



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 ignite and support conversations with your colleagues at your schools, or wherever you may be listening to this.

Josh Flores: 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, C-E-L-C-H-A-T, 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 enjoyed this inaugural podcast episode. 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.

Josh Flores: Yeah, because I really enjoyed your Ignite session.

Zackory Kirk: Oh, thank you. Thank you.

Josh Flores: Hopefully you're getting lots of praise for that, anyways.

Zackory Kirk: People liked it. I'm glad. It was controversial, a little bit, and it was very political, very heavy, but-



Josh Flores: I'm sorry, but we need to talk about that. Especially at a conference with leaders. Educationally, that is something that we can't be scared of talking about. That's a conversation I want to have, and I also don't want to talk about it, but I know it needs to be said.

Zackory Kirk: Right.

Josh Flores: Some of the things you said, oh, shook me a little bit.

Zackory Kirk: Well, I agree. So, that is the point of what we do. And when you look at the state of our nation, you're really looking at the fact that so much of that is the result of educators shying away from really addressing some really hard topics.

Josh Flores: Oh, man, yes.

Zackory Kirk: And I think that many people, when you look at what we do with the four C's in 21st century learning and teaching those 21st century skills, because that really was the underpinning of the Ignite talk, is that we're talking about really having kids learn how to communicate, and to learn how to communicate with themselves, learn how to advocate for themselves. But when you look at how people voted in the 2016 election, even how people have voted in recent midyear elections, so many people voted against their own self interest. And so many people have become so brainwashed by media as to what is the right thing to do that, it kind of goes back to, why did we not teach kids early to really think through critically, really learn how to filter out false information, really learn how to question what's put in front of them? And why did we just simply teach people to go along politely for the sake of being polite, for the sake of not causing a stir?

Zackory Kirk: And I think that's a big part of why we are where we are. And I think if we're going to do anything different or see any differences in our society, we have to teach kids those skills, teach them how to collaborate, how to work with someone no matter who that person may be, where they come from, and to really respect their differences, honor those differences, and then let those differences change you and inform you while not changing you and informing you if it's not in align with your best interest.

Josh Flores: Okay, that's a good point. But time out, real quick, because I'm already writing notes. I already had notes I wanted to talk to you about, but could you just introduce yourself?

Zackory Kirk: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So my name is-

Josh Flores: Hi, welcome to the podcast.



- Zackory Kirk: Yeah, thank you. I'm Zackory Kirk, and I am the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Atlanta Public School System.
- Josh Flores: Atlanta, all right.
- Zackory Kirk: Yes, Atlanta.
- Josh Flores: Okay. Director ...
- Zackory Kirk: Of curriculum. So I taught high school English for nine years. I then served as an Instructional Coach at one of our state's lowest performing schools. I went from a suburban high school that had very high achievement, very high performance, to a high school that had the lowest in the state.
- Josh Flores: Okay.
- Zackory Kirk: Got some growth there as an Instructional Coach, and then became what's called a Professional Learning Specialist where I trained and mentor coaches in a specific region or zone of that district. I then became a K-12 Literacy Coordinator for a suburban district and then came back to Atlanta Public Schools as their Secondary Literacy Coordinator and now I oversee the entire curriculum instruction department for that district as their Director.
- Josh Flores: Fantastic. All grade levels.
- Zackory Kirk: All grade levels, all content areas, as well as our extended core content areas as well.
- Josh Flores: That sounds incredible. That must be a lot of fun.
- Zackory Kirk: It is a lot of fun and it's an incredible amount of work, but it's good work.
- Josh Flores: It's important.
- Zackory Kirk: It is. And one thing that I can say is, I kind of talk about that trajectory, and for all the educators listening, many people want to kind of climb the ladder, but I think the key is at every job you take that's a promotion, is double the work of the job before. So if you're a good instructional coach, you're doing double the work of a teacher. And if you're a good specialist, you're doing double the work of a coach. And if you're a good coordinator, you're doing double the work of a specialist.
- Zackory Kirk: So therefore, in theory, you're doing four times the work of a teacher. So it should never be less work. You should never ascribe to get out of the classroom because you want less work. It's because you're ready to take on more



responsibility and be of greater service. That is the heartbeat of it all, is that the more people that you work with, that's more people as a leader that you have to serve and put their interests continuously before your own.

Josh Flores: Yeah, I think that's exactly what I was thinking, you have to be of greater service. I love the way you put that because, I think, when you're in these administrative positions, you're still there to support the teacher and get them to be the best instructional facilitator they can be.

