

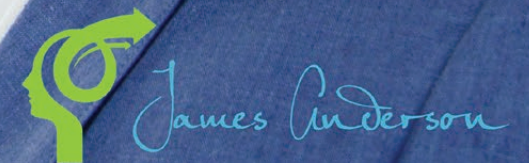
The Mindset CONTINUUM

How to implement Growth Mindsets
and increase Learner Agency

JAMES ANDERSON

Speaker | Author | Educator

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CONTINUUM

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ABOUT JAMES ANDERSON

James Anderson is an Australian-based international speaker, author and educator who is passionate about helping fellow educators develop students as better learners.



Originally a teacher and school leader, for the past 20 years, James has been working with schools to make classrooms more thoughtful places. He challenges teachers to think deeply about their own Mindsets and how their beliefs are communicated to students in often subtle and unintended ways.

James's work combines Growth Mindset with Habits of Mind and Practice to create Learning Agility. He puts the growth back into Growth Mindset! And, through creating and describing the Mindset Continuum, he provides the cornerstone for effective Growth Mindset interventions.

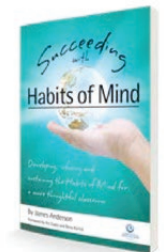
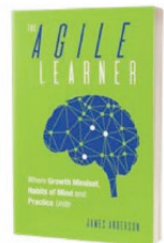
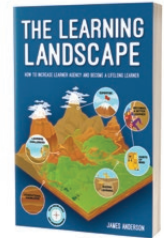
James values the relationships he builds with the schools and teachers he works with, providing the 'follow-through' that's so often lacking in teacher professional development. His speaking, workshops and online resources provide not only the deep understandings required to do this work meaningfully, but

also the tools and ongoing support needed to sustain it in your school and make a real difference to student learning outcomes.

James will show you how to create your school-based Growth Mindset Style Guide to ensure your school consistently 'nudges' all students towards an increasingly growth-oriented Mindset.

James is a Certified Speaking Professional and regularly speaks at conferences around the world. His previous publications include *Succeeding with Habits of Mind*, *The Agile Learner* and *The Learning Landscape*, as well as a host of e-books and other teacher resources. His online course, 'Transforming Teaching and Learning with Growth Mindsets,' supports thousands of educators in schools around the world. He is an international affiliate of Art Costa and Bena Kallick's Institute for Habits of Mind and the creator of www.habitsofmind.org.

James can be contacted for speaking and consultancy work at www.jamesanderson.com.au.



INDEX

ABOUT JAMES ANDERSON	3
INTRODUCTION TO THE MINDSET CONTINUUM	6
MINDSETS DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, BUT OUR INTERVENTIONS AREN'T	8
THE FALSE MINDSET AND WHY IT CAN'T BE IGNORED	13
HOW WE'VE BEEN SETTING TEACHERS UP TO FAIL	17
THE LEARNED GROWTH MINDSET	21
THE AUTHENTIC GROWTH MINDSET AND MINDSET MOVERS	25
NURTURING AUTHENTIC GROWTH MINDSETS WITH POSITIVE MINDSET MOVERS	29
BELIEFS. ACTIONS. EXPERIENCES.	35
4 PATHWAYS TO THE FIXED MINDSET	38
SCHOOL-WIDE APPROACHES TO CHANGING MINDSETS THAT WORK	42
WHY CHANGE YOUR MINDSET? TO HELP DEVELOP BETTER LEARNERS	49
ASSESSING FOR LEARNER AGENCY	53
WHERE TO FROM HERE? HOW CAN I HELP YOU?	60

INTRODUCTION TO THE MINDSET CONTINUUM

The Mindset Continuum is a reflection of psychologist Carol Dweck's research and the real world.

In her landmark best-selling book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Dweck describes someone as having a Growth Mindset when they believe their most basic characteristics, such as their talents, abilities and intelligence, can be developed through dedication and hard work. On the other hand, people with a Fixed Mindset believe these abilities are fixed traits.¹

Defining Mindset as being either fixed or growth allows us to easily compare and contrast these different belief systems. Importantly, it enables us to highlight the starkly different behaviours associated with each set of beliefs. For example, people with a Fixed Mindset give up easily, while those with a Growth Mindset are more likely to persist. Juxtaposing Fixed and Growth Mindsets has become the standard way of describing people's Mindset.

However, in the messy world of schools and classrooms, people are not so neatly categorised into fixed or growth. Most people see their capacity to develop their abilities as limited – *to a degree*. Rather than falling into one of two categories, most people's beliefs are more accurately described as falling somewhere along a continuum.

The Mindset Continuum is a reflection of Dweck's research. One of Dweck's standard research tools asks participants to rate how strongly they agree or disagree with statements like: 'No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it a good deal.' And, 'When I work hard, it makes me feel as though I'm not very smart.' Dweck uses the results to describe a participant's Mindset on a continuum, with several degrees of fixed and growth.

I have created the Mindset Continuum to reflect the continuum of beliefs that exist in the real world. Importantly, the Mindset Continuum describes the various behaviours we observe in the classroom as a result of these beliefs. For example, it is unlikely

we would find classrooms where students fall into one of two groups: those who give up immediately and those who persist. In most classrooms, students will persist for varying lengths of time, with varying expectations about their eventual mastery. In the Mindset Continuum, I describe the changing patterns of behaviour we observe as we develop increasingly growth-oriented Mindsets.

Dweck's work has gained enormous popularity over the past few years. However, this enthusiasm has not always translated into tangible and meaningful changes in classroom practice, or the hoped-for improvements in student learning outcomes. While it is useful to think of the fixed/growth dichotomy when seeking to understand the importance of Dweck's work, as we'll see, the Mindset Continuum is far more effective when seeking to implement Dweck's ideas and change students' Mindsets.

The Mindset Continuum also helps us understand and address many of the practical implementation challenges schools have encountered. The Continuum clarifies our goals and sets more realistic expectations for change. It helps us address the False Mindset, which as we'll explore later has undermined our work, and points us towards a more meaningful and practical way of nurturing growth-oriented Mindsets through changes in teacher practice. Perhaps most importantly, it helps us understand the role Mindset has to play in helping us create better learners.

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MINDSETS DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, BUT OUR INTERVENTIONS AREN'T

There is no doubt that Mindsets matter. In addition to Dweck's foundational research, a growing number of large-scale studies show that a student's Mindset has a critical impact on their performance.

For example:

- A study¹ of all 10th graders in Chile (more than 160,000 students) showed that holding a Growth Mindset predicted academic achievement across every socioeconomic level.
- In California, data from more than 100,000 middle schoolers² found that students' Mindsets were a reliable predictor of their test scores.
- A meta-study of 113 studies³ showed that a Growth Mindset was a significant factor in people's self-regulation towards goals.
- A study⁴ of 15-year-old students across 39 European countries showed that Mindset explained a greater proportion of their PISA scores than their home environment.
- In Latin America and North America, Mindset had double or triple the effect of home environment.

Clearly, a Growth Mindset is important to student achievement. But this is not the question that we, as educators, need to concern ourselves with. The real questions are:

- Can teachers in real-life classroom situations significantly influence students' Mindsets? (And, if so, how do we best do that?)
- Are the changes we are making to students' Mindsets making a difference to student learning outcomes?

The answer to these questions at the moment seems to be ... no!

Work out of Michigan State University suggests that our school-based Growth Mindset interventions aren't working⁵. Others⁶ have failed to replicate Dweck's results. According to John Hattie's research⁷, the effect size of Growth Mindset versus Fixed Mindset on student performance is just 0.19 - well below his 'Hinge Point' of 0.4.

In short, it's not that Mindsets don't matter; it's that changing Mindsets isn't easy. And the way we are trying to change them in the classroom isn't working.

Perhaps most importantly, we have assumed that changing a student's Mindset will automatically result in improved learning outcomes – an assumption that may well prove to be false. This is because Mindsets are beliefs, and we don't believe our way to success. To succeed, we need to act. Simply believing we can grow is not the same as achieving growth.

A big part of the reason why our interventions haven't been working is the over-simplification of Dweck's work. As interest in her work spread, teachers became increasingly aware of the big picture of Fixed and Growth Mindsets. We were told that people with a Growth Mindset achieved more, valued effort and hard work, embraced challenges and were receptive of support and feedback. On the other hand, we were told that people with a Fixed Mindset felt threatened by the success of others, ignored or hid their mistakes, felt limited and avoided challenges.

There was no doubt which was the better of the two. After all, who'd want a Fixed Mindset?! So, faced with an apparent choice between the overwhelmingly 'good' Growth Mindset and the overwhelmingly 'bad' Fixed Mindset, many teachers naturally decided they must have a Growth Mindset. And that, of course, was the mistake that gave rise to the False Mindset.

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Just believing you can grow isn't enough. You also have to be taught **HOW TO** grow, and that's the job of the teacher. -James Anderson

OUR MINDSET IS OUR UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

IT IS WHAT GUIDES OUR ACTIONS
AND DECISIONS WHEN WE ARE
NOT PAYING ATTENTION

JAMES ANDERSON



THE FALSE MINDSET AND WHY IT CAN'T BE IGNORED

Dweck and her colleague Susan Mackey first described the emergence of the False Mindset in late 2016^{1,2}. The False Mindset is exhibited by a teacher who may intellectually understand Fixed and Growth Mindsets. They may even advocate for a Growth Mindset or be the Growth Mindset champion in their school, employing Growth Mindset strategies in their classroom. But because they haven't spent the time deeply reflecting on their own Mindset, their actions might reflect a more fixed view of abilities.

Why would the actions of someone who understands the Growth Mindset, and who may even advocate Growth Mindset strategies, reflect more Fixed Mindset beliefs? The reason is that our Mindset guides our actions when we're not paying attention. It's part of what we call our 'unconscious bias' – our default settings. As a result, unless we pay close attention or have deeply examined our beliefs, any underlying fixed beliefs we have come to the surface through our day-to-day decisions and actions.

