

Education Unscripted & Explored Transcript

Season 2: Episode 1 | The Spaces that Shape Us

Kari Vogelgesang ([00:07](#)):

Welcome back to another season of Education Unscripted and Explored with Kari and Mark. This season, we continue exploring the people, partnerships, and ideas shaping education today. As always, we'll have honest conversations grounded in research, lived experience, and the realities educators and communities navigate every day as they work together to build the relationships, [00:00:30] environments, and systems that help people and communities flourish.

Mark McDermott ([00:35](#)):

These are important and necessary responsibilities, and schools are uniquely positioned to lead much of this work, but they also raise an important question. How do families, community organizations, businesses, healthcare providers, and local leaders become true partners in creating the conditions where young people can thrive?

Kari Vogelgesang ([00:53](#)):

And I would like to begin this season with a question that we will come back to, not only throughout this conversation, [00:01:00] but I think we will keep coming back to it throughout this season. For decades, I believe we've measured school success largely by what happens inside school walls through testing, how kids behave in school, how they participate and engage in school activities. But I also believe if we truly want to strive for kids feeling like they belong and families feeling like they belong [00:01:30] and developing healthy, sustainable relationships and shaping mental health in our communities, not just in school, but outside of school, we should also be asking what we're doing outside of those school walls and how we're partnering with different organizations in our communities to make this possible for students and our families.

Mark McDermott ([01:51](#)):

Oftentimes, it probably feels like the question that we get asked is how do we get schools to do more? And what Kari and I are thinking about, I think [00:02:00] a little bit, and maybe what we can explore in this conversation is maybe a better question of how do schools and communities work together to create conditions where every young person can thrive? And as always, the views expressed today are our own and not necessarily those of the University of Iowa or the College of Education.

Kari Vogelgesang ([02:18](#)):

I'm really excited to introduce our two guests today. Today's guests approach community building from two different but very deeply connected perspectives. The civic spaces [00:02:30] where people gather and the natural environments that help make those spaces welcoming, healthy, and alive. We're excited to welcome today, Anne Mangano. She's the director of the Iowa City Public Library and Bob Geniusz, who is the director of operations for Sustainable Landscape Solutions here in Iowa City, Iowa. Anne and Bob, thank you so much for joining us today. Before we dive in, would each of you tell our listeners a little bit about yourself, your [00:03:00] role, and what excites you most about the work that you do in our community?

Bob Geniusz (03:04):

Sure. Thanks for having us too. I'm excited to be here. This is definitely stuff we love to talk about at Sustainable Landscape Solutions. I am the director of operations, so I oversee logistics, scheduling, staffing, things like that. I think what really excites me is seeing the finished product when people see it, that we put together hard work, whether that's from our crew or whether it's from our customers. [00:03:30] It can be stressful along the way building something for our customers and for our crews, but to see it at the very end when it's a beautiful finished design, things like that, a newly created outdoor space and just seeing the wow and the sense of accomplishment, both from the people that built it and from our customers. Yeah.

Anne Mangano (03:50):

Thank you, Bob. And thank you for having me. I'm Anne Mangano. I'm the library director at the Iowa City Public Library. And I've been in the role since September of [00:04:00] 2025, so I'm a new director. But I've worked at the library for about 20 years in my entire professional career, and it's such a special library. And one of the things that I love about the Iowa City Public Library and all public libraries is that we really don't always know the impact about what we do. We provide a lot of opportunities, but sometimes every once in a while we'll hear a story where someone used our fax machine to provide documents to the [00:04:30] federal government and they were able to get their citizenship. Or we had a story where somebody used our photocopier, all of our digital media lab, and they started their own law firm after finishing law school just with the opportunities they had at the library.

(04:43):

And so they wrote back and they sent a little donation to the foundation. But those are the stories we hear about, but we don't always hear from everyone. And so it's wonderful to just see when we hear back about those things.

