Podcast: Powerful Learning Through Entrepreneurial Opportunities

I have been a long-time promoter of engaging students in real-life (project-based) opportunities. That's driven from my own experiences as a 4-H participant in my elementary and high school years and having observed teachers and students tackling powerful learning through doing live event projects. Those experiences generated my interest to learn more when I was introduced to The Society of Childhood Entrepreneurs. Leah Ellis shares how even young elementary students can learn important life skills as entrepreneurs.

Visit The Society of Childhood Entrepreneurs website here.

Find Leah's book, "Sparks to Stars: The Story of Astra & Zeke" here.

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Podcast Transcript:

[00:00:00.300] – Steve [Intro]
Hello and welcome to Steve Barkley Ponders Out Loud. Together, we'll explore ways to support teacher growth, elevate your coaching practice, and boost student success. Each week, I'll share my own insights as well as conversations with inspiring guests to help you lead with confidence. Thanks for listening.

[00:00:30.000] – Steve
Powerful learning through entrepreneurial opportunities. I've been a long-time promoter of engaging students in real-life, project-based opportunities. That's driven from my own experience as a 4-H participant in my elementary and high school years, and having observed teachers and students tackle powerful learning through doing projects. I've recorded a number of podcast with teachers and students who tackled solving real problems, such as the fourth-graders who designed their playground so that it was accessible to students in wheelchairs. They also held events all year long to generate the funds for the design to be implemented. Those experiences generated my interest to learn more when I was introduced to an article about the Society of Childhood Entrepreneurs. Joining our podcast today is the founder of the Society of Childhood Entrepreneurs, Leah Ellis. Leah an experienced early childhood and elementary educator and the mother of four children. Welcome, Leah.

[00:01:37.280] – Leah
Hi. Thanks for having me.

[00:01:39.240] – Steve
Thank you so much for joining us. Why don't we just jump in for a starter to work from then. Give us a little description of the Society of Childhood entrepreneurs.

[00:01:50.720] – Leah
It's a Society of Child Entrepreneurs. We teach kids how to

start and run their own businesses. But it’s not just those lemonade stands that you’re used to. I have kids that graphic designers, 3D printers. They’re really kids who have an idea and the tools to implement it. Then I teach them the skills to make sure they implement it well and it can be sustainable as they get older.

[00:02:13.520] – Steve
What led to your initial focus on students as entrepreneurs?

[00:02:18.480] – Leah
My daughter – it’s a little bit of a long story, so bear with me.

[00:02:22.920] – Steve
Go ahead. We got time.

[00:02:24.800] – Leah
Before COVID, I ran an in-home daycare, and I taught essentially an all girls engineering curriculum because that’s just how our program had fallen together. I loved it, and I loved teaching STEM to little girls and pushing these girls outside of the traditional boundaries of what they expected little girls to learn. Yes, our water bottle Rockets had lots of glitter, but they still learned about propulsion, and it was amazing. But then my house flooded, and I had to move into a hotel. You cannot run an in-home daycare out of a hotel room, so we temporarily shut down our daycare. Unfortunately, our grand reopening was March 17th, 2020. At the time, we lived in Los Angeles County, and that is the exact day that they issued the stay at home order. So we never got to reopen. And then the city that we lived in opened a free for essential workers’ childcare within walking distance of my house. So then even my tiny glimmer of hope that maybe we’ll get the essential workers went away because they had a free option less than a mile from me. That meant I needed to pivot and figure out something else to do.

[00:03:31.620] – Leah
Since I'm reasonably entrepreneurial, my husband and I had decided to start a financial coaching company together. I would watch small business trading videos and entrepreneur mom stuff, videos like that on the big TV in our living room because my husband was deployed and I was home alone with an 18-month-old and a four-year-old. Then, maybe April, May, my four-year-old looked at me and said, "Mom, I want to start a business, too." Of course, my initial gut reaction – "Four-year-olds can't start businesses. No." Then she did that one word that is the top of every four-year-old's vocabulary, that they all…it's their immediate reaction to everything, "but why?" I had no good answer for why she couldn't start a business. And we were trapped at home anyway. So what was the risk of experimentation? It was going to be, at the very least, a learning opportunity for her. So we sat down and we brainstormed, and she went even into some Facebook groups and had voting and polls on what name she was going to select with her business and everything. And she finally settled on, Custom Drip Art from Melody Paints. After the world reopened for COVID, Melody ended up having some opportunities to be a featured artist for some city art shows.

