



Doug Schachtel of Portfolio School

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Annalies Corbin: [00:00:11] 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.

Annalies Corbin: [00:00:33] It's obsolete. A hundred years ago, it functioned fine. So, let's talk about how we reimagine, rethink, and redesign our educational system. So, today's episode of Learning Unboxed, we are going to be talking about the Portfolio School, which is in New York, and we are talking with a Co-Founder and Head of Community, Doug Schachtel. And Doug, welcome to the program.

Doug Schachtel: [00:01:00] Thanks. Glad to be here.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:01] So, Doug, we'll start, two things, I always like to sort of preface the program. This is about positive disruptions and education. So, there are lots of conversation about all the things that aren't working, and while that may be true, there are also an awful lot of innovations that are happening in the world of education, particularly K-12, around the world, and the Portfolio School being one of those.

Annalies Corbin: [00:01:23] So, let's start with, where did this idea for this Portfolio School sort of come from as a co-founder? I always love to talk with founders in one form or another, because we always often have these kind of crazy ideas, and then for some reason, they sort of come to be. And so, I'm always curious about the sort of moving from this idea into the actual action. So, tell us a little bit about sort of the launch story here.

Doug Schachtel: [00:01:47] Yeah. So, this was back in 2015, me and my co-founder, Babur Habib, we decided to start a school, which sounded completely crazy to me in the beginning, to reimagine, as you were saying in the beginning, all these amazing things that are happening in terms of disrupting school. But the way that we kind of saw schools at the time, and schools really haven't changed too much in the last 125 years, 140 years, and it's ripe for disruption, and there are a lot of other schools that are doing some changes in education.

Doug Schachtel: [00:02:28] We saw a particular way that we wanted to create a learning environment for students that we didn't quite see around where we were. And we spoke to a lot of thought leaders in education, a lot of other schools who have since become wonderful colleagues for us. Mostly on the West Coast, there's a

lot more schools in that entire space. But like Saeed and those, I listened to your last program. That was a great one.

Annalies Corbin: [00:02:56] Good.

Doug Schachtel: [00:02:58] A NuVu studio. And so, there are similar models, and it's interesting that when you talk to all these different innovative schools, it's like a big Venn diagram, there's a lot of similarities, but then there's also places where they kind of differ. And in putting the school together, it becomes a reflection of the community that you're building it with, and the team that you have in place, and what kind of approach you're kind of going for. But pretty early on, we realized that the school was going to focus on a maker-centered approach to education, where kids are going to be working on hands-on projects, the learning is going to be integrated rather than separated out into subjects, and that it was going to be starting in kindergarten.

Doug Schachtel: [00:03:47] There are a number of schools that do this at the high school level, like High Tech High in San Diego, and that was an interesting kind of conversation in the beginning, is where would we start? Will we start in kindergarten? Will we start in high school? And we really wanted to build it from the ground up, and it so made sense for us to start a kindergarten. And we started as a K-to-three back in 2016, and now, in our next year, we're going to be K-to-six.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:14] Okay. Yeah. You want to just start with the itty-bitties.

Doug Schachtel: [00:04:17] Yeah, exactly.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:18] Yeah. They're fun. That's a great place to start. And it's funny because we've internally, at PAST, had this conversation numerous times as well, right? In the work that we do, where is the most meaningful place to be impactful, especially if you're talking about creating some type of change? And there's something to be said for starting at that ground level and building up. You can also start in the middle and build out in both directions. And there are pros and cons to all of those approaches. And so, it's intriguing and interesting, sort of the space that you started.

Annalies Corbin: [00:04:49] And the other thing that's really interesting to me is, so starting schools, that's not your background. So, that's the other piece, I think, that's a bit intriguing about actually all of these schools that are part of the collection, if you will, of innovative schools that are part of your group. So, you mentioned NuVu, who actually aired this week in a fabulous conversation, but like many of the folks involved in these creative endeavors, and I think this is fairly common, your background is not in education. You're a marketing and media guy.

