

MONDAY MESSAGE FROM DR. MCFARLAND



Pull, team! Pull!

April 16, 2018

There is nothing more impressive than the sight of people working together for a common goal. As I visit campuses and attend events, I am encouraged by our level of teamwork and collaboration. I have seen it during my site visits on campuses, meeting with teachers, students and parents and also during our inaugural collective early childhood enrollment efforts. I have seen it in the campus-wide preparations for the STAAR writing assessments and at the district's job fair. Teamwork was on display Saturday for our entire community to see as more than 120 CISD employees, students and family members took part in the Victory over Violence race.



All of these things remind me what it feels like to work with a group of individuals willing to do whatever is necessary to see that students are successful and the objectives are accomplished. There is something empowering about working with others to achieve collectively what no one person could achieve alone. The outcomes are amazing when people decide to work together.

I know many of you may be accustomed to closing your door and dealing with issues in your class in isolation. At this time of year, you likely feel overburden. Today, I want to remind you that what you feel is real and normal. **If you care deeply, then you feel a significant amount of pressure because you know what is at stake for the students you serve.**

I believe that most educators want the very best for the students they serve, but the reality is, oftentimes, the struggle to get there may make it seem impossible. The struggle is real and the challenge is great, but I am convinced that if we keep focused on the work before us, and dedicate ourselves to helping each other collaboratively, we will look back with a sense of pride and satisfaction at what we have been able to do together.

My Uncle Leon told me a story about his mule, Sammy, which supports the idea about individuals working together to make a significant impact.

Uncle Leon owned a few mustangs and a team of mules. On Sundays, he would go to the races at the dirt track and enter his team in the mule race and mule pull. Uncle Leon had a reputation throughout the piney woods of East Texas, because he always had the strongest and fastest team of mules.

Of course, my Aunt Mary hated when Uncle Leon would go to the races, and she always complained that he took better care of those old mules than he did of anything else. I never got a chance to see the team of mules race, because by the time I got old enough to go to the race track, Uncle Leon had sold or lost all of his mules but one, Sammy.

Sammy was one of the oldest mules around and was blind. Although Sammy was blind, he was still the strongest mule in the county. After one bad rain, Uncle Leon was traveling down Gilgal Road and came across a woman named Mrs. Jewel, who was stuck in the ditch. He told Mrs. Jewel that Sammy could pull her vehicle out of the ditch. Mrs. Jewel did not believe him, but she did not have any other options. Uncle Leon went to his barn, got Sammy and brought him back to where Mrs. Jewel had slid off the red dirt road into the ditch.

He connected Sammy to the small car and begin to call out orders, "Yaa there, Gus! Pull, pull!"

He barked the orders twice, but Sammy did not move.

Uncle Leon then called out again, "Yaa there, Jack! Pull, pull!"

Still nothing happened and Sammy did not move.

He yelled again, "Yaa there, Sugar! Pull, pull!"

And at last he yelled, "Yaa there Sammy! Pull, pull!"

Immediately Sammy dropped his head and started to drag the vehicle out of the ditch.

Once Sammy pulled Mrs. Jewel out of the ditch, she got of the car and said, "Leon, why do you call out all those other names before your mule started to pull?"



It was then that Uncle Leon explained that Sammy was used to working with a team of mules, but now he is blind and the team is gone. When Uncle Leon calls out the series of names, it reminded Sammy that he was a part of a team. It reminded him of the strength of the team, and because he is blind, Sammy believed the team was pulling with him and he gained more strength than he had before.

Uncle Leon used this story to remind me that **the strength is in the team**. Victory is possible when we work as a team, because **all of us are much stronger than any one of us**. That is what Sammy taught me and that is what many of you have confirmed for me over the last few weeks. The struggle is real and our challenges are great, but **collaboration is our strength** and that will make success possible.

With something to think about, I'm Mike McFarland, calling out "Yaa there, CISD! Pull, pull!"

Handwritten signature of Dr. Michael D. McFarland.

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