[00:04:45.260] – Leah
She continued doing her outreach. We were invited to our first children's business fair, which she loved. Then we left California and we moved back home to Kansas, and I hosted a children's business fair as an opportunity to get connected with some of the other people who were doing similar things with their kids. When I finished it, I was not nearly as satisfied as I had been at the first Children's Business Fair because as the organizer, I realized all the things that we weren't doing. Because we had to put on this beautiful event, the kids had all made tons of money, sold amazing things, and then they left, and there was no more learning. And that, as somebody who takes child development and education so seriously, really frustrated me because we had opened this

wide door of excitement and then not used it. We created the Society of Child Entrepreneurs to take that big excitement of their first fair and then build an entire educational program around it so that they're actually learning sustainable entrepreneurship, financial literacy, leadership skills, confidence, all of those skills that they learn as entrepreneurs while they're still kids.

[00:05:55.700] – Steve
Could you tell us some of the projects that students have taken on as their business?

[00:06:02.860] – Leah
My favorite one is, I actually have a girl who does the plushies that she crochets, and they are so soft and so beautiful. They look amazing. I looked at her and I was like, "How do you make these? How long does this take?" She was like, "Oh, it takes an hour and a half." I was like, "Wait, what?" I have another girl who does custom pens. I really love her pens. I have one in my desk that says, "She is fearless." We have two young gentlemen who run 3D printing companies. I have another boy who is an avid reader and very frustrated that at 13 years old, his classmates aren't avid readers anymore. We all know that around fourth grade, that reading for pleasure drops off. But he still really loves reading, and he wants his classmates to read with him. So he created this business called Troy's Top 10. And if you tell him a genre that you like, he will give you books in your recommended genre that he would recommend you read next. That way, he can keep his classmates reading because they're not reading boring books. He's already identified the books that they're going to be interested in.

[00:07:14.700] – Steve
Very cool.

[00:07:15.740] – Leah
Yeah, he's a future educator. He just doesn't know it yet.

[00:07:20.180] – Steve
[laughter] There's a term that I use in my work with teachers that I call, "live event learning." I use that term to describe students working on projects where there's a real consequence for the choices that they make. There's also some unknowns that are present. I think those are both key elements to the learning. I think it's why extracurricular activities in schools are so often a great learning experience for students. It seems that all applies to your entrepreneurial focus.

[00:08:00.160] – Leah
Oh, absolutely. I mean, we literally put on live events open to the public where these kids have to put on their customer service hats and talk to strangers. And we don't know how many people are going to show up. We don't know who's going to show up. We don't know what they're going to say. I had one guy tell me at a renaissance festival that he would not support our organization because he did not support child labor.

[00:08:23.227] – Steve
[laughter]

[00:08:23.560] – Leah
And the kids were like, What? I had to be like, I don't think you understand our program. But it was a great opportunity for the kids to be like, no, this is not child labor. This is mine, and I want to do it. It's always fun because we never know what we're going to hear at an event, and the kids have to learn how to pivot, how to think on their feet, how to communicate.

[00:08:49.880] – Steve
Real life.

[00:08:50.500] – Leah
How not to laugh at grownups who say we don't support child labor.

[00:08:54.380] – Steve
Yeah. I read on your website that the experience is build learners' confidence, communication skills, and resilience as just a few of the positive traits that you mentioned. Would you expand on that a little?

[00:09:09.280] – Leah
Right. If we think about entrepreneurship as an adult, you're the face of your company, which means you have to have great communication skills because you have to be able to identify what your company does and explain it to other people in a way that they understand. You have to have confidence to know that you're describing it in the right way and that you are the right person to do that job. And then you have to be resilient enough to know that some days there are going to be bad sales days and you keep going anyway. All of those things still apply to my kids when they learn. One of the biggest opportunities for one of our kids to learn resilience. Actually, it's a little bit of a sad story. We had what we thought was going to be an amazing market set up. Our city does a fall festival, and we bring in 10,000 to 15,000 people from the neighboring big city to our small town in two days. It's a massive event. I had gotten the opportunity for our kids to be able to have booths at the event. It was free.

