



Aspiration into Action

MSD of Decatur Township College and Career Readiness Department

December 17, 2014 Vol. 8

Upcoming Events across the District:

◆ *Scholarship Help Night*

Decatur Central High School
December 17

Sessions at 6:00, 6:30 & 7:00
in EDGE computer labs

DCHS & DTSE Seniors and
Parents—don't miss it!

► Naviance Parent Registration

◆ *Skills for College Parent Night*

Decatur Middle School
December 18

6:00 pm in DMS cafeteria



Winter Break

December 20 —January 5

Check out the [CCR webpage!](#)

Got Grit?

What does “Grit” have to do with College and Career Readiness? Is this something you are born with or can you acquire Grit? This is the first in a series of “soft-skills” a.k.a. “non-cognitive” skills that will be addressed in future volumes of the CCR Newsletter.

There are a number of synonyms for Grit including: Perseverance, Tenacity, Persistence, and *stick-to-it-iveness* (not sure that’s really a word, but people say it).

Angela Lee Duckworth, a psychologist and leading researcher on **Grit** defines it as: “*the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals*” (Duckworth et al., 2007). Through her research she has not been able to nail down exactly what makes some people grittier than others, however she does believe grit is something people can learn. She also believes grit can wax and wane in response to experiences. People might be gritty about some things and not others. Duckworth gives an example that illustrates this notion, “You can see a child be exceptionally self-disciplined about their basketball practicing, and yet when you see them in math class, they give up at the slightest frustration.”

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/tomorrows-college/grit/angela-duckworth-grit.html>

Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress. The gritty individual approaches achievement as a marathon; his or her advantage is **stamina**. Whereas when disappointment or boredom signals to others that it is time to change trajectory and cut losses, the gritty individual *stays the course*.

<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/Grit%20JPSP.pdf>

Key to Success: Intelligence or Grit?

Duckworth's research suggests that when it comes to high achievement, grit may be as essential as intelligence. That's a significant finding because for a long time, intelligence was considered *the* key to success. In one study, Duckworth found that smarter students actually had *less* grit than their peers who scored lower on an intelligence test. This finding suggests that, among the study participants, (all students at an Ivy League school) people who are not as bright as their peers “compensate by working harder and with more determination.” And their **effort pays off**: The grittiest students - not the smartest ones - had the highest GPAs.

Connection to College and Career Readiness

In the United States on average only **55%** of the students entering a 4-year postsecondary institution graduate with a degree within 6 years. <http://www.higheredinfo.org>

Grit and College Completion

There are many possible reasons people take more than 4 years to complete a 4-year degree or why some don't finish at all. Duckworth thinks grit is likely a significant factor when it comes to college completion, especially among first-generation college goers. Grit is a particularly helpful trait when it comes to *challenging* experiences, and for first-generation college students, college tends to be a challenging experience. When they come up against obstacles in college,

they have no one in their families to turn to for help. There are also concerns for students from high-poverty backgrounds. They not only face issues with finances, they may also have limited social support for academic achievement and long-term goal setting.

Learning to be Gritty

Another leading psychologist, Carol Dweck suggests that **mind-sets** have a powerful impact on how students behave and perform when faced with a challenge or with failure. A “*growth mind-set*” is one in which a student believes that with effort, he can get better. More to come on this topic...

How Gritty are you? Take the **Grit Test**