

Ukulele Music

Keith: welcome to LeeCoSchools Edcast number 14 with Mrs Cynthia meals now why are we talking miss meals Kyle

Kyle: so Cynthia meals is the new principal at Loachapoka elementary school I know she's been at Loachapoka before we talked a little bit about that but I just wanted to sort of introduce her to the community let people know who she was

Keith: she's got some great ideas for what she wants to do out there absolutely I think you know we're already into the school year a little bit and I see some of the things that's happening and things like some really good things are already happening out there and so I'm really excited to see what she can do out there

Kyle: absolutely absolutely

Keith: she's just a ray of sunshine as a person

Kyle: yeah yeah yeah I've never seen her upset or sad or mopey she's always just Sunbeam

Keith: it's always nice so after you listen to the episode if you have any questions comments complaints criticisms compliments colloquialisms conundrums or concerns you can find us on the web at www.lee.k12.al.us/edcast you can find us on twitter @leecoschools on facebook at facebook.com/leecoschools or you can also find us on the Lee County app we have our own little icon on there and that's found in Google Play or the Apple Store and you can contact us by email at edcast@lee.k12.al.us with that Kyle...

Kyle: heeeeeeeeeere we go!

Funky Transition Music

Kyle: let's start with you introducing yourself. tell us who you are, tell us about your professional journey, anything you want to tell us.

Cynthia Meals: I'm Cynthia meals and I've been in Lee County schools for a long time I came here

Kyle: how long is a long time

Cynthia Meals: a long time

Keith: listen my momma told me it's not polite to ask anyone that question

Kyle: I'm sorry! my fault my fault

Keith: you'll notice I've never asked a woman

Kyle: Oh a long time

Keith: just whenever she says a long time twice just accept it don't drill down

Kyle: alright ok

Cynthia Meals: I've been here since 2002 and it's I started out graduated from University of Montevallo and started in January of 1996 in Washington County I was in the special education department there's a speech therapist mm-hmm and then I went to Monroe County and then I decided I'm single I'm gonna try to travel this state and then went to North Alabama and worked in Huntsville a little while worked in Auburn City a little while and then I came home

Kyle: so this is where you're from

Cynthia Meals: no no this is like the home this is where I'm gonna be but I'm from Evergreen, Alabama okay my parents still live there

Keith: yeah that's down south like Conecuh County?

Cynthia Meals: Conecuh County Conecuh sausage yes like the best sausage around that's my home and my parents live there Keith and Detricia Pughfor but this is my home as far as my working environment I've been here ever since I started out at Loachapoka elementary Eddie Clark hired me there to do some reading resource and he said I had the job and I said where is this so I had to look it up back in the day you didn't have the Google - there sure yeah I'm asking where how do I get there mm-hmm and I fell in love and every year he would come back and say now I'm ready to move you to so-and-so spot and I would beg him No and so after the fourth year of every year he would call me every March or April and I'm like to transfer you and I would say no please mr. Clark let me stay and he would let me stay which is a blessing and finally I said mr. Clark you gonna call me every year just know I'm gonna ask to stay here so he stopped calling me so that was a blessing

Keith: and then my career stalled! (jokingly)

Cynthia Meals: so and then my after I think my fourth year there I went ahead and got my administrative degree James Davis was the principal there and he was really putting me in some leadership positions and so I decided to get that degree and so from that point on I've been more of an administrative role and I worked in classrooms and I had data meetings and I did cross grade level my job at the time was to blend the elementary and the high school curriculum to make sure teachers are talking curriculum and their understanding this is what happens at the elementary level on how that affects the middle school level and just have them come together for the first time and so I really enjoyed that aspect and then I interviewed for an assistant principals job with Kathy Ledbetter and she called me I'll never forget and offered me that job and I knew there are wonderful candidates and I was very humbled when she called me and said then I was at Beauregard elementary for a long time, seven or eight years and assistant principal there and Here I am now at Loachapoka um the faculty says I'm back home that's kind of my journey and then I'm married to when I moved from Huntsville to Auburn I married Ryan meals and he was pretty much raised here and he moved here when he was young we met married eyes met in church and that's it okay okay to show you around offered for a while right yeah it's been good have two kids so I hope I get to live in here and plan to be in this area for a long long time he's a chiropractor here in Opelika going in soon

