



characterfirst
education



elementary
curriculum

Diligence



SECTION 1 Introduce Diligence

This curriculum offers approximately 3 hours of instruction, divided into 3 sections. Each section can be broken into smaller pieces if you prefer short lessons. For additional resources, visit www.CharacterFirstEd.com.

3 WAYS TO BUILD DILIGENCE:

Educate

Focus on diligence for a period of time. Use the lessons in this curriculum to talk about diligence and why it matters. Look for ways to emphasize diligence during other subjects, such as reading, math, language, history, social studies, science, music, health, and athletics.

Evaluate

Think about daily decisions in the light of good character. Ask yourself and your students, "Is this the right thing to do?" Use the "I Wills" on page 4 as behavioral objectives, and refer to these standards when correcting negative attitudes and behavior.

Celebrate

Catch people doing good and point out the character qualities they demonstrated. Children thrive on sincere encouragement, so don't overlook the little opportunities to praise each day!

© Copyright MMXIV by Character First, a division of Strata Leadership LLC. All rights reserved. No portion of this work may be copied or distributed for personal or commercial use without the publisher's written consent.

Dr. Virginia Smith, education director
Robert Greenlaw, writer and editor

www.CharacterFirstEd.com
877.357.0001
Printed in the U.S.A.

Item: 04165

DEFINE DILIGENCE (Discussion, 15 minutes)

Point out and discuss key words in the definition. Review and commit the definition to memory. Use the Diligence Character Card (sold separately) to remind or reward students who learn the definition.

Definition: *Focusing my effort on the work at hand.*

The word *diligence* comes from *diligo*, a Latin word meaning "to love earnestly." The more you care about something, the more effort you will put into it.

Diligence is like an investment, which means that what you put into something determines what you will get out of it.

The opposite of diligence is laziness. Lazy students daydream in class, forget their homework, and care little about school. These habits lead to a poor education and a difficult future.

Be diligent, not lazy. Your future depends on it!

Related concepts:

hard work, work ethic, industrious, dedication, achievement, success

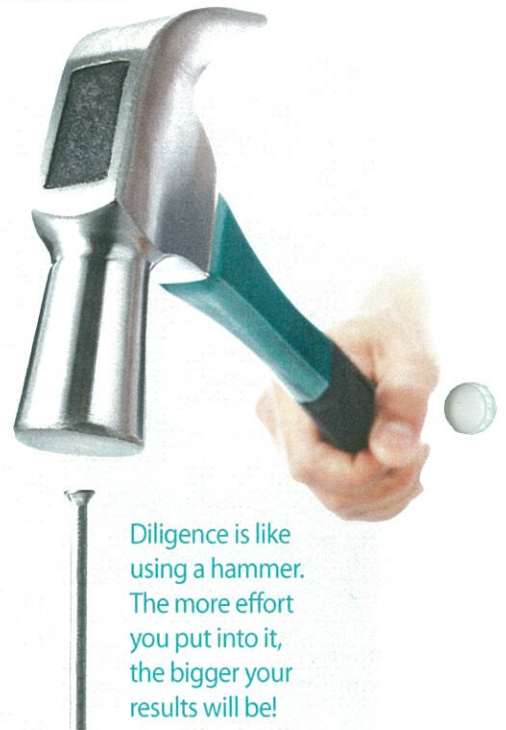
Discussion:

- What are some jobs that require you to be diligent at school and at home?
- What are some benefits that come from being diligent? (finished sooner, more free time, greater trust, better compensation, the personal satisfaction of a job well done.)
- What is the opposite of diligence? (Being lazy, apathetic, careless, distracted, slothful, procrastinating.)

"Do everything to the very best of your ability." —Lou Holtz



Additional resources at
www.CharacterFirstEd.com

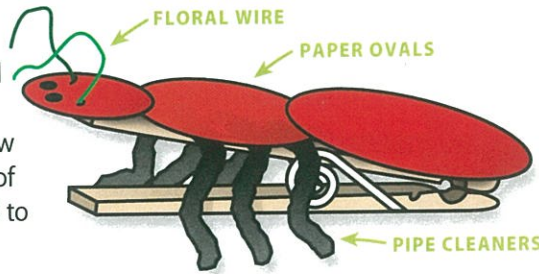


“DILIG-ANT” (Project, 30 minutes)

Describe how the ant shows diligence and use this project to remind students to always give their best effort.

