

# Diligence

Character... It starts with me!

MONTHLY EDUCATOR BULLETIN

## Vs. Slothfulness

### I WILL:

- finish my projects
- do a job right
- follow instructions
- concentrate on my work
- not be lazy

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## Focusing my energy on the work at hand



Someone once said that we can either become 'bitter' or 'better'

from our hard times. Now, what is the only difference between those words? It's the letter 'i', as in 'I have a

choice as to whether my hard times make me better, or make me bitter' which really is cool when you think about it. Diligence allows us to choose how we spend our energy. We can become bitter and spend our energy taking others down- or we can become better, and spend our energy

making the world a better place.

Many people also see diligence as meaning hard work. When you work hard on something, and put energy, and care, and attention to detail, it becomes more than just hard work-it's *heart* work, putting your time and effort into seeing a project completed.

### Go to the Root



Diligence is a descendant of *diligere*, a Latin word meaning "to value highly". It is formed by combining *dis* ("apart") and *legere* ("to choose"). Diligent individuals choose to make the most of their abilities and their energies.



### Diligencia vs. Pereza

Invertir mi tiempo y energía para desempeñar las tareas que se me en

## Tortoise and the Hare

Everyone knows the story of the Tortoise and the Hare. The Tortoise keeps plodding on, while the Hare jumps ahead. The Hare gets arrogant and takes a nap, while the Tortoise moves steadily and carefully toward the finish line. The Tortoise wins because he showed Diligence in his approach to winning the race, and never lost focus from his goal.





## Character Quotables

"Diligence is the mother of good luck."

-Benjamin Franklin

"Patience and Diligence, like faith, remove mountains."

-William Penn

"Time is what we want most, but what we use worst."

-William Penn

"No man e're was glorious, who was not laborious."

- Benjamin Franklin

"Failing does not make us a failure, the only time we do become a failure is when we decide to stop trying any more."

-Bob Proctor

"I don't measure a man's success by how high he climbs but how high he bounces when he hits bottom."

-General George S. Patton

"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

-Thomas Edison

"Success means doing the best we can with what we have. Success is in the doing, not the getting – in the trying, not the triumph."

-Wynn Davis

"One of the main differences between those who succeed and those who fail can be found in how they approach life's difficulties. Failures either try to avoid their problems or to work around them. Successful people accept them and work through them, even when it includes some suffering. It's this process of meeting our problems head on and looking for solutions that gives life meaning."

- Hal Urban

"The more the marble wastes, the more the statue grows."

-Michelangelo

"Chaos is inherent in all compounded things. Strive on with diligence."

-Buddha

"What we hope ever to do with ease, we must learn first to do with diligence."

-Samuel Johnson

"The expectations of life depend upon diligence; the mechanic that would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools."

-Confucius

"Nothing is so difficult that diligence cannot master it."

-Malagasy Proverb

"When I was young I observed that nine out of every ten things I did were failures, so I did ten times more work."

-George Bernard Shaw

"Where luck is wanting, diligence is useless."

-Spanish Proverb

### Curriculum Connection



### Social Studies

'Due Diligence' is a term used in business and legal settings to describe an effort as constituting a reasonably thorough attempt to complete a task. It is often used when an entity is acquiring another such as when a business purchases another business. A reasonable investigation into the viability of the business is conducted prior to the purchase. Students can find other business or legal examples of what constitutes Due Diligence. You can then relate this to their efforts in the classroom. What constitutes Due Diligence if a student forgets to bring home a textbook needed for a homework assignment? Did they make an attempt to get the book after school? Call a friend? Get to school early to complete the assignment before classes?

## Thomas Edison-Hero of Diligence

Thomas Edison is considered to be the most abundant inventor in history, holding more than 1,000 patents in the US alone. Some of his most famous inventions are the phonograph, moving-picture camera, and of course, the light bulb! Thomas Edison was a man of great brilliance, but

he didn't get the design right on the first try. He kept trying to find out just how to make his design successful, and his diligence did pay off. One of his more famous quotes about the light bulb is, "I have not failed 700 times. I have not failed once. I have succeeded in proving that those 700 ways will not work. When I have eliminated the

ways that will not work, I will find the way that will work."

Just as Thomas Edison did with the light bulb, we need to apply diligence to the tasks at hand. You never know what you may accomplish.



## DIB-ing for Diligence

Students who are praised on achievement will often only choose easy tasks that require little effort to gain praise, and shy away from more challenging projects. Students who are praised for their character, however, come to understand that the means (effort) and the ends (achievement) matter.