Doug Schachtel: [00:05:19] Yeah, exactly. And it was funny that it wasn't my background. My only background in education is that I went to a number of schools growing up. And it's interesting that where—there's a lot to say about this, but for me, there was a real personal element that really connected to why I wanted to do schools. And there are sort of like the micro-reasons of why, what is my personal why for the business?

Doug Schachtel: [00:05:49] But that sort of matched what, in a macro level, which is sort of what we were talking about in the beginning, when you take on this idea of the system of education, you re-shifted. When those things line up, you really feel like, oh, I might be onto something very powerful. I actually could have a very important part in our culture. And for me personally, though, I went to—this is a story that kind of resonates with a lot of people that I speak to, is that I always loved learning growing up.

Doug Schachtel: [00:06:20] And at some point, a shift happened in my education where it became more about school, and less about learning and more about just, how do you become really good at school? And the skills of being good at school, as you go on, especially in middle school and high school, become very different from actually learning and learning about your identity, learning about what makes you tick and how you learn best. It's things like, okay, how do you take a test? How do you please teachers? How do you follow directions?

Doug Schachtel: [00:07:00] All these things that are totally opposite of what the world wants and expects of people today. And so, for that reason, like when school was over, I kind of went in the other direction and never thought about it. I was somebody who always loved working with kids, doing afterschool programs, always donating my time to do those things, but I never thought of it that way, because I had this experience where I became very disenchanting with the idea of school. And in fact, it's funny when I talk about this to people, it's like I'm not a huge fan of school. In terms of like as it's defined, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:07:39] I can't tell you how many times I hear that. This program, because we're out there looking for these amazing disruptions, so I will tell you, that is a theme I hear over and over again in this innovation space, that's a lot of people, school didn't fit me, I didn't like school, I didn't really learn what I needed, I got out into the real world and I realized I was completely ill-equipped, and so on and so forth. So, your story, I think, is part of a foundational story for all of us collectively. And I use that us that and a giant you at the beginning, who are involved in this sort of innovation in education spaces.

Doug Schachtel: [00:08:13] It's true. It's true. And the other thing that happened in the beginning is we spoke to someone who became our advisor, Tony Wagner, and we just reached out to him, because we were fond of his books and fond of the way he was thinking about things. And we saw that movie, Most Likely to Succeed, that was like right when we came out, a number of screenings. And something he said to us is that there's a rich history of entrepreneurs doing this.

Doug Schachtel: [00:08:38] And it gave us great confidence in what we were doing and kind of reaching out in how we were going to start building this up. Of course, we realized that both me and my co-founder, he comes from an education technology background, but has not worked in schools and not being in the school educator, we had to build this team up around us. And that's common to what other entrepreneurs and people with non-educator background did to get their schools off the ground.

Annalies Corbin: [00:09:08] Yeah, absolutely. Again, those were very common trends, people that are really passionate, who come with a pretty unique set of skill sets that they can apply in sort of a different sort of way. So, I want to be able to give a little context for our listeners, because they come from all over the world and may not be familiar with the school. And so, let's sort of set the stage for them. So, give us the nuts and bolts. So, right now are getting ready to be a K6, but what else is going on at this elementary school that's based on kids being makers and stretch out from there? So, help us with a little bit of sort of the theory, the action that you're putting into place.

Doug Schachtel: [00:09:46] Well, it's an exciting place. Every day, walking into this place just feels like a joy. And that's what we hear from our families and from kids as well. They don't like summer vacations, because when they come here, the whole idea is that they are working with their hands. They're building, they're creating, they're getting to work on amazing projects. And the way that it's sort of structured to give them that way of learning is that number one is we have mixed-age groups understand about our school. So, for this year, we had a kindergarten group. That was its own thing.

Doug Schachtel: [00:10:30] Then, we had a first and second grade group. We had a third and fourth grade group. Next year, we'll have a fifth and sixth grade group. And they are working on themed projects throughout the year that stretch across the entire school. So, everybody in the school, even across all those groups, is working on a theme, the last one that we worked on this year was called The Tools that Connect Us. And over a period of two or so months, all the work is tied to that theme and it ends in this exhibition. This sounds familiar from other schools that do some things like WriteWorks does the arts and there are exhibitions at the end.

