

Grit and Deliberate Practice

“Grit is the quality that enables individuals to work hard and stick to their long-term passions and goals” (Bashant, 2014, p. 14). Grit has been studied by Angela Duckworth for its impact on the completion of goals and the ability to persevere through challenging tasks. Duckworth and Seligman(2005) found that grit, perseverance and self-discipline are better predictors of academic success than standardized tests or IQ. They found that adolescents who were highly disciplined outperformed their more impulsive peers academically, both in improving grades, higher standardized test scores, attendance and admission to competitive programs(Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). Angela Duckworth also found that grit was a significant predictor of cadets’ ability to complete basic training at West Point Academy (Berger, 2019).

Though much research has been done assessing the importance of grit on academic success, few interventions have been thoroughly researched on how to help students develop grit. Some suggestions of interventions you may include, but that have not been significantly researched, are having students write about past failures and help them reframe problems, reading books and having conversations about grit, modeling “grittiness”, and helping students develop good habits (Bashant, 2014; Davis, 2015). Some research has been done on the implementation of deliberate practice to improve grit and academic performance. “Deliberate practice entails engaging in a focused, typically planned training activity designed to improve some aspect of performance” and usually involves four key steps: 1) a well-defined goal for improving some aspect of performance, 2) an added challenge to the students’ current skill level, 3) immediate feedback, and 4) continual practice to improve errors (Duckworth et al, 2011, p. 174; Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2016, p.729). Examples of deliberate practice in the classroom could include: pre-class reading quizzes, in-class clicker questions, and other activities designed to promote individual practice, identify weaknesses and provide feedback(Deslauriers, Schelew, & Wieman, 2011).

Grade Level:	All
Materials:	Varies
Duration:	Throughout the school year, as needed.
Implementation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Some researchers recommend first instructing students about what deliberate practice is and how it can improve academic performance is an essential first step in encouraging students to engage in the practice more(Eskreis-Winkler et al.,2016).2. Include deliberate practice activities in your daily lesson plans.3. Provide students with immediate feedback on where to improve and engage in more practice.

Does it work?

Angela Duckworth and colleagues (2010) found that spelling bee participants who engaged in more deliberate, solitary practice of spelling words performed better in spelling bees and demonstrated higher levels of grit, as compared to participants who only practiced with a parent or coach, or engaged in leisurely practice activities such as reading. In another study, undergraduate physics students were randomly assigned to one class with an emphasis on using deliberate practice activities in learning about electromagnetism or the control group with a traditional lecture (Deslauriers, Schelew, & Wieman, 2011). Those who were assigned to the deliberate practice group participated in pre-class reading quizzes, clicker questions in class, and other deliberate practice activities. Those in the deliberate practice class scored higher on a follow-up assessment as compared to their peers in the control group (Deslauriers, Schelew, & Wieman, 2011).

Eskreis-Winkler and colleagues (2016) completed five, randomized control trials assessing the impact of deliberate practice on middle school and college performance, as well as to see if teaching students about the benefits of deliberate practice could motivate them to engage in this practice more effort. In the first study assessing the impact of deliberate practice on middle school grades, about 1000 sixth and seventh grade students engaged in a 45 minute online math practice activity. Students received immediate feedback for each question, and as students answered questions right, the questions became more difficult. The students who completed the activity and engaged in more consistent deliberate practice received higher grades. In the other studies, middle school and college students were instructed about the benefits of deliberate practice and motivation on academic achievement prior to participating in a deliberate practice activity. The control groups were just instructed about various study skills. Participants in the deliberate practice group engaged in more deliberate practice up to a month following the intervention, and also had higher end of course grades compared to the control group (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2016).

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