[00:10:09.400] – Leah
It was just for our members. We were anticipating it was going to be the biggest thing that had ever happened for our little baby organization. But at the last minute, the city moved all of the adult vendors to a different location, which meant the area where our kids were was crickets because there were no vendors around us. We were just in this empty building by ourselves. The unfortunate part of all of it was it also took place on my daughter's 10th birthday. So on my daughter's 10th birthday, she woke up that morning prepared to make hundreds of dollars, talk to thousands of people, and just have a blast selling her business. And over the course of the day, she

probably saw three people and got four or five pity sales. And she obviously was incredibly disappointed at the end of the day. That was her birthday, and it had not gone the way she wanted it to. Then we had another fair the following month, and she came home and she was like, “okay, so these are the steps I want to take to make sure that the November fair goes better than the October fair did.”

[00:11:12.080] – Leah
How easy would a 10 years old to have been like, “That sucked. I’m never doing business again.” She’s learning that resilience of, okay, sometimes things don’t work. What do we do to make it go better next time? The November fair was a little bit better, and she did make some more sales.

[00:11:28.360] – Steve
Well, you can tell your daughter that you met a gentleman who got on an airplane in New Jersey and flew to Washington, DC, and spent a small fortune to speak at a conference, and no one came to his session. [laughter]

[00:11:50.580] – Steve
I know her entrepreneurial pain and learning from that.

[00:11:57.700] – Leah
Right. What entrepreneur doesn’t know the experience of a bad event or a bad sales day. It’s part of saying, this is a part of life. Even if you’re not an entrepreneur, there’s going to be bad days in whatever you’re doing and that resilience to be able to say, what do I have ownership that I can fix to make it better? It’s not even just the resilience, but also that problem solving skills and that locus of control of what do I manage.

[00:12:26.680] – Steve
I earlier recorded a podcast with the authors of a book called, “Leaders of the Class.” They focus on schools developing leadership skills for all students. Their focus was

high school and traditionally, there's a select group of students who go through high school learning leadership skills. Their focus was on our need to greatly increase that opportunity. It strikes me that entrepreneurial approach can create a lot of those similar opportunities for kids.

[00:13:06.380] – Leah
Right. Especially because as an entrepreneur, not only are you learning to lead your business, but part of our curriculum teaches social entrepreneurship and how as an entrepreneur, you have the opportunity, and I would even say the obligation, to work on making your community a better place. In one of our books that is yet to be published, the main characters help a girl identify a field in their city – we have all those fields, and it's like an empty field in between buildings, and it's full of plastic bags. So how to take that field and turn it into something that the community can use. And this young entrepreneur leads the project to turn it into a community garden in a playground. Entrepreneurs have the opportunity to do those things because we already have outreach in our community. People already know us as the person who does that business. So they already understand the report. They've already built some relationship. They want to help us with other projects.

[00:14:00.000] – Steve
Very cool. I'm wondering how you would envision teachers making entrepreneurial opportunities for students. I know some teachers do a thing that they call a genius hour, where it gives kids a freedom and autonomy to tackle anything they want. As I was thinking about the work that you're doing, I could envision an entrepreneurial hour a couple of times a week, falling into the schedule where kids could engage in their entrepreneurial venture.

[00:14:40.480] – Leah
Absolutely. In fact, I cheated a little bit on this one because I'm writing a curriculum. So the best way to put it in

your classroom is wait 24 months for me to publish the rest of what I've written and then just put my curriculum in your classroom. But no, really, it's all about just starting to ask questions and let the kids build the solutions. Tell the kids, we have this problem, how can business solve it? And then letting them slowly build businesses that solve those problems that they see in their community. And then taking those to the public and collecting money and being very proud of themselves for earning their own money. With our curriculum, it starts out very simply with, what is an entrepreneur and what does an entrepreneur do? Then by the end of the school year, they actually put on their first market where they're selling the product that they've invented that school year.

