

# Perseverance

**Perseverance** is sustained intellectual curiosity. Perseverance is remaining focused, seeing a task through to its completion.

Explore these strategies to intentionally support Perseverance as a Habit of Mind in your classroom.

## **Another Way**

When students provide an answer or explanation, routinely ask them to show you "another way." What's another way you can get that answer? What's another explanation for the result? What's another way to explain what happened? Thinking of these alternatives strengthens students' critical and creative thinking skills.

## **Press On**

Students are often good at an initial brainstorm, but once the flurry of initial ideas slows, they sometimes have trouble pressing on to the next flurry of ideas. Practice this skill by posing prompts for small groups to discuss such as, "Think of things that are red." Once the room quiets, let the students sit in the awkward silence for 20 seconds. Then prompt, "What about other things, like emotions or feelings?" The groups will resume their discussions, discovering that brainstorms sometimes lull, but you can press on by thinking about the issue from a different perspective.

## **Something New: Inside the Classroom**

You want students to be willing to try new things and be open to new ideas. To promote this culture in your classroom, challenge your students to try one new thing each week. This could include working with a new partner for an investigation, setting a class or individual goal, or trying a "flipped learning" unit. Let them know that continually trying new things can help them discover new interests and more efficient ways of doing things.

## **Something New: Outside the Classroom**

You want students to be willing to try new things and be open to new ideas. To promote this culture in your classroom, make it a habit to try something new every month. Share your efforts with students, especially any failures. Use the construct, "I tried...I failed...I learned..." to model openness to new ideas, perseverance, and a growth mindset.

## **Questions Sans Answers**

Resist the feeling that you need to answer every question your students pose. Leave some questions unanswered. Acknowledge the question as interesting, and let it be. Learning to live with unanswered questions builds a sense of intrigue in your classroom and can help activate student curiosity.

## **Progress Bar**

Students like to visually see where they are in a process. To keep them engaged, create a Progress Bar on the board. For example, if investigating plant growth, you could visually display the steps: Set up plants-->Record data after 5 days-->Record data after 10 days-->Analyze data-->Watch videos/Read sources-->Present. Color in each step of the process as you complete it. Progress Bars give your lesson an instant game-like quality.

## **Chunk It!**

When students are working on a large project, assist them in breaking it down into smaller tasks. Using labeled big blocks you can build a tower by chunking it. Or using big, labeled puzzle pieces, you can complete the puzzle. Help students understand that any task that seems daunting can be broken into smaller pieces and that celebrating small wins helps make large projects more manageable.

## **Use "Yet"**

Help students learn the power of the word "yet" for a growth mindset. Instead of, "I can't do multiplication," say, "I can't do all my multiplication tables, yet." Instead of, "The class isn't ready to read chapter books," say, "The class isn't ready to read chapter books, yet."

## **Inspiration**

Post pictures or quotes from people who persevered through challenges to accomplish their goals. (Athletes, inventors, world leaders, etc.). These examples remind students that success rarely comes without failure and perseverance.

## **Positive Self-talk**

Students need help knowing what to say to themselves to stay motivated. Saying things such as, "This is too hard!" or "I don't know how to do this!" become barriers to developing perseverance. Teach students alternative language, such as, "I know I can do this!" or "If I get stuck, I can ask a friend or the teacher for help!"

## **Model Perseverance**

Students love personal stories from their teachers. Providing them with details about the weekend house project that did not go as planned, as well as, how you ended up solving the encountered problems, helps students develop perseverance. Include honest feelings about how you felt like giving up but ended up being glad you stuck with it.

## **Accelerate and Brake**

Sometimes your students just need a little encouragement to get over a hurdle. A few supportive words like, "Think about how good you will feel when you finish those last two problems," is sometimes the push they need. Also knowing when it might be time to take a little break before engaging again is important. Suggest, "Let's let this problem sit for the day and come back to it tomorrow," can relieve stress and promote new ideas. Braking is a helpful strategy, but make sure the learner really does come back and re-engage.

## **Free to Fail**

Post all the first attempts at creating a flying machine on one side of a board. Post a jet airplane on the other side. When students attempt an engineering design problem, have them post pictures of their first trials on the board under the flying machines. Have them post their best solution under the jet airplane.