



Josh Flores: Welcome to the official CEL Talks podcast, brought to you by the Conference on English Leadership or CEL. CEL is a collaborative, dynamic, discussion-based forum for literacy leaders organized under the National Council of Teachers of English, also known as NCTE. Every year, and in every episode we honor conversations around texts, speakers, and big ideas. We believe it's essential for leaders to maintain and move conversations. Welcome to the conversation.

Josh Flores: Thank you for subscribing and sharing our CEL Talks podcast. I am Josh Flores, your host for season one. Each episode was recorded live at the 2018 CEL Annual Conference in Houston, Texas, and features speakers, keynotes, and members of CEL, the Conference on English Leadership. We hope our conversations ignites and supports conversations with your colleagues at your schools or wherever you may be listening to this. It's a great PLC tool. If you want to introduce something different to your PLCs. I think it's a great support tool for that, to start conversations that maybe you are already having or want to have. And we hope that you find all sorts of unique ways to use these podcast episodes. It's chock full of information. I had a lot of fun just talking shop about our profession with professionals this year, and I look forward to continuing this podcast series.

Josh Flores: Speaking of sharing and continuing conversations, if you would like to know more about CEL, you can find us on the Twitter at @ncte\_cel. Or, you can search for the hashtag #CELchat, and you'll find our members using that hashtag and sharing and having conversations. You can also visit ncte.org, the NCTE main page, and find us under the groups tab. Here's where you can get all the information and get prepared for our 2019 Fall Conference. It's happening in November, 24th through the 26th in Baltimore, Maryland. And get this, our theme this year, Creating Opportunity: Leadership to Ignite Movements and Momentum. I'm excited. So, hope you enjoy that. And I hope you enjoy this inaugural podcast episode.

Josh Flores: Please don't forget to subscribe and share with a teacher friend that you love and give us some feedback. Keep the conversation going with us too. Engage with us on the Twitter. So, thanks again and enjoy this episode of CEL Talks.

## **CEL Talks podcast: Season 1, Episode 6**

### **Podcasts as Mentor Texts with Sherry and Jeff Krapels**

Josh Flores: Thank goodness for YouTube. Otherwise, how would we find commercials to show students?

Sherry Krapels: We never would be able to.

Josh Flores: Yeah. We'd be lost, and it would just totally ruin units . . .



Sherry Krapels: We'd be lost, without the commercials [crosstalk 00:02:52].

Josh Flores: . . . on propaganda and rhetorical appeals. I definitely am guilty of that. My kid, I'm trying to teach him to just do the Nintendo himself and go into the inputs . . .

Sherry Krapels: How old is he?

Josh Flores: 4. He's awesome at Zelda: Breath of the Wild, by the way. I always like to brag about that. His mom is really proud at how well he does at chess. Whatever. He's awesome at Zelda. He accidentally flipped it to just live TV, and he was like, "What? What?" We started watching something just to see how to go.

Sherry Krapels: "I can't make this start and stop."

Josh Flores: It was like, "What is this thing interrupting the show?" "Well, that's called a commercial. I know you grew up on Hulu." We splurge for the no-commercial. Hulu.

Sherry Krapels: Oh, wow. Good for you.

Josh Flores: Living it large.

Sherry Krapels: You're fancy.

Josh Flores: Making it rain. All right, it looks like the levels are okay, so got all that. Thanks for agreeing to do this.

Jeff Krapels: Thank you for having us.

Sherry Krapels: Thank you for having us.

Josh Flores: You saw podcast equipment, and you immediately said, "I want a podcast in my class, and use it in the class. I'm interested in that." So I want to talk about that. First, can we get introductions out of the way?

Sherry Krapels: Yeah, sure.

Josh Flores: I'm Josh. Welcome to the podcast.

Sherry Krapels: Hi. I'm Sherry Krapels.

Jeff Krapels: I'm Jeff Krapels, and I'll say what we said at our workshop: We are married, we're not weird twins.



- Sherry Krapels: We are not brother and sister. We are married to each other.
- Josh Flores: Does that come up a lot?
- Sherry Krapels: I just feel like we have a last name that's unique enough that you see it, and you don't forget that you've seen it, so you see both of us. I just want to air it out, before people start looking and trying to read the vibe, and figuring . . . It's not like we hold hands when we present or anything. It's just like, I just want people to know.
- Josh Flores: OK, OK . . . just wondering if there's a story behind that, that came back on a feedback form or something.
- Jeff Krapels: No.
- Sherry Krapels: Oh God, no.
- Jeff Krapels: We're being proactive.
- Sherry Krapels: Proactive, yeah.
- Josh Flores: Where are you from? What do you do?
- Sherry Krapels: We are both teachers in northern New Jersey. We're in two different school districts, though. I'm a high school English teacher, but I teach all four grades. So I teach 9, 10, 11, and 12.
- Josh Flores: Awesome.
- Sherry Krapels: Yeah. I really love it. I really love it.
- Josh Flores: Which is your favorite?
- Sherry Krapels: Well, I've taught 12th graders on their own for a while, and I love 12th graders. I really do. They're very serious about their futures, but at the same time, they're giant babies. The dichotomy of it is really great. I have 12th graders now in a journalism class, where I teach 9 through 12 in one class. I have all four grades represented in one room at one time. That has been a super, super cool experience. I love having all of them together. But I've taught sophomores every year of my career, and I love a high school sophomore. I think they're the best. I love them.
- Josh Flores: You're so brave and patient. You must be the most patient.



