

Dilworth Elementary Character Education

Perseverance (April)

Pre-teach: Greet the students and tell them that today you will be discussing the trait perseverance. Ask the following questions and call on different students for answers. Listed below each question are examples of responses you are looking for. You may need to rephrase students' answers or guide them along.

(Ask) What is perseverance?

1. Staying with the task and not giving up.
2. Showing commitment, pride and a positive attitude in completing tasks.
3. Trying again and again and again.
4. Being patient and willing to work hard.

(Ask) Can you name some people who have shown perseverance?

1. Lance Armstrong, Thomas Edison, Harriet Tubman, Helen Keller, Stevie Wonder, etc.

Book: Read and discuss a story that teaches a lesson on perseverance.

(Ask) What are ways you can show perseverance?

1. When you are near the end of race and struggling to finish, find a burst of energy to cross the finish line.
2. Try a new sport or skill that is challenging, and don't quit.
3. Study and work hard to improve your grades.
4. Save up your money and do extra chores to buy something special.
5. Help a younger child learn to ride a bicycle or play a new game.
6. Spend hours practicing to play an instrument.
7. Always finish what you start. Do not give up when things get tough.
8. Try something again, even if you failed the first time. Remember, you had to learn to walk before you could run!

Activity: Complete an activity to go along with your lesson. (Activity suggestions are attached.) You may incorporate your activity at any time during your lesson.

Closing comment: It takes perseverance to fulfill your dreams.

“Consider the postage stamp: its usefulness consists in the ability to stick to one thing till it gets there.” —Josh Billings

“Never, never, never give up!” —Winston Churchill

Perseverance Activities

I Think I Can, I Think I Can...—Dilworth Kindergarten Classes

Materials: Story of “The Little Engine that Could”

After reading the story of “The Little Engine that Could,” ask one student to share a challenge he or she has faced or is facing now (learning to play soccer, being patient, sharing with a sibling, learning to read or write, waking up early for school, etc.). Ask the class if they can think of one or two steps the student could take to persevere and try to meet the challenge. Discuss several challenges this way. Remind them of the Little Engine and its perseverance.

Ask the students to form a long human train, with you as the conductor. While you lead the train around the room, have the students repeat the phrase “I think I can, I think I can!” Remind the students that with perseverance they can do anything!

All Shook Up!—Dilworth 1st Grade Classes

Materials: Three or four plastic jars with tight lids, a plastic bowl, three or four pints of whipping cream, honey, plastic knives, and sliced bread

Pour a pint of whipping cream into each container and place the lids on securely. Tell the students that their perseverance is going to pay off today. Pass the jars among the students, giving each student several moments to shake the jar before passing it on. Remind them not to give up—with perseverance they will shake up a delicious surprise.

While the students are shaking the jars, read a story about perseverance. (It should take about 10 minutes for the cream to separate into a lump of butter in each jar.) Carefully remove the butter from its liquid and place it in a large plastic bowl. Drizzle honey over the butter. Invite the kids to spread the delicious treat on a piece of bread. Perseverance is a “sweet” character trait to generously spread throughout our lives! (*Edible Objects Talks*, Lingo)

Sink or Swim?—Dilworth 2nd Grade Classes

Materials: Clear glass bowl with water, modeling clay (Not Play-Doh)

Roll clay into four balls, three of them small and one a little larger (like small and big marbles). Drop each small one into the water and watch them sink. Tell the students that each ball represents a person that feels discouraged or frustrated by life’s difficulties. We all feel like that at times. Just like the clay balls, you may want to give up and sink into a sad state of despair. (You can give the clay balls pretend names and ask the students to make up reasons why each one might be feeling low. For example, Susie is struggling to finish her science project on time and wants to give up...)

Next, take the larger clay ball and start reshaping it to form the shape of a simple canoe. Talk about how *this* person is not going to give up when faced with a problem. They are choosing to have a positive attitude and show perseverance. Discuss how it’s possible to work through the challenges and achieve your goal by “reshaping” your attitude. Put the “boat” in the water and watch it float. Now take each of the small balls and put them inside the “boat.” Ask the students what can happen when a person has a positive attitude and decides to persevere. They not only achieve their goal, but are a positive role model for others. (*10-Minute Life Lessons*, Jaime Miller)

Act It Out!—Dilworth 3rd Grade Classes

Materials: None

Have students work in small groups to make up original skits demonstrating perseverance. Suggest topics or challenges a character or characters can try to overcome. (Didn’t make the team after trying out the first time, worried about musical recital coming up, schoolwork is really challenging and frustrating, etc.) Allow each group to present their skit to the class. Ask them to clap and cheer for perseverance after each skit is presented.

