

[Recording starts 0:00:00]

VICKI: Happy Pi Day. This is our Pi Day Special. Yes, it's all about math and Pi Day. And we have Chris Smith [@aap03102](#) from Scotland who will be talking about wild wacky ways to celebrate Pi Day. So welcome, Chris, and what is your first idea for celebrating Pi Day?

CHRIS: Well, over the years we've been involved in lots of really strange and wacky Pi Day antics. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TACPw5NtUk> I think if I was looking back when I thought it was particularly fun and the kids really get involved, I had this old car and the mileage in the car was about 28,000 at the start of the school year back in August. And over the course of the year, every day, we will plot the mileage in my car because we're excited and wondered whether or not it could have 31415 which is the first few digits on Pi Day which is the 14<sup>th</sup> of March. And so every single day we would plot the mileage on the car and after a while we began to see a pattern emerging. [We wondered whether it was going to actually happen. And the kids were doing a creation of the line of best fits. Some of them were talking about exchange in the graph? Why does the car not move as much over Christmas or over October? Those were my holiday times and the car was just stuck outside the house.

And then on Pi Day that year, I drove into the school and when I got up to the classroom I told the kids, "We've got to 31,414. We've missed it by 1 mile." And so what we did was we got down to the front of the school and our school has a roundabout in the car park, so we just drove round and round this roundabout to get the final mile. So we managed to make the road to Pi Day land exactly on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March so that was a probably special one.

VICKI: Wow. And I love how you took something in real life. I bet the kids will never forget that.

CHRIS: I don't think they ever will. You're right, Vicki.

VICKI: I love that. And you can, of course, never do that again, so how did you top that?

CHRIS: So something else that I did was one of the pupils in the class said, "But why don't we do a musical tribute to Pi? Why don't we create the Pi.M.C.A?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FHuZaboPho> So we took that classic Village People anthem and we wrote some mathematical lyrics to it and then we performed this, we recorded it and put it on YouTube. And so the Pi.M.C.A is there to enjoy for everyone. And actually the Museum of Math in New York <http://momath.org/> had a Pie Day competition in 2015 where they were looking for the best Pi-related song and they chose out Pi.M.C.A as the one off the high school category for age group, so that was really, really exciting.

VICKI: I bet it was, it's just so hilarious. I love how you're just using this creativity. So you did top the car. What else have you done?

CHRIS: So one year, the kids said to me, "Well, everything we do something for Pi Day we will get to enjoy it but what about other people that live around, as in the community - what about the people that live further away?" And so they said, "What about if on Pi Day we manage to not just get excited at our school about Pi but actually share that with other people?" And so what we did was they wrote lots of [interests in] math question and put them on the back of postcards saying, "If you find these postcards, try the puzzles and send it back to us." And then we stuck them on to helium balloons, send them of in the air and the idea was if these puzzles will go off and maybe be found by someone in a distant land or a few miles away and maybe try the puzzles and send them back to us. The balloons didn't go that far, I'm going to be honest, Vicki. The farthest was just a few miles away, but it was fun to see, there was math problems go up in the air for a share the maths Pi Day.

VICKI: So did you get any back? You got any postcards back?

CHRIS: Yeah, we did get some back but we imagined that it may go far. You know, miles overseas and maybe their English wouldn't actually be sort of a language that we printed these questions on, but actually, the farthest away was a little town about four miles from where the school is. So it didn't go too far.

VICKI: I love that. So what are you going to do this year?

CHRIS: So this year what I've done is I've collected over a thousand different pictures of students and teachers in our school, each of the holding a different digits of Pi. So the first one is a three and then a point, and then one, four, one five, nine, two, six, five, three, five, eight, nine, seven, nine, three, two, three, eight, four, six, two, six, four, three, three, eight, three, two seven, nine and you know the rest, don't you?

VICKI: Oh yeah, right. [LAUGHTER] *VICKI DAVIS @COOLCATTEACHER*

CHRIS: And what I've done with those images is I've sort of put them together and collated them onto this mosaic which will provide an overall beautiful creative picture. So each letter that I've taken of these students would be a wee pixel would be "Pi-xel" and that would form one larger math-sterpiece which we will unveil on Pi Day. So I'm really looking forward to showing the students that because they will be running over to see their tiny image in this massive mosaic that we've got created which is our latest visual tribute to Pi.

VICKI: And you'll send us those links so I can go back and add this to the show notes during the day, huh?

CHRIS: I absolutely will, no problem.

VICKI: This is so exciting. I just lo how you're just making math so much fun. You know, there are some teachers who say, "Oh, it's math, you can't really do anything exciting with math."

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CHRIS: I think math is a really creative subject. There's lots of opportunities for making it fun and enjoyable and engaging. I'm really passionate about math and a wee bit about this geeky number Pi. And I think conveying that to the students, that robs it off on them and they come up with a lot of ideas of how we may celebrate Pi Day every year. And they say to me, "What are we going to do next year, how are going to top this, what's coming on Pi Day 2018?" We'll have to wait and see.

VICKI: Oh my goodness, there's just so many things that you can do. So as math teachers are listening to this and it's Pi Day, could you give sort of a math teacher pep talk of encouragement about how to get their math class exciting, not just on Pi Day but every day?

CHRIS: There's something in every math teacher that drew them towards math at some point. Maybe for me that was universe just being caught up with the wonder of this number of Pi. And I know way more digits than anyone would ever need. If you ask NASA how many digits of Pi do you need for any realistic universe-wide calculation, they will say 15 digits? So we've taken this way beyond what people need. But I've got a fascination with this number. And for some people, what got them interested in math was solving simultaneous equations or for some people it will be the application of math to solving real world problems. Or for somebody else it may be just the idea of setting and struggling with a problem and battling with it and eventually triumphing over that problem. Wherever it is, the teachers need to take their own passions and their own excitement about the subject and pass that on to the students because each of the students will relate to something slightly different.

VICKI: So as we go out of the show, Chris, I'm going to have you recite as many digits of Pi until I'll say stop. Are you ready?

CHRIS: Okay.

VICKI: Go.

CHRIS: 3.14159265 3589793238462643383279 –

[End of Audio 0:08:34]

*[Transcription created by tranzify.com. Some additional editing has been done to add grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors. Every attempt has been made to correct spelling. For permissions, please email [lisa@coolcatteacher.com](mailto:lisa@coolcatteacher.com)]*