

# Developing Resilience and Independence in K-3 Children

Grit: Willingness to Persevere and Overcome Obstacles

Building Healthy Relationships and Positive Interpersonal Skills

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# So...Why are we here today?

Our children are growing up in a rapidly-changing, complex society that is much different than any of us experienced. It can be quite challenging for us, as parents and as educators, to help them navigate their world.

Our busy lifestyles have had an impact on stress and anxiety levels for individuals and families; for some, “more” has resulted in “less” valuable family time

Technology is dramatically changing the ways we interact with others

Some children are coming to school less prepared to perform age-appropriate functions and embrace challenges, both simple and complex

Most activities for children are planned and supervised, leaving little precious time for “free play” wherein children build and rely on their own creative skills, set their own rules, resolve conflicts, and build relationships

# Essential questions

- Are we providing children with the tools they need to be successful?
- How do we each define success – as a school, as parents, as families?
- Are we supporting children enough without coddling them too much?
- Are we fostering self-esteem/self worth by helping children feel “capable”
- Are we allowing (requiring) children to do what they can for themselves?
- Are we allowing children to experience and feel failure in a healthy way?
- Are we modeling empathetic behavior and important interpersonal skills?

Are we preparing the  
child for the road?

*or*

Are we preparing the  
road for the child?

In response to these questions  
and challenges...

The Rutherford Public Schools  
adopted a district-wide goal focused on:

**Social-Emotional Learning**

# What is Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)?

The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to do the following:

understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions

## The NJ State Board of Education

has adopted the core competency standards proposed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, Emotional, Learning (CASEL)

# New Jersey Social and Emotional Learning Competencies and Sub-Competencies

Self Awareness

Self-Management

Social Awareness

Responsible Decision-Making

Relationship Skills

In Part 1, we focused on:

- Empathy
- Responsibility

Today, we shift our focus to:

- Grit
- Relationships and Interpersonal Skills



# Questions to Explore

Why do some children/people appear to have the ability to tackle challenges better than others...  
(regardless of IQ)?

What qualities do those people possess?

# Qualities to Define

What is Resilience?  
What is Perseverance?  
What is Grit?

# Defining Resilience

- “***Resilience*** is our ability to bounce back after we have struggled, faltered, or failed. It is being able to pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, take a moment or two to collect ourselves, and get back to the business of pursuing our goal. It involves optimism” - Miller
- The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress

# Defining Perseverance

- ***Perseverance*** – continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition; the quality that allows someone to continue trying to do something even though it is difficult

# What is Grit?

- Grit is a personality trait possessed by individuals who demonstrate passion and perseverance toward a goal despite being confronted by significant obstacles and distractions
- Grit is a “sticktoitiveness”; a diligent spirit; the nagging conviction that keeps pressing on when it’d be easier to give up
- “Grit is a positive, non-cognitive trait based on an individual’s passion for a particular long-term goal or end state, coupled with a powerful motivation to achieve their respective objective” - Cedar

# What is Grit?

- “Grit is the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals” - Duckworth
- “Grit is about sustained, consistent effort toward a goal even when we struggle, falter, or temporarily fail” - Miller
- Grit involves Conscientiousness, self-discipline, perseverance, and resilience
- One of the biggest indicators of Grit is the ability to ***delay gratification*** while working on a task. Simple in theory but difficult in practice – especially in today’s technological world

# Sorting out Resilience, Perseverance, and Grit

## - Building Learning Power.com

- **Resilience** seems to be defined fairly narrowly as the ability to bounce back after adversity or disappointment, be able to manage and adapt to sources of stress and adversity
- **Perseverance** tends to be associated with steadfastness on mastering skills or completing a task; having a commitment to learning
- **Grit** is defined as the tendency to sustain interest and effort towards long term goals. It is associated with self control and deferring short term gratification

*Grit is the engine that moves us towards our goal.*

*Resilience and perseverance are the oil that keeps the engine moving*

# Angela Duckworth

- University of Pennsylvania Professor of Psychology
- Recognized as one of the foremost authorities on **Grit**
- Since 2005, has studied grit and behavior in students
- Through research, has concluded that Grit matters more for kids in reaching their full potential than intelligence, skill, or even grades
- For people to develop Grit, they need to cultivate a **Growth Mindset**
- “Just because it feels difficult, does not mean that it’s impossible and that you shouldn’t try”



# Angela Duckworth

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TED Talks Education Video

Grit: The Power of Passion and  
Perseverance

TED Talk

# Grit and the Greater Good: A Conversation with Angela Duckworth

*Duckworth carefully points out that  
“Grit isn’t everything; Character is Plural”*

## Three Families of Character Strengths:

- ***Interpersonal (strengths of heart)*** – include gratitude, empathy, honesty, and social-emotional intelligence
- ***Intrapersonal (strengths of will)*** – academic self-control, delay of gratification, ***grit***, and related ways of thinking about the world, like optimism and growth mindset
- ***Intellectual (strengths of mind)*** – curiosity, open-mindedness, intellectual humility, imagination, and creativity

# Grit and the Greater Good: A Conversation with Angela Duckworth

- Responsibility on students but also on society – “I want kids to have agency but I also want society to take responsibility; ...create the circumstance under which growth mindset and grit and other aspects of character can grow”
- Grit as a trait - ex. Basketball vs. Math - View as the same situation – **a challenge** – Can’t yet, but can do with some support, practice, and effort
- Grit is one part passion and one part perseverance; curiosity can play a big role
- The Hard Thing Rule; kids choose the activity and have to stay committed to it

# How (and Why) to Teach Kids to Have More Grit

- Cedar, [verywellfamily.com](http://verywellfamily.com)

- ***Let your child find a passion*** – pursuing an interest they have chosen themselves will help motivate them to engage in the hard work and perseverance needed for success
- ***Place kids in activities out of their comfort zone*** – encourage them to try and continue activities that might be challenging or anxiety producing; chance to prove they can do anything
  - “Learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable” - Saban
- ***Let your kid get frustrated*** – Parents hate to see their kids struggle, but taking risks and struggling is an important way for children to learn; resist the urge to jump in and “save”

# How (and Why) to Teach Kids to Have More Grit?

- Cedar, [verywellfamily.com](http://verywellfamily.com)

- ***Brainstorm together*** – if a child is struggling, use the experience as a way to teach resilience and an “opportunity” for success (instead of quitting)

Help brainstorm strategies and a plan of action, but allow the child to take ownership of the solution

- ***Teach that failing is OK*** – talk with children about your own failures and how you persevered; model how to be calm and determined; model how being flexible and knowing how to problem solve is useful

# How (and Why) to Teach Kids to Have More Grit?

- Cedar, [verywellfamily.com](http://verywellfamily.com)

- ***Discuss effort and not accomplishments*** – the goal of a task is not perfection, and if you intervene constantly, your child will realize that you do not have confidence in their abilities; share openly about struggles and challenges and celebrate when family members attempt to persevere through difficult tasks
- ***Be a Gritty parent*** – you can tell kids what to do and how you want them to act, but the real lesson is in how you act; manage your own anxiety and stop controlling your child's actions; instead, coach them by doing activities with them, not for them

# How (and Why) to Teach Kids to Have More Grit?

- Cedar, [verywellfamily.com](http://verywellfamily.com)

- ***Model a Growth Mindset*** – a Growth Mindset is shaped by adults through language and behavior that we model for kids; be mindful of you own thinking and the messages you send in words and actions

Praising kids for being smart suggests that innate talent is the reason for success while focusing on the process helps them see how their ***effort*** leads to success

When parents talk positively about making mistakes, kids start to think of mistakes as a natural part of the learning process

# Carol Dweck

- Stanford University professor and author of “*Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*”
- Dweck has found that people with Growth Mindsets are more resilient and tend to push through struggles because they believe that work is part of the process and they do not believe that failure is a permanent condition
- Success in many areas of our lives can be dramatically influenced by how we think about our talents and abilities



# Fixed Mindset, Growth Mindset, and Grit

What is a Fixed Mindset vs. a Growth Mindset?

Is Grit/How is Grit related to Growth Mindset?

Does Grit help to foster a Growth Mindset?

Does having a Growth Mindset foster Grit?

# Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset

## Nature vs. Nurture

### Fixed Mindset

- Based on the beliefs that abilities are fixed; intelligence is innate

### Growth Mindset

- Based on the belief that your basic qualities are things that you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others
- The belief that abilities can be developed

*The view you adopt for yourself can profoundly affect the way you lead your life*

# Fixed Mindset *or* Growth Mindset?

A person with a  
**Fixed Mindset** may:

- avoid challenges
- give up easily
- ignore feedback
- become threatened by other people's success
- Try hard to appear as smart or capable as possible

A person with a  
**Growth Mindset** may:

- embrace challenges
- give their best effort
- learn from feedback
- become inspired by other people's success
- believe their intelligence can change if they work hard

# Risk and Effort

## Fixed or Growth?

- Risk and effort are two things that might reveal your inadequacies and show that you are not up to the task; quickly fear challenge and devalue effort
  - *Fixed or Growth?*
- Recognize the value of challenging themselves, taking risks, and the importance of effort
  - *Fixed or Growth?*
    - Nothing ventured, nothing lost - Fixed or Growth?
    - Nothing ventured, nothing gained - Fixed or Growth?

# Ways to Help Your Child Develop a Growth Mindset

- *Talk about it:*
  - Guide discussion with your child by asking questions:
  - Did you make a mistake today? What did you learn?
- *Encourage Failure:*
  - Failure happens often and it is ok; the brain grows
  - Don't step in to prevent; learn to persevere
- *Praise the Process:*
  - Instead of saying, "You're so smart!", praise effort, goal setting, persisting through challenges, or creativity
  - "Wow! You must have worked really hard on this"

# Ways to Help Your Child Develop a Growth Mindset

- *The brain can grow:*
  - Remind your child that intelligence is not fixed
  - When things are difficult, their brain grows if they persist
  - Through learning, their brain makes new connections
- *Help them change their dialogue*
  - Your child's self-talk makes a huge impact on their mindset
  - "This is too hard vs. I can't do this yet but I will keep trying"
  - Model a Growth Mindset dialogue for them

*Remind your children of "The Power of Yet"*

# The Power of Play

Creative, unstructured, frequent play time can positively impact:

- Resilience, perseverance, and Grit
- Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Intellectual Character Strengths
- Confidence and Self Esteem
- *Interpersonal Skills and Positive Relationships*

# What are Your Memories of Playing as a Child?

- Do children today have the same amount of play time?
- Do children play as frequently outdoors?
- Were your activities most often planned and structured?
- Were your parents concerned about you being ‘bored’?



# The Play Deficit

- Dr. Peter Gray  
Research Professor, Boston College

“When I was a child in the 1950’s, my friends and I had two educations. We had school (which was not the big deal it is today), and we also had what I call a hunter-gather education. We played in mixed-age neighborhood groups almost every day, often until dark. We played all weekend and all summer long. We had time to explore in all sorts of ways, and also time to become bored and figure out how to overcome boredom, time to get in trouble and find our way out, time to daydream, time to immerse ourselves in hobbies, and time to read comics and whatever else we wanted to read rather than the books assigned to us.”

# The Play Deficit

“Beginning around 1960 or a little before, adults began chipping away at that freedom ...”

“Adult-directed sports for children began to replace “pickup games”; adult-directed classes outside of school began to replace hobbies; and parents fears led them, ever more, to forbid children from going out to play with other kids, away from home, unsupervised.”

There are lots of reasons for these changes but the effect, over the decades, has been a continuous and ultimately dramatic decline in children’s opportunities to play and explore in their own chosen ways.”

# Five Ways Play Benefits Kids

## - Gray

- Play gives children a chance to find and develop a connection to their own self-identified and self-guided interests. In free play, children do what they want to do and the learning and psychological growth are by-products, not conscious goals of the activity
- It is through play that children first learn how to make decisions, solve problems, exert self control, and follow rules. As they direct their own free play and solve the problems that come up, they must exert control over themselves and must, at times, accept restrictions on their own behavior and follow the rule if they want to be accepted and successful at the game

# Five Ways Play Benefits Kids

## - Gray

- Children learn to handle their emotions, including anger and fear, during play. In free play, children put themselves into physically and socially challenging situations and learn to control the emotions that arise from these stressors.
- Play helps children to make friends and to get along with each other as equals. Since play is voluntary and playmates may abandon the game at any time if they feel uncomfortable, children learn to be aware of their playmates' needs and attempt to meet them in order to maintain the play

# Five Ways Play Benefits Kids

## - Gray

- Most importantly, play is a source of happiness. When children are asked about the activities that bring them happiness, they say they are happier when playing with friends than in any other situation.

# Why is it important for your child to have friends?

- Having friends builds confidence and self-esteem.

Children with solid friendships have more confidence and are more likely to choose friends for the right reasons. Children with low self esteem may choose friends who do not treat them well because they may feel that is what they deserve or may be looking to fill an emotional void.

- Children learn early on what a good friend (and a not-so-good friend) looks like, which helps them avoid toxic relationships later on.
- Children learn how to deal with conflict.
- Having trustworthy friends gives children the opportunity to share feelings and feel less alone or isolated.

# Why is it important for your child to have friends? (continued)

- Unsupervised play allows children to develop leadership skills.
- Unsupervised play helps develop imagination and creativity - make sure electronics are put away for play dates!
- When not micromanaged by adults, children tend to increase problem-solving skills – this helps with developing grit and boosting confidence.
- Children are able to build empathy when they have more time for play.

# How Parents Can Help Children Have Meaningful Relationships

- ***Encourage interaction with siblings at home*** - This is the first opportunity many children have to socialize and learn some of the important skills. Parents can monitor and correct in the moment to help in this learning process.
- ***Focus on traits that make a good friend*** - These traits include, but are not limited to trustworthiness, honesty, kindness and the ability to be supportive and empathize.



## How Parents Can Help Children Have Meaningful Relationships (continued)

- ***Parents as role models*** – The best way for children to learn is through example. You can set a good example for your child by being a good friend and having good friends. If you surround yourself with positive people who exhibit good friendship traits, your children will learn that this is what a friendship looks like. Make sure your children see you investing time and energy in your friendships, staying committed to your social obligations and being an honest and trustworthy friend yourself.

# How Parents Can Help Children Have Meaningful Relationships (continued)

- *Teach social skills to your child*

- Discuss with your child how important it is to a friendship to be a good listener and a good sport. Model these behaviors and practice active listening at home.
- Teach your child how to say “No” and how to accept “No” as an answer.
- Encourage your child to walk away if they feel unwanted by others and to look for accepting and welcoming friends.
- Help them resolve conflicts. Teach them about taking responsibility for their actions and do not accept when they are blaming without taking any responsibility. Talk about sincere apologies and accepting apologies from others. Help them learn to compromise. Opportunities to teach these skills present themselves at home when there are conflicts amongst siblings!

## How Parents Can Help Children Have Meaningful Relationships (continued)

- ***Discuss realistic expectations of friends*** - Children need to understand what is realistic to expect from friends, as opposed to what we would want in a perfect world. No one is perfect and their friends won't be, either.
- ***Help your child distinguish between popularity and friendship quality*** - The people that are popular are not always the best quality friends. Emphasize that having good friends is much more important than being in the "in crowd".

# What Are We Doing in School?

- Messaging at our Morning Assembly
  - Pillars of Character - responsibility, others
  - Discussions on resilience and perseverance
  - “Step Forward”; “Figure it Out”; “My Bad”
- School Climate and Culture PLC activities
  - International SEL Day
  - Creative/Constructive Play Day in 3rd grade
- School Goal related to Climate and Culture

# Climate and Culture Relationships, Responsibility, and Resilience

- Maintain a culture that helps students become more responsible learners and empathic community members
- Foster the development of essential interpersonal skills including empathy, understanding, and working with others
- Foster the development of resiliency, grit, persistence, resourcefulness, self discipline, and personal responsibility
- Letter to parents and guardians sent in August, 2022 regarding grade level academic and behavioral expectations