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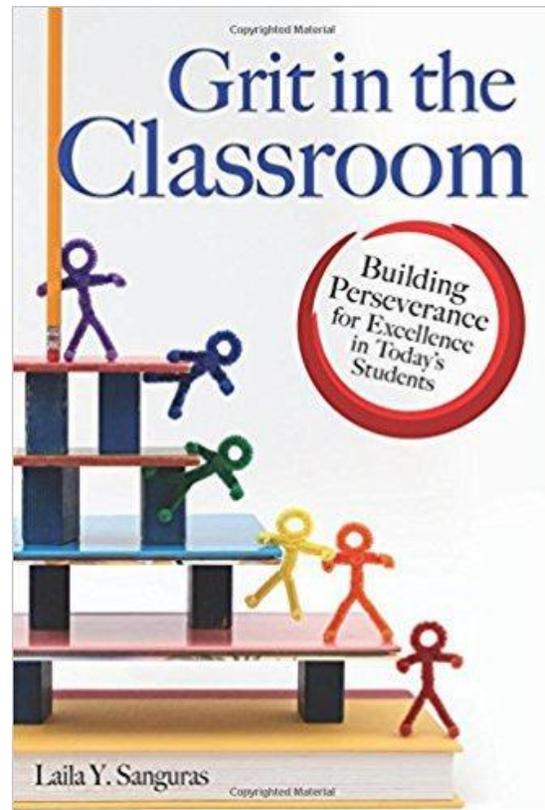
Sanguras, L. (2017). *Grit in the classroom: Building perseverance for excellence in today's students*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

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The timely topic of cultivating grit among contemporary students is relevant for many educational audiences: in-service teachers, pre-service teachers, graduate school faculty training these teachers, postsecondary researchers, school psychologists, school counsellors, school principals, school administrators, and parents. So when first reading Laila Y. Sanguras's 2017 book, *Grit in the Classroom*, my initial question was the following: who were her intended audiences? Sanguras directly addresses teachers—both in-service and pre-service—as the readers for this book. But she does not mention any of the other potential audience groups mentioned above, and she does not consider their professional responsibilities in her relevant recommendations. While I find Sanguras



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writes in a warm, personable voice, and she makes valuable analytical points about the psychological concept of grit and about how teachers can practically develop grit in their students, I do not recommend this book as priority reading for in-service and pre-service teachers due to its (a) weak foundation of evidentiary research, (b) omission of the debates over grit research, (c) evidence of the author's fixed mindset, (d) distractingly folksy writing style, and (e) lack of an original theoretical or empirical contribution to the debates over grit in the classroom.

One weakness I find in this book is its sparse evidentiary research base. Sanguras omits many prominent research studies related to grit and focuses almost entirely on the articles from the best-known researcher on this subject, Angela Duckworth, and her colleagues (Duckworth & Eskreis-Winkler, 2013; Duckworth, Kirby, Tsukayama, Bernstein, & Ericsson, 2011; Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews & Kelly, 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). But there are many other significant researchers on the topic of grit (Kaufman, 2013; Strayhorn, 2014; Wolters & Hussain, 2015) who should have been included in addition to Duckworth. As a result of the abbreviated literature review, it is unclear what new knowledge Sanguras hopes to contribute to the discussion of grit. So the first deficiency of this book for in-service and pre-service teachers is the paucity of its research foundation.

A related weakness is that Sanguras doesn't acknowledge relevant academic debates over the efficacy of grit in student education. A recent research study by Rimfeld et al. (2016) critiqued the concept of grit for offering no new insights on student behavior than previous academic research on the concept of "conscientiousness." This earlier research on "conscientiousness" that was a basis for contemporary studies on grit is another omission in the literature review section of this book. Sanguras ignores important studies on "conscientiousness" by

researchers such as Brent Roberts (Fayard, Roberts, Robins, & Watson, 2012). She also overlooks Alfie Kohn, author of *The Myth of the Spoiled Child* (2014), which describes some downsides to the cultivation of gritty students, and cites the 2007 study by Miller & Wrosch that argues that sometimes giving up is healthier than persisting in the pursuit of unattainable goals. I am not agreeing with these critics of grit, but I believe that Sanguras needs to present fairly and to weigh in on these debates between grit proponents and grit detractors.

Another flaw in this book is that Sanguras herself shows a fixed mindset in some of her recommendations for cultivating student grittiness. In Chapter 3 Sanguras concludes with three recommendations for how teachers can help students to build grit: (1) teachers should make hard assignments and assessments the norm and require students to apply themselves to succeed (2) teachers need to help students identify their talents and encourage them to achieve excellence in those areas (3) teachers need to recognize their key role in helping students to form their identities. In this second recommendation, Sanguras falls into the common view of student "talents" as being fixed and innate. Her conception of students' talents as fixed is at odds with the research by Dweck (2002, 2006) and others that have persuasively shown that students can develop their intelligence and their talents with effort and strategies. The author also shows a fixed mindset in Chapter 1 when she draws a heavy contrast between grit and intelligence, and she implies that intelligence, too, is innate and fixed. In these passages and others, Sanguras reflects a fixed mindset in her own thinking.

Given that one of the main conclusions found by Sanguras in Chapter 3 is that teachers should increase the academic rigor of their classes in order to build student grittiness, it is strange that this book lacks academic rigor itself. As I have already mentioned, the literature review is deficient. In

addition, the author's writing style is breezy and non-academic. Shouldn't Sanguras start by writing an academically rigorous book herself before recommending other teachers raise their academic requirements for their students? Her address of the readers with second-person viewpoint, folksy and sarcastic asides, and digressive personal anecdotes make for an entertaining, but also a distracting, reading experience. Certainly, teachers will not learn standards of academic rigor by reading this book.

Most importantly, Sanguras is not contributing original theories or original empirical evidence that will forward the contemporary research related to grit in the classroom. In sum, there is no important new information in this book. Sanguras successfully

provides a review of the concept of grit, and she provides some case studies that illuminate different aspects of how students have more grit than other students. But she does not systematically study any aspects of grittiness among students or how teachers cultivate grittiness in their students that forwards the academic conversation in a significant manner.

Despite the fact I do not view this book as a high priority read or as offering significant, original information on the subject of grit, I did find Sanguras to be a reflective raconteur of her personal teaching experiences involving the important subject of cultivating grittiness among students, and her warm voice and thoughtful observations are a welcome way to pass an afternoon or two.

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