

There is evidence that demonstrates the importance of growth mindsets for students and the role of the teacher in promoting growth mindsets in their students. But research also indicates that the mindset of the teacher influences the mindsets of students in their class. Try this quiz to reflect upon which mindset you generally employ in regard to your teaching.

1. Do you, or others you know, have a natural ability for teaching?

- a) Yes, I think that some people are born to be teachers
- b) No, I think good teaching develops with time and experience

2. How often do you execute a lesson perfectly as planned?

- a) Most of the time
- b) Sometimes
- c) Rarely - there are always unexpected contingencies that I need to respond to, or adaptations I need to make. Sometimes students just don't get it and I need to think again.

3. How do you organise your teaching to match students' ability?

- a) I plan challenging and diverse learning tasks for all my students and provide appropriate support and scaffolding to ensure they all achieve success.
- b) I have ability groupings which remain pretty constant over the term. I know my students' abilities and they don't tend to change.

4. Which of these do you prioritise in assessing student learning?

- a) Performance on standardised assessments only.
- b) The processes used by students to achieve success in their learning, including the use of knowledge, strategies, focus, and attitudes towards persevering and taking up challenges.

5. What do you do when a student makes a mistake or experiences difficulty?

- a) I give them the answer if they start to get embarrassed.
- b) I normalise the mistake or difficulty as an important part of learning, and use it to help the student's growing understanding and mastery of the material.

6. How do you feel when a student has trouble learning something?

- a) I feel incompetent, I feel I am not a good teacher.
- b) I feel challenged. I know I need to increase my understanding about this student, this difficulty, and the topic I am teaching in order to improve my teaching.
- c) I feel exasperated. I blame the previous year's teacher, or the parents.
- d) I feel resigned. Obviously this work is beyond this student. I will take them back down a level.

7. What is your response when a colleague offers to come and observe your lesson?

- a) Great! An opportunity for some constructive feedback. I think I will ask him/her to focus on the quality of my feedback.
- b) No thanks. I'm scared I'll get negative feedback.
- c) No thanks. I don't have any problems.
- d) Here's a chance to prove myself as a good teacher. I'll teach that lesson on probability as I know that is pretty easy for the students so I'm unlikely to experience any problems.

8. How do you respond to challenges in your career?

- a) I feel anxious and shy away from them.
- b) I feel positive and embrace the opportunity.

9. When students don't pay attention or don't follow your directions, do you:

- a) Feel incompetent and defensive?
- b) Blame the students or the programme requirements?
- c) Wonder whether students have understood what you are teaching or what you could do to improve students' motivation?

10. When a colleague makes suggestions for your teaching, do you:

- a) Feel criticised and angry?
- b) Feel defeated and look for an excuse?
- c) Listen with interest, and ask questions?
- d) Seek the next opportunity to try these out?

11. How do you feel when it seems as if a colleague is better than you at something?

- a) I feel jealous, but console myself that there are other things I can do better than him/her.
- b) I feel threatened, and think about how I can prove myself competent.
- c) I feel eager to learn, and wonder if this teacher might engage in a mentoring relationship with me.

12. How do you feel about collaborative teaching?

- a) I'd rather go it alone. I have enough teaching talent to carry me forth.
- b) I have got my teaching all organised and working well. I don't want to have to adjust anything.
- c) I'd jump at the chance. Think what I could learn about teaching and my students from watching someone else teach them.

What your answers reveal:

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| 1 a) Fixed mindset; b) Growth mindset | 7 a) Growth mindset; b) c) d) Fixed mindset |
| 2 a) b) Fixed mindset; c) Growth mindset | 8 a) Fixed mindset; b) Growth mindset |
| 3 a) Growth mindset; b) Fixed mindset | 9 a) b) Fixed mindset; c) Growth mindset |
| 4 a) Fixed mindset; b) Growth mindset | 10 a) b) Fixed mindset; c) d) Growth mindset |
| 5 a) Fixed mindset; b) Growth mindset | 11 a) b) Fixed mindset; c) Growth mindset |
| 6 a) Fixed mindset; b) Growth mindset;
c) d) Fixed mindset | 12 a) b) Fixed mindset; c) Growth mindset |

Which mindset are you?

If you identify fixed mindset tendencies for yourself, this is okay and an important first step towards a growth mindset. When you can identify and accept your tendencies towards fixed mindset thoughts, you can work through them and try to replace them with growth mindset beliefs.

Do you need to develop a growth mindset for yourself?

Listen to your thoughts and identify when you evaluate or categorise student ability, make a hasty judgement that a student has low ability, or provide comfort to such a student about his or her low ability (a fixed mindset view which leads to lower expectations on the part of the student). Counter that with growth mindset thoughts: 'What can I do to uncover this student's motivation?', or 'what is preventing this student from learning?' Rather than determining that some children can't learn and finding a reason for that, determine to find a way to help them learn. If you don't hold a growth mindset (yet) then work on developing your own growth mindset before teaching it to your students. It is possible to hold a fixed mindset alongside a growth mindset - a permanent growth mindset would be artificial. What matters is to accept, recognise, and understand the fixed mindset without being constrained by it. Also, try considering your teaching ability from a growth mindset. Don't expect an error-free lesson to define your ability as a teacher. Perhaps you haven't yet figured out how to support a particular group of students or how to best teach a difficult unit, but maybe other teachers have experience and can share their strategies with you. These are the situations (and the students) who give you a chance to become a better teacher. Give yourself time to experiment and find out what works. Set yourself reasonable and achievable goals, and engage in frequent reflection. Believe that the challenges you experience in teaching are great opportunities for you to learn about and improve your teaching.

References

- Dweck, C. (2014). Teachers' mindsets: 'Every student has something to teach me'. *Educational Horizons*, 93(2), 10-15.
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