

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

### "Ayers All Access" Podcast

*Ayers Institute for Learning & Innovation  
Lipscomb University College of Education*

### Episode 3 – February 22, 2022

Title: *On The Road #1– Hospitality*

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#### SPEAKERS:

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#### FULL TRANSCRIPT:

**Rachael Milligan:** Hello. Welcome to the Ayers All Access podcast brought to you by the Ayers Institute for Learning & Innovation. This podcast is a chance for us to help you access compelling people, current topics, practical tips, and innovative solutions— all related to the field of education. To find out more about this podcast and all the work of the Ayers Institute, check out our website at [AyersInstitute.org](http://AyersInstitute.org). You can also find us on Twitter and Facebook @AyersInstitute.

**Karen Marklein:** Thank you for joining us. One aspect of our job as educators and consultants with the Ayers Institute is traveling and visiting many school districts. We get a chance to meet educators in rural and urban settings in PreK-12 and higher education. It's a great opportunity to see what's happening broadly in education today and to collect stories about our experiences. And it always leads to interesting conversations.

As we reflect on those experiences in this "On the Road" episode of the Ayers All Access podcast, we want to share what we're seeing and hearing and hopefully spark some ideas that you can use to make a difference in your community.

**Rachael Milligan:** I'm Karen Marklein, and I serve as the Director of Programs for the Ayers Institute.

**Rachael Milligan:** And I'm Rachael Milligan, Assistant Dean for Program Innovation in Lipscomb's College of Education and the Director of the Ayers Institute.

So Karen, let's get started. We've recently had the opportunity to traverse the whole state; completing some assessments on various things in over a dozen rural school districts.

**Karen Marklein:** Yes, it does feel like we've done the whole gamut from, you know, the furthest East Tennessee to the furthest West Tennessee— in just in the past few weeks.

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**Rachael Milligan:** Yes, yes.

So, I'm interested. What have you been seeing? What is really stood out to you as you've been traveling— really about the people and places that you've visited? What stood out?

**Karen Marklein:** Well, you know, I just love being able to see all those different, you know... Greet the people in different districts and in different roles in districts. And so many things rise to the top when I think about what we're seeing. These educators are so dedicated. And it's been such a difficult year. And they're so resilient and they truly do love to learn. They are so—they're just ready for whatever the next thing is that they're that they're going to learn about. So, all of those things that have been really important.

But I have just been so astounded by just the hospitality. And the kindness. I mean, people—they're just salt of the Earth, wonderful people. And I just— They make us feel so welcome and they make us really feel like, you know, we've become a part of their school communities. And I just love that.

**Rachael Milligan:** Absolutely. I couldn't agree more with that. There's been so much hospitality and kindness shown toward us everywhere we go. And that has been a consistent theme from the west to the east and every place in between. You know, it's hard when, you know, sometimes when we encounter— Many times when we encounter folks in these districts, it's the first time we've met. We may or may not have spoken (depending on who we're talking to) spoken on the phone or through Zoom beforehand. But you know, I think there's just something about the bond of school that brings us in.

And what I like to say with districts when we get there is, you know, just what you and I don't get to have a home school anymore.

**Karen Marklein:** Right! Yeah, we both really miss that.

**Rachael Milligan:** Yeah. And so, having that home K-12 school PreK-12 school is just something that there's no other experience like that. And so, when we get to interact with these districts and they are so welcoming and embrace us in that way, it's just so nice. That hospitality is fantastic.

**Karen Marklein:** Yeah. So, let's hear about some of those experiences. So, what specifically has happened to bring this hospitality theme to the surface for you?

**Rachael Milligan:** Well, I think one thing that really stands out in recent memory of, you know, some of these very recent travels we've been doing is I was in one school district that has a fantastic culinary arts program. And it's one that they really pour a lot of resources and time into. The teacher who's in charge of it is so dedicated and they have a lot of experiences for the students in the community through catering that they do, through a lunch that they're able to

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offer at low cost for, you know, workers in the community and things like that. And it gives the students a really great opportunity to learn about the culinary arts and to hone that craft.

