



July 1, 2011

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EXCELLENCE

Volume 2, Issue 4

## Cotton Center ISD Mission Statement

**“Our mission is to graduate all students with skills and values to successfully compete as life-long learners.”**

**E.L.K.S.**  
Excellence  
in  
Learning  
Knowledge  
and  
Skills

## The Scope of Excellence (Part 2)

Excellence should cover every area of our life. So far, I have mentioned the areas of education, communication, relationships, employment, and diet and hygiene. The next five characteristics are just as critical as the first five. They are exercise, appearance, finances, character, and possessions.

Exercise—this is critical to longevity. Unless one seeks to improve themselves physically, old age will come quicker than expected. Excellence in exercise means growing stronger and more agile than before. This does not just happen. There is a time to let things happen and a time to make things happen. Exercise does not just happen; one has to make physical rigor occur. My wife has made several attempts to exercise throughout her life with miniature trampolines, the thigh master, treadmills, dumb bells, and the list goes on and on. I remember when the Nordic Track came out. She begged and begged. She said she would work out every night. But she didn't. They all remained in the closet because there was no excellence. No goals were set and work regimen was developed or applied. To be successful in exercise, there must be excellence.

Appearance—taking pride in one's appearance is not only tied to self respect but also excellence. I tell students all the time that they have not control over what someone else does. They only have control over what they do. Realizing that no one is going to

comb your hair, shave your face, insure that your clothes are ironed, or keep your shirt tucked in requires an attitude of excellence. Always strive to look your best because the bottom line is this—it's up to you to look the best you can.

Finances—money is the one area that most have trouble. In this age when credit is so easily obtained and so poorly managed, excellence is critical to a person's financial freedom. My wife and I had placed ourselves in a terrible situation financially and realized that we needed help. We went to see counselors and went on a financial plan. The advice I received and the strategies I implemented were directly tied to goals and values. We were making our decisions based off excellence, and these principals not only set us free from debt but also stayed with us for the rest of our life. When it comes to money, everyone thinks of changing something other than themselves. But we had to do the changing. And it was not a better paying job; just a better paying strategy—the strategy for excellence.

Character—I began to preach values when I went to Spur because I knew that I had no control over someone's athletic ability. I could not guarantee a winning ball club each season because my students performed according to their own abilities, and other schools might have better athletes. But I knew that I was able to change my students' attitudes. Presenting these

concepts to my athletes at Spur did more to set the groundwork for excellence than anything else I did. Also, there is no way that one can even consider pursuing excellence if character is not a part of the scope. Since those times, I have brought this philosophy with me and chosen to live by it. Character can be improved but it takes excellence.

Possessions—what we own should be governed by excellence. How's that? A person of excellence will do their very best to take care of their possessions. If they own a vehicle, they will ensure that the oil is changed regularly. If they own a home, they will make sure that the yards are manicured. Possessions reflect an individual's pride, and personal pride can only be cultivated by how one values what they own. Excellence helps us to esteem highly our possessions.

Excellence does not just arrive; there's no waiting for it. It's developed through dreams and goals. At no point can one say, "Well, I've reached excellence. I can rest now." And when the application of excellence is made to all the areas of one's life, there never is downtime.

Excellence seems to be largely a matter of one's scope. The more in life one attempts to improve, the closer they get to excellence. Failure may come, but it does not have to come the same way twice. Learn from mistakes, and cover every area of life with excellence.