The False Mindset has the potential to undermine our Growth Mindset interventions in the classroom. For example, when a teacher adopts the Growth Mindset strategy of 'Praise Effort' but implements this from their own unexamined and more

fixed view of abilities, 'Praise Effort' can come to mean 'Praise *Struggling Students* for Effort'. In this case, praise for effort becomes a consolation prize, something given to students who lack 'natural ability'. Consequently, much more fixed messages about ability are communicated to students².

The False Mindset has arisen because we have stigmatised the Fixed Mindset. We've told people it's a bad thing to have a Fixed Mindset and only enlightened learners have a Growth Mindset. Social media presents the Fixed Mindset in black and red, using negative images of locks and even Darth Vader from the *Star Wars*. The Growth Mindset is depicted in light colours and greens, represented by images of life, trees and Yoda. We often see 'fixed versus growth' representations of Mindsets – the inference being there is some sort of competition, with Growth Mindset being the winner.

When presented with the dichotomy of fixed versus growth, many people are inclined to (accurately) recognise that they don't have a Fixed Mindset. After all, they don't avoid challenges, ignore feedback or feel threatened by other people's mistakes. So, if they don't have a Fixed Mindset, then logically they must have a Growth Mindset. So no further work is necessary! And that, of course, is entirely wrong.

While these people may not have a Fixed Mindset, they also don't have a Growth Mindset. The reality is that their Mindset can be more accurately identified as lying somewhere along the Mindset Continuum. But when fixed and growth are the only options presented, they don't recognise they are 'allowed' to be on a continuum.

The Mindset Continuum is essential in combating the False Mindset because it de-stigmatises the Fixed Mindset. It allows people to say they aren't as *growth oriented* as they could be. In my work, I frequently ask teachers and school leaders to put up their hand if they have a Fixed Mindset - and get almost no response. After introducing the Mindset Continuum, I ask who could become more growth oriented, and nearly every hand in the room goes up! The Mindset Continuum gives you permission to examine your beliefs and grow.

The Mindset Continuum recognises what Dweck has been saying for many years: 'A Growth Mindset is not a declaration. It's a journey.' The Mindset Continuum clarifies what that journey looks like and sets you on the path to becoming increasingly growth oriented in your Mindset.

Very few people, if any, have a truly Fixed Mindset. Likewise, very few, if any, have a true Growth Mindset. Everyone falls somewhere along the Mindset Continuum. Where you fall along that continuum is neither good nor bad. It just is. We must be careful not to imply fault when someone finds themselves towards the low-growth end of the continuum. As we'll explore, your Mindset is not a choice you make - it is a belief that is developed, usually unconsciously, over a lifetime.

Recognising that your Mindset lies somewhere along the Mindset Continuum is the first step to avoiding the False Mindset. It also helps shine a light on why many of our Growth Mindset interventions are failing – we've been setting the wrong goal. We should never have expected our interventions to result in students having a Growth Mindset. Instead, our goal should have been to help them become more growth oriented.

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A Growth Mindset is not a
declaration, it's a Journey.

- Carol Dweck

Your success with Growth Mindset will not be measured by the number of students with a Growth Mindset.

It will be measured by how much more growth orientated they have become



HOW WE'VE BEEN SETTING TEACHERS UP TO FAIL!

The vast majority of Growth Mindset interventions in the classroom don't recognise the journey of becoming increasingly growth oriented. The expectation is that after a Growth Mindset intervention, students will be cured of their Fixed Mindset and 'have' a Growth Mindset. This expectation sets both students and teachers up to fail.

Many popular Growth Mindset interventions ask students to jump to the finish line and 'adopt' a Growth Mindset. Classrooms abound with posters and affirmations that list the behaviours associated with Fixed and Growth Mindsets, asking students to adopt Growth Mindset behaviours. We create displays that advocate, 'Instead of saying ... say this ...' We list catchphrases and ask students to repeat them. We tell students that instead of saying, 'I can't,' they should say, 'I can't yet.'

The problem with these interventions is two-fold.

Firstly, they set the number of students with a Growth Mindset as the measure of a teacher's success. As we have discussed, very few, if any, students 'have' a Growth Mindset, even after significant interventions. Consequently, in many schools, teachers implement these strategies, then after some time

recognise their students don't 'have' a Growth Mindset. As a result, they abandon Growth Mindset as 'last year's initiative'¹.

The beauty of the Mindset Continuum is that it helps teachers reset their expectations. The success of our Growth Mindset interventions is not measured by the number of students with a Growth Mindset, it is measured by how much more growth oriented our students have become! Our goal should be for our day-to-day classroom practice to nurture, nudge and nourish an increasingly growth-oriented Mindset in students. It is unrealistic to expect significant changes in students' Mindsets in short periods of time.

We shouldn't expect students to suddenly start embracing challenges, listening intently to all our feedback, and persisting for long periods. Rather, they will start taking on slightly more difficult challenges, perhaps only if they think there's a reasonable chance of success. They will listen to more of our feedback, as long as they don't feel criticised. And they will stick at tasks a bit longer before they start feeling as though their effort is wasted. Our goal should be small incremental changes along the Mindset Continuum, not flips between Fixed and Growth Mindsets.

This highlights another common misconception based on the fixed/growth dichotomy: the idea that sometimes we have a Fixed Mindset and at other times we have a Growth Mindset. There will certainly be some contexts where we are likely to be more growth oriented than others. And we are likely to have triggers that, at a given moment, may temporarily incline us towards one end of the continuum. However, it would be inaccurate to suggest that our lives are made up of 'Fixed Mindset moments' and 'Growth Mindset moments'.

The second problem with these interventions is they don't tackle the real issue. A Mindset is the set of *beliefs* we hold about the nature of our abilities. Typically, classroom interventions don't target student beliefs. Instead, they target student *language*. And while it might be possible to get students to sound as though they have a Growth Mindset, it is doubtful their underlying beliefs have changed!

This is where the popular 'Change your words. Change your Mindset' posters get the message back-to-front. While they are accurate in describing what people towards each end of the Mindset Continuum tend to say, simply changing words does not change underlying beliefs. These posters would be more accurate if they said, 'Change your Mindset and watch your words change!'². This is because it's our underlying beliefs that drive our language, not the other way around.

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The beauty of the Mindset Continuum is that it helps teachers reset their expectations.

MINDSETS ARE JUST BELIEFS.

THEY'RE POWERFUL BELIEFS, BUT THEY'RE JUST SOMETHING IN YOUR MIND, AND YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR MIND.

Carol S. Dweck

Mindset: The New Psychology Of Success



THE LEARNED GROWTH MINDSET

When an idea like Growth Mindset comes along, the most natural thing for teachers to do is learn about it, then teach it to students. This is exactly what's happened in classrooms around the world. But this may have been the wrong thing to do.

We have put posters on walls telling students what a Growth Mindset is. We have told them why a Growth Mindset is important. We have told them what people with a Growth Mindset say and do. We have told them that people with a Growth Mindset tend to do better at school and work. In short, we have taught *about* the Growth Mindset, as if it was a topic to be understood.

But knowing what a Growth Mindset is not the same as holding Growth Mindset beliefs.

Dweck has said, 'Mindsets are just beliefs. They are powerful beliefs, but they are just something in your mind, and you can change your mind.'¹

The problem with this statement is that it makes it sound as though changing your Mindset is as easy as changing your mind about what you are having for dinner. As teachers, we have taken it to mean that we can simply tell our students to

believe they can change their most basic characteristics, and they will. But, as we'll see in a moment, changing long-held and often unexamined beliefs and assumptions isn't that easy!

There is a real danger that we are teaching students to pretend they have a Growth Mindset. As educators, when we observe our students parroting Growth Mindset catchphrases, we may be inclined to think our interventions have worked. We may even evaluate students' Mindsets using survey tools similar to the ones Dweck uses. Students who have been taught about Mindset will have learned how to give the expected answers. From here, it might appear that our Growth Mindset interventions are working when, in fact, they are failing to change underlying beliefs.

It is useful to think of our Mindset as a gut reaction or our default settings. As we've mentioned, Mindset is part of our unconscious bias; it's what guides our actions when we are not paying attention. While we might choose to adopt the words 'not yet' when prompted, if our underlying belief is that we are unlikely to succeed, we will probably feel our resolution fade even as we say the words. Similarly, although we might like to tell ourselves we have a Growth Mindset, we may still

feel judged and fearful of comparison when we see someone performing at a higher standard than our own.

What we are seeing is the emergence of what I call the 'Learned Growth Mindset'.

Students with a Learned Growth Mindset have learned about Growth Mindset as if it were a topic. They can talk the talk. They have knowledge about Mindsets. But a Growth Mindset is not *knowledge* about our ability to grow; it's a set of *personal beliefs* we have about our capacity to change. Consequently, students with a Learned Growth Mindset seem to have a Growth Mindset but are likely to default to their true Mindset when unmonitored.

