

<u>Speaker 1:</u>	Welcome to the Creatively Connected podcast from Education Closet. Connecting teachers and ideas one glue stick at a time. Here's your hosts and K12 Art Chat founders Matt and Laura Grundler.
Matt Grundler:	Hi everybody. This is Matt and Laura Grundler and welcome to another episode of Creatively Connected Classroom. And uh
Laura Grundler:	This week's a little different because we are super excited to have Susan Riley with us.
Matt Grundler:	Yay.
<u>Laura Grundler:</u>	Susan is the CEO of Education Closet which very kindly sponsors this pod cast, and she's a great friend of ours. So it might be a little bit more off the cuff, friendly and just[crosstalk 00:00:53]
Matt Grundler:	Oh yes.
Laura Grundler:	Friendly, and just [crosstalk 00:00:57] (laughter)
Susan Riley:	We'll be good, we'll be good tonight I promise.
Matt Grundler:	Okay. I guess.
<u>Laura Grundler:</u>	So Susan, I don't know that everyone, I mean that we have the privilege of knowing you so well, but I don't know that all of our listeners really know your background and how you became the CEO of Education Closet and how that all happened.
Susan Riley:	I always say it was a series of happy little accidents. I feel like Bob Ross, you know.
<u>Susan Riley:</u>	I actually started as an elementary music teacher and I was in there for about ten years. And during that period of time I got to about year five and decided, you know, I hit that teacher burn-out part that happens so often
Laura Grundler:	Yes.



Susan Riley: And I had had multiple experiences at that point in title one schools as well as total the other end, very small affluent schools, and decided that I needed to make a bigger impact. I really wanted to make a bigger impact than I could in a single classroom. So, I thought administration was going to be the key, so I got my Masters in Admin. And kind of went to the dark side for a minute, a hot minute, so I,

Laura Grundler: Same thing.

- Susan Riley: I know, right. (laughter)[inaudible 00:02:20] because its really not, I mean, I know more fantastic administrators than I know administrators who are you know, terrible. I think administration gets a really bad rap most of the time.
- <u>Matt Grundler:</u> When we were laughing, hold on, I'm sorry to interrupt Susan, but we were laughing because Laura's mom used to work for administration and that as well, so when Laura got her Master's all of sudden she was like, "You've turned to the dark side."
- Laura Grundler: Yeah, my mother [inaudible 00:02:48]. She was like, "Your kidding? A Masters in Administration." And it was for the very same reason actually: I wanted to make a bigger impact on my community. You know, I loved my kids, I loved my school, but I wanted to have a farther reaching impact on the art and really getting that focus and passion that I have for that out there to more people.
- Susan Riley: That's exactly it, I, as a music teacher was really frustrated with the state of the arts in our school, and the lack of respect, and knowing what it could do and not being able to bust through the red tape or the perception that the arts were fluff. And so I thought if I could become an administrator I could then, I would be in a position to change that. And so, through my Masters program, I actually discovered arts integration. I discovered that this is thirty years worth of research; I had to do this awful research methodology paper. It was during a summer session and I was like, Oh, God, what am I going to do this on, and I found arts integration, and I thought, Wow!

<u>Susan Riley:</u> And I had my thesis, I had to have a practicum as an Administration candidate, and so I'd gone to my principal, and I said," You know, I really think that this could work. I think this could be something that would



help us lift all students who were struggling at that point with, we were moving towards the middle. We had spent a lot of energy lifting our struggling learners,

Laura Grundler: Yeah.

Susan Riley: And they were making some pretty nice progress. But, then all of our gifted and talented kids were shifting downward, you know, and so we had this move to the middle and none of us could figure it out. And so I said, "John can we just try a pilot of art integration?" And he was like, "Well, if you can get a first or second grade teacher on board with you, and a fourth or fifth grade teacher on board with you, you can have your little pilot and Kind of test out the waters." And I presented it to Team Leaders Meeting, and I ended getting all of the team leaders from K to 5.

Matt Grundler: Wow!

<u>Susan Riley:</u> To take the pilot with me plus our reading specialist and our special education team leader.

Matt Grundler: That's a big deal.

Susan Riley: Yeah! It was great.

Laura Grundler: Talk about buy-in.