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:08] Exactly how we do it, too. Absolutely, yeah.

Doug Schachtel: [00:11:13] The other thing that we sort of realized in how we wanted to structure the school, and all this talk about innovation, and especially when you talk about technology, there are all these very analog things when you think about how to innovate in schools, like the schedule, scheduling everything. And so, how you can create enough time in the day for children to get into a deep flow with the projects, how to give them enough time to do that, but then how do you structure it in a way that you actually give them enough time to learn the core academic skills?

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:49] And how do you do that, because that's going to be the thing everybody wants to know? How are you doing that there, Doug?

Doug Schachtel: [00:11:55] That's a big question. It's like this sounds great and it sounds like a great afterschool program, right?

Annalies Corbin: [00:11:59] Right.

Doug Schachtel: [00:11:59] But then, how do you actually make sure that kids are learning? So, we have dedicated time for the core skills around math and literacy, and then with early childhood, with phonics. But everything else, when it comes to science, humanities, making and design, computational thinking, all those things are brought together in the service of the project.

Doug Schachtel: [00:12:22] So, there might be places where math naturally fits into the project, where literacy fits into the project, but there are distinct times where those two are given their time in the schedule. The other thing is that the schedule changes throughout the year and we're flexible in allowing that to happen. So, one way that that really shifts throughout the year is that we also have time where children are working on independent projects, projects that they come up with and they want to build.

Doug Schachtel: [00:12:49] So, we have periods of time during the year when they are working for larger periods of the day on those projects. And then, that ends in a culmination event where they're presenting their ideas. And a big thing for us is that we want to give kids a number of toolboxes by the time they end up leaving our school. Sure. There are core academic areas that they do need to understand and I think that's the big sort of division that's sort of happened around progressive versus traditional education, is that progressive became, oh, well, it's all about creativity.

Doug Schachtel: [00:13:26] And the core academic skills, that gets a little bit of a looser kind of approach. And for us, we wanted to blend the two where there is this heavy influence of creativity, and curiosity, and kids making things. But at the same time, you can't do really interesting, meaningful work if you don't understand certain core knowledge areas, so how do you make sure that you do both?

Doug Schachtel: [00:13:52] So, it's really about the schedule and the intention, and making sure that we are assessing and tracking where children are using very traditional things like Fountas and Pinnell for literally engaging New York for math, common core standards as well. I mean, you can just do backwards design when you think of these projects and know exactly where students are.

Annalies Corbin: [00:14:17] Right. And it's also really easy just to sort of clarify for folks, and correct me if this is not the case for your school, but I'm assuming this is a case, it's really, really easy in a problem or project based environment, which Portfolio School is, to go out and grab when you take a look at the themes of the projects, and say, we're going to easily, and I use that word deliberately, we're going to easily hit this huge number of core standards, that if those expectations of the learning, that more traditional-based learning that we know kids have to walk away, but we're going to integrate it all the way through. And these kids are just going to never even look up and shift from one set of contents to another. when done really, really well, it's seamless and it's all inclusive. And I assume that that's the case with what you've got going on at the Portfolio School.

Doug Schachtel: [00:15:08] It is. And I think the other thing is that we also know that children are not going to learn exactly the same thing at the same time as everybody else. That's another sort of carryover and a logistical carryover in traditional education is that just because children are born between this date and this date, they're going to be ready for this bit of content on this day. And for us, it's like you're going to understand that, but you might not understand it today.

Doug Schachtel: [00:15:36] That might come for you next week. It might come to you next year. And that's a big thing. It's like, well, okay, by the end of third grade, you might be caught up in this certain area or you might need a little bit more time in this area right now or you might be ahead of your peers grade-level-wise in a certain area. And I think just allowing for more flexibility is everything.