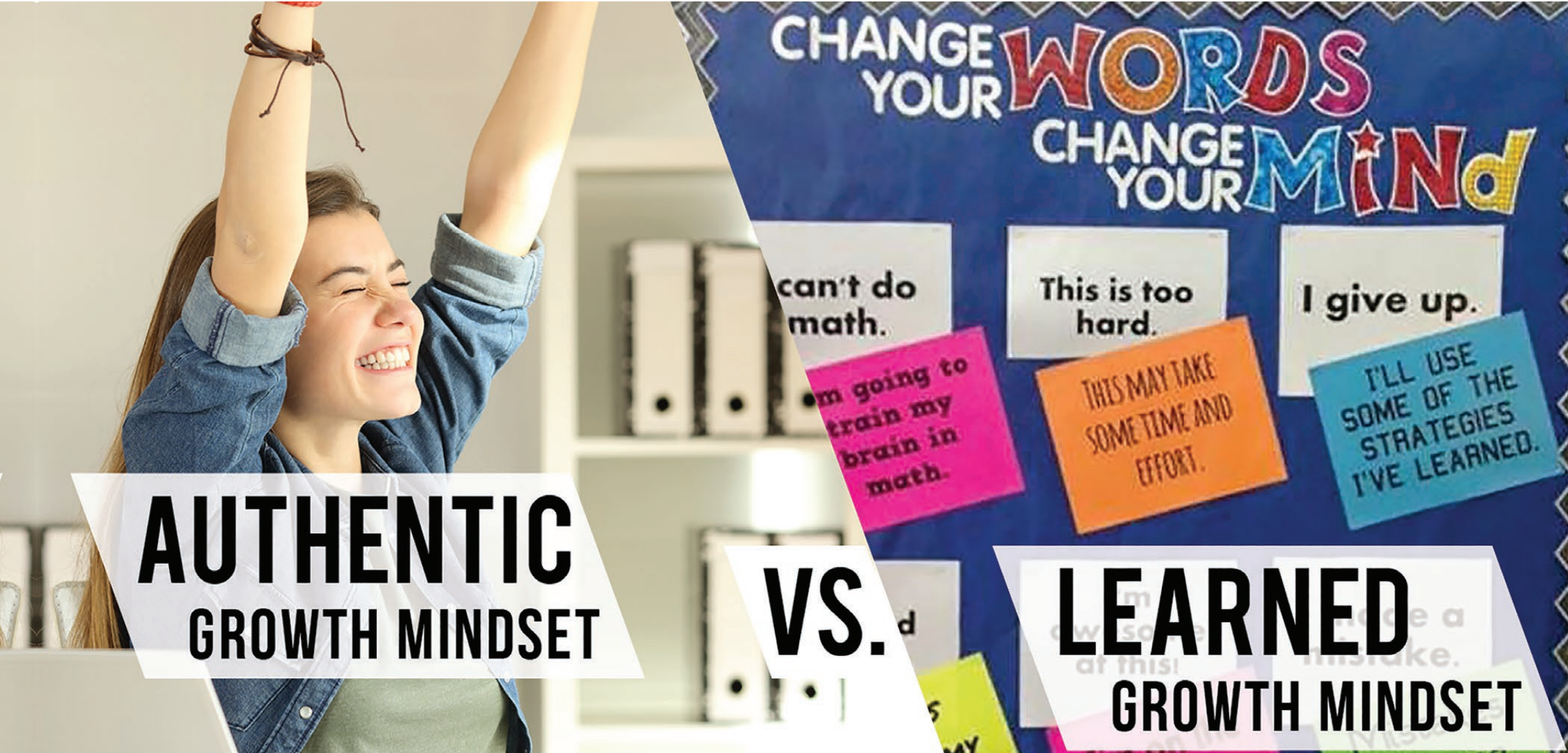
When we teach *about* Growth Mindset, students may end up with a Learned Growth Mindset. They can talk the talk, but we need them to walk the walk. We need them to develop what I call an Authentic Growth Mindset. An Authentic Growth Mindset guides us towards the growth response as our default.

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**a Growth Mindset is not
knowledge about our
ability to grow; it's a set
of *personal beliefs* we
have about our capacity
to change.**



**AUTHENTIC
GROWTH MINDSET**

VS.

**LEARNED
GROWTH MINDSET**

A Growth Mindset tells you...
“I can grow.” It doesn't say,
“how to grow!”

- James Anderson

THE AUTHENTIC GROWTH MINDSET AND MINDSET MOVERS

One of the less appreciated facts about Dweck's work is that she did not invent the Growth Mindset.

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success is full of examples of people with either a Fixed or Growth Mindset. Interestingly, what all these people have in common is that none of them had read Dweck's book before it was published. They'd certainly never been in a classroom that had a Mindset poster on the wall.

It is important to recognise that Dweck did not *invent* the Growth Mindset – she *identified* it. All the people she cited as examples had come to their own understandings about their capacity to change their most basic abilities without the benefit of a single lesson or even knowledge of the term Growth Mindset. All Dweck did, initially, was document these people's beliefs and describe the impact they had on their achievements.

A critical question for educators is: where did people get their Authentic Growth Mindsets from *before* we could give them lessons about Mindsets?

The short answer is that a significant pathway to an Authentic Growth Mindset is through lived achievement and experience

of your efforts leading to growth^{1,2}. The people Dweck used as examples of a Growth Mindset didn't have to be told they were capable of changing their most basic characteristics. They knew that from personal experience. When your own experience of growth leads you to a personal understanding that you are capable of growth, you have what I call an Authentic Growth Mindset.

There, is of course, a corresponding Authentic Fixed Mindset. In Dweck's research, she records many examples of people with a Fixed Mindset, none of whom had heard the term 'Fixed Mindset', and presumably had never been explicitly taught a Fixed Mindset. Similar to the Authentic Growth Mindset, an Authentic Fixed Mindset comes from putting in effort and experiencing no growth. There are at least four pathways to an Authentic Fixed Mindset that we'll explore in a moment.

It is the Authentic Growth Mindset that we must develop in schools, not a learned one. Even more importantly, the recognition of the Authentic Growth Mindset helps us better understand and develop effective school-based Mindset interventions. We must draw our lessons about how to teach FOR a Growth Mindset in our classrooms, from how individuals

developed their Authentic Growth Mindsets before we had posters and online programs.

Experiencing growth and the lack of growth can be powerful influences on our Mindset. Indeed, I suspect that ultimately, they are likely to turn out to be the biggest single influence on our Mindset. However, they are not the only influences. We learn about our ability to grow or not to grow in many small ways every day. I call these experiences Mindset Movers.

Examples of Mindset Movers might include:

- Parents who encourage their children to keep going with a task when they are struggling, instead of substituting the task with something they could succeed at more easily.
- Students being taught strategies to get past the point of difficulty, rather than seeing their time and energy spent for no gain.
- Helping students recognise the new abilities they develop as they work through difficult periods, ensuring they attribute these abilities to their efforts.

These are small examples of positive Mindset Movers. Each tells the learner a little about their ability to change their most basic characteristics. These and many more Mindset Movers add up over a lifetime to move a person along the Mindset Continuum. Ultimately, the sum of these positive Mindset Movers results in a robust and enduring growth-oriented Mindset, rather than the sort of Mindset that needs to be consciously brought front of mind and is easily swayed by outside influences.

Of course, not all Mindset Movers push us towards the growth end of the Mindset Continuum. While positive Mindset Movers reinforce the belief that we are capable of change, negative Mindset Movers reinforce the belief that we are incapable of change, pushing us towards the low-growth end of the spectrum. Negative Mindset Movers might include a lifetime of regularly being categorised and labelled, or putting in lots of effort for no reward, or constantly being compared to other people, to name a few.

Where we find ourselves on the Mindset Continuum at any point in time is the sum of all the positive and negative Mindset Movers we've experienced in our lives.

Our schools and classrooms need to be filled with many small positive Mindset Movers every day. Changing students' Mindsets is not a matter of putting up a poster, teaching them about brain plasticity, asking them to say 'not yet' and telling them to adopt a Growth Mindset. While these things may help, it is the accumulation of real experiences that make up the journey of developing a more growth-oriented Mindset.

Our focus in schools needs to be less on teaching *about* Mindsets and more on teaching *for* a Growth Mindset, using Mindset Movers. The question then becomes: if we want to move students along the Mindset Continuum towards a more growth-oriented Mindset using Mindset Movers, what should those Mindset Movers look like?

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Our focus in schools needs to be less on teaching *about* Mindsets and more on teaching *for* a Growth Mindset, using Mindset Movers.

A Growth Mindset is not growth.
It's the **INVITATION** to grow.
- James Anderson

NURTURING AUTHENTIC GROWTH MINDSETS WITH POSITIVE MINDSET MOVERS

Perhaps one of the biggest misunderstandings about Mindsets is that having a growth-oriented Mindset is the same as achieving growth. This is not true. While the Growth Mindset tells you ‘I can grow’, it does not tell you *how* to grow.

This realisation will resonate with many educators. Students who have been given Growth Mindset lessons may adopt phrases such as ‘not yet’. Unfortunately, after a day, a week or a term, ‘not yet’ becomes ‘still not yet’ as the student fails to achieve the promised growth. This failure acts as a negative Mindset Mover, pushing them towards the low-growth end of the Mindset Continuum.

The reason for this is that we don’t believe our way to success. To achieve growth, we need to take action! Learners will experience powerful negative Mindset Movers if we promise them growth but fail to teach them how to achieve that growth.

This is one of the reasons why I developed the idea of the Agile Learner. The Agile Learner is someone who not only

understands they are capable of growth, but who also understands how to achieve that growth. In the context of trying to move students along the Mindset Continuum, the personal experience of growth is a powerful and positive Mindset Mover.

Let’s not lose sight of the fact that it is the *growth in abilities* we are trying to achieve. It is a hollow exercise to help students develop the understanding that they are capable of growth without giving them the capacity to achieve that growth. At the end of the day, we are trying to develop students who have the capacity to achieve more in their lives. On its own, a Growth Mindset does not do that. It must be coupled with appropriate actions.

Dweck’s work on Growth Mindset is the foundation of the Agile Learner. It represents the invitation to grow; the understanding that you’re capable of taking actions that will lead to growth.

Art Costa and Bena Kallick¹ describe these actions as the Habits of Mind. These are the dispositions learners must develop and

apply to succeed at increasingly difficult tasks. Anders Ericsson's² work on practice describes the process of engaging in these increasingly difficult tasks. This process involves stretching beyond your current best, pushing beyond your Comfort Zone into your Learning Zone – something I've termed 'Virtuous Practice', which I describe in detail in *The Agile Learner*.

Taken together, these three ideas – Growth Mindset, Habits of Mind and Virtuous Practice – form Learning Agility³.

Developing a Growth Mindset is important, but ultimately, achieving growth is what we are aiming for. When we develop Learning Agility, we put the growth back into Growth Mindset!

A Growth Mindset will only lead to growth when we do the work, and even then only when we do the *right* sort of work! Costa and Kallick's work with Habits of Mind, along with Ericsson's work on practice, shows us how to do the work that will achieve growth.

LEARNING AGILITY



A Growth Mindset only works
right sort of
when you do the work.



New research from McKinsey & Co.⁴ suggests that having a Growth Mindset *and* understanding the actions necessary to achieve growth is a better predictor of success than having a Growth Mindset alone – a quality they describe as Motivation Calibration. The more accurate you are at describing the cost of growth (the type of actions required to achieve growth), the better calibrated you are. In fact, the impact on student performance of being well-calibrated is equivalent to the impact of leapfrogging into a higher socioeconomic quartile.

