



- Matt Grundler: Welcome everybody. This is Matt and Laura.
- Laura Grundler: This is the Creatively Connected Classroom Podcast. We are super excited to welcome Samantha Melvin to the podcast this morning.
- Matt Grundler: She was one of our hosts and had an amazing topic talking about leading the way from classroom to community. She was an amazing host and hit on such a really important thing as we get ready for starting going back to school.
- Laura Grundler: But for us, this is really special because Samantha has been one of our mentors for some time as the State of Texas is just ... She has been very active in our state organization and really we look up to her as really leading the way, so we're really excited to have her this morning.
- Matt Grundler: Absolutely.
- Laura Grundler: Samantha, welcome to the podcast.
- Samantha Melvin: Well thank you so much. I'm excited to be here and thank you for the kind words, but I think we are, as has been stated just this last week actually, we're the hive. I think what's magical about the way we're able to interact with each other, we're able to share all of these ideas, and it's not necessarily one person, it's all of us bouncing ideas around and seeing what works in our respective environments, we teach in very different situations, we have different populations that we're seeking to nurture in different ways. Then also we are working with a variety of different ways of interacting with people. Let's say people have different systems and we have to work with those systems, and of course, doing what's right for kids. So [crosstalk 00:02:14]. Thank you.
- Laura Grundler: Thank you.
- Matt Grundler: There's no real subtle way to ask it, but what is the story of you that's brought you to the position that you're in I guess? How's your educational journey gone?



Samantha Melvin: Well it's interesting, I came from outside of art education actually. Coming into art education I always saw how important it was. My dad was a painter but he was also an engineer so I grew up in that environment where you're using every part of you, your intellectual ability, your creative ability, and you're really maximizing that. It wasn't about separating those. I think I grew up with that mentality knowing that I really built my philosophy that children are thinkers and artists. It's important for us to really question all the time. We can't except face value, you have to dig deeper. It's really important that we encourage that, but then also the importance of the tactile and hands on experiences. I'm not just saying from a technology standpoint with fingers on keyboards. I'm talking about really getting into materials and exploring what they do, and how they evolve through our manipulation. It has to be a tactile exploration.

From me growing into this field standpoint I knew how important it was growing up and then for my own children. Seeing different districts who either really emphasized it and had support systems in place, like when I started teaching in Spring Branch ISD, it was an incredible learning environment for that as a young teacher in the classroom with 29 elementary schools, an incredible art coordinator, Gloria McCoy, give her a plug because she's incredible. Then moving to a district that just was not aware that was something that needed to happen. It's about raising that awareness and helping them see that there's so much more that could be brought by having a strong visual arts program at the elementary level.

We were fortunate when we moved to Burnet, which was a personal decision, I became that parent, which leads into the whole idea of the advocacy. We never stop advocating, even when you do have the support. Early on, they did not have an art program at the elementary level and it's a matter of building that. You have to show them that it's important and give them the opportunity to make those choices leading them the right way.

Laura Grundler: Right?

Samantha Melvin: But you can't hit them over the head with it either. I'm sharing this with others because we run into this kind of thing all the time where we see



that something that is right for children, and actually there is state standards for these things, that it's really important to just continue advocating and just show the opportunities that we have by offering these outlets, and, I believe, core subject. I see art education as core to helping students communicate and build their knowledge because as we all know, regardless of which field we're in, we know that Student A may find mathematical approaches as a way of solving problems, but other students are going to find visual representations as a way to solve those problems. Then it's a matter of all of us finding the right words. Getting everyone on that pages takes work, you have to show up, which it all ties into the amazing conversation that we had the other day because it's not about just presenting information then walking away. You have to be constantly sharing that, and talking the talk, and doing it, really living it with students and showing parents, and communicating with your colleagues, and all those great things.

Anyway, that's where all of this evolved. I was able to build with, of course, my principal's blessing because you have to have everyone on board. When Jill [Whitiken 00:07:15] hired me she that we were building. We built a really great program and I'm very proud to say that we had by the end, I left the school district with other opportunities, we had the art teacher at the elementary where I was, but then also a certified art teacher at the K-2nd grade campus, which was all knew.

Laura Grundler: Wow, fabulous.

Samantha Melvin: It took all of us, the school board, the principals, it took all of us as parents to have those conversations and to really put that in place. It's not one person, and that I think is really important to remember.