Perseverance Activities, continued

Icy Perseverance—Dilworth 4th Grade Classes

Materials: Prepared in advance: an ice cube for each student with a penny frozen inside, paper towels to catch melting ice

Begin your lesson by giving each student a small ice cube. Explain that the first person to get the penny out of their ice **without** putting it in their mouth or hitting it with another object is the winner. You may want to continue your lesson until you have a winner. Afterwards discuss:

1. How does melting the ice cube compare to reaching your goals?
2. Did you ever feel like quitting? Why do some people quit before reaching their goals?
3. Could you have gotten the penny quicker if you had broken the rules? Would you feel as good about winning if you didn't follow the rules?
4. How do hard work and perseverance help you achieve your goals?

Try, Try, Try Again! —Dilworth 5th Grade Classes

Materials: None

Discuss this quote from Thomas Edison: “I never failed once when I invented the lightbulb. It just happened to be a 2,000-step process.” How does this old saying relate to Thomas Edison’s approach? ““Whether you think you can or think you can’t, either way you’re right”?”

Consider how different life might be today if Mr. Edison had chosen to quit after his first few attempts to invent the lightbulb. What if he hadn’t believed he could create this new invention?

Have the students work in pairs or small groups to write their own quote for perseverance, and then share their quotes with the class.

Additional Perseverance Activity Options

Feel free to add one of these activities to your lesson or replace your grade’s assigned lesson with one below.

Reach for the Stars (Suggested for all grades)

Materials: Colored paper, pencils, scissors

Ask each student to draw a large star outline on colored paper and cut it out.

Have the students write a dream or goal that they hope to achieve this year or in the future on their star, along with several steps that could help them reach their dream or goal. Ask them to decorate their star. Ask about potential challenges in reaching their goals, how they would face these challenges, and the perseverance it might take to fulfill their dreams.

“Stick with It” Singalong (Suggested for grades K–2)

Materials: Whiteboard and marker or posterboard and marker

Write the lyrics below and ask students to follow along and sing to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

When you’re **working**, stick with it, stick with it, stick with it.

Keep on going, do your best. Don’t give up!

When you’re **playing**...

When you’re **running**...

When you’re **learning**...

Ask the students to come up with new verses about situations when they need to stick with it and show perseverance.

(From *Character Education: Ideas and Activities for the Classroom*, Carson-Dellosa Publishing Company,

Additional Perseverance Activity Options, continued

The Tortoise and the Hare (Suggested for grades 1–3)

Materials: Story of the Tortoise and the Hare

Share the fable of the tortoise and the hare. Divide the class into two groups, the Hares and the Tortoises. Ask each student to write a sentence from the point of view of his or her character before the race and after the race.

Then ask the students to rework the fable, describing what would have happened if the tortoise had given up and not persevered until the end of the race.

(From *Character Education: Ideas and Activities for the Classroom*, Carson-Dellosa Publishing Company, Greensboro, NC, 1988.)

Perseverance Puzzle (Suggested for grades 2–4)

Materials: Sentence strips, written and cut in advance

Make sentence strips with sayings about perseverance. (“Nothing succeeds like a try;” “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again;” “Hard work brings good results;” “You can only move a mountain one rock at a time,” etc.) Cut them apart and keep each saying’s words clipped together.

Ask the students to break into small groups, with each group putting the words in order to make a saying about perseverance. Ask them to read their sentence and share what it means to them.

(Adapted from *Character Education: Ideas and Activities for the Classroom*, Carson-Dellosa Publishing Company, Greensboro, NC, 1988.)

Goals for Life (Suggested for grades 3-5)

Materials: None

Ask the students to consider things they want to accomplish. Whether they involve learning or improving (at sports, in school, in playing a musical instrument, learning to juggle, overcoming a fear of heights, etc.), they probably have many things they want to achieve.

Sometimes writing down goals and plans is a powerful start in persevering and attaining goals.

Ask students to write the beginnings of the following sentences, then to fill in with their own answers (for learning, improvement, or achievement). Ask willing students to share some of their goals and how they will persevere to reach them. Will reaching these goals always be easy? Does difficulty along the way make a goal more or less satisfying to reach?

My Goals

This year, I want to accomplish:

In two years, I want to be able to:

Three things I want to learn to do in my life are:

Something I’d like to improve at is:

When I’m grown, I want to do or be: