



## 166. Rebuilding Education from the Ground Up with Nathan Gorsch and Katie Flanagan

**Katie Flanagan:** [00:00:00] Each class gets to figure out what do they really want to try to replicate here that's traditional school and what do they not care about.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:00:13] Welcome to Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. I'm your host and Chief Goddess of the PAST Foundation, Annalies Corbin.

We know the current model for education is obsolete. It was designed to create fleets of assembly line workers, not the thinkers and problem solvers needed today. We've seen the innovations that are possible within education and it's our goal to leave the box behind and reimagine what education can look like in your own backyard.

Welcome to today's episode of Learning Unboxed. As always, I'm super excited because of the conversations that we get to have about innovative and transformative educational programs from around the country and around the world.

And today, I'm really excited because we get to talk about the Village High School in Academy School District 20 in Colorado Springs. And joining us is Founding Principal of the Village High School, Nathan Gorsch. And he is going to share with us a little bit, first and foremost, about what the Village High School is, why it's a unique hybrid model, and why folks out there thinking about transformative education should really consider some of the components that Nathan is going to share with us.

And joining Nathan is Katie Flanagan or Flan, as I understand she is called, who's the teacher at the Village High School, and Kate Bennett and Kenny Dufalt, who are students. So, welcome to the program everybody.

**Nathan Gorsch:** [00:01:44] Hey, Annalies. Thanks for having us. We appreciate the opportunity to share a little bit about our school. And probably most excited to be here from our students that are going to be sharing a little about their experience.

But, yeah, I'm Nathan Gorsch, and I'm the Founding Principal at Village High School. And we really thought out about nine years ago to reinvent high school. So, like our current model did not serve students well. Obviously, it's a factory model and it doesn't really match the modern workplace. So, I decided that we wanted to reinvent school kind of with the idea of if we were to started school from scratch, what would it look like, and kind of build those components in.

So, we started with 25 ninth graders and a modular behind one of our traditional high schools. And I'm pretty sure our creative time, it had grown to 450 students, with about 250 students on our waiting list. It's really kind

of taken off. Students have, I think, a pretty awesome experience, but we'll let them share here shortly about their experience as we try to move more into a high school that maybe mimics the modern workplace more than our traditional model does.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:02:53] Yeah. And I'm super excited to have that conversation. Before we move on to Katie, our teacher, and our two students, one quick question that I have for you, Nathan. So, as the school district says, "Hey, let's try this new thing," I mean, lots of school districts are talking about, "Hey, let's try this new thing," and many of them are even admitting that a lot of things are not working.

So, I guess before we start to get into the nuts and bolts of how the program works, what was that conversation like? I mean, what was that impetus beyond just, "Hey, we need to make a change," but then you create this particular type of program in particular. Because, honestly, lots of districts talk about this but very few actually pull the trigger as we know.

**Nathan Gorsch:** [00:03:39] Yeah. I guess, I wouldn't say that there was impetus from our district. I think that some urgency was created. I often joke that if you were to look at maybe the worst places to try to innovate in America, I'm not sure our district would be at the bottom, but we'd probably be in the bottom ten percent.

Our schools here are pretty successful. Our community is pretty happy with our schools. But, yet, I was an assistant principal at one of our traditional high schools that by reputation is a great school. But I walked around and I saw kids disengaged. It wasn't the kind of place I would want to send my own children to. And I just felt like we could do better in our traditional model with short changing our kids.

So, funny enough, I really tried to create this sense of change and this sense of urgency in a place that, frankly, wasn't really asking for it. I'll never forget the superintendent at the time when I kind of rolled out this idea and this dream. I'll never forget what he said to me as he said, "I will support you going out on that limb." Which, unpack that phrase, so if it doesn't work, we're going to cut it off. You're really kind of going out on your own. This is your thing.