Kyle: it's neat that you know in your early career you sort of circled back around and then here inside of Lee County you start out at Loachapoka and get to sort of circle back around yeah that's really neat

Keith: I never realized you've been hired by Miss Ledbetter she was the AP of what was just Smiths Station Elementary when I we were yes it's cool okay so to this day she and I whenever she sees me so we're off on a little tangent for a second because this is the perfect place to tell this story

Kyle: it's a perfect place to tell this story

Keith: so when I was in the 2nd grade I was in Cub Scouts when we had our meeting we were Cub Scout uniforms to the school and so we got so for recess I can wear my hat and so me and just two other kids when we were really into the scientific method without knowing it because we decide you know what when we're inside and we look up those ceiling tiles don't look that hard and you know I thought that well you I didn't realize that I didn't know the concept of a drop ceiling all that other stuff so we thought that it was the same material up top as it is what we see was sitting in her desk looking up so we decided to test that theory out and so one of them took a quarter of a red brick and tried to was gonna try and throw it up onto the roof to see if it would go through

Kyle: not you

Keith: not me

Kyle: not you

Keith: not me I was not the thrower I was not I didn't even want I thought it was a bad idea to throw it I thought it was a good idea to that that would be a way to try it out I just thought it would be a bad time and place to try that right so I'm standing there and he's gonna eat chucks it up there and it's second-grade trying to throw to the top of the building it didn't quite make it and so it bounces off the side of the building and I'm still standing there watching it like an idiot it is coming right at me and it hits me boom top of the head now luckily it hit like the foam part of the Boy Scout hat or the Cub Scout hat and so but it still put a hole in my head and so you know it hit me and it stung me there for a second I like how and then I look down in this blood of my hand and of course then I freaked out yeah so I go cry into the teacher they take me to the office and so miss Ledbetter she is keeping me calm Walt until my mom gets there to take me to the doctor and so she so we had this joke that my brain fell out of that hole in my head and it was rolling around the playground and so she was going to keep an eye out for it and get it back to me so I am 35 years old and if I ran into Kathy Ledbetter today I would ask her if she found my brain yet and she would tell me know by this time it is eroded down to a grain of sand that we can't

Kyle: that's the running joke throughout decades

Keith: so I was what seven years in so 28 years almost 30 years we've had this joke going on yes yeah

Kyle: yeah she was a fine assistant principal back in the day and when I came to work here she was an administrator at Beauregard and was a fine administrator there too

Keith: she's great

Kyle: yeah

Keith: I didn't mean to take it down that rabbit hole there yeah yes just a perfect place to tell that story yeah so you told us so you touched on this a little bit but tell us a little bit more about your time at Loachapoka Elementary when you're there as a special ed teacher what were some of the things that

have made you fall in love with the place and read it first of all telling Eddie Clark I'm not leaving quite calling me and then wanting to get back

Cynthia Meals: I've just always enjoyed making kids feel comfortable at school and it was just the connections that I had with the children and the connections and the trust that I had with families it was giving them experiences they never experienced before right it is a small family I mean everybody feels everybody's pain and everybody feels everybody's happiness and back then you had so many people that peers foundation and Vulcan engineering yep they were very very involved the community churches very very involved so you didn't feel like you were trying to make these strides alone you felt like you had