[00:15:26.960] – Steve
Very cool. What's the best way for a listener to find out more about your Society for Childhood Entrepreneurs and follow up with you personally on some questions and follow that curriculum you're working on and the books you're working on?

[00:15:43.600] – Leah
Our website is is soceict.org – if you follow on that, I post stuff on our blog. Then our Facebook page, the Society of Child Entrepreneurs, I post regularly in there on what the kids are doing and what's going on. Those are the two places that you'll catch on the quickest when new things arrive. Then my email address is just leah@soceict.org. You can always email me and be like, I need to know more. Then, this is new – I didn't tell you about this Last time we talked because it wasn't a thing yet. But the first Astra and Zeke book is now on Amazon and Barnes & Noble. You can actually buy the first book in the series and at least meet the characters.

[00:16:25.960] – Steve
Tell us a little bit about that book.

[00:16:28.360] – Leah
Astra and Zeke the mascots that I created for the Society of

Child Entrepreneurs. One thing that we talk about when we're the Society of Child Entrepreneurs, it can't just be adults telling them what to do because that's just bossing them around, which is what we're trying to avoid. So I created Astra and Zeke, 10 and 12-year-old business coaches who work together to teach entrepreneurship to kids. They're the staple of our curriculum. They're the staple of most of our programming. And so this first book is the story of who they are, how they meet, and the origin of their business coaching company, "From Sparks to Stars."

[00:17:05.340] – Steve
Well, terrific. We'll put the links to those things in the lead-in to this podcast, make it easy for folks to find.

[00:17:12.160] – Leah
Also, I got incredibly lucky. I have the best illustrator, so the book is just beautiful.

[00:17:17.500] – Steve
Terrific. Terrific. Thanks so much for joining us.

[00:17:20.820] – Leah
Thank you so much for having me.

[00:17:24.060] – Steve [Outro]
Thanks for listening, folks. I'd love to hear what you're pondering. You can find me on Twitter or LinkedIn at Barkley, or send me your questions and find my videos and blogs at barkleypd.com.

Podcast: Finding Awe While Learning

I heard about a great experience illustrating awe in learning that was shared by a group of middle school students and their teacher in Grand Island, New York. They joined me on this podcast sharing their reflections and insights. As you hear their story consider where these elements of Awe appeared:

- Awe occurs when we experience something much larger than ourselves
- Awe leads to the need to reframe one's understanding of the world.
- Awe often brings forth emotions of humility, gratitude, and compassion.
- Awe is linked to prosocial behavior: people are more likely to help others after experiencing awe.

Connect with the teacher, Lora Randles: lorarandles@gicsd.org

Subscribe to the Steve Barkley Ponders Out Loud podcast on iTunes or visit BarkleyPD.com to find new episodes!

Podcast Transcript:

[00:00:00.000] – Steve [Intro]
Welcome to the Steve Barkley Ponders Out Loud podcast. As instructional coaches and school leaders, you are tasked with guiding continuous teacher growth to create student success. This podcast looks to support you with strategies from experienced guests, as well as my own insights that I've gathered over the years. I'm thrilled to have you with us. Thanks for tuning in.

[00:00:29.540] – Steve
Find Leading Awe While Learning. While I've been involved in writing a chapter for a book about awe in learning, I heard about a great experience generated by a group of middle school students in Grand Island in New York and their teachers. Their superintendent posted about their work with a note that said, "The students were learning with heart and leading with purpose." As you hear their story, consider where these elements of awe connect. Awe occurs when we experience something much larger than ourselves. Awe leads to the need to reframe one's understanding of the world. Awe often brings forth emotions of humility, gratitude, and compassion. Lastly, awe is linked to pro-social behavior. People are more likely to help each other after experiencing awe. I'm excited to have Lora Randalls, an ELA middle school teacher, and her students, Fiona and Logan, sharing their stories with us today on the podcast.

[00:01:49.540] – Steve
Welcome, folks, and thanks so much for joining us.

