

# Ready-to-Use Resources for **Grit in the Classroom**

Activities and  
Mini-Lessons  
for Building  
Passion and  
Perseverance



A **Prufrock Press** Book

Laila Y. Sanguras



**READY-TO-USE RESOURCES FOR**

# GRIT IN THE CLASSROOM

*Ready-to-Use Resources for Grit in the Classroom* provides tools to help teachers, students, and families understand and foster passionate, creative, and curious grit in all students.

It can be difficult and time consuming to figure out how to develop grit in the classroom. This resource includes student activities and mini-lessons that can be completed in fewer than ten minutes, with activities on topics from goal setting, to re-examining failure, to optimism. Interactive and engaging, this book challenges students to rethink failure, push past obstacles, and passionately pursue their interests.

Featuring helpful teacher instructions and reproducible handouts for each activity, *Ready-to-Use Resources for Grit in the Classroom* is the perfect addition to any educator's social-emotional learning library.

**Laila Y. Sanguras** is a former middle school teacher with a Ph.D. in educational research. A recipient of the 2021 Outstanding Teaching award from Baylor University, she is passionate about supporting teachers and students at every level.



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# **GRIT IN THE CLASSROOM**

**ACTIVITIES AND MINI-LESSONS FOR  
BUILDING PASSION AND PERSEVERANCE**

**Laila Y. Sanguras**

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# GRIT IN THE CLASSROOM

## Welcome

With the increased emphasis on developing the social-emotional skills of students in the past decade, *grit* has become a popular buzzword. It is often used synonymously with *perseverance* and *stick-to-it-iveness*, without the equal attention paid to passion and curiosity. This resource book provides the tools needed to help teachers, students, and families understand that grit is two-faceted, and that both facets are crucial to grow.

Most people who work with students want them to have grit (i.e., passion and perseverance), but it can be difficult and time consuming to figure out exactly how to develop these psychosocial skills. In fact, when I was working with a group of teachers a few years ago, they loved everything I had to say about grit, but really needed to know *how* to cultivate their students' passion and perseverance. Specifically, they wanted resources they could use in their classrooms tomorrow. Well, being a people pleaser who never misses an opportunity, I immediately got to work and created this book just for them (and you)! This resource book includes specific activities that can be completed in fewer than 10 minutes, along with direct instructions for how teachers can support their students for each activity.

I have combined my expertise on grit and my creativity in lesson development to create this book. The student activities range from goal setting to re-examining how we view failure, in addition to calendar space for students to track their assignments and their progression toward their goals.

A note on the organization of this resource book: The resources are organized by topic and are not meant to be completed in order from cover to cover. A recommended order of activities is included in the appendix.

Enjoy!



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# GRIT IN THE CLASSROOM

## Introduction

### What is Grit?

Angela Duckworth (2016), a professor and researcher, has become the name associated with grit. She defined *grit* as sustained perseverance coupled with intense passion. According to Duckworth, people can be successful if they persevere through challenges and are passionate about their pursuit.

In a 2016 *Fortune* 500 Insiders Network forum, Greg Hyslop, the chief technology officer of The Boeing Company, made the case that perseverance is the most important skill a millennial can have. Hyslop argued that most of Boeing's projects could take a decade or more to complete, but that many younger employees will not stick around to their completion. Those who stay with a project long term learn the problem solving and conflict management skills that are critical to being successful in innovative fields. Those who quit and move onto the next shiny object miss out on those skills. Grit involves *sustained* perseverance.

However, grit can *only* exist when sustained perseverance is paired with passion (Duckworth, 2016). Passion is a strong desire for an activity, object, or person that one loves, values, and invests time and energy into. It is the “why” that gets us out of bed in the morning, and it is crucial that we help our students find their “why.”

In building grit, effort counts twice – more than achievement and more than talent (Duckworth, 2016). As teachers who give our students everything we have (and then some), we can take practical steps toward cultivating grit in our students. When we place an emphasis on effort, authentic effort, with our students, we are also showing them a way to improve their performance.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge that many students live in conditions that seem to naturally breed grit. You may have students who have adult responsibilities or who live in poverty or who attend schools that are under-resourced. Those students are often described as being gritty. In fact, there are some people out there who use grit as an actual reason to *not* address the issues of kids having adult responsibilities or living in poverty or attending under-resourced schools (Ris, 2015). They say that these conditions are actually making them stronger and more likely to be overcome future obstacles. Ummm, excuse me? This reasoning is completely ludicrous and those people should be uninvited to the conversations about how to support students and improve schools. This is not the context in which I discuss grit in this book. Before we do anything to address the academic and social

development of students, we must first address issues that create inequitable educational experiences for our children (Stokas, 2015). Every child deserves a first-class education delivered by teachers who are appropriately compensated for their time, energy, and expertise. Period.

## **You Are a Hope Dealer**

Let's face it. Asking students to rethink failure, push past obstacles, and passionately pursue their interests are great expectations. These are difficult and messy things we are asking our students to do, but we know that these are the keys to helping them lead happy, successful lives.

That being said, it is important that you know your role. I know, I know; you already do a million things, but this is crucial. You are a Hope Dealer. This means that you need to be the one standing right by each student as they mentally refocus their attention from their failure to what they can learn and how they can improve from that experience. You must help your students recognize the obstacles that are already present in their lives, and help them shift those obstacles to opportunities.

