin: [00:33:56] Which is a much more fulfilling endeavor, right?

Alvin Logan: [00:34:00] Absolutely.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:00] We do a lot of professional development, like with many organizations and entities do, of course, with teachers and schools. And we have these sticky note postcard things that we hand out. Every teacher gets this. And it says, teach your passion, right? And so, I love this piece of the conversation, because I think sometimes, we forget that teaching and learning, they're not just symbiotic, that one desperately needs the other to show them the way. And if we let go of some of what we think we know, and then we embrace the things we're passionate and curious about, we can help each other sort of find a slightly different journey. So, I appreciate that so very much.

Alvin Logan: [00:34:48] Yeah.

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:51] It's important. It's absolutely important. We can't help kids tap into their own curiosity and passions if we can't identify and own our own, right? And so, that's part of it. Teachers that I have found that have been reticent to stray from a standardized curriculum or are sort of planning guide, if you would, I say that with chagrin, the thing that I find more than anything else is it's because they're afraid.

Annalies Corbin: [00:35:16] It's because back to one of the things you were saying earlier, the institution that they learned in was very structured and not conducive to being inclusive or to recognize the unique qualities of the individuals within that system. And so, oftentimes, that's exactly what I find. It's not that folks don't want to. It's they have no idea how to step outside of what they've been exposed to, to imagine something else.

Alvin Logan: [00:35:42] Absolutely. And that's the beauty of, again, the Burke as an institution, the Burke being an informal education institution, that is we provide that opportunity. We provide the chance to engage with learning, and that takes place above and beyond. That wasn't necessarily envisioned, because again, as you're being trained as a teacher, you're learning how to do things, either due to [indiscernible] observation or you're learning how to do things based off of theory, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:36:07] Right.

Alvin Logan: [00:36:07] You have practice. You have practicum. You get in the classroom absolutely and support teachers, but really being out there by yourself and really being able to learn not just a theory, but to put it in practice with young minds, in a space that's, again, not pressure, it's one that allows for creativity. It's

one that allows for opening up your understanding, and really quelling your fears and your inhibitions when it comes to doing something different, right?

Alvin Logan: [00:36:33] Because again, the things that teachers can do different are the things that create different students. And it's hard for a lot of folks especially to begin a career to envision doing things different, because they just want to get the role first. And in part, what I like to tell teachers, especially when you're going into your first job, is to just be different. It's okay. It is okay to be different. We all come from a different place. We all have different understandings. Just be a little bit different.

Alvin Logan: [00:37:00] That's why [indiscernible] taking different teachers, because they're different, right? So, I'm excited for that. I'm excited for where it's going to go. And I'm excited for the teachers that are going to engage with us in a way of showing the love and the joy of learning, and not just the formulaic process, so let me teach this lesson, let me teach this section, but more so, let's go above and beyond. How does it sit home? How does it touch your heritage? How does it touch your culture? How does your family understand it? It's knowledge.

Annalies Corbin: [00:37:30] Yeah. That's beautiful and joyful. So, thank you so much, Dr. Logan, for spending time with us today and for sharing not only the work that you're doing at the Burke, but the journey and the ever-evolving journey. That's part of the work that you're engaged in. So, thank you so much. We appreciate it.

Alvin Logan: [00:37:49] Thanks for having us. And I hope I speak on behalf of the Burke Museum. It has been a pleasure, definitely been a joy. For our listeners out there, if you do come to the Burke, please look as up. We are doing amazing things and we're going to continue to. And your voice, your help will help us get to the place where you want us to be. So, please speak up, reach out. Our virtual programs go anywhere across the world. And we're just excited to engage with as many folks as we can to share as many lessons and build as many relationships as we can as well.

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:16] That's wonderful. And on the web page, when the program comes out, all those resources' links. Absolutely. Please reach out to Dr. Logan and his team. So, thank you again.

Alvin Logan: [00:38:26] Wonderful. Thank you. Thanks for having us.

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:30] 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 reimagine education.