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Dear Readington School Community,

As I reflect on all the fortunes for which I am thankful, a recent Halloween event came to mind. It is a story that exemplifies how we can display gratitude even for the little things we have in this world.

The night of Halloween, my neighborhood was buzzing with childhood excitement. In my town, they close off the streets for trick-or-treaters so you can imagine that hundreds of pieces of candy are given out over the course of the night. So much so that we set up a table in our front yard with a bowl of candy for efficient distribution. Toward the end of the night, I began to pack up our Halloween table and candy. Two young men, no more than 12 or 13 years old (likely local middle schoolers), approached me and said trick-or-treat. I provided candy and invited them to take a handful since the night was wrapping up. They did so, said thank you, and then sat on the curb to talk and presumably dig into some of the candy they had received throughout the evening. A few moments later, one of the young men approached me (still trying to fold up our table) and said, "Here you go" handing me a Snickers bar. Snickers is one of my favorites, which I am certain he did not know.

"What's this for?" I asked, confused. Think about it - why would a teenager be giving an adult a piece of candy?

He responded by saying, "I just wanted to give something to the people who are giving out so much to me tonight." He held out the Snickers bar closer to me in an effort to say, 'Here, take it.' I was stunned by the expression of gratitude by this young man. He clearly saw this as a gesture of giving back. I took the candy and thanked him for his generosity and returned to my task of folding up our outdoor table. He looked at me and said, "Can I help?" Again, I was dumbfounded by this offer. I gestured toward the other end of the table and told him how to fold in the table legs. We made small talk as I asked about his Halloween. He provided some short responses, but it was nice to talk for a brief few seconds. The task was done, I thanked him, and he returned to his spot on the curb with his friend.

I went into the house and told my wife about the encounter, so pleased to report that a teenager in our town displayed such mature, thoughtful behavior. I secretly hoped this would be the action of one of my boys in the coming years - I am still hopeful.

Gratitude exists in varying forms, but it is alive and well in this difficult world. It wasn't about the candy in this instance, it was about the act of giving to show thanks. It's just that simple. Consider how you can extend a hand and show gratitude during this Thanksgiving season.

Maybe we all have a little something we can learn from this teen. For me, that message taught me how giving could come in any shape, and sometimes it can come when you least expect it.

I'd like to wish our school community a safe and healthy Thanksgiving Day! Enjoy friends and family as you reflect on all that you are thankful for.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Hart, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools