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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

The Significance of the Thought Life

How important is the thought life to excellence? If how one thinks is a reflection of who they are, the way one thinks is critical. For one to understand the significance of the thought life, there are three concepts that must be understood—the process, the need, and the change.

In looking at the process, students must understand how the thought life affects them. A teacher once spoke to me about how it is needful to help students understand how long term and short term memory works, that, if the student can attach a short term file to a long term file, they will be more likely to remember the piece of information. By understanding this process, students can realize that they can learn and that they can grow in intelligence.

The idea is the same when it comes to excellence and the thought life. Everyone needs to know that transformation occurs as a result of changing one's thought patterns. No one is changed by any other method. Good thoughts bear good fruit and bad thoughts bear bad fruit, but we are the gardener.

One reason for needing to comprehend the process is because a person always ends up the way they think. Our thoughts always control our actions. That's the basic premise. Thoughts are the foundational key to excellence. Coaches often tell their athletes that if they will play to win, then more than likely, they will win when they play. Playing to

win is a mental attitude and mental discipline. Playing to win is based off how one thinks. Playing to win is directly tied to the thought life.

Because change in an individual is contingent upon their thought life, there is an absolute need to altar one's thinking in order to change. If one does not change the fabric of their thoughts, they will never be able to change reality. Therefore, to change the world, one must change their mentality.

I have known several students who always blamed their situation on circumstances not realizing that if they had simply changed their thoughts, their whole perspective on life would have changed. If there was anyone who had a right to complain about life, it was my best friend. He was one of five children, his dad left when he was small, his mom worked as a car hop until she married again. Even after a stepdad came on the scene, there was very little money.

He practiced the laws of excellence but primarily he thought correctly. He made goals to meet his financial requirements for going to college, he studied efficiently to insure good grades in school, and most of all, he understood this one concept—nothing stops the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.

For my best friend,

excellence did not depend on who a person was or what they had, but rather, what they thought. He understood that no one reached excellence without the right thought patterns.

Change in a person occurs because a person's thinking changes. If they think wrong, I call it “stinking thinking” or “poverty of mind.” Truly, some things have to be believed before they can be seen. This takes a paradigm shift in one's approach to life. The important single ingredient in the formula of excellence is knowing how to look at a situation.

As an athlete, I always felt that there was some way to pull out a win even if my team was behind by 30 points, and we had less than a minute to go in the game. This attitude has up girded me in times of trial. I knew it all began with my thoughts.

Watch your thoughts, they become words; watch your words, they become actions; watch your actions, they become habits; watch your habits, they become character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny.

I put this axiom in the field house at Spur because I knew how significant it was. In order for students to do well in life, they have to watch what they say. Their success, destiny, and ultimate distinction is tied to their thoughts. They have to think how to do this or that better: they have to think excellence.