Laura Grundler: Definitely. It's interesting that you say that ... not interesting to us, but maybe to other people, that the arts are a core, or should be considered a core. I've been talking to art teachers, especially at the elementary level. I'm just curious, I'm going to take a tangent here for a minute, our elementary music, and art, and PE are called specials.

Matt Grundler: Are called specials.

Laura Grundler: I have a feeling that in talking to many, many, many elementary teachers that is a little off-putting to them being called "specials." Something that



I've been saying to art teachers is what if you started calling yourselves the essentials team. I'm just curious what your thoughts would be about that or how you would consider rebranding that elementary experience for those teachers and those students.

Samantha Melvin: It's interesting because it's all labels.

Laura Grundler: Right.

Samantha Melvin: It comes down to those labels and how you create that culture. I think we end up developing culture. I knew just from my own experience I didn't our classroom to just be called the art room. I really wanted it to be something unique. So we were the Fine Arts Studio. The studio is that atelier where the artists come in, and they're working together, and there's a theme that brings us all together but we're all working towards our own creative output.

Laura Grundler: Right.

Matt Grundler: Yes.

Samantha Melvin: For a studio it could be musical instruments. It could be a kinesthetic response to something. It could be a performance art, collaboration. It could be any number of things. It could be writing a play and not even getting a chance to perform it, but actually just sitting down and writing, and putting these ideas on paper. That studio, I like the idea of studio.

Laura Grundler: I like that, yeah.

Samantha Melvin: That opportunity to work with other creative thinkers and use different materials to put that out into the world I think is magical. I think really, the language arts room could be a studio too.

Laura Grundler: Absolutely.

Samantha Melvin: I think we need to rethink how we approach education. I just saw recently, and I'm not going to be able to give this individual credit, and I'll have to followup later, but about looking at our spaces and how we're thinking about organizing spaces to maximize that. It was a design thinking conversation that some people were having on Twitter. How can



we maximize that so that we're using walls as white boards? We put up a counter alongside the wall and we have tall chairs there, the students are able to work in two person teams and collaborate that way. How can we really create those [inaudible 00:11:24] where yes they can be working in wet medium and it's not going to ruin the carpet. Those are basic things that we have to [crosstalk 00:11:31] negotiate.

Laura Grundler: Definitely.

Samantha Melvin: ... also have a space where they work in wet medium in one area, but then also they dry their hands, and they go to the computers and they're working to get their ideas down. They're writing their artist statements, then they do a presentation, and they can use the video camera to do their work and explain what they just did. If you can optimize all of that and have that in one space I think that is pretty magical.

Laura Grundler: Definitely.

Matt Grundler: It's interesting you say that because that's kind of where a name change when I was at the elementary level, I had gone for so long it just being called the Art Room. We were in renovation, I was in transition in different classrooms, and I was in a much smaller room than I was before I left. I was just like we only have room for tables, and chairs, and us, and being able to make things, so we're going to be calling this now the Art Studio. So it became the Art Bear Studio, because our mascot was the bears. There was a lot of question, especially from the students, why is it called the Art Studio. That gave me a chance to say, well we're all artists, we come in here. We are creating things, we're making art, and that's what artists do. They come into their workspace and they create, and so that is considered a studio. It's a good way, even at an elementary level, to have that kind of conversation with students.

Laura Grundler: Yes, absolutely. Well and I think the flexibility of the studio is ... I think we think of classrooms as rows and desks. I think the idea of the studio is a much more open space. I think that it's a flexible space versus a classroom. Maybe it's just that we grew up in a classroom where there were rows and those kinds of things. I'll never forget a couple years ago our friend from Australia, our mutual friend from Australia, Kathy Hunt, was in town. We were in a classroom and she was flabbergasted when we



walked into this classroom because it had the little desks with the chair tied to the desk, and there's the little basket for the textbooks behind it. She said, "What are these little people prisons that you have?" She had never seen such a thing. She said, "This is not conducive to learning." I said, "Right on, I agree." I said, "But this is a change we're having to make."

Samantha Melvin: It comes down to our funding, so it's a matter of arranging those little desks into groups and [crosstalk 00:14:06], and maximizing what we can do to control our space and make it more flexible. But yes, it's true. Those contain children rather than encouraging them to really blossom and grow. I think studio time or studio spaces are really the way to go. But your comment about essentials, then it becomes a competition-

Laura Grundler: That's true.

