



From Beneficiary to Benefactor

January 17, 2022

Since 2000, all states in our country have recognized the third Monday in January as the official observance of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. His life and legacy have been put on display, and he has been evaluated in an exhaustive way in the media, by authors, within our school systems and by society. Dr. King is arguably considered one of the most influential and impactful leaders of all time. The federal holiday is an acknowledgement of that fact. Dr. King's legacy of nonviolent advocacy against social, economic and educational injustice is well documented, and today we all are beneficiaries of the sacrifices he and other leaders made.

In essence, we all sit today under shade trees we did not plant and we drink from wells we did not dig. Each one of us are beneficiaries of ancestors, leaders and others who have come before us and made sacrifices in the past that we all benefit from today.

My intent is not to diminish your intellect, your diligence or your accomplishments. Although each of us made sacrifices and worked really we hard, we all are here, in large part, because of the sacrifices of others. The challenge is that although we are beneficiaries, we often are not aware to the identity of all of our benefactors. In most cases, we can't pay them back for what they have done. Because of this, **the most logical way forward is to pay it forward.** We must make sacrifices today that will benefit others in the future. That is how beneficiaries become benefactors.

As educators, we are blessed to be beneficiaries and fortunate to be provided opportunities during the normal course of our vocation to move from beneficiaries to benefactors.

The life of Dr. King left of us many lessons, but I believe one of the most impactful was that he showed us and told us how to go from a beneficiary to a benefactor. It is more blessed to give than to receive. He received a lot compared to others, but he gave so much more. His model of giving his life, his peace and his self in order to lift the load of others is a key lesson that I extracted from his life.



It is critical that as we pause to reflect on the life of Dr. King that we also recognize the responsibility we have to pay it forward and to do things today that others coming behind us will benefit from.

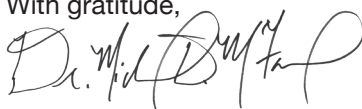
It is easy to get caught up in the reality of today, to focus on the challenges and to become paralyzed by the fear of what could be and lose sight of the opportunity we have been blessed with. It is important for us to remember that it is those that do for others who often time find the most fulfillment out of life.

As educators, we are expected to show up daily and present our best selves so that others can experience a positive future benefit. Knowing that we are working for future generations, we are digging wells that we will never drink out of, and we are planting shade trees we will never sit under, so that knowledge must be its own reward. We must also recognize that we pay a debt we owe to those before us when we sacrifice for those who are in front of us and those who will come after us.

I challenge each of you to honor the legacy of Dr. King and your other unnamed benefactors by paying it forward daily. Just as America is better as a nation as a result of sacrifices made by Dr. King and others – our school district, our students and our community will be the beneficiaries of the actions we commit to today.

With something to think about on this MLK Day, this is Michael McFarland and I encourage each of you to recognize you are a beneficiary and I challenge you to work to become a benefactor of Crowley ISD.

With gratitude,



Michael D. McFarland, Ed.D.
Crowley ISD Superintendent of Schools