

Sweeping a Classroom

The order from the head teacher was direct: "The classroom needs sweeping. Take the broom and sweep it."

Young Booker T. Washington knew that this was his chance. He swept the room three times, and then dusted the furniture four times. When the head teacher came back to evaluate his work, she inspected the floor closely and then used her handkerchief to rub the woodwork around the walls, the table and the students' benches. When she could not find one speck of dust anywhere in the room, she said quietly, "I guess you will do to enter this institution."

Cleaning a classroom was nothing less than Booker T. Washington's entrance examination to Hampton Institute in Virginia. In later years, he would recall this as the turning point in his life. He wrote in his autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, "I have passed several examinations since then, but I have always felt that this was the best one I ever passed."

Slacking off, goofing off and dozing off rarely open doors of opportunity. Those doors are opened best by a consistently excellent effort.

I am reminded of a verse that I first read in childhood:

*If a task is once begun,
Never leave it 'til it's done.
Be the labor great or small,
Do it well or not at all.*

In the centers of Life Care and American Lifestyles and in the work of Life Care at Home, we admire those individuals who daily practice this principle.

--Beecher Hunter