DIB-ing is an effective way to praise students who show good character. It stands for :

**D**escribe-describe the character quality

**I**llustrate-illustrate how the student used the quality

**B**enefits-show the benefits to that student and others

Here are some examples of DIB-ing using this month's character trait of Diligence:

- Suzy you were diligent by investing time and energy in staying focused on reading *War and Peace*. You will perform well on the test.
- Suzy you were diligent by investing time and energy and writing out all of your work for your math homework. It helped me discover where you need help.
- Suzy you were diligent by investing time and energy by following the instructions for assembling the linear accelerator for the science fair. The people attending will enjoy your presentation.
- Suzy you were diligent by investing time and energy in concentrating on finishing your English worksheet even though the workmen outside were making noise. Now you won't have to do it for homework.
- Suzy you were diligent by investing time and energy in consistently turning in your daily journal assignments this quarter. Your writing skills have definitely improved.

## Bounce Back

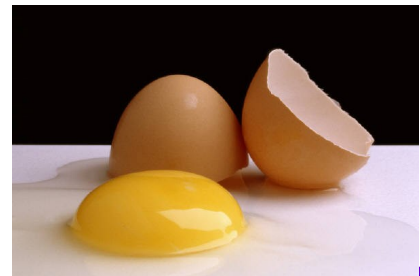


For this activity you will need foil, 2 hard-boiled eggs (or raw if you are daring), and a superball. You can do this demonstration yourself, or you can ask the students to do it while you narrate. First spread the foil out on the floor at the front of the classroom. Show the students the egg and the ball. Ask the class to predict what will happen if you drop the egg.

Then, drop the egg onto the foil. The shell will crack, at the very least. Next show the second egg and ask what will happen if the egg is thrown with great force at the paper. Then do it. Now do the same with the ball (but not on the foil), first dropping and then throwing. The ball will bounce back. When you're finished, wrap the eggs in the foil, and then you can throw them in the cafeteria trash cans not your classroom can...

Discuss the difference by explaining that when "egg people" hit an obstacle, they

splatter. The harder they hit, the harder they splatter, giving up on their goal. When "super ball people" hit an obstacle, they bounce back. The harder they hit, the harder they bounce back. (When the going gets tough, the tough get going!)



## The Daffodil Principle

'The Daffodil Principle' by Jaroldeen Asplund Edwards is a story about an actual place, a daffodil garden near Running Springs in California. An entire mountainside covered in daffodils, a flower that only blooms 3 weeks out of the year. This field did not come about on its own. One woman with her two hands planted each of the 50,000 bulbs, but it took her over 40 years to do it.



An excerpt from the end of the story reads:

"The principle her daffodil garden taught is one of the greatest principles of celebration. That is, learning to move toward our goals and desires one step at a time--often just one baby-step at time--and learning to love the doing, learning to use the accumulation of time. When we multiply tiny pieces of time with small increments of daily effort, we too will find we can accomplish magnificent things. We can change the world ...

'It makes me sad in a way,' I admitted to Carolyn. 'What might I have accomplished if I had thought of a wonderful goal thirty-five or forty years ago and had worked away at it *one bulb at a time* through all those years? Just think what I might have been able to achieve!' My daughter summed up the message of the day in her usual direct way. 'Start tomorrow,' she said."

This story demonstrates how diligence, when applied to any task, can create amazing results.

For the written version: <http://www.abundance-and-happiness.com/daffodil-principle.html>



# House of Cards

A house of cards is created by stacking one card on top of another, one card at a time, to create a structure. There are many different types of card houses on record, including ones up to 75 card stories tall, and even one that is a replica of Cinderella's Castle in Disney World! Card stacking is hard, though, as with the slightest breeze or jostle of a surface, the entire thing could be lost in the shuffle. Diligence is key when trying to create a house of cards, as it will give one the will to see the project through.

Have students bring in packs of cards from home and try it out in the classroom. How tall did the house of cards get? How many times did they have to start over because someone wasn't being diligent? How can you apply the aspects of building a house of cards to life?



## 212°

Water is just hot at 211°. But add that last degree, and it boils. Boiling water produces steam, and steam is powerful enough to move a locomotive.

It's that extra degree of effort that can propel us to achieve more. Consider golf champions. They win by one or two strokes over their closest competitor. Races are won by margins measured in seconds. The World Series will separate the teams by a only handful of runs. Diligence is all about that extra degree of effort. It is choosing to continue to work towards a goal. For more information on the concept of 212 visit [www.just212.com](http://www.just212.com).



There is also a video on You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLtMemBHbXo>.

For this activity, you will need two popsicle sticks or small twigs, and a couple spools of thread. Students can pair up, or this can be an individual activity. One student should hold the two sticks in front of them, while another

student ties one circle of thread around the sticks. Each student should take one stick and then attempt to pull them apart. The thread should snap pretty easily at this point. Repeat the thread tying, but this time tie two circles of thread. It should be a bit harder to snap the thread. Repeat the thread tying, adding one more loop of thread each time, until the thread will not break.



Now make a list on the board of good and bad habits, like doing homework versus not picking up after yourself. Habits are a lot like the thread. The more times we act with diligence, the stronger the habit is, the stronger the inclination to act with diligence when we are facing a challenge.