Mark McDermott (05:00):

[00:05:00] Okay. So Linda McDermott, my mother, fan of the show. Oh,

Kari Vogelgesang (05:05):

She's

Mark McDermott (05:05):

Our

Kari Vogelgesang (05:05):

Number

Mark McDermott (05:06):

One fan. Yeah. One of our loyal listeners was also a librarian. And so Linda will be very proud, Anne, that we invited you on today. But she worked in our local small community library back in Traer. And oftentimes people, when they think about community spaces, specifically libraries, they might think of shelves of books, quiet reading areas. And then with parks and landscaping, they think of grass, trees, places to walk. [00:05:30] We often forget both of those places and others have been intentionally

designed environments that can shape how the people feel, gather, interact, connect once they're there. So Anne, tell us in your mind, how would you describe the role of a modern public library?

Anne Mangano ([05:48](#)):

Yeah. I will say first that it is very much still books. If you asked anybody off the street, what did they do the last time they were at the public library? I would say over 70% of [00:06:00] them would say, "I checked out a book." Or, "What do you think about the library?" They say, "I think about books." And that's true. We still have shelves of books. We still have opportunities for people to sit and read and explore from all ages. But we really think about the whole person when we're thinking about libraries and what we're offering. And it is about learning. That's our mission is how do people learn? And we start from the very young with story times. We also, for people who are retired [00:06:30] or their life is changing towards their end years, and we think about technology classes for them. So we offer technology classes called Senior Planet through Johnson County Public Health.

([06:40](#)):

So it's just a variety of literacy needs, whether that's true literacy, the reading literacy, but also media literacy, digital literacy, and now artificial intelligence literacy. And we're kind of thinking about how things change and how our programming. We're also a place for people to gather and learn together, whether that's two people in a study room talking about the things that they're [00:07:00] working on, to big community meetings about important topics in the community and making decisions, whether that be debates for elected officials or just a topic that everybody wants to kind of share their information about and ask questions. One thing I will say also that maybe is a little bit more invisible at the library is that we do provide a lot of social services. We are a place for people to be during the day when it is very hot or very cold. There's not a lot of places that are truly public that people can go.

([07:28](#)):

And when we think about [00:07:30] traditional library services, we have that reference question. And those have changed a lot. They still exist. It's just we're often connecting people to community resources, whether that be if they need acute needs like food or shelter, we're pointing them to the community organizations and the nonprofits that can serve them.

Bob Geniusz ([07:47](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Thanks. What

Anne Mangano ([07:49](#)):

About

Kari Vogelgesang ([07:49](#)):

You, Bob? I

Bob Geniusz ([07:50](#)):

Think in our company's role, we go by the slogan of we connect people with nature. And I think a lot of that is just kind of getting people outside, simple as that is, [00:08:00] just getting out of your box. If you heard the old little song, Little Boxes,

([08:05](#)):

Just talks about how if you're just in your house all the time, you're boarded up there, but to get out and to be able to connect with something other than your screens, things like that. And if you can walk down the street, of course, but is that as enjoyable as if there's a well-built path or a walkable path? Or if in a more wooded area, it's cleared out and there's a place you can walk through. Or if there's shade trees, [00:08:30] you can walk down the street, but are there shade trees that keep it a cooler, more walkable place to go? I think that's the biggest thing. And whether that's somebody in their own yard at home, it could just be, it doesn't have to be a big extravagant project they have to do, but maybe it's just overgrown and they just want somewhere that's going to be cleared out and just a place to sit and hear the birds and things like that.

Kari Vogelgesang ([08:52](#)):

I think you both kind of started to address my next question for you. So a lot of the experience [00:09:00] and education and research that I do is connected to mental health. And maybe both of you already know that the U.S. Surgeon General has identified loneliness and social isolation is a major public health concern. And we know research has proven time and time again that if people stay connected consistently in meaningful ways, then that builds and strengthens personal and community wellbeing, engagement, and it even leads into academic success that we see inside [00:09:30] the classroom or inside the school walls as well. So from your perspectives in your third spaces, whether it be shaping how landscapes are developed in our communities or within the public library, how can these public spaces, green spaces, help address isolation and strengthen things like belonging, connection, friendship, community?

