



# CREATING A GROWTH MINDSET IN YOUR SCHOOL

PLAYBOOK VOL. 1

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# INTRODUCTION

Let's get started by looking at the ways this playbook will help you to improve student and teacher success at your school. In the pages ahead, you'll encounter key insights and actions that will allow you to create a culture of growth in your hallways and classrooms. Drawn from a wealth of research, this playbook will walk you through the practice of creating a growth mindset in your school. As you'll see, giving every student the chance to succeed in her or his education isn't just a dream – it can be a reality. So now let's turn the page. . .



# WHY SHOULD YOU READ THIS PLAYBOOK?

Chances are you've heard of "growth mindset" before. It's a popular term these days in the actual and digital hallways of education. But "growth mindset" is much more than just the flavor of the month. It's a way of changing the culture of a school, the dynamics of a classroom, and a student's conception of her or his intelligence.

It is not enough, however, to just embrace the philosophy of a growth mindset. Yes, it sounds good - good enough to be part of a school's mission statement. But how does it work? What does it look like in practice? This playbook will offer the answers to those questions. The draw of creating a growth mindset in your school is that it is a way of addressing several different types of struggle. Ask yourself: am I experiencing any of the following challenges in my school?

- **Students are lacking motivation and engagement in the classroom**
- **Significant achievement gaps exist between students, especially along the lines of race or gender**
- **Students have poor opinions of their own performance**
- **Teachers are struggling to make material meaningful to students**
- **Teachers aren't collaborating with each other about instructional strategies**
- **Classroom goals are about earning approval rather than a hunger for learning**
- **School leaders are having trouble responding adequately to teachers' concerns**
- **The culture of your school feels stagnant**

These are daunting challenges, but they aren't unfixable. This guide will give you the concrete steps you'll need to meet these challenges head on by creating a growth mindset in your school.

# WHAT YOU'LL LEARN IN THIS PLAYBOOK

First things first: let's define the term that's at the heart of these pages:

## Growth Mindset:

A self-perception when “people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment.”

This definition is our liftoff as we begin a journey through the practice of what a growth mindset looks like. By reading this guide, you will learn specific strategies for engaging teachers and students in a process of growth.

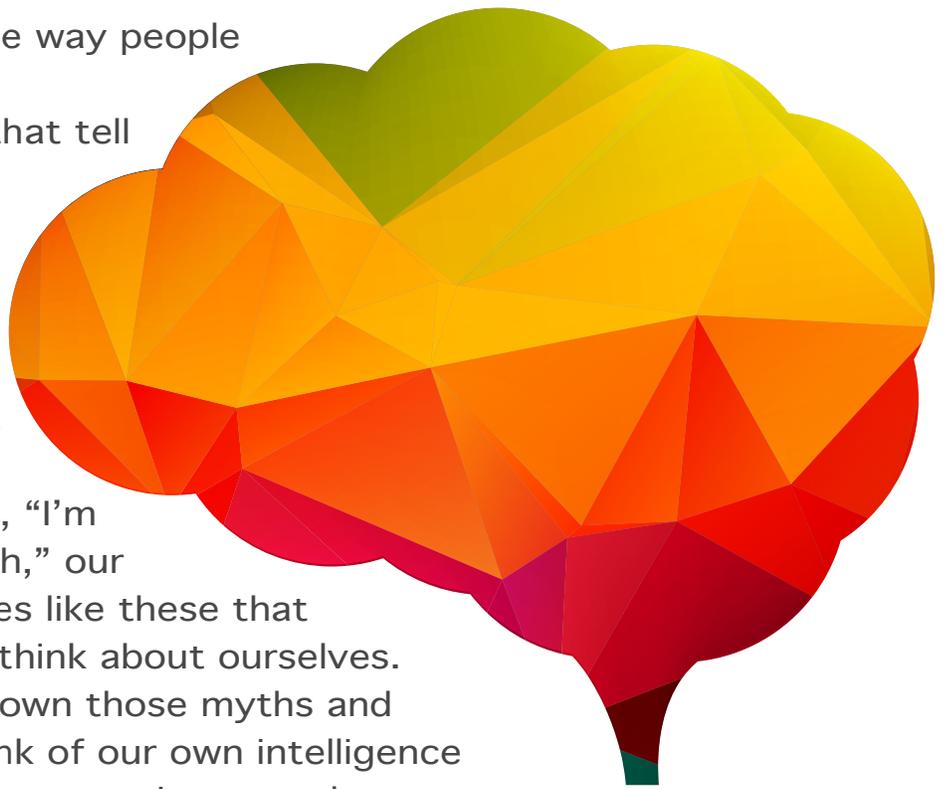
The pages that follow will outline:

- **HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND CREATE A GROWTH MINDSET**
- **HOW TO CREATE A CULTURE OF GROWTH IN YOUR SCHOOL AT LARGE**
- **HOW TO IMPLEMENT A GROWTH MINDSET IN THE CLASSROOM**
- **HOW TO MAINTAIN GROWTH BOTH IN THE CLASSROOM AND IN THE HALLWAYS**

So let's get started!

