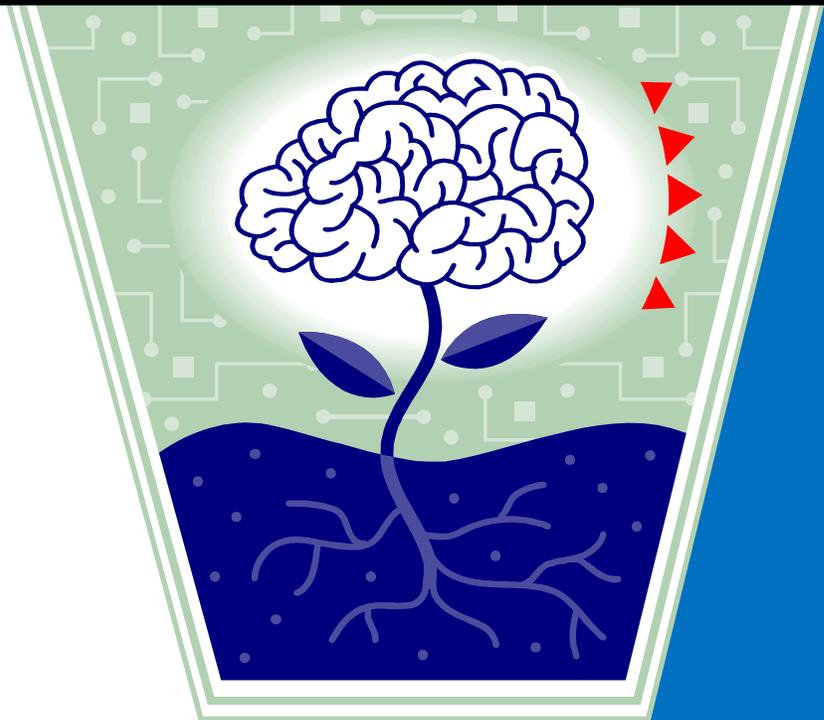


Policy Brief

A Growth Mindset-The Key to Success



Allison Sibthorpe
McGill University
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Winter 2014 Internship

In 2014 the IHSP welcomed ten McGill students from across the University for a 14-week Internship. Training sessions focused on communicating research findings to the media or general public, and gaining insight into different disciplinary approaches. In addition to in-depth research projects carried out in collaboration with faculty and staff, interns devoted ten to fifteen hours to short policy projects on a topic of their choice. Students were asked to frame an issue, find at least two points of supporting evidence and develop rudimentary policy recommendations. The following document reflects the short timeframe given to students to complete this task, and may not be a polished product.

Please note the opinions reflected in this document do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the IHSP.

A GROWTH MINDSET- THE KEY TO SUCCESS

THIS POLICY BRIEF WILL ANALYSE
THE BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING
PROGRAMS THAT TEACH
STUDENTS ABOUT GROWTH
MINDSETS.

CONTEXT AND THE ISSUE

According to results from PISA 2012, Canada has dropped out of the top 10 in international math education standings. Canada did not fare too well in reading or science either. Only one country outperformed Canada in reading in 2000, and now five do. In science, two countries outperformed Canada in 2006, and that number rose to seven in 2012. This decline should be raising alarms about the country's future prosperity. We need skills and knowledgeable workers to really improve our prosperity and build our society. Canadian educators should take action to ensure that this decline does not continue. Implementing a program that teaches students about a growth mindset could address these issues.

WHAT IS A "GROWTH MINDSET"?

The growth mindset is the view of intelligence as malleable. People who have a growth mindset, in contrast to a fixed mindset, view intelligence as something that can be improved with hard work and perseverance. With a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success-without effort. With a growth mindset, people view intelligence and talent as something you get by doing hard work, and as a result they tend to persevere when they face obstacles.

**Students who
have a growth
mindset (which is
the view that
intelligence can
be grown and is
not fixed) have
better school
results**

