

10 Strategies for Fostering a Growth Mindset in the Classroom

Helping students develop a growth mindset requires deliberate effort from educators, but many of the methods can be easily integrated in existing practices. The following strategies and tips can help educators foster a growth mindset in the classroom:

- 1. Normalize struggle.** Struggle is part of the learning process, and emphasizing and reinforcing that idea helps students react positively when they feel challenged.
- 2. Encourage engagement with challenges.** Portray challenges as fun and exciting, and easy tasks as boring.
- 3. Embrace the word “yet”.** If someone makes the statement “I’m not a math person,” adding a simple qualifier will signal that a process exists for gaining ability. “You’re not a math person *yet*.”
- 4. Tout the value of hard tasks to the brain. Promote** the idea that brains are malleable “muscles” that can be developed. Research on brain plasticity supports the idea of neural growth, and mindset research has shown that believing the brain can grow has a demonstrative effect on behavior and achievement.
- 5. Demonstrate mistakes and celebrate corrections.** Mistakes should be viewed as learning opportunities. Teachers can model this outlook in reactions to their own mistakes and steps they take to correct a mistake.
- 6. Set goals.** Having students set incremental, achievable goals demonstrates the attainability of growth and progress.
- 7. Develop cooperative exercises.** Working together to solve problems emphasizes process and reinforces the importance of getting help and finding solutions. It also deemphasizes individual outcomes.
- 8. Provide challenges.** Part of developing a growth mindset is teaching students to overcome obstacles. A particularly hard math problem or complex writing assignment that stretches their abilities can provide opportunities for growth and further instruction that emphasizes problem-solving.
- 9. Avoid praising intelligence.** This may seem counterintuitive, but praise for “being smart” reinforces the idea that intelligence is a fixed trait. This can be demotivating for the students being praised (“I’m smart; I don’t have to try harder”), as well as for those who don’t not receive the praise (“That student is smart; I’m not”).
- 10. Don’t oversimplify.** “You can do anything!” may feel like harmless encouragement, but if students aren’t put in a position to overcome challenges, they’ll conclude that such statements are empty, and the educator will lose credibility.