Zackory Kirk: Absolutely. I always say the hardest job in education is the job of a principal because they have so many diversion concerns and issues to deal with, but the most important job in education is that of the teacher. And if you're not finding a way to empower your teachers and let them be their very best selves in that classroom, then you're not doing your job as an administrator.

Josh Flores: So what are the three things you do to help teachers be their best?

Zackory Kirk: It's that you empower them continuously in the same way that you encourage kids to constantly have differentiated supports or differentiated paths to getting where you want them to be. You do the exact same thing for teachers, you ensure that their unique, individual selves are able to prosper and shine in that classroom, but there is no one size fits all, right?

Zackory Kirk: So I have a pretty big personality. It's always been my number one passion to not try to duplicate me, that's not something that I would ever want to do. But instead, take you for who you are and let you be the best that you can be. Help you determine that, help you find your strengths, help you grow those strengths so you can be better and better.

Zackory Kirk: You don't have to be dynamic to be this amazing teacher. You can be extremely quiet, you can be extremely shy, you can be extremely who you are and still be the most effective teacher in the classroom because everything that you are has let you become the teacher that you are. You wouldn't have made it to this place in life if you didn't use and have those strengths that make you awesome. So that's number one is let you be who you authentically are and encourage that by empowering those choices.

Josh Flores: Well, I think it's sad that ... I think that it's a very unique perspective for someone that's in your position to have because I feel like the higher some administrators go, we tend to want everything to be standardized, look the same so it's easier to manage for them at that level.

Zackory Kirk: Oh, they don't have the servant's lens, right? You're right, I have encountered that and I try ... It's a quick thing to fix though, right? When I meet other leaders who have that mentality, it's really easy to fix. You just simply explain it's not



about you, it's about kids. And if kids are going to be successful and learn and grow and be their best, then we have to help teachers become and grow and be their best.

Zackory Kirk: So you have to take yourself out of the equation. It can't be about what's easiest for you to manage or what's easiest for you to ... in terms of doing your job, what's going to make your job easy. It's about what's going to make that job easier for that teacher because the easier you make it for a good teacher, the more they're going to do anyway. Teachers never stop working. They never seek to stop working. They simply want the barriers removed that hold them back from being their best.

Josh Flores: That's a great perspective. Going back to that, I want to talk more about the social media use.

Zackory Kirk: Yeah, yeah.

Josh Flores: First, what's your Twitter handle?

Zackory Kirk: It's @ZackoryK and it's spelled phonetically, it's Z-A-C-K-O-R-Y-K @ZackoryK. And my Instagram, which is probably a little bit more interesting than my Twitter, is-

Josh Flores: Oh, really? Okay.

Zackory Kirk: A little bit, yes. Dr. Kirk, K-I-R-K, English, as in, of course, our profession, English.

Josh Flores: What do you usually ... or what's your main use for those?

Zackory Kirk: So on Twitter it's all about education and I'm constantly Tweeting out educational stuff, links, resources for teachers. Tweeting out the work of my team and what they're doing in schools to move people forward. Many times people see the central office as the big, bad central office so being that I'm the Curriculum Director, it was my absolute hope to really show anyone out there who's looking that people in curriculum work really hard, too, and that their job is, again, meant to be four times as much work as the people that they serve if they're going to be effected. So I constantly had to highlight that so that's a lot of what you see on my Twitter.

Zackory Kirk: On my Instagram it's a little bit more personal so you don't see as much educational stuff. You kind of get a glimpse into my personal life.

Josh Flores: But you're not afraid to be transparent so they see that you're human, which is-

Zackory Kirk: Yeah, you need to see that.