<u>Susan Riley:</u> It was like a prayer: Please, please, take this with me. And I think they all felt sorry for me because I was young and dumb and didn't know any better, and they thought, well, you know, let's humor her.

Matt Grundler: Right. I got it.

Susan Riley: Yeah. So the first year was painful. I learned a lot of lessons about what to do and what not to do. And as I was learning those lessons, I was thinking there has got to be a way of documenting this so we don't have to re-invent the wheel next year. And so I started education closet, really, as an online journal for myself to remember what worked, what didn't, to share it with our teachers, and be like, okay, so heres what we've done, were gone to use this as a collection of lessons so any lessons we



develop were going to house them here. And it just kind of took off from there. We found a lot of research based components and added it to the site. And then three years later we got recognized at the Kennedy Center-which is great-and I ended up moving into an Arts Integration specialist role for an entire county school system.

Matt Grundler: Wow.

<u>Susan Riley:</u> Its the first role of its kind in the state of Maryland and my job was to provide arts integration training to all five-thousand teachers in the district, which was like really overwhelming.

Laura Grundler: Yep. One person to 5,000 teachers?

Susan Riley: Five thousand teachers, its a very large district. And so we were, you know we had it strategic. We were going to start with elementary, were going to capitalize on some of the middle school stuff that was happening because Bates Middle School, which has been highlighted for arts integration for a long time, was the middle school area in that district. So, we decided to do vertical alignment. And in that process, I did the same thing with Education Closet. I said you know what, lets document what this looks like now on a district scale. From the school house to now a district wide component because it is completely different. From working in a school to bringing arts integration to everybody in a district looks very different when you need to do it in multiple schools at multiple levels and have a vertical alignment at the same time. So I did a lot of that and that was also very successful, and then I got that three year, I swear its a three year itch thing, you know? My dad does this every five years, I do this every three. I think the longest stretch lve ever had is being a CEO I think its because I've made it my own, I can't really walk out on myself. (laughs) But, at that three year point there was a lot of red tape in central office, as you know. You know, Laura.

Laura: Yeah.

<u>Susan Riley:</u> It was frustrating because again I wasn't getting impact that I originally envisioned for that. I thought, "If I go to a district level I can bring this to a huge amount of people. And then it was red tape, red tape; You can't



do this, you have to do this, you have to, you have to go over here, and you have to get this permission, and I'm like, "Permission! For what?"

<u>Susan Riley:</u> And so that's when I decided to take the leap and leave the traditional education route and just go on my own full time with Ed Closet. And it has been the best thing I've ever done. So, that's the back story.

Matt Grundler: In a nutshell.[crosstalk 00:08:29]

Laura Grundler: So, okay, Education Closet offers a lot of different things, you know, in arts integration. Arts integration has been, I mean, there's just all kinds of [inaudible 00:08:41], all kinds of resources-so many of them are free. Holy cow, just even listening to this pod-cast that you provide is free.

<u>Matt Grundler:</u> What we've seen in the last three years has been, I mean to see the changes that Education Closet has added to their repertoire of things has been really amazing too.

Laura Grundler: Definitely.

Susan Riley:

And it is something we very much stand by that 80% of what we offer is free because I remember very well being in that position of just starting with arts integration and looking for resources, and the only thing I could find were text books that were sixty dollars or more-so I couldn't do a book study-or programs that I could buy that were a thousand dollars or more. And so, I was like, well there's nothing in-between. And so, the goal was to make this as accessible for as many teachers as possible at a very beginning level, and then its[inaudible 00:09:39]go deeper, and like the way we kind of interact in our community, and then you can pay for it. I don't necessarily think that we as teachers need to be paying for things right up front. I think that it is important that there is a good mix so, yeah, it was, and you kind find things for free. That's the other thing that grates on you sometimes, for teachers, is that organizations will make things free, quote/unquote, free for teachers, but put your email in to get whatever it is and then it is like, its terrible; its something that is such fluff I could have done that in five minutes, you know what I mean?

Matt Grundler: Yeah.



