



May 1, 2011

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EXCELLENCE

Volume 2, Issue 2

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 Pledge of Excellence

On the wall of the “war room” at Spur, I wrote down the following pledge:

“I deserve excellence.”

“I am worth my highest goal.”

“I will walk, talk, think, and act like the person of excellence I ought to be.”

“I will associate with only positive people, places, and things.”

“I refuse to associate with any person, place, or thing that promotes negativity or mediocrity.”

“Nothing, absolutely nothing, will keep me from excellence.”

This was a daily recitation for my athletes. We said this before going to practice and before going out to compete. I had them do this intentionally knowing that what they said could affect their thinking. Saying this pledge on a daily basis, my athletes were going against the dominant thinking of their friends. I believe that good habits are easy to form as bad ones. Saying the pledge was a way to insure that they had a say in deciding how they were going to live.

This pledge is an excellent tool for whatever group one leads. The tenets involved in this oath set the groundwork for positive behavior and great effort. First, students have to understand what excellence means. This is the basis for the pledge. If students do not

know that excellence is holding oneself to the highest standard in order to attain their highest personal destiny, the rest of the pledge will be effective. Students need to know that they deserve to be the best that they can be—that they are free to work within the framework of their destiny. They are free to deliberate, make decisions, and choose between alternatives. This pledge enables students to realize viable choices.

Understanding that excellence is a continual reaching for an individual's best, the student will realize that such an accomplishment requires the implementation of goals. The wonderful thing about goals is this—they give you the standard that is necessary to reach ultimate distinction. And if one refuses to accept anything but the best, they very often get it.

Nobody has to be what everybody says they are. This pledge helps to bring this to fruition for it sets a line of demarcation between the mediocre and the excellent, the negative and positive walk, talk, thought, action, person, place, or thing. This type of confession helps students stand up for what they believe to be right even though it means standing alone.

I will never forget trying to instill leadership qualities in my football captains. I wanted them to commit to these axioms that I was introducing. We were playing a great football team, and I was

having our athletes get ready to walk out on the field. I asked who wanted to lead us in the pledge.

There was a strained moment of silence, and I wasn't sure if anyone would volunteer. Breaking that icy silence was my quarterback, who until now had thrown fits and as well his helmet during football games.

He hopped up and said, “I'll do it.” I was shocked, to say the very least. But also very pleased. I knew that this philosophy was having a positive effect. I had to decide that I would stick with these values come what may. My commitment to excellence had to be greater than my fear of commitment.

Years later, that same athlete saw that I had posted on Facebook the law of eminent success. He responded with the *like* button. This told me that he remembered and even had been influenced by the philosophy of excellence that I had introduced at Spur.

Excellence consists of going beyond the required in all that one does without losing enthusiasm. There were times when I wondered whether I was on the right path. Some student-athletes quit while others displayed adolescent behaviors throughout the season, but I never altered my course.

The pledge of excellence is centered around a marvelous principle—If you do what you say, you'll become what you say.