But kind of that's the way we were treated, to be honest with you, for a period of time until we kind of had proof of concept. And then, funny enough is we have proof of concept as students started flocking to this program and we kind of had a substantial waiting list, our current superintendent actually found us a new building and said, "You know what? This is the future of education and we need to support it." We've already outgrown our current space. We've been in this space for about two years and we've already outgrown this space, and so we're trying to figure out what are the next steps for us.

But the big kind of impetus for change was the student experience. I mean, I think students, even the students that were successful, didn't necessarily like school. They weren't happy being there. They didn't love the way they spent their time. And then, the secondary piece of that is I don't think teachers were happy and I don't think teachers like the way they spent their time. So, we really said, "Let's reinvent really thinking about the student experience and the staff experience." And let's start there and then kind of go backwards to build our systems to support the student and teacher experience.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:06:12] Yeah. I really love that. And I will tell you that I have spoken with so many founders on this program, and I can't tell you how many times I've heard someone say, "Yeah. You go out on that limb. We'll support you to do that." So, I think that's a fairly common sort of a reality for folks that choose to stand out on that limb. So, you now, good on you for doing that.

So, Kate, as a student, I'm super curious about, you know, you have all kinds of options in your community, why did you choose the Village High School? What is it for you?

**Kate Bennett:** [00:06:49] This is actually only my second year going to Village High School. I went to a traditional high school for two years. And I loved the opportunity of freedom that this school offered. And I loved that I didn't have to feel like school was a chore to go do. School is something that I now want to do because of the opportunities that this school has granted.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:07:13] And you're a senior this year, correct?

**Kate Bennett:** [00:07:14] Yes.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:07:16] Yeah. Okay. So, we're going to come back around to what does it mean to be a senior at a school like this in a second, because I got a load of questions.

But, Kenny, same question to you, so you, I believe you said, were a sophomore, is that correct?

**Kenny Dufalt:** [00:07:31] Yes, ma'am. I'm a sophomore here at the Village.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:07:34] And so, why did you choose the Village? Why did this appeal to you?

**Kenny Dufalt:** [00:07:39] Well, I'm not originally from Colorado. I lived in Arkansas during the summers. I live here to play hockey at the top level. And this school really helps me be able to do so because of the freedom, because of the flexibility that I have in doing my homework, my school work. Just communicating with teachers is so much easier here.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:08:05] So, for you, flexibility. So, I'm really super curious, Katie, as a teacher, so both the students have led with, "I love the freedom of this place," so I need you to explain to me what's the structure of that freedom so that our listeners can get that. And then, the same question, actually, I have to you, why would you choose to be a teacher in this type of setting? What was the appeal for you?

**Katie Flanagan:** [00:08:30] Okay. So, structure of the place is really hard to explain. But we use an online program in order to free things up for students to do all sorts of other stuff. So, we don't love online school, but it allows us to do the really cool things that we do. So, students come here. We're not about doing online at home. Students come in most days. They make a schedule that work for them. It's more of a college schedule where you pick what time of day you're going to school.

So, like Kenny doesn't come in the morning because he's skating and, oftentimes, is gone Thursday, Friday because he is somewhere else in the country playing hockey. So, students do their core classes online. And us teachers just kind of manage that. So, I don't have to create my biology curriculum. It's already there and kids can work on it when they want. So, I have kids who are still in Unit 2 and I have kids who are already in the second semester. But then, I'm there to support them with it.

The best part, I think, is all the classes that we get to teach in-person. So, our electives, we have so many crazy different electives. Like, I teach AP Biolab. The students learn the AP Bio content on their own but they come to me for lab. I also teach a freshmen seminar. I teach a bio ethics class.

Students came to me and wanted Intro to Med Class. We had one online but they wanted one in-person, so I said, "Sure. You find the students to take it," and now I have 30 kids in it and they have designed the whole

thing. Like, we brought in guest speakers. They're getting CPR and first aid certified. Just really they have -- that class.

