

5-2018

The Importance of Introducing Growth Mindset to Childcare Professionals

Jenn Hall

California State University, Monterey Bay, jehall@csumb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all



Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education Commons](#), and the [Early Childhood Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hall, Jenn, "The Importance of Introducing Growth Mindset to Childcare Professionals" (2018). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 255.

https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/255

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Capstone Projects and Master's Theses at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

Jennifer Hall

The Importance of Growth Mindset for Childcare Professionals

A Capstone Project for the Human Development & Family Studies Major

California State University, Monterey Bay

Spring 2018

Introduction

In this day and age, many children are guided through school by instructors and leaders which evaluate their capabilities. This guidance can include phrases such as, “you draw so well!” or “you’re really good at ____”. The use of evaluative comments is a dilemma because it could potentially sort children into different ability groups, which could cause children to feel down on themselves when put in such situations.

Early care and education teachers use praise often with young children. However, many teachers may not realize that this praise is evaluative and may make children think their abilities are fixed and cannot be developed with effort. To address this issue, I plan to provide a training opportunity for the center staff at KinderCare Learning Center at the Monterey Presidio on the topic of growth mindset. This training will include a PowerPoint presentation from the Transforming Education website, which is a free mindset resource with trainings for educators and students.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Psychologist Carol S. Dweck developed the concept of mindset, and defines it as: a “self-perception or ‘self-theory’ that people hold about themselves” (Dweck, 2017). Her research has shown that the view individuals adopts for themselves profoundly affects the way they lead their lives. Having a growth mindset is believing that any abilities can improve with hard work and determination. An example of this is believing that with practice and patience, individuals have the ability to improve whatever it is they set their minds on. For example, if Susie is currently performing poorly in her math class, she believes that she would benefit from trying a different approach and can do much better. The fixed mindset, however, is the opposite. If individuals have only a certain amount of intelligence, a certain personality, and a certain

moral character, they believe that they have to prove to others that they have healthy doses of such traits. These individuals believe that their qualities are carved in stone and cannot be improved upon, and thus creates an urgency to prove themselves over and over again (Dweck 2007). As stated by Dweck (2007), when an individual believes that their capabilities are as good as they're going to get, the person then feels as though they have to constantly prove themselves. According to Bostwick (2017), growth mindset is defined as the degree to which students believe that their intelligence, skills and ability are malleable. These individuals also believe that change occurs through effort (Dweck 2007), and that performance is a reflection of their current and not absolute ability (Hong et al 1999).

According to Laurie Elish-Piper (2014), growth mindset is a key component when it comes to developing “grit” (perseverance and passion for long-term goals). With growth mindset, an individual believes that the ability to learn is not fixed, and such ability is able to be changed due to effort. Elish-Piper also states that it is possible for families to help children develop a growth mindset at home, and that doing so doesn't require knowledge of a certain subject such as science or algebra, a college degree, or even fluency in English. It only requires that families model, encourage and reinforce growth mindset. When doing so, it is believed that children will start to internalize such ideas as well as to incorporate them into they approach their schoolwork and life goals.

In order to help foster the development of growth mindset in children, parents are encouraged to remind children of a time they learned something new that seemed to be challenging. These experiences can vary from learning to swim, riding a bike without training wheels, or memorizing multiplication tables, as well as discussing how “getting good” at something often requires hard work, time, and effort. It is also important for parents to talk with

children about how making mistakes is okay, practicing and sticking to the task at hand. This essentially will aide in the long run when young individuals are learning new tasks, skills and/or content. For example: using phrases such as “this is hard, but if you stick with it, you will get better”. Parents and families can also support their children by assisting them and embracing their feelings of frustration as well as modeling resilience. Elish-Piper (2014) concluded that, “by giving children & their families insights into the important attributes of growth mindset, we can increase the likelihood of learning, accomplishment, and success for all children” (Elish-Piper, 2014, p.14).

It is believed that introducing growth mindset to parents and teachers could be helpful to their students in order to provide a more positive outlook on learning, as well as self-confidence. Bostwick also mentions that students who use a growth mindset often tend to be less susceptible to “self-handicapping,” and report higher levels of academic engagement and achievement.

From a theoretical perspective, early childhood educators may benefit from training on mindset. Erik Erikson’s seventh stage of development, known as generativity vs stagnation, is when an individual's’ main concerns are their career and family and tend to play the role of always being “in charge.” Erikson's definition of Generativity is an adult’s ability to look past caring for only oneself in life and learn to put the well-being of the next generation ahead of theirs (Passini & Mortelli, 2015). This theory relates to growth mindset and childcare professionals in the essence that they are there to care for and teach the children in their care setting. It must be considered that one may not necessarily have offspring in order to achieve generativity. Success in this phase usually depends upon an individual’s effort to give something for the betterment of many (Morselli and Passini 2015).