Kyle: to build inclusion like that working at

Cynthia Meals: you had community support getting to work with a variety of ethnic groups too you so they should appreciate a certain culture oh absolutely I had been when I was in Washington County they have a large number of American Indians there and so I got to learn about the culture there and experience different things well the same thing for here with the Hispanics group they were able to share different customs and cultures and just make me aware of these types of things so that you can I would feel comfortable they would feel comfortable and it's amazing how patient they are with me as I would try to communicate so I'm just really excited to be back there the events that took place at Loachapoka Elementary in the past I'm going to bring that back and a lot I mean a lot of it is still in place I mean I don't have a lot of involvement I reckon that was the biggest struggle for me going from as a teacher at Loachapoka elementary to Beauregard is that I'm you know at Loachapoka I knew every family every child I knew the names and then going to Beauregard it is with the I didn't feel that at first it took me three years to really have that connection with that community because there was the number and so now I'm hoping I'm gonna be teaching maybe some of my students' children are you know working with them I've had several already stop by and check to see if it's really me

Kyle: well and you had mentioned some of the Hispanic population there Loachapoka elementary has the largest English language learner population in Lee County yes have you've done some work back and forth to some of the testing and there miss blanco so those are things you know that is a very tight-knit group

Cynthia Meals: and they're very supportive I mean all the families they are supportive and if you put something out there for them they're going to do what they can to be there they want to be a part of their child's education and they send their best to you every day and so I just I feel like that's gonna be nice to be able to come back to that small net I get to see names and faces again and get to know those families

Kyle: so okay let's talk about some short-term goals here

Cynthia Meals: okay immediately we're trying to get the school in shape for our families we have some important things coming up to start out the school year and I want families when they come up to see a facelift right um and it wasn't necessarily my doings it was community members coming to say hey how can we help you Wow and so and that's what's so exciting they came to me and I pretty much said this is what we have and this is some things I would like to see what happen and it is little by little pieces are falling into place and I hope that when families drive up to register or when to come check out their

child or assuring them that they see something different yeah and it was wonderful before but I want to I wanted to kind of give it a different look and we have landscaping and all volunteers just a serve day happened in July in which we had 120 volunteers come from real I was told that maybe 30 or 40 would come and then we had 70 something and then they just kept flowing and so how can I help and it wasn't just one church it was a variety of churches that actually came together to help us and they planted shrubs had it brought butterfly garden in the front and in the back trying to support the kids and the teachers and getting them excited about the school our custodians have been working so hard to put some paint on the wall and mr. Moses and Miss Emma they are the best I asked them to do something they just keep the best smile in front of course I'm right there beside them I try not to give tasks that I wouldn't do with them

Keith: that's just important for leadership is now in the military you're more likely to follow the general who leads from the front right and a guy that says in the back and just issues orders so that's it

Kyle: and so let me speak to that for this very recently we got done with PLTW so we had some devices that have gotten loaned out and so we went to go pick them up yes pretty standard IT boring task well so I go out to Loachapoka Elementary and where do I find the new principal she has got her paint clothes on scraping paint off of brick in the very front of the school working with everyone else so that just I think is a real testament to how much you care about that school went and and and getting all the community to put these things into it I think is just sowing back in that love for Loachapoka

Cynthia Meals: I've had several parents that have come to register and they'll say no I wasn't invited it like I didn't know about it and I said I don't worry you're gonna yes we're gonna do it again and so that it's exciting to see that they're eager to be a part the excitement that's good you know

Keith: and I find that easy to believe because the first time I met you Glenn I just started and Glenn was taking me around to some of the schools and so we go Beauregard Elementary and first of all you know I own this place also it is awesome I didn't give it I was not really giving it credit that's right they put it that way when I first met you you know oh how are you give you this big hug and I get back and I'm terrible with names so I didn't so I didn't catch your name that the first time so I come back to Kyle and was like at Beauregard Elementary I said I met this really tall blonde lady who was very friendly and he goes that was Cynthia Meals and I'm like oh yeah well she was like really cool she's really nice though then of course

Cynthia Meals: here we go

Keith: working together with the social media whenever I found out that you had gotten the job out Loachapoka I was like oh this is a perfect person yeah there yeah