And then, I teach an International Foods class. Where, I can't cook. My brother is the one that works at Michelin-starred restaurants but I can't cook. So, we researched different restaurants and cultures and geography, and then we go eat at those places.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:10:34] I want to take that class, sign me up.

**Katie Flanagan:** [00:10:38] Right. So, because they are doing their math, their science, their social studies, their English online, we get to do so many cool other experiences. And the other thing that does for me as a teacher is it frees me up that I'm not straight lecturing all day long. I teach a variety of classes but I also have more time to mentor students.

One of our core philosophies is about mentoring these students, and being there with them as they struggle through, or they're doing great or they fail, and we help them figure out how to get through it. And so, I have more time with kids personally than I ever did before because I had to be focused on the lesson.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:11:25] Uh-huh. I really love that. And I'm super curious, Nathan, this is a full on hybrid program, because one of the things I can imagine that folks that are listening to this are like, "Okay. How does that then translate against the standards that I'm required to teach, the requirements for State of Colorado's graduation." You know, circling back around to that senior experience, "I'm applying for colleges, how does the outside world think about what I've just done." So, how do you help folks understand those components, Nathan?

**Nathan Gorsch:** [00:12:06] And just to piggy back quickly off of what Katie said, so I tell people upfront I'm not a fan of online schools. I actually think they're a terrible idea. But I'm a huge fan of online learning. And I think we shifted the framework, the power of online learning in most places is location. Here, we believe the real part of online learning is personalization.

So, I think if somebody like Kate in her previous school with 25 students in a class, the teacher can't create 25 different lesson plans. So, we make kids run a race as a group. Don't go too fast. Don't go too slow. Stay with the group.

Well, human nature says I want to run my own race. So, if I'm being successful, I want to go faster. If I'm struggling, I want to slow down. And so, all we're doing is leveraging, I think, human nature of what is the pace you want to learn this material with the deadline being you have to get your work done by the end of the semester because we still post traditional grades at the end of the semester, even with some caveats and with some flexibility around that.

So, these students get a curriculum that is designed specifically for them. So, if they know material, they can actually test out of it. And so, we don't waste their time. And instead they can really dig in deeper on areas that maybe they aren't successful or that they haven't already mastered.

Which leads into the second question, actually, we're in a very high performing school district. The Air Force Academy is part of our school district. And we're the largest school district in Colorado to be accredited with distinction.

Oh, and by the way, the highest test scores at the high school level in our entire district belong to Village High School, which is awesome. And I'm never going to lead with that because I'm more proud of the culture. I'm more proud of it's filling a connection here. But I believe with all my heart that if you connect kids to school, you put amazing adults in front of them, you give them a personalized curriculum, they're going to perform really, really well.

And so, yeah, we've had students. We had several of our graduates at the Air Force Academy. Our students are getting into the schools that they want to get into. But I believe that it's not just about getting in the school because we practice being college students.

Our students operate like they're in college from the time they're a freshman, so when they leave us they have a different skillset than students in our traditional schools around time management, communication with adults, the rig and determination when I don't feel like working. Kind of all the things that we know lead for secondary success, we give our kids the opportunity to practice everyday.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:14:40] Yeah. Yeah. You are really sort of leading in that space of student agency. And we talk about that frequently on this program, but I don't know that I've seen a better example of that in terms of what you're doing.

And I would imagine that students very much like Kenny who find themselves there because it gives them the flexibility to pursue a non-academic thing - I don't know - but I suspect, Kenny, that hockey is super important to you, and it's going to be super important to you even post-high school. You have aspirations in that space.

So, I'm curious, you know, as you go through and think about the opportunities that you have at Village High School, in particular the creativity around the vast diversity of electives that you have, how do you make decisions? How do you make choices? I mean, I get the online pieces where you're going to meet your core requirements. But how do you make decisions and balance your time as it relates to the electives you get to choose. What does that look like for you?