Ants diligently store up food for the winter. They work with other ants to carry bits of food larger than themselves, and they work hard, even when the queen ant cannot see them. Ants keep working until they have enough food for the winter. When winter comes, ants have all they need because they worked diligently during the summer!

Help students make a “Dilig-ANT” as a reminder to focus on the work at hand. Cut a black pipe cleaner into thirds. To make the legs, bend each third over a clothes pin and tape in place. Cut one large, one medium, and one small oval out of red paper. Glue the ovals to the clothes pin. Draw two eyes, and poke a piece of floral wire through the head to make the antennae.



Supplies: clothes pins, black pipe cleaners, floral wire, red and black markers, paper, scissors, glue, tape

Points to Ponder:

- Diligence is working hard, even when no one is watching you.
- Do your work quickly so you do not run out of time.
- Don't be afraid of something new or challenging. You might be surprised by what you can do when you try.

AESOP'S FABLES (Story, 20 minutes)

Use Aesop's fable of the tortoise and the hare to illustrate diligence.

Aesop's fable of the tortoise and the hare is a good example of diligence and laziness. The diligent tortoise overcame its heavy burden, while the hare squandered its natural abilities and speed advantage by being lazy.

Diligent students make the most of their abilities and work through setbacks and disadvantages along the way. Diligence means doing your best, regardless of the outcome or odds of success.

Other Reading:

- *The Little Red Hen*
- *The Little Engine That Could*
- *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*
- Biographies on great achievers, explorers, and inventors

Diligence



Focusing my effort
on the work at hand



SECTION 2 Practice Diligence

Celebrate Methods and Results

When you “catch students doing good,” be sure you celebrate the methods they used as well as the results. Otherwise, you might unwittingly encourage students to take “character shortcuts” in order to achieve desired outcomes.

For example, instead of just celebrating the fact that someone won a game or passed an exam (which could happen by chance, natural ability, or cheating), use that opportunity to celebrate the diligence, patience, and responsibility you observed that helped the student achieve success.

This is one way to reinforce the positive character traits needed for long-term success, not just short-term gain.

Celebrate when students...

- Put their whole heart into a project.
- Take care of both large and small tasks.
- Ask questions to better understand their assignments.
- Avoid or overcome distractions.
- Respond to needs quickly.
- Work cheerfully, even when doing something tedious.



I WILL... (Discussion, 25 minutes)

1. Concentrate on my work.

Do not waste time or goof off in class when you should focus on your assignments. Work when it is time to work, and play when it is time to play.

- What are some distractions you should ignore in order to concentrate on your work?
- How can you avoid distracting others in your class?

2. Follow instructions.

Part of diligence is figuring out what you should do and how you should do it.

- What can you do if you are unclear about an assignment?
- Why should you read instructions before starting a project?

3. Do a job right.

Do a job right the first time. Check your work and do your very best, even if no one is watching you.

- Why is it important to check your work before turning in assignments?
- Why should you care about spelling, handwriting, and finishing on time? How can these habits help you in the future?



4. Finish my projects.

Amelia Earhart said, “It is far easier to start something than it is to finish it.” As the first woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean alone, she should know. Do your best to finish your work on time.

- Do you have projects you need to finish? What will it take to finish them?

5. Not be lazy.

Good things in life take work, including good relationships, a good education, a good job, and a good future.

- What would happen if everyone was lazy and didn't care about their work? What type of a school, home, or community would that produce?

