

## Mindset Activities for the Secondary Classroom

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Nov. 4 - ISACS

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## Agenda

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- Introduction.
  - My details
  - How I discovered Mindsets
  - Summary of Dr. Carol Dweck's book
  - Why this feels so important to me
- What I've done with my students
  - Outline of a 40-minute class I ran with 7th graders.
  - Description of a recap lesson
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Other books I'd recommend:

- *Nurture Shock*  
Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman
- *Intelligence and How to Get It*  
Richard E. Nisbett
- *Why Don't Students Like School*  
Daniel T. Willingham
- *Outliers*  
Malcolm Gladwell
- *Talent is Overrated*,  
Geoff Colvin
- Anything by Peter H. Reynolds
- [www.brainology.us](http://www.brainology.us)
- [www.mindsetonline.com](http://www.mindsetonline.com)

## **Math 7 - Mindset Lesson**

Today, we'll take a few moments to discuss some recent research around how particular beliefs that students hold can influence their achievement. This is an idea that I'm really excited about because I think can be quite helpful, so I hope you'll give it some extended thought.

### **Agenda**

- Sorting activity and discussion
- View some videos that will provide examples
- Read an article about the brain
- Discussion and information presentation about different types of mindsets.

You can't really change how intelligent you are.

You can actually get more intelligent over time.

Some people are just born smart.

I haven't mastered this idea yet.

Hard work is how you become successful.

I like to hear about other people's successes, because this inspires me.

I compare my score to those of my friends and if theirs are higher, I feel bad.

When you make a mistake, it means you have a chance to learn something new.

No one in my family is good at \_\_\_\_\_.

It's best to take risks and challenge yourself, even if you're not sure you can do it.

It's best to do things you know you know how to do.

When you make a mistake, it means you're just not good at what you were trying.

If you have to work hard, then you're not very smart.

I'm always being judged and evaluated and I have to try to appear smart.

Intelligence may be partly inherited, but it is also influenced strongly by the environment.

If someone criticizes me, it means they think I'm not good enough.

I'm always finding opportunities to learn something new.

When someone criticizes me, it means they think I can do better.

Here's another way to classify these ideas:

Growth Mindset/  
Learning Goals

- Believe that competence develops over time through practice and effort.
- Choose tasks that maximize opportunities for learning.
- React to easy tasks with feelings of boredom or disappointment.
- View effort as necessary to improve competence.
- More likely to be intrinsically motivated.
- Use learning strategies that promote true comprehension.
- Evaluate own performance in terms of progress made.
- View errors as normal and useful part of learning process; use errors to help improve performance.
- Are satisfied with performance if tried hard, even if efforts result in failure.
- Interpret failure as a sign that they need to exert more effort.
- View teacher as resource and guide to help them learn.

Fixed Mindset/  
Performance Goals

- \*Believe that competence is stable; people either have talent or don't.
- \*Choose tasks that maximize opportunities to demonstrate competence.
- \*React to easy tasks with feelings of pride or relief.
- \*View effort as a sign of low competence.
- \*Are more likely to be externally motivated
- \*Use learning strategies that promote only rote learning.
- \*Evaluate own performance in terms of how they compare to others.
- \*View errors as a sign of failure and incompetence
- \*Are satisfied with their performance only if they succeed.
- \*Interpret failure as a sign of low ability and therefore predictive of future failure.
- \*View teacher as judge and evaluator.

## **Examples**

- Molly and Felicia
- Jim Marshall
- Guess Who
- Embracing failure
- Business School

## Please Discuss

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Choose one of the following questions to discuss in small groups:

- What would you hope that students would take away from the lesson so far? Would these activities achieve this goal? Can you think of other ways to convey the ideas?
- How would you modify these ideas for younger or for older students?
- Are there any learning or performance goals that stand out as particularly significant to you?

