

Transcript for Episode 000 - Introductory Episode a.k.a. "The Soft Opening"

Ukulele music

Keith: Welcome to the LeeCoSchools Edcast introductory podcast! I'm calling it our soft opening. You know how restaurants will sometimes have "soft openings" a couple days before the grand opening just to iron out the kinks and bugs in the system? That's what this kind of is. So I'm calling it our soft opening.

Kyle: Well ok, that makes sense. The goal of this episode is to welcome you to the Edcast. We're going to introduce ourselves and give you sort of a rough idea of what we want to accomplish with the Edcast. First question: What is this podcast supposed to be about? Like, what are you even doing listening to us right now? The Edcast is going to be a twice monthly podcast where we, the hosts, and a guest discuss different topics surrounding education or highlighting events in the community or anything we think will be a benefit to our listeners.

Keith: And because, one, you have to choose to listen to us and so you're welcoming us into your life...

Kyle: Thank you

Keith: ...in a more intimate way and thank you for doing so, we want to give you an idea who the two people you're going to be welcoming into your earholes on a regular basis are.

Kyle: Right!

Keith: First off, my name is Keith Claridy. I am a graduate of Smiths Station High School. I attended Smiths Station all the way from Kindergarten through 12th grade. Then, I have my Bachelor and Master's degrees from Auburn University in History. As an undergrad I also had a minor in Religious Studies and I also took a lot of philosophy classes because those were a lot of fun. I've taught at the high school and college levels, online and in a traditional classroom setting. I used to teach online for Troy and then I've taught at Southern Union, CVCC...

Kyle: So, real quick, which do you prefer? Did you prefer teaching online or did you prefer teaching in the classroom?

Keith: I really liked teaching in the classroom, honestly, because I had a better, more immediate reaction with the students...

Kyle: So that immediate feedback...

Keith: ...and I had more places to stop off and tell stories. I had a new captive audience every semester, it was just amazing.

Kyle: They were required to be sitting there listening to you.

Keith: That's why I said captive audience. I used to teach at AUM. So I was a bit of a Gypsy or a Bedouin educator at the time.

Kyle: And apparently, you traveled pretty far to teach right?

Keith: I did. When I was teaching for Troy University, they sent me to Malaysia – 12 hours difference from us. Gorgeous place. The best food I've ever had. Just a wonderful culture. And what's so great about it is, as a former British colony, they all speak English, so there's no language barrier or anything. It was wonderful. Best two weeks teaching ever and I taught them American History...

Kyle: It was right in your wheelhouse!

Keith: Absolutely! After teaching, I spent six years working for the State at DHR. I was the only person in the state to track down people who were trafficking their food stamps. Trafficking is trading your food stamps for anything other than eligible food items. I would do a lot of this via social media. You would be surprised how many people tried to openly sell their benefits...

Kyle: So you would track them down online?

Keith: I would track them down online, the Feds would give us tips, all that...

Kyle: I'm sure some top secret stuff in some of that...

Keith: I don't want to give away too many of our tactics, but yeah, I was the only person doing that. Now, I think they have one or two other people doing it.

Kyle: So, more than one person had to replace you is what you're saying?

Keith: I...I don't want to brag. I'm going to let you say that. Those are your words, not mine!

Kyle: Alright, sounds good.

Keith: And since April 2017, I have been the administrative assistant for the tech center here at Lee County Schools, I'm also the webmaster for the main district website and I also look over the other 14 school websites. And I'm also the social media manager for all the district social media accounts.

Kyle: Very cool! Well, we are very definitely glad to have you on your show (laughter). My name is Kyle. I'm the cohost. I also graduated from Smiths Station High School, went there K through 12. I received my Bachelor's from Auburn in 2006 and immediately went into working in education. I got a job in 2006 in Georgia and have been working in education ever since then both in Alabama and Georgia. About a year and a half ago, I went through the process to become a Certified Education Technology Leader (CETL). It's a national certification where it lets people who are either more technical in nature or more education-minded in nature know both sides of the coin. Because, I'm sure as any of you who are listening know, technology and education are going hand in hand. Your kids are not losing technology in the classroom, they are gaining it. So, that was something I decided to do about a year and a half ago...