Cynthia Meals: there are a lot of people that interview for the position and excellent candidates and I'm very humbled that dr. Mac McCoy feels that I'm in the best position for this job but every anywhere I go do things to the best of my ability and it might not be so what somebody else thinks is the best but I do expect excellence and I do things as Christ would have me do them and that's to the best of my ability

Kyle: absolutely

Keith: so let's talk a little bit about your time as assistant principal out at Beauregard Elementary and so what are some of the things that you learned there working under miss Ledbetter and dr. Harris that will

help you and you now that you're a principal at Loachapoka elementary what are some of the things that you learned there at Beauregard elementary

Cynthia Meals: I learned I think the best thing about an AP is when you get the first couple years behind you then you can kind of grow from there the first two years really three years is building those relationships and it is so time consuming but it pays off and so making those phone calls I've always tried to say how would I want to be treated as a parent you know if it is hey Johnny did so great today I saw him and he actually did really well on that test today and taking the time to make that positive phone call which I I wish if there's any Beauregard people I wish I could have done that more consumes you but and then also on the negative end I would always would want to hear from my child's principal of something didn't go quite as planned so I'm making those phone calls um building those we got rapport and there's relationships I'm spending time with the kids I think I learned if you the kids realize you love them you guys that tough love not to you sure then they're gonna follow suit and say I really feel like that's going to be my base and what I've got to carry on is tough love and as far as what I learned for teachers I encourage them to discipline themselves so others don't have to you know we're adults here your job that we're here alone kids so let's get the job done I want them to know I'm here to listen and I'm here to guide but ultimately it's about the kids let's be forward and

Kyle: well and I think that's kind of your motto right it's about the kids and so if we're having to take time because teacher A and teacher B are having an issue that's time that we were wasting and this time the kids are not getting us at our most awesome I think that's great

Cynthia Meals: and then Beauregard is very similar to where I came from at Loachapoka you know there's a sense of family hood there and we all like communicate a lot bigger group but as an administrator just seeing at Beauregard how the teachers plan together and collaborated and worked as a team I definitely want to make sure that still hey we're taking place at Loachapoka because to me if you have a strong grade level that we'll plan together and move forward together following the wonderful guide we have from the central office it makes a big difference if we're all moving in the same direction making kids so I've learned a lot I mean oh gosh between you Kathy Ledbetter and Lisa Harris I feel like I'm equipped I feel like I've been through experiences it doesn't mean that I'll always have the right answer sure and my answer that I give to people may not be the answer they want to hear but you know I mean when you feel led to lead in a certain way you're in a direction you it's about kids we're gonna do about kids it's not about the extra I remember doctor Mac when I was talking to him recently and I made this statement about teachers and I said yeah I was a little I was a little late to this because I was working with a kid marched a student and he made the comment he said as long as you're dealing with students the parents can wait or the teachers can wait right I like that and it has stuck in my head as long as I'm managing students and guiding them and supporting them that's your priority not saying that we shouldn't always be on time details but I know but you know there is that sure that sure is a hard sure game no so I really appreciated that um the fact that that kind of gives me a perspective of this is my focus

Kyle: well I think something you said really struck a chord with me I think taking the time it's hard especially I think in the assistant principals job because they're in charge of discipline they're in charge a lot of a lot of very important things in the school but things that can if you let them really take sort of and they can take a negative focus I think when you've mentioned taking time to call parents about positive things yes I think just that just that touch is says so much because my assistant principal called

me and said hey this is what happened with Talen it was great he did wonderful this that the other like but as a parent I mean that's where I want to be I know that my child is at that right place now if someone from the school said hey no everything's fine yeah you know he really made that some growth today or he did something that was very good today that's such a that's such a good thing and I think something that any school system would be lucky to have

Cynthia Meals: dr. Harris I'll copy her and the fact that she would email the teachers on the grade level and say hey give me a name and a number and let me know what they did really well and then she would call and brag or if she saw herself calling bragging values and so we all kind of followed suit that way because you want parents to know that their child is in a safe place and they're in a loving place right and make it so that it's welcoming

Kyle: right and that the people who are in charge of that child want to love them and care about what's going on yes I think that's great

Keith: and you know AP's are very important oh yeah because oh yeah well I mean but like they were there they I have more interaction with the APS than I ever do with principals yeah and you know the APs the ones that I remember I you know

Cynthia Meals: are you saying you're not gonna remember me?