People with an Authentic Growth Mindset understand they can achieve growth because they have developed Learning Agility. They have developed their Habits of Mind. They have stretched and challenged themselves to apply those Habits of Mind in their Learning Zone and have achieved growth. They don't need to be given a promise that they are capable of growth – their lived experience has taught them it's true.

However, it is important to recognise that *achieving* growth is not the same as *experiencing* growth.



When we fail to recognise the growth we have achieved, it has a similar effect on our Mindset as when we fail to achieve any growth at all. We begin to see ourselves as static and unchanging.

Schools constantly stretch and challenge students to achieve more. Although we could do it better, we also help develop students' Habits of Mind. As a result, practically all students achieve at least some growth. Unfortunately, many fail to recognise and experience their growth. They go through their education believing they are 'average' or some other unchanging standard.

When we fail to recognise the growth we have achieved, it has a similar effect on our Mindset as when we fail to achieve any growth at all. We begin to see ourselves as static and unchanging. This lack of apparent growth is another powerful negative Mindset Mover that pushes us towards the low-growth end of the Mindset Continuum.

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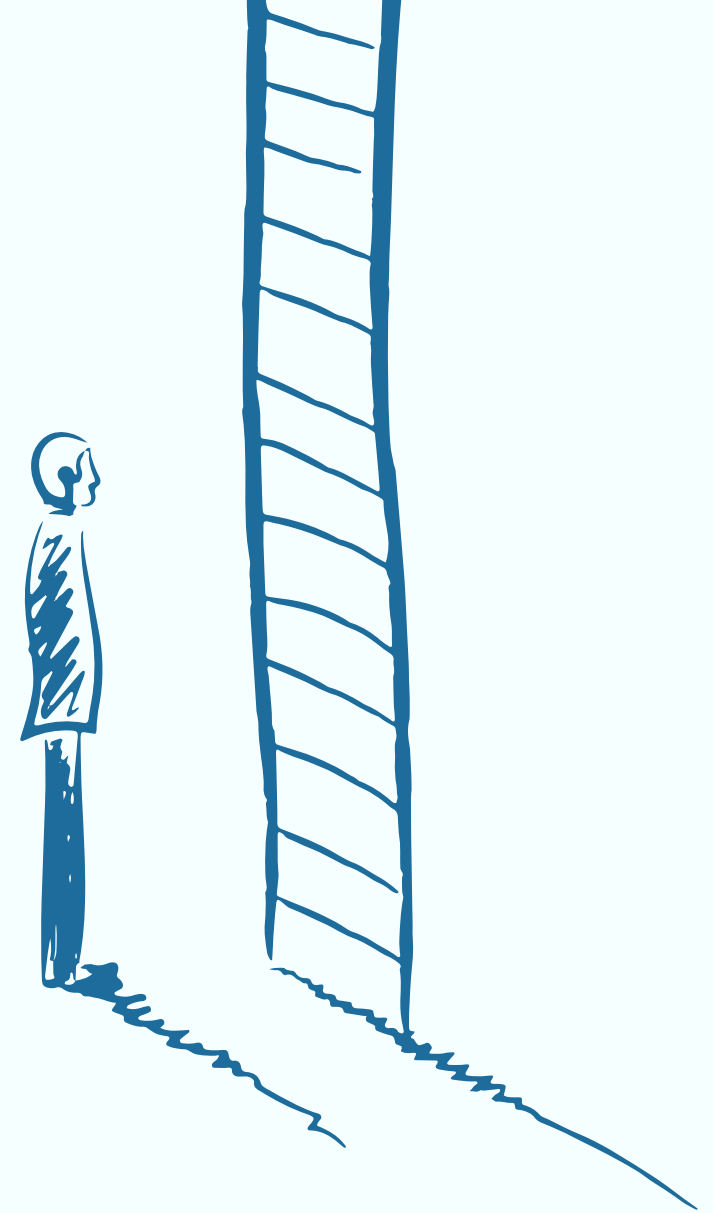
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Motivation Calibration

**UNDERSTANDING THAT YOU
ARE CAPABLE OF GROWTH,**

and

**ACCURATELY JUDGING WHAT
ACTIONS WILL BE REQUIRED
TO ACHIEVE THAT GROWTH**



BELIEFS. ACTIONS. EXPERIENCES.

There are three key areas in which schools need to create positive Mindset Movers to move students along the Mindset Continuum: beliefs, actions and experiences.

Our Mindset Movers need to target the beliefs students have about the nature of their abilities. We need to ensure students understand their abilities can be developed with the right sort of effort. One way to do this is to show students that the people we admire, our heroes and experts, have built their talents through a process of slow, incremental improvement. These people started like anyone else, and the process that developed their talents and abilities is open to everyone. Another way to impact students' beliefs is to ensure that when we offer learning pathways to students, they must understand that these pathways are choices they can make – there's no filter that selects only those students with the ability to follow a particular path.

Currently, the vast majority of Mindset Movers we deliberately create in schools as part of our Growth Mindset strategies only target beliefs. And even these tend to do it in a very shallow way with catchphrases and promises that growth is possible. This has been a reasonable starting point because Dweck's work is about beliefs. As she states, 'Mindsets are just beliefs.'¹

The issue for our school-based interventions is that students' beliefs about their abilities are not only impacted by what we tell them to believe. They're also impacted by the results of their actions – their lived experiences. We can give students the affirmation that they are capable of growth and the promise of 'not yet'. But if students fail to engage in the right sort of actions and don't achieve that growth, or if our assessment methods hide the growth they have achieved, then their overall experience will be one of not achieving growth.

In the face of the positive Mindset Mover the teacher creates with a promise and positive affirmation, and the negative Mindset Mover of the lived experience of not achieving growth, it is likely the lived experience will trump the promise. The net result will be movement towards the fixed end of the Mindset Continuum.

This is why working on beliefs is not enough. Catchphrases like 'believe and you'll achieve' mislead us with half-truths. It is more accurate to say, 'Believe and you will act. Act effectively, and you can achieve.'

We must also create positive Mindset Movers that target student actions. We need to teach students how to become the type of learner who can achieve the growth we promise them. We do this by explicitly developing their Habits of Mind and helping them understand the process through which new talents and abilities are developed. We must help students recognise and embrace their Learning Zone – that level of challenge just beyond their current best, which Lev Vygotsky² described as the Zone of Proximal Development and where the most effective learning takes place.

We need students to reflect on and judge their effort not simply in terms of the time and energy spent, but *how effectively* that time and energy was spent. Their focus needs to shift from effort to efficacy and understanding what I describe as ‘Effective Effort’³.

Finally, we must create positive Mindset Movers that ensure students recognise and experience the growth that results from Effective Effort. They need to see the rewards for their efforts, and recognise how much they have grown. One way to do this is to ensure students frequently measure their progress against their past performances, rather than by comparing themselves with their peers.

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Believe and you will act.
Act effectively and you
can achieve

4 PATHWAYS TO THE FIXED MINDSET

Understanding these key points of action for Mindset Movers also help us understand the major negative Mindset Movers that push students towards the fixed or low-growth end of the Mindset Continuum. These negative Mindset Movers helps us recognise how students develop an Authentic Fixed Mindset. While we would never intentionally 'teach' students a Fixed Mindset, they none-the-less may come to hold fixed beliefs when they experience these negative Mindset Movers.

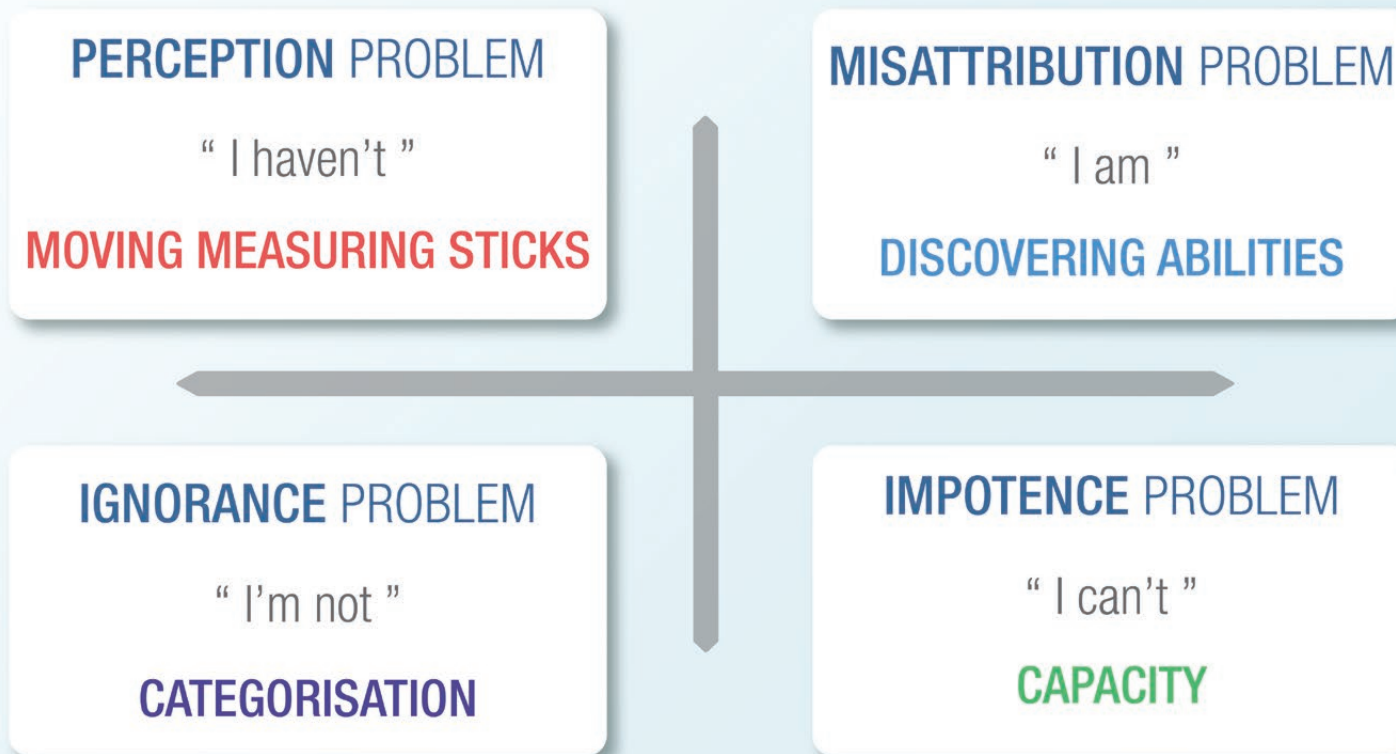
While we want to create positive Mindset Movers in our schools and classrooms, the impact of removing negative Mindset Movers may be an equally as powerful means of intervention and, in many cases, easier to achieve. There are four broad types of negative Mindset Movers¹, each leading towards a more Fixed Mindset.