[00:01:52.840] – Lora
Hi. Thanks for having us.

[00:01:55.220] – Steve
Lora, you shared with me earlier that this unit, built around the book, "A Long Walk to Water," has been part of your

instruction at the school for a few years. Would you share with us how it was selected and what you've learned about the power of the book across the years with students?

[00:02:16.540] – Lora
So it was about 16 years ago, and New York State had just started implementing this new curriculum and one of the books in their curriculum, they called them Modules – and they were leaning towards these four modules. And one of the books in a module was "A Long Walk to Water." And I had never read the book before, but as I began delving into these new standards, I started by reading the book. And if you want to talk about an awe moment as an educator, it's actually sitting in a staff development, probably should have been paying more attention to the speaker, but got caught up in this book, which is an appropriate middle school level. So I ended up finishing it in that setting and thinking to myself, I don't love the module that New York State's prepared, but this book's a keeper. And I knew from that moment on that this book was going to be both changing in my life as an educator, but also for the lives of my students. But what it did is just so much more than I could have ever anticipated – this impact that it's had on them and me personally in my life as well.

[00:03:30.000] – Steve
Logan, as you read the book, what impact did it have on you?

[00:03:38.620] – Logan
When I was reading the book, it was just very wild to think that kids my age were going through that stuff. I go to school, I go home, I have fun. And kids over in South Sudan were running from wars and stuff. And it was really wild to think about, but just hearing saw the story was so impactful. He's just such a powerful person. He came from being in war, being in this war-set environment to now helping everyone in South Sudan and those places without water. It's just super changing of what he's done.

[00:04:23.280] – Steve
Fiona, talk about a piece that especially caught your attention.

[00:04:28.900] – Fiona
Just how lucky we are to have running power and electricity and heat and water and air conditioning because it never really occurred to me how lucky we are because these kids have to go and get a bucket and fetch water every single day for their village. And even when they go and walk the entire day to get the water, it's filled with harmful bacterias and sicknesses. And so that's just a really big struggle. And I didn't really realize how lucky we are to have clean water and fresh water, and that we don't have to spend our entire day walking to get water that's just filled with bacteria and that's going to make us sick anyways.

[00:05:13.600] – Steve
Lora, what led to the move from reading the book to the decision to engage in the Water for South Sudan project?

[00:05:23.520] – Lora
Well, I feel like I would be amiss if I didn't say a little bit about the book.

[00:05:28.240] – Steve
Yeah, please.

[00:05:29.400] – Lora
Okay. The book itself was written by Linda Sue Park. Salva is a true person. He was a Sudanese refugee who became known as the Lost Boys back in the '80s. When these boys from South Sudan were relocated to America, they began their lives here. As Logan said, Salva has now dedicated his life to bring water back to the people of his original country. Reading the book, Salva as a real person, and he speaks it like engagements, church, civic organizations, schools, and he had to gather a lot of money to get his project started. It just so happened

that Newbury, a winning author, Linda Sue Park, was in the audience at a church in Rochester when Salva was speaking. She was so moved by his story that she decided she wanted to write a biography about him. But she wanted to write it for middle school students as that was Salva's age when his journey began. So as Salva gets separated from his family at about 11 years old, he flees to what they call in Africa as the Bush, only to never return home. And Salva travels for 11 years over thousands of miles of the wild truck of Africa swamp lands, areas inhabited by dangerous lions, crossing rivers filled with crocodiles to different refugee camps, only to find life they're not as much better than just his survival in the wild.

[00:07:16.320] – Lora
When the United States found out that this was happening in other countries around the world, they started to bring these Sudanese refugee kids over to America. But they couldn't have been a soldier. They had to be orphans. And Salva met criteria, and they had to have a vision. They wanted to bring something to America. They wanted these people to come to get educated. And Salva learned English from one of the workers in the park. So he comes to America, and he's relocated right here in Rochester. And the family that he lives with helps him adjust to life in America. He goes to Monroe Community College, graduates with a business degree. And then all of a sudden, after he's lived in America about six, seven years, he checks his email. This is a fun point in our lesson when we're like, How far Salva has come? Now that he's checking his email.

