

# MONDAY MESSAGE

## FROM DR. MCFARLAND



### The Power of One Positive Affirmation

April 2, 2018

April is one of my favorite months because with this month comes one of the family holidays when all of my relatives return to Gilgal hill and participate in the Easter Trail Ride.

I remember the excitement leading up to Easter and looking forward to catching up with all my cousins and eating dinner at my Grandma Sadie's house. I can remember being outside listening for the sound of the cars of my Aunt Faye and Uncle John, Uncle Preston and others. I could not wait until they all got to the hill because I knew for a couple of days we would have nothing but fun, food and fellowship. I would always meet them outside and help them unload their vehicles, and I look forward to it every holiday. Once everyone arrived and got settled, the adults usually all ended up sitting on the front porch talking about the current events of the day, while my cousins and I were playing in the yard or down in the woods.



One early evening just before dawn, I remember playing with my cousins Dewayne and Kevin while my grandma, Aunt Dora and Aunt Dorothy had gone to the S&H Green Stamps store to trade in the stamp booklets for some kitchen items. While they were at the store, they ran into Mrs. Breckenridge, my first grade teacher, and according to them, Mrs. Breckenridge shared with them that I was her favorite, that I was always polite and was the best reader she has ever had. When they returned, Aunt Dorothy called me in the house. I thought I was in trouble because we had been play fighting and Kevin got hurt, but that was not the case. I remember Aunt Dorothy with her big pretty smile said, "Come here boy. Let me give you a hug. I am so proud of you! You keep doing well in school, and you going to make us all proud!" She told me what Mrs. Breckenridge had said about me.

Every year after that when they would come up from Kirbyville, she would always ask me, "Are you still doing good in school?" I will never forget that hug, that smile and how Aunt Dorothy made me feel. She made me want to continue to make her proud.

As I reflect back on that experience today, I realize that had the teacher not taken the time to share the positive word with my Aunt Dorothy, then this is an experience I would not have had. I know Mrs. Breckenridge was likely exaggerating, and maybe she was just being nice. I know she has no recollection of the event, but I remember the effects of it 35 years later. **The little things you say and do as an educator have much more influence than you or I can really even imagine.**

I am asking you to do like Mrs. Breckenridge did and make a special effort to share a positive word to your students' parents or guardians. I challenge you to look at your class roster and find at least one thing positive to say about every student in your class and then take the next step by calling, emailing, sending a note or mailing something nice, positive and encouraging home. Parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles all truly want to know that their children, who they are entrusting to us, are in the hands of people who care about them and are able to see the good within them. Be willing to speak life into your students and their situation. I truly believe that our words and our actions have power, and when we share them, we truly make difference.

I was reminded of this point during one of my campus site visits with parents. One parent had received a positive phone call from a teacher three years ago, and she never forgot it. She spoke with pride about the teacher and the impact the teacher had on her student. However, the same parent mentioned that since that day, no one had bothered to call her with positive news. According to her, all she received the last three years were negative messages. She was not an unreasonable person, and her only request was that she receive a positive message every once in a while. Several of the other parents agreed that it made a world of difference for them when they knew that the teacher or some adult at the school shared positive news about their child.

I believe that all of us know the importance of sharing good news, but the challenging reality is that it is often the negative exchanges that result in a reach out to parents. **For the next two weeks, I am challenging each one of you to identify one positive thing you can share about your students, and be intentional about sharing the information with a parent or guardian.** The simple act of sharing a positive affirmation can make the difference. It did for me!

With something to think about, I'm Dr. Mike McFarland, reminding us that our words have power.

**Dr. Michael D. McFarland**  
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