Negative Mindset Movers that act on students' beliefs lead to what I term the 'ignorance problem': they lead students to believe they can't grow.

For example, these negative Mindset Movers are created when students are told 'not everyone can be good at that'. They're also created when students fall victim to a personality test (1) that categorises them as 'being' a certain type of person, with fixed strengths and weaknesses, and, therefore, 'cut out' for some paths in life but not others. Such messages lead students to suffer from the 'I'm not' problem. For example, they may tell themselves, 'I'm not a mathematical sort of person.' With repeated messages like this, students come to believe that actions in the areas they 'aren't cut out for' would be wasted, so they choose not to engage in those actions, guaranteeing they won't grow in those areas.

Negative Mindset Movers that act on students' actions lead to what I term the 'impotency problem'. When we fail to effectively teach the actions that lead to growth, students fail to grow. This failure leads to the 'I can't' negative Mindset Mover. Students learn they can't grow. After all, they have tried, they've put in 'effort', yet they have failed to improve.

Four pathways to a **FIXED MINDSET**





Recognising that our Growth Mindset interventions need a three-pronged approach – targeting beliefs, actions and experiences – to be successful is critical.

Another powerful negative Mindset Mover is the awareness problem or the ‘I haven’t’ negative Mindset Mover. The problem here often lies with the use of ‘moving measuring sticks’. Students may achieve growth but fail to recognise it. There are a variety of ways this negative Mindset Mover is created, including using the same name (such as a grade) to describe different standards. This is how a student might come to believe they are a ‘B’ student. Another way this negative Mindset Mover is formed is when students constantly compare themselves to other students in their year level, all of whom are also growing at a similar rate. This means that every time a student compares themselves to their peers, their ‘ranking’ doesn’t change much.

The final major negative Mindset Mover is the ‘attribution problem’. These students may achieve growth and recognise their achievement. However, they incorrectly attribute their growth to *being* who they are, rather than to their actions and the Effective Effort that resulted in them *becoming* who they are. Instead of going through a process of learning and developing new abilities, these students feel they are being tested so they can discover the abilities already inside them. Teachers may inadvertently create this type of negative

Mindset Mover when they credit a student's achievement to them 'being' musical or artistic, for example.

Recognising that our Growth Mindset interventions need a three-pronged approach – targeting beliefs, actions and experiences – to be successful is critical. Where students find themselves on the Mindset Continuum is the sum of all the positive and negative Mindset Movers they experience.

This helps us answer the question: what do we need to do to make an enduring and positive change to students' Mindsets? The answer: we need to create many small, regular positive Mindset Movers, and remove as many negative Mindset Movers as we can in the day-to-day lives of our students.

The more pressing question then becomes: how do we do that?

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SCHOOL-WIDE APPROACHES TO CHANGING MINDSETS THAT WORK!

At this point, it may be tempting to think we have the answer. We need to tell teachers to include positive Mindset Movers in their day-to-day practice. The problem comes back to our old enemy, the False Mindset. Teachers with the best of intentions may still send some fixed messages.

As we've said before, it is important that we don't criticise or demonise teachers (or anyone else) for their beliefs. They haven't chosen their fixed beliefs. They aren't intentionally transmitting them to their students. In most cases, these beliefs are the unexamined result of a lifetime of small negative Mindset Movers.

For example, many teachers grew up with parents who were part of the self-esteem movement. As students, they may have come home complaining that maths was hard. Their well-intentioned parents saw a self-esteem issue. They didn't want their child to feel bad, so they told them not to worry, not everyone can be good at maths, and they should find what they are good at (i.e., what they can do without struggle). These are negative Mindset Movers.

An alternative way to respond to this situation – and create positive Mindset Movers – is to normalise the struggle. Tell the child that everyone, even the very best mathematicians, struggles when they encounter topics for the first time. Then identify what part of the work they find challenging and help them work through that. And once they master the topic, acknowledge it is a result of their effort. Something they initially found hard is now easy for them.

Repeated Mindset Movers like these create our Mindset. If we predominantly experience negative Mindset Movers, we're likely to end up at the low-growth end of the Mindset Continuum. If we predominantly experience positive Mindset Movers, we're likely to end up at the high-growth end. And, of course, not all Mindset Movers are equal. Some will have a greater impact on our beliefs than others. These underlying beliefs, the sum of all the positive and negative Mindset Movers we experience, form our unconscious bias, which drives most of our daily decisions and actions.

If the teacher grew up exposed to many of the negative Mindset Movers described above, they are likely to repeat these to students in unintended ways. When the teacher sees a student struggling with maths, they might adopt the scripted Growth Mindset catchphrase that he or she ‘just can’t do it yet’. At the same time, they may be inclined to unconsciously lower their expectations for that student’s achievements in maths, and perhaps change the amount or type of feedback they give, quietly encouraging the student to pursue subjects they find less challenging.

This reinforces what we explored earlier: you don’t get to choose your Mindset. So, while we might ask teachers to implement positive Mindset Movers, the reality is they don’t have the cognitive space to reflect on every decision they make every day. Although they may follow the rules of ‘Praise Effort’ or adopt catchphrases like ‘not yet’, the delivery of these can be derailed by their unconscious bias or contradicted by other negative Mindset Movers they unintentionally create. So, even well-intentioned teachers are likely to send mixed messages if all they have are Growth Mindset rules to follow and catchphrases to parrot.



If we predominantly experience positive Mindset Movers, we’re likely to end up at the high-growth end of the Mindset Continuum.



What we are trying to do is make it more likely that the teacher will create a positive Mindset Mover when there's a chance they may create a negative one. To do this, we need to 'nudge' the teacher.

It's important to note that in the context above, there was an opportunity for the teacher to create either a positive or negative Mindset Mover. The teacher was always going to say something to the struggling student. So, we aren't creating extra work for the teacher. What we are trying to do is make it more likely that the teacher will create a positive Mindset Mover when there's a chance they may create a negative one. To do this, we need to 'nudge' the teacher in the right direction.

A nudge is a term used by behavioural psychologists¹ to describe an intervention that doesn't force you to make a particular decision or take a specific action, but makes that decision more likely. For example, placing healthier food options close to the checkout at the supermarket is a nudge to encourage you to buy healthy food. You don't have to buy it, but you're more likely to if it's easily accessible.

In the context of creating positive Mindset Movers, a nudge is a general principle for teachers to follow that makes it more likely they'll create a positive Mindset Mover. Because they are driven by principles instead of rules, nudges are more flexible and easily adaptable to individual classroom situations.

For example, in classrooms, it is common practice to look at the work of experts in the field students are studying. However, when we look at only the achievements of these peak performers, it can give the impression they are somehow different from everyone else. They appear to be the ‘type’ of person who’s good at that subject. They *are* artists, scientists or writers. We unintentionally neglect the process of *becoming* the artist, scientist or writer. The idea that achievements are due to who you are rather than what you’ve done is a pervasive negative Mindset Mover.

The nudge here is to ‘focus on the backstory’. When teachers carry this principle with them into their teaching, it makes it more likely that when they talk about the expert in their field, they mention that they, too, were once a student who struggled like everyone else. They produced average work early in their career and continued to grow and develop as they applied themselves to developing their abilities.

This nudge is broadly applicable and extends further than talking about experts. When we celebrate student achievements, this nudge puts the focus on how the achievement was reached,

not just what the achievement was. This can be applied to an individual achievement or at the school awards ceremony – another example of where a nudge can tip the balance between creating a positive or negative Mindset Mover.

Some nudges, like the one above, are quite broad. Others are far more specific to the individual school or classroom. The power comes from bringing these nudges together as a school and creating what I call a *Growth Mindset Style Guide*. This individual and tailored style guide describes a set of principles that act as nudges for teachers in a school, guiding the various day-to-day and moment-to-moment decisions they make.

Because a style guide is far more tailored and adaptable than broad rules or limited catchphrases, it has a much more pervasive effect on ensuring a greater number of positive Mindset Movers are created in classrooms and throughout the school. We must remember that teachers are well-intentioned. They don’t need to be told what to do and say. They just need a little nudge to make it more likely they’ll create a positive Mindset Mover, especially when there’s a chance they may unintentionally create a negative one.

Ultimately, the best way to change a student's Mindset is to change the Mindset of teachers. When we remember that teachers want the best for their students and that the Mindset they have today is not something they have chosen but a reflection of many small experiences throughout their lives, we can start to expose and challenge some of these previously unexamined beliefs. The Mindset Continuum helps teachers recognise that just like their students, they are on a journey towards becoming increasingly growth oriented. Where they are on that journey is just where they are. The critical element is that their underlying beliefs are challenged, questioned, examined and, where necessary, changed.

It is also important to recognise that we are not asking teachers to believe in something that isn't true. The beauty of Dweck's work is that she didn't make it up. She didn't create the Growth Mindset; she identified it. The same is true of Costa and Kallick's work with the Habits of Mind and Ericsson's work with practice. These thinkers did not dream up a good idea. They observed what people were doing as they developed their talents, abilities and intelligence.






This work is not about giving students or teachers false hope. It is about recognising the reality of the human condition, which is that we *are* capable of changing our most basic abilities. This is because of our brain's amazing capacity to rewire itself. Each time we rewire our brain, we become capable of something we were not capable of before. Learning, therefore, is not a way of *reaching* our potential, but a way of *developing* our potential².

