

## Our Mind Drives Our Success

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### Introduction:

In America there is a gap in achievement (Barton, 2004; Harris & Herrington, 2006) and opportunity (Darling-Hammond, 2015) among middle school students. Why is it that some students succeed & others fail? This question is a key motivator for me to think about how we might reimagine our teaching and discipline to achieve a different outcome for all our students and our community. Intelligence can be viewed as either static or as a muscle that can grow in strength over time, we refer to that as a fixed and growth mindsets respectively. However, a growth mindset will influence individual success because it will build on a person's effort to continuously improve (Boalar 2013; Dweck, 2010). This aligns with what the industry says is the best thing school can do to support future employees, help students perceive themselves as lifelong learners to drive continuous improvement & innovation, and to collaborate effectively within a team. Which lead to the following research question:

*How does students' perception of self and learning affect academic performance and career preparedness?*

My 6<sup>th</sup> grade consisted of two classes, one had structural supports implemented within a smaller population & the other had less structural support within a larger population to meet student needs. All students were taught fixed and growth mindsets, practiced collaboration and charted their test results, measured their growth and reflected on their performance & set goals for improvement. Their academic growth was measured using the district benchmark results and their perception of self & learning were measured with pre and post surveys. I evaluated their responses through the lens of growth and fixed mindset.

### Findings:

My 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes overwhelmingly personally identified with growth mindset characteristics, 98% acknowledge that if they worked hard and practiced they would be good at math. Students averaged 10% growth throughout the year, resulting in an average scaled score of 40% in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, which places them at grade level in math. Students recognized that middle school math is more difficult, increasing the need for adopting a growth mindset to succeed in math.

### Plan of Action:

The growth mindset needs to become an integral part of the classroom teaching practices and school culture. To make that happen we must look at improving processes and systems when identifying problems and places for improvement, not people. This way our 6<sup>th</sup> graders will become lifelong learners consistently striving for improvement for their family, community and work place. I will find ways to break the stereotypical thinking of who and what is smart in the middle school community by emphasizing and teaching growth mindset.