# CHANGING MINDS

It isn't easy to change the way people think. Too often, we are bombarded with stories that tell us intelligence is fixed. Whether it's the account of a genius who has mastered a field seemingly without any effort, or the lament of a middle-schooler who shakes his head and says, "I'm just not any good at math," our culture is filled with stories like these that slowly seep into how we think about ourselves. Growth mindset breaks down those myths and changes the ways we think of our own intelligence and effort. Up ahead are some pointers on how to start that process in your school.



# FIXED MINDSET VS. GROWTH MINDSET

Let's take a moment and outline the differences between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset:

	FIXED MINDSET	GROWTH MINDSET
<b>BASIC BELIEF</b>	I believe my intelligence is inherent and static. My abilities and potentials were determined early	I believe my intelligence is fluid and continuously develops. My abilities and potentials are still unfolding based on the effort I commit
<b>WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE</b>	The desire to look smart	The desire to learn
<b>HOW CHALLENGES ARE MET</b>	Avoid challenges, stick with what you know	Embrace challenges, seek out new opportunities for learning
<b>EFFORT</b>	Effort is fruitless, because you're either good at it or you're not	Effort is a path to mastery; failure is an opportunity to learn
<b>CRITICISM</b>	Ignores constructive feedback because it's too personal	Embraces constructive feedback, learn from mistakes
<b>SUCCESS OF OTHERS</b>	Feels threatened when others succeed	Admires the success of others, look for lessons and inspiration
<b>EFFECT ON OTHERS</b>	Gets in the way of cooperation, too defensive or proud	Facilitates cooperation, open to the skills and suggestions of others

Equipped with this knowledge, your first task is to ask a few questions:

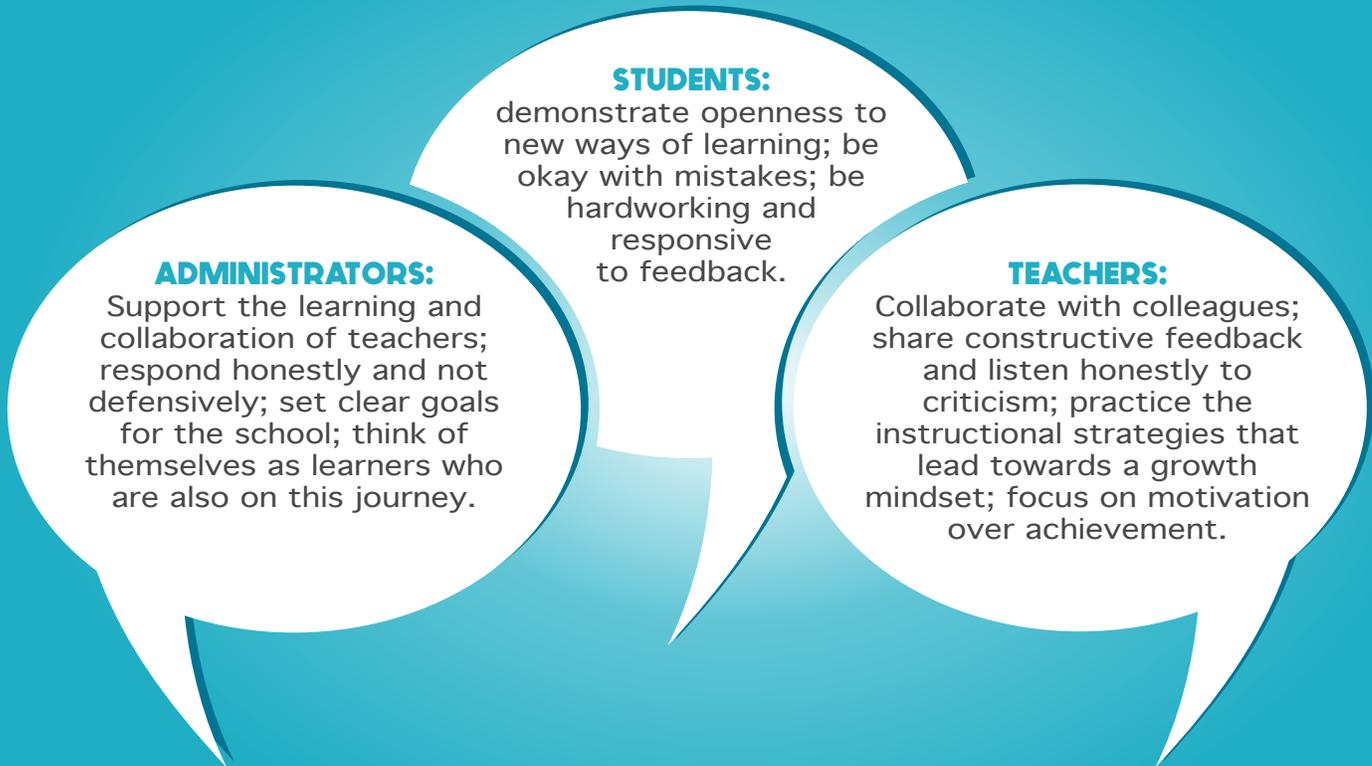
- In what ways are students demonstrating a fixed mindset?
- In what ways are teachers demonstrating a fixed mindset?
- In what ways is the school not growing?

Consider this the assessment phase of your project. By identifying areas of struggle, you can begin to focus on where your efforts will go.

