Establishing a Growth Mindset Plan and Embracing the “Yet”

In Carol S. Dweck's book, Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, she discusses the steps for us to reach our full potential. To become lifelong learners and step away from the “fixed” mindset or “false growth” mindset so many of us are in. The first thing we need to do is become self aware. So many of us think we are in a growth mindset but in reality we are in that “false growth” mindset. I need to step back and look at how I am viewing a situation, ask myself which mindset I am in, if I’m not in the “growth” mindset change that before I proceed. As an educator, having a “growth” mindset will help empower our students to develop their abilities, learn to use different strategies, and give them the desire to learn. A “growth” mindset is realizing that everyone is capable of developing their abilities. This includes sports, artistic abilities, educational and personal goals, as well as the business aspect of life. It’s about trying new strategies every time we fail, noticing and embracing our success isn’t just about our effort. It’s having us focus on the actual learning experience, the process of us reaching the other side. We have to grow our talent like little seeds.Our classes are full of reluctant learners set in what we call a “fixed” mindset. Everytime they are met with a difficult situation or problem in life they shut down and run. Some have been scraping by, others falling further and further behind increasing the gaps. They feel trapped in this “groundhog” type of pattern. They feel defeated, they aren’t good enough, they aren’t smart enough, they just aren’t good in that subject. They are stuck in that “fixed” mindset, feeling like they just don’t get it and never will. So why try? What’s the point right? Wrong! They don’t have it “yet”, they will have it if they keep trying. Unfortunately we as educators have had a part to play in instilling that “fixed” mindset into our students. We need to turn things around and help foster a “growth” mindset and “yet” more in our classrooms and discussions.

“Yet”, a word you think to be insignificant but depending on how we use it, it could change everything for our students. When they hit an obstacle in life, which they will so many times, we as educators need to change their mindset from thinking, “I can’t do this” to “I can’t do this YET.” This sets a precedent. We are helping them declare if they continue their journey they will master that skill. That journey might be long and treacherous, but they are claiming that success! No matter how long it takes or how hard it is, they will reach it, they will master it. It is there for the taking, and we are there to help them realize this. This powerful word can help our students rethink and reframe how they see themselves and their abilities. They will come to realize they are capable of great things. It just might be a journey going from “I don’t know this YET” to “OMG I get it!!”

There are steps to embracing our “growth” mindset-the first step is to accept that I have a fixed mindset in certain situations. As I become more self aware I will evaluate each situation before proceeding by making sure that I am in the “growth” mindset. Step

2-What are my triggers? When does my negative Nancy like to creep up and give me all of her unwanted opinions? After figuring out what triggers my “fixed” mindset to come forward I can reevaluate those feelings, know that is not going to be beneficial for anyone, discuss the options and move towards being in the correct mindset. Step 3-give my “fixed” mindset a name-Negative Nancy here we come! Step 4- The journey-now that I have completed all steps I can be aware of my mindset, my triggers and decide how I want to address and confront them. Tell negative Nancy I want to change into a growth mindset and make sure that I don’t let her continue to sway my thoughts. I am bad at reverting back to that “fixed” mindset when I fail. She creeps back in and says,” See, I told you! You can’t do it!” Everytime she comes slithering back into my mind, I’m going to look at myself in the mirror and tell her,”I can’t do it YET” I’m going to prove to her that I can. I am going to make it a mission to look at every setback I encounter as a learning opportunity. A chance to look at it from a different perspective and come up with another strategy. Lock every failure away into the box in my mind labeled “YET”. Now that I know how I am going to sway myself toward embracing a “growth” mindset I can ask myself how to use it to help foster that same mindset into my students on a daily basis. First I need to make sure I am self aware, so that I can acknowledge when I am in each mindset. I need to make sure that when I am teaching I am teaching for concrete understanding of concepts. I am going to set a personal goal with my students, although I have high standards and expect them to do their best to reach those standards, we will also work together to master each skill we encounter. I am going to build and help them develop their potential. When we are in a lesson and I have a student who can’t quite grasp the concept or is completely lost I am going to make sure that I am only concerned with them achieving understanding of that concept. I am going to make sure that I am not worrying them about the grade they are going to make. We are going to focus on our strategies and the rest will come. I will ask them to show me where they are at and what they have done already. Let them know I want them to show me their process so that I can understand how they got there and their thinking process. If I understand how they got where they are I can help them come up with a way to move in the correct direction. We will work things out and figure out the next step together. My students will know that I am there to foster their love of learning. I will focus on the process, strategies, and effort together as a whole when I praise my students. I can’t tell you how many times I have slipped back into that “fixed” mindset and told my students, “Wow! You are so talented!” “You are so smart, you have passed so many math facts.” When we praise our students, which we should, we need to make sure that we are in the right “growth” mindset. We need to praise them for the process, how many ways they did something before they had mastered it. Praise those strategies and choices they made to get to that “yet”. If they haven’t quite gotten there yet we need to give them that constructive criticism. We are all guilty of trying to build them up and not give them any negative criticism or feedback that we might possibly be doing more

harm than good. If they are exposed to that constructive criticism at a younger age it will help them grow as a person. They will learn how to take negative feedback and turn it around to fuel their desire to try it a different way.

This new mindset will help me foster a growth mindset into my students by modeling it. They will see me make mistakes and fail, and we will discuss how I can turn these mistakes into a lesson. What did I learn, and how can I do it differently next time to get a different result? Every challenge is an opportunity for growth, all students can learn, they just learn differently." I am going to view dispositions as "muscles", some are stronger than others." (Dweck, 2019) The more we use those muscles the bigger they will grow and the more we will learn.

Since the "growth" mindset is a continuous journey I will continue to try and stay in the "growth" mindset every day. I will look at different instances that will arise throughout the day and make a mental note of which mindset I am in and try to make sure that I am self aware with my words as I move along. I will continue to foster that mindset daily in my classroom to help instill the "growth" mindset in my students. I plan to continue to look back on the book Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol S. Dweck. Watch more Ted Talks like: The Power of belief- Mindset and Success, Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard by Chip Heath & Dan Heath, How to Enhance Performance & Learning by Applying a Growth Mindset-Huberman Lab Podcast and other youtube videos I find along the way. This will not only help develop my growth mindset but my students as well.

References

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