- Sherry Krapels: No. I don't have the patient . . . I have 9th graders, this year and I do adore them, but there's only 13 of them, so they're easy to love because they're in small numbers. But I don't know if I have the patience for the younger grades. The 10th graders though, they're a little bit older than 9th graders, they're a little bit more mature, but they're not 11th graders, who are convinced that everything they're doing is the most important thing anyone has ever done, like the SATs and the ACTs. So sophomores are that sweet spot. I love a sophomore.
- Josh Flores: Well, good for you.
- Sherry Krapels: Thank you.
- Josh Flores: I like the freshmen. I feel like the sophomores, they just have a little bit too much of a little bit of arrogance already. Then, everything older than that's just boring. I got to be a little goofy, so 9th grade's my sweet spot.
- Jeff Krapels: I also teach high school English, and I've taught all the grades except sophomores. The two grades I'm always teaching are freshmen and seniors. I love freshmen too. Someone said it before, and I think that I figured it out. I liked being one of the first people to introduce them to high school. You get to know them, and you can be goofy. One of my colleagues says that freshmen are just 8th graders with a tan, so there's something kinda nice about it. Then, because I teach a bunch of grades, and I've had electives, a lot of times I have these kids again when they're seniors. So you can still be goofy because they know you already. Freshmen and seniors: it's a nice little rollercoaster doing that.
- Josh Flores: I think, for whatever reason, I also need that immediate feedback. I feel like you get that faster with 9th grade because you see them evolve. Like, a lot of them will grow up and come back a little bit more mature after that winter break. I don't know if that's something to do with it, but I think it's interesting just to see that in a person. I like to watch [crosstalk 00:07:02] people watching.
- Jeff Krapels: They can't hide it. Their faces tell every story.
- Josh Flores: Yeah. Or, even when they come back as sophomores, and you see them get taller, it's really crazy. It's really fun.
- Jeff Krapels: Like, "Who are you?" "No, I'm just that same kid that you [crosstalk 00:07:13] two months ago."
- Josh Flores: "I don't even recognize you! Where's your baby face? This is crushing me." I really like that you said, "I like to be the one that introduces them to high school." Is there a reason for that?



- Jeff Krapels: You know what? In my district, they're coming from four different towns, and it's a regional high school. On top of the pressures and the fear of entering high school, there's also the fear of, "Even the kids in my own grade, I don't know all of them." For me, something I like to do is, before they come in, I look at the seating chart and I look at which towns they're from, and I always put the freshmen at tables with kids from other towns, so that they're forced to make friends. It can be scary, and I think sometimes, they see all the stuff they have to do, and it can be overwhelming. If I can be the one person that makes them realize, "Eh, it's going to fine," that's a nice thing for me.
- Josh Flores: It is interesting how that keeps coming up in these conversations, that we do like to move students around, almost strategically, like they're game pieces, so they get to know each other. We're strategically building a stronger community. It's a crazy responsibility, but it's one that, I think, is unspoken, that is not in a standard or is not taught necessarily in your college classes when you're becoming the teacher, but very important.
- Jeff Krapels: Absolutely.
- Sherry Krapels: It's definitely a thing early in the career that's so hard. Think about, your first two, three years teaching, making the seating chart and trying to figure it out and trying to get the balance just right. I abandoned seating charts a long time ago, because I just feel like I got to know them a lot better by where they decide to sit in the room. That tells me something about them.
- Josh Flores: I only do it with my freshmen.
- Sherry Krapels: There is like a certain degree of social engineering that goes into making a classroom work. Keeping these kids together, because they vibe well. Putting that kid on that side of the room, because you need him by your desk because you need that eye contact. There's something to that.
- Josh Flores: That's true. Well, I love a seating chart. I mostly taught freshmen, so I think I felt I really needed it. You probably don't need it with juniors, seniors as much, but freshmen, they're still like puppy dogs. You're just trying to keep them-
- Sherry Krapels: That's what you always say about them.
- Josh Flores: Yeah. You're just trying to keep them from wrestling and licking each other. [laughter] They're just like puppy dogs, just a room full of them. I'm a dog guy. Podcasts in the classroom. How are you using them?
- Sherry Krapels: I have managed to work podcasts into every single one of my classes in the last three or so years.



Josh Flores:

Why?

