[Recording starts 0:00:00]

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: So teachers, we're talking to TW Williamson @tww00
from Taiwan. It is 4:30 in the morning as we're recording this. That's how dedicated he is and I do want to say that my good friend, Annette Lang, *(editor's note: Hear the interview with Annette on my previous podcast here: http://www.coolcatteacher.com/innovate-like-turtle/)* told me all about TW and how he's collaborating. So today we're going to talk about five ideas for connecting with others. So TW, what's our first idea for today?

TW: I think the first idea is letting go of your concept of control. When I started partnering up with Annette, it was the third or fourth person I looked or and Annette was looking at the same time. And our director of technology, Victor Boulanger, @VictorBoulanger put me in touch with her. And once you get a partner, it's as good or better than you are. It just takes off from there and you have to share that idea of collaboration.

Vicki: I love that. But does it mean that you have a little less control if it's just you in charge of your classroom?

TW: Absolutely. You have to really rethink it. Collaborating with a partner develops a sense of trust. I have to tell this, it almost built a sense of competition because Annette is so good at, I guess, outthinking me. I have to consider, how can I keep up and how can I give back to her more and then we try to take that naturally to the students.

Vicki: And it really does make you better. I know from my 11 years of global collaboration, when you have amazing people to work with as I have throughout these 11 years, it goes make you better. Okay, what's our second idea?

TW: Well, our second from the collaboration is how you share. You have the easy first step, our school is just about to host a big Asian Google Summit.

[00:02:00]

And the idea of a Google Summit https://www.edtechteam.com/summits/ really is – to many of us who work here it's just obviously because that's what drives us every day is using technology. And so Annette and I started out sharing ideas by Google Doc and now our students share. For example, Annette and I set up the student websites and we just match them up and partner the kids randomly and then we share the student emails. And this year – and you mentioned 11 years for you. This is, I think, our third or fourth year, what we've done is we've added an optional column so the students can share to Facebook. We don't promote that but we don't deny it because they do it naturally. And so they Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook each other.

So it goes from teacher sort of setting it up to the students taking their projects from there.

Vicki: And that scares some people to death, TW.

TW: Yeah, it does. But the kids are doing it anyway. So part of it is we make the column and the kids can look at the sheet and they can edit it. And the column is green for everything the teachers are requiring them to share through their school blog sites and their school emails, but then the other column is labeled some other color, it's really clear, maybe it's red. And it says, "Stop and think that this is you sharing." And we all teach digital citizenship and privacy but we hope that it's channeling them in global ways of learning and making new friends but also global ways of thinking about their academic and their intellectual pursuits.

Vicki: Okay. What's your third?

TW: Well, my third goes from there to the students are working on a project and when they create their project they go back and forth in the medium of their choice. So for example, we're doing a movie trailer project and my students in language and literature write the story board and share it with their partner in that school, at BMSA. But we don't require how they share it, they just have to keep the record in Google Doc   http://docs.google.com   for   me   and   Google   Classroom http://classroom.google.com and then they show it in the medium of their choice.

[00:04:00]

And likewise, her students respond with their feedback in any way that works for the kids. So you and I choose to Skype, other people choose a different method and we let the students have that freedom and then they explore, and they succeed or not and that's part of the learning.

Vicki: I love that you're not say, "Oh, you have to use this or that" because, really, do what it takes to get the job done. Pick it on and pick something you want to use. Okay, what's our fourth?

TW: I just want to say my fourth would be based on what you just said. It's the idea that if you really want to learn, you can't just learn when I'm teaching you, you have to learn what you're going to learn and to accomplish the task. And if this is the fourth one, I think it takes us to the blog which we not call a website for each students. And we go from the storyboard and then the feedback from Annett's students. And my students are writing a script. So again, I don't choose what websites they look at, they just have to tell me what they've learned and we share that. The script goes to Annette's students. It comes back to my students however they do that. And then Annette's students actually create the movie trailer. And we don't have any control over what format or movie style or editing.

My students are like, "What are they going to do? Is it going to be live people?" I said I don't know. It could be stop action, animation they have to post it to their school

website, their blog, with reflective writing on how has the whole experience been for them? What have they learned or how do they feel about it? And I don't control the writing. I say, what's been meaningful, how have you learned as a learner in this process. And then because they're publicly sharing their work, obviously their partner at the other school is going to see it and everybody knows it and that really raises the stakes on authenticity and I think it really deepens the sense of purpose.

[00:06:00]

Vicki: TW, I have to know the topic. Just tell us real quick. What are they writing scripts about?

TW: Well, again it's free choice. We have a wonderful teacher here, Jessica Boulanger, and she went to a big air coast Conference and back with how to create a culture of reading. So within language and literature across the high school four grades the students begin each class with 10 minutes or 15 on the long block of reading a book of their choice. They go the librarian, they get books, they get choices, and my students read and they have to record that in a log. And the movie trailer project is pick a book that you like that you've read on your own time, not only in class but at home, on the train, wherever you read and develop your story board and your script and students would develop the movie trailer on the book that my students have chosen which we hope is from the love of reading.

Vicki: Love it. What's your fifth idea?

TW: I think my fifth idea is really just going back to the beginning of the trust and collaboration and the work it takes to do that. And the first work is reflecting on yourself. And you mentioned it, teachers – at least I speak for me, you control what you do and then you really don't because you don't control the student's minds, you just control the content that you want them to learn. And once you think, how differently can they learn, you look at your teachers in your school, the classroom next to you and you say, okay, what are you guys doing?

And then you put yourself out there to Annette and even within your school, our director of technology, Victor Boulanger, is a remarkable guy. And she says, "Oh, that's great, you're doing that. Here's an idea, tell me more." And just really opening up, literally your classroom door but more than that, your mind to what can happen. And I don't want it to sound too high and exciting but it really is.

[00:08:00]

And it comes with pitfalls, you don't know where it's going next and you can't always plan and you're trying to catch up to what someone else is doing. But isn't that what you want your students to do? So therefore, isn't that what you want to do? And that gets me to talking to people like you and going to conferences and you think, this is really cool, it's not what we used to do, it's what we're teaching them for what they want to become and what's out there.

Vicki: In some ways, I would say as we finish up that it's almost like an adrenaline rush addiction. When you start collaborating and connecting, it's so real-world but I could just never go back. I don't know about you, but do you ever think about before and go, "Oh my goodness, I just kind of missed the point before?"

TW: Well, maybe the point wasn't there before or it was so much harder to do. But I do think, like you and I keep going forward. It's hard to keep up sometimes with the concept of powers school and the day to day things, when the excitement of what did Annette tweet me last night? Oh, here's an idea and she wants to follow us at the Google Summit this weekend but she can't come and I'm like, "Oh, here's the hashtag." And I didn't know about those things. I'm a little bit of a slow comer to this, but when you get the right partner, did I miss the point before or was the point the point, then? And the point keeps changing. And are you willing to go and say, "I want to follow that point. I want to be out there trying to be part of that point."

And I really think that's the excitement of it.

Vicki: You know, TW has kind of his own his own strategies, or it's the point, what is the point and is your point constantly evolving to push you and your students to be better learners?

TW: And you say what is the point? Well, this is the point. I have been teaching for a long time. I hear what's exciting and you have to try it and you have to be willing to fail. But I guess the real point is I met Annette and I began to trust her. And I trust you and you willing to do that? And sometimes it blows up in your face but as your network builds, there's a lot of cool people who are creating some really cool ideas.

Thank you for listening to the Ten-minute Teacher Podcast. You can download the show notes and see the archive at coolcatteacher.com/podcast. Never stop learning.

[End of Audio 0:10:19]

[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]