[00:08:06.270] – Steve
[laughter]

[00:08:06.860] – Lora
He realizes that an old cousin from his back in Sudan says he thinks that he's found his father at a clinic suffering from some waterborne illness from drinking the water. Salva and his new family in the United States help him get all the paperwork

in order.

[00:08:24.410] – Lora
He travels back to South Sudan, finds out, yes, this, in fact, is his father. He gets spend a week with his father. It's very moving. It's a very powerful moment. And Salva then has to return to the United States, not knowing if he'll ever see his father again. So at this point in Salva's life, he realizes he wants to give back. He wants to do something. And his dream is he wants to bring water to the people of South Sudan. So things like that are happening to his father don't happen to others. So to do this, Salva needs to start a nonprofit organization, and he needs to do it from scratch. He needs to start at the beginning. So he starts, as I started my story, by talking to civic organizations and schools. And it takes him a lot of years to raise enough money to bring his first well to South Sudan, which would be built in his original village of Lunarik, and where he was reunited with his mother and his sisters that he hadn't seen at that point in over 20 years. So at this point now, after all these years have gone by, and Water for South Sudan has now been up and running for about 20 years, he's brought more than 600 wells to South Sudan.

[00:09:41.980] – Lora
He teaches hygiene with water, planting crops with water, how to preserve water, how to maintain wells, and all of these components. And the well is never to be used just for one village, and they have to share it with anybody who comes. So Linda Sue Park writes this manuscript, and it's 900 pages. She's like, okay, this isn't going to apply with middle schoolers.

[00:10:07.650] – Steve
[laughter]

[00:10:07.650] – Lora
This is a fabulous story of Salva's life. She goes back to the

drawing board, and I tell my students this, too, not once, not twice, nine times.

[00:10:17.260] – Steve
Oh, wow.

[00:10:18.050] – Lora
Nine times until she gets this version of Salva's story that she's satisfied with. So it's condensed to about 120 pages. She's still not satisfied. Linda Sue Park says there's just something missing. She goes, yes, this is a story about Salva, about water. But when we've learned about the water in Africa, it's really the girls whose lives revolve around the fetching, the gathering of water, the boiling of water, washing with water. The girls are the ones who have to transport using their lives. The boys hunt. They are more likely to get an education. So Linda Sue Park created a composite character. She created a fictional character, a girl about Salva's age, and she named her Nia, which is just a popular name in South Sudan.

[00:11:07.960] – Lora
Nia's story was told at the beginning of every chapter, much shorter, maybe a page to two pages, just telling about Nia's very monotonous, very mundane life of gathering water, coming back for lunch, gathering water again, having to teach her little sister how to gather the water, her little sister becoming ill during the rainy sees in them having to move to an area closer to a lake bed. But then there's tribal wars on top of the Civil War. So there's all these components going into the story. So at the end of the book, When Salva is working on building his wells, Nia is from a rival tribe. So at the end of the book, the little girl Nia is asking her, Uncle, why did Salva bring the water to our village? Why would it Dinka to bring water to the newer tribe. Her uncle said, Well, he wants to bring water to all the people of South Sudan, not just to his own tribe, the Dinka. At the end of the book, Linda Sue Parks creates this very moving moment when Nia

goes up to Salva and thanks him for bringing the water. I cry every year.

[00:12:20.040] – Lora
It's just such a lovely full circle moment. At this point, these kids are engaged. They're engaged in Nia's story, even though it's fictional, they can relate to this arduous task of having to gather water day in and day out, and they see what Salva has done in the world to make a difference. That is the story of why Linda Sue Park wrote the book. Now, her and Salva are very close. They do speaking engagements together. Prior to these students I have with me today, Logan and Fiona, we actually taken a group of students that we were able to see Linda Linda Sue Park and Salva together and talking about the creation of the book. I'm going to let Logan tell you a little bit about when we saw Salva this last time and how his message now has changed a little bit, if that's appropriate for this point in the conversation?

