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THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EXCELLENCE

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## 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**

## Do You Want Excellence or Mediocrity?

Mediocrity is one of the biggest hindrances to excellence. Why do I say that? If excellence means holding oneself to the highest possible standard to attain their highest personal destiny, then mediocrity is its antithesis. Mediocrity means doing what one's always done and getting what one's always gotten.

In other words, it's creating a rut that keeps an individual moving along the same path. This occurs many times because people are opposed to change, but if we want something we've never had, we're going to have to do something we've never done.

If we don't make a change, we will consistently do the same thing over and over again and reap the same results. In this age of accountability, a school cannot continue doing the same thing. It must change with the times. We cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are; however, if we like the condition we're in, we need to stay just the way we are.

People hate change, but transformation does not occur without it. To resist change is to be satisfied with mediocrity, and that's the one unpardonable sin against excellence.

We must strive to improve and that comes through never settling for less than what is best. Excellence never settles; mediocrity settles for what one has.

The problem with

being satisfied with our performance is found in the attitude. Often individuals become complacent with, satisfied with, and even proud of their past accomplishments. They live off their former achievements and think it to be the epitome of excellence. But be warned—the chains of mediocrity are generally too small to be felt before they are too strong to be broken.

It's so easy to attempt several things and achieve only to the level of mediocrity. Instead, let's strive for excellence in one area. In doing so, we become more powerful than 99 who are mediocre. Even if we meet with disaster in what we do, at least we sought to reach for excellence. Defeat is not the worst failure. Mediocrity is the true failure.

To remain mediocre is to be satisfied with where we are. To remain mediocre is to be happy with our state of affairs. There exists within the confines of our heart, though, that knowledge of what is right. Knowing the difference between excellence and mediocrity is easy. Choosing excellence is the hard part.

As we strive for excellence, we will undoubtedly come across those who want us to conform to their way of thinking. They'll say, "We've been doing it this way all these years, why change?" Or they'll challenge us and say, "We've tried that before, and it didn't work then. What makes you think it will work now?"

These are individuals who are steeped in mediocrity. They are comfortable with complacency. They are lukewarm in their desire for school improvement. Don't be that way.

Be a person of excellence. Don't do things because everyone else does them. Don't be a part of the crowd. Dare to rise above the crowd. This is what excellence is all about.

Now there are two types of mediocre individuals—those who are ignorant of their condition and those who are proud of it. Be patient with the ones who do not know any better. Train them, school them, and coach them up. But the ones who are proud of mediocrity will hinder any positive gain we try to make in school.

To overcome their mindset takes courage. It requires the willingness to take a stand for what is right. This is what's known as the courageous leadership imperative. Be a leader. Whether it's as a student, a teacher, a parent, a staff member, a trustee, a business owner, or a community member. Do what it takes to lead the way towards excellence.

Show the support and eagerness it takes to make school successful. If we as a school community work hard to help our students achieve academic excellence, we will reach exemplary for our campus and district. And this will all be due to our commitment to excellence.