Doug Schachtel: [00:16:02] And when you just say, okay, well, that day is over, now, I'm going to test you on it. And if that was the day when that just didn't work for that student, now, they're like, oh, I don't understand this. And it starts to imprint on who they think they are, like, well, I'm just not a math person now. And that just compounds and creates a whole other dynamic for that student, but for us, it's like, okay, you don't understand yet.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:29] Exactly. Yeah, I love that. And that's the perfect way to put that, because we have that conversation often, too, and the reality is, in this fully engaged, applied sort of teaching and learning environments, the other piece that we've seen repeatedly is that we can hit the same number of content standards that a traditional school may have required throughout the year, but we can hit them numerous times in the same year as opposed to only hitting them once.

Annalies Corbin: [00:16:52] And to your point, doing a test, and then moving on, because not every kid's going to get it the first time. And by the time they've seen it the second or third time in a different application, because you're using it over, and over, and over again, suddenly, that light bulb goes off and it's meaningful for that child's. Very individualized in that space.

Doug Schachtel: [00:17:08] Yeah. No, it's really a good point, just like the idea of kind of circling back and silo to the content, where you can start talking about Newton's laws of physics for the first grade, you would never do that in another school.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:19] No, but why not? Why not introduce it in the moment that it makes sense, because of the project that you're doing, right? You'll have to get it. You just have to at least have been introduced to it.

Doug Schachtel: [00:17:30] Yeah, exactly. So then, okay, so there's a certain piece that a first grader can understand about Newton's laws of physics, and then when they come back to it maybe a few years later or maybe next year, there's a different element. There's more math brought into it that they can understand at that level.

Annalies Corbin: [00:17:48] Right. And they bring the context with them from project to project to project, right? And they sort of are able then to figure it out along the way. That's the other piece. There's a lot of that self-directed learning opportunity when you're doing it that way.

Doug Schachtel: [00:18:00] Yeah. And the word you just used is context is everything for us, that when we think of even the projects that kids are working on, it has to organically come from questions and things that they would actually experience in their daily lives. So, why is the sky blue? Why do leaves change color? All these things that they're questions that they would come up with naturally. And brain science, I mean, our own experience, everyone else understands that if something is meaningful to you and you happen to learn it, you're going to be invested in that process of learning and you're going to remember what you learned. So, making everything kind of contextual and interesting to the student is vital.

Annalies Corbin: [00:18:47] Absolutely. That point of engagement can't be underscored. And I hear all the time when we go out and work with a variety of different, more traditional schools around making these types of transitions, one of the things that I frequently hear from school faculties, and it's not necessarily because they don't want to, it's just the space that they're in in that moment, out of all fairness, right? But one of the things, what we frequently hear, is yes, but our kids can't do that, which is not the case at all.

Annalies Corbin: [00:19:16] It's really a case of, there's been a long journey or path where students have become so disengaged from the moment of learning that, sometimes, it can be hard to turn that tide. And so, helping those faculty understand that you can, in fact, re-engage by trying to work with students in a sort of a different capacity, sort of a different mindset can be a pretty powerful thing. So, let me use that as a segue to ask you then, where or how do you find your faculty? Because I'm sure it's not just you and your co-founder running around with these K through sixth graders, so talk to us a little bit about the staff. What's the magic, the people that make this happen?

Doug Schachtel: [00:20:04] So, we have an amazing team here. And the teachers, the way that we find them, let's say, in very logistical ways, like we put something on our website, we put it out to our community, and we post it in some places. And what comes back are people who really want this and who have, in varying degrees, had some success being able to implement projects in their own classroom, have oftentimes come up against a restriction in their current environment where they wanted to have more freedom in what they're doing.

Doug Schachtel: [00:20:44] And they're like, I know that this is the way to do it, I just want a place that allows me to do that. And with that impulse and with that idea usually comes a collaborative kind of mindset, that foreign teacher, because that's everything about how we're designing our units, and the units are those to those two-month long project, where it's collaborative, where we have a design and making teacher who works with classroom teachers, who works with an artist, who everybody comes together to create what that project is.