Sherry Krapels:

Because I think that they are a great tool for storytelling. I think that there's something about that episodic nature of the podcast, that I think a lot of our kids actually are losing because they're watching Netflix, and they're bingeing things. I like getting them into a podcast when it's not all up and available yet, so that there *is* that anticipation that builds. I think, too, they're episodic in a way that a really well written book is, or that a chapter of a text is. It teases out story over different voices and different mediums. The first podcast I used was the first season of *Serial*, when I was teaching seniors. The whole theme of the second half of the year was tragedy, but I tried to stick with retellings. So we read *Wide Sargasso Sea* because it's a retelling of *Jane Eyre* from the perspective of Bertha. We read *Wicked* because it's a retelling of *The Wizard of Oz* but from the underdog's perspective. I framed *Serial* in the same way. Right? Now Adnan is getting his version of the story told, which is very different from the story that was told in court.

Sherry Krapels:

It was a really great thing, because it was a contemporary. Adnan was an 18-year-old, they were high school seniors. There was this thing on which they could really identify, but also because Sarah Koenig is this excellent reporter who invests all this time in bringing together all these different voices to make a coherent narrative. That's something that I'm always talking about with my kids. They read *The Great Gatsby* when they're sophomores and we talk about narrative bias in that, but here's this opportunity to actually listen to these other voices as they come together to tell a story. How does it sound different when the detectives are talking about it versus when Sarah's talking about it versus when Jay is talking about it? That kind of got me hooked on podcasts in my classroom. I have my juniors—my AP lang students—listen to *Revisionist History* because their research project for the year is . . .

Josh Flores:

The Malcolm Gladwell one.

Sherry Krapels:

. . .It's the Malcolm Gladwell one.

Josh Flores:

That's a podcast.

Sherry Krapels:

It's fantastic. The whole . . . I think the title really gives you a clear sense of the theme, but his whole thing is to look at stories that have been told and retell them in a more complete or more accurate way. The model I use for them is the McDonald's hot coffee case. This woman who, the story was, she sued because she spilled hot coffee on her and hot coffee is hot, so duh. But the real story was she was, like, 90 years old, and she got third-degree burns over two-thirds of her body. It was like this terrible thing. McDonald's knew that they were serving their coffee too hot. The whole thrust of the research project is find a story that's been told incorrectly and retell it. I use *Revisionist History* as a model for



them for that, which is a bonus, because I love Malcolm Gladwell and I plug him at every opportunity I can in that class.

Sherry Krapels: I just keep looking for ways to do it because I think that there's something to getting kids to quiet their brains and listen to something for a while. I think if I can get them hooked on it, too, again, it's this other mode of storytelling for my journalism students. They listen to *On the Media*. They listen to *The Daily*. I just think that that listening component is so important for them, to quiet their brains and quiet their hands for a little while and just invest in a story, in a different way than what they're used to. For a kid who doesn't love to read, if they love podcasts, they love to read, they just don't know it yet, maybe. I think it's another way of looping them back into reading.

Josh Flores: I think that's really interesting because I've been on the fence for the past year about this whole read-aloud practice in the secondary level that I've been reading a book on that's really kinda opened my eyes to read-alouds and the benefits that they still have and the purpose of them, how to use them in the secondary room. I think that podcasts are a perfect medium to do more read-alouds effectively. In the traditional read-aloud, the student has no responsibility but to listen. They're not even supposed to necessarily follow along in a text. They're just listening for comprehension to hear how a reading should sound. That's another powerful thing that *Serial* does so well, with tone and mood. You have to really . . . You can't help but be affected by the way it's paced.

Jeff Krapels: I think it was Penny Kittle and Kelly Gallagher at the NCTE session talked about a project they have, where they make students record a passage the way it was meant to be read. . .

Josh Flores: Yeah, a Flipgrid.

Jeff Krapels: Yeah. That's fantastic. I was like, "Why don't I do that?" Because I've always been somebody who, when we're trying to read, *I* do the reading. Not because I'm such an egomaniac, although that's part of it. The other part is just, when you're reading Shakespeare, for example, the students don't necessarily know how it's supposed to sound. So, yeah, I want to turn it over to the kids, but if you don't know that this is supposed to be funny yet and you read it in this really dour tone, you're going miss some sort of comprehension because tone is such a big part of it. With podcasts, I think you're right, because I've only done them in my journalism class and I had them listen to podcasts as models, so that they could create their own podcasts and then hopefully put them up on our school newspaper website. And I had these kids who were, like, very much mimicking the podcast that they liked. It was funny because . . . it was a little derivative, but they were learning how to make a form match the function. So they loved sports, and it sounded a lot like this ESPN podcast they were listening



to and they had, like, a recurring segment and weird sound effects in the background. I was like, "All right," but that's the way you get there.