Bob Geniusz ([09:55](#)):

I think from my perspective on that, I personally, I know back [00:10:00] in 2020, it was a rough year for everybody obviously. What I found was you always hear people say now like touch grass. But it really is. For that time, I would go out into Hickory Hill Park and just go on a walk. And in that moment, it's just like everything's okay because the wildlife's doing everything. All the plants are growing in their system that they go through and all that. And the prairie's flourishing and the woodland's alive. And you're just at peace and quiet. And that's just, [00:10:30] if I didn't have that space, I mean, I probably would figure out other ways to get through it, but just to be able to escape there was so huge for me personally. And I think it goes beyond that. If you have an outdoor space, I'm a big animal welfare person.

([10:45](#)):

So I feel like animals, they always say they can help with loneliness and things like that. But what if you have a dog that is high energy? Is there anywhere to walk them? Things like that. But if you have a nice shaded little park that you can walk through and get their energy out and then you can [00:11:00] keep them, then that lightens the load on the local animal shelter. It's a kind of a snowball effect there.

Kari Vogelgesang ([11:06](#)):

That's great. Thanks, Bob.

Anne Mangano ([11:08](#)):

I think with the library, we also recognize that learning is inherently social.

([11:14](#)):

And an example is that we have a program every week called Story Jam. And Story Jam is learning through song. They'll sing in their learning literacy. And one of the things that happens at this story time

that we weren't [00:11:30] really prepared or planned for is that the kids are singing and the parents are sitting in the back talking. And we talk about how, is it disruptive? But really what the parents are doing is they're making connections. And then they go to the playground together. And then they're making friendships both at the kid level and at the parent level. And maybe this is. I think having a child can be [00:12:00] somewhat isolating. It's a change of life. And when you have more friends that are kind of going through that same thing and you can talk about what's happening in your life and it's very similar to what theirs, that's a connection that is really important.

(12:12):

At the same time, they're learning modeling of how to read a story and how to share literacy with their child. But that's kind of a deep connection that I think we made an opportunity for, but we didn't really quite plan for.

Kari Vogelgesang (12:26):

I know, Mark, you have a question next, but I can't help myself [00:12:30] right now. I am thinking about the spaces that both you and Bob just described and when I was a young mother and making that transition from college to being a young mother and feeling so isolated. And all my friends had moved off to different places. And the connections that I made were through parks in the library. We started the baby and mommy library program years ago. This was even before the first [00:13:00] big remodel because Griffin's 25. I just aged myself. But also at the park too, there are all kinds of rec programs at the park and that's how I met my new group of friends. And had I not done that, again, I probably would've been fine, like you said, Bob, in 2020, but it sure was extremely helpful.

Bob Geniusz (13:23):

And sometimes it's just, honestly, it's those little interactions when you're on a walk. On [00:13:30] a hike, sometimes it's just ... I think to myself, sometimes maybe that's the only time that person might have said hi to somebody today or spoke to somebody. You don't know.

Anne Mangano (13:39):

It's creating community. It

Kari Vogelgesang (13:41):

Is. Yeah.

Mark McDermott (13:43):

I want to shift gears just a little bit to this idea of connections and interactions. And for sure, one thing we'd be interested in was hearing about maybe how the two of you see the interaction between the two spaces you work in, the public library and then green spaces. But I'd be interested [00:14:00] as well in how do you see maybe connections or interactions with public schools or with the K-12 environment that Kari and I talk a lot about? So either of those. Do you see some potential interactions between the two spaces you work in? Because a lot, Anne, what you were talking about, we have a school librarian come in and talk to my class and she talks about a lot of the same things that you do in terms of the shifting priorities and the different things that they're working with and how they can integrate [00:14:30] with the other work that's going on in school.

(14:31):

So I'd be interested in either of those.

Anne Mangano ([14:34](#)):

We do feel that library services don't really, they don't end at the library door. We bring our library programs to parks. In the summer, we have a weekly program called Stories in the Park. So we bring our bookmobile there. All the neighborhoods in Iowa City have a park and that's by design. But we don't have a library in every neighborhood. And so we have a bookmobile and the majority of the stops are in the parks because [00:15:00] we think that not only do they have the books, they can go to the playground, they can play in open space and they can have that communal time. It's their library stop. It's their park that they're visiting. We also recently have a new program called Audio Buds where we have people come, they bring an audiobook and then they walk a trail in a park. And although it starts out being an individual task, you're listening to an audiobook, but then people start talking about the books that they're listening to and then they just naturally [00:15:30] discard the audiobook and then they start talking to each other as they're walking around the park.

