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## S2 E9: Creativity

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## Transcript

**Lisa Dieker**

Hi, welcome to Practical Access. I'm Lisa Decker

**Rebecca Hines**

And I'm Rebecca Hines. And tonight, Lisa, we're going to be thinking about talking about creativity, which we left off with last time. It's an interesting thing because honestly, I don't think either one of us are really that creative, so I can't wait to let you start with creativity and what it means in education and special education and what can we do to promote it?

**Lisa Dieker**

Well, so first of all I am going to push back on that statement. I actually hold a couple of patents. I think I'm fairly creative. But maybe, maybe not ok, but anyway, we'll go there later, so we'll not make it all about us to start with. But I do want to go down that rabbit hole later and talk about my elementary report card. It'll be a good laugh for everybody later.

But anyway, I really start with thinking about creativity as not just having a skill, but actually sharpening that skill and you know, I'm a big lover of Malcolm Gladwell's work about the tipping point that says, you know, once you got 10,000 hours of something, you are an expert. That's a long time for those of you who are classroom teachers or those of you are parents. It's several years into both of those tasks that you kind of reached that tipping point and get your skill set. If you're like me and only had one kid, you maybe never reach your tipping point. I'm not sure you got to double whammy that. But what I think is interesting is for all kids, we really give them lots of choice and let them pick and choose things. Whereas I think sometimes we want to harbor kids with disabilities to they must choose this, and they must choose that. And I think choice is important, but I think once a kid feels a spirit of creativity and motivation and engagement, we need to make sure that that we help them focus in that area long enough to become that and what Gladwell found in this research is, you know, the best violinist isn't the one who was the best at playing. It was the one who persevered. So, I think creativity and perseverance really have to go together to kind of reach that pinnacle. That's kind of my beginning thoughts, but that's a little dry and boring. I'm sure you have something a little more exciting for us?

**Rebecca Hines**

Well, I don't know that I have anything more exciting after you've scolded me. But you know truth be told, of course we're both creative in. Our own ways, Lisa.

**Lisa Dieker**

That's true. I just said you're extremely creative, lady.

**Rebecca Hines**

But it's funny because you know, a lot of people think of creativity as you know, they equate it really with artistic ability sometimes. I think that's what I was referring to.

**Lisa Dieker**

That I don't have.

### **Rebecca Hines**

But I think we, you know we limit our thinking about what creativity really is and we limit it to you know, art or music and some of these traditional traditionally creative fields. You mentioned the idea of being creative in putting new things together to apply for a patent. Certainly, you know we both have a lot of experience in doing things like that and taking existing things and making something new and creativity also in the area of things like writing. But it's funny because I think when teachers try to teach something like creative writing, they assume every student understands and has the capacity to just conjure ideas to, you know, put things together in a new and original way. And with my own kids and with students that I've taught in the past, I've found that that's just really not the case always. So, I think when it comes to creativity, I think you know, the first step is to allow ourselves to give people the opportunity to explore creatively. Even from a really young age, we teach kids, you know, color inside the lines, which is the opposite, honestly, of creatively interpreting you know in this image. I think that when I think about creativity is to start thinking about stretching the bounds and teaching kids, you know, when to express themselves in this format versus this format and understanding that not all students have the same ability to creatively come up with something unique themselves. So sometimes you might put some interesting words or prompts over to the side. If I was doing something like creative writing or a story starter to get them started, but in the spirit of creativity, you could use one of my story starters or you know you could come up with your own unique story and telling stories verbally and getting kids to think in a silly way. There's lots of improv games that you can find online. You know that ABC game where you tell a story with the first person is to say a word with A, the next person with the B, the next person with C. So, all of these kinds of things just start with divergent thinking. I think when I think of creativity, it's how do we encourage people to think divergently when in schools, we've constantly been telling them that there's one way to do everything and this is how it's done.

### **Lisa Dieker**

And you know, it's funny, I think of when I think of creativity go back to my own experience. You can only imagine the trauma I still receive of having that C on my elementary report card. And yes, my friend, Doctor Hines, it was an art. And it was justified and I think a C was generous still today. That's not my skill set yet. I highly value art and I think that's the fine line of valuing creative skills in other people as well as finding your own niche of creativity, whatever that might be. And maybe it is putting things together. You know, again, I know the work you just did with UCP live and watching that in this immediate move to online, I'd love to hear you talk about, you know, kind of how you created that. I mean, you're famous for creating this kind of tornado of thoughts very quickly and rapidly and quick prototype and that's your gift. And I think you've learned to let be known for that. And I think that's true for people with disabilities, whether it's and I always think about, you know, the different types of intelligence. Whether it's musical. I think the one we miss the most for a lot of kids, kids who are naturalists. The kids who like animals, you know, one of my students was in love with cockroaches. That that's a skill set. Because personally I didn't see a lot of value in cockroaches, but again that student saw value in a bug in dirt, in planting and I think as parents and as teachers. We need to make sure that what we love isn't what we expect students to love, and we do know that creating your own thinking or creativity is the job skill of the future. So, nurturing that ability to think outside the box is really

important and maybe letter grades, that's why I brought up the C, are the best way to say that. They probably had some skills in something. I'm not sure what in the art world. But I do think that it made me quickly say I'm not an artist and I do believe in mindset goes with that. If I believe I'm something, then probably I can go in a direction. Maybe I'm not the best singer, but if I sing with great confidence on stage, people will listen. I may not be the funniest person, but if I stand on stage with confidence, I think it's that mindset, thinking about the different intelligence and really building that creative thinking that that really takes everyone to the next level in all jobs, but I think we often diminish that in kids with disabilities.