Samantha Melvin: ... with other teachers and it's not about that. I really see our role as educators. We are educators and yes we teach a specific discipline. But within our discipline we hope to touch base with all of these other ways of thinking. I would hope that an English teacher is also going to tap into different works from different periods and find ways to explore language and the beauty of descriptive vocabulary, for example, and also tap into geography, and talk about where pieces originated. I think all of us need to be doing a better job. I don't think it's just art teachers doing a more interdisciplinary connection. It's about all teachers making it more of a blanket or a web of knowledge, which is what I think we're [crosstalk 00:15:42].

Matt Grundler: That's a good description.

Laura Grundler: Well, it goes back to the hive.

Matt Grundler: It does.

Laura Grundler: Everything seems to go back to the hive.

Matt Grundler: It does, it does.

Laura Grundler: Which is a perfect segue. The first question you shared with the chat was, "How do you grow as an educator and how do you share that learning



with others on your campus?" Can you just reflect on that question a little bit and maybe why you asked it or what your answer would be to that?

Samantha Melvin: I think one of the issues that we all face is that idea, and it's a stereotype that we need to break, of the art teacher or teacher, I see it as the art teacher, who goes into his or her room, closes the door, we close the door and we do our own little thing, the little magic thing that we do with kids because it's supposed to be fun. Because when teachers drop their students off they often say, "Oh you guys have a good time. Have fun in the art room." But, what I really think we need to be doing is keeping that door open and inviting the teachers in.

It's always such a mad rush, but just sending them an email and saying, "If you don't mind coming three minutes early, just three minutes early so that you can see the students work in progress, and you can ask your students what it is that they're learning and what they're working on." Allowing that interaction, causing our colleagues to really look at what it is that we are doing as teachers, and maybe there's something that we can glean from those conversations with our colleagues.

The goal is for us to maximize our students' learning. If junior is having a really hard time in that particular teacher's class, but has just blossoms in our class then there's obviously something that child has tapped into in our learning environment that may benefit the child in that other teacher's classroom. Sometimes, yes, it's a personality conflict. Often, it's more they're just running into some type of obstacle. Our goal is not to just be self-centered. Our goal is to really blossom or help those students grow and learn. If we can share what we're doing then we're doing our job-

Laura Grundler: Absolutely.

Samantha Melvin: ... with that child.

Matt Grundler: I was just going to comment, whereas in my case at my particular elementary school, our job at the end of class was to take them back down to their classrooms. I actually used that time to promote or advocate for what we were doing in there. A lot of the time there would be some of it that would be digital, or I had taken a picture of it and I



would be able to carry my iPad down there to be able to show the teacher what we were working on. More times than none the teacher was like, "Oh wow, we just were covering something like that," or, "We were just talking about," blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It helps to show that there is a connection between art and those other areas.

Laura Grundler:

It's so true, our son he memorizes things, especially if they're tied to music. We would say to the homeroom teachers that were doing the math with him, "He really struggles with his math." We'd say, "If you could find some music that would help memorize how to do those equations," or in third grade they learned the multiplication tables. If we could all work together to find some kind of multiplication rap it would help him so much because that's how he learns. Oftentimes, we've found that there was a resistance to those kinds of suggestions. What we're trying to do is, again, like you said, break away from those singular classrooms where you're in your little kingdom or queendom as the teacher and let's say, "No, let's look at the learning." Howard Gardener, he's got it. There are multiple intelligences. For some kids it's the kinesthetic. If there's a way they can use rhythm in the PE classroom to help them find a pattern and that can connect to math and those kinds of things that's what we need to be doing for kids.

Samantha Melvin:

Yes, yes. Well I think for art teachers you're trying to protect that zone because for so long we've had to advocate, so we're protecting that space.

Susan Riley:

Hi there. This is Susan Riley, founder of Education Closet. You know, Samantha and Team Grundler are hitting upon so many topics in this episode. But the most powerful one I think is the idea that we need to rethink how we approach education. That's definitely the power of arts integration and STEAM.

