

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	1
Pre- and Postassessment	13
PART I: Persevering With a Passion for Learning	21
Lesson 1 Ingredients for Success	23
Lesson 2 Talent Meets Passion	29
Lesson 3 Encounters With Eminent Individuals	35
Lesson 4 The Why Factor	41
Lesson 5 Tenacity	49
Lesson 6 Grit	55
Lesson 7 Face-to-Face With Obstacles	61
Lesson 8 Deliberate Practice	71
Lesson 9 Getting in the Flow	77
PART II: Growing Toward Excellence	85
Lesson 10 Growth Mindset	87
Lesson 11 Pursuit of Excellence Versus Perfectionism	101
Lesson 12 Changing Thinking	111
Lesson 13 Facing the Fear of Failure	119
Lesson 14 Handling Mistakes	125
Lesson 15 Dealing With Setbacks	137
Lesson 16 Can Stress Lead to Success?	145
Lesson 17 From Procrastinating to Producing	153

Teaching **TENACITY, RESILIENCE,** and a **DRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE**

PART III: Guiding Emotion Toward Excellence	161
Lesson 18 Understanding Emotions	163
Lesson 19 Managing Emotion	171
Lesson 20 Hope and Learned Optimism	183
Lesson 21 Self-Awareness	191
Lesson 22 A Matter of Perspective	197
Lesson 23 Interpersonal Problem Solving	203
Lesson 24 Assuredly Assertive	209
References	217
Appendix: Additional Resources and Supplemental Lesson	223
About the Authors	227
NAGC Programming Standards Alignment	229

Introduction

As educators, we shape and support the growth of students. Presented with an array of student abilities, we are tasked with supporting and transforming those abilities into actualized achievement. What does it take? How can we foster resilience in the face of setbacks? How can we teach students to have tenacity as they persevere through challenges when it would be easier to give up? What gets in the way of student success, and how can we support students to problem solve with zeal instead of fear? In talent development, noncognitive skills are important factors that help thrust achievement to higher levels. In line with the importance of cultivating psychosocial skills such as tenacity, resilience, and mindset to help promote achievement (Subotnik, 2015; Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2011), this curriculum is the how-to for doing so. We can help students tackle obstacles before them, reframe their thinking so that they are not discouraged from defeat, and reach and perform at the edge of their abilities.

Purpose

This curriculum fosters psychosocial skills that prepare students for long-term success. Psychosocial skills help individuals deliberately and productively achieve goals (Olszewski-Kubilius & Calvert, 2016). In the context of talent development, these skills propel a learner to the next level (potential to competence, competence to expertise, expertise to demonstrated achievement; Subotnik et al., 2011). This resource, written for students in grades 4–8, provides tools and strategies teachers can use to cultivate tenacity, emotional regulation, resilience, and a comfort with tension.

Teaching **TENACITY, RESILIENCE,** and a **DRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE**

Although we wrote this resource with gifted students and their talent development in mind, these skills and strategies can support the long-term success of any student. The lessons include social-emotional concepts appropriate for all levels of learners.

Much has been discussed about grit, growth mindset, learning from failure, and overcoming obstacles. Although students may understand that mistakes help them grow and that they will need to overcome obstacles to obtain their dreams, they still experience disappointment, frustration, and fear when faced with challenges. We must teach students to deal with the unpleasant emotions that accompany setbacks. When students are working at the edge of their competencies, they are more likely to make mistakes, but they are also more likely to grow.

To teach tenacity and resilience, we must guide students to become self-aware of obstacles that may keep them from achieving their personal goals, some of which they can control and some they cannot, and how it is important to know the difference. Further, we can help develop students' sense of purpose by encouraging students to think beyond self-oriented goals and consider how they can positively contribute to change in the world. We believe that this comes through teaching students to be mindful of how they pursue excellence. We use the phrase *mindful excellence* throughout the curriculum to mean being aware of how our thoughts, emotions, and beliefs about abilities affect how we pursue developing our own unknowable potential.

How do we teach these skills in today's classrooms? Learning to persevere with sustained effort does not happen by accident. First and foremost, we must create contexts for developing academic perseverance. Tenacity, grit, and growth mindset only happen when a student has an opportunity to develop skills to work hard. Although this curriculum provides numerous engaging activities and strategies that teach students about tenacity, resilience, and self-awareness, these activities will not effectively translate to students' lives in the absence of appropriately challenging curriculum and instruction. However, we know that even when teachers are able to provide challenging content that supplies the context to nurture perseverance, teachers are still looking for direct strategies to deliberately guide students to develop these skills.