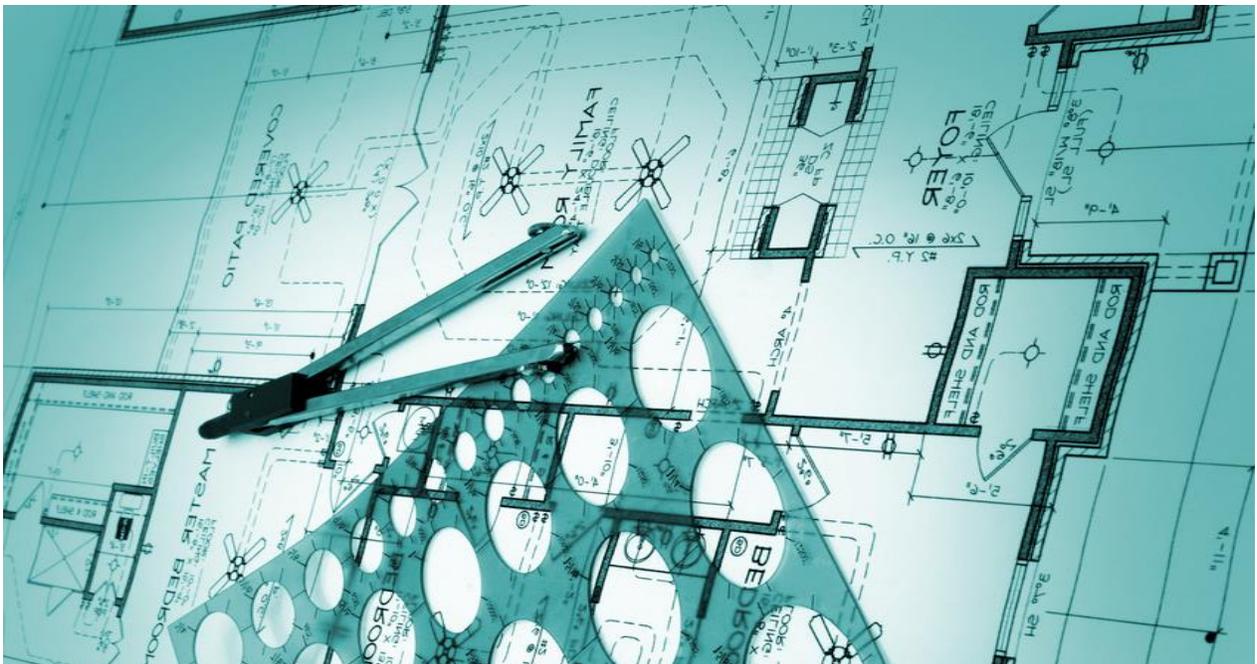
CONTEXT: WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Past policies have focused on raising children's self-esteem to improve grades but results show that policies and programs that raise self-esteem have no effect on grade improvements. Meanwhile, many studies have shown that students who adopt a growth mindset do better in school. A recent study showed that students with a growth mindset had an upward trajectory in mathematics grades over seventh and eighth grade, while those who viewed their intelligence as a fixed quality did not.

This was true even though students had equal levels of prior achievement; students who believed that their intelligence was malleable did better than did equally able students who viewed their intelligence as an unchangeable, fixed "entity." This was true for students at all levels of ability.

Students who have a growth mindset show greater motivation in school, achieve better grades, and have higher test scores.

This issue is very important because a growth mindset creates motivation and productivity not only in school but also in the worlds of business and sports



EXAMPLE:

THE BRAINOLOGY PROGRAM DEVELOPED BY CAROL DWECK

Researchers piloted Brainology in 20 New York City schools. Virtually all of the students loved it and reported (anonymously) the ways in which they changed their ideas about learning and changed their learning and study habits. Teachers reported that they were more motivated and worked harder.

These findings indicate that there is a simple and inexpensive program that can have huge positive benefits. Curriculum developers should coordinate with teachers to find the best way to integrate the program into school hours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Train specialists who can help teachers learn about the latest experimental findings on everyday practices that promote growth mindsets and then use continuous improvement processes to make these work reliably in their classrooms. Everyday interactions with students, such as the way parents and teachers praise performance, frame critical feedback, structure grading systems, or talk about race and gender, can have a profound effect on mindsets.
2. A Growth Mindset Intervention. Researchers have developed precise, theory-based interventions that redirect students' thinking toward a growth mindset. These can involve classroom- or Internet-based reading, writing, or video activities lasting from one to several class sessions.

**Teach about the growth mindset
in classrooms**

IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

CRITIQUE OF POLICY OPTION(S):

- Training teachers can be expensive, and it is less standardized.
- Determining the right length for the intervention
- Finding time to implement the program during school hours
- How to integrate the program into the existing curriculum
- The research was based on relatively smaller samples so the results might not be as dramatic on a large scale.
 - However, there is very little to lose if the program is implemented. The program is inexpensive, takes little time and everyone including the teacher could benefit from learning about the growth mindset.

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Institute for Health and Social Policy, McGill University

1130 avenue des Pins Ouest

Montréal, QC, H3A 1A3

www.mcgill.ca/ihsp