

Instilling a Growth Mindset in Students

Research shows that when students have a growth mindset, they are more likely to be successful in all classes. According to Carol Dweck (2012), “A growth mindset is when students understand that their abilities can be developed through effort.” Students have a growth mindset when they believe that their knowledge, abilities, and performances can be improved through hard work, persistence, and productive time on task. Students have a fixed mindset if they believe that their intelligence and talent are unchanging. Students with a fixed mindset will often give up when faced with challenges or obstacles.

One way to help instill a growth mindset in your students is to make sure you’re praising the learning process, rather than the final answers. See the table below for ideas on the types of things to say (or not to say)!

Promoting a Growth Mindset – Say it!	Promoting a Fixed Mindset – Don’t Say it!
“Your efforts are really paying off – that last submission showed a deeper understanding of the concept.”	“You’re so smart!”
“Every mistake you make helps to create connections in your brain so that if you keep working, you’ll get where you need to be.”	“Ooh, that’s not correct. Anyone else?”
“I like this strategy. Can you share with all of us?”	“Great answer.” (It’s fine to acknowledge correctness or not, but don’t stop there - help students examine their thinking.)
“This is an exciting challenge. I know that you can all do this but it may take a while.”	“This is really hard.”