

Planting Today for Results Tomorrow

Oct. 15, 2018

I had the opportunity to attend my 30th high school reunion this weekend, and we had an awesome time. My wife and I walked the halls of Jasper High and reminisce as we searched for classrooms of the teachers who made an impact in our lives. The hallways looked the same with white walls and black lockers. The classrooms felt the same with rows of desks as organized as they were in 1988.

As I walked down the hall, I imagined teachers in the hall, telling us to quiet down and keep our hands to ourselves as we hurried to class. When I stopped by Mrs. Cauley's room, I found her working with a student to finish an assignment before the pep rally. I guess the saying of "The more things change, the more they stay the same" is somewhat true.

As I exited the building, I noticed the size of the trees on the front lawn. I remember them as small bushes, no more than 2- to 3-feet tall. I helped plant the same trees as a part of my cub scout troop, under the direction of my father and den leader, Douglas McFarland. I still have the patch that we received from that day. Daddy explained to all of us that one day the trees would provide shade for students attending the high school. I had forgotten about this experience until I drove up to the campus and saw the trees in full bloom and several students standing in the shade waiting on their rides.

Growing up, my dad would always talk about living today while preparing for tomorrow. He was a visionary thinker and always challenged us to prepare for our future. When we drove through town, he would point out where the next supermarket or fast food restaurant would be built. I remember him telling us about this new large store that would be moving into Jasper that had everyone excited called Walmart. He was concerned because he believed it would be hard for local business owners to compete. He was always looking at the current situation and preparing for the future possibilities.

My visit to the high school and Jasper had me thinking about about where we are today in Crowley and where our community is headed for the future. I thought deeply about the change process, the "why" behind our organizational change efforts and the future impact of our actions and intended results.

Last week, I engaged in a brief discussion with the Districtwide Educational Improvement Council, the Board of Trustees and other district leaders about the significant population growth our community is experiencing currently and in the foreseeable future.

Since 2015, more than 9,000 people have moved into Crowley ISD's boundaries. In addition, we had the largest number of new home closings, existing home turnovers, residential lot developments and new neighborhoods plotted in the last three quarters. Based on the latest demographic data, CISD boundaries represent the fastest growing area in southwest Tarrant County with the most available land for future development. We currently have more students enrolled than ever before, and with this increase, we have seen a significant increase in the percentage of our students who are school dependent.

In summary, our population has changed significantly. Not only have we experienced significant growth, but we are serving a mobile population that requires an educational system that is much more responsive to academic, social and emotional needs than ever before. As we move forward, the population we serve will continue to change, and we must be prepared to create the best conditions possible for success today and in the future.

We are modifying strategies and actions today so that our students can experience positive results tomorrow. The challenge is to learn from what has worked in the past, while accepting the fact that our current reality requires us to be willing to take risks to meet the needs of our students today.

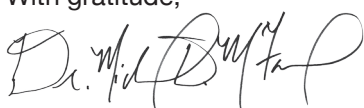
Change is necessary in all facets of our organization in order for us to achieve the level of success we want for our students today and tomorrow. I recognize change can feel overwhelming. It will seem like some of the actions are unnecessary and different than what was required in the past. I also understand that the pace may seem unbearable, and to some, it may seem tedious.

As we evaluate our systems and actions, we know working collaboratively to address student learning and planning of lessons is a must. A priority will be placed on ensuring student access to a guaranteed, viable curriculum that addressed different learning styles, while data-driven instruction and monitoring student progress will confirm all students are making growth.

I am convinced the hard work we are expecting today will reap dividends in the future. I know that does not make today any easier, but I hope you realize the effort is not in vain. The things that are being asked have been vetted, and we know that as we get closer to implementing with fidelity, the results will come.

When I think back on my experience this weekend, I realize that what I saw was the result of what happened over the last 30+ years. I would like to encourage you to realize that your effort today, although it is hard and frustrating, will be worth the cause of tomorrow. Because of the foundations we are laying today, our students will benefit by leaving with choices and opportunities.

With gratitude,



Mike McFarland