- Josh Flores: ... I think a good leadership quality, too.
- Zackory Kirk: Yeah. The most recent thing on there is I've been on a weight loss journey since January of 2017 so I've chronicled that whole journey with ... I'm a Weight Watcher, I'm an active Weight Watcher. I'm a proud man on Weight Watchers and I've lost 60 pounds so you see a lot of-
- Josh Flores: Oh, my God. Wow, okay.
- Zackory Kirk: ... Not so much to food, right, because I don't think people would care about what I'm eating. But you see the fitness that I kind of do and I really like to, again, motivate people period. That whole concept of just empowering people period is a big thing for me, it's really important. I think that's why I'm here. I'm a teacher, right, so I want to constantly teach in every part of my life. So that's kind of what you see a lot of on my social media.
- Josh Flores: Well I think that that's really important, the fitness aspect. That's an aspect that we don't talk about enough is that-
- Zackory Kirk: The whole concept of us as teachers and that is something that completely gets missed. And I try to tell teachers this all the time, you cannot be your best self as a teacher, if not your best self as a human being.
- Josh Flores: Right.
- Zackory Kirk: That means you have to be healthy, you have to have taken care of your personal needs, you have to care of your family needs and you have to take care of your overall mental health and wellbeing. When you constantly put yourself always the back burner, which is a natural impulse for us as educators, then you're not going to be great in a classroom. That's why you're tired, that's why your fatigue, that's why you're burnt out because you're putting your wellbeing and wholeness to the back burner. You have to put your health and yourself first sometimes so you can be better for the kids.
- Zackory Kirk: There's nothing wrong with a mental health day. There's nothing wrong with truly coming to NCTE for the entire conference. I have some friends who came and they said, "Oh, I didn't come until Saturday because I didn't want to miss a day with the kids." Well what did you really do on that Friday before the break that was so important that a sub could not have carried those plans and executed them well?
- Josh Flores: That's a good point. Yeah, I don't know if some teachers, I think, get stuck in this ... I think ... What was the term? They get this savior syndrome-
- Zackory Kirk: Which is sad.



Josh Flores: ... and then a martyr syndrome and then they don't put themselves first or they use it ... sometimes they use work as an excuse to not deal with their own baggage.

Zackory Kirk: That is so true.

Josh Flores: And we need to deal with that so we can, like you said, be the best for our students, right?

Zackory Kirk: Absolutely.

Josh Flores: And that's what you did so that's fantastic.

Zackory Kirk: I did, I did. I'm thankful, I'm thankful. It was a little bit of a ... I was gaining weight incrementally over time, so it was a slow gain, but it was a consistent gain. And I had high blood pressure and had the threat of possibly taking blood pressure pills when I know that that's not the genetic path for me. I know that was something I could control. It was a wake up call and I just think to myself, I really wish more people, period, especially people of color who deal with these issues would kind of just try their best to just take control of it with some help. And for me, Weight Watchers was the help, it was the motivation that got me started and it was the accountability that kept me going. And so I'm proud to say I will be a lifelong member, which of course I'm not being paid by Weight Watchers, but I had to-

Josh Flores: But shout out to Weight Watchers anyway.

Zackory Kirk: I love the program. For me, it means just so much. I love the program.

Josh Flores: You do what you gotta do. I have a-

Zackory Kirk: Almost as much as I love books, but not almost as much as I love Jesus. So I'll put Jesus first, then the books, then Weight Watchers.

Josh Flores: Well, you got your priorities straight, I think.

Zackory Kirk: Right, right.

Josh Flores: You could get far with those three things. But I had a similar thing, you said you had high blood pressure?

Zackory Kirk: I did.

Josh Flores: Yeah, in my last job, I was just doing way too much, but I always cared about the job, but I wasn't dealing with myself. And I had this collapse one day and I



thought I need to be around for my kids and so that's when I switched off and did less work. The world kept going somehow and I started losing weight. But you do think more clearly, too.

Zackory Kirk: You do.

Josh Flores: You're much sharper, you can be better for everyone that way so good for you. Besides fitness and taking care of yourself so you can take care of your family and then take care of your students, another professional responsibility, I think, is social media and the way you use it. You can be such a good role model, you can really earn more professional credibility with your students through your use of social media.

Zackory Kirk: Absolutely.

Josh Flores: But the point that you shook me with in your presentation, because it was just so true, was the fact that we see bullying on social media that is modeled by people that are supposed to be leaders, and that was really hard to hear. It's not like I hadn't heard it or thought of it before, but you had a statistic that went before that.

Zackory Kirk: Yes, 2,000 students committed suicide from 2016 and 2018 and it's been cited as bullying as the number one cause of why they chose to take their lives. It is a tragic statistic and when you see something like that, it just really jolts you because we all know that it would get better, right? We all know that if the kids could have just seen that, but we're living in a society right now, just a brief moment in our American history, that this whole entire concept of bullying and social media irresponsibility is just looming out of control and we as educators have to take it back. We have to find a way to reach our kids and find a way to show them that this is now what we need to do, this isn't how we do it. And so I was really thankful when Lavanya, earlier today, shared that hashtag what is it? I think it was #Icanhelp.

Josh Flores: Yeah, yeah.