- Sherry Krapels: It's how you use mentor texts when you're writing. It *all* starts a little bit derivative, until they can grasp the tool.
- Jeff Krapels: Freestyle.
- Sherry Krapels: Yeah, until they can freestyle, until they can grasp the tool enough to make it their own.
- Josh Flores: That's exactly like teaching. You're following a structure that was given to you, until you can freestyle, and now you're making up your own structures.
- Jeff Krapels: Everything I do is quilt work of other people I've seen [crosstalk 00:15:26].
- Josh Flores: Well said. Do you both record podcasts with your students?
- Jeff Krapels: I haven't this year, because I no longer teach journalism. Again, I'm like Sherry, in that I love them. If I could find a way to get them in there . . . Those and TED Talks are the things that I just love and I think are interesting ways of telling stories. I teach *The Odyssey* and it's oral storytelling, so I feel like there is a organic connection between those.
- Josh Flores: I miss teaching *The Odyssey*.
- Jeff Krapels: Anybody who hates *The Odyssey*, sit down with me. We're going to have a talk.
- Josh Flores: Don't sit down with me. I can't be your friend. I can't handle you. You're done.
- Sherry Krapels: Our journalism program is in its earliest years. Last year was the first year we had a journalism class. So I just started our journalism program, which has been a very cool experience because I've gotten to build this thing, and build it with kids who came to that class because they already knew me. I teach in a super small school, which is why I teach four different classes . . . but we graduate like 130 kids a year. Last year my journalism class was a hodgepodge of kids I had taught in other classes. I had 21 kids; I had taught 16 of them before. They came to take it because I begged them to. I was like, "Guys, please come take this class with me." They did, and the program has grown. This year, I convinced my school to let me have some of my journalism kids from last year take the class again, call them Journalism Twos. They take the class with my Journalism Ones so it all runs in one section. We did a feature story project last year, and I invited them to record if they wanted to. I wanted to leave form open, but I also knew that I didn't really have the skills yet to make sure that they could do that





effectively. This year, my plan for my Journalism Twos is during their feature story project, to create maybe a three-episode podcast.

Sherry Krapels: I've got six of them, so I could really have the six of them work together. I feel like that's a project that six kids could work on together, do the production, do the interviewing, and do all those different things. That's my plan. They don't know that yet, but that's my plan for getting my kids to actually start engaging in podcasting, because they've been listening to them with me for years now, those kids.

Josh Flores: They listen to them in class?

Sherry Krapels: Yup.

Josh Flores: [crosstalk 00:17:37] in class.

Sherry Krapels: Yeah. We have a recurring assignment for my journalism kids where they listened to *On the Media*, NPR's show about reporting on the media. They listen to at least one episode of that a month. I encourage them to make part of their daily news diet some daily podcast, whether it's *The Daily* from the *New York Times*, or *The Gist* from *Slate*, or whatever daily they can find to just listen to on your way to school, listen to it in between classes, whatever, just so that you're engaged with the news all the time. They're familiar enough with the form now, and I do let them have time to listen to them in class. They're familiar enough with the form now that I think that it's something that they have enough background in to try to take on as a creative project of their own. We'll see what happens. I'm to going keep my fingers crossed.

Josh Flores: You said you love a Gladwell. Have you read any Adam Grant?

Sherry Krapels: I've read a little bit of Adam Grant, and I actually have a sort of embarrassing Twitter story related to Adam Grant.

Josh Flores: Yeah?

Sherry Krapels: Yeah. This is such a Twitter faux pas, I felt so badly about it afterwards. I follow Malcolm Gladwell on Twitter obviously, and I listened to . . . There was an episode of *Revisionist History* where he was debating Adam Grant. They were having a conversation, and it was so fantastic. I tweeted something about how listening . . . Oh, Malcolm Gladwell said something about how in his job, his two goals are to be left alone and to not be bored. I was like, "You're speaking to my soul." I tweeted something out about it, and I tagged Malcolm Gladwell but I didn't tag Adam Grant in it. Adam Grant saw it and responded to me. I was like, "Oh, my gosh! I want to be your best friend, too. I'm really sorry I didn't tag



you." That was the end of it. It's not like we're best friends now or anything, and Malcolm has still not reached out, but I'm waiting.

Josh Flores: Well, when he hears this podcast though, he'll reach out again, I bet.

Sherry Krapels: Yes. I'm still interested in being your friend. No, he's great too. He's great, too. And I do think that my responsibility with my AP lang students—I took it in high school, and we read the classics. We read a lot of Francis Bacon and we read the old, . . . the heavy hitters. Those people are really important. One of the things that I feel really strongly about, with my AP Lang class, is I want to expose them to awesome contemporary essayists. They are out there. There are awesome people who are still writing incredible things that are sophisticated and interesting and approachable. Gladwell makes his way into my class all the time, because I just feel like he's one of those people who really opens up kids' heads.

Josh Flores: Well, I can't recommend a Adam Grant's book *Originals* enough. That's one of those books where I could do nothing else. I could not put it down.

Sherry Krapels: Really?

Josh Flores: I just kept reading and reading and reading.

Sherry Krapels: I love a book like that.

Josh Flores: I need to read more of his stuff, but *Originals* was so good. It's exactly what I needed at the right time. I did like a keynote presentation on it. I presented lots of the . . . It's full of just useful research I think, especially when you're in positions like we are, in education leadership. It's a lot of stuff that we need to consider and think about when we go out and we foster others to be leaders too, in our profession. Because we need a lot of them. There's a lot of the work to be done, especially when you're implementing new forms of media like you're doing with podcasting. Is there a starter podcast that you'd recommend for someone who wants to introduce podcasting in your class?