**Kenny Dufalt:** [00:15:47] So, yeah, my electives, I would say the teachers make it pretty flexible for students like myself who are traveling or just may not be able to get to school everyday. Yeah, like I am in the internal medicine class and I'm able to take quizzes earlier, take a math test. I'm able to work ahead or work after my tournaments during the week.

Yeah, so I have tournaments on the weekends, Thursday through Sunday. I have to either get all my work done before or after. I put that on myself. So, it is a lot of individual kind of discipline but it is necessary and it will calm eventually.

**Nathan Gorsch:** [00:16:36] -- elective -- maybe that might be a great place to start too.

**Kenny Dufalt:** [00:16:40] Yeah. So, I take Spanish, too, internal medicine. I have a freshman, fair enough sophomore elective that I have to go to every week.

**Nathan Gorsch:** [00:16:57] Sports science.

**Kenny Dufalt:** [00:16:57] Sports science, yes. Sports science, I actually just --

**Katie Flanagan:** [00:17:02] How did you choose those?

**Kenny Dufalt:** [00:17:04] Well, I do science in the mornings and afternoon, so I have to build my schedule around that. These classes are around lunch time so I'm able to get to practice and then get to school. And I do this at the beginning of the year. I kind of build my schedule around my practices, which is because I need to focus on that and have the luxury of getting a good education as well.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:17:32] Yeah. That's that very applied opportunity for you to be thinking about it. So, Kate, I'm also curious for you, as a senior and having had experienced both more traditional high school and then opting into this, you know, we always talk about the incredibly wonderful things about this programs, because they are incredibly wonderful in many ways, but we also recognize that anything that is super innovative is also hard on a whole host of different levels. They're hard to start. They're hard to sustain. They're hard to keep going. They're hard to explain. Take your pick. So, I'm super curious from you, as a senior, having had both of those experiences, what was hard about this?

**Kate Bennett:** [00:18:13] It was hard getting adjusted initially. I wasn't used to have to manage my own time. I was constantly on the time of my teachers at my previous school. And so, it did take a little bit of time to find that motivation and determination so that I could finish my work on my timeline.

But once I got into the hang of it, I just thrived from there. I was able to keep my schedule at a place where it was nice for me and I could do my schoolwork while also use my time to hangout with my friends or play volleyball or coach, which is what I do for my job. And it has just been great to have that flexibility but it was hard getting adjusted to the initial part of finding my own timeline.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:19:08] Yeah. Sometimes freedom is like that big giant white piece of paper, that whiteboard, and it says, "Okay. Let's brainstorm an idea." And you're like, "I don't even know where to start," as it relates to those pieces.

Katie, what do you see from the students in terms of where is the struggle points in this innovative system, I guess?

**Katie Flanagan:** [00:19:31] Yeah. Like Kate said of learning how to manage your time, we were actually just talking about that in my freshmen seminar class. And we were talking about gaining the system versus true learning, and when it's -- to do which.

And so, also a struggle for teachers and students is letting them figure it out on their own while we're walking beside them. So, it's really hard sometimes as a teacher to not try to fix it all for the student, and make them get these things and on time. But instead, as mentors, we're there with them. They know that we're there with them. We can help them brainstorm plans. We can help them brainstorm time management, all of those types of things. But when it comes down to it, it's up to them.

And I was telling our freshmen today, we would rather they struggle with that right now while we're all here with them, rather than in college when they're paying tens of thousands of dollars, and there's other really different things going on in life and we're not there to walk with them. So, I think that's the challenge.

**Nathan Gorsch:** [00:20:39] Yeah. If I can just jump in. I think a great analogy that kind of spells this out is, here, we are very, very clear that students are in the driver's seat of their experience. And I would say that the most schools, the adults are in the driver's seat. And the best analogy is that, when you teach a teenager to drive, you can tell them about it, but you can't actually teach them to drive without letting them be in the driver's seat and give them some coaching.

And part of that coaching is knowing that they're going to mess some things up, and that it's going to be scary. But you can't learn how to drive without driving. And I don't think you can learn how to be an adult without being an adult.