Zackory Kirk: To kind of immediately say, let's take this bullying down and stop it right off the bat. Hopefully we can see more of our leader's Tweets get #Icanhelp as well.

Josh Flores: Right. And it does aggravate me. I see that Facebook, social media, all of these places, I grew up with that. I'm a Xennial, not a millennial-

Zackory Kirk: Yeah, me too. Right.

Josh Flores: I'm a Xennial.



- Zackory Kirk: People don't know what Xennials are, but it's a little bitty thing.
- Josh Flores: Yeah, kind of like it's stuck in between ... I didn't have a cell phone when I was in high school, but I did-
- Zackory Kirk: You had Nintendo-
- Josh Flores: ... have the social media. I definitely had Nintendo.
- Zackory Kirk: ... that you rushed home for, right?
- Josh Flores: Oh, I had Nintendo, yeah. But I grew up with social media in college and that was just such a weird thing to have. And now that students have that, I didn't ever think about how they might get bullied at school, but then there's no safe haven when they go home and get on the computer because there's bullying that follows them there and how that could affect them someday. We were not ready for this, not at all. And so now it is another responsibility teachers have to take up and be the superheroes they are and model how you can do good.
- Zackory Kirk: How you can use it right, responsibly-
- Josh Flores: Right.
- Zackory Kirk: ... and even the good things that come from it. But that's tough, I think it's tough. It'll be tough as we continue to move forward and continue to see how social media evolves in the lives of our kids.
- Josh Flores: But you mentioned how one thing we can't do, what we have to stop doing, and I know it said before, is we used to say, "Don't be that teacher that closes the door from being observed from other teachers." But we also can't close the door on what's happening around us politically, what's happening around us and how the world is changing. I know that a very specific example that I live through and when I was in Oklahoma, I was a State Director and I traveled and I begged and I used social media and email blasts and vlogs to connect with teachers. And I'd tell them, "Listen, here are all these legislative agendas that are coming down and they're trying to do this. This is probably going to be bad. I need you to get involved or have an opinion for it." And there's was a mentality that, "Well, it'll all go away. Just ignore it. It'll all go away," and it didn't go away. Things have gotten progressively worse. They're starting to get better, but they got progressively worse. And then finally teachers became more politically savvy. I don't know if you saw Oklahoma had the walkout.
- Zackory Kirk: Yes, I did. I saw about Oklahoma. I was heartbroken to find out that Oklahoma paid so little to their educators and put such a small investment in their lives. When I read those articles, I was shocked, I had no idea. I'm from Rural



Mississippi, so I definitely know about low teacher pay, but being in Atlanta, a metro area, where the teacher pay is very comparable to what you would get in a number of other professions. Not what it should be, but still it's definitely a livable wage. I was heartbroken to see the articles of the teachers who were making such massive life sacrifices just to make ends meet and to be able to do what they love. So cheers to you for that work and cheers to the People of Oklahoma.

Josh Flores: Yeah, I'm really happy with the, not necessarily with the governor race, but I'm happy with the local representatives. A lot of teachers ran and they actually won position seats this time. So that's pretty huge.

Zackory Kirk: That's great. Teachers make great politicians.

Josh Flores: I think they can. They will.

Zackory Kirk: Many of them really do. They have that heart and that heart never goes away no matter what a good teacher will always be a good teacher, no matter what position and where they go in their career life. And someone who has that heart for teaching and education and for kids will always have it and they're always going to advocate for it. And no matter what comes around their heart is still going to beat and it's still going to shine through.

Josh Flores: Now, how's the status quo in Atlanta and Georgia and general?

Zackory Kirk: Right now, definitely the people of Atlanta feel [inaudible 00:20:16] . There's a little bit of a dark cloud over us over our recent governors race. It made national news, but for those who actually live through it-

Josh Flores: There's the Beto thing. There's a lot of people that are bummed out about it that aren't even from Georgia.

Zackory Kirk: I don't know about ... Was there large amounts of voter suppression in that race or was it just ... I thought it was kind of not as much of a turnout as what people thought, whereas in Georgia we definitely experienced true old school, 1960s voter suppression. I live in an area that's predominantly minority and I love my area. I love where I live, it's in a suburb of Atlanta right on the outside of Atlanta, it's in DeKalb County. My voting place has always had a minimum of 20 booths. I voted in every election since I was 18 years old. When there's one thing on a ballot, I'd go and I'd vote and click just to say that I did it. I haven't missed an election and when I went to vote this time there were eight machines and-

Josh Flores: What?