Jeff Krapels: Oh, boy. I'm leaning more toward the storytelling podcasts. All of the people Sherry mentioned tell stories really well. I like the . . . what was it called? *Slow Burn*. I wouldn't use it necessarily with high school students.

Josh Flores: *Slow Burn's* a podcast?

Jeff Krapels: Yeah. The first season dug into the Nixon scandal, Watergate, and all of that. Then, the second one was Lewinsky-Clinton. What their vent was, is these are big stories that everybody seems to know about, but because they were such big stories, there were lot of little stories that got lost along the way. So it took, like, 10 episodes in each season to remind the public, and re-report these things



that got lost in the daily onslaught and deluge of news and it was super interesting. I knew about Watergate, but I wasn't alive. When they went through all these stories of people like, Martha Mitchell, who I'd never heard about but my dad was like, "Oh, yeah. I remember Martha Mitchell." It's a really interesting way of looking at a story, similar to what you said about untold stories but looking at a story from angles that you wouldn't have looked at.

Jeff Krapels: Like, Kylene Beers said it at one of the sessions, "When you change the way you look at something, the thing itself changes." That was the experience I had with *Slow Burn*, and they just wrapped up their second season. Second season might be a little mature for high school students. I think they can do the first one. It's just this concept of, everybody thinks you know about this thing, but you lost some stuff in focusing on the big, salacious things. There were all these interesting things that got sifted through the cracks a little bit. I love that one. If you're like, "I don't think I like podcasts," there'd be no way you could turn that one off.

Josh Flores: That sounds like a . . . You just gave me a lesson plan idea, so great.

Sherry Krapels: That's awesome.

Josh Flores: I would use that podcast, take the topic . . . I don't know if you've seen . . . I'm trying to remember. I want to credit the people when I have these activities, but I just got this new activity I saw modeled at this conference I was at in Montana, where essentially, you have a sheet of paper with three circles in like a target format. You put the topic in the middle, in the dot. Then, in the circle outside that, you write everything you know, or think you know, about the topic. Then, as you're listening to the podcast, in the last circle, you write everything you're clarifying or adding to your knowledgebase about that.

Sherry Krapels: That's interesting.

Jeff Krapels: That's really cool.

Josh Flores: It's just a good way to brainstorm. Then, you can take that and compare with your peers around you and see if there's anything you missed while listening.

Jeff Krapels: You could do that with almost anything.

Josh Flores: Yeah.

Sherry Krapels: Yeah. Especially on a slant to implement podcasts in a meaningful way. I'm thinking with writing and classroom discussions, analyzing these topics. That's a great . . . that sounds like a perfect [crosstalk 00:23:34] avenue to introduce that.



- Jeff Krapels: It's one of these things where, as English teachers, I think we're always trying to convince kids that stories matter and they know it. They know it in their heart. But I think when their stuffy, old English teachers are like, [in a pompous voice] "We should listen to podcasts," they're like, "Ugh. We don't want to do this. We don't want to sit around and listen to NPR." Like, "No, no, no. There really are good stories." Imagine, get a 15-year-old to go home and be like, "Listen to what I can tell you about Watergate." Their parents will be like, "What? Why do you even care?" That, to me, is the draw of it because I think we are human beings who love stories, and podcasts, when they're done well, do a really good job of even taking topics that you would think are too small and really fleshing them out. Even for the college essay I've liked to use podcasts or TED Talks to show students that you don't have to write this essay about the time you changed the world and solved world hunger and got everybody to stop fighting. It can be a really small moment that we look at and tell it in a meaningful way.
- Josh Flores: There's a podcast called *Brains on* . . . It's a science-based podcast, but it's all about how our brain works and it's *for* elementary kids . . .
- Sherry Krapels: That's really cool.
- Josh Flores: . . . and it's really awesome. They have an episode talking about facts and opinions that would be perfect to use for students, too. That's one I can't recommend enough. I would use it to get to facts and opinions, but then whittle it down to rhetorical argument structures, too. That'd be great. Do you have a suggested one that you would [crosstalk 00:24:58] use?
- Sherry Krapels: I'm scrolling through my list of the things I listen to every single day.
- Josh Flores: Yeah?
- Sherry Krapels: Yeah. Because I . . . like the kids don't watch regular TV, I don't listen to regular radio really. I listen to podcasts on my way to and from work, when I'm in the car going anywhere. My daily ones are *The Daily* and *The Gist*, which I can't recommend enough. I think *Serial* is a great primer if you've never listened to a podcast before. *S-Town* was dynamite, done by the same people who did *Serial* and is this . . . I actually really want to use it in my American Lit class if I can find a way to, except that it dives into some very adult issues.
- Jeff Krapels: The thing about *S-Town*, though, that was really interesting . . . Did you listen to that one?
- Josh Flores: I haven't.
- Jeff Krapels: A guy wrote a letter to the producers of *Serial* saying, "There was a murder that was swept under the rug in my town that I want you to investigate." When they



started investigating it, I think they realized pretty quickly that that was not really true. But the story focuses on this guy—

Sherry Krapels: —who turns out to be fascinating.