And here, we just kind of pull that college or adult workplace experience down into a younger level with a lot of support around and a lot of backseat drivers to give instruction and to help them learn how to navigate being in the driver's seat while it's still a safe place to do so.

**Katie Flanagan:** [00:21:37] I think another struggle is, we just don't have a lot of the traditional stuff that high schools have. And for some students, that's perfectly fine, like they want no part of it. But other students are wondering if they're missing out. A lot of them play sports in other schools, but are they missing out on sporting events, or proms, or that type of thing.

And so, Nathan is great about letting the students run that. And we've had some really weird proms, where we come to school dressed up on a Friday or whatever for prom, food trucks, and all sorts of stuff, because the kids came up with that idea one year. But now there's some kiddos who they're like, "We want a traditional prom. We want to go to a hotel, or ballroom, that type of thing." And Nathan said, "Okay. Well, what would it look like?" And so, there's a group of students planning that and finding out from the rest of the school what they want.

So, kind of learning on each group, each class gets to figure out what do they really want to try to replicate here that's traditional school, and what do they not care about.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:21:37] Uh-huh. I think that's really interesting, because at PAST - and Nathan knows a little bit about this from me talking about it - when we sort of think about that early college experience and the opportunity to provide student agency, we see those same growth experiences that you're talking about.

My son is a freshmen now by experience but a sophomore-and-a-half by credits at Ohio State because he participated in a program very much like what you're talking about. And I think that one of the most intriguing things now stepping back from it because I helped design the program that he went through, but now I get to be the mom on the flipside because that kid is in college.

And what I can tell you is some of the intriguing pieces for me was being able to watch where he could navigate fully independently and make those decisions, and where those pain points still are because the reality is they're still talking about somebody that's only 18 years old. And although we stick this label and we call you an adult because you had this magical birthday 18 years later, that's not necessarily the case in the same way that the school doesn't traditionally fit everybody.

And so, I'm super curious, both Kenny and Kate, and either one of you can feel free to opt in, when you sort of think about what's coming, the future that you have, what are you concerned about in terms of the educational experience you had? Because I will tell you that in my conversations with my son, the pain points were not the ones he thought they were going to be. And I think that's case, obviously, for all kids. But I'm super curious, as you're going through your experience right now, what are you concerned about?

**Kate Bennett:** [00:24:42] I would say I'm probably concerned about not being able to have as flexible as a schedule. You know, you have the required classes that you have to take in college if you already know what degree path you're going down or whatever the case may be. I'm used to so much freedom here being able to customize my schedule to whatever is working for me, but college is a little bit of a different story, depending on where you -- but I would say that's probably my biggest concern.

**Nathan Gorsch:** [00:25:16] If I could jump in, I would love Kate to talk a little bit. Kate's mom works at the local university, so she might have a little different perspective also. I mean, do you have those conversations with mom about how this might translate to college?

**Kate Bennett:** [00:25:28] Yeah. I definitely do. I have been able to take a lot of college courses through enrolment because of my mom working there. But the opportunity is also available to all kinds of students. But I do feel a little bit more prepared because I've been able to have those college classes and being taught at that higher level. But that is also translated into everybody is being taught that higher level in college. And so, that will be a little bit more of an adjustment that is not high school level anymore everybody is taught.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:26:11] Yeah. Yeah. What about you, Kenny, any thoughts on that?

**Kenny Dufalt:** [00:26:15] I would say that I've gotten pretty used to the family environment here with the teachers, like they're kind of all mentors to me. All the staff, actually, even from our officer to Nathan, they've all been great. So, I think just kind of being more on your own. I don't know how to say it, just more out there on your own and kind of doing your own thing and having people by your side.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:26:52] Yeah. That can be a scary thing. I don't know, I think that's absolutely legitimate. I'm also curious, Nathan, you started out with 25 kids and now you're 450 and you have a 200 student waiting list, one of the questions that I often get as a follow up to a lot of the conversations that I have on Learning Unboxed is, that's super, super cool, but can it really scale?

