

MONDAY MESSAGE

FROM DR. MCFARLAND



Fertilize the Roots

March 19, 2018

Spring is my favorite time of the year. The weather is usually great, and it is during this time that flowers start to bloom, the grass turns green and the sun seems to shine a little bit brighter than normal.

Growing up in deep East Texas, the beginning of Spring was always signified by the blooming of the azaleas and the opening of the annual Azalea Festival. For three days, the downtown area in Jasper was transformed into a carnival atmosphere to celebrate the blooming of the azaleas and the opening of the Azalea Trail. It was a big deal to get your address added to the Azalea Trail, and in order to do so, your lawn had to be maintained and the azaleas had to produce a significant bloom.



My grandmother worked her entire life as a housekeeper for many of the wealthy families in Jasper and they all had azalea bushes. Every year, during the pruning and planting time, my grandmother would take the bushes that were being discarded and bring them home to plant them in her own flower bed and nurse them back to health. Grandma would always say that soon her address would be added to the Azalea Trail. She not only had azaleas, but also roses, red tips and all different varieties of blooming flowers. While her yard was always beautiful, she was never selected for the Azalea Trail. In spite of this fact, she kept planting, pruning and fertilizing her bushes, and she never stopped believing they would eventually bloom.

She passed about 10 years ago. The azaleas she planted never put out a full bloom while she was alive, however, something amazing happened about five years ago. The azaleas experienced an extreme growth spurt and produced the most beautiful bloom ever. These bushes have continued to grow and blossom. Three years ago, Grandma Sadie's home was placed on the Azalea Trail, and it remains there today. I make a point every year to go back and make sure the lawn is perfect, so the azalea blossoms will shine for the folks who are driving the Azalea Trail.

As I think about my grandmother's effort, intensity and belief in her azaleas, I can easily connect it to the work that we do on a daily basis. In essence, we are true gardeners, just like Grandma Sadie. She took the plants just like they were — some damaged, some bruised and many discarded. She would care for them and bring them back to life. She never stopped believing that one day they would blossom. Her belief was like fertilizer to the roots. While she never saw them blossom, she never stopped believing and the bushes never stopped growing.

Many of our students are like these azaleas. They are full of seeds of prosperity and future possibility. They need us to believe and nourish them to create the conditions necessary for them to grow and blossom. They need us to fertilize the roots. I challenge you to commit to doing all things necessary in order to enhance the possibility that our students will blossom and experience a positive result.

The blossoms may not be visible today, but our students will grow if we deliver high-quality lessons, intervene when necessary and ensure we are using every available instructional minute available. Our belief, our hopes and our actions are fertilizer to the roots of our students.

As we enter testing season, I challenge each of you to remember that what we do daily and how we use our time is critical to the future success of our students. Instructional time should be sacred and pre-planning is a must if we intend to create the right condition for growth to occur. Focus on student progress and growth in learning as we move forward, and know that when it occurs, the blooms will not be far behind.

With something to think about, I am Mike McFarland, encouraging you to keep gardening and fertilizing the roots!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Michael D. McFarland".

Dr. Michael D. McFarland
Superintendent, Crowley ISD