- Susan Riley: So, it's important to me that the resources we provided, that's why I love this podcast because you guys your heart and soul in it, and it is such a valuable component, and so in line with what we do in that everything that we produce, whether its free or not, has got to be of the best quality-because that's what teachers deserve. Laura Grundler: Yeah. Matt Grundler: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. Laura Grundler: I called you the other day just because I was curious about new things that are happening with Education Closet, and you were talking to me a little bit about the certification program, and I, I wish that I had the time to do it;and I tried to talk my husband into it last night.[crosstalk 00:11:04] Matt Grundler: I have time.[crosstalk 00:11:08](laughs) Oh right, right, right, right. Laura Grundler: Yeah. Matt Grundler: Tell us a little bit more about this certification program, like what's involved, what's the end, what do you get from it? It, you know. Susan Riley: Yeah. This is the heart of what we do. It hadn't been for a long time but this is our third enrollment season, so I am really really excited. Because, like now we have it nailed down. We understand exactly the sequences that need to happen, the delivery that needs to happen for teachers, what the time frame needs to look like for them. So I am really excited because its, were expanding it, were getting it accredited. So it is phenomenal. The certification program came out of my brain when about four years ago I was looking at all of the things that we offered and I thought, there's not a cohesive way for teachers to understand what all it takes to be an arts integration [inaudible 00:12:04]specialist. [inaudible 00:12:05]one.
- <u>Susan Riley:</u> You know, you can take a couple of courses here or there, but there is nothing sequential that will walk you through the process, nor was there anything out there that really reflected the reality of what it took to take my school from zero to sixty, or to take the district from zero to sixty. So, there wasn't anything that helped you understand how arts integration



and [inaudible 00:12:31]utilized for leadership or for, and how to craft that for buy-in and get those teachers on board so its not just you doing it by yourself, but it is collaborative in nature. How to get funding for it. What does standard [inaudible 00:12:46]really look like. How do you type a really solid lesson plan that, by the end of it, your students are going to thrive, and question. How do you access it. So, these were all things that, you know, you can take little bits and pieces, but there was nothing in sequential. And so, we decided to develop this certification program that walked you through, from the beginning to the end.

Susan Riley: The first go around was messy, like everything for an artist of any kind. I love my first cohort of students because they really gave me such great feed-back. Like, my first set of video lessons, because its set up, in sprints. So each sprint right now is eight weeks long. And there is five to six video lessons in each sprint. And the video lessons are about fifteen to twenty minutes long. So, easily chunk able. We also have them as an audio recording so if you want to listen to it in the car on the way to work instead of watching the video, that's fine. We even have a transcript of it so you can read it if you want. There's lots of different ways of ingesting the information.

Susan Riley:

But, its pretty consist. And then, the only thing you turn in at the end of each sprint is a culminating project. And that's where you have a cohort and a mentor that's been assigned to you. And you work through that project while your going through that sprint so that what you produce at the end of each sprint is really of best quality for yourself, but it also ties it into what your working on. So the framework for everybody's project is the same. Like for example, in sprint one the project is to create a standard alignment guide. So, you're taking a look at standards in science and social studies and math, things that you maybe don't have time to do during your regular school day. And, your looking at theater and art and music standards, and figuring out what are some ones that make a natural fit. And you actually create a chart for that. So that's your first project.

Susan Riley: And, so those projects can be, you can do that, (laughing)[crosstalk 00:14:53]Your laughing now.



<u>Laura Grundler:</u>	I'm laughing because I'm nerding out. I'm laughing because that's the kind of stuff I,I like to do.
<u>Susan Riley:</u>	Love right? Yeah. Because were teachers, Its what we love, right. And so, the point of that project is that if I'm a kindergarten teacher, or if I am an eighth grade biology teacher, I can still get the same I can still get the same benefit. I just craft it based around my content, right. So, we have these projects, and each project builds upon the others. So like in sprint two you go in to look at those standard alignment sheets you created and you pick like three of them, and develop some really amazing arts integrated lessons and corresponding assessments with those.
<u>Susan Riley:</u>	So everything that you're doing is leading, building upon each other and also helping what you're already doing right now. In our first go around with this, I think each lesson was like an hour. I think it was just like, I was just like knowledge dumping to the core. (laughs)
Laura Grundler:	Wow.
Susan Riley:	Everything I know about arts integration and STEAM. Just provided all at once.
Laura Grundler:	(laughs)
Susan Riley:	Knowledge overload. (laughs)
Matt Grundler:	[inaudible 00:16:08]
<u>Susan Riley:</u>	Yeah. So that first iteration it was, we've got to tighten this up. The second iteration's so much better. And now the third go around we are going to keep everything the same as what we had actually for the second, the second enrollment period because its worked really really well. We've added something different though. We started out the certification program with the idea that it was going to be interactive, so you were assigned a mentor or a coach and a group of fifteen to twenty-five people that you were going to be able to connect with throughout the program through video-chat, through think book community, through on-line comments in the learning management area. And that has been really, like fantastic. We have a great network.