### **Rebecca Hines**

I think I think that we diminished that with kids of all abilities really today in schools I don't know why, and of course it's not all of us and it's not every class, and it's not every teacher. I do think that we've come to think of things that have a creative bent, as you know, being those extra things or you know we don't have time to do something et cetera. We don't value as much as we can sometimes. The importance of that, that type of thought, that type of divergent and creative thought. You know, I was looking at an article in Psychology Today and they referenced something from the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders about autism and creativity. And they found a strong link between creativity and autism. Apparently, what they found was that people with autism didn't actually, when presented with something like a paper clip, you know, and asked to think of how many ways they could use that paper clip. Well, they didn't actually come up with as many ways as the typical person did, but the things that they came up with were far more unusual and sometimes it is that unusual thought that gets us to the next level. So, if we think about that even as again, parents, teachers, anyone who's trying to promote some creative thought, it really does sometimes start with picking up some things I have. Let's see how many ways we could think of to use this one thing. And even that really is creative, though.

### **Lisa Dieker**

Yeah. And I know going back to what we talked about in past podcast, but it's kind of you and I's go to is choice boards and project-based learning. I mean, there's no way you can't create your own thinking when you open up the options and say, you know what, here's 9 choices and again I would be thinking about which one of those are you the weakest in. As a parent, you know, I had to think about art and music not because I don't value them, that's not my strengths. And so how do I make sure I'm not diminishing that in my children and my students and in my community opportunities for field trips and so consciously being aware of maybe your weaknesses, being sure you're giving kids choice and opportunity in those areas I think are important.

And again, I think creativity and expression go together. We need to make sure kids have a voice to express whatever it might be, and, in some cases, we may not always appreciate their expressions, but I think that's part of being, especially the teenager we happen to be at the beach this weekend and there's been a lot of expression of things I'm a little confused by. But I look at it and think, but you know what that has meaning to that person, and they should be able to create their own world, and especially in this time that's a little more turmoil than we might normally see. So, I do think creativity and expressing who you are should really kind of go together.

### **Rebecca Hines**

You know you mentioned that idea of choice and we always talk about choice, and I think you know, if we wanted to frame that in some now traditional thinking and education, I would really bring that back to the whole universal design for learning piece of you know what we're doing in our classroom because the other side of creativity for me personally, is when you know that I really actually don't like is when my student my own children are given an assignment and then they do their best on it. But they're not good artists and then they give points off for their creativity or their drawing or their and then, like, why couldn't you give my kid another option. If you tell him to draw a poster, which incidentally, I don't know why high school teachers would ever tell my, you know, young adult children that their only option to draw something on a poster, but to continually get points out because that they drew wasn't good enough or creative. And I think that sometimes in an effort to give kids a chance to be created. We sometimes don't take UDL approach and give them also an alternative if that's not their natural, you know bent especially by the secondary level. Just like you, I honestly got a C in ceramics in high school. It brought my GPA down. I couldn't help it, I tried. I don't know how I was supposed to learn to be better at ceramics. I made ugly things. I couldn't help it.

But I knew I had to take an art class and I knew I was just going to fail miserably. So, I do think that you know the other side of it is, you know, the choice part really does matter, and we frame it in universal design for learning. I do think it's, you know, should always be given exposure to different ways of thinking about things, but options ultimately, you know, in how they express and how they express it. I would say one other thought about the creativity piece is if you're looking to promote creativity. Every classroom could easily have, you know, a creator space. You know, we talked a lot about makerspaces, etcetera, but we should definitely have creator spaces in our classroom where kids could go and create and tinker. So, whether we make it technology based or art based or whatever, all of these pieces together definitely one layer I think every classroom should have moving forward, is that space to create.

### **Lisa Dieker**

Well, I'm going to wrap this up with this that we do love our teachers, ok? We may not have had great grades, but we do love our teachers. PE, music, we think you are the backbone of actually building academic skills and my go to is always, you know, when you make that, make your space, consult the speech therapist, the PT, the OT, the PE teacher, I mean what could be in my space in your discipline so that it isn't a maker space of me as a math teacher or a science teacher or reading teacher because we know what we know. And I think it's when these disciplines come together, we can be more creative in what kids do. So, we're excited you could join us for this session on Practical Access, and again I have to say one more time.

We love you Art teachers, and we look forward to you posting on Twitter any questions you have @AccessPractical.