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VICKI DAVIS:

Hey remarkable teachers, today's a little bit different. I called principal Ryan Kaczmark on Skype the other day. And we got so excited, the topic turned into a show. Hope you enjoy.

RYAN KACZMARK:

"I wanted to do something different for reading other than the reading logs. I wanted to do something to get families to read together, to get that family time."

VICKI DAVIS:

The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every week day you'll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.

VICKI: Hello, Ryan?

RYAN: Hello? Hey Vicki, how are you doing?

VICKI: Great. How are you?

RYAN: Not too bad, not too bad. You know it's been a good week – great week, actually. We had a lot going on this week. We ended a penny war between my two schools. Kind of combined that with Alex's Lemonade Stand <https://www.alexslimonade.org/>. So I challenged my two schools to raise a \$1,000 in pennies in the penny war and they actually raised \$5,000 to donate to childhood cancer.

VICKI: Oh my goodness. I know you're excited. I saw that picture on Instagram. That's awesome.

VICKI DAVIS @COOLCATTEACHER

RYAN: Yeah. Blew my mind. You have your expectations here and then the kids just blow it away. It was funny, we even created a shortage of pennies at the bank because so many families were going in to get pennies.

VICKI: Oh my goodness. So why were you doing this?

RYAN: Actually I kind of turned it into a one book, two school challenge. We did the book Lemonade War <http://amzn.to/2kWWxAU> and I did it with both my schools with support of the Tuscarora Education Foundation that I wrote a grant to and they paid for the majority of the books and then the PTO both going to pick up the tab for the rest. So we sent a book home to every family and have readings every night. And we thought we really want to make this big, a community event, and give back. So we decided, let's do a penny war and donate to Alex's Lemonade Stand for childhood cancer. It exceeded every expectation I ever had.

VICKI: Wow. What do you think you taught?

RYAN: We talked about giving back and that was the big thing. And my big things was there's no losers here. I wanted the families to read with the kids and I got a lot pictures on Facebook and really connected with social media. And then also giving back. We always stress giving back, like beginning of year. We did a challenge at the beginning of the year. Every year we do something goofy and we raise money and the staff donates to a good cause like we start off with Special Olympics. We always try to stress about giving back. And the teachers, we even stress in the middle of all this because chance was coming in left and right and my teachers did a great job. Like, I had teachers with lines outside their doors. Because the way we did was like a penny was positive but if somebody dropped a quarter in that was like 25 cents **taken away from the team.** it was really a big war. And I said we didn't lose track of that. So every once in a while they will pull up something from Alex's Lemonade Stand and talk about there's kids out there that really need this and how it's so good to give back to the community and give back to these kids.

VICKI: I love that.

RYAN: It's phenomenal for the school, for the community, just to see that and to see the parents. Like, my Facebook traffic had increased so much when I started posting things. It was like triple the increase. In average, we'd reach about three to four hundred people. Anytime I post something about the lemonade war or the penny war or Alex's Lemonade Stand we're hitting about 1200 people.

VICKI: That's amazing. And it's books and it's caring about others, and social entrepreneurship and everything all wrapped up together.

RYAN: Yeah. It was great for my staff too because the teachers really built it up because you can't do any of this without them. And it's funny because the teachers played into it – like I had a couple of teachers, they had no silver signs on their door and the kids just loved that because they knew which teacher to pick on and they would be going down to that classroom daily just to drop a quarter here, a quarter there. It was amazing the amount of community response that we go. It just blew my mind. We issued a lot of challenges, I told them the winning class who had the highest total would get a pizza party. We did have some incentives based in. One thing I have to do, I have to run a race for education. I have to do 50 laps in a lemon costume.

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VICKI: In a what costume?

RYAN: A lemon costume.

VICKI: From the lemonade stand, I guess. Oh my goodness.

RYAN: Yeah. We had fun with it. It didn't work without the teachers, the community and – the big thing was I told the kids that there's no losers in a situation like this. I said we put a book in every family's hand, we got a lot of families to sit down and read

every night and at the end of the day we raised a lot of money in one month to fight childhood cancer.

VICKI: Wow.

RYAN: I said that's amazing.

VICKI: That is amazing. And what does it do for your community and how people feel about your school?