<u>Susan Riley:</u>	We also had a lot of people who said, " I want to go at this at my own pace. I don't need a community of people, its not how I learn best. I would really like to reflect and go through this on my own. I might want to go through it faster, or if life comes up I might need a little bit of leeway." And that is the thing about the interactive program; it is one year start to finish. You start July 1, you end June 30th. One year. It doesn't allow for a whole lot of flexibility in terms of time. So this year we've added a second track; we've added the independent study track. So, its also really nice with tuition because the independent study track is about half the price.
Laura Grundler:	Aha.
<u>Susan Riley:</u>	So it gives you the time flexibility, it just doesn't give you the interaction. So its really about how you learn best. And I think that's something that's really important for me, is being able to provide personalized learning as much as we can for adult learners just like we do for our kids.
Matt Grundler:	I was just going to say
Laura Grundler:	Yep.
Matt Grundler:	Kids done something were pushing left and right is how do kids learn best, and they gotta to learn.
Laura Grundler:	And they've got to know how they learn best. Yeah. So[inaudible 00:18:03]
<u>Susan Riley:</u>	Well you know the independent track is there Laura, so you can[crosstalk 00:18:07]
Matt Grundler:	No [inaudible 00:18:12]that social component so that wouldn't have really helped him.
Susan Riley:	Yeah, that's true.
<u>Laura Grundler:</u>	[inaudible 00:18:17] So to me, when you get to the end of this, first of all is what I've heard, is that all of this meaningful to whatever you're doing in your day to day educational career. Things that you can apply to take away, so if Matt was teaching an english and art class, or working with his



english department he could apply these things during the school year and see if they work or not. Is that correct?

Susan Riley: Oh, yeah. And its so interesting to see the people who apply and move through this program because we've had people who are traditional classroom teachers, we've had people who are arts teachers and media specialists and principals and coordinators. We've also had museum educators. We've had people who are from non-profits who are looking to build after school teams and art integration programs to support their community. We just, literally just interviewed someone who is working in medical education.

Laura Grundler: Wow![crosstalk 00:19:22]

<u>Susan Riley:</u> At the post secondary level and working specifically with wounded veterans. And so how do we take a look at medical care through the lens of the arts?

Matt Grundler: Oh, gosh [crosstalk 00:19:35]

Laura Grundler: That would be so cool.

Susan Riley: Right. So for me, that's the exciting part of this is being able to have a community of so many diverse perspectives and backgrounds because you learn so much that way. And also it provides us with a good challenge, because we are looking at these [inaudible 00:19:58]programs flexible enough, and pliable enough, that all of these kinds of learners can come in. And so far, cross fingers, it hasn't. So, yeah, that, today I was like pleasantly surprised. I thought, what in the world, how is this going to work.

Laura Grundler: [inaudible 00:20:12] Its so cool though. I mean, when you said that I immediately went to my father was a disabled veteran, and I was at the VA with him, and they had visual journaling classes for veterans. And, I was like, I think everyone knows how individual journaling I am [crosstalk 00:20:28]And I was so super excited to see that because I was like a way for PTSD to work through the trauma of all these events. And I thought, Shh, and I actually had a moment where I was like well you could integrate music this way and movements and physical therapy. I was having a whole like, I was taking pictures of the bulletin board at the VA



place. So, that's really exciting to hear people looking at this through a unique lens like that.

Susan Riley: And its like The Matrix cause once you see it you can't unsee it.

Laura Grundler: Right.

Susan Riley: Once you start to see those connections that fun for me is to watch where people start, and when they get to sprint four. I can see this connection, and this one, and this one. And they would never had seen that starting at the beginning. So, that's cool.

Laura Grundler: Yeah.