Doug Schachtel: [00:21:23] And without that collaboration, you're not going to find one person who knows how to do all those things. In a more traditional environment, you might not even have that level of expertise kind of at the table, or in the best case, you might have a teacher who then sends their students down the hall to the fab lab, where they work with that design and making teacher, but there's not much collaboration and much integration between what they might be doing in the classroom versus the fab lab.

Doug Schachtel: [00:21:53] And our kind of tagline or whatever, it's like we don't have a makerspace, we are a makerspace. And the big thing like it's not that place where you go to, and it's behind lock and key, and you get to go in there 45 minutes a week. Kids are in there pretty much daily, and the key in there, they're getting the tools that they need that they are safely trained on, And they have the badges, so you use that. It's not like kids are running amok in this place with hacksaws.

Annalies Corbin: [00:22:24] It's not just controlled chaos at best?

Doug Schachtel: [00:22:27] Yeah. No. But to quote another school founder that we were fond of, Gever Tulley, trusting children is everything. And once you give them the trust and the training, of course, to use some of these tools, they can do it. And so, starting with kindergartners, there's a gradual trajectory around design and making, and basically giving them the keys to the kingdom, where they can start owning their own decisions about the projects they're working on and their own personal goals.

Doug Schachtel: [00:23:10] So, you'd be surprised, even in first and second grade, kids are setting their own goals, they understand their schedule, they check in with teachers constantly about, okay, how does what I'm learning connecting to the goals that I've set for myself? Like I haven't seen that in any school that I have personally been to that the other idea of context and meaning, and like what you're saying, that it's difficult for teachers to say, my kids can't do that. I think once you start passing the torch to them, of course, with the scaffolding or with the planning, with the classroom management, all these things to go away, but giving them the skills to set their own goals with the teacher to understand why they're learning something, that becomes very powerful so they're invested in the learning.

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:06] Absolutely. Yeah. So, let's talk a little bit then about the community piece. So, the most successful, innovative schools, I would argue, just from my own sampling around the world of talking and visiting so many of these places, are really steeped in the local. They have a solid understanding of the community in which both they set or nested in the communities that they serve.

Annalies Corbin: [00:24:35] So, let's talk a little bit about that piece, because I gather from looking at the website, from the conversation we've had thus far, that the idea of having a solid understanding of your community is probably a pretty integral part to the success of the program. So, share with us just a little bit about the way that you think about that in particular since that ties into your new title as Head of Community.

Doug Schachtel: [00:24:59] Yeah, right. So, we're located in Tribeca, in downtown New York. And from the beginning when we started this school, we wanted it to be something that grows out from this place. So, we were trying to figure out how we can create this kind of schools that become embedded in communities that might function differently based on the community, but that have the same sort of core philosophy and core approach.

Doug Schachtel: [00:25:30] So, I think that there's a natural way that when you're starting something in any community, and for us, it happened to be Tribeca, that you are very closely linked to where you are, how you're using the community, how you're actually using the city around you as an environment part of the classroom that it would look very different if we're just in another town. And it would have to adapt, so a school like ours

popping up in a more suburban location would have a very different feel to it. Not better or worse, it's just different.

Annalies Corbin: [00:26:08] Different, right.

Doug Schachtel: [00:26:09] Yeah, because it's a reflection of the community. And I think the core kind of philosophy and the core approach is something that I don't think would shift no matter where it is. I think that once children come into the classroom, into the school, that would feel very natural, whether you're coming into a school in Tribeca or Boise, Idaho, or some rural location. And I think the other piece that we had in our minds from the beginning is that not everybody can live in Tribeca, not everyone can come to a school like ours, how do we enable this type of learning to exist outside?

Doug Schachtel: [00:26:50] And I know that this is something that you guys are working on as well with professional development, curriculum development. Those are the ways that we had educators coming to us asking these questions from all over the world, I want to bring that into my classroom, and that's something that we have always had in our in our game plan to do, and we've been building that out, and we're excited to continue doing that.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:15] Because at this point, it's a single school, it's not schools, plural, correct?