Kyle: let's be honest the assistant principal handle Business at the School

Keith: they do stop there and that wasn't a line so long

Cynthia Meals: but I will say with Kathy Ledbetter and Lisa Harris it wasn't and my job your job it was our job right and I think that's what helped me to grow some with dr. Harris it was if we had a discipline it wasn't my job or your job it's like who can get together and that's that she really put me into the situations and supporting me and we share out his and that's what we do still today mmm it is it's a it's a team approach to everything I think

Kyle: well I think there's a lesson to be learned there if you're trying to cultivate leadership in your district what's that you're not from Lee County you're listening to this you know there's there's a there's a nugget there there's some lesson of you know instead of it just being you handle this stuff I'll do the principal stuff I think that offered you specifically a really good growth chamber I kind of to have to go outside and really gain some knowledge that it's going to do you very well how many years

Keith: and the role of principal has it is evolved since last century when we were still in school

Cynthia Meals: it's no longer wearing just that maintenance hat to make sure that the grounds are kept and the teachers are in place and that the students are not roaming around it is so much more you're in that classroom now yeah you're you're teaching the lesson you're modeling you're providing PD you're it's more curriculum based now yeah of course was safety he is huge and that is one thing I feel like if kids cannot come to a safe environment and they don't feel safe how can they learn for sure that is so critical and I've been talking to the assistant principal at Loachapoka his name is Antonio Hinson that's right and of course Pam Revels is the SRA mm-hmm and they have done a fabulous job at working with their safety plan as we did it at Beauregard elementary and so I think it's gonna go well I think the school is they have taken steps you're never ready ready but for the kids to be in a very safe environment that's that's the blessing -

Kyle: okay let's shift gears for just a second here so talk to me about some things that you have planned as potential outreach or community focused plan so it sounds like you've got everything in the school kind of really under control

Keith: you've already got the community involved yeah people upset they didn't know the stuff is gonna ride

Kyle: but do you have any specific plans you have for community outreach

Cynthia Meals: as far as community there is a Loachapoka community center and I'm meeting with somebody Friday um to see what we can do about I'm having events there it came to me I reckon in May I was registering her parents mmm Beauregard and she was um spoke Spanish and her her language was broken but we could communicate and I was welcoming her and I said your Spanish I mean you speak very very good English to be spanish-speaking and she said yes she said I learned it and that's at a different school in a different County and I was like oh I said so you had classes and she said yes they taught me how to function in an english-speaking world and I'm like yeah and of course then I called dr. hunter and I said what is this and he said oh I actually created something like this in Opelika City okay so I really want to try to you have have classes for them and maybe I mean down the road maybe they can pass their GED or right I mean you know can just really grow but they want I think from talking to our EL teachers here there's a needs assessment that was conducted and then the most important thing for our Hispanic families is that they feel like they can connect to the school and that they can help their child well okay well beyond a book to speak some English and understand some of the aspects of it it's huge today with some funding will come here and to be able to have these classes for these parents um and I think they would would definitely the classes will be driven off of what they feel that's most important that's this is one of my visions that I want to make sure that our parents feel comfortable and they know how to communicate they feel successful themselves on being able to help their child at home and I'm gonna best gotta be challenging yeah so that's just I reckon that's one

Kyle: that's great I think choosing something that is parent-driven parent need driven and really focusing on that I think is is it great is great and especially for the English language learners community

