

MONDAY MESSAGE

FROM DR. MCFARLAND



Progress is not inevitable

February 12, 2018

“Progress, like freedom, is not inevitable and success is not evolutionary...”

These words are paraphrased from the great Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speech at Galilee in Shreveport, Louisiana in 1958.

A couple of weeks ago, we celebrated the life and legacy of Dr. King, and we are now in the middle of the month of February, where we intentionally recognize the service, sacrifices and contributions made by outstanding African Americans throughout history.

During the last few years, I have committed to studying the words and actions of Dr. King, and I am revisiting his work and words in an effort to extract meaning for our daily efforts here in Crowley. I challenge you to do the same. Go beyond the traditional black history discussions and commit to learning and sharing with our students at a deeper level.



As I studied the speech at Galilee and others, I began to see Dr. King in a different light. The classification of him as a dreamer and visionary seems to minimize his true essence. With just a little studying, and reviewing of firsthand accounts and primary sources, you will find more than just a dreamer. You will find a man of action, conviction and courage.

Our focus on the “I Have a Dream” speech has minimized the essence of who he really was. He was a great orator, but more importantly, he became the conscience of America. During the Galilee speech, Dr. King used the theory of evolution to make a dramatic point. The theory of evolution, as most of you know, is one that is based on the belief that man has simply evolved to his current state. In other words, we have just naturally gotten better, smarter and more efficient over time.

In the context that Dr. King used the illustration, he compared the theory of evolution to the mindset of the people to which he was speaking. He attempted to make the point that change and freedom will not come unless the creative minority is willing to act, sacrifice and take action, based on conviction.

He rejected the theory of evolution as it relates to freedom and civil rights. Dr. King wanted to ensure that the listeners were compelled to intentional action for a specific cause.

Upon listening to his words, I began to connect the freedom, progress and equality he spoke about as it relates to civil rights to our efforts in the pursuit of success, excellence and a high-quality educational experience for our students. I hope that you recognize **excellence, like freedom, is not inevitable, and success is not evolutionary**. Our students will not simply evolve into successful beings. Each of us must act on the strength of our conviction and be committed to ensuring that we do what it takes daily to impact them in a positive way.

We are making progress and are intentionally responding to the key recommendations of the curriculum audit. Several curriculum tools and resources have been developed and are available today. Common assessments have been administered, and action planning is ongoing. In many areas, the student academic outcomes indicate that our students are making progress and headed in the right direction.

The foundation for success has been laid in Crowley ISD. We have one of the highest graduation rates and one of the highest post-secondary readiness rates of the Tarrant County cohort districts.

Please understand that these things did not occur because of evolution, and they will not persist inevitably. These gains occurred, and progress is persisting, because of you. Many of you represent the creative minority, who have rejected the idea of evolution and have become actionaries.

I challenge you to recognize that **exhaustion is the enemy and the conditional acceptance of mediocrity is a thief**. We have made progress, but we must also realize that now is not the time to become comfortable with minimum progress. It is not time to relax, even though you may be exhausted. Keep planning with your colleagues and sharing best practices. When students don’t learn in the way that you teach, modify your approach and teach in the way they learn. Refuse to accept mediocrity and demand excellence from our students.

History teaches us that excellence can be achieved, but it requires united action, sacrifice, persistence, grit, humility and conviction. The creative minority must rise in active rejection of mediocrity. Excellence is not evolutionary, and like Dr. King, we must courageously move from dreams and visions to intentional action, based on convictions. When we are able to make this transition, we will truly be able to ensure excellence and a high-quality education for the students we serve.

With something to think about, I’m Mike McFarland, challenging you to be persistent and commit to making a daily positive impact in our students’ lives.

Dr. Michael D. McFarland
Superintendent, Crowley ISD