While you begin to identify those areas of your school where growth is much needed, keep in mind this essential checklist of elements that lead to a growth mindset. These research tested elements can act as your tool kit as you begin your work. As you talk and listen to teachers and students, strive towards hallways and classrooms that embody the following:

- **EMPOWERMENT**
- **OWNERSHIP**
- **RISK-TAKING**
- **MODELING**
- **COLLABORATION**
- **AUTONOMY**
- **REMOVING THE FEAR OF FAILURE**
- **SUPPORT**
- **FLEXIBILITY**
- **COMMUNICATION**

These sound great, but you might still be wondering what a growth mindset looks like for all those in your school. Here are some end points to work towards for the many different people in your building:



**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Support the learning and collaboration of teachers; respond honestly and not defensively; set clear goals for the school; think of themselves as learners who are also on this journey.

**STUDENTS:**

demonstrate openness to new ways of learning; be okay with mistakes; be hardworking and responsive to feedback.

**TEACHERS:**

Collaborate with colleagues; share constructive feedback and listen honestly to criticism; practice the instructional strategies that lead towards a growth mindset; focus on motivation over achievement.

# WHAT ARE SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT GROWTH MINDSET?

As you strive to create growth mindsets in your school, it's important to be clear about what you're doing. Below are a few common misunderstandings about growth mindset. Make sure you don't fall into any of these traps!

**X IT'S ALL ABOUT EFFORT**

Not true! While effort is very important, learning involves trying new strategies and seeking input from others.

**X BAN THE "FIXED MINDSET"**

Bad idea! We are all a mix of fixed and growth mindsets. Your goal is to encourage a mindset of growth in your school, but inevitably students, teachers, and administrators will slip into old habits. Banning the fixed mindset only stigmatizes people and slows them as they grow.

**X PRAISE EVERYONE, NO MATTER WHAT**

Don't do that! Building towards a growth mindset involves constructive feedback – whether you're talking to a student, a teacher, or an administrator. Being encouraging of effort and talking openly about mistakes is crucial.

**X THESE ARE ONLY IDEAS THAT APPLY IN THE CLASSROOM**

No! While growth mindset is worth striving for in the classroom, it has plenty of relevance in other areas, too, including pedagogy, professional development, leadership training, and even personality.



# HOW WILL YOUR SCHOOL BENEFIT FROM CREATING GROWTH MINDSETS?

Growth mindset is about re-envisioning what your educational community can look like. Through hard work, your school stands to reap the many benefits that come with having a culture of growth, such as:

## CLOSING THE GAPS

Achievement gaps haunt so many schools because students are locked into preconceived notions about their own potential. A growth mindset can draw students away from stereotypes about their own intelligence and pave the way for achievements they would never experience with a fixed mindset.

## INNOVATION

As both teachers and students endorse a belief that their capabilities are a result of hard work and experience, the possibilities increase for innovative work. Teachers and students move out of their comfort zones and explore new ways of learning.

## REMOVING THE FEAR

Fear has no place in school. But when students believe their intelligence is fixed, fear guides their days. Teachers who feel unable to go outside their comfort zones in the classroom will also be guided by fear. Having a growth mindset is about hope and ability, not fear.

## IMPROVING WELL-BEING

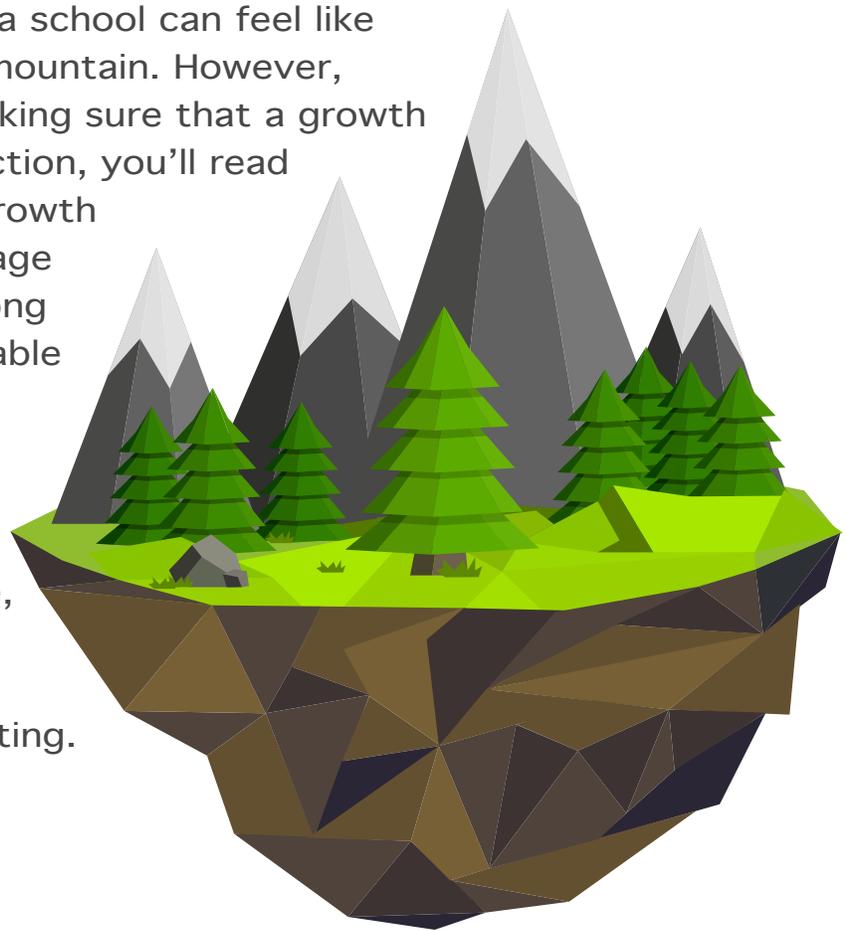
A fixed mindset is a defended mindset. Afraid of going outside of one's comfort zone, those with a fixed mindset see any challenge or new experience as dangerous. Creating growth mindsets in your school hold the promise of breaking down these defenses and changing the way students and teachers see themselves.