Consideration of Diversity

Dweck (2014) has conducted various experimental studies with racially, ethnically, and economically diverse students which shows that a central factor in resilience has to do with a student's mindset about intelligence.

After considering the information found, I believe that teaching growth mindset to early educators as well as parents is appropriate as it can foster positive development in the children they are working with. Also, I believe that informing people on the use of growth mindset could apply across diverse groups as the results found in these studies has not proved to vary by different race, gender, or ethnicity. Growth mindset has also been used on a variety of different ages which ranges from early childhood to high-school age children.

Bostwick, Collie, Durksen and Martin (2017) in Australia found that a students' growth mindset as well as self and task based goals were indicators of a type of "underlying" growth orientation. This growth orientation was positively related with academic engagement as well as achievement in mathematics. It was also mentioned that such growth orientation has implications in which can promote positive outcomes throughout high school as well as higher education.

During this research I will be offering training to educators of all age groups at KinderCare Learning Center. All of the participants are women, with their ages varying from 23-56. The children vary from one to six years of age. It is assumed that younger children will show little response to growth mindset phrases in comparison to the older children age's three to six.

Method

The method used for this project will involve a one day staff training at KinderCare Learning Center where several team meetings will take place. I will be going into each program for about 30-40 minutes during a scheduled time in order to have the opportunity to speak with

the participants without distractions. It is the intent to introduce the concept of growth mindset to these early educators through a PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix C), as well as to encourage them to implement it in their classrooms.

About a week after the initial meeting with each preschool program, I will be conducting check-in meetings. During these meetings I will be asking the participants if they felt they learned anything from the first meeting, and if they would incorporate the concept of using growth mindset with the children in their care. Handouts will also be distributed in which will have growth and fixed statements, participants will be required to indicate the mindset of the statements (fixed vs. growth; see Appendix B).

After the meeting, participants will also be given a survey in which they will be provided a series of statements, and asked to convert them into a growth mindset sentence of their own. Participants will also be encouraged to reflect on a personal past occurrence in which growth mindset was used. These surveys can be found in the appendices.

Results

Upon introducing the staff at KinderCare to the concepts of mindset, showing a PowerPoint on from Stanford University, participating in classroom observations and conducting one-on-one meetings with staff a week after the presentation, it was concluded that all learning outcomes for this project were met.

Learning outcome one was that participants would identify growth mindset statements in contrast to fixed mindset statements on their own. They met this outcome by completing a worksheet (Appendix B) after the introductory presentation on mindset. Out of the participants, 100% of them correctly named the growth mindset statements as well as creating some statements of their own that reflected the concepts. Some growth mindset statements they created

included, “I failed, but I know if I try harder next time I will do better”, “I’m not very good at riding a bike, but I know that if I practice I will get the hang of it eventually”, and “If I work hard at learning Spanish I will improve over time.”

Participants also created their own fixed mindset statements. These included phrases such as “Math is hard for me and it always will be,” “I will never be able to sew my own clothing,” and “I just can’t learn a new language.” Learning outcome 1 was met.

For learning outcome 2, the goal was that participants would use growth mindset phrases while teaching in their classrooms after the initial presentation. After doing classroom observations, it was found that only about 50% of them used growth mindset phrases while being observed. One of the participants who works with infants and toddlers was observed telling a child who seemed to get frustrated that the child could not walk very well and would cry each time he or she fell down, to which the caregivers said “ I know it’s hard to walk right now, but if you keep practicing, you’ll get better.” In another classroom, a child was overheard saying to a friend, “I’m just not good at drawing cats,” and a teacher nearby then walked over and mentioned, “I’m sure you’ll get much better if you keep drawing them.” During these observations, it was determined that by the educator’s uses of such statements that relate to growth mindset in their classroom environment, Learning outcome 2 was met.

Learning outcome 3 was for participants to evaluate their own use of growth mindset. Participants met this by completing a self-evaluation (Appendix D) worksheet a week after the initial PowerPoint presentation and the evaluation of their classroom observations. The evaluation included questions to be answered in a true/false format and contained questions such as, “I feel like I have a clear understanding of the mindsets” and “I have used a growth mindset

statement in my classroom in the past 7 days". Upon completion of the self-evaluation, all answers were collected.

After gathering the results from the self-evaluations, it was determined that 100% of the participants stated that they felt as though they had a clear understanding of the different mindsets. Additionally, 50 percent of the participants stated that they were curious to learn more about the subject, and were interested in doing research of their own. For more results, see Appendix A.

