



"NO ONE CAN CONSISTENTLY PERFORM IN A MANNER THAT IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE WAY THEY SEE THEMSELVES."



They Must SEE in Order To BE

Aug. 26, 2019

As I read the statement above, I am reminded about the power of our sight and the resulting visions. We have all heard the quote about the fate of a people without vision, "Without a vision, the people perish." Since my desire is for all the students we serve to prosper and reach their full potential, I now realize that we must do more than just ensure that they are equipped academically. **We must ensure that when students leave us, they have a vision of themselves and a vision for their future, and they understand the possibilities that await them.**

Vision is defined in many different ways, but for our purposes, I am concerned with the vision that our students have of themselves. The real challenge that we are facing is that our students are like sponges and they are constantly receiving information that they use to develop a vision of themselves. This vision is based mostly on their sight, their experiences, their knowledge of their history and those of the people closest to them.

Growing up in Jasper, I remember most businesses were father and son businesses. Businesses like Jimmy Auld and Son Furniture Store, Flurry and Son Logging, Payne and Son Wrecker Service, and many other family businesses. I wondered what it was that made the children of preachers become preachers, the children of doctors enter into medicine and the children of teachers become educators. I now realize it was, in some way, a result of the awareness and exposure that occurred during childhood that created a vision for the future that was realized by the son or the daughter. We are most likely to become that which we have a tangible model for.

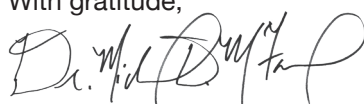
I remember the day my dad, Douglas McFarland, who was the town barber and respected business leader in the community, asked me if I was considering becoming a barber. I am sure today that my answer disappointed him, because I told him I wanted to do something different. I didn't really know what I would become at the time, but I knew I did not want to be a barber. If he was disappointed, he didn't let me know and he constantly reassured me that I could be whatever I wanted to be. I heard him, but I am not sure I really believed him because I had very little evidence to prove this and even fewer tangible models of success.

It was not until my teacher, Mrs. Cauley, sat me down and forced me to think about my future that I decided on this path in education. Even though I was a senior with above average grades and an excellent record, I had no clue about my future. I had no vision. Unfortunately, I was not the exception – I was the norm. I can think of many of my friends whose fate was similar. We had done all the things that people told us to do and learned the things we were told to learn. But, at the end of the journey, we still had no direction and no vision because we had very little sense of who we were. I knew very little about my history, and therefore the definition of my future vision was limited based on the limitations of my current environment.

Our challenge as we walk down this path of transforming our district is to simultaneously engage in the difficult work of transforming students' self-concept. **If our students don't have a vision for their future, our responsibility is to help them develop one.** We must intentionally create opportunities to expose students to current and past models of success so that students can begin to see themselves differently. In order to ensure that all students achieve their full potential and be all they can be, we must increase their awareness of possibilities and expose them to models of success.

Let's all help our students SEE so they can BE!

With gratitude,



Mike McFarland