Bob Geniusz ([15:34](#)):

I think a lot of kind of what we do would be, I think the connection there could be something where just the curiosity from kids on how pollinators and things like that and native plants and being curious about that. And that's not like, "Ooh, that's a gross little bug. That's a caterpillar and that's going to turn into a monarch butterfly." Out at Kent Park, I don't know if you've been out there, there's a little education center and they have the life of a butterfly around there. And [00:16:00] I think that would be like a good connection between library and what we do.

Kari Vogelgesang ([16:05](#)):

I want to talk a little bit about, and I'm going to skip forward a little bit, Mark. So, the last couple of blogs that I wrote for Scanlan has to do with third spaces. And there's a specific term. So for those of you who are listening, if you haven't read those two blogs, then you can go to the Scanlan Center for School Mental Health website. What are you waiting

Mark McDermott ([16:26](#)):

For?

Kari Vogelgesang ([16:27](#)):

Yeah, get there. Get on it. Right.

([16:29](#)):

But [00:16:30] I think that this is a really important conversation because as particularly since 2020, although this was happening well before 2020, schools often take on the brunt of. I'm going to go ahead and just be bold and say blame for things that are happening in communities or not happening in communities that have to do with our youth that are living within that community. And third spaces are really [00:17:00] helpful in designing communities that provide support and partnership for schools to help shape and to help raise the youth that are living in that community to be as healthy as possible and to help everybody just thrive and be their best selves. So I'm wondering as we're thinking about that, these third spaces, and you are our partners in our schools, Sustainable Landscape Solutions, you are definitely a partner [00:17:30] with schools. Our public library, you are definitely a close partner with schools and making sure that this happens.

(17:37):

So I'm wondering, Bob, when you get a project, what kinds of things help? What kinds of things do you think about and do you plan for when somebody says to you, these are the goals or these are the things that I want in this particular space? What do you think about and what can you tell the rest of us to think about? I can tell you, I'm going on and on right now. I'll stop, [00:18:00] I promise. But I can tell you as I start to rethink even just my own yard, I start to think about, okay, when my kids come home and I want us to use this outdoor space as community, or I want to share it with my neighbors, what should I be thinking through?

Bob Geniusz (18:16):

I think one of the biggest things would be, a lot of it depends on budget, but things like that. But I would say just have it be accessible. A lot of times if it's overgrown or weedy, things like that, you don't really want to sit out there. But beyond [00:18:30] that, I like to think about the different seasons of plants, like the diversity in the plants. If you have things that are coming up and you don't have to do a full on prairie, it's something we could do. But where in the spring, in April, you have Golden Alexanders and other new plants coming up and then it goes into cone flowers. They each have their different seasons of color and different benefits for different insects. And it goes all the way through the fall when you have asters coming up and things like [00:19:00] that just to keep that year round interest.

(19:03):

And by year round, you could have a red twig dogwood out there that has red sticks throughout the winter. But beyond just the plants themselves, do you need a functional space? Do you need just a little pad even just for your trash cans to get them out of the mud?

Anne Mangano (19:18):

Or

Bob Geniusz (19:18):

Do you need a pad where you can put a grill out there or a path so that you can get back to the back area of your yard? Things like that. So it's kind of what the goals are. A lot of times that people [00:19:30] say they don't know. It's just what feels right? What are you looking for? Do you want to just lounge out on a chair? Or do you want to be hands on and be weeding and changing your plants around all the time? So there's a lot of different options.

Kari Vogelgesang (19:43):

Little did people know that they were also going to get free landscaping advice when they joined this episode. They didn't know that. What about you, Anne? How do you start to think through the kinds of materials you need to order? You were just talking before the episode started, how you're going to have a big remodel and you're [00:20:00] going to be moving bookshelves. Why don't you talk about some of that?

Anne Mangano (20:03):

Yeah. So the Iowa City Public Library is going to have a refurbishment project in January of 2027. And what we're doing is we're re-carpeting the library essentially. And it's had 22 years of use. We have about a million people come in through the building each year. So the carpet doesn't owe us anything and it needs to be significantly replaced. And then we're going to do some furniture replacement as well

and paint. The thing [00:20:30] that we have to kind of think through when you re-carpet a library is we have to lift all of those shelves and we have to move them. And one of the things we have to think about is do we want to move them back to where we originally intended them? The library was designed in 1999. We're replacing computer furniture. The computer furniture was also chosen in 1999 for its 2004 opening.

