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## Growth Mindset in the Classroom

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### **Cover Page Footnote**

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# Growth Mindset in the Classroom

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"Mindset is an established set of attitudes held by an individual." (Dweck, 2006). Every student will come into a classroom with a different mindset. Some students will be excited for the opportunity to come into the classroom and learn. Others will come into the classroom with a lack of motivation and may even be discouraged by the thought of learning new concepts. Learning new concepts can be a scary and intimidating process. Many students lose motivation that is required to tackle these tough tasks. Students may lose confidence and settle for being "just ok." There are many students that could exceed their own expectations, and all they need is a little nudge in the right direction.

Carol Dweck proposed the concept of mindset and different types of mindsets. She has compiled decades of research to form the idea of mindset. Her findings have been groundbreaking for people around the world, especially in classrooms. Many students enter the classroom with a *Fixed Mindset*. Carol Dweck (2006) says, "In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success without effort." With a fixed mindset, students have already been defeated before they even attempt a problem. These students tend to give up when confronted with problems. In some instances, students become frustrated easier and more frequently. Students that have a fixed mindset believe they are either born with certain talents or academic achievement, or they aren't. Marina Krakovsky (2007) makes an excellent connection between students who have a fixed mindset and a Soccer club in England. She says, "Faulkner knew the source of the trouble: British soccer culture held that stars are born, not made." Many students share this same belief. Many students believe that you are either born an efficient learner, or not. Students that believe that they can only learn so much information have a fixed mindset.

Fixed mindset can be detrimental to a learn-

ing environment, and especially to an individual learner. Students compare themselves to their peers, often times asking why they cannot perform as well academically. Renee Jain (2012) says, "Individuals with a fixed mindset believe intelligence and talent are innate and immutable. In other words, no matter how much you study or how hard you work, you're pretty much stuck with the cards you're dealt. Since a youth with a fixed mindset believes their potential is capped, they avoid challenges which test their abilities." Every teacher struggles with the student who refuses to take a chance, or who becomes frustrated early when dealing with an academic struggle, hearing the dreaded "I don't get it" or "This is too hard." Hearing those words is a sign that your students may have a fixed mindset and needs the tools to become self-confident to tackle academic issues that students may face. It is the educator's job to provide those tools for the student. Students need to understand that their intelligence can be developed.

Dweck's definition of growth mindset is as follows, "In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment." Students who buy into the idea of growth mindset will become more resilient when they are faced with academic challenges. Students will be far more willing to go outside of their comfort zone to solve problems. Robert Schuller has a great quote that relates to growth mindset quite well, "What would you attempt if you knew you could not fail?" This relates to growth mindset, not because students won't fail from time to time, but instead because students that practice growth mindset are not worried about failing. If a student fails, all they accomplished was finding a strategy that does not work for them, they can keep searching for strategies that may work. Growth mindset, in itself, does not improve student's overall IQ. Instead, it increases student's resilience, drive, and investigative strategy. These are all strategies that students

will be able to use throughout the students' lives. Growth mindset is not limited to the classroom. Students can apply this to different aspects of their lives.

On paper, growth mindset sounds great! An eager, young teacher who is ready to take on the world would think, "I can instill this into all of my students; all I have to do is discuss it with them." In reality, there is a lot more that goes into the development than that. You can compare the process to a football team. People may show up and watch a football team play a game. The fans may be blown away by how well they work together or how hard they work. People only see that part of the process, the final product. However, there is much more that goes on behind the scenes that people do not see. There are practices, workouts, study tables, and film sessions. All of these attribute to that team's success. When an administrator comes in to observe a teacher, he is only seeing that final product of how the classroom operates. However, there are many different things that had to be done to get to that final product. Planning, demonstrating procedures, and walking your students through those procedures all attribute to the final product. Teachers have to go over these procedures with their students to establish growth mindset in their classroom. Teachers must go through these procedures and processes so that their "final product", or classroom environment, is healthy and built on growth mindset.

The idea that growth mindset can be instilled into classroom just by encouraging students is simply not true. While encouragement is key for a healthy classroom, there is more to having a strong foundation in classrooms. To implement growth mindset into classroom, teachers must start at the very beginning of the school year. Introduce your students to the concept, and explain different strategies on how they can practice a growth mindset. Katie Finley (2016) says, "When students succeed, praise their efforts and strategies as opposed to their intelligence. Praise for intelligence can actually undermine motivation and performance, as children praised for intelligence increasingly

view intelligence as a fixed trait; in the face of failure, these children will display less task persistence, less task enjoyment, and overall worse performance." Praise students for the effort that is put forth, not just the level of achievement that the student reaches. Not all students will reach the same achievement level; however, students can still put forth their best efforts. Teachers should also focus on the value of the process of learning. If students do not value the process of learning, they will focus success on the grade they receive. It is imperative that teachers do not place too much of an emphasis on the grades students receive. Finley (2016) also believes that teachers must design classroom activities that contain cooperative work, rather than competitive. When students are allowed to work in groups, they are able to collaborate together. This allows students to share their strategies. Students will need to work and collaborate with others in their futures, so growth mindset is a great way for students to start practicing these great strategies.

Growth Mindset is an extremely powerful resource teachers can implement into their classrooms. The implementation of growth mindset into the classroom will benefit the whole school. Growth mindset is a great way to improve student problem solving and peer cooperation skills. Growth mindset is not something that is installed over night. It may take weeks of procedures and encouragement before students fully start practicing growth mindset strategies. There are many strategies that schools could use to instill growth mindset into their classroom. A school could set a session of their in-service time aside and have a speaker come to discuss growth mindset. A speaker could inform teachers how it benefits students, some of the best ways to implement it into their classroom, and how to ensure that students keep practicing these great strategies. Evidence has shown us that students, teachers, and administrators would benefit greatly from implementing growth mindset into the classroom and schoolwide.

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