Keith: the English language learning community there when they feel like they have part ownership in something they really like the church I go to in Phenix City there's a really strong Hispanic community and will they have a separate mass as a Spanish for them and stuff and so whenever they do stuff around the church ninety percent of the folks that are there are from the Hispanic communities helping to keep that place looking nice doing stuff and so if you show that they are a part of that community they will take ownership of it and help

Cynthia Meals: and that is very true and at Loachapoka I would say Hispanic african-american Caucasian I say that's a group and the whole community is very tight-knit I feel like they if I have a need they're gonna use whatever you know if it's a hammer or versus their hands or just coming and sitting with a child or I feel like if I put a need out there it doesn't matter the ethnic group I feel like they're gonna be very supportive

Kyle: it really says a lot about the Loachapoka community for you know you're new out there and so I think they have a lot of trust in you you know because

Cynthia Meals: I want to build that trust yeah we're gonna have a back to school bash coming up and I really want that opportunity to be able to say hey Here I am I mean get to see similar the community members I've already met several of my students come to this school but I do want to build that trust I would rather instead of asking a community member how miss meals feels about something please come to my door talk to me call me I mean just come spend some time and so that's I think that's gonna be important

Kyle: oh yeah oh I agree I promise

Keith: so it's obviously very passionate and caring about yours about the students where does that drive come from where does that Cynthia Meals: I came from a very impoverished County my brother is the fourth generation of a family business Pugh and son incorporated it's a recycling business in which all levels come right we were expected to help with the business and in the summers when I got old enough I would help sure with the operation even from driving a forklift to working on a boom to changing a hydraulic filter Wow I was involved

Keith: so scraping paint off of bricks was easy compared to that

Cynthia Meals: but I loved it that's my nature I want to learn and my mom and dad really we have a work ethic that is very strong I'm married into a family that's huge Auburn fans Ryan worked for the Auburn football team and so we're like the....

Keith: hashtag war eagle!

Cynthia Meals: uh-huh and so when I came into the Meals family it was really big you know to watch the Auburn game and stuff and so they asked me when Ryan and I were dating well what did you do I would you know be for Auburn Alabama day I'm like well we had the radio tied to the back of a Ford tractor and we were out working listening to the game first mom and dad you know there died I'm sorry mom dad yeah I mean we were always very involved and we wouldn't always be the happiest children doing this job sure mm-hmm but looking back I'm so grateful that I know these things now and I know what work ethic is like I know what it is like to work with all levels of society the poverty is common I mean when we were in our classrooms and it's not this way now right we would have 36 kids in the classroom and so when it would start to rain we would all go and grab our buckets and we would put them in spots in our rooms and we'd all have to try to move our desk to try to get around to avoid the rain and to try to squeeze into a spot so that you're not interrupting somebody else it was very challenging

Keith: was this Charles Dickens elementary?!?

Cynthia Meals: and so I'm used to poverty I'm comfortable with poverty and Loachapoka schools the elementary and the high school Mr. Weeden and I are working to try to support I mean 90 to 95% poverty and so that's where I feel at home that's where I know I've been there I know that child that comes in that can't speak anything that I don't want them to feel scared I know that child that struggles to read because I struggle to read as a young child and so my mom are trying to help me and help me help me you to learn to read so I think it's just because of the way I was raised I really feel like it's the strong foundation that I've had growing up and the work ethic my dad and my family we never sent somebody to do a job unless we did it too - he never commanded he was by out there fixing the equipment with the person getting just as dirty as they got mom was you know in there - I mean it's it is if they've led by example and I feel like that's where my passion comes from for kids is that I'm not going

to tell somebody to do something when I can't do it myself you know if I can't figure it out then we'll figure it out together I'm very collaborative say I don't know I reckon that's

Kyle: that's a good answer

Cynthia Meals: okay

Kyle: that's a good answer and I'll tell you talking about that story the first thing I said when they finally announced because we were all very interested in who was gonna get the job yeah and when they finally said they're gonna put Cynthia Meals out there, I said well ain't no one gonna out work her

Cynthia Meals: I will say I've got to find that balance

Kyle: oh I'm sure you you do yes

Cynthia Meals: because

Kyle: you need someone to tell you to go home that's important

Cynthia Meals: I have to have people because I get that student and I totally forget about my appointment or you know I mean because I'm with that student at the time I'm actually

Keith: (out the side of his mouth) or her podcast recording...