[00:13:18.900] – Steve
Yeah, I have to tell you, I'm awed. I'm awed listening to the story from you, and I love the passing on of awe. Linda Sue Park gets odd the first time she hears Salva, and then she writes the book that puts you into awe, and now you've got this great opportunity sharing it with the kids. I'd love to hear Logan's insights.

[00:13:44.600] – Lora
This year, Salva came – it was a Sunday, so we couldn't take a field trip. So voluntarily, students were able to just go hear him speak at a local church. So Logan was one of the students who came out to meet Salva. So I'll him tell you about that day.

[00:14:01.680] – Logan
So I remember going in there and then just actually seeing him in person was just like, wow. Because you think about all that he's went through, and now he's here in front of you, telling

you about what he's doing with the water for South Sudan and everything. Then after he was done explaining how he helps people and makes wells, he actually sat down and then he would sign books and meet people. There was a line to him because, of course, there's a line. Then it was so big. To just think, when I was getting closer to it, I think, I'm going to meet him. It's just so like, wow, like what I said before, of what he's been through, and now I'm going to shake his hand and stuff.

[00:14:53.140] – Steve
You've given a great description of awe for our listeners.

[00:14:58.120] – Lora
Definitely. He's very great gracious. One of my students who drew him a picture, and Salva was kind enough to let my student bring the picture up for him. He's like, Salva, I drew this picture for you, and he was very gracious, and it was very sweet.

[00:15:16.120] – Steve
Fiona, I'm wondering, how did you get engaged with raising the funds that your class raised?

[00:15:25.340] – Fiona
I went home that day and I was telling my parents Salva's story, and they were very touched by it. And so I also called up some of my relatives, and I told them Salva's story and just how hard his life was and how hard life is still for people in Sudan. And they were crying on the phone. They were so touched and awed by his story. So they donated to the fundraiser. And we did a walk the entire seventh grade, our entire team. We did a walk around the track a few times. It was in the hot sun. And I couldn't imagine walking in the hot sun every day to get water for your entire village because I was barely walking in the hot heat on our track because it was so hot. But we walked for water, and we did that all as a community. It was a really cool thing to just see so many

people get together and actually care about his story and what it means.

[00:16:27.140] – Steve
I really hear the awe experience keeps rippling out to other people getting engaged in it.

[00:16:37.720] – Lora
One of the local Aquanis Club heard about the story, and then they donated a couple of thousand dollars to support the kids. So by the end of the walk, the kids had raised all of this money going towards a second well that we would bring to South Sudan. And so we were really proud of them.

[00:17:00.660] – Steve
Very cool. I'm wondering, Logan and Fiona, do other times at school and other projects that you've been engaged in, can you connect to another time that you got that awe experience? Anything come to mind?

[00:17:22.180] – Logan
It was actually in Mrs. Randall's classroom again. At the beginning of the year, we were reading this book called "The Outsiders," and It's like the whole book's made up, but it's about the Greasers back in the '60s. I did not expect it to turn out how it did. I love the book so much. I had to buy the copy of it. I'm actually going to see the Outsiders play this weekend.

[00:17:55.620] – Steve
Very cool.

[00:17:56.370] – Lora
The Outsiders, the Broadway musical is Buffalo this week.

[00:18:01.080] – Steve
Oh, wow.

[00:18:01.890] – Lora

The Outsiders' book, I'll let you, Fiona tell you a little about it, but it's just a great novel in not judging a book by its cover. It's these really poor, beat-up-looking kids, and the rich, popular kids taunt them and jump them and things. It's just a really great book for the kids as well.

[00:18:26.660] – Steve
Fiona, I'm wondering what words of advice you might offer to teachers as well as students about the opportunities to be engaged in those kinds of learning experiences that create awe?

[00:18:45.700] – Fiona
Just that it's very important to learn about other people's stories and points of view because you don't really know what others are going through because you can't really tell until you read about it or they tell you about it. I feel like reading a story about somebody else's life, it doesn't even have to be "A Long Walk to Water." Another book about somebody's struggles during a hard time or some event in history can really help you open your eyes and see what's going on in the world around you and what happened in the world around you. It can make us learn from that and move on from that.