But before, you know, before I even showed up, they asked me, you know, if I had any allergies they needed to be concerned about. And when I got there, they presented me with the best lunch I have ever had on a school campus. It was homemade lasagna. I mean, probably the best lasagna I've ever had. A salad. I had some bread. I mean, this is I've never had a lunch like this in a school, and I'm on the front of the of the lunch box that they gave it to me in, it said for our special guest. And so, you know, it's the little things that just made me feel really welcome. And it's just that, again, that theme of hospitality that's just really, you know, prevalent throughout all of these travels.

**Karen Marklein:** That's so precious. Yeah. And to say, "you're our special guest," you know, like you said, we may not have even interacted with them personally yet. But they do— They just make us feel special.

**Rachael Milligan:** Yeah, absolutely. Can you? What examples would you give?

**Karen Marklein:** Well, I don't have a great— I do have a great lunch story, but the one that really is, kind of, in my brain right now is, you know, like these schools (even if we've talked on the phone or Zoomed) a lot of these schools we've just never been to, you know? And so, I pulled up at one school and it was multiple buildings. So, there were— It was unclear, you know, exactly where I was supposed to go. And so, I parked in a visitor spot. (There's another example of hospitality.) You know, there's always spots right at the front door.

And so I thought, "OK, well, this this must be it," you know, so I get out of my car. And it was it, wasn't it? It was clearly not the door I was supposed to go in, so I thought, OK. And there was another building not far away, so I didn't move my car. But I walked, I had to cross the street and, you know, and I got in that door. But again, not the front office. Not where I'm— I know this is not where I'm supposed to go. So as soon as I got out of that door, I heard someone say "Mrs. Karen!" And my contact in that district was just kind of waiting, you know, just watching for me.

**Karen Marklein:** And I thought, how precious is that that, you know, she's worried about where I'm going to go or, you know, do I know where I'm supposed to go, kind of thing? And so as soon as I got in there in the school, you know, it was like, "Oh, I'm so sorry, you had to. You had to walk around." I'm like, "No, it's OK," you know? So they just, I don't know. That's just an example of: I felt like they were really taking care of me, you know, and ready to greet me as soon as I got there.

So, it just makes you feel good.

**Rachael Milligan:** Yeah, absolutely. And you know, that also makes me think of— the always watching out for you, always thinking about what your needs are. That reminds me of: we have a long-term partnership in a district that we were there back in the fall. And we've gotten to

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know them really well over the years. And they're, you know, always so welcoming to us. That particular visit in the fall, we were in a beautiful local coffee shop and it was just great. And we began our session with, you know, the quote from Anne of Green Gables that "I'm so thankful to live in a world where there are October's."

**Rachael Milligan:** And I just I began talking about how much I love the October and the fall and how, you know, just love everything having to do with that. Including, you know, going on ghost tours and how I love the history of small towns and things like that. And I got emails from several in that group wanting to know when I would be back in the area because they wanted to go on a ghost tour with me because they knew that was important to me. They also knew that I love history. And so I think these personal relationships that we build over time are indicative of that, that connection and wanting to be hospitable in that way— to make it feel like, you know, this is this is not just we're coming together to talk about school and something academic, although that is our purpose, but it's really connecting as educators.

**Karen Marklein:** Sure, sure. And I would say, you know, another way that we have felt connected is there's one district that's pretty rural in terms of there's not a whole lot of lodging. And you know, where can we— where are we going to stay? We're not sure. And the director of schools said, "Oh y'all can just stay at my lake house." And we're like, "Oh, yes, we will do that." That never actually came to fruition, but it was so precious that he would just say, "Oh, sure, that would be fine."

**Karen Marklein:** And they're constantly pointing out local restaurants that that are their favorites. It's like they see a need and they want to fill that need. And you know, again, it's just so touching when that happens.

**Rachael Milligan:** Yes. Yes, absolutely.

**Karen Marklein:** So I mean, all these stores are great, and it does make us feel good. But I wonder, you know, in general, what does this say about educators? What do you think?