As well as explicit lessons on cultivating social-emotional skills that drive excellence, this curriculum includes opportunities (or Curriculum Extensions) for teachers to link the concepts to curriculum content. For example, students may analyze characters' thoughts and feelings and determine how they relate to perseverance, coping with stress, and emotional regulation. In other lessons, students might study eminent individuals in history, science, or math to understand the approaches they took to overcome obstacles.

This curriculum is built around the assumption that ability is important, but it alone does not lead to success. Further, motivation to succeed in the form of grit, self-discipline, or ambition does not lead to automatic success. Students must have the opportunity for *all* of these factors to be nurtured. This includes *opportunities* to work hard, apply authentic effort, practice self-regulation strategies in various domains, and

INTRODUCTION

develop abilities to the fullest. These self-regulation skills can only be applied when a skill feels difficult and hard; therefore, it is important to remind students that when a task feels challenging, it is an opportunity to develop both the learned skill and the self-regulation skill. Through the interaction of developing both cognitive and non-cognitive factors, students can reach unknowable potential.

Teaching for Talent Development

The teaching of psychosocial skills should be matched to certain stages of talent development. For example, Olszewski-Kubilius and Calvert (2016) explained that mindset and teachability are important at the first stages of talent development when students are introduced to foundational concepts in the talent domain. In later stages, it is important to develop skills to challenge instructors and advocate for creative ideas even through criticism (Subotnik & Jarvin, 2005). In this curriculum, most lessons relate to the early stages of talent development (e.g., potential to competency), given that the lessons are for grades 4–8; however, some skills, such as using assertive communication, applying deliberate practice, and responding to criticism, can be applied throughout talent development stages.

Links to Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is particularly important, as it relates to tenacity and a pursuit of excellence. Fear is a powerful force that causes avoidance of challenges. The emotion of disappointment can paralyze one to never want to take risks. The feeling of hope can be used to catalyze momentum toward the completion of a goal. Self-regulation of emotion in high-stakes performance situations is important for long-term success (Olszewski-Kubilius & Calvert, 2016). When students are taught to be aware of how their emotions, thoughts, and beliefs about their abilities influence their own behaviors and pursuit of excellence, they can be empowered to channel their energies toward their passions for learning. Bar-On's (1997) five competencies of emotional intelligence provide a framework for many of the skills taught within this curriculum (as cited in Bar-On, Maree, & Elias, 2007):

1. The ability to be aware of, to understand, and to express our emotions and feelings non-destructively.
2. The ability to understand how others feel and use this information to relate to them.

Teaching **TENACITY, RESILIENCE,** and a **DRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE**

3. The ability to manage and control emotions so they work for us and not against us.
4. The ability to manage change, and to adapt and solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature.
5. The ability to generate positive affect and be self-motivated. (p. 77)

Guided by Psychological Science and Research

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2015) documented 20 principles from psychological science that impact Pre-K–12 education. The principles in the areas of thinking and learning, motivation, social skills, classroom management, and assessment—many of which are incorporated within this curriculum—evidence the connections between psychological science and educational practice. APA added additional guidance specific to gifted learners in 2017, noting some of the most salient topics for this population, including growth mindset, assessing readiness, deliberate practice, and fostering talent development.

The evidence-based practices used in this curriculum have demonstrated effectiveness with gifted students in particular. Some of these lessons are derived from the first author’s development of affective curriculum that specifically addressed perfectionism and coping, which demonstrated positive effects for decreasing components of unhealthy perfectionism (Mofield, 2008). We then expanded this focus to incorporate broader aspects of achievement motivation theories based on our collaborative efforts in studying the relationships of mindsets, achievement attitudes, coping, and perfectionism (Mofield & Parker Peters, 2015, 2018a, 2018b; Mofield, Parker Peters, & Chakraborti-Ghosh, 2016).

Organization

This text is divided into three sections that target specific topics and skills. Each lesson features an introduction section to provide background information regarding the psychosocial concepts addressed, including relevant research related to the idea and practical tips for cultivating the skills in the classroom (and beyond the lesson).

Part I: Persevering With Passion for Learning provides an introduction to the necessary ingredients for success. Students learn about the importance of cultivating interests as part of developing talent, specifically academic talent. Students also learn

INTRODUCTION

about the concepts of grit, deliberate practice, and how to find the optimal “flow” in pursuing challenges. Students think about the purpose in achieving excellence through understanding learning/mastery goals versus performance goals, and exploring a life philosophy. This section also includes strategies to develop tenacity, specifically by developing purposeful, meaningful goals, identifying the obstacles to achieving these goals, and developing a plan to move forward.