Jeff Krapels: Fascinating, super interesting, has all these different layers and he's kinda like a local celebrity but also a local oddball. The stories that come out of it, and I don't want to say too much in the group because there's some big twists-

Josh Flores: No spoilers.

Jeff Krapels: No spoilers.

Sherry Krapels: No spoilers, no spoilers [crosstalk 00:26:10].

Jeff Krapels: I remember listening to it, and saying to Sherry, "If we did this in your classroom and in my classroom, I think the conversation you have, *besides* the great storytelling techniques . . ." It's almost like a Southern gothic, the way the story is told. But the ethics of how we tell somebody's story—there were a lot of people who wrote about, "I think we went too far with this guy." The producers of the show revealed things about his life that maybe he didn't want to reveal. Or, maybe blew him up in way—because he was a loner—in a way that he wouldn't have liked. Even the way we tell a story, like ethics in reporting, could be told through the way you look at a podcast, which is what I loved about that.

Sherry Krapels: In a literature class, it could be a lesson about characterization. Like, direct and indirect characterization. How do we get to know who somebody is? Because with this guy, it's through what he says. It's through what people say about him. It's through the things that people don't say about him. It's the stuff he does. He's a fascinating person, and the story is fascinating. There are also some really great fiction podcasts out there that I haven't spent enough time playing with, but that I do like to listen to. *Welcome to Night Vale* is this very cool, deeply weird podcast, that masquerades as local radio, but as completely fiction. The *Night Vale* people have produced a bunch of other really interesting stuff.

Sherry Krapels: *Alice Isn't Dead* is another great, fiction-based podcast that I love, that they've turned into a book and is fantastic. One that I also really liked, and you will like if you're an *X-Files* fan, *The Black Tapes*. There are these really cool fiction podcasts out there, too—

Jeff Krapels: In the style of the old radio plays.

Sherry Krapels: In the style of the old radio plays. I think too, it's this really interesting space that exists between book, show, and audiobook, right? *Alice Isn't Dead*, the guys who wrote the show then wrote a book of *Alice Isn't Dead*, but it's not exactly



the same as the podcast. It's like a re-imagining of this fictional story. I think the idea, too, of building fictional universes is something that maybe we don't look to podcasts to do necessarily, but some of them are doing them really, really well. Like, *Welcome to Night Vale* is completely immersive thing, with all sorts of in-jokes, and if you've listened to the whole thing, there's all sorts of stuff that you understand. And they're also great podcasts for representation. Like *Welcome to Night Vale*, the voice of Night Vale is Cecil Baldwin, and Cecil is gay. *Alice Isn't Dead* is told by this girl Keisha, who's looking for her wife, Alice. That the characters are gay is not the main story about them. It is just a thing that is true about them. As an issue of representation, too, I think that's a really cool thing. That we can hear that, and that it's not tokenism. It's not about the gay character who does this. It's about this guy, Cecil, who is the voice of Night Vale, and who has a husband, Carlos. And it's about their relationship, but it's also about all the other stuff that happens in this super weird place.

- Josh Flores: I got to try that. Just like in my actual reading life, I don't read enough fiction. I read tons of nonfiction.
- Sherry Krapels: I get into pockets. Like, I get into a fiction space, and I'm reading a ton of fiction, and I don't want to pick up nonfiction. Then, I get into a nonfiction moment. Then, for a year, I'm not picking up any fiction. I have to find balance.
- Josh Flores: I think fiction podcasts are becoming more popular. Marvel started one. It's—
- Jeff Krapels: The Wolverine one?
- Josh Flores: Yeah, the Wolverine one.
- Jeff Krapels: I got to hear it. I heard clips of it. I was like, "This is amazing." When you say building a fictional universe, I'm like, "Look at Marvel, man. Now, they're getting in podcasts. They're everywhere."
- Josh Flores: Like, "We have the universe. Now, we're going to use this new medium." I can't wait to listen to that [crosstalk 00:29:46]
- Sherry Krapels: The production on it is slick. Like, the parts that I've heard, the production is good. It's not janky sounding, you know what I mean? It sounds good. I think that's important, too. This nice, rich production value. It enhances the story.
- Josh Flores: What a great activity for students to learn how to do that production and find background music, sound clips, and sound effect clips [crosstalk 00:30:09].
- Sherry Krapels: Yeah. It's a great opportunity too for teachers to do cross-collaborative stuff.
- Josh Flores: Absolutely.



