

A Blog for Busy Teachers

FREE LANGUAGE-BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES

Specific examples of praise to reflect a growth mindset

Carol Dweck's research on growth mindset supports the powerful data collected by Jo Boaler. Specifically, in an article Dweck authored titled "[The Secret to Raising Smart Kids](#)" (2015), Dweck provides clear examples for how to use a **growth mindset** to praise a student's work. She urges educators to place the focus on the student's effort and process rather than if the work is correct or incorrect.

Structuring feedback to reflect a **growth mindset** (the belief that ability and intelligence are changeable) vs. a **fixed mindset** (the belief that one cannot change their ability) can help students understand that proficiency in a subject, such as math, is possible and not a result of innate talent. In reflecting on how this can be applied to a math class, below are some suggestions of example phrases for both teachers and students to use that support a growth mindset vs. a fixed mindset.

Phrases for **teachers** to use that inspire a math growth mindset:

Fixed Mindset: Instead of saying...	Growth Mindset: Say this...
Great job! You are so good at math; it must be easy for you.	You did a great job on this math problem. I really like how you went back and analyzed your work when you got stuck and then moved forward.
All of your answers were right; great work!	When you were working on this problem, you utilized multiple different strategies to come to the answer. Great work.
You need to go back and fix your mistakes to raise your grade from failing.	Let's use this test as an opportunity to look at why certain problems are confusing to you and help you recognize which strategies to use next time.



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Phrases for **students** to use that inspire a math growth mindset:

Fixed Mindset: Instead of saying...	Growth Mindset: Say this...
Division is hard.	I am going to figure out what I don't understand about division and ask for help.
I don't get math.	I am going to train my brain to understand math.
I always fail math tests.	I am going to use some of the strategies that I have learned to help me be better prepared next time.

For more examples, please refer to the articles and references listed below.

How Does This Connect to Landmark's Teaching Principles™?

Explicitly teaching mathematical mindsets is a foundation for creating a safe and supportive learning environment where students can feel successful in math, as mathematical mindsets encourage students to make mistakes and embrace the idea that there are multiple ways to solve problems. This concept is directly related to Teaching Principle #1: Provide Opportunities for Success. When teachers Provide Opportunities for Success, they are grounding their instruction in the belief that students need the chance to build confidence and self-esteem. Partnering an approach to teaching mathematical mindsets with Teaching Principle #1 can help reduce math anxiety and improve self-esteem in math classes.

References:

Boaler, J., & Dweck, C. S. (2016). *Mathematical mindsets: Unleashing students potential through creative math, inspiring messages and innovative teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Brand.

Boaler, J. (2018, December 14). Developing Mathematical Mindsets. Retrieved July 5, 2019, from <https://www.aft.org/ae/winter2018-2019/boaler>

Dweck, C. S. (2015, January 01). The Secret to Raising Smart Kids. Retrieved July 5, 2019, from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-secret-to-raising-smart-kids1/?redirect=1>