If the Fixed Mindset view of the world was accurate and we couldn't change our most basic characteristics very much, and no amount of the right sort of effort was going to change that, then our job as educators would be to identify students' talents as early as possible. Then, we would categorise them into groups of 'can' and 'can not's', and effort would be recognised as an indicator of a lack of natural ability.

Fortunately, this is not the world we live in. In the real world, our students are capable of enormous growth. That growth doesn't come for free. It takes time, energy and a specific set of behaviours applied in a specific way. But it is possible. Developing a Growth Mindset is about understanding we are capable of that growth. Developing Learning Agility is about achieving that growth!

Making Mindset MEANINGFUL

in your School and Classroom

	GROWTH MINDSET	IS YOU	UNCONSCIOUS AND ACCURATE	AUTHENTIC
	STYLE GUIDE	NUDGE YOU	DRIVEN BY PRINCIPLES FLEXIBLE AND TAILORED	FOCUS ON THE BACKSTORY
	RULES	DIRECT YOU	OFTEN TOO BROAD, OVER GENERALISED OR MIS-APPLIED	"PRAISE EFFORT" "CELEBRATE MISTAKES"
	CATCH PHRASES	TELL YOU	PARROTED. OFTEN CONTAIN HALF TRUTHS	"NOT YET!" "BELIEVE AND YOU'LL ACHIEVE"
	CURRENT MINDSET	DEFAULT YOU	UNCONSCIOUS AND MIXED	"HIGH ACHIEVING STUDENTS" V'S "STUDENTS WHO ARE ACHIEVING HIGHLY"

In many ways, the Mindset Continuum is a reflection of how well we understand this underlying reality of our human condition. When we deeply understand our capacity to change and how to achieve this change, we naturally embrace challenges, listen for feedback and value the effort it takes to create new abilities. Mistakes are viewed as temporary and a valuable source of information to help us grow. It would make no sense to feel judged by someone else's higher standards. Rather, we'd feel inspired to learn from them so we could also achieve those standards. Understood in this way, creating schools that move students along the Mindset Continuum and nurture a more growth-oriented Mindset in every student becomes an educational imperative, an essential component of creating better learners.

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WHY CHANGE YOUR MINDSET? TO HELP DEVELOP BETTER LEARNERS

Being towards the high-growth end of the Mindset Continuum does not guarantee growth. There are plenty of people with a Growth Mindset who do not achieve growth because they have not developed the appropriate learning behaviours. As we've explored, a Growth Mindset tells you 'I can grow', but it doesn't tell you how to achieve that growth.

Neither does being towards the low-growth end of the continuum deny growth. Dweck cites many examples of people who she describes as having a Fixed Mindset who have achieved significant growth. These include top CEOs like Lee Iacocca of Chrysler and elite sports stars like tennis player John McEnroe. All growth requires, even significant growth, is engagement in the appropriate behaviours.

So why put so much emphasis on moving students along the Mindset Continuum and developing increasingly growth-oriented Mindsets? Why not just focus on the actions – the Habits of Mind and Virtuous Practice – and achieve the growth? Why bother with getting the underlying beliefs right?

One of the main reasons for moving students along the Mindset Continuum is that it helps them become better learners more quickly. We might think of the Growth Mindset as an accelerant that speeds up our journey to becoming a better learner. When we've got the underlying beliefs right, students are more likely to make the choices that lead them to develop the behaviours required to become better learners.

While everyone can learn, teachers are highly aware that not every student learns as effectively as everyone else. Students vary in the amount of control they have over their learning and how well they can translate that learning into action, something we refer to as Learner Agency. Some students are highly effective learners; others require some guidance. Others still barely seem to engage in the learning process at all.

In my work, I define 6 types of learners¹.

1. **Non-Learners:** These learners avoid learning situations. They choose inactivity over any activity that might lead to learning. They tend to ignore mistakes and other sources of information that might help them grow.

2. **Beginning Learners:** These learners lower the bar, choosing to challenge themselves with the easiest of tasks. They have only the most basic understanding of the types of behaviours/Habits of Mind that help them tackle more difficult tasks.
3. **Performance Learners:** These learners continually strive to do their best – but no better. They enjoy demonstrating what they can do but are reluctant to push themselves to grow. They tend to accept feedback that confirms what they can do but ignore feedback that might be critical.
4. **Directed Learners:** These learners accept challenges that are given to them. They require guidance from a teacher to stretch and challenge themselves, and to develop the necessary Habits of Mind so they can take on more difficult tasks.
5. **Independent Learners:** As the name suggests, these learners are more self-directed. They set their own goals and take more control over their learning, including developing their Habits of Mind and seeking feedback that helps them improve.

6. **Agile Learners:** These learners are more responsive. They leverage a changing environment and embrace learning opportunities that help them develop more sophisticated Habits of Mind.

What makes these learners different from each other, and what gives the Agile Learner more Learner Agency than the other learners, is how well developed their responses are to 5 Key Learning Characteristics:

1. Their ability to identify and willingness to stretch themselves into their **Learning Zone**.
2. Their knowledge and understanding of their learning behaviours/**Habits of Mind** and the degree to which they are focused on developing and improving these.
- 3&4. How they gather information from **mistakes** and **feedback** to inform their growth.
5. How well they distribute and use their time and energy (**effort**) in the pursuit of self-improvement.

How well we engage in these characteristics determines the type of learner we are. The more developed we are in these characteristics, the greater our Learner Agency. The way a Growth Mindset helps us become a better learner is by influencing our relationship with these Key Learning Characteristics.

For example, as we move along the Mindset Continuum, we develop a more growth-oriented relationship with our Learning Zone. We tend to enjoy challenges and persist in the face of difficulty. Similarly, as we move along the Mindset Continuum, we develop a better sense of ourselves as a learner. We are therefore more likely to reflect on our Habits of Mind and to seek and use the information we receive from our mistakes and the feedback of others.

It is critical for educators to recognise that although the Growth Mindset helps nurture a better relationship with these Key Learning Characteristics, it does not directly develop them. The Growth Mindset does not make you a better learner. The Growth Mindset might give you the courage to take on challenges, but it does not give you the capacity to succeed at those challenges². Recognising this highlights the critical role of



Nurturing a student's journey along the Mindset Continuum is just one aspect of a teacher's work. This work must also be coupled with teaching students how to be more effective learners.

schools and teachers to teach students how to become better learners. Students must not only understand they are capable of growth; they must also understand how to achieve that growth.

So, while having a more growth-oriented Mindset might make a student more inclined to stick at a task for longer, that does not necessarily translate into them having the necessary learning behaviours to succeed at the task. Similarly, someone with a more growth-oriented Mindset will be less likely to feel judged by mistakes but may still be poorly equipped to recognise and act on the information those mistakes provide.

Nurturing a student's journey along the Mindset Continuum is just one aspect of a teacher's work. This work must also be coupled with teaching students how to be more effective learners. This requires more than merely advocating for students to 'work harder'.

As we've discussed, becoming a better learner, experiencing growth and developing a more growth-oriented Mindset are closely linked. The better learner you become, the more likely you are to achieve growth. If you then recognise that growth

and accurately attribute it to your actions, you'll develop the Authentic Growth Mindset.

And we must take into account that in any given class, we are likely to have many different types of learners at all different stages of development. If we are to help students become better learners, we must consider their current level of development. The advice and instruction we give to a Beginner Learner should not be the same as what we give to a Self-Directed Learner. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. We must offer appropriately tailored instruction to learners of different types. To do this, we need to critically consider how we assess the traditional 'non-academic' component of a student's work.

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ASSESSING FOR LEARNER AGENCY

Practically all schools provide feedback to students and parents about a student's academic results. This often comes in the form of grades related to some measure of the standards the student has achieved over the term or year.

Most schools also provide feedback to parents and students about the non-academic component of a student's performance – often loosely described as 'effort'. The essential question we must ask is: how much impact does this reporting have on student learning outcomes?

As a teacher, I was always concerned about the apparent disconnect between the 'effort grade' and a student's academic performance. In many schools, I've observed it is possible for a student to get a low academic grade and a high effort grade. The reverse is also true: a student can get a high academic grade and a low effort grade.

If there isn't a strong correlation between effort and achievement, what exactly are we measuring and why are we measuring it? After all, it is the standard – or, perhaps more accurately, the knowledge and skills of how to achieve the standard – that is important.

Dweck¹ has already pointed out that in some instances, 'effort' has become the consolation prize in the classroom. Some educators praise effort instead of – and sometimes in spite of – the outcome. What we need to do is praise the effort that leads to the outcome². Effort that does not lead to growth is the wrong sort of effort!

What we want students to improve in is not effort, which often translates into time and energy. We want them to improve their *efficacy* – the outcome of that effort. It is not 'OK, as long as you try your hardest!' If a student spends their time and energy in a way that does not lead to growth, it is not because they are incapable of growth. It is because they have not been spending that time and energy the right way – they have been engaging in the wrong sort of effort. They need to be taught how to use that time and energy more efficaciously, and that means developing them as learners!

My observations have led me to believe that there are two broad ways schools assess against the non-academic component of student learning. Both are limited.

Many schools assess the non-academic component of student performance by measuring what might be described as 'behaviours'. These are often discrete actions that can be observed and counted. They might include actions such as 'comes to class on time' or 'arrives at class with necessary equipment'. They are often measured quantitatively and usually on a scale of 'rarely' to 'often', or something similar. The degree to which these judgements are supported by evidence varies greatly. Reporting on these behaviours is typically summative, and frequently the only formative component of this assessment is 'please do these more often'.

These behaviours are, of course, important and impact on a student's academic performance – to a degree. At some point, a student engages in these behaviours 'often', after which there is no scope for further improvement. More importantly, engaging in these behaviours does not necessarily improve student learning.