- Sherry Krapels: I happen to be lucky that I have in my building really, really talented teachers who teach video productions and who teach photography. For my journalism class, I'm working with them all the time. But there's no reason why I couldn't work with them in other classes. They've got the skills to do this, they've got the equipment to do it, and my kids take their classes. It's a natural partnership. I think it's a good thing too, for English teachers to get out of their classrooms a little bit.
- Josh Flores: I'm like running late on time, but I'm enjoying this conversation too much. [crosstalk 00:30:41] So I gotta ask you one more question.
- Sherry Krapels: Yeah.
- Josh Flores: You already shared your favorite introductory podcast to use in the classroom, or just use for personal, to get into it. Are there any tips for implementing it, that you've learned along the way, that you would pass on to someone that wants to introduce it, so they can know, "You want to avoid this," or, "Here's some good advice. Use these tools, or these resources would help you start one"?
- Jeff Krapels: I think when I've done them, and again, I've done them just to journalism course, but to take the time to navigate some of the podcast software, for lack of a better word, *platforms* with students, and how them how to find them, is really valuable. You see this when you do independent reading, and a kid says, "I don't know what I want to read." No, there are tons of book for you. You just haven't found the right one." The nice thing about podcasts is every podcast platform, whether it's the Apple one or Podcruncher, the one I use, they're all separated by category. You know your kids. Hopefully, you know your kids, and you know that . . . Like, my student Jason was a huge sports fan. I was like, "Oh no, here. Go to the sports podcasts and look at what are the top ones."
- Jeff Krapels: These are the ones that are the best, at least the ones people are listening most to, and point them in the direction, at least in the beginning, before they get comfortable with delving out into other places. I think we've got to think of it the way we think of our independent reading and try to get to know our kids, and find podcasts that they would think . . . Like, I love news, but I don't know if my 14-year-old boy in my freshman class is really interested in super wonky politics podcasts. But I do know that he's really into comedy, so let's find him something that's funny.
- Sherry Krapels: I would say two things. One, for the teacher who was a little bit anxious about the thing that Jeff was talking about, "How do we navigate all this?" If you're a teacher who doesn't really listen to podcasts, one thing to know is that all these podcasts have their own websites where you can just stream the audio straight from the website. And I do direct kids there sometimes, because they're not



podcast listeners, when they can't operate the software. I would say teach them how to operate the software, but also just have a backup plan. These podcasts have their own websites. You can stream them directly from the website, and that's nice and easy. The other thing I would say is, don't be afraid to just play the audio in class. Like, I won't play a full 30 minute episode through my SMARTboard. But I will, when we're going to discuss *Serial*, I'll come in with a couple of clips in mind that I know I want to play because I wanna listen to. I think a lot of times, as teachers, we're resistant to moments where there is a seeming lack of activity. I think it's the kind of thing that's kept teachers from having kids read independently in class, like sustained silent reading, especially in the secondary classroom. It doesn't look like we're doing anything.

Jeff Krapels: Yeah. If somebody walked by and saw you all sitting there while something played through your audio, would you feel weird about that?

Sherry Krapels: Again, too, because knowing that nothing is going to be happening on the screen. My kids also, they're always saying, "I'm going to go *watch* the episode." I'm like, "No, you're not. There's nothing for you to look at." I think there's nothing to be afraid of about saying, "I want to play this 2-minute clip so that we can all hear it together and so that we can listen to it and then we can talk about it." I think that there's nothing wrong with taking the time to really . . . You would do it with a book. You would send them home to read chapter one, and then you would draw their attention to page five and say, "Let's reread this." Re-listening is the same thing as rereading and it's just as valuable, and I know it looks like people aren't doing anything, but they can be and they should be, and they are.

Jeff Krapels: Well, because it's a text.

Sherry Krapels: It is a text. I think there's nothing wrong with, and I think it's a thing teachers should *not* be afraid to do. Play it in the classroom. Let them hear some of it. Let them see you're thinking, as soon as you're listening to it. Ask them questions before, so they know what to listen for. I think playing it in the classroom is super important.

Josh Flores: Y'all keep giving me thinking points. We're going to go over time, but you're so right about the independent reading. That really triggered me, because I did a walkthrough with the principal once. I was like, "Wow, this teacher is amazing." He was like, "All they're doing is reading. There's nothing going on. She's not *teaching* them." I was like, "Whoa, whoa." We had to have this come-to-Jesus talk. The next day, I had this research basis all typed up for him. So I feel like *maybe* we need the same thing. I need to find research on a just what's going on when they're listening. We know that is such an important skill. That listening and speaking has been a ongoing topic here at the conference, about the importance of that.





Jeff Krapels: It's in all the standards. Like, we are listening and speaking [crosstalk 00:35:05] common core.

Sherry Krapels: Yeah, listening and speaking are in there.

Jeff Krapels: We spend all of our time on reading of literature and reading of informational texts. This is a way you can listen *and* do an informational text *and* do a literature . . . You can combine that stuff.

Sherry Krapels: We also expect them to listen to us all the time. I don't know why we act like a podcast is any different than if . . . If I played a two-minute clip of *Serial*, how is that any different than if I stand up there and talk for two minutes? Nothing, in terms of the kids' skill. The only difference is production value.

Jeff Krapels: Production value.