Zackory Kirk: There were eight machines and then I made a video, I quickly posted to my social media about it. Because actually, I voted on election day. I always vote early. When I went to vote early twice the lines were wrapped around the building, but then I found out that they also had very few machines for early voting. Then there was massive media attention throughout the day. All of the social media where people were saying there are three booths working out of 12. So our Secretary of State who is now our governor-elect, Brian Kemp, his office oversaw this and they sent broken machines, machines without cores to areas that were heavily minority areas.

Zackory Kirk: So it is an amazing testament that Stacey Abrams was able to get so close to being our first African American governor, first female governor, first Democratic governor elected in the 21st century. But she lost and that still hurts us to know that she lost when she probably would have won had these tactics of Jim Crow America not been put in place in Atlanta, and we're powerless to stop it. She could fight further, but we know where it would go to the Supreme Court and we know how that's going work out with, unfortunately, the Supreme Court Justices that we put in office, that we put there. And we put them there because we voted for Donald Trump and elected him as President knowing that he would have the ability to shape our nation for a generation and we have to live through that.

Zackory Kirk: Personally, I don't think that I'll see better days in our nation because of that during my lifetime. I think that we're in a different page that we're going to turn. I think for 40 more years of life we're going to live under these decisions, but that's okay because we've had it good for awhile. We saw some amazing things for awhile and I know that those who've come before us saw much worse and if they can survive and endure that as they did so can we. But they started building towards a better America that we didn't continue across this nation and it's time for us to rebuild and restart again by doing exactly what I talked about in the Ignite speech, teaching our children the value of democracy, having them understand the value of advocacy and always focusing on their self interest, but also what's right for the good of our country. And not being told what that is, but listening to your heart and your instincts of what you know is right.

Zackory Kirk: If people just simply do what they know is right in this crucial time, we're going to really be, again, the country that we are known for being. Just do what's right. It's not right to bully, it's not right to call someone's stupid, or fat, or ugly. It's not right to go to to another country and disrespect our veterans, to go to the country and disrespect world leaders. These things are wrong. This isn't right, we know this isn't right and the fact that so many Americans are defending these actions that are deplorable are really disappointing, but we can turn the tide again.

Josh Flores: It is. We have a lot of work to do.



Zackory Kirk: We do.

Josh Flores: It's a lot of work, man.

Zackory Kirk: And we may not see the pay off. I'm mentally preparing myself for that. I pray we do, I hope you do. I hope it's a quick turn, all of a sudden the 2020 election gives us an ushering in of hope. But even if we get in a totally different political mindset, whether it's a Democrat or Republican coming into office, we're going to, even with that, have so much damage done by this whole entire movement of xenophobia and, for lack of a better word, nationalism that really isn't nationalism, but that kind of is nationalism. It's going to be really hard to undo that. And we have a lot of ... I won't say dark days ahead, but I can't find a better word for it at the moment.

Josh Flores: I just say we just have a lot of work.

Zackory Kirk: A lot of work.

Josh Flores: It's going to be work. And so, yeah, I would agree with your sentiment there. But I think the one key that is really essential that you mentioned of all the things we got to be teaching, but the one especially is just how that talk to each other. When we've avoided so much under the guise of being polite and it's actually we've abused that politeness in order to not be interested and not really get to understand each other, not to get to know each other.

Zackory Kirk: That's right.

Josh Flores: And so like you said, we need to talk. Our students need to learn how to talk to each other so they can better understand each other so we don't do this again. I am impressed with Atlanta. They must be very supportive of you or you're just that valuable to them because you share your opinions. And I know that many people in your position would be too timid to be outspoken, to say what needs to be said in the, again, fear of offending someone because of that fake politeness. But they're pretty supportive of you and your use of social media and the, and your speaking keynotes?

Zackory Kirk: Oh, yeah. Our District has a ... We definitely have a social media policy, but we are encouraged to tell our story. So it's no secret if anyone's going to Google Atlanta, we had a nationwide cheating scandal in that city that definitely has cast a shadow over the progress that was made and that we're making. But we realized that the only way that we're going to make known the transformative work of turning a district around is for us to take control of our narrative. We want our kids to do the exact same thing.