Cynthia Meals: yeah I'll never forget dr. Mac calling me he calls my cell phone when he offers me this job and I'm with a student that is having a meltdown that's right uh-huh oh so he is calling me and I course I answer the phone with that because sometimes on my phone it doesn't show who it is yeah you just see central office and I'm thinking okay I need to answer this and I answer it in his voice is on the end of the line I'm like uh of course kids screaming you know but that's the way it is I'm not expecting people to work as hard as because I'm not as disciplined to go home I mean you need to go home to their families families first right um so I know I've got to be more disciplined and I hope that I can put people in place to help me be disciplined think of him is mine because I have two precious children ten and twelve year old and they need mama yeah being a good wife a good mama a good voice right now I was defending the place that dr. Harris said give it two years okay I'm here one year or less but I want to get I do put known teachers and and then first I want them set and I want them feeling excited and then if there's enough left let's do me so you know I do put them ahead of me and I want to serve them to make sure they can be successful and not to be served so give them what they need if it's professional development its materials it's a listening ear is it you know yeah I want them to feel an eagerness to serve these children and feel excited about their job and and we're not gonna always agree they're not not always like Miss Meals yeah because I'm gonna do what's best for kids that's right um and so if they do their job we're gonna be good but that's not I mean that's you know what I'm afraid of it it's great sometimes

Kyle: yeah absolutely well in my mind there is one place that all that stuff can come from if you if you're wanting your teachers and the people in your community to be passionate about what they do and to work hard that always comes from the top him because there plenty of times you can see leadership in the staff I can go out to schools a bit like this feels like that leader like you can see that and so I feel like that's that's gonna that's working for you especially if you've already got them excited about doing things in that room and really start empowering them

Cynthia Meals: yeah and empower the students too because I want them to take pride in their school yeah and chain and and adjusting the culture I'm taking pride in this school right and I'm assuming that it's good now but I want to make it better um of the teachers to know that you know we're gonna all work together to keep this level of cleanliness and of expectation yeah when a community a community member comes in I want them to be very happy about where their child is

Kyle: yeah absolutely

Keith: yeah something about picking up trash reminded me of

Cynthia Meals: that's a pet peeve of mine by the way is it when an adult walks by a piece of trash and doesn't pick it up when I was coming in at Beauregard I would come in every morning cuz when people get out of the cars trash goes flying one yeah I come in with a pile of trash because I'm just like it's not just the custodians job it is our job right up teachers listen that's my pet peeve and then you walk by you say oh that's not my job and you and you walk by and you don't pick up that trash help me so when you're out there you're gonna pick up some trash, right?

Kyle: I will now

Keith: whenever I was in high school I was in driver's ed the driver's ed teacher he was like hey that was one of his things just like you know if you don't want combined you stay trying to pick it up and play the trash and so some of us did it but so he yeah he happened to see one of us do it and so then the next day in class he commended that person and and you know you know you didn't know that I was watching but you did this and that made that person's head grow this big yeah and so you might want to implement something similar

Cynthia Meals: praise them on the intercom big announcement

Keith: well maybe not but you know the next staff meeting got like hey I saw this what's your face doing the thing

Cynthia Meals: I'll do that I'm gonna definitely do that get some more buy-in right that's right the trash picker-uppers cuz trash happens and you know you know mean people drop stuff and but that's the thing that's the first impression when you go

Kyle: okay so we're after finishing up what are some of the awesome things that you have gotten to be a part of in your career in education