MATH RELAY

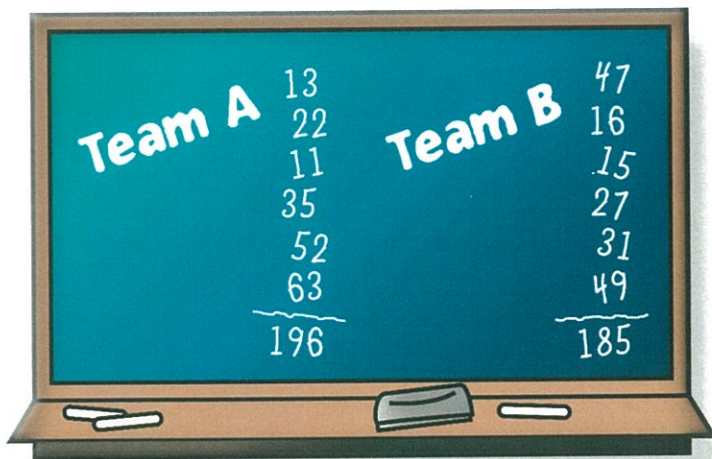
(Exploration, 25 minutes)

Use this game to apply each of the “I Wills” of diligence to the study of mathematics.

Line up your students in several teams facing the board in your room. Give the signal to start. The first student in each row should approach the board and write a number on it. (Specify how many digits may be written, depending on your age group.) When the first students return to their respective lines, the next student should walk to the board and write another number underneath the first.

When the last person on the team has written a number on the board, have the children work in their teams to add all the numbers. Groups win if they add their numbers correctly. Let the last child move to the front so everyone has a chance to start as you repeat the game.

- 1) Math requires detail. If even one decimal point is out of place, the answer is wrong. Children must concentrate on even the smallest details of their projects.
- 2) Arithmetic can be complicated and requires students to follow all the instructions.
- 3) Math assignments done correctly are not just assignments with all the right answers; they must also be done neatly.
- 4) Most math problems require a series of steps. Children who quit halfway through never reach the answer.
- 5) Students are responsible to complete and return their homework without requiring others to remind them. They cannot be lazy with their assignments.



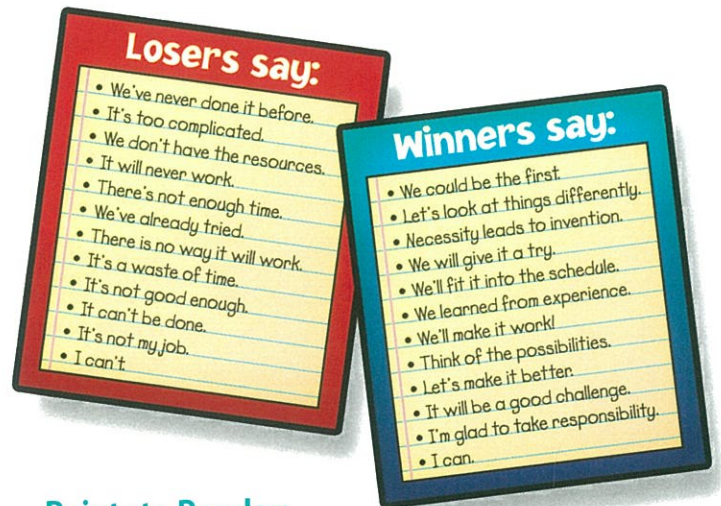
Additional activities at
www.CharacterFirstEd.com

WIN & LOSE?

(Exploration, 25 minutes)

Use this activity to encourage students to have a positive mental attitude about the job at hand.

Write the listed statements on slips of paper and place them in a hat or jar. Select them one at a time and read them aloud. Students should give a thumbs up or thumbs down based on whether the statement is a positive or negative thought.



Points to Ponder:

- Being a winner starts with a positive outlook and a “can-do” attitude.
- It's the little choices students make every day—not just the big ones—that help them succeed.
- Diligence is like an investment. The results of your effort depend largely on how much you apply yourself to the work at hand.

DILIGENCE POEM

(Literacy Connection, 15 minutes)

Teach this poem as a way to memorize the five “I Wills.”
Watch the video at www.CharacterFirstEd.com.