<u>Matt Grundler:</u> And that's what it's all about. I mean, that's what you want them to open their mind and start seeing things differently. So

Laura Grundler: I mean we don't teach, well we do. That's so funny. We teach in silos, like you know I was a secondary teacher. I had one period of art six periods a day. [inaudible 00:21:40]I didn't get to see the English team or the Biology team or the Math team very much. And yet, in art all these beautiful connections exist. And so, there were times when I would think to myself, "I wonder if this applies to what the kids are learning in Earth Science right now?" And in my mind I would think it would but I never had the time to really look and see how it connected it.

Matt Grundler: Or even have a conversation with somebody who is more a specialist in that area.

Laura Grundler: Yeah.

Matt Grundler: You hear what I'm saying, Hey, this is where that connects. So

Laura Grundler: So what if you go through the certification program. [inaudible 00:22:17]This is the end.

Susan Riley: (laughs) That's the million dollar question, right. [crosstalk 00:22:23]Once you submit that portfolio and our certification team, we have a team of coaches, obviously [inaudible 00:22:31]of mentors, we all come together at the end of the program and look through every single [inaudible 00:22:36]portfolio. We all look at every single one and grade it against a



rubric so that we can be sure that we all kind of touched the learners in some way. And so, provided you get an 80% on that final portfolio review, you get a certification. We have a jobs board that is only for certification grads, and so what that does is provides a place for organizations who are looking for arts integrationist team specialists to kind of go to get somebody who is certified. It also provides you with a really nice network. About 90% of our grads are working as either arts integration specialists, arts integration consultants, or in some capacity working for another organization in that kind of a role, which is exciting. We had one grad who has a book coming out on how to connect guidance counseling with arts integration and social emotional learning. [crosstalk 00:23:35] Amazing.

Laura Grundler: Brilliant.

Susan Riley: Yeah. She had a book deal come out. We've had another one who has been working with another large organization that I can't talk about, but they've provided a lot of art supplies for a lot of students in a lot of places. [crosstalk 00:23:47]

Matt Grundler: Is this like

Susan Riley: A big name organization actually ended up calling from our grads because they know what they're talking about. Its, they really see it seamlessly, they have great examples of work, and they're just doing phenomenal stuff. I mean, the consulting components that are in therethat's the other thing, is we do these master classes which are so fun, for me, because its like the bonus stuff that I really want to sink my teeth into and we just don't have time during the normal programs. Like at the end, all of our grads get a whole bonus session from me on how you become a consultant, what's all this stuff you need to have in terms of taxes, and business stuff, and all of that in order to become a consultant, and then how you go market yourself.

Laura Grundler: Yeah.

<u>Susan Riley:</u> In that capacity. So, that our whole goal is that we support you. Once your done, we support you in any capacity that we can. So, you get access to the accelerator for free, so that you get all of the resources all of the time. Its just that we want to make sure that were



supporting[inaudible 00:24:51]the best quality arts and integration specialists we can get, because our students need it. To be quite honest, our students need it so anything we can do to help with that we are excited to do it.

Matt Grundler: Cool.

Laura Grundler: Awesome. So, how does Matt sign up for this? (laughter)

Susan Riley: Hey Matt, we have an application process my friend. (laughs)

Matt Grundler: Okay. All right.

Susan Riley: Actually, it's open for enrollment. It only opens up once a year. It closes on March 15th. And its an application process so both strands, either inter-active or independent. We have a very short application. We want to get an understanding of your background, what PD you've already had, what your goals are. It's really important for us to know what you want, because if we're not a good fit for you I don't want to waste your time, or your money, because you work too hard for it. So the application is there. Once you send in the application we review it, and if you go for the interactive track we also do an interview, a video chat interview so that you can ask questions and get more information. So, and then from there it is a rolling admissions policy. Rolling admissions means that we admit people as they come in; So the earlier you get it in the better. Obviously. But, yeah, we close that on March 15th and then it won't open again until 2020.

