



It's Hay Making Time

August 16, 2021

As we launch into this new school year, I challenge each one of you to block out the noise of those things that you cannot control. **Focus on what you can control, who you can influence, how you can make an impact and who you have the responsibility to serve.**

I remind each of you that we are all missionaries, and our mission is to educate children, to ensure that they are safe and secure and that, when they leave us after graduation, they are equipped to think critically and become productive citizens. The environment we carry out our mission in is a lot like the weather in Texas. It is volatile, uncertain, chaotic and, in some cases, unpredictable. But regardless the conditions, our responsibility remains unchanged.

As the political noise around the actions we are taking to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic intensifies, I encourage you to become even more intentional about designing and ensuring high-quality learning experiences for our students, regardless of things outside of our control. We know that in this environment, tomorrow truly is not promised, and every day we have students in class is a day we must take advantage of. We must focus on making hay (educating students), because that is what we can control. **It is hay making time in Crowley ISD.**

As a young boy growing up in the country, one of the activities I enjoyed was making hay. My uncle, Verget Jr., and Mr. Buck farmed together in a place on the outskirts of Jasper called Beech Grove. They farmed about 50 acres and had several fields that they would use to grow the hay that they would turn around and use either for food for the livestock or sell to other farmers in the community.

As I look back now, I realize how important timing was to all the things we did throughout the year. Everything had a particular window of time and opportunity for ultimate success, and usually that was based on the season and weather. From hog killing season to hunting season, planting season to hay season, everything in farming is based on timing.

During hay season, my uncle was always on us about being on time and ready to go. He would always say, "Country boy, you have got to make hay while the sun is shining." I didn't really think much about it when I was younger, I just know we were all scared of him because he was tall and did not mind getting onto us. So, when he said it was time to make hay, we knew that meant it was time to get to work and not "lollygag around."

What I now know about making hay is that it can only be done when the sun is shining and conditions are right for drying out the grass. And once the grass was dried out, it had to be gathered before the seasonal rain came. If hay got too moist, it would mold and be unusable for food. So now I know why my uncle would always say, "Make hay while the sun shines." He was really admonishing us to take advantage of the opportunity we have today because the timing and conditions are right – but they may soon be changing.

We all are aware that we are operating in an unstable environment. But in spite of that reality, we do have a responsibility to provide the highest quality education possible.

That means we must ensure that all our students are participating in the beginning of the year assessment. In some cases, many of them have been out of school for over 18 months. The assessment will provide us with a reliable baseline so we can know where to start, what to focus on and how to take action to recover the learning that was lost. This action will prove to be most critical in determining our progress this school year.

Our students will definitely have social, emotional and mental health needs that we must be prepared to identify and address. What we all have been through has been traumatic and to make hay (to educate), we cannot be guilty of not noticing.

How we do school and how we make hay must be different than how we have done it in the past. **We must be targeted, intentional and committed to ensuring that each student gets what they need and that we serve them in new ways.**

Our environment is likely to change in ways we may not be able to predict, but what will not change is our responsibility to educate and to make hay. It is hay making time in Crowley ISD.

Act like a family, work like a team and stay focused on the mission!



Mike McFarland, Ed.D.
Superintendent, Crowley ISD