You can provide hope through words of encouragement, smiles, and showing your students that you are on this journey with them. You can also share your own experiences with overcoming obstacles, failures, and successes. Not only can you be an example of what it means to be gritty, your willingness to be vulnerable further opens the door to deep connections with your students.

## **You've Got This**

You can read more about the importance of cultivating grit in my books *Grit in the Classroom: Building Perseverance for Excellence in Today's Students* and *Raising Children with Grit: Parenting Passionate, Persistent, and Successful Students*.

# GRIT IN THE CLASSROOM

## Chapter 1: How Gritty Am I?

Raise your hand if you love taking quizzes – if you have taken the “how good a friend are you” quiz or the “what Harry Potter house do you belong in” quiz or “what kind of cheese are you” quiz. Well, I am right there with you. I take these quizzes because I am curious about the answers, but also because I want to see how the quiz creator is going to determine a quiz based on a few personality questions. Once I started learning about designing assessments, I learned that my curiosity actually stems from trying to determine how a construct is measured.

Think about this. If you were handed a bunch of questions related to balancing equations, you could probably deduce that you were holding an algebra quiz. Your brain is working to put the pieces together to provide a context for these questions. This is why I think it is important to really dive into the grit scale when we first start discussing grit with students. We can learn a lot about what it means to be gritty simply by reading the items that measure grittiness.

In this chapter, students will take Duckworth’s grit scale and explore the different dimensions of what it means to be gritty. There are seven specific activities included:

1. The Grit Quiz
2. GRIT Acrostic
3. SWOT Analysis
4. SWOT Review
5. Grit and Growth Mindset
6. Owning Your Power
7. Changes in Grit



# HOW GRITTY ARE YOU?

THIS IS MOSTLY TRUE ABOUT ME ...

THIS IS MOSTLY UNTRUE ABOUT ME ...

## The Grit Quiz

Before diving into the activities in this book of resources, it is important that we help students understand what grit is. One of the best ways to do this is to really look at the items used to measure grit. Tell students that we want to see how gritty they are. They should answer each question honestly; be sure to explain that there are no right or wrong answers.

You can have students complete Duckworth's grit scale directly on her website (<https://angeladuckworth.com/research/>). You can select from the 12-Item Grit-O Scale (Duckworth et al., 2007) and the 8-Item Grit-S Scale (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009), depending on what you think will be best for your students. The directions for scoring the instrument are provided at the end of each quiz. At the top of the "How Gritty Are You?" page, ask students to write their total grit scores. Then they also need to choose the two items that are MOST like them and write those in the top box. They will write the two items that are most NOT like them and write those in the bottom box. You can tell them that you will revisit this later in the year.

It is also a good idea to talk through each item after students complete the quiz. I suggest that you write each question on the board and then talk through it with your students. For example, one item is "I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge." You might ask students to share times when they or someone they know has overcome setbacks. You might ask them to explain how it felt to overcome setbacks or how they know the difference between an important challenge and a not-so-important challenge.



# WHAT DOES GRIT MEAN TO YOU?

G

R

V

T

## **GRIT Acrostic**

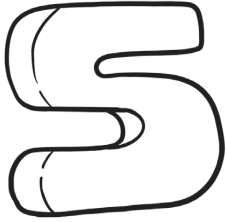
Ask students about the two components to grit (passion and perseverance) and remind them that both are important. Explain that passion is what keeps us moving when we want to give up and that everyone who has ever accomplished something great wanted to quit at some point. Also explain that perseverance is when we can see the obstacles, but we choose to keep going anyway. Perseverance is what gets us to reach our goals, while it is the passion that keeps us moving forward.

Give students time to complete the GRIT acrostic poem. They need to start each sentence with each letter in the word "grit." They can add additional sentences to explain themselves when necessary and can include examples. Students can also add drawings/images that coincide with each letter. You can have students present their poems to the class or in small groups. You also might consider displaying these in your classroom.

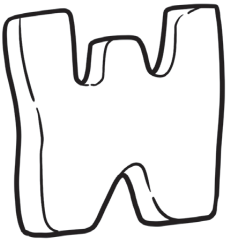


Think deeply about how you would describe these aspects of your identity.

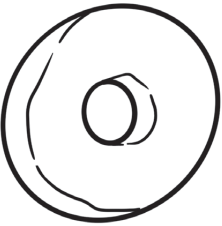
### STRENGTHS



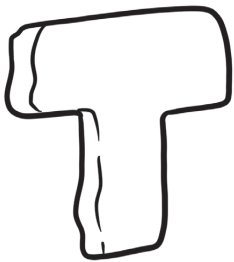
### WEAKNESSES



### OPPORTUNITIES



### THREATS



## **SWOT Analysis**

An important component to being gritty is knowing who we are. We need to have a strong sense of our identity and a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis can help (Pestle Analysis Contributor, 2015)! Begin first by modeling your own SWOT analysis for your students and then lead them through their own. Depending on your students, this might be something they can work on with a partner or alone.

Students will identify their personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities (the resources they have available to them), and threats (things that might hinder them). You may need to coax students to really think about their strengths. For example, they sometimes do not realize that being bilingual or being immersed in two different cultures is a positive thing. The same is true for opportunities. For some, they may have financial stability in their family, which is an obvious opportunity. For others, they may have a lot of siblings (which seems like a pain), but is actually a resource because they always have people around them. (This SWOT analysis is a really great one to talk through individually with students who are struggling in your class, are not motivated, etc. It is a great tool to help you connect to them.)