

## THINK+

### STRIVING FOR ACCURACY AND PRECISION

*“If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.'”*

-Martin Luther King Jr.-

Are you in the habit of striving for excellence? Where have you set the bar for yourself? Some students often let themselves slip into a rut of producing inferior or insignificant work. This is common, but dangerous because what you produce always something about you—about who you are and about your character. When you produce sloppy or insufficient work, it suggests that you are not the kind of person who takes the time to care. On the other hand, if you produce careful work—work that strives for excellence and checks carefully for any errors—it suggests that you are a fine worker committed to producing the best that you can at this time in your learning.

As you anticipate the demands of your future in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond, it is more important than ever to prove you are a person who wants to make a difference—a real game changer. What will matter most as you set goals for yourself is the degree to which your actions are striving for exceptional performance. Are you putting your best foot forward to push yourself toward your goals? Look at your output. Is what you are producing relevant? Accurate? Precise? Error-free? Are you meeting your goals?

People who are constantly striving for accuracy and precision are valuable and respected. Embodied in the stamina, grace and elegance of a ballerina, a writer, a shoemaker, or a street sweeper is the desire for craftsmanship, mastery, flawlessness and economy of energy to produce exceptional results. People who value accuracy, precision and craftsmanship take time to refine their products. They review the high standards by which they abide; they review the models and visions they value; and they review the criteria that will confirm that their finished product matches and exceeds those criteria. To be craftsman like means knowing that one can continually perfect one's craft by working to attain the highest possible standards, and pursue ongoing learning in order to bring a laser like focus of energies to task accomplishment. It means continuous learning throughout a lifetime. Craftsmen take pride in their work and have a desire for exactness, precision, elegance accuracy, faithfulness, and fidelity. For some people, craftsmanship requires continuous reworking. Mario Cuomo, a great speechwriter and politician, once said that his speeches were never done—it was only a deadline that made him stop working on them!

Stand in front of the mirror and ask yourself: “Did I give the very best of myself to the world today?” If the answer is “yes”, explore what motivated you and how you feel at the end of the day. What will your goals be to continue to work toward even greater performances? If the answer is “no”, perhaps you settled for mediocrity. If so, hold your head up high, reflect on what happened that took you off your balance and set your goal for the next day to exceed today’s performance. Dedicate yourself to becoming that rare person who does his or her very best and then push yourself even further. Striving for excellence is a sure way to make yourself stand out!