RYAN: I took a screenshot of some Facebook comments the other day and I just send them out to my teachers. The community outpouring. Because with the teachers, we have some skits at the end to – like right now I have this one I'm looking at. The teachers had a lemonade squeezing contest and it was like primary versus intermediate and who could squeeze the most lemonade out of a bag of lemons? And so the teachers would rotate through. And the parent said, love that you staff enjoys having fun with the kids, the book was great and we'll be looking forward to buying the rest as a family. To me, that's phenomenal.

VICKI: Wow.

RYAN: And then there was another one a community member wrote in on and it just blew my mind. It says, "Amazing job everyone, you all deserve it. Great things are happening at Mercersburg and Montgomery Elementary Schools. The teachers and staff, you guys are doing an awesome job keeping the children intrigued and wanting to learn while having fun along the way. That's so important." Another one, "So proud to be a parent attending Montgomery Elementary School, I had children that attended Mercersburg as well and the staff are awesome at both school." You know, that's just amazing.

VICKI: Wow. What did they say when you came up with this idea? I mean where did you get the idea? *VICKI DAVIS @COOLCATTEACHER*

RYAN: I wanted to do something different from reading other than the reading logs. Wanted to do something to get families to read together, to get that family time. We saw this one book one school challenge and I saw the price tag so I wrote a grant to our Tuscarora Education Foundation.

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I talked to my literacy coaches. Once I came up with the idea and then the penny war – they did all the leg work for me. They came up with questions that they asked the kids, do we have lemonade pictures in the hallways where teachers would ask questions to the kids and they could put a lemon in the picture. Or we have some kids writing responses in the pictures as well. So it was phenomenal.

VICKI: Wow. Did you have any idea what was going to happen here?

RYAN: No, I thought if we got a \$1000 that would just be great. I was going to happy, between two schools – if we can get \$500 between both schools that would be

absolutely amazing. I learned a lot about the power of social media too in this because I kicked it all off with a Google Form, a poll, and I said, "If Mr. Kaczmark has \$10 in pennies to give to a classroom, which classroom teacher should get them?" And I said, "Mr. Kaczmark has \$10 of quarters, which classroom teacher should get them?" And I launched in on a Saturday morning while we were sitting at wrestling with my son and I also issued a challenge, "If we can get 50 shares by Monday I will increase it to \$20."

VICKI: Wow.

RYAN: Well, I actually had to turn the notifications off on my phone because it was draining it because all of them kept coming through. Some people, I'm sure, voted twice but we had over 13,000 replies on that Google survey.

VICKI: Oh my goodness. What are you thinking here?

RYAN: It blew my mind. I was talking to a friend of mine in Lancaster and he goes, "Hey, are you doing a challenge at your school?" I said, yeah. He said, "Well, I saw a friend of mine share it on Facebook out here."

VICKI: My goodness.

RYAN: And that's almost two hours away. My own parents are not quite tech savvy but they were sharing in on their Facebook page so it's amazing how things can grow legs. That was very eye-opening for me of when you really challenge something and one thing shared, I can really reach a lot of people.

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VICKI: Okay. So give us a one-minute overview of how a principal or a teacher can bring something like this to their school. Just use this project as an example. What would you do?

VICKI DAVIS @COOLCATTEACHER

RYAN: First, you have to have great staff. I came up with the idea of just saying, "Hey, I want to do this lemonade book." And then we talked about giving back and then another teacher said, "Alex's Lemonade Stand would be the perfect one." So we just kind of brainstormed together, then my literacy coaches just make it happen. And then my big thing was I just kept doing the green screen recordings, giving the updates to the parent, issue the challenges and it just kind of took it legs from there and just run. It was great to be able to raise \$5000 to give back in one month. We're not huge schools by no means. We have about 270 kids in each school so it's not like we have a thousand kids that brought in money. We're two pretty small schools but they did a phenomenal job.

VICKI: Wow. So this is a really a remarkable story and it's perfect for a wonderful Wednesday. What a great idea Ryan Kaczmark and his school has really given us something to think about.

RYAN: Ultimately, I really think it starts with your teachers. They have to create that buy-in with their kids. But the whole time I was pleased with my teachers, they didn't let them lose sight of that it was for a great course. And so every teacher in the classroom now have a certificate for donating. When I gave it to the teachers, we had kids applauding. It was phenomenal. It's one of those feel-good moments as a principal.

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