“ In this mindset, the hand you're dealt is just the starting point for development. The growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts. Although people may differ in every which way, in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments; everyone can change and grow through application and experience. ”

-Carol Dweck  
Mindset: The New Psychology of Success (2006), p. 17

# A CULTURE OF GROWTH

Changing the culture of a school can feel like pushing a boulder up a mountain. However, doing so is crucial to making sure that a growth mindset lasts. In this section, you'll read about how to model a growth mindset, how to encourage practices of growth among teachers, and the inevitable obstacles that both teachers and administrators will face. Creating a culture of growth is a collaborative, sustained effort that requires new modes of thinking and communicating.



# HOW TO MODEL A GROWTH MINDSET IN SIX EASY STEPS

Now begins the action phase of your project!

A lot of the talk around growth mindset focuses on its place in the classroom. That's very important, and we'll get there eventually. But first, let's spend some time talking about how you can model a growth mindset to other administrators and teachers. This is the best way for a culture of growth to trickle down into the classroom.

Schools with a healthy culture of growth are collaborative, communicative places where colleagues give feedback, support and challenge each other, and create new teaching strategies. So, how do you make that happen in your school?

## STEP 1

### **MODEL & SUPPORT GROWTH**

As a school leader, you have to model the mindset that you want to see in your own hallways. Setting clear goals for yourself is key. Make these goals known during professional development workshops and show the teachers in your school that you are striving towards a culture of growth.

## STEP 2

### **EXPOSE THE PROCESS**

Setting clear goals for yourself – goals that you share with the teachers in your school – begins this next crucial step: exposing the process. As a leader, you have to de-mystify a growth mindset. Creating one doesn't happen through magic. It happens by being transparent with your work. Encourage teachers to share their trials and errors. Give “permission” for mistakes. Urge them to set their own goals and share them. Make clear that there is a steep learning curve as you all work towards growth.

### STEP 3

#### LET TEACHERS OBSERVE EACH OTHER

Encourage teachers to sit in on each other's classes. Organize professional development days around those observations. Here you have to be vocal and draw upon a sense of community: Our goal is to create a culture of growth, not judgment. Having colleagues sit in on each other's classes is meant to begin a conversation, not an evaluation.

### STEP 4

#### PICK THE RIGHT MODELS

It goes without saying that some teachers will key into a growth mindset faster than others. As you draw upon successful teachers, or even teams, to showcase what a growth mindset looks like, be careful whom you pick. Select teachers or teams that have struggled with the process rather than ones that picked it up in a cinch. Showing that you are all in this struggle together creates a culture of growth.

### STEP 5

#### FOLLOW UP

As a school leader, show that you are thorough in your commitments. Follow up with teams of teachers after professional development days. Offer constructive, detailed feedback when you observe a teacher in her or his classroom, and continue following up as the year goes on.

### STEP 6

#### CHECK THE PULSE

Finally, be patient! Creating a culture of growth doesn't happen overnight. But with enough diligence and effort, it will happen. Your job as a school leader is to check the pulse of your building. This means holding regular meetings with teachers and teams, listening to their challenges, and keeping detailed records of their progress.

# REFLECT AND SHARE

Giving teachers and administrators in your school the chance to reflect on the process of creating a culture of growth is essential. **Without reflection, action adds little value to your school.**

Furthermore, reflection has to focus on the process rather than the product. The reflection you encourage in your school shouldn't deal with how successful teachers were in developing new goals and strategies, but in what they learned from the process.

Ideally, reflection should be built into the ways that teachers communicate with each other in a culture of growth. But you have to get the ball rolling by setting aside specific time during professional development to start this process.

It's best to group teachers into small, seminar-style teams and have them discuss the following questions. If you repeat this process a few times a year, reflection becomes part of a process of growth.

## CLASSROOM-DIRECTED QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways do you demonstrate to students that they are in charge of their academic success?
2. How exactly do you communicate to students that they are working hard, as opposed to calling them "smart" or "gifted"?
3. In what ways do you show students that their insights often result from failure rather than success?
4. How do you monitor students' mindsets and goals? Can you give examples?

## SELF-AWARENESS QUESTIONS:

1. How do you avoid falling into a fixed mindset about your students' abilities?
2. In what ways have you adjusted your teaching strategies this year to help develop a culture of growth?
3. How do you avoid falling into a fixed mindset about your own abilities?
4. What do you need to feel more supported as you develop and model a mindset of growth?