I will work until I finish any job that I may start.
And instead of being lazy, I will work with all my heart.

I will concentrate on what I do, and keep my goal in sight.
I will follow the instructions so the job will be done right.

My character is what will make a leader out of me!
So next time through, let's say it more ENTHUSIASTICALLY!

SECTION 3 Diligence in Real Life

Thomas Edison

In 1879, America witnessed the dawn of a new era—the age of electric light. Before then, the only light sources available after sunset were candles, oil lamps, or gas lamps.

Thomas Edison worked diligently to make the age of electric light possible.



When he was young, Thomas was fascinated by the telegraph, a machine that sent coded messages over wires. Thomas started to experiment with electricity and look for new ways to use its power.

Eventually, Mr. Edison started his own laboratory to do his experiments. One evening, he stared at what looked like a small piece of string. The string gave him an idea he was anxious to try!

He used the string as a light bulb filament. The string began to glow until...*POOF!* It burst into flames. Another experiment had failed, but Mr. Edison would not give up.

Mr. Edison learned from every failure, and he eventually discovered a filament that worked! After years of trying, failing, and trying again, Mr. Edison finished what he set out to do, and ushered in the age of the electric light bulb.



Read more about
Thomas Edison at

www.CharacterFirstEd.com

The phrase “busy as a beaver” is a good description of the beaver’s diligence. Beavers work hard cutting down trees and using the wood to build dams and lodges where they can live safely.

THE BEAVER (Story & Activity, 25 minutes)

Drip...drip...drip. Little drops of rain turned into big drops of rain. Big drops of rain formed puddles of rain. Puddles overflowed into streams, streams turned into creeks, and creeks poured into a lake already brimming over with water.

Animals throughout the forest took shelter from the storm, including a family of beavers inside their warm and secure den. The sound of wind and rain didn’t bother them at all. Even the crashing thunder didn’t cause them fright. They rested peacefully until they heard the faint sound of water trickling through their dam.

Water trickling through a dam might not sound like a big problem, but it can be disastrous for beavers. In minutes, a small leak can turn into a major hole that could wash away the dam—ruining the beaver’s home in the process.

One by one, the beavers left their home in the middle of the lake through an underwater passage. Up came five little noses to the surface of the water to look at the damage.

The beavers saw the water was higher than normal because of all the rain. They swam toward the dam and found a small hole with water pouring out the other side. No one had to tell them what to do. They immediately plunged below the water and went straight to work. There was no time to waste!

Get Busy

Beavers usually work only at night. The daytime is meant for them to rest. But none of the beavers rested on the day of the storm. There was too much work and not much time.

Three beavers swam to the bottom of the lake and each grabbed hold of a branch with its mouth. The branches were there for just a time like this—when the dam needed emergency repairs.

While the first beavers covered the hole with branches, the other beavers scooped up mud from the bottom of the lake and plastered it across the hole. But the dam sprang another leak, so the beavers went to the bottom of the lake to fetch more sticks and more mud.

The beavers grew tired and the storm grew worse. But as long as there was work to do, the beavers kept working!

Work Hard

Soon the beavers ran out of sticks at the bottom of the lake. But that didn't stop the beavers. They quickly swam to shore and grabbed branches scattered on the ground.

Then the oldest beaver stood next to a tree near the water's edge. With its sharp front teeth, the beaver started chiseling away at the bark. Chips of wood flew everywhere. Soon another beaver joined the action until they cut a large "V"-shaped notch out of one side of the tree. The oldest beaver took a few more bites and slapped a warning with its tail. *WHACK! WHACK! WHACK!*

The tree leaned toward the lake until it crashed in the water. Now the beavers could chew off as many branches as they needed to plug leaks in the dam.

Finish Strong

The rain finally stopped, but the water kept rising. Just when the beavers thought the job was done, a big hole opened up in the lower part of the dam!



Watch a video of the beaver story at www.CharacterFirstEd.com. You can also download a beaver coloring page for younger students and a poem activity for older students!