Doug Schachtel: [00:27:19] Right. We just have the one Portfolio School here.

Annalies Corbin: [00:27:21] And so then, another clarifying question to that same point, so right now, you're a K through six, but is the aspiration K through 12? Will it continue to grow with these kids? There's no expectation that when these kids finish sixth grade that they're going to middle school someplace else. The intent is for them to stay with you, correct?

Doug Schachtel: [00:27:36] Exactly. So, we have committed to being a K to eight right now. Our goal is to be a K to 12, and we've been planning and designing how our high school would look, but that would be a separate location. So, when we can get that off the ground or in the ground is a TBD at the moment, but that's always been our goal. And there's amazing opportunity in high school and sort of imagine what that looks like.

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:05] There is indeed, yes. We've got lots of experience in that space, right? Because lots of places start there, as you've indicated, yeah.

Doug Schachtel: [00:28:11] No, I saw that. And the work you guys are doing in terms of helping people redesign what high school looks like is amazing. So, yeah, I would love to continue talking about that on another podcast.

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:23] Yeah. No. We can definitely have that conversation whenever you want. So, I always like to sort of, as we sort of think about sort of wrapping the conversation, one of the things that I hear from folks all the time is, oh, that sounds really great and was awesome to hear everything that Doug had to say, but what Doug didn't talk about was, this is not easy. So, there are constraints.

Annalies Corbin: [00:28:44] There are things that you bump up against that you had to basically design your way either around, or out of, or through, or to incorporate, because it's just the reality, and that's okay. So, share with us a little bit of some of those experiences, because folks love to hear that they're not alone in thinking, oh, my gosh, what did I do? What was I thinking? I have that thought all the time, what was I thinking?

Doug Schachtel: [00:29:08] No, I know. I mean, I can't think of anything more meaningful than doing what we do and trying to figure out a better way for kids to learn. And not just I think when you feel very connected to what you're doing, all those things that are hard and the struggles that I think come in any venture in any business just become easier to deal with. But people, I would say, you're not alone, if you're out there and you're realizing that this is a hard thing to do.

Doug Schachtel: [00:29:44] I think every day, you're really drawing on the same things that we expect from our kids in school. And when we talk about education that really focuses more on creativity, it's kind of ironic and kind of a shame that schools aren't thought of in a more creative way. Like you focus on how to creatively solve education, right? And creativity is just how you're dealing with various roadblocks, various challenges.

Doug Schachtel: [00:30:17] And so, I think if you sort of embody the same flexibility and the same design thinking that we talk about with our students, you always have the right tools to navigate any challenges that you're going to face. And it's a very human process, a school education, whatever organization that you run an education except for maybe education technology is a very human organization. And my role as head of community, I get to see that it's about families, it's about children, it's about staff, it's about the team.

Doug Schachtel: [00:31:02] There are so many pieces and it becomes a very complex organism, because it's a number of people. And more and more, it's really just about how you line everybody up in the same direction, all those people, the students, the families, the staff, the team, all your community partners that are around you, if they buy in, you're going in the right direction. And any sort of roadblock, you can always go back to that place of this is why we're doing it and this is where we want to go. And it just gives you a way to always face any challenge and you know that you're going to make the right decisions.

Annalies Corbin: [00:31:44] Absolutely. And I love the idea of thinking about education as a very complex organism, right? So, it's a living, breathing thing. It's not just an engineered system, because it's got real people in the mix of it. And I think sometimes, we get really used to the wrotteness, if you will, of the machine, that system sort of mechanism that's just churning these folks out. Everybody's going to read page 12 on Tuesday, and we're going to take a test on Friday, and we forget about the fact that the single greatest value add that we have back into the flip side of whatever the educational journey is, is the individuality of all of the folks that were part of that living and breathing organism.

