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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

## Excellence and Character (Part 2)

Excellence means to hold oneself to their highest standard so that they may attain their highest personal destiny; whereas, character is not measured by the success one achieves but rather by the opposition they encounter and the courage with which they maintain their values in the midst of overwhelming odds. Although there is a difference between the two, they are intricately interrelated and necessary.

A person has to have character to achieve excellence. Without character, an individual will have no desire to achieve goals or strive to be the best. I heard a saying once that goes like this, “People of character are like tea bags. They perform when the water is hot.” If one is going to achieve great things and set their sights on a high standard, they will face hard times. Good things never come without a challenge.

It’s the struggle that defines who one is. The problems a person goes through and their response to those problems are indicative of whether they have character. There was a state championship football game between Converse Judson and Midland High. A last second hail Mary pass allowed Judson to claim the state championship by a score of 33-32. The winning touchdown came with only seven seconds left in the game when the quarterback tossed a 76 yard touchdown pass. This was a moment of great character manifested on the part of

the Judson team, but that performance was made in the small moments of the game.

Judson could have said so many things to themselves. They could have complained and said that it wasn’t fair. They could have said that 76 yards was too far. They could have blamed their coaches, their teammates, and their parents for their predicament. I’m certain that this was a time when giving up seemed easier than standing up. But they didn’t quit.

This victory was the hard to get kind that came from character. The Judson Rockets displayed strength in weakness, courage in fear, and dignity in defeat. Dignity in defeat? You see, Midland had just scored with a 22 yard touchdown pass, and there were only 22 seconds remaining. I can imagine how the Bulldogs from Midland must have been feeling. They had to be giddy with excitement thinking that the state championship belonged to them. And I’m certain that defeat was far from their mind. On the other hand, there may have been Judson players clinging to a thin thread of hope. But in the fire of such uncertainty, this team stayed with excellence.

Both teams had talent. There’s no mistaking that. But when it comes to ability, character matters most. That’s what needs to guide our talents and gifts. In fact, I’ll go as far as to say that any type of success without character or excellence is like eating too much

cotton candy. At first it’s sweet, but too much of it makes a person sick. This can be seen with professional football players.

The Dallas Cowboys were one of the premier powerhouses in the NFL, but by their three-peat, their reputation had degraded to one of lawlessness and impudence. One athlete faced charges of sexual assault on a 17-year-old; two others faced drug suspensions; and one was arrested in a hotel room where police found drugs in his room (Cordon). Their success was sickening because they showed no character.

On the other hand, Tom Landry’s last year as a Dallas Cowboy seemed to be a fiasco—a disaster. They lost a team record 13 games, but not many remember him for that. When one thinks of Tom Landry, they think of character. It’s important that people know what one stands for. It’s equally important that they know what one will not stand for. That’s how Tom Landry coached. He once said that a team that has character doesn’t need stimulation.”

How true. Landry expected his players to live up to his expectations. He achieved winning the Super Bowl and the worse record in team history. But he’s not remembered for his worst season, and not necessarily for his Super Bowl wins. However, he will always be remembered for his character. If you display character you too will always be remembered.