Discussion

Providing informative and clear information on the mindsets has the ability to give early childhood educators learning tools for their classroom to facilitate learning in a positive way. Dweck's(2007) research has found that children who are taught with a growth mindset approach have demonstrated higher GPA's, show more interest and effort in learning (even when presented with a difficult task or subject), and have a lower drop-out rate. Numerous research has also proven that the first five years of life is when a child's brain is developing most rapidly and absorbing information. Additionally, early educators are traditionally taught to teach children about diversity, social interactions and basic skills. This demonstrates a need for this topic to be taught when considering the benefits demonstrated by elementary through high school students who have been taught using growth mindset. Perhaps if this approach was being implemented with younger children, there may be less occurrences of bullying as well as self-confidence issues. The possibilities are endless.

It is a hopeful wish that this teaching approach will be incorporated and implemented throughout early childhood education settings in the years to come.

Appendix A



Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset

Name: _____ How long have you been working with children? _____

Out of the following statements, please identify whether they are Growth Mindset or Fixed Mindset.

- 1.) Wow, you did really great on that. You must have worked really hard. _____
- 2.) You're really good at drawing, you were probably born with that talent. _____
- 3.) I'm not doing so well in science, but if I practice I know it will get it eventually. _____
- 4.) "I just can't learn math". _____
- 5.) A person is born with a certain amount of intelligence and that's all. _____
- 6.) A person's intelligence can be developed through hard work and effort. _____

7.) Write a statement of your own that includes the concept of growth mindset

8.) Write a statement of your own that includes the concept of fixed mindset

Appendix C

Growth Mindset

A powerful concept, with a strong evidence base

© 2015 by Transforming Education

Two Mindsets: Fixed vs. Growth

- Students with a **fixed mindset** believe that their own intelligence and talent are innate traits that don't change
- Students with a **growth mindset** believe that ability can change as the result of effort, perseverance, and practice
 - Mindset affects all students regardless of achievement level
- Differences in mindset can lead to achievement gaps in grades, test scores, class behavior, and other student outcomes that last for years

transforming education 7

What Do These Mindsets Look Like?

Fixed Mindset "I just can't learn math, I'm not good at it"	Growth Mindset "Math is hard, but if I keep trying, I can get better at it"
Believe intelligence is something you're born with...or not	Believe intelligence is the result of effort and continued work
Desire to look smart, to avoid looking dumb	Desire to learn, even if it takes effort
Tend to see challenges as threatening	Tend to embrace challenges as fun and exciting
Tend to give up when things get hard	Tend to persist in the face of setbacks
Ignore criticism	Learn from criticism
Feel threatened when others are successful	Find inspiration and lessons in others' successes
See the path to success as something out of their control	See their own effort as the path to success

transforming education 8

Growth Mindset

- The two videos we're about to see relate to **growth mindset**
 - Some of the stories you told each other may relate to it too
- Many teachers encourage growth mindset in their students without putting a label on it
- Making it explicit can be a powerful tool to improve student outcomes

transforming education 9

Teri's Story

A challenge the 10th-grader struggled with in school

© 2015 by Transforming Education

Video_1_Teri_Student_Voice.mp4

A Brief Look at Teri's Growth

- Let's quickly identify a few things you saw or heard that related to growth mindsets.
 - What kind of mindset did Teri have at the beginning of the video?
 - What resonated with you in the video?
 - What lessons did you take away from it?

Growth Mindset Matters

- Studies have shown that students with a growth mindset
 - o Are more motivated and engaged, even when work is challenging
 - o Are more likely to review or revise their work
 - o Score better on math and verbal standardized tests
 - o Fail fewer classes and have higher GPAs
 - o Are more likely to persist in high school and college

Sources: Aronson, J., Fried, C. B., & Dool, C. (2002). Reducing the effects of stereotype threat on African American college students by shaping theories of intelligence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38(2), 113-125. Blackwell, L. S., Tozsinewski, K. H., & Dweck, C. S. (2007). Implicit theories of intelligence predict achievement across an adolescent transition: A longitudinal study and an intervention. *Child Development*, 78(1), 246-263. Dweck, C. S., Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. (2011). Academic tenacity. White paper prepared for the Gates Foundation. Seattle, WA.; Yeager, D. S., Walton, G., & Cohen, G. L. (2013). Addressing achievement gaps with psychological interventions. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 94, 62-66.

Encouraging a Growth Mindset

The power of praise

video_2_the_impact_of_praise.mp4

What Can a Teacher Do?

Sample growth mindset practices developed by educators

Praise Effort Over Results



Praise effort and process, not results: "You did great on that. You must have worked really hard."

