

MONDAY MESSAGE

FROM DR. MCFARLAND



Are You A Bamboo Farmer?

October 16, 2017

I've enjoyed the first couple of weeks in office, meeting people throughout the school district and community. I'm even more convinced now that success is possible at the level we all desire. I was asked last week what will it take and what is our plan for achieving success? I realize these are questions that many others have, and, quite frankly, these questions keep me up at night and wake me early in the morning. These questions drive me daily as I continue to collect information and evaluate our systems. What I do know is the folks I've met are united in their desire to become an excellent school district where all students are equipped to achieve their full potential. The challenge is identifying the necessary actions to bring this vision and our dream to reality. As I think about the questions of what success will look like, how will we intentionally plan for it and how long it will take, I am reminded of the parable of the Chinese bamboo farmer.

There was a struggling Chinese farmer who decided he would deviate from the norm in his village and plant bamboo trees. The Chinese bamboo tree when fully grown reaches over 90 feet. Chinese bamboo farmers were considered true risk-takers and dreamers and were often ridiculed by other villagers. Growing bamboo trees was a risky proposition because it takes more than five years before you ever have any visible evidence that growth is occurring and very little tangible return on investment is received by the farmer. The farmer takes the seed, plants it, waters it and fertilizes it for a whole year and nothing happens. He continues to plant, water and fertilize for the next four years with still no visible sign of progress. During the fifth year, there is a small sign that something is occurring below ground, and this is usually where the miracle occurs. After five years of remaining focused and engaging in disciplined behavior, the tree sprouts and becomes visible. During this year, the tree grows about a foot a day to reach its natural height of about 90 feet. At this point, the farmer becomes the village hero.



Did the bamboo tree grow 90 feet in one day or did it take five years to grow 90 feet? I believe the answer is that it grew 90 feet in five years, with the first four years of growth occurring out of sight. The bamboo tree uses the first years to establish a root system and a foundation to sustain the 90 feet of growth to come.

When I think about our desire in Crowley ISD, I can relate to the desires of the farmer. Our 90-foot bamboo tree is our desire to provide the best educational experience for the students we serve. I would love to convince you that it will be an overnight proposition, but, in reality, that is not the truth. To get where we want to be, it will take each one of you committing to planning high-quality, engaging lessons that require students to think

critically. This will be the root system and foundation for high-quality, tier-one classroom instruction. It will require providing intentional interventions and changing the way we teach to meet the way students learn.

Bamboo farming will require modifying practices and policies that no longer meet the needs of the students we serve today. It will require each of us to commit to learning more and spending more time planning our lessons, so students will learn at a deeper level. Bamboo farming will require us to not give up on students, even when they have given up on themselves. All of these activities, when done with intentionality, will lead us to success and act as water and fertilizer to our 90-foot bamboo tree.

I challenge each one of you to become bamboo farmers and focus on growing the hopes and dreams of the students you serve. As the bamboo farmer remained focused on the goal and applied disciplined effort, I challenge you to do the same. Commit to being a bamboo farmer daily and realize that the height of the bamboo tree and the success of our students depends on you.

With something to think about, I am Mike McFarland, encouraging you to keep planting.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Michael D. McFarland".

Dr. Michael D. McFarland
Superintendent, Crowley ISD