Part II: Growing Toward Excellence provides lessons to help students move beyond their comfort zones, take risks, and handle mistakes. Students learn about growth mindsets, unhealthy perfectionism versus pursuit of excellence, productive ways to handle mistakes and setbacks, reappraisals for interpreting stress, and the importance of risk-taking in learning.

Part III: Guiding Emotion Toward Excellence emphasizes social-emotional intelligence by guiding students to understand how their emotions influence behaviors, specifically their pursuit of excellence. Students develop self-awareness of their emotions and learn key strategies for managing impulses, anxiety, and/or fear. Students also learn the importance of testing assumptions of the mind, which affect relationships and how challenges and setbacks are interpreted. This section also provides opportunities for students to develop positive interpersonal skills and effective, assertive ways to communicate their emotions and work through conflicts.

Big Ideas

Each section focuses on specific big ideas (see Table 1). It is recommended that these big ideas are displayed so that students can make connections to their learning. In addition, students may develop other big idea statements that relate to the concepts presented.

Key Concepts

The curriculum promotes three major concepts throughout the lessons. These ideas can be emphasized and built upon as you continue to guide students’ self-awareness and understanding.

Mindful excellence. We define this as being aware of how our thoughts, emotions, and beliefs about our own abilities influence our pursuit of excellence. When we are aware of the negative self-talk that we say to ourselves when confronted with a challenge, we are empowered to change our thinking. When we are aware of how

Teaching **TENACITY, RESILIENCE,** and a **DRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE**

TABLE 1

Big Ideas

SECTION	BIG IDEAS
Part I: Persevering With a Passion for Learning Essential Question: What does it take to persevere?	Perseverance is rooted in purpose. To persevere is to channel enthusiasm into endurance.
Part II: Growing Toward Excellence Essential Question: How can I grow beyond the boundaries of my comfort zone?	Growth involves risk and courage. Growth can be uncomfortable.
Part III: Guiding Emotion Toward Excellence Essential Question: How can I manage emotions so they work for me, not against me?	Self-awareness leads to self-management. Self-awareness catalyzes change.

our emotions change in response to stressful situations, we are empowered to regulate those emotions. When we are aware that our abilities are changeable, we are empowered to change them. We refer to a pursuit of excellence as any endeavor toward achievement. A pursuit of excellence is different than a pursuit of perfection. A pursuit of excellence involves striving from the motivation for success rather than a motivation out of a fear of failure. Remind students to be mindful of their motivations behind their thoughts, emotions, and beliefs about their abilities. This awareness of how they pursue excellence can be the tool for managing the obstacles (such as fear of failure, lack of motivation, self-doubt, etc.) that often stand in the way of reaching goals.

Lean in and push through. This refers to being aware of any unpleasant emotion that is experienced (due to a challenge, conflict, or obstacle) and learning to push through the temporary discomfort. This phrase can be used to help students be aware that they are getting out of their comfort zone in learning or tackling a new challenge. By leaning into the struggle, the students can reframe the struggle as opportunity. This is part of developing emotional intelligence, as students become aware of an emotion and deal with it, rather than shoving it aside where the emotion may eventually resurface in other behaviors (e.g., lashing out in an argument, passive-aggressive behaviors, avoidance of new experiences and risk-taking in learning, etc.). “Lean in and push through” requires courage to step into unknown territory (e.g., push through the awkwardness of handling a conflict, feeling that others will not think you are smart if you fail, etc.). The phrase “lean in and push through” can be used to help students be aware of why they are feeling the emotion. What is the emotion motivating them to do? Is the challenge a true threat, or is it an opportunity to grow and move for-

INTRODUCTION

ward? Pushing through the discomfort will involve stretching, but these small steps of stretching enable growth.

