

MONDAY MESSAGE

FROM DR. MCFARLAND



More than a Teacher

May 7, 2018

As we enter into the last stretch of the school year, prepare for the next couple of weeks of testing and look forward to summer, I would like to pause during this Monday note to reflect, remind and refocus you on the significance of what we are doing, the importance of why we do it and the necessity for us to focus to the finish in order to complete our assignment. It's particularly fitting as well because today marks the beginning of Teacher Appreciation Week.

I was at an event last week and was asked a question that I am sure many of you have considered at some point in time, "Of all the choices and opportunities for a profession that you had before you, why did you choose education and if you had to do it over again, would you make the same choice?"

This was a tough question, and it kind of caught me off guard. I reflected for a moment, and I found myself in my 12th grade Typing class in Mrs. Marva Cauley's room. I recently looked at my memory book and found my senior class schedule and saw that I had Mrs. Cauley for first period Typing and last period Business Law and Finance. Every day my senior year I was blessed to start and end my day with Mrs. Cauley. To me, she was a cross between Oprah Winfrey and your mean aunt who loves you to death but would never let you think she does. I know she loved me and the other students, but at any point in time she would put us in our place and demand excellence from all of us. I remember it was around this time of my senior year in May 1988 when she made me stay in her class for lunch detention because I had turned in several poorly completed projects and was suffering from a bad case of that "itis" that strikes many students when they near the end of their high school experience. To me, hanging out at Dairy Queen or the new Burger King, riding through Ebenezer Park at Sam Rayburn Lake, or simply hanging out at the fieldhouse were all better options than finishing my senior year strong. All these things were definitely more important to me than an elective class that I didn't need to graduate. At least that is how my 18-year-old mind had rationalized my actions. It is impossible to connect the dots of your life going forward, you can only do that looking back.



As I sit today 30 years later and look back, I am so thankful that out of the 56 teachers I had during my schooling from pre-kindergarten to my senior year, I had one teacher who cared enough to insist that I finished the assignment, and more importantly, that I stayed on the right track. I am thankful that Mrs. Cauley saw her role as more than a teacher, because I definitely see her as that today. I am grateful that she cared enough to assign me a detention, and when I showed up, we did not talk about my assignments. She knew I would take care of those. She pushed and challenged me and told me I would have detention every day for the rest of the school year until I decided what I wanted to do with my life and what I would major in at college. It took me three days of detention to complete my work, but she still would not let me go until I could tell her what I would major in and why. On the third day, I told her that I wanted to have a career where I could impact people in a positive way like she had impacted me. I then asked her what she majored in and she told me Business Education, and so the next day I met her before school and told her that I wanted to do for others what she had done for me. So I chose education because my teacher chose me.

As I look back now, I realize that Mrs. Cauley did this for many students. She chose them and was intentional about speaking life into students. Daily, I consider it a blessing and an honor to be an education leader, and I aspire to continue to lead educators who daily are choosing to help students figure out life. I learned more about life from Mrs. Cauley than I did about Typing or Business Law. I learned that as an educator, we have an awesome power to build up or tear down with our words and actions. I thank God that Mrs. Cauley noticed that I was not finishing my race. I am grateful that she cared enough to hold me accountable, and I am thankful that she saw in me things I did not see in myself. She could have shut down and started packing her room as most of my other teachers did. She could have coasted the last couple of weeks like most of my coaches did. She did not, and because she did not quit before her assignment was complete, 30 years later, a country boy from Jasper, Texas is here today living the life of his dream.

Mrs. Cauley was my teacher, but more than that, she was and is my hero. She is much more than a teacher. I challenge each of you to find a way to pour into your students as we end this school year. **Realize that the race is not over, there is still work to do.**

With something to think about, I'm Mike McFarland, challenging each one of to realize you have a responsibility to complete your assignment and an opportunity to become more than a teacher.

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