



Heroes Work Here!

October 26, 2020

As we wrap up the first six weeks, I want to offer to each one of you a sincere appreciation for what you have done during these uncertain times. Thank you all for exhibiting grace and patience as we go through this pandemic and continue to focus on providing our students the very best education possible.

I know that things have been emotionally challenging for us all for quite some time. Figuring out how to provide a quality educational experience with the variables that have become a part of our reality has been no easy feat. Personally, it has been hard for me to constantly make decisions in this environment, because the information on which decisions are made changes constantly. Therefore, the reliability of the decisions are often subject to the uncertainties that may exist at the time of implementation.

I assure you that we labor with intentionality as we consider next steps. I am thankful to have a school board and a team of learning leaders on campuses and at the central office who have decided we will collectively use the most reliable information we have to always prioritize student, teacher and staff safety. However, we also collectively recognize the significant responsibility we have to ensure the best educational experience for those who are depending on us -- our students.

Seven out of every 10 families we serve are what we would consider “School Dependent” and they count on administrators, principals, teachers and staff to not only provide a safe place physically, but to also provide a secure learning environment, socially and emotionally. **Regardless of the challenges and barriers we face, those families still depend on us to give our very best.** Our students need us, and for many of us, we need them.

As I visit campuses, I see students who are happy to be back in the buildings and educators who are glad to engage face-to-face with students after such a long time away. I see a lot of positive vibes and proactive actions being taken by campus pandemic response teams and others to ensure safety. The level of positivity has been encouraging and energizing for me.



I saw a lot of good in the midst of a not-so-good situation, but I also saw many that have concerns as well. I felt the sense of despair in some when we discussed virtual learning and the numerous challenges that this new modality brings. I heard concerns about students who need more structure and virtual students who are failing or suffering with completion of assignments. Many discussed the difficulty of ensuring students are getting what they need.

In addition, I realize that this is the time of year where feeling overwhelmed is the norm. Right now, if you don't feel a little overwhelmed, stretched thin and somewhat frazzled at the current state of things, that's great, but I recognize these feelings. But I also recognize that whatever I feel, my students and their families are likely to feel that and much more. They count on us to help alleviate some of their discomfort. Remember, on your worst day, you are the best hope for some students and families. You are an educator, and to them, **you are a hero.**

When I think of my true heroes, none of them donned a cape, but they were all merchants of hope for me. Mr. Russell Sharp gave me my first job as a lawn boy, mowing yards with him as a seventh-grader. He paid me in cash every day. He was a hero because he gave me encouraging words through his constant feedback about what he saw in me. He told me I was a hard worker, a leader and someone he was proud of, and I believed him.

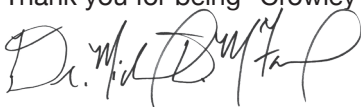
Coach Baker was another one of my heroes - not because of what he taught me in class or on the field, but because he took time to play catch with me after practice. During that extra time together, he spoke life into me and told me how much he believed in me. He talked to me about things other than sports, and he told me I could make better grades than I was making at the time, and I believed him.

Heroes share a common trait - they all show up at the right time. When things appear dire, when feelings of despair and uncertainty are present, when you feel defeated, overwhelmed and near your breaking point, heroes show up. They bring positivity. They may not always solve your problem, but they **provide hope and positive focus** that becomes uplifting.

As we have gone through this pandemic, we have seen the role of the first responders reframed and now you see signs all over that say, “Heroes work here.” As it relates to this pandemic, I agree our first responders and our health care workers are true heroes, but I must also submit that what I saw throughout our district over the last two weeks was heroes at work, doing what they love to do. I saw heroes all throughout Crowley ISD, and I am convinced now more than ever that the true “Heroes work here” in Crowley ISD.



Thank you for being “Crowley ISD Heroes.”



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