

MONDAY MESSAGE

FROM DR. MCFARLAND



The Silver Bullet Syndrome

October 9, 2017

Although last week was my first official week in the district, I have actually spent the last month immersing myself into the culture of Crowley ISD. I have had conversations with many leaders and teachers in the district, and the message is consistent. Everyone wants to do better and to be better because they recognize that the reality of our students' success depends on us all becoming better.

The challenge is that sustainable organizational improvement does not occur overnight. Great things are seldom done by an individual working in isolation with no attention to collaboration. In essence, **true success is usually the result of teams of individuals** putting aside differences, dreaming big dreams, exhibiting courage in the face of adversity and displaying grit while taking disciplined, collective action to remain focused on the goal.

The mission in CISD is to provide excellence in education for all students so they can achieve their full potential. Our goal and ultimate responsibility is to work together to ensure that we have the systems, programs and practices in place to truly provide an excellent experience for all students.

It is human nature to search for the "silver bullet." However, I have discovered that **there is no silver bullet for success**. No matter how many consultants we bring in or how many programs we buy, sustainable success and organizational transformation is an inside job, and it must be led by those inside who are willing to work collectively for the common good.

During my reflection time this weekend, I thought a lot about collaboration and its importance. I was reminded about a story my Grandma Sadie told me about my Great Grandpa Charlie Douglas and his horse named Besse. Grandpa Douglas would be considered a modern day mechanic, but in the early 1900s, she called him a jack-leg carpenter because he mostly built and repaired wooden wagon wheels. Grandpa Douglas was famous for his team of horses that he used to win East Texas timber wagon pull competitions. He also used his team of horses to pull wagons and other vehicles that got stuck in ditches on the red dirt roads after the rains made the dirt roads difficult to travel.

Besse was the strongest horse on the team, and Grandpa Douglas often only needed Besse by herself to pull the vehicle from the ditch. However, Grandpa Douglas would call out the names of the entire team of horses before he called out Besse's name. Besse was always called last, and once she finally heard her name, she would drop her hind legs and begin pulling the vehicle out of the ditch. When asked why he called all of the other names, Grandpa Douglas said that when Besse was younger she worked on a pull team of horses that won every timber pull around. Besse was the leader of the team and was the strongest. However, an accident caused her to lose her sight. Grandpa Douglas called all of the other names of the horses in her team every time he wanted Besse to use all of her strength, because once Besse heard those names she would respond as if she was pulling with the team.

Grandma Sadie emphasized the point that **people are like Besse, and when they are a part of a team, they are much stronger and go much farther than they would be able to as an individual**.

As I think about collaboration, I realize this point was true for my Grandpa Douglas, and it remains true for us in CISD today. **Collaboration is the closest thing to a silver bullet I have found, and I will be challenging all of us to make collaboration a key component in our improvement efforts**. The answers we seek are within our schools, within our buildings and within our district. What I have found is that the silver bullet or the solution to the challenges we face can often be found within the organization through collaboration. It is this belief that causes me to be convinced that **collaboration is our greatest hope for success**.

We will become the highest performing district in Tarrant County, first and foremost, by creating a collaborative environment on our campuses and a collaborative culture within our district.

I have found several examples of this in CISD, and I would like to share with you the following video that shows how collaboration has been critical to the success at North Crowley Ninth and Crowley Ninth. In a systematic way, we will ensure that collaboration becomes a norm and the way we do business throughout the district. [Please take a moment to view this short clip](#) by clicking the image on the right.



As I continue to follow the entry plan, my immediate focus will be to create the necessary structures, time and space to ensure that across-district collaboration can happen in a meaningful way. The research is clear and I am convinced, based on experience, that creating a collaborative culture is the single most important action we can take to ensure sustainable success.

With something to think about, I am Mike McFarland, encouraging you to make it a great week in Crowley ISD!

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