

Developing a Growth Mindset Plan & Final Compilation

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Rethinking Growth Mindset: Moving Toward a True Learner's Mindset

The more I study mindset, especially after reading the recent meta-analysis from Case Western Reserve University showing that a growth mindset by itself doesn't significantly change outcomes. And honestly, I'm guilty of this too. I've told kids "you just have to believe you can improve," but the research proves belief alone won't move the needle unless we build the right environment, supports, and opportunities around it (Sisk et al., 2018). So going forward, I'm shifting how I use the growth mindset in my own work with teachers, SPED teams, and students who use AAC devices.

How I'll Modify My Use of Growth Mindset

Instead of treating growth mindset like a magic switch, I'm going to tie it directly to authentic practice, feedback loops, and strategy development. Carol Dweck never meant for growth mindset to be a motivational poster; she stressed that it's about pairing belief with action, effort with strategy, and mistakes with reflection (Dweck, 2006). Now that we know mindset alone doesn't produce measurable gains, my focus will be helping learners build the behaviors that growth mindset requires, not just the language. That means celebrating progress, modeling "try again" thinking, and coaching students through strategic problem-solving rather than just encouraging persistence.

How I Can Help Learners Develop a Growth Mindset

For my students, especially those using AAC devices. I want to normalize productive struggle.

That means:

- giving feedback that is specific

- designing tasks where mistakes are expected and safe
- building in reflection moments (“What did you try? What will you try next?”)
- using AAC modeling to show persistence in communication

Learners won’t magically “become growth mindset people.” They need conditions that support it, which aligns with what we learned in CSLE: change the environment, and the learning changes too.

Other Factors That Must Be Considered

The research tells us that mindset interventions work only when paired with:

- supportive relationships
- high-quality instruction
- strategy coaching
- teacher expectations that communicate belief in the student

Mindset without instructional design and authentic learning opportunities is basically empty calories. So if we want growth mindset to matter, we need to consider the whole system, students' backgrounds, school culture, feedback practices, and whether learners actually have the tools to try again.

Modeling the Message of “Yet”

I firmly believe that students watch what we do more closely than what we say. So modeling “yet” in my own practice matters. If a device isn’t responding, or a student is frustrated, I can model:

- “We don’t have that word yet.”
- “Your message isn’t clear yet, try another button.”
- “We’re still learning this part together.”

This shows that “yet” is not a cute phrase; it’s a way of approaching challenges with patience and strategy.

Growth Mindset, Feedback, Cheating, and Grades

One of the most interesting parts of growth mindset research is how it affects feedback. Students with a growth mindset are more willing to receive corrective feedback because they don’t see it as a judgment of their intelligence (Dweck, 2016). And honestly, this is huge. When feedback stops feeling like failure, cheating becomes less tempting. Students cheat when grades become identity statements; growth mindset reframes grades as data, not definitions.

This also helps limit the constant stress around grades. When students understand learning as a process rather than a scoreboard, they’re less likely to chase points and more likely to chase understanding. And that’s where grit comes in, not as “just push harder,” but as sticking with meaningful goals because the work matters (Duckworth, 2016).

Avoiding Growth Mindset Misuse

We’ve all seen growth mindset be misused

- “Try harder.”
- “You didn’t succeed because you don’t have grit.”
- “Struggling means you’re growing.”

This is how we unintentionally shame kids, especially SPED students. True growth mindset requires scaffolding, differentiation, and psychological safety. If we want to prevent it from becoming a fad, we need to implement it with integrity.

- focus on strategies, not slogans
- connect mindset to real learning tasks
- avoid weaponizing “grit” by ignoring structural barriers

Is Growth Mindset Enough?

Honestly? No. It’s a good foundation, but not the whole house. Growth mindset must sit inside a Learner’s Mindset, which is bigger, deeper, and more about identity. The Learner’s Mindset, asks students to be curious, reflective, self-directed, and engaged in authentic problems. It’s not just “I can grow,” but “I am responsible for my own learning, and I have a say in it.”

Moving Learners Toward a Learner’s Mindset

To help my learners adopt a true Learner’s Mindset, I can:

- use COVA to give genuine choice and ownership
- design CSLE environments that encourage exploration
- promote curiosity over compliance
- use AAC devices in ways that empower and not limit students voice
- model my own learning journey openly

The goal isn't perfect growth; it's continuous growth. And when students see me learning, messing up, adjusting, and trying again, they understand that learning isn't about performance, it's about transformation.

Resources

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House.

Dweck, C. S. (2016). What having a “growth mindset” actually means. *Harvard Business Review*.

Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance*. Scribner.

Sisk, V. F., Burgoyne, A. P., Sun, J., Butler, J. L., & Macnamara, B. N. (2018). To what extent and under which circumstances are growth mindsets important to academic achievement? *Psychological Science*, 29(4), 549–571.