Zackory Kirk: And so when our new Superintendent, Dr. Maria Carstarphen, came to our school system in 2014 I wasn't with the system that I was in a neighboring system in Erie county School System then. When she came, I was immediately motivated, inspired by her and her desire to transform that system and get results. And so when she came in, Atlanta public schools was struggling to come out from under this scandal of what was ... I guess it's now confirmed, there was a district wide effort to ... It was an erasure situation with state tests. And there were anomalies on these assessments that got flagged by the state and a mass investigation, 13 educators were indicted and of the 13, there's several that are actually in jail serving very lengthy prison sentences-

Josh Flores: Wow, okay.

Zackory Kirk: ... for their role. Their Superintendent at the time had served for 10 years and unfortunately, she's passed away since from cancer, but she was way awaiting to go to full blown trial during the end of her life. So this amazing Superintendent came into us from Austin, Texas and she just blazed a trail for hiring some of the best people in the United States to come into Atlanta to work. I was fortunate enough to come back to that system and work with her and under her leadership. And she encourages us to, again, take control of our narrative, tell our story. When we're doing good work with the school, highlight that good work. When we're moving the needle with teachers, show what we're doing because that is our story and that's exactly what we're doing to move forward.

Zackory Kirk: So she is a trailblazer in social media and is a role model to me and has really helped me understand the value of Twitter and getting out the work that we're doing. So they're very supportive in that regards. Now in terms of politics, I typically don't share much of the politics and I don't think I've said anything that's super controversial. I think it's been, again, something I think is for the most part what we're seeing and what was happening. The fact that-

Josh Flores: No, I think you've been totally respectable in all your views.

Zackory Kirk: The fact that there's social media bullying by leaders is there. Unfortunately, our governor elect literally had an ad where he held a gun to a 13 year old kid saying, "You better be careful messing with my daughter," to really relate and appeal to the voters of Georgia saying I support gun control law, I support gun rights laws. So I don't think any of this is a secret or is new, this is what it is. And I think maybe I say it kind of bluntly, but I don't know any other way to say it. You just gotta be honest.

Josh Flores: All right. Well, last question. Do you see yourself possibly getting into politics?

Zackory Kirk: There's no question. There's no doubt about it. I absolutely-



Josh Flores: Not just as an active citizen.

Zackory Kirk: When I retire.

Josh Flores: Okay.

Zackory Kirk: I'm going to always be involved. I'm always going to be active and I definitely plan to have a whole entire second life as a politician.

Josh Flores: Good.

Zackory Kirk: ... after I complete my 30 years in education in the field.

Josh Flores: It's horrible. I don't want it. But you know so much.

Zackory Kirk: Well 30 years, you got to ...

Josh Flores: You know too much. you have to get in there and now make change, right?

Zackory Kirk: I do believe that that's kind of the benefit I think of when you retire and being able to kind of work 49%, that's the law in Georgia. You work 49% and I would definitely still do my 49% and the other 51% will be spent under our gold dome hopefully serving in the State Senate or State House of Rep. That's the hope.

Josh Flores: That's fantastic.

Zackory Kirk: Awesome. Well I had a great time with you.

Josh Flores: Thank you so much.

Zackory Kirk: And the great, amazing CEL experience has been awesome.

Josh Flores: Yes, it was great.

Zackory Kirk: To anyone out there listening, if you've ever wondered what is CEL, the Conference on English Leadership, is it really worth my time? Should I stay those extra days? You should. It's amazing. You engage with so many amazing leaders. So next year we hope to see you in Baltimore.

Josh Flores: Yeah, and I had fun in Atlanta when it was in Atlanta. I had some good stories, I'll have to tell you off the air. But it was a good time in Atlanta.

Zackory Kirk: Atlanta's a great city.



Josh Flores: It is a great city.

Zackory Kirk: It's a great city.

Josh Flores: But-

Zackory Kirk: I tell people all the time, it is a great city.

Josh Flores: Yeah.

Zackory Kirk: The city is very progressive. Even though Georgia may not be the most progressive state, Atlanta is a very progressive city and it's a very diverse city. And people are truly, truly on the move in that city.

Josh Flores: Oh, yeah. I loved it there. I'm not too far from there. I live in Birmingham, Alabama.

Zackory Kirk: Awesome, awesome.

Josh Flores: So I'm a just the car ride.

Zackory Kirk: A car ride away.

Josh Flores: Yeah. Well thanks for your time. We should get out of here.

Zackory Kirk: I know, it's getting late.

Josh Flores: Yeah, it got empty real quick, but thanks for listening and-

Zackory Kirk: Thank you for the opportunity, my friend.

Josh Flores: Absolutely. Thanks for listening. Until next time, take care of yourself, take care of your students and take care of each other.