If you're looking for practical strategies and support in rethinking how you can rethink the arts into your own classroom I really want to invite you to check out our online courses. Each one is self-paced, gives you 10 PD hours, and shares practical ways to incorporate arts integration and STEAM. You can find all five courses and three big bundles over at [educationcloset.com/courses](https://educationcloset.com/courses).





Now, let's get back to this incredible conversation.

Samantha Melvin: I think what is so powerful actually ... and Crayola, I give credit to Crayola because they came up with this slogan of the chief creative officer.

Laura Grundler: I love that one. I have [crosstalk 00:21:53] that pen. Yeah.

Samantha Melvin: Great. It's so important for us to remember. I know we get the requests from the PTA to make a poster. Well, if we then say, "Let's all get together and make posters," rather than saying, "Okay, I'll take on and do all the posters," that's crazy, that's crazy setting a standard that is just really difficult knowing that we all have family and we have other professional development things we need to address, then we're teaching and all of those things. If we say, "Let's do it on Wednesday afternoon, everyone join in." It becomes a school-wide thing where teachers know once a month if we need posters for an event then we're setting that time aside.

Laura Grundler: Maybe we could all work-

Matt Grundler: I think-

Laura Grundler: ... collaboratively in the studio space.

Samantha Melvin: Yes, and that's the idea.

Matt Grundler: I think that kind of leads into that question that you had, which was question four about how do you cultivate the leadership attitude and a growth mindset in your campus and those other people that are around you. There are those people that are very reluctant, very hesitant, the walls go up instantly. How do you cultivate that, especially for a lot of our younger teachers, a lot of our newer teachers. They're afraid to reach out because the more established teacher or the oldest teacher that's there at their campus might be defensive about it.

Samantha Melvin: Well and it's really hard. Really, I'm an introvert, that's the crazy part. You wouldn't know it because you have to work so hard to put yourself out there, especially if you're building a program you have to go up to everyone and introduce yours, [inaudible 00:23:45]. I think the key is that if you're a new teacher on a campus you have an opportunity.



Not all the teachers are going to come to you and introduce themselves so it's almost like you have to go around on parade and introduce yourself, and let them know that you really are interested in collaborating, which can frighten off some people, but, that you really are interested in what is going on in their classroom and that you welcome them into your room even though at that moment you might be thinking, "Gosh, I hope they don't come on Tuesday because I'm doing this crazy project." [inaudible 00:24:35]. But, it doesn't matter because ultimately, regardless of the mess and the loudness, which I actually encourage people to be thinking about how loud a classroom is, and introducing yourself.

Hopefully, your principal will have introduced the new teacher at the faculty meeting and made it a big deal, but then you actually stand up and say a little bit about you. You connect with just one person. It's the same as if you're a child and you're moving to a new school, which happened to me a lot. We moved a lot when I was little. Just connecting with one person just really sets the tone just for that start. If we're able to do that with one colleague and start talking about what we're doing in our environments then I think that is the launch pad for growth and for leadership. We start feeling the waters about what we can do to lead and communicate what it is that we're doing and what it is that we want for our students and our classroom. But then I think it's also when we start showcasing artwork I think it's really important that we talk about process. We may not be able to speak it, we actually need to show it.

When we're setting up, even if it's just six pieces, and we only have time to do six pieces, but we also include an explanation of the objective, and what it is that the students are looking at, it's not one artist and it's not one outcome. All of these different-

Laura Grundler: Layers.

Samantha Melvin: ... entry points and [crosstalk 00:26:17] ideas, and we talk about that. You could put one piece of art up. If all you have time for is one piece of art and an explanation, then you're showing your colleagues what the thinking that is happening or occurring within students minds in your space, and you're sharing that with them. They can make those connections. Eventually, you're going to connect with other like-minded



educators. Then together you create this culture and it takes time. It's one of those things that evolves and it can only evolve through communication, so being very open about what you're doing.

For me, I joined Twitter in 2007. I won't forget that because it was one of those we moved to a small town and I knew I wanted to stay connected. The only way I was going to stay connected and still grow as an educator by tapping into this other medium, which is the virtual space, and using Twitter for that. That's when I met Tricia [Fuggelschadt 00:27:36] and I met Teresa McGee, then Holly Beth Kinkade, and Jean King. The list is much longer. But it was being able to connect with educators who were in all different parts of the country, who felt that they had something to share, but the people within their space didn't really get it yet. They didn't really see the potential of that space.