So, you got a waiting list, you got folks wanting to come in, you're expanding beyond. But one of the great things that we heard you folks talking about is sort of the intimacy of the program. So, how do you scale that successfully?

**Nathan Gorsch:** [00:27:28] That's really kind of the next question for us. We're talking about maybe building an expansion, maybe a gymnasium to have sports programs. And I think we could probably grow this school to about 600 kids. But even if we get to 600, we're still going to have a waiting list, because I think more families and students are going to demand flexible programs and thoughtful programs than what we're ever going to be able to serve.

I maybe have a different take on it than some people, but the tools we have here are affordable. Like, I could give somebody - to piggyback off the title of the podcast - a box, a Village box with all the tools. But what's not affordable is the culture.

We have amazing adults here that really are focused on students. I mean, like I know Katie just talked about it, but it's a family. It's a tightened atmosphere. And we've got the most amazing adults I could find anywhere across this city in front of our kids.

I mean, we steal teachers from all over the city. The most amazing educators. That part is harder to scale because you would have to do so much work around leadership, around culture, around the different proficiencies and skillsets that a teacher needs to have in a teaching environment like this, versus standing and not even talking. That part is a lot harder to scale, and that's where we would have to do a lot of work to replicate this or to kind expand this model, if you will.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:29:06] Katie, what do you think about that from a teacher perspective? Where does that scale conversation fall for you?

**Kate Bennett:** [00:29:17] We have that conversation all the time, like, how do we do this for more kids? We love what we do, how do we get this to more kids but not become a school of a thousand and lose all the personalization that we have? We talk about it with our teacher friends, like, "How do we save our teacher friends from education and bring them over here with us?"

They're struggling like I used to be struggling, and overwhelmed, and it's hard to explain what we do over here. It's just like I, oftentimes, feel like I can't even share different ideas. Like, "Well, try this or this," because they're in a system and you can't necessarily do this in the system they're in. Like, Nathan had to totally recreate and start over and have a different type of system, so a lot of it doesn't translate to regular schools.

But we talk about, "Do we open up other campuses at different high schools? Do we open up other campuses in different parts of town?" Transportation is an issue for us and since we're a choice school, there's not transportation provided. So, there are I know quite a few kiddos who don't come because they have no way to get here. And so, figuring that out, Nathan goes and talks to people all over the world yet or country? The world.

**Nathan Gorsch:** [00:30:44] That's just [inaudible].

**Kate Bennett:** [00:30:46] And sharing these ideas so that others start playing with the same thing and coming up with the same thing. But, yeah, we're constantly talking about it.

And then, do we split the school and take half of the staff to open up another campus and leave the other half? Do you really just hire brand new teachers that don't have an opportunity to see what we're doing here and they try to recreate it? How do you really build that leadership density, for a lack of a better term, that teacher density and a new program so that you can keep up culture, so you can develop that amazing culture that we have.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:31:26] Yeah. And that's always a struggle. I mean, every time I have this particular conversation, very, very similar components to it, right? You know, how do we? We want to serve more kids and yet we know that this thing is special because, and there's this whole list of reasons, and they're valid reasons. So, what do you do with that? So, absolutely. But I always like to ask the question because I know that people are wondering as they're listening.

I always like to sort of wrap the program up a little bit by recognizing there are folks out there that are listening to this and thinking about what you're saying and wanting to go and proceed with some of the pieces that they've heard. So, I want to start with our students. So, you know, if you imagine a teacher administrator, even somebody from the community, a parent or student that's out there thinking, "Oh, this is really remarkable," so, Kate, what would you tell that teacher or administrator that wants to do something like this about the journey? What would you say to them to encourage them to proceed?

**Kate Bennett:** [00:32:31] I would say that for me, personally, it's opened up an entirely new world of things that I didn't even know were possible as a student. I'm able to do so many more things. So, just reiterating that if you break free of that cycle of the traditionalist's views of how school is supposed to be, it is so much better for students, teachers, administrators. It's just a better experience for school.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:33:03] Absolutely. What about you, Kenny?

