

# TEACHING TODAY'S LEARNERS #4



Got SWAG?

## School with a Growth Mindset

(I wanted to use 'classroom' but CWAG doesn't really work)

### FIXED vs. GROWTH MINDSET

In a **growth mindset**, a learner believes that he or she can grow abilities and intelligence when exhibiting effort. Often students who exhibit a growth mindset take on challenges, learn from feedback and their mistakes, and use a lot of effective strategies to improve and learn. On the other hand, in a **fixed mindset**, a learner believes that his or her creativity, intelligence, and character are all static. Intelligence translates to success, and thus to carry on the sense of “being smart” the learner strives for success and avoids failure at all costs

### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Students who understand that the brain can get smarter, or students who have a growth mindset, do better in school because they have an encouraging perspective on learning. They focus on *improvement* and see effort as a way to build on their abilities. These learners see failure as a natural part of the learning process. In contrast, students who have a fixed mindset tend to focus on *judgment*. They're more concerned with proving that they are smart or hiding when they're not. That means they tend to avoid situations in which they might fail or might have to work very hard. Many studies show that students who have a growth mindset respond differently in challenging situations and tend to find more success in school, jobs, and in life. (adapted from: Mindset Tools)

### IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT EFFORT

A growth mindset isn't *just* about effort. Carol Dweck points out that “perhaps the most common misconception is simply equating the growth mindset with effort.” Certainly, effort is important for students' achievement, but it's not the only thing. Students need to problem solve, try new strategies, and seek input from others when they're stuck. They need this collection of approaches, not just their effort, to truly learn and improve. It is key to remember that effort is a means to an end in the goal of learning.

# 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.



SOURCE: Carol Dweck