

# Chalkboard

By

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It has taken ten Chalkboards to get to the point where I usually begin the series each year. That point is sharing with you the unofficial theme for our district for the school term. Ms. Renee' Bradshaw, the Administrative Assistant and HR Coordinator for the district, has deemed it as ""The Butterfly Effect- Small variations produce large variations in the long-term"". Her summary is taken from a scientist named Edward Lorenz who espoused an idea he called the Chaos Theory that had a recognizable quote, ""When a butterfly flutters its wings in one part of the world, it can eventually cause a hurricane in another...."". Mr. Lorenz's work was in the field of meteorology; his model was used to predict global weather patterns. What follows is a synopsis of an example I gave the staff to describe how the theory applies to our interconnectedness with others.

Tamhra Shawver, the district's Treasurer, has been a friend to my family since we came to Gentry thirteen or so years ago. Ms. Shawver had a dream of becoming an auctioneer, which she began fulfilling early this last summer. Because of our family friendship, Regenia and I decided to go to her first auction. (After several more of these outings, I told Dwayne Craig that I'm going to have to enroll Regenia in Auctions Anonymous because she is getting addicted.) At this first auction we bought, for what I thought was a great price, several pieces of antique furniture in various degrees of repair. Some of the pieces needed to be refinished. Regenia and I began learning how to do the refinishing on our own. Regenia discovered that she liked to use a sander. (This was indeed a surprise to me.) Regenia and I started fussing over who was getting to use the random orbital sander the most. I bought Regenia a sander of her own as a gift for her 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Chaos indeed!

Did you follow the chain of events? Ms. Shawver's friendly nature led to my buying Regenia a sander thirteen years later. More importantly, a few steps back in the chain, Regenia discovered a latent talent and we both picked up a new hobby that we enjoy doing together.

What was the application to a staff of educators? I asked the staff at that back-to-school meeting two questions. **Have you ever thought about how your behavior, your speech, your attitude affects the students you teach?**

**Do you accept that all of those above things affect somebody whether you want it too or not?**

Obviously our mission is to educate students in the 3 R's. Less evident, is that how we impart that knowledge often has as long lasting an effect on a child as the facts we convey.

It is important to me personally that we treat each student at Gentry with respect. It is important to me that our actions toward students are fair and impartial. It is important to me that we are kind.

There is a Latin phrase I drop into my writings from time to time- *in loco parentis*. It simply means, "in place of the parent". That is what we are symbolically, and to some degree legally, when a child enters the doorway of the schoolhouse. It is my expectation for staff that their actions, those flapping of the butterfly's wings, convey to the student a love for learning, a respect for themselves, and a respect for others.

I need not say but I will that there is no room for qualifiers or exclusions. Every child that comes to our school is the product of a father and a mother. The color of the skin, the style of the apparel, the church they attend or not attend, how many zeros are on their parent's monthly bank statement, or any other characteristic you might name are of no consequence in regard to how students should be treated.

It is my desire that every child who goes through our school system will be able to look backwards from far down the road of life and say positively of some employee, "That person made a real difference in my life."