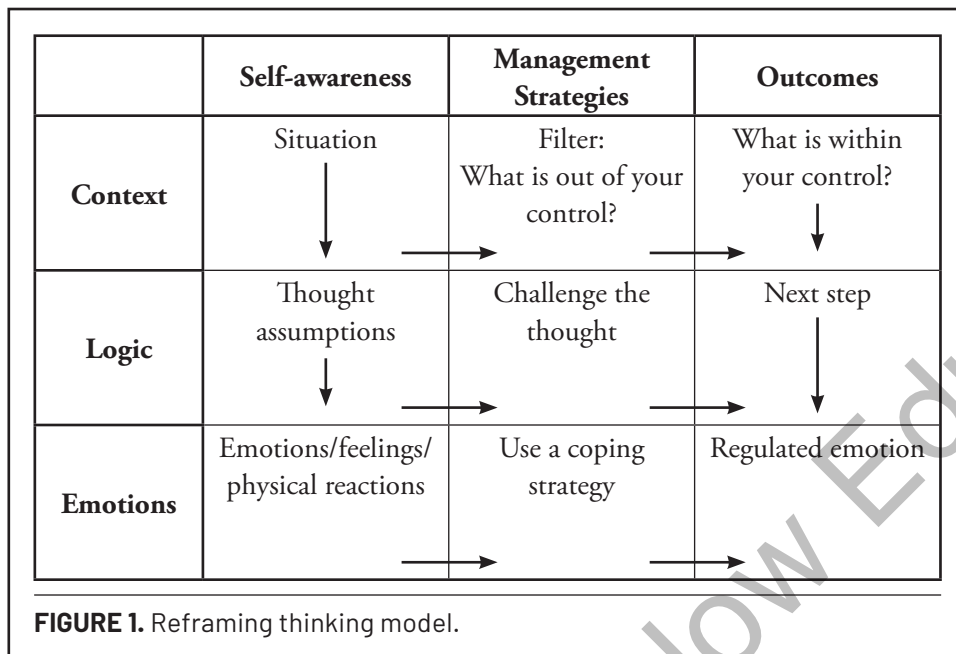
Reframing thinking. This refers to techniques for teaching students how to adjust their perception of a situation or challenge. Many of the concepts in this curriculum (challenge, growth mindset, emotional intelligence, stress) relate directly to perception. As we researched each idea, we noticed a major pattern from all facets of psychological science—our thoughts can be reappraised or reframed. For example, do you perceive that intelligence is fixed? When this thought is reframed (i.e., intelligence is malleable), it affects how we pursue challenges. Do you perceive that you have control over your success and failures? If you feel that you can respond proactively to change your behaviors in response to your circumstances, this can lead to positive outcomes. Do you believe that stress is debilitating? If stress is perceived as enhancing, this can lead to better performance. As you teach these lessons, help students understand that reframing our thinking affects our emotions and beliefs, which affect our behaviors and relationships.

Figure 1 shows an overall model for considering obstacles within and out of our control, testing thoughts and assumptions, and regulating emotion. Over the course of the curriculum, students have opportunities to apply all of the strategies. Some lessons may emphasize a row or a column. For example, students learn to think through the context of a situation (moving left to right), and learn to ask what is in their control and what is not within their control (Lesson 7 and Lesson 14). From here, they learn to take the next step (moving down the last row), which can often build positive emotion for moving forward. Other lessons may emphasize the emotional-thought connections, building on the idea of self-awareness. Students are led through the first column. What is the situation, and what did you think of that situation? (How did you interpret it? What emotion is linked with this thought?) From here, students can learn to logically dispute the thought or assumption (Lessons 12 and 20), or learn strategies to regulate the emotion through coping strategies (Lessons 15 and 19).

What Drives Excellence?

The curriculum is meant to provide lesson ideas and activities to develop a drive for excellence. Table 2 is an overview of the obstacles and concepts (fuel) for gearing up for a successful drive toward excellence. As you complete selected lessons, you may post a chart, adding concepts as various lessons are completed.

Teaching **TENACITY, RESILIENCE,** and a **DRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE**



Lesson Components

Each lesson includes lesson objectives that delineate what students should know, do, and/or understand as a result of the lesson. Materials outline specific handouts, links to videos, or other hands-on materials needed to facilitate the lesson. An Introduction section provides a hook. This is followed by Class Activities that engage students to think, respond, and interact with the concept. Because we know that teachers need to justify instructional time by tying in social-emotional learning with content, we offer Curriculum Extensions, which serve as suggestions for embedding literature, informational texts, and writing in response to the ideas in a lesson. The Personal Reflections are opportunities for students to respond to ideas in a personal journal (which need not be shared or collected by the teacher). The Conclusion Connections offer ways to connect students to how the lesson relates to ideas in other lessons, how the lesson relates to big idea statements (see Table 1), and/or how the lesson relates to mindful excellence, lean in and push through, or reframing thinking. They serve as a way to help the student see the skill as one of many factors that drive achievement motivation. Finally, Checks for Understanding offer ideas for exit tickets or quick ways to use formative assessment to determine how well students understand the lesson concepts.