

Jinni Kwan, 7th Grade

Imagine Classical Academy at Indigo Ranch

Excellence is Never an Accident

Accidents happen on a daily basis. It's true. On any given day, one might accidentally slip and fall, by coincidence run into a friend at the mall, unintentionally stub your toe, inadvertently bite your tongue, and so on. Yet, of all the mishaps that can occur in the world, EXCELLENCE is NOT something that happens by chance! According to the great philosopher, Aristotle, *"Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives (thus) choice, not chance determines your destiny!"* What powerful words from such a wise man. Still many people will argue that excellence is just luck a twist of fate. In my opinion, that is highly doubtful. I think Aristotle hit the nail on the head. Nothing that is truly excellent is ever attained without planning, perseverance and dedication.

As the daughter of an English teacher, I can tell you that without a doubt, my mother would insist that excellent writing only develops when there is a plan. I believe that she would also say that this is the same for all parts of life. Without a plan, life rarely evolves into something grand. To take it a step further, I would add that excellence cannot be attained without also having desire or choice. These are the first steps of creating a good plan, and thus the first steps towards achieving excellence. Please allow me to explain. Every day, day after day, I strive to be the best me I can be. Each day when I finish school, I go home, change my clothes and head to the dance studio. I push my body and mind to my physical limits in order to learn and expand beyond what I could do the day before. I stretch my limbs and muscles so that they can perform to the best of their ability, so that someday I will be an excellent, amazing dancer. Following my intense dance schedule, I return home and dedicate myself to my studies. Every moment when I do my homework, I tell myself to do my best, to strive for the "A", and to

accept nothing less from myself than excellence. It is a hard life. While other children are relaxing and playing on the computer, I only have time to dance and study. However, the important thing is that I consciously choose this for myself. No one makes me do what I do, I simply desire it. Why? The reason is simple because I am planning my future. Therefore, I make a conscious decision to strive, so as not to limit my options. I know that wise choices and good planning, will shape my destiny. Sincerely, I believe that this outlook will result in excellence, and I guarantee you that none of this is happening by accident.

Yet, even with the best plans, people still fail. Why? The key is perseverance. When someone believes, or is inspired to believe that failure is NOT an option, then they will succeed. So, perseverance is at the core of excellence. Only when one tries, and tries, and tries again, can you begin to form something truly spectacular. Excellence cannot be achieved by any magic spell. There is no trick, no potion, and no magic wand to instantly transform mediocrity into excellence. Only through hard work, blood, sweat, tears, time, and the intention to never give up, will one ever achieve excellence. For instance, this essay did not just write itself. I planned it, shaped it, and molded it into something much more developed than it was in the beginning. I didn't throw it together one late night. It actually took time (over a month). I revised and edited, and revised and edited, and revised and edited a plethora of times (thanks mom) until the writing became something acceptable to submit. I didn't give up. Even when I was tired, I was encouraged to keep trying. I did exactly that, and because of my perseverance, I was able to complete my assignment with pleasure and pride. In short, when I wrote this paper, I desired excellence, planned for it, and persevered through many long hours, until I was satisfied with the product. In short, without perseverance, the end result will not fully reach excellence on planning alone. One must be prepared to persevere through anything if you ever want to excel. Again, I assure you that this does not occur by accident!

Now, think about Steve Jobs and Bill Gates. Think about what they have accomplished. Do you really believe that any of their fame, fortune or success was simply by accident? Could anyone really argue that each man just one day had a cool idea and then, "poof," moments later they each had a multi-million dollar company?! NO! The construction of the corporations of Microsoft and Apple both took a multitude of conscious planning, followed by massive amounts of perseverance and dedication to achieve what they achieved. Yet, I think that both men might take it a step further. Perhaps they would also explain that excellence is not just planning and perseverance, but in fact a lifelong dedicated habit! [Even Aristotle himself stated that, "Excellence... is not an act, but a habit."] Thus, dedication is the last element needed to achieve and maintain excellence.

All in all, chance is not a variable anywhere in the equation of excellence. Many people might argue against that, but to me this is just an excuse for their own lack of commitment. Unfortunately, in this world, it is often easier to say, "I failed by accident," than to say, "I failed myself." People grow lazy, and don't want to work for what they desire. Still, the truth cannot be covered up by excuses. Aristotle said it best, "Excellence is never an accident." It can only be truly achieved and maintained through planning, perseverance, and dedication.