



AVID Professional Learning Workshop

**Fostering a Growth
Mindset for Student
Success**
Handouts

Understanding Mindset

In order for educators to develop and practice culturally relevant pedagogy, they must first understand the theory of mindset. Even further, it is crucial that they comprehend how a fixed or growth mindset can affect their own interactions with, and reactions to, students, as well as a mindset's impact on how students see themselves as learners.

“Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while, or the light won't come in.”

Isaac Asimov

Dr. Carol Dweck, one of the world's leading researchers in the field of motivation and the Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, has done extensive research in the area of mindset. Her findings on the growth mindset support AVID's philosophy of individual determination and its relationship to student success. Developing a growth mindset begins with a look at what the fixed and growth mindsets encompass.

In her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Dweck (2006) explains that people with a fixed mindset believe that their talents and abilities are fixed traits (i.e., they have a certain amount and can do nothing to change it). Dweck contends that people with a fixed mindset limit their success: “They become over-concerned with proving their talents and abilities, hiding deficiencies, and reacting defensively to mistakes or setbacks—because deficiencies and mistakes imply a (permanent) lack of talent or ability. People in this mindset will actually pass up important opportunities to learn and grow if there is a risk of unmasking weaknesses.” Alternatively, Dweck describes people with a growth mindset as “believing that their talents and abilities can be developed through passion, education, and persistence. For them, it's not about looking smart or grooming their image. It's about a commitment to learning—taking informed risks and learning from the results, surrounding yourself with people who will challenge you to grow, looking frankly at your deficiencies and seeking to remedy them.”

Dweck's website, Mindset Works, highlights the following findings from the research listed below:

- **Mindsets predict motivation and achievement** (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007).
- **Growth-mindset training boosts motivation and achievement** (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007).
- **Growth-mindset training narrows the gender gap in math** (Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003).
- **Growth-mindset training narrows the racial achievement gap** (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002).
- **Intelligence is malleable** (Ramsden, Richardson, Josse, Thomas, Ellis, Shakeshart, Seguir, & Price, 2011).

In a 2015 commentary that revisits her mindset work, Dweck reviews her findings and addresses popular misconceptions on fixed and growth mindsets. She states, “Perhaps the most common misconception is simply equating the growth mindset with effort. Certainly, effort is key for students' achievement, but it's not the only thing. Students need to try new strategies and seek input from others when they're stuck. They need this repertoire of approaches—not

just sheer effort—to learn and improve.” Dweck also addresses praise, clarifying that educators should not just praise the effort, but also praise the learning and help students “thrive on challenges and setbacks on the way to learning.” Additionally, Dweck voices concern that educators may sometimes use mindsets to justify why some students are not learning, blaming the lack of growth on a student’s fixed mindset. She says, “The growth mindset was intended to help close achievement gaps, not hide them.” Dweck also suggests that, in order to adopt a deeper, truer growth mindset, educators must “legitimize the fixed mindset.” She states, “Let’s acknowledge that (1) we’re all a mixture of fixed and growth mindsets, (2) we will probably always be, and (3) if we want to move closer to a growth mindset in our thoughts and practices, we need to stay in touch with our fixed-mindset thoughts and deeds.” Knowing and understanding our fixed mindset triggers guides the path to a true growth mindset. We have to know which of our actions and characteristics are rooted in a fixed mindset if we want to transform them into actions and characteristics of a growth mindset. Simply put, a growth mindset is more than a proclamation, it is a journey.

Part of that journey involves educators evaluating their own mindset and seeing themselves as learners before they can develop and foster growth mindsets in their students. Administrators who possess a growth mindset seek out learning opportunities, support teachers’ learning, are willing to learn from their teachers, and are responsive to, not defensive of, feedback. Growth-minded teachers collaborate with colleagues and work to strengthen their practice. They believe that students can learn and succeed, and don’t blame them for failure, instead teaching them to persist and learn from their failure. Rather than saying, “These kids can’t learn. They won’t even try,” educators with a growth mindset say, “How are my assumptions about these kids getting in the way of their learning? What do I need to change in order to reach them?”

Dr. Marilee Adams (2013), author of *Teaching That Changes Lives: 12 Mindset Tools for Igniting the Love of Learning*, states, “Mindset represents the set of beliefs and assumptions that we hold about ourselves, others, and the world... it affects how you connect or don’t connect with each child, and in turn how they connect with you.” Adams ascertains that mindset is not a constant; rather, it is continually changing depending on things inside and outside of each person, such as thoughts, feelings, and circumstances. She contends that people are not always able to control which mindset they are in, but they can choose how they react to it. Reacting with what Adams calls a “learner [i.e., growth] mindset” focuses the mind on growth through thoughtful choices, seeking solutions by questioning, and developing a win-win situation. Reacting with a “judger [i.e., fixed] mindset” focuses the mind on placing blame, creates automatic rather than thoughtful reactions, and develops a win-lose situation. The question then for educators is, “Am I in learner mindset or judger mindset right now?”

Once educators develop a growth mindset that embraces the belief that each student can learn and succeed, they can then begin to foster growth mindsets within their students. This book provides activities, reflections, resources, and experiences to assist educators in creating a growth mindset within themselves and their students.