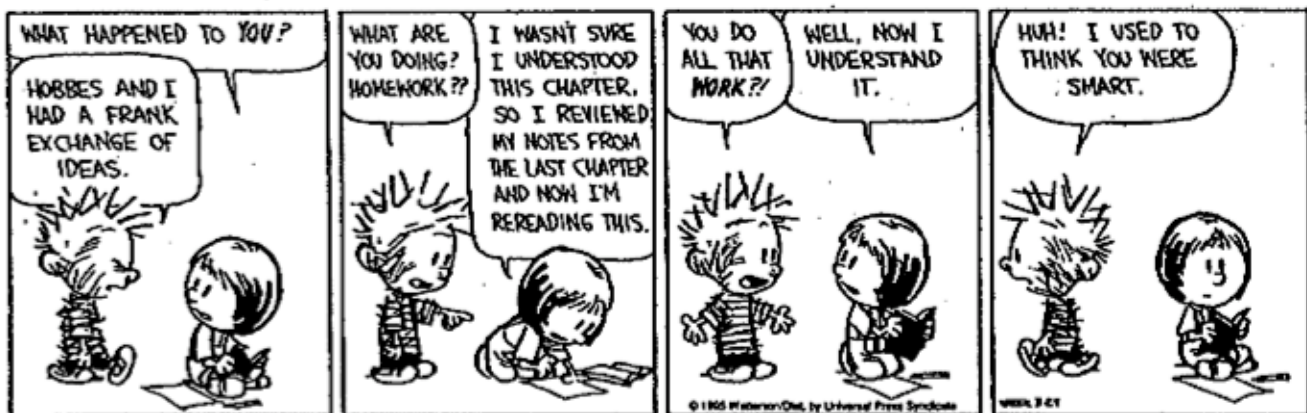
**A few comments summarizing Dr. Carol Dweck's research :**

- A growth mindset is critical to adopting learning-oriented behavior.
- Beliefs held by students when they begin 7th grade have a strong influence on their achievement over time.
- Students who believe that effort matters respond with more positive, sophisticated strategies and their achievement has an upward trajectory.
- The brain is much more malleable than previously thought.
- Learning causes substantial changes in the brain throughout life.

Here's a quote from a 7th grader in Dr. Dweck's study, illustrating a growth mindset:

" I think intelligence is something you have to work for... it isn't just given to you... Most kids, if they're not sure of an answer, will not raise their hand to answer the question. But what I usually do is raise my hand, because if I'm wrong, then my mistake will be corrected. Or I will raise my hand and say, 'How would this be solved?' or 'I don't get this. Can you help me?' Just by doing that, I'm increasing my intelligence."

And, here's a succinct example of someone with a fixed mindset:



CALVIN AND HOBBS © 1995 WATTERSON.



2. How would you summarize what is meant in this research we've been discussing by "Growth Mindset" and "Fixed Mindset"?

a. Can you think of an example of a time when you have acted with a growth mindset? At school, in your sports or hobbies, with your family.....

b. Can you think of an example of a time when you have acted with a fixed mindset? ? At school, in your sports or hobbies, with your family....

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## What I've Learned:

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From my daughter:

- Value the struggles
- Every child is an individual

From my students - some near-consensus on a few things:

- They really feel that at least at times, performance goals are helpful/ motivating.
- They insist that it's not that they're happy with easy tasks b/c of a fixed mindset, but b/c they are just lazy sometimes and don't always want to work really hard.
- They do not like the idea of being told all the time, "You must have tried so hard."
- "This is all well and good, Mrs. C., but it's kinda tough because my mom and dad have a fixed mindset and certainly don't look at my bad test grade as an opportunity for learning."

## What I've Learned:

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From Dr. Dweck's talk:

- People can have different mindsets in different areas.
- The most damaging belief is that smart = achievement without effort.
- I asked about the "just try harder" message with a worry about over-pressuring; she replied the message is not "just try harder," it's "value the learning."
- Study: Subject's level of attention was measured while taking a quiz... interesting results!
- Successful students manage their time, their motivation, and their response to disappointing grades.
- It's not just effort praise, it's process praise - praise strategy use, choosing difficult tasks, learning, improving, persistence despite setbacks... any part of the process.

Small group discussion/ brainstorming/ sharing of ideas.

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Please consider these topics of discussion:

- 1) Additional ideas for activities to discuss Mindsets directly in the classroom.
- 2) Ways to target specific individuals you identify as needing a Mindset adjustment.
- 3) Ways to weave a Growth Mindset into classroom policies and procedures.
- 4) Ideas about how to share this message with the larger community at your school - parents, other teachers, counselors, etc.

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**THANK YOU!**