

[Recording starts 0:00:00]

VICKI: You know, while there are some people building walls there are lots of us teachers knocking them down. And today, we have with us a global collaborative pioneer, Perla Zamora, [@pzamoraats](#) a friend of mine from Mexico who is a teacher.

PERLA: Hi. Well, I'll like to start tell you that it doesn't matter what is happening outside, your classroom is going to be always your kingdom and your students are going to be always your dreamers beside you. Anything is possible with technology and teachers who are willing to go far.

VICKI: So really, Perla, even if we get upset about things that are happening in our world, our classrooms are really a place where we can change the world by changing the future, right?

PERLA: Completely true. So every teacher and every student has the opportunity to be outside by connecting by technology, by sharing their ideas, experiences, passions, every single one will be able to be outside. It doesn't matter if you have maybe technology or devices or internet signal once per week or every single day or smartphones or tablets. Even in the most remote places, you're capable of going online. In our experience we have been in touch with people in India, they have from one rural school and even they cannot connect with us every single day. We have that opportunity to interchange out thinking, our cultural experiences and our learning experiences through a synchronous way using tools like Padlet <https://padlet.com/> like Lucid Press <https://www.lucidpress.com/>, like Lucid Chart <https://www.lucidchart.com> or another ways that you can use it anytime. Remember that time zones is not the limit. Time zone could just be time to wait for the other person to collaborate.

VICKI: So, really, time zones are an opportunity. And if you decide you want to connect, there's really no excuse. Is that what you're saying?

PERLA: That's the point. It's a good idea to find support. Support from someone sitting beside you, the one who's going to cheer you, "Let's go, let's do it, we can do it." Or something in the other side of the country, in the other side of the world the one who's going to be there waiting for you [for] your classroom, that feeling of excitement when your students can know that somebody is waiting for their videos or their comments or their blogs. That kind of expectation make that project work or the activity feel better and they want to go back to the learning experiences.

VICKI: Yes, and sometimes that co-worker is in your school and sometimes that co-worker is across the world, right?

PERLA: That's true.

VICKI: Now, Perla, let me ask you this. There is, of course, this whole issue of a wall that is supposed to be built between the United States and Mexico and you're actually bravely tackling this issue with a classroom in Missouri. Tell me what you're planning to do.

PERLA: So one of my social studies teachers she is going to be contacting with someone in Missouri when they will be discussing about the wall. Last school year, when the presidency was running, they discussed about pros and cons of different candidates. So now that they've grown up one year later, those students are going to meet again and they are going to talk about why, how and then different point of view about the wall. It is very ambitious what teachers from subject areas accept the global learning as a way to enrich their classroom. So now social studies is going to be stronger. Student in Missouri are going to learn and are going to listen to our students ideas. We are going to be open to other ideas because we are living different realities but we're sharing also the same realities.

VICKI: I love that. But, you know, there are a lot of people that aren't brave enough to talk about these issues.

PERLA: That's why it is so important. If we model our students, how to talk about hard topics, how to express our feelings, our thoughts about it from a respectful side. If we're capable to teach them that we can be open and we can share our real life with other people then the way like we have been solving troubles in the world could change. It is not a fact. It is the first steps, baby steps to move our way of solving problems right now to the future ways to solve the problems.

VICKI: So, Perla, that's the hardest issue that you've helped your students tackle by connecting with other students?

PERLA: Stereotypes. One of the main classes in technology, which is my class – we're aware that the stereotypes exists, that even we have some stereotypes. A few years ago when we connect with a school in South Africa. it was funny, because my students expect the kind of people related with, maybe the cartoon. And when someone else asks them if we are using donkeys as transportation and horses as transportation they felt offended. But do you know what? It is because we have been learning those stereotypes and accepting those stereotypes without investigating deeper. If you can open your mind to learn from other ones then the way that you expect the people that are living, acting or reacting in other countries is going to change. It is not going to happen from one day to the other. It's going to take time.

But as soon as they have been growing and learning from students living in different countries they accept that we are similar in a lot of – 100% maybe 90% of our humanity we share maybe same activities, similar food, similar schedules at school and outside. And there is so little difference between us and some of them is just because we don't pay attention to other people's needs or cultures. I still think stereotypes is everywhere but it is possible to take out.

VICKI: Perla, though, are you ever scared? I mean, do these topics ever scare you or worry you?

PERLA: Yeah, at the beginning, five years ago when I started, I remember I had that conversation with my students and I told them, remember every single word that you typed, that you said, every picture that you upload, every video that you produce and it's entitled with your name, our school name is representing us outside. You or your picture, your video, talks in the name of Mexico, Tampico, your family, yourselves, so be careful. At the beginning I was really scared what could happen if we opened so much to other people coming into our classroom or visiting our classroom. But then I discovered that we are so similar and we share the same feelings and we want to grow up together that, yes, it is possible. I really believe that it is possible to learn from each other.

VICKI: Have you seen anything that has given you hope as you've done these many projects?

PERLA: Oh yeah, of course. When I read my student's comments and other student's artifacts such as videos or any other one – when I read other students from other countries asking interesting questions, showing a real interest in who we are and how we do then I realized this time investment and this energy is well invested. So yes, when I can see that they know their work is going to be seen [by] people around and I can see how they're doing a better effort and they're trying to do to do a best project because some else is going to look at it.

VICKI: So Perla has given us so much to think about. When you see injustice in the world, try to teach students to explore for themselves. When you see stereotypes, teach them to investigate. Perla has done so much, she connects with the whole world. So I guess the question for all of us is, "Why aren't we?"

[End of Audio 0:09:23] VICKI DAVIS @COOLCATTEACHER

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