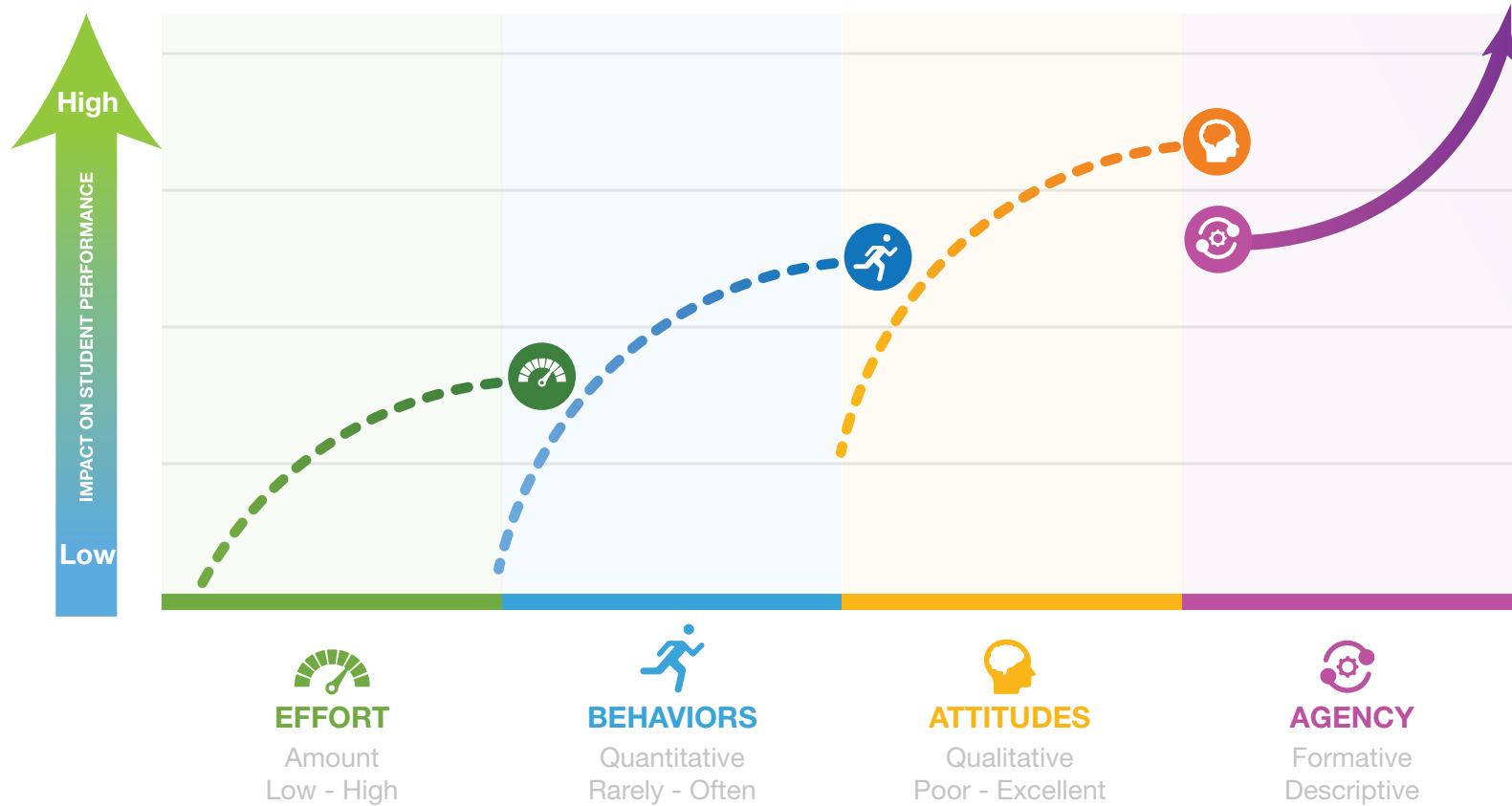
The next level for assessing the non-academic component of student performance is by gauging students' dispositions and attitudes. These are often measured qualitatively on scales from 'poor' to 'excellent'. These might include statements

such as 'participates in class discussions' or 'is prepared to ask questions'. While these are more closely related to student learning and are likely to have more of an impact on performance, they usually encounter similar problems to behavioural assessments. At some point, a student may be 'excellent' in all categories, and there is little formative feedback.

Given most common forms of reporting on the non-academic measures of student performance are weakly linked to academic performance and provide little in the way of formative feedback for students, I advocate a new approach.

This approach focuses on providing students with meaningful, tailored formative feedback directed at the development of learning characteristics to help students become better learners. It is an approach that focuses on the development of Learner Agency and, therefore, is more strongly linked to student achievement. Importantly, it provides formative constructive feedback to students, parents and teachers about the specific actions students will work on in the next assessment period to help them become better learners.

From
EFFORT 
 to
AGENCY 



This approach is based on teacher observations of a student's response to the 5 Key Learning Characteristics. Based on these observations, a judgement is made about the learner type that best describes the student. Most frequently, the learner will not be classified as a single type but will be judged to be transitioning between different learner types. Specific formative feedback is then developed to help the student become a better learner.

For example, one of the 5 Key Learning Characteristics is a learner's response to their Learning Zone³. Different learner types respond to the Learning Zone in different ways. These responses could be summarised in the following ways:

- Agile Learners: Embrace challenges in their Learning Zone. Actively seek challenges specifically for the opportunities they provide to help them develop not just in their field, but as learners.
- Independent Learners: Target their Learning Zone to take them to the next step of their journey. They are developing skills in identifying the appropriate level of challenge.
- Directed Learners: Attempt challenges at the direction of a teacher or instructor. These learners are compliant but cannot accurately or confidently identify the appropriate level of stretch that will help them grow.
- Performance Learners: Limit their challenges to their 'best'. They are comfortable doing their best and often enjoy knowing, and being known for, their ability to perform to a certain standard. However, they rarely stretch beyond this current best, so growth is limited. They remain in what I term the 'Performance Zone' – that level of difficulty slightly easier than their Learning Zone, that they can perform well and without too much risk of failure.
- Beginning Learners: Reduce the level of challenge. These learners do not stretch. They actively seek the easy road, opting for completion rather than competence or excellence. They remain below their Performance Zone in what I refer to as their Comfort Zone, doing the tasks that are well within their current abilities.



Given most common forms of reporting on the non-academic measures of student performance are weakly linked to academic performance and provide little in the way of formative feedback for students, I advocate a new approach.

- Non-Learners: Avoid a challenge. These learners would prefer to do nothing rather than something that might require any effort. They choose inaction, rather than action.

Take, for example, a student who is identified as typically trying to do their best without stretching themselves, unless at the direct instruction of the teacher. Their default is often to demonstrate what they know and can do well, rather than challenging themselves to do better with the accompanying risk of a reduction in standards. This student might be identified as a Performance Learner who is transitioning to the Directed Learner.

Using this model, a teacher would then tailor formative feedback to help the student become a better learner. Emphasis might be placed on communicating to the student that although parents and teachers value what the student can do, they are more interested in the student attempting what they can't do yet. The teacher may point out that feeling challenged and struggling with difficult work should be the norm, rather than completing less complex work well and easily. Parents might receive specific instructions about the type of questions to ask and praise to give at home. Instead of

asking what the student did well, parents would be encouraged to ask what the student struggled with and what they are doing to move past that. The student might keep a record of challenges that were difficult at the start of the assessment period but became easy as the student mastered them and moved on. These might then be discussed at the next parent-teacher interview.

As well as helping the student become a better learner, this specific formative feedback acts as a positive Mindset Mover. By giving instruction to parents about what questions to ask and what praise to give their child, we create nudges that help parents generate positive Mindset Movers at home, enabling them to overcome what might be their default bias of only praising achievement.

Similarly, schools can create nudges for teachers when they develop a Growth Mindset Style Guide for comment writing. Once teachers have identified a student's typical response to the 5 Key Learning Characteristics, they can refer to the school's style guide. The style guide may contain general principles or even a comment data bank of suggested phrasing

in line with building Learner Agency. This style guide would nudge teachers towards giving appropriate growth-oriented feedback and instruction to students.

Adopting a Learner Agency approach to assessing the non-academic aspect of student performance is a powerful way to systemically put the focus on creating better learners, creating policy nudges that help move students along the Mindset Continuum. It also helps ensure our feedback has a more direct, constructive and formative influence on improving learning outcomes.



Once teachers have identified a student's typical response to the 5 Key Learning Characteristics, they can refer to the school's style guide.

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2. Gross-Loh, C., 2016, How Praise Became a Consolation Prize, accessed 1st September 2019, *The Atlantic*, <<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/12/how-praise-became-a-consolation-prize/510845/>>
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WHERE TO FROM HERE? HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

The Mindset Continuum is a powerful tool that I have created and shared with the world. It helps us better understand Carol Dweck's work and helps us redefine our role in nurturing more growth-oriented Mindsets.

The Mindset Continuum allows teachers to think differently about their own Mindsets. Giving teachers permission not to be either Fixed or Growth, but somewhere on the Mindset Continuum, helps us avoid the pitfalls of the False Mindset and opens the door to effectively challenging – and ultimately changing – our existing beliefs.

I change teachers' Mindsets. With more than 20 years' experience in this area, I challenge long-held assumptions and institutionalised structures that have built boundaries around students and have limited their growth. I help teachers develop an increasingly growth-oriented Mindset, so they better recognise that every student is capable of significant growth. This leads to enduring changes in their practice. As I change teachers' Mindsets, I break down some of the beliefs that have held them back and I open up a new era of personal and professional growth.

I show schools how to create their own Growth Mindset Style Guide. Schools don't need to make radical changes to their practices to move students along the Mindset Continuum. Introducing small, subtle changes creates daily 'nudges' that result in the creation of positive Mindset Movers throughout the school. Creating a Growth Mindset Style Guide for your school is one of the most powerful things you can do to nurture more growth-oriented Mindsets in students.

But a Growth Mindset is just a set of beliefs. Even a highly growth-oriented Mindset doesn't guarantee growth. All a Growth Mindset does is encourage us to take action towards improving our most basic characteristics, such as our talents, abilities and intelligence. Ultimately, it's down to the specific actions we take that determine whether we achieve growth.