Nurture a culture that tolerates risk: "We value taking on tough challenges more than we value easy success."

Praise Effort Over Results

Instead of displaying only finished student work, post work in progress or drafts so students can see how work evolves with effort and feedback.



Think of the Brain as Something That Grows



Work with your students to create posters or other reminders that the brain, like a muscle, grows and gets stronger with effort.

Encourage Students to Share Advice

Have students write tweets, blog posts, or letters giving advice to a struggling student who doesn't think he is smart enough to succeed.



Frame Mistakes as Part of the Learning Process



When introducing new material or setting a learning goal, say something like:

"After you do this lesson, I'm going to ask each of you to share a mistake you made while doing your work, because mistakes can help us learn."

Specifically Reward Effort and Process

Create a grading rubric focusing on effort or process in addition to one focusing on outcomes.



Communicate High Expectations



As part of written feedback to students (especially those who are underperforming), explicitly communicate high expectations:

"I'm giving you these comments because I have high standards, and I know that you can meet them."

Growth Mindset in Your Classroom

What can **you** do quickly and easily?

Please get a copy of the Introduction to Growth Mindset handout

Working Toward a Growth Mindset Classroom

- Discuss the following questions with a partner or in small teams:

If you decided to do more to encourage growth mindset among your students

- Which of the practices we just discussed would you want to try in your classroom? Why did you choose this activity?
- How would you put it in place or get started?
- What will your immediate next steps be?
- What's something that's not on this list you would do? Why?

The Introduction to Growth Mindset handout lists all the activities we've just seen

Wrapping Up

A few more details to cover

Want to Know More?

Growth Mindset

- [Mindset](#)
- [Even Geniuses Work Hard](#)
- [Students' View of Intelligence Can Help Grades](#)
- ['Growth Mindset' Gaining Traction as School Improvement Strategy](#)
- [The Power of Mistakes: Creating a Risk-Tolerant Culture at Home and School](#)
- [Mindsets and Success](#)
- [Character Lab](#)

Social-Emotional Learning

- [Social-Emotional Learning](#)
- [A National Teacher Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Empower Children and Transform Schools](#)
- [Smart Hearts: Social and Emotional Learning Overview](#)
- [Emotional Intelligence Is the Missing Piece](#)
- [Can Emotional Intelligence Be Taught?](#)
- [The Heart-Brain Connection: The Neuroscience of Social and Emotional Learning](#)

Please note: The links above will only function in "presentation" mode.

Looking for Some Quick Feedback

- Transforming Education is constantly trying to improve the resources we create for educators
- You may have received a link to a very short survey about this session to help us improve it
 - o The survey is also at: TinyURL.com/SELTeacherSurvey
 - o Please share your feedback with us so that we can improve the free tools we create for teachers

Thank You!



Growth Mindset Self-Evaluation

Name: _____

Please indicate whether these statements are true or false

- 1.) I feel like have a clear understanding of the mindsets. _____
- 2.) I have used a growth mindset statement in my classroom within the past 7 days. _____
- 3.) I would like to share my new knowledge of the mindsets with others (friends and/or educators). _____
- 4.) I don't care about mindsets and have no intention on using it in my classroom. _____
- 5.) I am still not sure about growth and fixed mindsets and would like to do some research of my own _____

References

- Bostwick, K. , Collie, R., Durksen, T., & Martin, A. (2017) Students' Growth Mindsets, Goals, and Academic Outcomes in Mathematics. *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* (2017),225 (2), 107– 116
- Dweck, C., Greene, D., & Walton, G. (2016) Using Design Thinking to Improve Interventions: The Case of the Growth Mindset During The Transition to High School *Journal of Educational Psychology* (2016) Vol. 108 374-391
- Dweck, C. S. (2007). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Random House.
- Dweck, C., & Haimovitz, K. (2017) The Origins of Children's Growth and Fixed Mindsets: New Research and a New Proposal. *Child Development*, November/December 2017, Volume 88, Number 6, Pages 1849-1859
- Dweck, C. S., Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2014). Academic Tenacity: Mindsets and Skills that Promote Long-Term Learning. *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*.
- Elish-Piper, L. (2014). Growth Mindset and Grit: building important foundations for literacy learning and success. *Illinois reading council journal* fall 2014, Volume 42, number 4
- Kosterlitz, A. (2015) The four traits of confidence: growth mindset, courage, grit, and self-compassion." *Women Advocate*, Fall 2015, p. 12. *Academic OneFile*, Accessed 20 Nov. 2017.
- Morselli, D., & Passini, S. (2015). Measuring prosocial attitudes for future generations: The

social generativity scale. *Journal of Adult Development*, 22(3), 173-182.