# USEFUL FEEDBACK

Every school leader encounters the question of how to honor the teachers in their building. Teaching is an incredibly demanding profession, with so much energy and care poured into the classroom each day. If a school leader isn't responsive and caring towards the teachers in their school, teachers can feel disrespected and disengaged.

As you build a culture of growth, you must demonstrate emotional intelligence and professional intelligence in the feedback you offer. Before you begin the evaluation process, make sure you know the areas of interest and growth among your teachers. Ask your teachers to think about the following questions before you go into their classrooms:

WHAT YOU'RE INTERESTED IN	QUESTIONS
<b>STRENGTHS</b>	In what areas of your job do you feel confident? How do you excel in the classroom?
<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	Is there an area of professional learning that you are interested in pursuing?
<b>GOALS</b>	What are your learning goals for both you and your students? How do you work towards those goals?
<b>ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT</b>	In what area of teaching do you feel that you can grow?
<b>SUPPORT</b>	What sort of support do you need from your colleagues and the administration?

These questions set the tone for feedback that leads to a culture of growth. By being transparent with your process, a teacher won't feel blindsided by your evaluative comments. The feedback you give should be guided by these questions in an effort to create an evaluative system in the spirit of collaboration that honors teachers and encourages them to grow as well.

**It is key to think of feedback as a conversation. You are working towards a culture of growth together.**

# OBSTACLES YOU'LL FACE

This work comes with its share of obstacles. As a school leader, you should be prepared for the many challenges that come with implementing a growth mindset. Up ahead we've outlined a few of those obstacles, and included helpful hints for how to deal with them.



## OBSTACLE

Early in the school year, teachers claim that creating a culture of growth isn't working. They want to see results soon but so far there is just struggle.



## HERE'S WHAT YOU DO

In older models of organization, change is the exception, not the rule. With a growth mindset, change is the rule. Be clear with your teachers how the school is progressing towards its goals. Reinforce the idea that changing mindsets follows an S curve: change is slow at first, but once it begins, the effects can be seen quickly. Encourage them to persevere and remind them that you are all in it together.



## OBSTACLE

Some teachers in your school are concerned that they don't have enough say in creating goals for the school. They are worried that they are being "ordered" to institute a growth mindset.



## HERE'S WHAT YOU DO

Set aside time to meet with those teachers and ask them what goals they want to pursue, where they think they excel as professionals, where they think they need growth, what changes they hope to see in the school. If your teachers feel that they are not being heard, you need to hear them out and include them in the collaborative process of growth.



## OBSTACLE

You have just finished a tiring day of professional development. A teacher approaches you and says that she has been doing her job for many years, has taught hundreds of students, and is not interested in reinventing her pedagogy.



## HERE'S WHAT YOU DO

Offer some appreciation for her hard work and emphasize that she probably has a lot to offer to younger teachers. Encourage her to lead a session of the next professional development day, sharing what teaching strategies have worked, which ones haven't.

 **OBSTACLE**

You sat in on a teacher’s class, observed, and wrote him careful, detailed feedback. He comes to your office and is hurt that you were critical in your evaluation. He thought he was “a good teacher” and now is sad, angry, and confused.

 **HERE’S WHAT YOU DO**

Remind him that an evaluation is a tool for improving teaching and bettering the outcomes of all students. Walk through the evaluation and go over areas where further development is needed. Emphasize that you are not calling him a “bad teacher.”

 **ANOTHER HELPFUL HINT**

This only works if your feedback has been thorough and constructive. By all means, avoid characterizing a teacher as “good” or “bad.” You have to practice the philosophy of a growth mindset and focus on effort and experience!

 **OBSTACLE**

Several months into the school year, a teacher approaches you and claims she is meeting most of her goals for growth. She wonders why you don’t single her out as a superstar teacher.

 **HERE’S WHAT YOU DO**

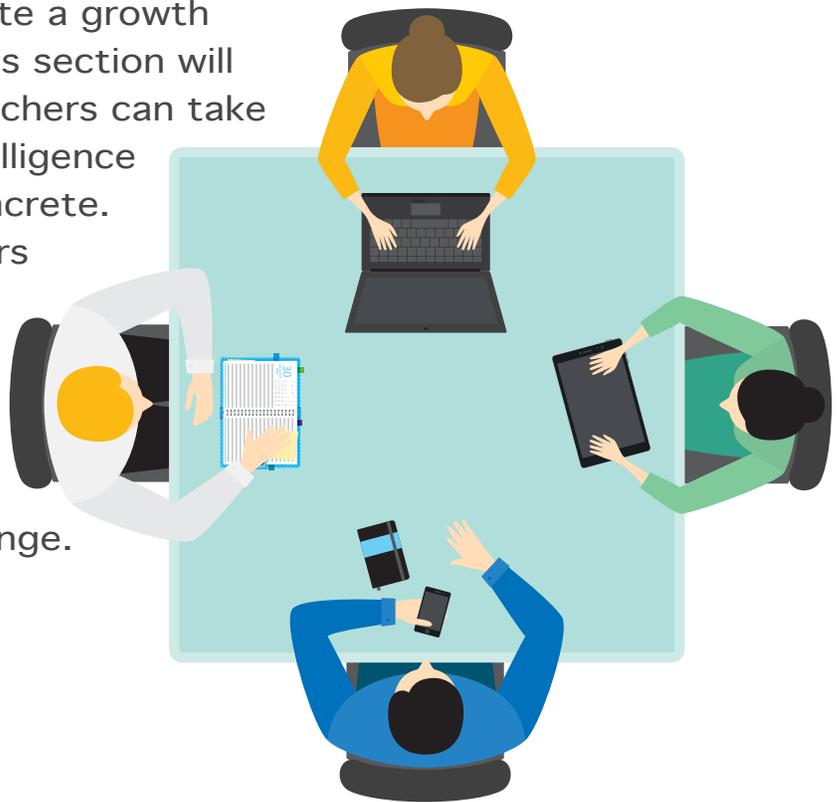
Remind her that in a culture of growth, a superstar teacher doesn’t exist. The goal isn’t to focus on outcomes. We are always growing and evolving. Praise her effort and highlight her effort in the next professional development setting.