I feel that we as art educators have done an incredible job of sharing what we do and helping educate other educators so that they have a fuller understanding of the potential of interacting through the visual arts, or the fine arts just in general.

Laura Grundler: Yes.

Matt Grundler: Yeah, oh absolutely.

Laura Grundler: Quite agreed.

Samantha Melvin: I think that growing our connections I just one way of developing that leadership and asserting that importance, not touting self-importance, but the importance for that field or that [crosstalk 00:28:47].

Matt Grundler: It's an interesting point because [crosstalk 00:28:49] several years ago I had just started joining into Voxer. It's a lot like Twitter in the audio sense where you're having conversations, you're recording a snippet. But one of the ... I think it was the 4 o'clock Faculty-

Laura Grundler: Breakfast Club-

Matt Grundler: ... Breakfast Club, I think it was called.

Laura Grundler: ... or something like that.



Matt Grundler: It was suggested by Rebecca [Maote 00:29:14], who was another person who got us into Twitter, Schaffer I guess was her name before. I was on this Voxer group and it was covering all classrooms, all areas. One of the things they were saying was, "Why is promotion, why do some people shy away from it?" I said, "That's probably why, because it's not blowing your own horn saying, 'Oh my gosh, look at what I'm doing.' You're advocating for yourself and you're advocating for your program." Somebody else had chimed in and said-

Laura Grundler: And most importantly, you're advocating for your students.

Matt Grundler: Yeah.

Samantha Melvin: Yes, yes.

Matt Grundler: The person had responded back and was like, "You know what, I never really thought about it in that way and we always see it as a negative connotation rather than a positive."

Laura Grundler: It's really interesting too because we've run into that quite often where people have said, "I see Twitter, or I see Instagram," or whatever it might be, as blowing my own horn when I'm showing off artwork, or I'm promoting this idea, or if I have a blog post and I'm sharing plan. I said, "I've never seen it that way."

I've always seen it just as we keep coming back to this idea, because it was such a thread this week about the hive, but I see it as the smartest person in the room is the room, and that we all learn from each other. If I see a really great image of an example from a lesson plan I'm going to start sparking ideas for how I can possibly use something similar, or I might reach out to that person and say, "I love this. Tell me how you did it. I think this would be a great experience for our students here." I think that people need to get past that.

Beyond the art people and the connectivity, I think that we've heard a lot recently around the idea of you said fear. I think as educators one of our pet peeves is the statement, "I can't even draw a stick figure." We hear that all the time. I think that in our schools sometimes people see the music and art person as that's their thing, and that's not my thing



because I can't even draw a stick figure or I can't keep a beat. And I'm, you know-

Matt Grundler: I can't even sing a note.

Laura Grundler: Or I can't sing a note.

Samantha Melvin: I have a solution for that. It's that whole idea of opening our doors. I think the biggest headway that we've made, or we made as a campus was when we hosted the faculty meeting in the art room. We actually did a pinch pot, we made pinch pots.

Laura Grundler: Everyone can make a pinch pots.

Samantha Melvin: [inaudible 00:32:11] pot, but the goal was to make bowls for the Empty Bowls Project [crosstalk 00:32:17] so much fun. We had this big goal. That was the gist of it. What was so magical is that it was after school, it was a faculty meeting. We had a very short faculty meeting, which everyone appreciated. Then everyone got their clay. Some of the children, children of the teachers were actually joining their moms and dads, but they were also former students of mine. It's kind of magical. They were in middle school and they were coming back, and they were showing their mom how to make a pinch pot.

What was really great is that when you hear one of your former who have gone off, they had been gone probably three years, and they are sitting down and they're talking to their mom. Mom is upset about the shape of that pinch pots that's evolving, and yes, it's a little sideways. It's okay, it's okay, because that's not really the ultimate goal. Yes, we were trying to make bowls for the Empty Bowl Project, but it was much more about having them have that moment using the clay and [crosstalk 00:33:28] materials, and seeing what it takes to create a work, that it's emotional, it's intellectual, it's physical. All of that comes together to create a work that even if it

is a little sideways you're still very happy that it's yours. Anyway, the young person was coaching mom through this and said, "Don't worry, Miss Melvin always said, 'Turn your mistake into a masterpiece.'" They're like, "You can just kind of push it a little bit."