Keith: and I know it's like your children you can't pick a favorite

Cynthia Meals: there's a lot of things and I think that through each phase I can see God working in my life and I see how he has put experiences in my path you know that I'm growing up and being around poverty and knowing what it's like to put a bucket out for water right um from that to where I'm at now I kind of can see okay some students never experienced that right some adults never know what it's like to not have that meal provided they don't know and so I think all of my experiences have molded me to who I am that there's not one necessarily that sticks out except for maybe getting that diploma yeah yahoo or the people that i've been to work with being able to travel all over the state has places I can call people right and check you know know things about different parts of the state and it studies - that was great and of course looking back as a single person traveling and not staying at a job very long I

probably stress my administrator saying that's by the way I'm leaving there cuz I'm really we know when you get a good person you want to say okay let's dress my administrators when I did that you know but I was happy and here I go and let me try something different in the part of state you know

Keith: so just remember that whenever your a really cool person is like alright, peace out!

Cynthia Meals: I get it but that's the thing I really want our teachers at Loachapoka if they want to be there I want to keep them there right all the things to me are highlights to be able to say thank you Lord for what you given because he just continues to provide and

Kyle: let me tell you what I heard and I don't know it sounds like you have gotten to experience sometimes you don't quite know why you're going through things yes and then later in life you start to see where there was there might have been a reason for this you now have a set of skills that not everyone has you can appreciate things that maybe not everyone can appreciate that might not have seemed right or fair or anything at the time but now you can start to see I can actually speak to this and not just be speaking right from the book and I can be speaking from my heart and you know you speak from your heart especially dealing with people that's gonna have a bigger impact

Keith: it's a lot of that stuff you only see it in hindsight at the time it's so terrible and later on you go oh well because of that this happened now so

Kyle: I now have something that might make this make me unique in this situation yeah

Keith: so whatever the bad stuff is happening or the not fun stuff is happening at a time you have to try because look let me pay something's hard I've been there and I know how hard it is at the time just go okay it's all happening for a reason yes something better come along it's kind of set me up for something else

Cynthia Meals: sometimes it's not about you sometimes it want thing you're going through this for somebody else you know to see something or to see how you're going to handle it and so I've come to realize that to you

Kyle: oh yeah oh absolutely

Cynthia Meals: you know but it's going to be it's going to be an exciting year I'm going to come back in a year or more I'm gonna give you some awesome things I like so ready yeah the highlights and then I'll be better equip here I am right

Kyle: it's important to remember you have to go home that's very important you need sleep you need food you need time with your family

Keith: your last name is Meals, you should remember to eat

Cynthia Meals: I've already got a couple of teachers or sweethearts and they're saying okay this meals here is your food because they know that got enough information

Keith: let's put out there what kind of foods do you like just so we know what I don't know what to bring about it for you

Cynthia Meals: I truly if you give me food...is okay so my husband didn't bring me flowers when we were dating and now to love on me he sends me ice cream

Kyle: that is the best idea I've ever heard in my life!

Keith: I'd marry him, too!

Cynthia Meals: Rocky road, butterfinger, people

Kyle: so an ice cream social is really what you're all about

Cynthia Meals: homemade ice cream better

Keith: you got to go home to make the homemade ice cream though, just pointing that out

Kyle: no bring all the stuff to the school you get you like the salt and the ice and everything

Keith: you know they make me I mean they make these things like this ball you put the you put the ingredients in and then there's this core that you put the ice in and then like the kids can just toss it around and as they're tossing around agitating it freezing it and at the end up with an ice cream to eat so there's four there's a reward thing for a class full of kids

Kyle: so stay tuned for Loachapoka Elementary ice cream social will be more than going to do a

Keith: we'll do a live episode from that and live stream it

Kyle: well thank you so much I look forward to your year at Loachapoka Elementary I know it's gonna be good

Keith: we wish you nothing but the best, you're like a ray of sunshine

Kyle: so you continue to be awesome and I think you're gonna do awesome things at Loachapoka Elementary

Ukulele Music