(20:49):

Well, things have drastically changed. And so, we are thinking a little bit more now ... the future changes really fast. I think exponentially faster than maybe when we were planning the [00:21:00] library originally or the 1980 building or the 1904 building that we're really thinking about flex space and making sure that whatever decisions we're making right now, maybe they're not the decisions we're going to make in five years, 10 years. So, we want to make ourselves successful when we get to those five, 10-year mark because we are on the dawn of artificial intelligence. What's that going to mean for library collections? I don't have the answer right now. But the point is that when we do find the [00:21:30] answer, we want to be able to respond. And so community spaces or third spaces have to be responsive to current and future needs. And so we always put ourselves in a position where we're ready to think through those things.

(21:43):

And we do those things by watching use data. I know how many people check out a library book, but I also, we are looking at how many people are coming in the door. What are they doing when they come into the library? Do we need to put more resources here? Do we have enough space for community spaces to meet? Or do we have enough room for collections? [00:22:00] And we kind of want to be able to respond and play around with those.

Bob Geniusz (22:05):

I think something actually that the library does great, and I think it's important for these spaces ... just the accessibility, not having a barrier. It's very welcoming. They have the big sliding doors open and then their big front area. It's like you can just tell that everybody's welcome there. You don't have to go up and think, "Oh, should I go in here?" Everybody feels comfortable going in there. And most of the time I go in and [00:22:30] check out paintings, which is a great community resource that our public library has here.

Kari Vogelgesang (22:34):

I've never done that. I know so many people who do that and

Bob Geniusz (22:37):

I've never done that. Should check out more books, but yeah it's mostly painting.

Kari Vogelgesang (22:40):

Sure.

Anne Mangano (22:42):

And the art to go collection was one of those in the 1970s, they just said people should have access to art. They should be able to check them out and put them on their wall. Especially when you have a lot of

students who use the public library. Maybe they don't want to invest in their apartments, in art. It's expensive to frame things. It's expensive to buy those [00:23:00] posters. And

Bob Geniusz ([23:01](#)):

That mental health too. I mean, I know in my own place it's nice to have a little rotation and new color and things like that. Definitely.

Kari Vogelgesang ([23:08](#)):

The other thing you're doing that's connecting the two of you is I, because I go on these walks, runs every single morning downtown across campus. And the library's also checking out seeds.

Anne Mangano ([23:22](#)):

Just last year we added a seed library and many public libraries have the ability to check out seeds. And it's really, you just check them out, you take [00:23:30] them and then we don't want those seeds back. But if you are inclined and you know how to do it, if you can save the seeds and bring them back. And we do that through a lot of different partnerships. We have five different partners that provide us seeds throughout the community. And so if people want to figure out how to grow basil or it's like a low entry thing, I think that's the other thing that's great about libraries ... if you're curious about something and you don't want to make a big investment ... great ... you can just try it out and see if [00:24:00] it's something you want to continue to do and learn more about. It's great.

Mark McDermott ([24:04](#)):

Yeah. Two things. One, Kari says she goes on a little run. It's like 12 miles.

Kari Vogelgesang ([24:09](#)):

Well, it's not, not

Mark McDermott ([24:11](#)):

Every day. Some of us go on a slow two mile walk. The second thing is it always comes back to science. Every time we do one of these podcasts - He's a science teacher. Yeah. So we always get a little science. I love it. Okay. So both of you have done a great job explaining all the different aspects and different facets of what you do. You've really covered a lot [00:24:30] of what we were hoping and thinking that we would probably ask you about just kind of naturally as you've discussed the different things that you do. So maybe let's circle back to the question we started with, right? This idea of if belonging, relationships, access to nature, mental health are all essential for learning and development. Should community share responsibility for those outcomes along with schools? And if the answer is yes, and I think probably everybody at this table would agree that it is, [00:25:00] what might that shared responsibility look like?