## Threadbare

# Croskey's Corner

It's 8:30 in the morning. You've just logged on to your computer. You open up your e-mail, check your Facebook page, glance at the news on MSNBC, play a little Solitaire, check back with your e-mail, take a phone call (while reading a posting on Facebook), answer a text, and check the time. It's now 8:31.

You are a multi-tasker in the Technology Age. Young people are seen as being better at this than oldsters like me. So forgive my bias toward the Character Quality of the Month – Diligence. The *Character First!* definition is “investing my time and energy to complete each task assigned to me.” For me, Diligence is the opposite of multi-tasking. It is, I think, a very valuable trait in a too-many-task world. It includes the principles of finishing my projects, doing a job right, following instructions, concentrating on my work, and not being lazy. (Not sure what the last one means; I find that adults use the word “lazy,” especially when referring to kids, to mean any behavior that adults don't like. Not a very precise term.) The definition of Diligence suggests that the task which someone should complete Diligently is ASSIGNED. But, I have observed that most of us do what we CHOOSE to do from those tasks given to us. The Latin root of Diligence supports this view. That root suggests that we choose one task or object apart from all others and give great value and attention to the object or task. Thus, Diligence, I believe, is a proactive, directed process.

Choosing a worthwhile task to complete is Step One to being Diligent. Step 2 involves disciplining myself to set aside other distractions and to keep focused. Step 3 requires Endurance (the Character Quality left over from June!) to finish the job I want to be Diligent about. Choose. Focus. Endure.

How do you get kids to choose to stay focused on worthwhile tasks? Gloria Mack, a psychologist from University of California, Irvine, has studied the way multi-tasking pulls kids away from being comfortable focusing. She frets about the “pattern of constant interruption” in our world and is afraid that this difficulty focusing will lead a generation to not be able to lose itself in thought. She believes parents and educators can counter this through a concept called Flow. Flow is an idea popularized by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. (He says his name sounds like “chicks send me high.” No kidding!) In an interview with *Wired* magazine, Csikszentmihályi described flow as “being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost.” In one of his books, he defines Flow as a mental state of operation in which the person is fully immersed in what he or she is doing, characterized by a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and success in the process of the activity. (Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper and Row. ISBN 0-06-092043-2) Flow suggests some popular intrinsic motivation concepts such as “in the groove,” “runner's high,” or “in the zone.”

Csikszentmihályi suggests we consider how challenging tasks are and how skilled one has to be to perform a task. If a task is not sufficiently challenging, and if the performer also lacks skill in that area, apathy results. If the challenge is low and the skill is high, boredom occurs. If the challenge is high but the performer's skill is low, anxiety can result. But if the task is sufficiently (but not overly) challenging, and the skill level of the performer is sufficiently high, an ecstatic state called Flow can be created for the performer. This is a state in which optimal learning can occur.

So, how can we help students to experience the feeling of Flow which will help them to choose to stay focused? The answer is to provide them with individualized learning opportunities which will appropriately challenge their varied skills. You are expected to do this in an era of scripted teaching manuals, everybody teaching the same thing on the same day, high stakes testing aimed at a non-existent middle, and teacher evaluation based solely on test scores? That sounds impossible. But I would argue that when we advocate (or pay lip service) to teaching 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, we are requiring that we teach individual students in unique ways which will challenge their skill set and will allow them to develop their problem-solving skills. The students who learn a fixed curriculum along with every other student are not being prepared for dealing with the fluid challenges of this Technology Age. Our students need to experience Flow in order to realize the value of choosing to focus and endure. My knees will no longer allow me to run long distances. My runner's high, therefore, will not occur under the same circumstances as it does for you marathoners. So, I need an individual exercise (lesson) plan to help me experience Flow. Our kids need no less consideration.

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**Character...It starts with me!**

## Character in the Classroom *Continuously*

There are many ways that you can teach the Character Quality of Month. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Ask students to make posters to hang in the classroom or around the school.
- Challenge students to find quotes, news stories, current (or classic) songs or movies that portray the character quality of the month. Be sure to share these with the class and “archive” these to use in future years.
- Add the character trait of the month to the spelling word list. (Even if it is posted in the classroom to copy!)
- Offer for students to make a video or write a rap that demonstrates the Character Quality of the Month.
- If you teach younger students, see if you can “borrow” some older students to lead your students in an activity or switch the roles and have the younger students “teach” a rhyme to the older students.
- If you teach older students, you can be the initiator in the previous activities.
- Invite local business leaders or small business owners to talk about the importance of a character trait. If you teach older students, aim to get a representative from a business that typically hires teens so that they can relate the importance of good character when applying for and *keeping* a job.
- Men and women in uniform usually make impressive guest speakers. Police departments, fire departments and military recruiting offices are usually willing to come into a classroom. Do not be afraid to give them specific requests or guidelines for speaking so that it is pertinent to the lessons of the month.
- Always have a generic character activity planned and ready to go that you can use as filler when you have time to kill or that a substitute teacher can use in your absence.