Sherry Krapels: The only difference is whose voice it is. So why should a principal on a walkthrough walk through and here Sarah Koenig for two minutes and think that's any different than if it's me for two minutes. Really, that's about a bias about what *teachers* ought to be doing and not about what students ought to be doing.

Josh Flores: Well said. Yeah, definitely. I think it's probably a bit more of a challenge to just listen because they don't have the visual aspect to watch you up there, doing whatever you do to get their attention. I do gotta give a shout out to all the professional podcasts. For the longest time, and I talked about it with what we're doing here, at CEL—we should market this and provide it to PLCs. The intention, our audience should be PLCs should listen to this podcast—but Heineman puts out a totally . . . They're just killing it lately, putting out all these podcasts to support all the books that they're putting out. It's great.

Josh Flores: I also love *Cult of Pedagogy*. Jennifer Gonzales, her podcast . . . Fire. Love it. I do have to give a shout out to . . . Now, this is totally a bias, but some friends of mine in Oklahoma, they have the *Okla Said* podcasts. Every Sunday, they have Okla Ed chats, and it's been going on for *forever*. It's very active. Before the Okla Ed chat on Sunday, they interview whoever's leading the chat. Then afterwards, the two hosts go through and they talk about . . . just give a rundown of the best tweets and their commentary on it. I think that's just a really creative way to just couple the two mediums together. If you weren't part of the chat, or missed it, there's so much going on, it's a good way to review all the great ideas being shared.

Jeff Krapels: I know you're going over time, but I just remembered something that's super important. I need to say this. I'm here because of a podcast.



- Josh Flores: You're here at CEL?
- Jeff Krapels: Yeah, because years ago I was trying to implement a different grading practice in my classroom. I was looking for a better way to do essay feedback. I was just searching everything, searching everything and I found this Bam Radio Network, which does a lot of quick interviews with educators on topics. Who do I listen to, but Kate Baker, who was interviewed a couple of years ago about something she was doing with her essay writing. And I didn't know Kate at the time. Then, I found her on Twitter, and I reached out to her. Then, we started talking, and then we ended up sitting next to each other at a conference in Denver, weeks later, just randomly, like thousands of people there. I sit down, and I'm like, "You look familiar." I introduce her to Sherry, my wife, because we're doing something similar in their classrooms. It brought us into this whole CEL network. If I hadn't listened to podcast . . . I even remember where I was. I was walking my dog. I was going around the pond by our house. I remember where I was when I first heard Kate's voice in my ear. Like, "Oh, this lady is great." I'm here, and I totally forget that a podcast brought me here. I'm sitting here talking to you, because I was listening to a PD podcast.
- Sherry Krapels: This is a very meta conversation.
- Josh Flores: That is a crazy story.
- Sherry Krapels: [crosstalk 00:38:17] A podcast about podcasting.
- Josh Flores: A podcast about podcasting-
- Sherry Krapels: Brought to you by a podcast.
- Josh Flores: And a podcast . . .
- Jeff Krapels: I'm in The Matrix.
- Josh Flores: Wow. It was just Six Degrees of Kate Baker, right here. We're here together.
- Sherry Krapels: Yeah. I think that is pretty much the theme of CEL, Six Degrees of Kate Baker.
- Josh Flores: That's so cool. Yeah, because she's a part of everything. I don't know how she does it. I don't think Kate Baker sleeps.
- Sherry Krapels: She doesn't, I'm sure.
- Josh Flores: There's no possible way. She's over there working right now, because she's running the conference this year. She's going to be onboard for next year, too.



Sherry Krapels: Yeah, no. She doesn't sleep.

Josh Flores: I don't know what . . . Well, good for you, Kate. Shout out to Kate.

Sherry Krapels: For the next episode.

Jeff Krapels: You're so over . . . I'm sorry.

Josh Flores: This was fun, this was fun. I love nerding out about podcasts.

Sherry Krapels: Yeah, this was really fun.

Josh Flores: Obviously, I like podcasting, and listening to them, too. Thanks for being here.

Jeff Krapels: Thank you for having us.

Sherry Krapels: Thank you for having us.

Jeff Krapels: Yeah, it was great.

Sherry Krapels: It was lot of fun.

Josh Flores: Skipping the session just to sit down and chat—it was pretty impromptu, but I appreciate it. Thank you for listening. Do you want to give your handles out? If anybody has more podcast questions, can they reach out to you on the Twitter?

Jeff Krapels: Yeah, sure-

Josh Flores: Or, just give Kate Baker's handle out.

Jeff Krapels: We'll give Kate Baker's. I'm Jeff Krapels. You can get me at @MrKrapels, it's K-R-A-P-E-L-S.

Sherry Krapels: I'm @Mrs\_Krapels, spelled the same way. The common spelling of Krapels.

Jeff Krapels: Someone took it?

Josh Flores: [crosstalk 00:39:26] Use the underscore, too. I'm Josh Flores. Thanks for listening. Until next time, take care of yourself, take care of your students, and take care of each other.