**Rachael Milligan:** I think it's important, when we think about that theme of hospitality, it's important to really carry that over into our interactions with one another that we see on an everyday basis, right? I think one of the reasons why we've experienced this across the state is because educators in general have that, "We're all in this together mentality." That team mentality like, you know, I'll do what needs to be done, let's get in and shoulder in the work together. And so really, that team and collaborative mentality is what fosters that hospitality idea.

**Rachael Milligan:** And I think as educators just need to remember that with their teams that they see every day. Because we see so many great examples of that across the state. And I think that is what continues to drive educators to do what they do. They love being there with the students. They love their content. They also love the teams that they work with, in most cases. And I just encourage educators to foster those relationships.

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**Karen Marklein:** Yeah. You know, I think about the relationships that stick out to me from school. You know, just the relationships of the faculty being so connected. And I think that's why we love feeling connected to the faculties that we're with.

You know, in a more specific way. How do you think that philosophy or that thinking about school impact students?

**Rachael Milligan:** I think, when we think about being hospitable in our classrooms, that means creating that safe and brave space for students to be able to share what they're thinking. To be able to feel like they have a voice. All of that comes down to the teacher fostering that really that theme of hospitality to everyone who's in the classroom, right? And so, you know, carrying over those traits that we're seeing from district to district into the classroom directly to students, and "This is a place for you. We're going to attend to your needs." You know, like we talked about with the ghost tour, right? We're going to identify those things that are special to you and use those to our advantage in your learning.

**Rachael Milligan:** The example that you talked about with the lake house— you know— What is there a lack of? What is there a need for? And how are we going to make sure a student gets that? And so I think, you know, all of those ways that we are being hospitable or that we've seen hospitality— I think there's a lesson for that and how we can impact students. Because if that's coming out in our classroom and in our teaching, then that's where it is. It's in those relationships and creating that space for learning. That's where the learning happens.

**Karen Marklein:** Yeah, yeah. And I think, too, just about kindness. You know how simple it is just to be kind.

You know, as you said, 'see a need, meet a need.' Treat other people like you want to be treated. And that's how we're feeling when we're with those districts. So, we know that's happening in the classrooms with these teachers because there have been so hospitable with us.

**Rachael Milligan:** And food doesn't hurt, right? You know,

**Karen Marklein:** Food never hurts!

**Rachael Milligan:** I hearken back to the special guest lunch.

**Karen Marklein:** Snacks never hurt.

**Rachael Milligan:** Yeah. Snacks, snacks in the classroom, to the extent that we can are always a plus.

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**Karen Marklein:** Yeah. I'm wondering when I can be scheduled in the "special guest lunch" district. Well, we'll work that out.

**Rachael Milligan:** Well, this has been really fun getting to talk about what we're seeing across the state in this theme of hospitality. I hope others have enjoyed and gotten something from this brief conversation. The things that we're seeing in these districts is really what makes it so great about our job and what we get to do in the field of education.

**Karen Marklein:** Absolutely.

Be sure to check out the show notes for this episode where you'll find links to helpful resources and anything we've mentioned today. I hope you've been encouraged and inspired and maybe thought of some ways that you could show some hospitality in your own classroom. You can find more episodes of Ayers Institute podcasts at <https://podcast.AyersInstitute.org>, on Apple Podcasts, and anywhere podcasts are found.

**Rachael Milligan:** Do you have a story about what's happening in schools today or an idea for a future topic or guest for the Ayers All Access podcast? We'd love to hear it. Send us a message using the Suggestion Box on the Ayers Podcast website or send us an email at [AyersInstitute@lipscomb.edu](mailto:AyersInstitute@lipscomb.edu).

**Karen Marklein:** And if you would like to receive a professional learning certificate for listening to this episode, fill out the online reflection form on the Ayers Podcast website and enter this 'Secret CE Code': [Code excluded from the transcript. Listen to podcast audio.]

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Until next time, remember educators change the world.