



Growth Mindset: A Brief Summary

Defining Mindsets Through Associated Beliefs

Someone with a **fixed mindset** may believe that ...

- Talent and intelligence are fixed
- People have innate abilities or that they are born with all their abilities
- Setbacks are proof that they aren't good enough and therefore may avoid challenges

Someone with a **growth mindset** may believe that ...

- Talent and intelligence can be improved
- Not knowing something or not being good at something is a temporary state
- Setbacks, mistakes, and failures are necessary for learning

Mindset Manifestations in the Classroom

Consider the scenario where a student failed a quiz on Monday. Below are possible manifestations of a student's mindset you may see in class.

A student with a Fixed Mindset	<i>Their response to</i>	A student with a Growth Mindset
Questions why they should study when it's either you have it, or you don't.	<i>Effort</i>	Understands that studying and practice can lead to mastery on concepts.
This failed quiz is proof they don't belong and shouldn't be in the class. And so, they can't succeed.	<i>Failure</i>	Failing the quiz is temporary and if they make some adjustments to study habits better performance is possible.
Sees the instructor's feedback as a personal attack on their intelligence or skills. May ignore the constructive criticism altogether.	<i>Feedback</i>	Reviews the instructor's feedback on quiz to gain insights on how to grow. Applies the constructive criticism to the next assignment.



Strategies to Reframe Our Language

What we believe about intelligence can influence how we interact with ourselves (i.e., inner monologue when we are learning), how we interact with others (i.e., external dialogue of what we show students we believe about learning) and therefore these beliefs can subtly influence how we approach teaching and engaging students.

Fixed Mindset Aligned Dialogue	Growth Mindset Reframing
<p>“That’s okay, maybe science is not one of your strengths”</p> <p><i>Students might hear this and feel that their struggles in science are a permanent (fixed) part of who they are. It can sound like we, the instructors, have already decided what they are capable of, which may lead to them disengaging or stop trying altogether.</i></p>	<p>“If you catch yourself saying ‘I’m not a science person,’ trying adding the word ‘yet’ to the end of the sentence. You aren’t a science person YET!”</p> <p><i>Framing with the power of “yet” can help students reframe their current challenge as part of a longer learning journey. It acknowledges they may not feel confident now, but it also communicates our belief in their ability to grow.</i></p>
<p>“Don’t worry you’ll get it if you keep trying!”</p> <p><i>Although we may say this to be encouraging, students who are already putting in significant effort might feel dismissed or unseen. They may interpret it as a sign that their current work isn’t enough, or that we don’t recognize how hard they’ve been trying.</i></p>	<p>“I see you are putting in a lot of effort, let’s talk about what strategies you are using”</p> <p><i>We start by acknowledging and validating the student’s effort. By shifting the conversating from “try harder” to “let’s explore what’s working” students are invited to a collaborative process. This can help them feel empowered to make informed changes, take ownership of their learning, and see success isn’t just about effort –it’s also about using the right tools and approaches.</i></p>

** Notice we are reframing progress and struggle to support a growth mindset and not reducing our standards of student performance. We can maintain high learning expectations for students while encouraging them to tackle hard challenges and to keep growing by framing both learning and success as a process where progress is made over time.

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