**Kenny Dufalt:** [00:33:07] I would say it's more fun, I would say. I mean, Ms. Flan, we have a funny class all the time. And it's just more hands-on sometimes, but also other times it's online. But I would just say it's just been a better mentally healthier environment than the traditional education system.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:33:07] Yeah. I love that, because why shouldn't school be fun? I hear that all the time. "Oh, it's just school," well, school should be fun too. So, Ms. Flan, the same question to you, what would you tell that teacher out there that's contemplating being part of something like this?

**Katie Flanagan:** [00:33:53] That it's scary to take that leap. Because as teachers, we also tend to be traditionalists and we've been in education for a while and we're loyal to our schools. But it's so worth it.

I taught in several different districts. I've taught overseas. And then, I had a kiddo really late in my life. And I was still trying to do everything as a teacher in a traditional school. You know, sponsor the clubs, do all these things, create amazing lessons. And I was so burned out and so I tried to go half-time, but how do you really that work at a school to go half the time? And Nathan was like, "I can do half-time. I have half-time positions all the time." And then, it ends up once I get here, it's like, "I don't need half-time. I can do this fulltime."

And so, I quit education a few times before, and I was on the verge of it again. And now I'm like, "Oh, I can go another 15 years." I mean, don't get me wrong, there's definitely still hard things. Like, we get so close with our students that oftentimes that's one of the hardest parts. But I can now have an outside life and raise my four year old and just be more balanced. Whereas before, I couldn't do that. I'd stay late until 5:00. I'd come home, be creating papers again. You can't do that with a kid anymore. So, it really just extends our lease on our education life.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:35:30] Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah, I appreciate that. Nathan, same question to you.

**Nathan Gorsch:** [00:35:36] Yeah. So, just to piggyback off of what Flan said, I think so many times in my previous life, I was tired working on things that didn't matter to me. And now I'm tired because of the things that matter. And I think that's what we all want out of life, is, we want to give ourselves something that matters to us. And I think that's a really important piece.

But the other encouragement is, there's a lot of people tinkering around the edges of change and education. But, to me, it's like we have to have a fundamental change. Like, we can't just continue to tweak a model that is broken and pretend that it's going to somehow fix itself with these small tweaks. I mean, we really said school is broken. Let's pull it apart and let's build it back into what makes sense in a totally different model and in a totally different way.

And like I was sitting in a conversation, and I don't mean to be disrespectful, but a conversation about the teacher shortage and what we're going to do about the looming teacher shortage. And one of the administrators said, "Well, we just go to local businesses and get them to give discounts." And I'm thinking, if a teacher is thinking about leaving, 20 percent offer that their oil change is not going to keep them in the [inaudible].

And we have a bunch of teachers here, like Flan, where we're looking to leave education. And we have fundamentally changed their role to make it more thoughtful, to make it more meaningful.

Like, we hire the online curriculum here for a very specific purpose. We hire online tools to free up teacher time. And because teachers have more time, then they can dedicate it to students, which is why they gotten in the profession, to begin with. And then, the most amazing thing happens when you have kids that want to be at

school, and teachers that want to be at school in this cycle of positivity that just creates this awesome culture. And that's only possible if we break it down and rebuild it from scratch. You can't make a little tweak.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:37:44] Right. Right. A hundred percent, I agree with that. So, we have the same conversations around the world, I suspect you and I.

I want to thank you all for making time to have the conversation with us today. And I will encourage our listeners to reach out. We'll post the resources on the website with the show notes. But I just really appreciate the fact that you took the time and you shared your story today. So, thank you so much.

**Katie Flanagan:** [00:38:11] Thanks for having us.

**Nathan Gorsch:** [00:38:11] Thank you.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:38:14] Yeah. Absolutely. 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.