Instead of...	Try Thinking...
I'm not good at this.	I'm not good at this yet, but I'll be much better with practice.
I'm awesome at this.	I'm on the right track.
I give up.	I'll use some of the strategies that we've learned.
This is too hard.	This may take some time and effort.
I can't make this any better.	I can always improve, so I'll keep on trying.
I just can't do math.	I'm going to train my brain in math.
I made a mistake.	Mistakes help me learn better.
She's so smart; I'll never be that smart.	I'm going to figure out how she does it, so I can try it.
Plan A didn't work.	Good thing the alphabet has 25 more letters.
It's good enough.	Is it really my best work?

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QUICKWRITE: Your mindset

Growth Mindset: What Can I Say to Myself?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instead of...	Try Thinking...
I'm not good at this.	
I'm awesome at this.	
I give up.	
This is too hard.	
I can't make this any better.	
I just can't do math.	
I made a mistake.	
She's so smart; I'll never be that smart.	
Plan A didn't work.	
It's good enough.	



Mindset Scenarios

Read each scenario and think about whether it is most connected to growth-mindset or fixed-mindset thinking. Be able to justify your decisions.

<p>James' teacher knows that he likes history, so she asks him to design a project to enter in the district's History Fair. James can't wait to get started because he likes a challenge.</p>	<p>Janelle has always struggled with math. When her teacher starts to introduce a new concept involving geometry, Janelle doesn't listen because she knows that she will never get it. She thinks, "Why listen, I am no good in math."</p>
<p>Jose wants to make the basketball team. He has spent 15 hours each week this summer practicing free throws and playing in pick-up games in his neighborhood. When school starts, the coach allows him to try out, and then tells him that he didn't make the team. Jose is very disappointed and tells his family, "I'm no good at basketball. No matter how hard I work, I will never make the team." His father responds, "I was never any good at it either; it must be genetic."</p>	<p>Tyrone likes to write and has just received peer feedback about his latest story from his writing group. They like his story, but are confused about the ending—some things just didn't make sense. Tyrone asks them a few questions to get more information, and then develops a plan to revise his story to make it better.</p>
<p>Jordan plays the saxophone in the school band. He has always liked music and wants to earn first chair. He comes close, but never seems to make it. He knows that he will need to keep practicing and talks to his music teacher for some tips so that he can improve.</p>	<p>Sheena studied hard for her biology exam and was shocked to learn that her grade was much lower than she expected. Her best friend didn't study at all and got an A. Sheena is angry with her teacher and thinks that the teacher doesn't like her.</p>
<p>Ling enjoys her ballet class, but lately, she has been making lots of mistakes. She doesn't like to mess up in front of others and is afraid that they will think she is clumsy. She tells her mom that she wants to quit ballet.</p>	<p>Mrs. Jackson is monitoring her students during silent reading. She sees that Nathan has stopped reading and has his head on his desk. When Mrs. Jackson asks Nathan to sit up and keep reading, he slams his hand on the book and says, "I hate reading. I am too slow and will never be able to read all of this."</p>

Growth Mindset: Frayer Model

Name: _____ Date: _____

Definition:	Visual Representation:
Growth Mindset	
Examples:	Non-examples:

Growth Mindset Tips from Carol Dweck

- Acknowledge the nuance in the research.
- Everyone has a fixed mindset sometimes.
- Name your fixed mindset.
- Move beyond effort.
- Put mindsets into a greater school-culture context.
- Don't use mindsets to label students (or yourself).

[Education Week Spotlight on Growth Mindset 2016](#)

Understanding Mindsets

When students believe they can get smarter, they understand that effort makes them stronger. Therefore they put in extra time and effort, and that leads to higher achievement.

We can help our students (and ourselves) identify where they may have fixed mindset tendencies so that they can work to become more growth minded. **We are all on a continuum between Fixed and Growth mindsets.**

Fixed mindsets

HOW TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS

Growth Mindset

What to say:

"When you learn how to do a new kind of problem, it grows your math brain!"

"If you catch yourself saying, 'I'm not a math person,' just add the word 'yet' to the end of the sentence."

"That feeling of math being hard is the feeling of your brain growing."

"The point isn't to get it all right away. The point is to grow your understanding step by step. What can you try next?"

Fixed Mindset

What not to say:

"Not everybody is good at math. Just do your best."

"That's OK, maybe math is not one of your strengths."

"Don't worry, you'll get it if you keep trying."*

*If students are using the wrong strategies, their efforts might not work. Plus they may feel particularly inept if their efforts are fruitless.

"Great effort! You tried your best!"*

*Don't accept less than optimal performance from your students.

Reflecting on your mindset

Read the Fixed vs. Growth Mindset table below, and reflect on what you believe about learning and how you approach learning something that is new and challenging.

- What mindset do you believe that you possess? Why?
- Do you relate to beliefs or attributes on both sides?
- Is there something on the Fixed Mindset side that you would like to change?

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
Wants to prove intelligence or talent.	Wants to improve intelligence or talent.
Avoids challenges for fear of failure.	Engages challenges to improve.
Gives up in the face of tough obstacles.	Persists in overcoming obstacles.
Avoids hard work.	Sees hard work as the path to success.
Treats criticism as an attack .	Treats criticism as an opportunity .
Feels threatened by others' success.	Feels inspired by others' success.

Video resources



[The power of yet](#) | Carol S Dweck | TEDxNorrköping

This video is 11:18 minutes in duration.



[Carol Dweck: The Effect of Praise on Mindsets](#)

This video is 3:25 minutes in duration.