Doug Schachtel: [00:32:39] Yeah. and the other piece about this is that there's really no choice. Like once you, and I'm looking at you, it's like once a person, and maybe this is the listener, realizes that there's something that fundamentally needs to change about how we educate future generations, you realize that we do need to fundamentally change how we teach future generations. There is no choice in that. Once you get that, you're like, we need to do this and this needs to happen right now. And if I don't show up today and make the right decision, I know that there's a consequence to that and that I play a part in how we're reshaping this whole culture that we have around us and the work that children are going to be doing.

Annalies Corbin: [00:33:26] Absolutely.

Doug Schachtel: [00:33:27] Yeah. There's nothing more important than what's happening right now.

Annalies Corbin: [00:33:31] Absolutely. And the world is changing so fast as we all know, we've just experienced the last 15 months of crazy stuff that was going on, and yet a lot of those aspects or elements are not going away. And the reality is we can no longer be preparing students for X, Y, and Z job, or a career, or whatever it is that they're going to do post-secondary, because reality is we don't actually know what those things are going to be, because the world is changing so fast.

Annalies Corbin: [00:33:58] There are endless and infinite possibilities. So, with that in mind, I always like to sort of close the program with sort of asking, what's the moon shot from your perspective? What's the moon shot? And it can be personal to your own philosophy or the school itself, but really, what's that thing? That big aspiration outside of what you've got going on right now that you think is possible with the work that you're engaged in?

Annalies Corbin: [00:34:26] I know that's a loaded question. What do you think is going to make the most difference? and it may be the most difference just at the Portfolio School, but it may be in the Tribeca community, it may be in New York, it may be national, it may be global. Where is the moon shot, that thing that we absolutely must roll up our sleeves and do right now that you feel like the work that you're doing can make a contribution to?

Doug Schachtel: [00:34:49] It's funny because I think of where things are coming from the top down, from workplace education back to graduate school, if you go to graduate school, down to college, and then to high school, middle school, elementary, and then here's where we are, right? And both of those sides are kind of re-evaluating what it means to be educated, but what it means to be prepared, and I think having a collective systemwide re-shift of the definitions of what it means to be educated and what it means to prove that you're educated.

Doug Schachtel: [00:35:36] So, I think what a lot of things that are happening with places like the Mastery Transcript, and changes in college applications and admissions is having a huge impact on how people are then able to make decisions about early childhood, about elementary, about middle school. And you're always looking to, well, what's the next thing? Because the thing that we haven't touched on in all of this, maybe just a little bit, is that those who are making decisions about children are not children, and that's a very tricky thing.

Doug Schachtel: [00:36:17] And how you can line up the motivation for a parent to match up with what's in the best interest of the child are sometimes things that are outside of even our scope. And so, I point to these like the Mastery Transcripts and colleges, because if that's the motivation, that's going to then drive things downstream to where we are. So, I think that the innovations that are happening, and that's why when we go to high school, we're going to be very excited about getting kids ready for the future they're going to face, and getting them to go to wherever they want to go, whether that's Princeton, Harvard, Yale, whether that's to go and launch their own company.

Doug Schachtel: [00:36:58] But that level of success that people get to see as parents, that that's where I want my child to go, we'll make the whole system kind of flow more naturally from one place to the next so that you can have innovative programs at the elementary level all the way up. So, I think that seeing that whole system work together is how I would answer that moon shot.

Annalies Corbin: [00:37:24] Yeah, I love that. And I think that that sort of sets the stage for folks to sort of think about that it's no longer the future work, it's work of the future, right? And if you can wrestle with a difference between those two things, helps sort of give folks a sort of different impetus for really, really thinking long and hard about what's needed, what's necessary, and what's the best interest for children. So, I appreciate that very much.

Doug Schachtel: [00:37:52] Sure.

Annalies Corbin: [00:37:52] So, Doug, thank you very much for spending time with us today. I greatly appreciate it. It was very exciting to be able to hear a little bit about the Portfolio School, and I would

encourage folks to take a look at the website and reach out to Doug, really exciting things happening there in Tribeca. So, thank you so much for joining us today.

Doug Schachtel: [00:38:09] Thank you for having me.

Annalies Corbin: [00:38:11] 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.