Keith: And so, with our boss, who also has the same certification, Lee County Schools is the only district in Alabama to have TWO people in the same district with that certification?

Kyle: That's right. I think there's a grand total of about 14 people who have that certification in Alabama and Lee County Schools is the only school district with two CETLs working for it.

Keith: Now I've toyed with the idea of getting it myself, but I was afraid of cheapening the certification with the administrative assistant having the same certification.

Kyle: I don't know if they can handle three of us in the same place...

Keith: Well...I mean...my head's not coming in the door, that's for sure.

Kyle: That's true! And so currently, I'm in charge of our student information system and I run the Help Desk. So that's a little bit about me. Now, Keith and I actually have some joint history together.

Keith: Yeah, we've known each other since the second grade. We were in Cub Scouts together back in the day...

Kyle: Thousands of years ago...

Keith: Yes, back in the Before Times, last century, way back in the 1900s even! Then we were also roommates in college, which...we actually wound up defying the traditional wisdom about that, because I was told, "Oh you don't want to be roommates with your high school friends in college because you're not going to leave still being friends"

Kyle: Yeah, with most people that makes sense because living with other human beings is different than just seeing them at school. But yeah, we worked out really great. We were there for three years and we actually worked out really great. And, we were probably actually closer after that than we were before.

Keith: Yeah, I think so, too.

Kyle: And one other thing we got to do while we were there...part of my Bachelor's degree was working in some of the radio stations. I worked at WEGL, weagle. I worked at Tiger 95.9 for just a brief minute. And I had the illustrious time slot, at weagle, of 12 AM to 2...

Keith: Gah, that was so much fun

Kyle: and so Keith and I actually have a little bit of a shared broadcast history together.

Keith: Remember that one time? We did get out of the midnight to 2 AM slot that one time during exams.

Kyle: Yes!

Keith: And so we go to the station and it's exam time, but it's after everything is closed.

Kyle: Oh yeah

Keith: If you know Auburn's exam schedule, they'll do exams into the night. And so, you had the idea of...

Kyle: We said on the radio that we would help anyone who needed something, they could call us and some people did. One guy in particular did...

Keith: One guy in particular called and he needed a scantron, he didn't have a scantron

Kyle: And Haley Center was closed

Keith: The bookstore was closed and so, I always, because I was a bit of a nerd, I always kept a supply of scantrons in my book bag because you never know when a surprise quiz might show up or something, I don't know. And so you looked at me and were like, "We've gotta make this happen" and I was like, "I mean, ok, yeah I've got some scantrons. I've got to go back to the apartment, though. So, I hopped in

the car and blazed back to the apartment and got 'em and the dude met us at the door of the station and we gave him his scantron and he was just as happy as he could be.

Kyle: He was thankful, very thankful for that! So we've been helping education through our voices for a while now.

Keith: Absolutely! That's very true!

Kyle: ohhh....we're ridiculous! Ok, that was a little bit about us. Onward and upward: our overall podcasting goals – we want to be able to have fun yet informative conversations with faculty, staff, other stakeholders of Lee County Schools. We plan to talk to teachers, administrators, coaches, sponsors, and anyone who has an interest in K12 education.

Keith: Anybody in the community sometimes, community groups that do scholarships or anybody who has any kind of an interest in K through 12 education, we want to talk to them.

Kyle: Right. Our goal is not going to be interview like. We're going to ask some questions, of course, but we want to always be thinking about the people listening to this, so what are you going to get out of it. Well, knowing my birthday isn't going to help you at all, but knowing what maybe a career coach thinks the five best things to do when you're leaving high school, what tests you need to take, how to apply for grants and things like that, things that will help people...