Laura Grundler: I love it. I love it.

Samantha Melvin: What was awesome is that she ended up putting little feet on it and using it like a pet bowl, like water bowl, and ended up absolutely loving it and buying it at the Empty Bowl Project so that she would actually have her own bowl, and bidding on it for the silent auction.

The rest of that is having the teachers actually taking some time and being in your classroom. Playing with watercolor, they don't have to walk away with a finished piece, but understanding what happens when you work on wet, for example, or doing dry brush techniques, and showing them what that looks like, and yes, the struggle. The struggle is real. It's a [inaudible 00:35:03] struggle for artists who have been practicing for forever who have their own studio and who are doing it every single day, and our students should be doing it every single day, but we get them maybe once a week and we hope that when they come in they can pick up and get back into their flow.

Other teachers of other disciplines need to tap into their own creativity. I think if we can have faculty meetings and just spend maybe 15 minutes on that artistic approach, or having a conversation about an art piece. I have to say, it's not just about making art all the time. You have to have these conversations and if they can make connections with artwork and understand the way that we can talk about a piece of art, and see it as text, which is a really important component, that's something we need to be doing with our students. Then they can make those connections to descriptive vocabulary and grow that tool belt collection to include artwork.

Matt Grundler: Their utility belt.

Laura Grundler: I'm so excited to hear you say that because I've been working with Artful Thinking for the past few years. We're still working with it. We've built it into our curriculum, but I really want ... and we've done it for our principals in our district. Artful Thinking out of Project Zero in Harvard wasn't developed for the art room. It was developed for Title I campuses to develop students' ability to read, and process text, and understanding, and being [crosstalk 00:36:51]. It's [crosstalk 00:36:52] all of that, comprehension, and questioning skills, all of those things. It's



really exciting to hear that because what I'd love to see is teachers do those activities with their peers so that they can see that meaning making actually happen.

Samantha Melvin: Yeah, so one of the things that I did one year, and it was actually tied to Big Art Day, which is in March, just a great opportunity for campuses across the state to be all making art in some way, some form. One of the things that we did was I presented at a faculty meeting, I brought this is a huge stack of prints, just of a variety of different periods, and styles, and artists. I talked about four different pieces, but then did a comparison of two pieces using a Venn diagram. I showed [crosstalk 00:37:55] how to look at the work and that they did not need to know anything about the artists, that it was all about this background information. That in fact feeding students and each other background information defeats the intellectual reading of work and that vocabulary that pops into our mind about a work is actually very relevant to what's happening in that piece an our own interpretation. It's not about what's been written in an art history. [crosstalk 00:38:29].

I had shared all these different prints at different tables and just asked the teachers to take a look at those and to think about the vocabulary that was relevant for their own respective grade level. This is a third through fifth grade campus. I could hear that excitement. You hear, "Wait, I didn't realize looking at this piece." I could really get my students to be thinking about the descriptive vocabulary that they were struggling with or just even putting sentences together, or in fifth grade writing Haikus and how they could write a Haiku about a piece.

For the big art day project the idea was that the classroom teachers and the arts rooms of a studio would be looking at different works of art. Table teams would be using the Venn diagram to describe two works of art, then they would share what they discovered about that piece. Then we would do further investigations about the work, but they could write a little essay about it, they could write a poem, they could write a Haiku if that was the kind of work that they were doing. Everyone was just really excited with what evolved from that. We ended up sharing these just in a little on campus video, it didn't go out to the public, which doesn't have to happen. You don't have to publicize it beyond. It can stay centralized.



I think what was so powerful is that other teachers in other grade levels saw the potential for art work as text.

Then building off of that I was able to then go back into each of these works and make deeper connections to the history of the piece and the artist, then make connections artistically with materials, and deeper investigations of meaning, but that was after the fact. As a campus we were looking at these artworks and we were really exploring ideas, and it was a collaborative thing. It was a really great way of making those connections where they didn't have all of the information to start with.

Matt Grundler: Well I was going to ask you about question five, but I think you pretty much explained it all, which was what is the expression do, what is right for the student, meaning you? I think we can all kind of agree and I think your statement was pretty much on showing that's doing what's right for the students.