([25:05](#)):

How do we set that up? What might be our opportunities for students and for families when schools partner with libraries, parks, departments, landscape professionals, local businesses, all those sorts of things. So what do you think there?

Bob Geniusz ([25:20](#)):

I think the biggest one, I mean, this is kind of an obvious one, but it feels like that our tax dollars go towards improvements and for things [00:25:30] that are needed. I know every tax dollar improvement doesn't need to be something flashy like a big park but make sure that it's something that's useful that everybody can enjoy and that each part of town has (access to) one too. Beyond that, it goes back to, I would say, just teaching about the importance of. And it doesn't just have to be in schools, but yeah, like a nonprofit director. Maybe they have a volunteer day for their staff [00:26:00] that goes out to Bur Oak Land Trust and helps to cut out garlic mustard or something like that. Just getting other people curious about nature too. Before I moved back here in 2020, I was in Chicago 17 years. I wasn't as into plants.

(26:18):

But then you come back here and they're just obviously more available and you get to understand the life cycle and how important each one is and that this one is a host for monarch butterflies. This is the food for monarch butterflies [00:26:30] and things like that. So yeah, just more curiosity.

Anne Mangano (26:34):

Great. Well, I think one thing about landscapes is that they're supposed to be ecosystems, right?

(26:41):

And I think that's what communities are too. They're ecosystems. And every single part, whether it's parks and rec, or if it's the library, the senior center, even our fire department and our police department and the schools, the hospitals, we all may serve specific missions and we [00:27:00] provide a very specific service, but they're codependent on each other. And if you want to make a community thrive and you want people to have enriched lives, well people can. Walt Whitman says people contain multitudes or I contain multitudes. Everybody does. Every single individual does. And maybe they use one resources more than another, but everybody's able to use those resources. And all of these associations or organizations [00:27:30] were founded by community members. Public schools were founded by community members. Public libraries were founded by community members because parks and rec was demanded. The community members demanded those items because they understood that they wanted a good community that they wanted to live in and that we provide for the holistic person.

Bob Geniusz (27:51):

And I guess also that our community, that's a great point, that our community listens to that and that there is a space for our community to voice those opinions [00:28:00] too. That is what's wanted. Those

Kari Vogelgesang (28:04):

Were beautiful answers. Thanks. Thank you. I know we're kind of running out of time here. So I think my next question is going to be, we're going to talk about the future. And you've already both kind of talked about that a little bit. When you think five, 10 years down the road into the future, what would a truly connected and thoughtfully designed community look like [00:28:30] and feel like? And I think it would be fun and interesting to think specifically about our community here in Iowa City. I know some of our listeners aren't necessarily from Iowa City, but I'm hoping that they'll maybe draw some parallels to their own community as well. But I think it would be fun to even name some specific things within our community that we could target and be really strategic about developing out.

Bob Geniusz (28:57):

I think everybody knows in the pen mall there's a [00:29:00] Summer of the Arts.

(29:01):

We were there in June, I think when the jazz bands were there. I was with some friends sitting in our chairs there and we all sat there a few times said, "This is peak Iowa City." It was just, not to sound younger than I am, but the vibes were great. It was just the sun was setting. Everybody's in their different space. Kids are on the playground. Other people are lounging, having their drinks in their chairs. Some people are dancing over here, teenagers over here talking, things like that. If we could have that [00:29:30] on the southeast side of town, if we could have that on the west side of town, those kind of little spaces.

Anne Mangano ([29:35](#)):

I like that. Yeah. I think one thing to think about in the next five to 10 years, and I'm thinking about the public library, but I also think about schools too. In our parks and rec, any actual association that's dependent on property taxes is when we're talking about Iowa City in the state of Iowa, there's a squeeze on resources. There's a huge squeeze on resources. And we're in this place [00:30:00] That's where we've been. I would never say that the public library has worked independently before. We have lots of partnerships. We try to think about ways that we can expand access to the library and work with partners to fill needs and their needs or our needs working together. But we're going to have to absolutely do that more because there's not enough resources to go around. And so we're going to have to think strategically about how to use those resources better [00:30:30] and how to make connections.