[00:19:28.380] – Lora
I know in eighth grade, you're going to read Diary of Anne Frank, so that might be impactful, too.

[00:19:33.240] – Steve
For sure. Fiona, I want to tell you, you just gave a great description that matches what the researchers are writing about awe, and that it gives you a perspective of the world around you that you didn't have before. You clearly labeled that. Logan, any words of advice to teachers and students about these kinds of learning opportunities?

[00:20:04.900] – Logan

I mean, some of the most important things with teachers is the teachers have to… They cannot just read the book and be done with it. They have to incorporate some of the book with their classes, and they have to actually make the book fun. Because during "A Long Walk to Water," when we first started reading it or we walked around the school with holding a water while walking.

[00:20:35.350] – Lora
We also made these hay canoe things, which it's taking that stuff from the book and turning it into something that you could do in class just makes learning about it so much better.

[00:20:48.640] – Logan
So you're not just sitting there bored out of your mind. You get to actually not experience it, but kind of experience it.

[00:20:57.220] – Steve
Well, Logan and Fiona, I I can tell you the two of you are ready to do a workshop for teachers. I'll look to sign you up. I'll tell you this, you're giving your teacher awe as she gets to listen to you because I can sit here and watch it happening on the screen. Lora, I'm just wondering any closing thoughts of advice you'd give to teachers about stepping into these kinds of opportunities?

[00:21:28.740] – Lora
Well, I feel like this book really speaks for yourself itself, and it touches a lot of people. Taking that little extra step and connecting with Water for South Sudan network – they give a lot of educational opportunities communities, and they provide a lot of different ways for educators. So whether it be a walk for water, they have a literal walk for water, sorry. They have what's called the Iron Draft Challenge. So schools are able to raise funds and if you raise a certain amount, you can win a visit with Salva, or you can win a visit with Linda Sue Park. So they offer incentives. Because of the popularity of the book, it's really been the success of Water

for South Sudan. And then they give other ideas just for curriculum, and they also give different ideas for fundraisers for kids to try to help, even if kids are… I mean, our fundraisers turned into something school-wide and something rather big. But even if it's a small fundraiser where students are raising $20, it's still showing the students the power of giving, the power of that they are able to do something, that this doesn't have to happen. This is what's happening in the world, and they can make a difference.

[00:22:48.850] – Lora
I tell them the story, I'm Salva's age exactly. While I'm teaching the story, I refer to Salva as 11-year-old, and he's escaping in the bush running for his life and finding water, finding food, hiding from soldiers, trying not to get kidnapped. So he has to fight. And I went to middle school like them. And the next year, when Salva lived in a refugee camp, I went to high school where they're going to go. And I tell them this is the year that, to remember the song "We Are the World?" "We Are the World" gets released. So at this point, it was directly talking about the children of Ethiopia. But as middle school students ourselves, we didn't know that there was a crisis in Africa, the same as these kids. And it wasn't until that time in my life that I realized that there are people in the world that don't have food, that don't have water. Just from this song, "We are the World," that brought a lot of awareness. I feel like the book brings a lot of awareness. The organization Water for South Sudan, it's not just fundraising. When you're walking around with a T-shirt on, you bring an awareness to these causes that are bigger than you and things that humble you and make you really appreciate what you have and the life that you've been given.

[00:24:13.160] – Steve
You've just labeled awe. Bigger than you. Appreciate. It's very, very powerful. Lora, I'm wondering, is there a way that you'd be okay with any listeners touching base with you if

they had questions and wanted to learn more you?

[00:24:30.940] – Lora
Sure, of course. They could email me right at my school email address, which is just my full name. Again, none of my name is spelled normal, so lorarandles@gicsd.org.

[00:24:57.160] – Steve
Thank you so much. And extend a thank you to your superintendent for putting the post on LinkedIn and allowing me to find out about it.

[00:25:04.800] – Lora
I will. Thank you so much.

[00:25:08.000] – Steve [Outro]
Thanks for listening, folks. I'd love to hear what you're pondering. You can find me on Twitter or LinkedIn at Steve Barkley, or send me your questions and find my videos and blogs at barkleypd.com.