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These aren’t all the obstacles you’ll face, but these represent several types of obstacles that you’ll face on your way to creating a culture of growth. **As a school leader, it is vital that you view these obstacles in a positive light, and demonstrate a growth mindset yourself!**

# CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

What can teachers do to create a growth mindset in their students? This section will outline specific steps that teachers can take to help students see that intelligence and effort are not fixed in concrete. Doing so requires that teachers focus on how they organize their lessons, and how they communicate. The strategies in this section will help foster a sense of self-knowledge in students, creating lasting change.



# FOSTERING GRIT AND STRUGGLE

Teachers modeling and developing a growth mindset in their classrooms have to enter the building each day knowing that they will emphasize motivation over achievement in the work that they do. That means that when they enter their classrooms, they will try to foster a sense of grit and struggle among their students.

But how do you foster grit and struggle?

**First, we have to dispel the major myth around grit and struggle: it is not just a matter of telling students to work harder.**

Now that we got that out of the way, let’s review some goals and specific strategies that help foster grit and struggle in the classroom.

## **PRAISE EFFORT, NOT OUTCOME: IT’S ABOUT THE PROCESS**

**How To Do It:** Repeatedly emphasize that struggle is part of learning; praise the effort of students working through challenges; keep criticism focused on the process, not the person.

## **GIVE STUDENTS PERSONAL CONTROL: MAKE THEM CARE**

**How To Do It:** Give students the freedom to decide how they will complete an assignment; allow them to select topics for a writing assignment.

## **LOW-STAKES ASSESSMENT: KEEP THEIR RECALL FRESH**

**How To Do It:** Giving regular quizzes or encouraging regular summaries of new material improves recall and keeps students engaged. The low stakes will decrease their anxiety and keep them engaged.

## **COLLABORATE: THE POWER OF A BRAINSTORM**

**How To Do It:** Offer work that encourages peer-to-peer collaboration; give students the chance to learn how their peers are approaching problems.

These goals and strategies will help students know that what they’re doing is **productive struggle**.

Teachers are also charged with the responsibility of providing the right sort of feedback to foster a productive struggle. Here are a few examples of what that looks like:

*“Walk me through your thinking. Let’s figure out how you got to this point in the problem.”*

*“Think about the material we covered earlier in the class (or yesterday). How can you see that applied to this problem?”*

*“I see that you’re stuck using this particular approach. Can you think of other ways that you might begin to approach this problem?”*

*“I see that you’re working hard on this problem. How about working together with a friend? Together, you can brainstorm some new strategies.”*

Above all, a teacher must make certain that a student’s struggle doesn’t go underground. In other words, when a student goes silent about what they are struggling with, a teacher has to encourage the student to speak up. Listen to what the student is saying and avoid the following pitfalls:

- Just giving them the answer
- Providing an easier task without working through the more challenging
- Moving on to the next exercise without addressing the struggle



**REMEMBER:**

*“Some struggle in learning is good, but there is a key distinction to be made between productive struggle and destructive struggle. Productive struggle allows students the space to grapple with information and come up with the solution for themselves. It develops resilience and persistence and helps students refine their own strategies for learning. In productive struggle, there is a light at the end of the tunnel; learning goals not only are clear but also seem achievable. Although students face difficulty, they grasp the point of the obstacles they face and believe that they will overcome these obstacles in the end.”*

-Robyn R. Jackson and Claire Lambert, *How to Support Struggling Students* (2010), p. 53

# MISTAKES ARE GOOD

One of the hardest parts of creating growth mindsets in the classroom is showing students that mistakes are good. Too often in our culture, mistakes are viewed as shortcomings, actions we have to cover to avoid looking foolish. But a growth mindset embraces mistakes and sees them as important signposts on the way to learning.

**The question, then, is how can a teacher normalize mistakes?**

### THE POWER OF YET:

Emphasize that their effort will pay off eventually. Mistakes are part of learning.

### BE FASCINATED:

Rather than brushing them off and treating them as shameful, use mistakes as opportunities to teach and devise new strategies.

### GIVE IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK:

Tell students right away where they made a mistake, and capture their attention while they're engaged.

### DISCOURAGE RUMINATION:

Don't let students ruminate and feel bad over their mistakes. Springboard to new strategies instead.

### ENCOURAGE MISTAKES:

So much of learning is innovation and experimentation. Students must be encouraged to make mistakes as part of their journey.