([30:32](#)):

I think one of the examples that we have with the schools is, and this is a longstanding program, that we offer that you can use their student ID as a library card. And that just takes away the barrier of having to sign up for a library card. If the parent opts in at the registration, in 97, 98% of people opt in, they can use their library card all year long. Just thinking about ways in which we can just go to the schools [00:31:00] and say, "Hey, what can we do better that will give you some resources?" Because if we don't have those partnerships, we're going to be trying to solve every problem by ourselves and we'll get nowhere.

Kari Vogelgesang ([31:14](#)):

I agree 100%. Mark and I have talked a lot about this over the past year with this new University of Iowa education hub that we've created down here in the Baker Teacher Leader Center and how we can strategically partner with community members and organizations knowing that resources [00:31:30] are getting tighter and tighter and tighter. I think that we have a responsibility here in the College of Education to do that with the resources that we have and the people that we have here in the college that can write grants and bring in partners like Sustainable Landscape Solutions and the Iowa City Public Library and other different kinds of community organizations on these grants to share expertise, to create environments [00:32:00] where students and families can be healthy and happy and build healthy relationships together. I know we're thinking very seriously about every kind of proposal that I read through.

([32:13](#)):

I think, okay, how can we work in different community members into this so that we can all do this work together?

Anne Mangano ([32:20](#)):

And we're doing that too.

Kari Vogelgesang ([32:22](#)):

Yeah, and

Anne Mangano ([32:22](#)):

I know, I know. Grants of, okay, so who do we partner with? If we have this issue or this is an acute problem, who do we work with [00:32:30] to remedy it?

Kari Vogelgesang ([32:32](#)):

So those of you who are listening out there, if you live in the Iowa City community area or in the state of Iowa, or if you don't, I want you to think about how you can get in touch with places like the library or a local university so that you can tap into some of those grant writing experts where we can help partner on different types of grant funding for different projects for the community. I think that's really, really important. Anne and Bob, thank you [00:33:00] so much for joining us and for helping us think differently about the civic and natural spaces that shape how people learn, connect, and belong. We really appreciate your time.

Mark McDermott ([33:08](#)):

Yeah. Well, and what I was thinking, I think one of the things that we have continued to emphasize as we've had different conversations in this podcast has been talking about these really important aspects of learning and acknowledging the complexity and that a lot of people, again, like we said at the beginning, oh, a library is a building with a bunch of books or a green space is just, let's put a path [00:33:30] out there. It's much more intentional than that. It's much more meaningful than that. It's much more thoughtful than that. And it's great to have experts like yourself to come in and kind of pull back the curtain a little bit and help us see what's going on behind the scenes to make these places as beneficial for all the people that are using it as possible. So maybe that helps us go back to that initial reframing of this question of how do we get schools to do more, to think more about how do we build communities where every young person [00:34:00] has multiple places to belong?

([34:01](#)):

I think that's where we all want to be and we all need to be. And we very much appreciate you coming in and telling us a little bit about what you're doing to help with that question. So thank you for that.

Kari Vogelgesang ([34:09](#)):

We're going to leave you today with a couple of thoughts. When schools, libraries, parks, families, health care providers, landscape professionals, community organizations, businesses, and local leaders begin seeing themselves as part of the same system, something powerful can happen. Students experience more than just academic success. They experience belonging. [00:34:30] They build trusted relationships. They develop resilience, and they grow up knowing there are many adults, peers, and places within their community where they are welcomed, valued, and supported.

Mark McDermott ([34:42](#)):

Healthy schools don't exist without healthy communities, and healthy communities don't happen by accident. They happen when all of us choose to share responsibility for the next generation.

Kari Vogelgesang ([34:52](#)):

Thank you for joining us for another episode of Education Unscripted and Explored. If you have any ideas for future topics or guests, we'd [00:35:00] love to hear from you. You can contact us at btlc@uiowa.edu or SCSMH-main@uiowa.edu.

Mark McDermott ([35:11](#)):

Right. Are we going to try this?

Kari Vogelgesang ([35:13](#)):

Yeah, you try it.

Mark McDermott ([35:14](#)):

Okay. With my apologies to my friend Ron Burgundy, you stay classy educators.

Kari Vogelgesang ([35:20](#)):

And as always, we're forever cheering you on. Thank you.