The youngest beaver wasted no time. With all its strength, it chewed off a tree limb and dragged it through the water. The beaver's little feet paddled as fast as they could to get to the leak, which grew worse every second.

The beaver plunged into the water and swung the branch toward the hole. The water pulled the branch right into place! Still holding its breath, the beaver dove to the bottom to scoop up as much mud as possible to cover the hole, but it wasn't enough. So the beaver got more mud! Back and forth the beaver swam until it had to come up for air.

When the beaver came up to the surface, it listened very closely. Would the sticks hold firm? Would the mud seal the leak? Thirty seconds passed. One minute passed. Two minutes passed and all was perfectly silent. The work was done, the dam held firm, and the beavers were safe.

Remember the beaver's example and focus your effort on the work at hand!



Family Connection

OVERVIEW: Diligence is investing time, thought, and energy into your work because anything worth doing is worth doing right, and what you get out of a project depends greatly on what you put into it. Diligence applies to small and large tasks, significant or menial, easy or difficult, whether someone sees you or not. The type of work doesn't matter as much as the way you do your work—which is a reflection of who you are.

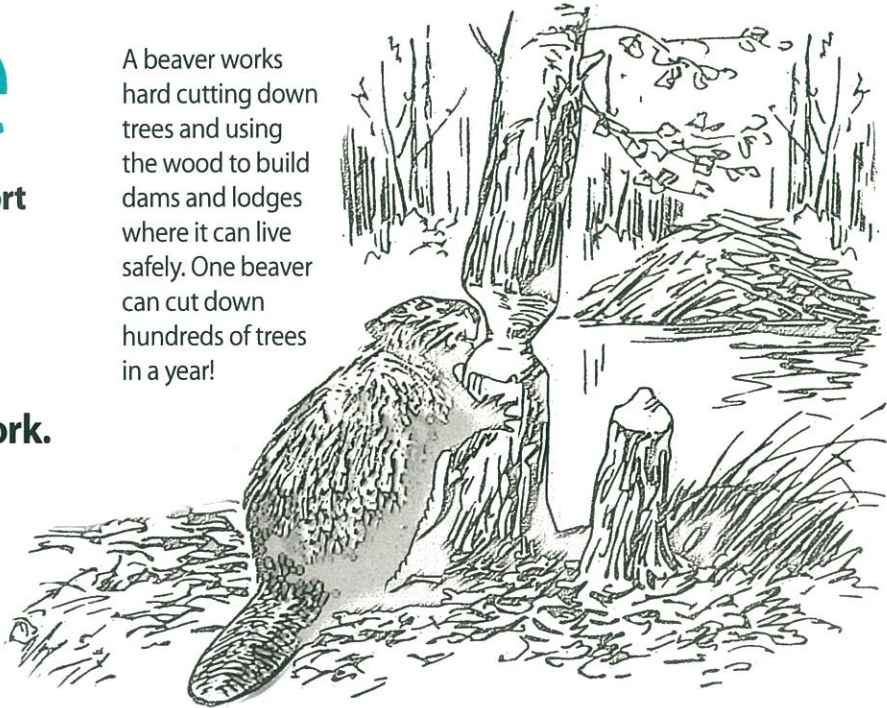
Diligence

Definition: Focusing my effort on the work at hand

I WILL...

- Concentrate on my work.
- Follow instructions.
- Do a job right.
- Finish my projects.
- Not be lazy.

A beaver works hard cutting down trees and using the wood to build dams and lodges where it can live safely. One beaver can cut down hundreds of trees in a year!



CHARACTER QUIZ:

1. What are some benefits of working hard? _____
2. Why should you do your best, even if no one else is watching? _____
3. Showing diligence means: a. you work all the time. b. you never get to play. c. you work to the best of your ability.
4. Diligence means enjoying every minute of your work: TRUE? or FALSE?
5. How can you be diligent, even if you don't enjoy your work? _____
6. Why do you think beavers are a good example of diligence?

This page may be copied and distributed for educational use.

© Copyright MMXIII by Character First. 877.357.0001 www.CharacterFirstEd.com