***Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* by Angela Duckworth, a Book Review by Dr. Marsha Fralick**

Having worked with in the field of education for 48 years now, one of the enduring puzzles is how to help students develop a passion for learning and the perseverance to achieve their goals. Too often students say they are not interested and give up on their goals too quickly.

I was happy to hear some answers to this question from Angela Duckworth at a speech at the National First-Year Experience Conference in Orlando. Here are some ideas from her book, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance.*

Duckworth defines grit as having the passion and perseverance to achieve long-term goals. It is a “never give up” attitude and the ability to keep going after failure. Developing grit is part of the maturation process. It involves figuring out what we want in life, learning to deal with failure, and persisting in spite of adversity.

It is interesting to note that talent or intelligence do not guarantee grit. Often our most talented students are the ones who give up too early. The author notes that “Our potential is one thing. What we do with it is quite another.” (p. 14) She adds that “Without effort, your talent is nothing more than your unmet potential.” (p. 51) The author has explored the idea of greatness and achievement and found “how little IQ mattered in distinguishing the most from the least accomplished.” (p. 75) Achievement and greatness depend having a goal, using priorities, and the consistence of effort over time.

Angela Duckworth has developed at [Grit Scale](https://sasupenn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_06f6QSOS2pZW9qR) that measures perseverance or grit. You can take this scale online to measure your own grit and to get an idea of the components of this characteristic. She has also posted a .pdf of the [Grit Scale](https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/12-item%20Grit%20Scale.05312011.pdf) that you can use with your students.

Now that you understand your level of grit and that of your students, how can it be increased? The author begins to answer this question by identifying the four components of grit: (p. 91)

1. First comes interest. People with grit enjoy what they do.
2. Second comes the capacity to practice which leads to mastery. It is the ability to work hard.
3. Third is a sense of purpose. People believe that their work matters to themselves and others.
4. Fourth there is hope which enables a person to keep going when things are difficult. “It is the expectation that tomorrow will be better than today.” (p. 169) Hope enables a person to think positively and to deal with setbacks.

The important point is that all these components can be learned.

Angela Duckworth makes an important connection with Carol Dweck’s theory of the fixed and growth mindsets. Students with a fixed mindset believe that intelligence is fixed at birth, increased effort does not lead to success, and that there is a limit to what we can accomplish. Students with a growth mindset believe that intelligence is increased as you learn new knowledge, skills can be improved through practice and effort, and that challenges are a way to be tested and improve performance.

Research completed by Angela Duckworth and Carol Dweck found that students with a growth mindset were significantly grittier than students with a fixed mindset. These grittier students earned higher grades, were more likely to enroll in college, and persist in achieving their goals. Students can learn about the growth mindset and teachers can encourage the development of it. Students need to understand that they can achieve success with consistent practice over a long period of time. Most importantly, students need to be able to analyze their failures, learn from them, and stay optimistic about the future.

The author concludes with the positive idea that anyone can “grow their grit” and it can result not only in more success, but also increased happiness and satisfaction with life. How can you increase your grit?

You can cultivate your interests. You can develop a habit of daily challenge-exceeding-skill practice. You can connect your work to a purpose beyond yourself. And you can learn to hope when all hope is lost. (p. 169)

My hope is that this brief book review will increase your interest in reading this book and learning more about the details so that you can use this information to increase your own grit and that of your students.

**References:**

Angela Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* (New York: Scribner, 2016.)   
Angela Duckworth’s online [Grit Scale](https://sasupenn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_06f6QSOS2pZW9qR) and .pdf of the [Grit Scale](https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~duckwort/images/12-item%20Grit%20Scale.05312011.pdf) that you can use with your students

**Videos:**

[The Key to Success? Grit](https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit?language=en) TED talk by Angela Duckworth

[The Secrets to Success](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24AOsgniY1o) by Will Smith (recommended by Angela Duckworth)