Keith: Or what strategies a teacher uses to keep the kids engaged or to introduce ideas to them in new, fun, and exciting ways. We'll hopefully get those ideas out in a different medium that will hopefully be entertaining while being informative and we'll disseminate those ideas around our district and hopefully beyond, well beyond.

Kyle: Absolutely. So we want to discuss meaningful topics with knowledgeable guests for the benefit of our listeners. That's just sort of our motto there.

Keith: We would also really like to be a resource for educators like I was saying, if we can capture good ideas in this podcast and send them out to all of you, then hopefully we can create a medium where good ideas are being sent out and being received and put into place in other areas, in other schools, in other districts, and around the country, hopefully. I mean, that's the hope!

Kyle: Right. And one of the key pieces of that is knowing that we don't know all the best things. We're not the people who know all the right answers, so we're going to find those people and we need to get those people to find us.

Keith: Absolutely. I always believe in people's expertise. Other people have expertise outside of what we have and so we want to talk to those people and learn and hopefully capture their ideas to send them out to make them available to others.

Kyle: Yeah, we want to be a platform for awesome ideas. We're not saying that we're going to generate a bunch of awesome ideas, but we would like people to be able to use this platform to communicate awesome ideas.

Keith: Well, we're also not NOT saying that we're gonna have great ideas. (laughter)

Kyle: Right! We could be...intelligent, but we're not sure! (laughter)

Keith: We also don't want this to be a one-sided between us and you, the listener. We want to actively engage with our community of listeners and so, if at any time you have any questions, comments, complaints, criticisms, compliments (especially a compliment, compliments will be very welcome), colloquialisms, conundrums, or concerns, you can find us in various places. We have a site on our district page, it is www.lee.k12.al.us/EdCast You can also find us on Twitter @LeeCoSchools. We're also on Facebook at facebook.com/LeeCoSchools and you can email us at Edcast@lee.k12.al.us

Kyle: So we're trying to be hidden is what you're saying? We don't want anyone...we're not offering any avenues for anyone to communicate with us?

Keith: We're trying to be as Byzantine and obscure as possible! (laughter) And so, when Kyle and I were thinking about this podcast and what our goals are and what our guiding philosophy might be...

Kyle: Right, what our mission statement is

Keith: And since we decided we want to talk to awesome, great people about, hopefully, awesome and great ideas, we ran across this passage called "Kids deserve an excited adult" and it is from Kids Deserve It by Todd Nesloney and Adam Welcome. It says, "Kids deserve an excited adult. They need someone who's ready to explore and laugh with them all day—someone who's looking for those magic moments, full of high fives coming down the line with energy radiating all around. Our kids have far more issues to deal with at home than many of us realize. School is their safety net, their safe place, their one true home. They want and *need* us to come to school every day, ready to surround them with love, encouragement, and hope. Leave your problems in the car. Take a deep breath and focus on the positive. Find hope. Kids need the best you. Step out and be your best every single day. Be awesome! The kids deserve it!"

Kyle: You know, I absolutely love that and as education-minded people and as educators and as parents, as community members and anyone who has an interest in the betterment of the kids of the community, I think that's just a great foundational statement.

Keith: Yeah, I love it. It is exactly what...it exactly encapsulates what I hope the spirit of this podcast is going to be.

Kyle: Absolutely, and I think that's just sort of how we should sign off. And at the end of every episode we're just going to say, "Be awesome" and that will be calling back to this, to the spirit of what we want.

Keith: Right, so at the end of every episode, we're just going to give you a quick reminder to be awesome.

Kyle: That's right. That's gonna end us for the first episode...

Keith: Thank you so much for listening!

Kyle: The zero-eth episode of the Edcast...

Keith: The soft opening of the Edcast!

Kyle: Right! Episode 000. We certainly appreciate you taking the time to listen and be awesome.

Keith: Be awesome everybody!

Ukulele music