Teachers should also be on the lookout for what types of mistakes their students are making. Identifying which mistake a student is making will help a teacher respond best.

- **Reaching Mistakes:** a student is reaching slightly beyond her or his capabilities. This is good! But it means that student needs help coming up with new strategies.
- **Epiphany Mistakes:** a student suddenly realizes that their understanding of a concept was incomplete. Encourage reflection about their thinking.
- **Sloppy Mistakes:** a student is struggling with a lesson because of carelessness and lack of attention. It's possible the work is too easy, or too difficult. In either case, a teacher will have to adjust the level of challenge, or encourage the student to work slowly, outlining their thinking as they work.
- **High-Stakes Mistakes:** a student who has worked hard makes a mistake in a high-stakes setting, such as an exam. Help the student figure out what exactly causes their anxiety, and work to alleviate it.

# FINDING THE RIGHT WORDS

Since a mindset is essentially a belief we hold about ourselves, finding the right words to change a student’s belief in who they are is crucial. Teachers must know that their praise and feedback will act as framing tools in developing a culture of growth in the classroom.

Let’s look at an example of a math classroom where some students are struggling and others are excelling. Here are a few ideas of what to say, and what not to say:

THE STUDENT WHO...	SAY THIS	DON'T SAY THIS
<b>ACED THE EXAM</b>	<i>“I like the strategies you used on the exam.”</i>	<i>“You did so well on that exam. You’re so smart!”</i>
<b>ACED THE EXAM AND IS NOW BORED</b>	<i>“It seems like this is too easy for you. Let’s find some work that is more challenging, work that you can learn from.”</i>	<i>“You’re so smart it seems like you barely have to try!”</i>
<b>WORKED VERY HARD AND EARNED A “C”</b>	<i>“You worked really hard preparing for this exam. You used some good strategies. Let’s figure out which ones worked, and which one’s didn’t.”</i>	<i>“Just try harder next time and you’ll do better.”</i>
<b>WORKED VERY HARD AND STILL FAILED THE EXAM</b>	<i>“I see that you put a lot of effort in. Let’s work together and figure out what you don’t understand.”</i>	<i>“You’re just not a math person. It’s okay. I’m sure you’re very good in other areas.”</i>

This isn’t the whole story, however. Teachers also have to help frame the language that students use with each other. Again, focusing on process is key. Classroom activities centered on cooperative – rather than competitive – learning help direct students’ attention and words towards growth.

*Praise the process and create the motivation to learn!*

These strategies provide answers to the biggest challenge: figuring out how to cultivate a sense of belonging. When students feel excluded, their motivation drops off. Using these strategies, teachers can create inclusive environments that are ripe for growth.

# SELF—KNOWLEDGE IS KEY

A fixed mindset is a defensive mindset. It suggests that people are one way or another, born into their capabilities with no hope of change. Creating a growth mindset in the classroom involves changing this perception that many students hold. **Teachers are indeed helping students achieve greater academic success with a growth mindset, but they are also changing the self-knowledge that students have.**

Just as we encourage school leaders to be transparent with their process, we also encourage teachers to be transparent with students about what they are trying to accomplish. Here are a few good questions to ask students periodically throughout the year. These should prompt awareness and self-knowledge:

- 1. HOW DO I RESPOND WHEN I'M CHALLENGED? WHAT DO I DO? HOW DO I FEEL?**
- 2. WHAT STRATEGIES DO I USE WHEN I'M FRUSTRATED?**
- 3. WHAT SORT OF FEEDBACK IS USEFUL WHILE I'M WORKING?**
- 4. WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T CHANGE HOW I RESPOND TO CHALLENGE?**

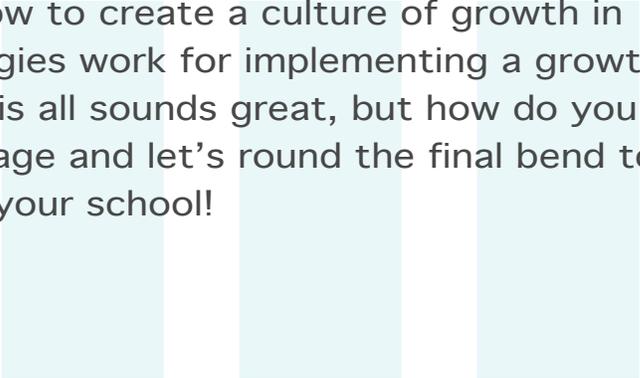
As students increase their self-knowledge, they stand to become more self-sufficient learners. Getting there involves seeing their own progress. Up ahead are a few suggestions for how to make that happen.

- **Journals:** Having students keep journals in which they chart their learning is a good way for them to see progress. Teachers can frame the journals with questions about what was challenging, what strategies they used, what habits they developed.
- **Chances to Reflect:** At the end of an exam, a teacher can provide space for students to reflect on how their understanding of the material has shifted.
- **The Science Behind Growth:** Offering students some introductory material about how their brains are wired for growth gives them the chance to feel naturally empowered.
- **Write, Write, Write:** Asking students to write down a few take-away points from each lesson encourages them to continue charting their own knowledge and helps them become more self-aware learners.