Samantha Melvin: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I think you have to know your students. Of course we have to do, it doesn't matter what discipline you're teaching, you have to do your homework. You have to read the information that is provided to us [crosstalk 00:41:40]. It's a lot of work, it takes a lot of time, but it is our job, and it is really important to be understanding of this situation that child faces, the challenges and all of those things.

But, that being said, it is also important for us to find other ways to tap into that child that is not linear. If we are having conversations, and we're getting to know that child, and we are developing a sense of trust ... I think one of the biggest things for me was creating a safe environment that is not about mocking anyone. You don't mock your colleagues, you don't mock other students, sarcasm doesn't work. I don't believe that works with elementary students. When you get into middle school and high school that is banter, but at the elementary school they still need to know that they're getting straight information. You need to be kind, it's about demonstrating that with adults, and you're modeling that kind of behavior. If you can't do that then elementary school is probably not that space for you. There are a lot of creatives who find beauty in sarcasm, and that's awesome, but that's not a place for elementary. And [inaudible 00:43:13] because that's-





- Laura Grundler: No, I like direct. I agree with you 100%. Even at the middle school, honestly, you have to be very careful with the sarcasm because-
- Matt Grundler: It can be misconstrued.
- Laura Grundler: ... it can be misconstrued. Kids are coming from so many different entry level points, especially with maturity at that age and all the things they're going through. Just from my former life as a middle school assistant principal, I think you need to be very careful with sarcasm all the way through the ninth grade, quite honestly. I just don't know that they have the maturity to, some do and some don't, to interpret it.
- Samantha Melvin: I think one of the greatest things that we need to communicate is that we're trying to develop a trust so that when we enter into a space, which really should be campus-wide, but often it's the studio, where they're testing new ideas and they feel safe to put their ideas out into the world, even if it's just on a piece of paper at that moment. Later they'll be able to talk about it from a point of comfort, which if we don't feel safe about sharing our ideas then they're just going to stay within us and what a shame. Right?
- Laura Grundler: Right.
- Matt Grundler: Oh absolutely.
- Samantha Melvin: We're [crosstalk 00:44:37] if we don't give that podium to the students to really be able to express themselves.
- Laura Grundler: For sure.
- Matt Grundler: That's awesome.
- Laura Grundler: Samantha, every time I talk to you I just learn so much. Just in this conversation I've had so many ideas for the teachers I work with. You're just a joy.
- Samantha Melvin: Oh, well thank you so much.
- Laura Grundler: A joy. Do you have any parting words or last message you'd like to send the audience of the podcast, just something that you want to stick with them?



- Samantha Melvin: I think it's ... Wow.
- Laura Grundler: I know, that's a big question.
- Samantha Melvin: Big question.
- Laura Grundler: I put you on the spot.
- Samantha Melvin: I think what's really important is that you show up. I think that right there speaks volumes about what we do in the classroom. If you are that person who is dependable, who does what you're supposed to do, which we're paid to do, but you actually do it earnestly and then treat others with kindness, and you are the person that others can turn to, whether it's the 10 year old, or the 35 year old, or the 50 year old colleague it doesn't matter. They may not be in that right moment to hear you fully, but just that enthusiasm and that passion that you bring to your workplace carries a lot of value. You're there to engage students. You're there to create momentum so that they can express themselves, so why not bring joy to that? I think that's a really powerful opportunity that we have. So there we are.
- Matt Grundler: Wow.
- Laura Grundler: There we are. Wow. Thank you so much for being a part of this new adventure for us, episode number two.
- Matt Grundler: Episode number two.
- Samantha Melvin: Oh it's so great. Thank you for [crosstalk 00:46:40].
- Laura Grundler: You're our second guest. We're going to continue to build and grow together. It's a journey so-
- Matt Grundler: We're glad, we're glad we're connected with you not just through Twitter, but being in the state of Texas and knowing you for so long.
- Samantha Melvin: It's just always a pleasure hanging out with you guys. Thank you so much for this opportunity, but I look forward to seeing you in person soon.
- Matt Grundler: Yes.



Laura Grundler: Soon, yes.

Matt Grundler: Soon for sure. Well we just want to thank Education Closet and thank you Samantha again. We will see you guys around.

Samantha Melvin: Thank you.

Laura Grundler: Thank you.

Matt Grundler: Thank you.

Laura Grundler: Bye.

Matt Grundler: Bye.