

Teaching for a Growth Mindset

(adapted from Liu Sun, 2015)

Avoid Sorting Students

Sorting students into ability groupings can reinforce a fixed mindset. Instead, try to:

- Emphasize high expectations for all students
- Avoid use of “person labels” such as “smart,” or being a “math person”
- Acknowledge different students publicly for excellence (much easier when focus is on learning strategies and process rather than summative performance)

Set Growth Mindset Norm

Teaching students about the malleability of the brain helps them understand the scientific evidence for why it is true that we can all grow our abilities. It is especially important to:

- Teach students that our brains get stronger when we’re challenged
- Emphasize the goal of learning above specific outcomes
- Create environments where intellectual struggle is embraced
- Create opportunities to celebrate and publicly introspect about mistakes

Feedback & Assessment

Opportunities to receive performance feedback are an essential part of improving our abilities and reinforcing a growth mindset. Try to incorporate these strategies:

- Provide praise that focuses on the process rather than correctness or speed
- Ensure praise for trying hard (effort praise) is authentic and warranted. If the student didn’t try hard, they may conclude their success is due to innate ability
- When students are struggling, affirm high standards and provide reassurance that you believe in their ability to succeed
- Provide descriptive feedback that focuses students on improvement opportunities
- Structure assignments so that revisions are allowed (or required) (e.g., 1st draft of essay is not graded)
- Encourage help-seeking and collaboration, but not as a shortcut around struggle

References

Sun, K.L. (2015). *There’s no limit: Mathematics teaching for a growth mindset* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Stanford University, Stanford, CA.