# CONCLUSION

You're almost there! By this point, you're well versed in what a growth mindset looks like, how to create a culture of growth in your school, and what strategies work for implementing a growth mindset in the classroom. This all sounds great, but how do you maintain growth? Turn the page and let's round the final bend to creating growth mindsets in your school!



# MAINTAINING GROWTH

Consider this the *reflection phase* of your project. But keep in mind that reflection doesn't mean you're down growing! Quite the opposite, actually. Now it's time to walk through a few steps that will help you maintain growth in your school for months and years to come.

When you ask whether your school is maintaining growth, you're really asking whether your school is maintaining a love of learning. Here are five qualities to look for in administrators, teachers, and students that will help you answer that question:

- **ENGAGEMENT**
- **EXPLORATION**
- **EXPERIMENTATION**
- **POSITIVE ATTITUDE**
- **SELF-BELIEF**

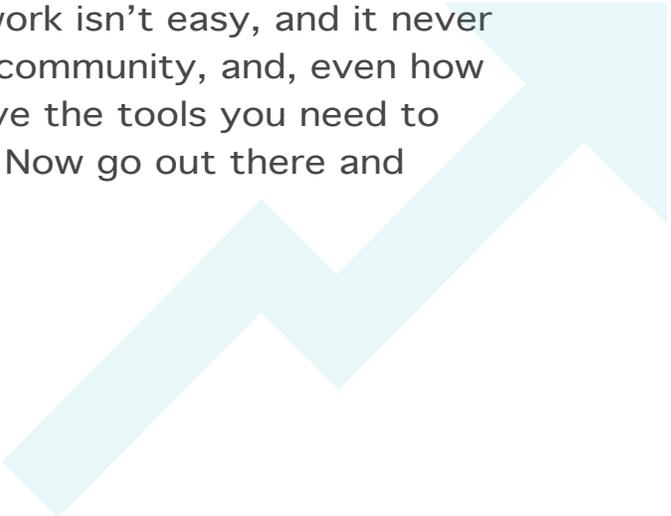
Working towards a growth mindset comes with plenty of setbacks, and those setbacks can make you abandon all your hard work. It's important to persevere in the face of difficulty, however. A growth mindset is an ongoing process. Creating a growth mindset in your school is really about changing how people see themselves. Here are five pointers on maintaining growth in your hallways and classrooms:

- 1 DAILY REMINDERS:** Make it clear in staff meetings, in daily interactions with colleagues, and your messages to students, that you value growth. Draw upon the checklist of essential elements that we gave you earlier and turn it into a "Look For" list. Circulate this list to your staff so that everyone is on the lookout for signs of a growth mindset.
- 2 SHARE STORIES OF GROWTH:** At least a few times a month, share a story of growth, whether in your addresses to students, in staff meetings, or in conversations with colleagues. Look for and tell stories of growth to provide regular examples of what the school is working towards.
- 3 SMALL VICTORIES:** Encourage teachers to chart their own "small victories" and those of their students as well. Working towards a growth mindset can be intimidating! But keeping track of small victories along the way provides the evidence that progress is happening.
- 4 USE THE RIGHT WORDS:** As a school leader, your words echo through the hallways. Make sure that you're using the right words to maintain a culture of growth in your school. Words that speak to the effort and dedication of teachers and students help reinforce growth. Substitute the words of a fixed mindset, such as, "You're so smart", with growth mindset encouragement, such as "I'm impressed with your thinking on this topic."
- 5 EMPHASIZE THAT A MINDSET IS A CHOICE:** As you lead your school, always emphasize that a mindset is a choice. It is not fixed in concrete. It's a belief we hold about ourselves. Reminding the teachers and students in your school that they have a choice in what to believe about themselves is powerful.



## MAINTAINING GROWTH

With a growth mindset comes the opportunity to build a powerful, active community in your school. The work isn't easy, and it never ends. But it changes achievement, the community, and, even how people think about themselves. You have the tools you need to create growth mindsets in your school. Now go out there and start growing!





## THINK THROUGH MATH

116 Federal Street.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

866.357.8664  
[www.thinkthroughmath.com](http://www.thinkthroughmath.com)



# ABOUT US

## THINK THROUGH MATH

At Think Through Learning, we believe that success in mathematics transforms the way students perform in school and beyond, and we are driven to motivate students in unprecedented ways. With our award-winning Think Through Math on-line instructional system, every student can have his or her own teacher at precisely right moment – whenever, where ever they are. The patent-pending web-based solution provides adaptive math instruction that is aligned to each state’s standards. Access to live, U.S.-certified teachers during the day, at night, or on weekends provides students with the individualized attention students need – whether they are in school, at home, or on vacation. Our unique system of motivation builds confidence and competence in mathematics, allows students to overcome math anxiety, and ultimately helps kids learn-and-love-math

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## DR. SEAN AKERMAN



Sean is a social and personality psychologist with a focus on social justice and marginalized groups. His work draws upon personal and collective narratives to explore such issues. His articles have appeared in *Theory & Psychology*, *Psychologist-Psychoanalyst*, and *SAGE Case Studies in Methodology*. He received his PhD from the Graduate Center, City University of New York in 2011; BA from Wheaton College in 2006.

Previously, he taught at Hunter College, Sarah Lawrence College, and Bennington College. Now he is an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Psychology at Northland College.