I describe the 5 Key Learning Characteristics that define Learner Agency. How you identify and relate to challenges that stretch you beyond your current ability. How you develop your Habits of Mind. How you receive and respond to information in the form of mistakes and feedback. And how you distribute your time and energy to maximise time spent



Schools don't need to make radical changes to their practices to move students along the Mindset Continuum. Introducing small, subtle changes creates daily 'nudges' that result in the creation of positive Mindset Movers throughout the school.

growing. Your ability to effectively engage in these 5 Key Learning Characteristics defines your Learner Agency and describes you as a learner.

I show teachers how to assess Learner Agency. Based on the 5 Key Learning Characteristics, I give teachers the insights and deep understandings they need to assess their students' current level of Learner Agency. I show teachers how to move past ineffective summative measures of effort, behaviours and dispositions, to provide meaningful, graduated and qualitative assessment to students, which helps them better understand themselves as learners.

I give schools and teachers the tools to increase Learner Agency. Assessment of Learner Agency must be formative. It must provide meaningful direction to the student about how effective they are as a learner and, importantly, what they need to do to increase their Learner Agency and become even more effective. I help teachers target the individual learning needs of each student so they can become better learners. Moreover, I give teachers the pedagogy and strategies required to facilitate students' growth in Learner Agency.

I show schools how to engage parents to support their children's development as learners. Parents are one of the biggest influences on student learning, however they often unwittingly create negative Mindset Movers that impact their child's development as a learner. I provide teachers with simple yet powerful strategies to inform and engage parents so they can better support the development of their child's Learner Agency.

The Mindset Continuum describes how well a student understands themselves as a learner. The closer a student is to the growth end of the Mindset Continuum, the better they understand their capacity for growth and learning.

Learner Agency describes how effectively the student can engage in the processes and behaviours that lead to achieving that growth. The higher their Learner Agency, the more effective they are as a learner.

An Agile Learner is the highest form of learner. They deeply understand their capacity to grow and have developed their Learner Agency to become a highly effective learner. They have high Motivation Calibration. They have well-developed Habits of Mind and understand they need to stretch and challenge themselves with increasingly difficult tasks. They have a deep understanding of themselves as a learner and have become antifragile.

As a speaker, author and educator, I help schools develop Agile Learners. My teacher workshops, school-based consultancy, online courses and keynote speaking will engage, inspire and empower your staff. I give educators the pedagogy they need to improve student learning outcomes. If you want to find out how to move students and teachers along the Mindset Continuum, assess and develop Learner Agency, and create Agile Learners in your school, I invite you to contact me today.

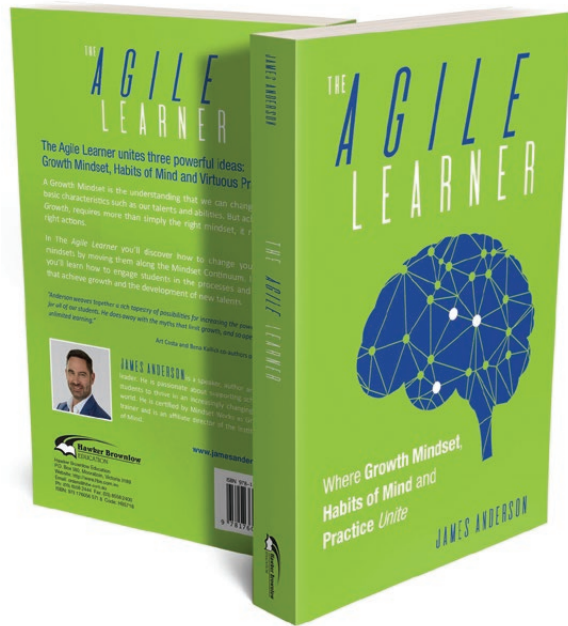
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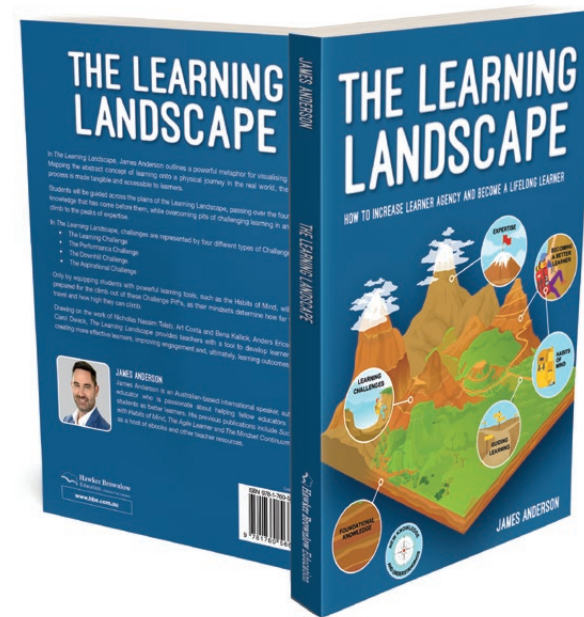


I give educators the pedagogy they need to improve student learning outcomes.



A Growth Mindset is the understanding that we can change our most basic characteristics such as our talents and abilities. But achieving that Growth requires more than simply the right mindset, it requires the right actions.

In *The Agile Learner*, you'll discover how to change your students' mindsets by moving them along the Mindset Continuum. Importantly, you'll learn how to engage students in the processes and behaviours that achieve growth and the development of new talents.



In *The Learning Landscape*, James Anderson outlines a powerful metaphor for visualising learning. Mapping the abstract concept of learning onto a physical journey in the real world, the learning process is made tangible and accessible to learners.

Students will be guided across the plains of the Learning Landscape, passing over the foundational knowledge that has come before them, while overcoming pits of challenging learning in an effort to climb to the peaks of expertise.



FIXED

The Mindset

CONTINUUM

Going beyond "Fixed Vs Growth" to a deeper understanding of Mindsets



GROWTH



FIXED



LOW GROWTH



MIXED



GROWTH



HIGH GROWTH



WORLD VIEW

Sees themselves as **UNCHANGING AND UNCHANGEABLE.** Life is about discovering yourself and searching for where you fit into the world.

Change and **GROWTH IS VERY LIMITED.** See themselves as "not cut out for" some domains. Amount of growth possible in other domains is limited.

Limited Growth Mindset – believes they are capable of **GROWTH IN A LIMITED NUMBER OF DOMAINS.** Life offers only limited choices.

Sees themselves as **CAPABLE OF SIGNIFICANT GROWTH** in most domains. Sees great choice in life. May see themselves as restricted from significant growth in some domains.

Understands they can **CHANGE THEIR MOST BASIC CHARACTERISTICS.** Life is about deciding what you want to be and creating the abilities required to reach goals.



CHALLENGES

AVOIDS CHALLENGES. Sees them as a potential threat.

Takes on **EASY CHALLENGES** that they believe they are likely to succeed at.

PREFERS CLEAR, IMMEDIATE GOALS. That aren't too far out of reach, or in an area they find difficult.

ENJOYS BEING CHALLENGED by more open-ended tasks, even if not always immediately successful.

EMBRACES CHALLENGES even when path to achievement is not immediately clear.



ENCOUNTERING DIFFICULTY & OBSTACLES

GIVES UP IMMEDIATELY when they encounter difficulty.

TRIES FOR A WHILE, but gives up if not progressing quickly. May try to find alternatives when encountering obstacles.

PERSISTS WHEN SEEING PROGRESS. Is developing a repertoire of strategies for getting past obstacles.

EXPECTS EVENTUAL MASTERY. Understands new learning is meant to be difficult so sticks at tasks for long periods.

PERSISTS FOR LONG PERIODS even in the face of setbacks and when new skills need to be learnt to achieve mastery.



EFFORT

EFFORT IS ASSOCIATED WITH FAILURE and inability, so is seen as that. Expects things you can do to come easily.

Recognizes that effort is sometimes required. **SUSTAINED EFFORT IS A BAD THING.** Misunderstands that, not all types of effort produce growth.

EFFORT IS NECESSARY, but usually not enjoyable. Likely to prefer to do it easily. Recognizes when effort is being ineffective.

Has experienced success as a result of effort in the past. Associates Effortive Effort with growth.

Understands **EFFORT AS PATH TO MASTERY.** Actively works on developing strategies for more Effective Effort.



FEEDBACK & CRITICISM

IGNORES useful negative feedback. Sees feedback as a list of their faults.

Accepts some direct feedback when conclusions can be made quickly and easily. **TENDS TO FOCUS ON POSITIVE FEEDBACK.**

FORMATIVE FEEDBACK IS SEEN AS USEFUL, as long as it's targeted and achievable.

Accepts and **LEARNS FROM FEEDBACK.** Positive feedback is seen as recognition of their effort and process, that led to the achievement.

REQUESTS CRITICAL FEEDBACK from targeted expert sources in order to improve their process and outcome.



SUCCESS OF OTHERS

FEELS THREATENED by competitors. In others and grade comparisons, as these may highlight perceived deficits.

MAY MIS-ATTRIBUTE SUCCESS of others to luck or natural ability rather than growth achieved through effort.

ENJOYS PERSONAL SUCCESS, so will engage in competition and comparison when these make them look good.

FINDS LESSONS AND INSPIRATION in the success of others. Admires excellence. Enjoys the challenge posed by competition.

SEEKS OUT MASTERS AND EXPERTS in an effort to "learn their secrets". Competition is seen as a way for both competitors to push themselves to improve.



MAKING MISTAKES

Actively **HIDES OR IGNORES** mistakes.

MAKES EXCUSES for mistakes. Looks for quick fixes. May attribute blame to others.

Expects to make mistakes and understands **MISTAKES CAN BE CORRECTED.**

Recognizes mistakes made are **SUPPORTS FOR LEARNING** opportunities.

Deliberately structures themselves so errors have **HIGH LEARNING POTENTIAL** to facilitate further growth.



OFFERED HELP AND SUPPORT

TURNS DOWN help and support. Feels requiring help highlights their own deficits.

TOLERATES help when given. Discriminated to ask for help. Doesn't like to be seen to need help.

and support when offered. May not continue to seek help, if difficulties are persistent.

Expects feedback and recognizes it as **DESIRABLE** to help them grow.

help and support from specialized sources. **SEEKS OUT**