Laura Grundler:	Oh, wow.
Matt Grundler:	Whoa.
<u>Susan Riley:</u>	Yeah. (laughs)
Laura Grundler:	So this is the window, right now?
<u>Susan Riley:</u>	Yeah.
Matt Grundler:	(laughs)



<u>Susan Riley:</u>	Its the window. Right now. And we're like, I told you guys at the very beginning, we've been back to back interviews today from nine a.m. 'till four. I was like, waah, this is a lot, but so good, so good.
<u>Laura Grundler:</u>	Just out of curiosity, do you have a lot of people signing up, just from my heart, I want to know that there's a lot of people out there that are interested in this.
<u>Susan Riley:</u>	Yeah, I was telling my husband the other night, every time I open this I have a little bit of trepidation where I'm like, is this gonna, is there like anybody else out there who wants to do this, and every year we have more and more people apply. Already, and its been open, you guys, just for one day. One day. At this point, at this recording we have over 300 applicants for like a hundred spaces in interactive version and a hundred spaces in the independent version. So, its competitive, people really want to get in, and I love that because that means
Matt Grundler:	I was going to tell you, that's got to make you feel good. Because [crosstalk 00:27:28]
<u>Susan Riley:</u>	[inaudible 00:27:29] people are looking for a way to remember the joy of teaching again.
Laura Grundler:	Yes.
Susan Riley:	You know.
Matt Grundler:	Yeah, Yeah. [crosstalk 00:27:39]
<u>Laura Grundler:</u>	Well you kind of started, to bring us back to the beginning of this conversation, you, there really is a five year burn-out mark. You and I, we've talked about we have a lot in common and I was thinking, I said this to somebody the other day, I've been in the role that I'm in five years in July. This is the longest I've ever been in one role as well. And I'm like, oh, it's time for a new challenge, or a new school, or you know, what-ever it is.
Matt Grundler:	I keep telling her I'm



Laura Grundler: You know, I don't know whether it was burn-out, some of it was burn-out, some of it was just this desire to change the world. But I think we have to be very mindful of that piece of joy, and losing it. And I'm, having been a campus administrator, I've seen lots of teachers that were amazing, start to fade away. And its your, we have to, as administrators, as educators, we have to try to uplift and help people connect to the joy of teaching, just like you said. Susan Riley: Yeah, and I believe wholeheartedly that if there is, if you have a desire in you, whatever that looks like, if it is a desire for more as a teacher, if its desire to expand, or go somewhere different, or try something different, there's a reason that you have the desire. And it is not a mistake. It's leading you somewhere, and so you owe it to yourself to follow that because it's the only way you are ever going to find out what that means for you. So, whatever that means. Laura Grundler: I don't think we have to ask her[crosstalk 00:29:14] Matt Grundler: No. I was going to ask, say, yeah, same thing. I don't think we, that was pretty full. Laura Grundler: That was it. Profound. Susan Riley: I'm not so sure about that, but you guys are kind. (laughter) Matt Grundler: No, that was, that was pretty good. Laura Grundler: No, I mean I, you know, it's true. I'm Matt Grundler: You gotta follow what, you gotta follow what makes you happy, cause if you don't your not going to be happy. I mean that's really what it comes down to. Susan Riley: You've got to follow your passion, you've got to follow your gut. You know. Laura Grundler: For sure. Matt Grundler: All right. On that note, we appreciate you taking the time, and I know

your exhausted from all the interviews, so



<u>Susan Riley:</u>	That's part of the deal. But thank you so much for having me on you guys, it's been amazing listening to the pod cast grow, and so I'm exited to be on one of the episodes. (laughter) [crosstalk 00:30:05]
Matt Grundler:	[inaudible 00:30:05]
Laura Grundler:	So, there was a lot of great information shared today. Thank you so much.
Susan Riley:	You're welcome, and thank you for having me on. I look forward to hearing the next set of podcasts coming out.
Matt Grundler:	And I'll be getting on my, my application [inaudible 00:30:17]and so.
Laura Grundler:	All right. [crosstalk 00:30:22]
Matt Grundler:	All right. Bye Susan. Thanks
Susan Riley:	Bye.
<u>Speaker 5:</u>	Heads up, seven-up friends. If you've been enjoying these episodes, be sure to subscribe to the Creatively Connected Classroom podcasts. You'll get a notification every time we release a new episode, each and every week. And, take a screen shot and put it on your favorite social media:Twitter, In stop, Facebook, you name it. Tag Education Closet and K12 Art Chat so we can reach out and say thanks. And if you really love us with all the feel, give us a review, and/or rating over on I tunes; it helps others find the show and connect with our incredible community. Thanks for all your support.