***Building Growth Mindsets in the Classroom- Copied from a website***

As a national consultant and coach, I have been on a personal mission to promote teaching kids about growth mindsets all over the country (and world!). Since first hearing Carol Dweck speak about her powerful research at a KIPP conference many years ago, I have committed to working with teachers to help them find doable ways to bring growth mindset practices into the daily world of their classrooms.

The model my co-authors, Alicia Duncan and Joy Stephens, and I created to support teachers is to help students feel, talk about, see and own Growth Mindsets. Of course, the wonderful schools and teachers I work with have taken our ideas and made them better! In this article, I'd like to share what Alicia's been doing with her 7th grade classes to help them feel their mindsets. These activities help launch the growth-mindset talk that will happen throughout the rest of the year.

Alicia intentionally spent the beginning of this school year building Growth Mindsets into her daily classroom instruction. Since her students learn in varied ways, she offered them experiences that helped them learn about their own mindsets by having them feel their mindsets and change their self-talk into growth-mindset talk. Her goal is to help her students develop the internal messages needed for successful learning in her classroom.

Alicia spent one full day doing "Feel It Activities" and teaching the students about mindsets. Then she followed up with some 10-15 minute mini-lessons about developing growth-mindset talk throughout the next week. The time she took at the beginning of the year laid the foundation for how she talks to students and how the classroom runs for the rest of the year. Alicia has found that if she builds their "mindset muscles" up front, they grow stronger as learners throughout the year.

So much of our learning is tied to our emotional reactions to events and situations. Eric Jensen, author of "Teaching with the Brain in Mind," reminds us that the brain is most alert when there is a physical or emotional change (Jensen, 1998). In order for students to move away from fixed-mindset thinking and limiting self-talk to growth-mindset thinking and self-encouragement, they need to understand what messages are playing in their brains when they face challenges.

We designed the following activities to have students feel and experience their own mindsets so they can learn to make adjustments toward more growth-mindset reactions.

The goal is to place learners in situations where things are not easy for them. We want students to struggle, grapple, and FEEL frustration, so they can begin to note their automatic response when challenged. We want them to listen to their loud inner talk (and possibly even outer talk!). From this place of awareness, they can begin to identify whether they respond with growth or fixed mindsets when faced with a challenge. Do they say, "Aggghhh! I can't do this!" or "Man, this is going to be difficult!"?

Remember, the goal of this experience is to move kids away from fixed-mindset thinking and negative self-talk and toward growth-mindset thinking, giving them the vocabulary and experience to use growth-mindset talk and shape growth-mindset behaviors.

To begin, introduce the idea of "building brain matter" by showing how neurons are activated in learning and how new connections can be made. Share with your students the vocabulary of fixed and growth mindsets and let them know they are about to experience what their own mindset is like. Opening the lesson may sound like this:

"We are going to test our limits, patience, and determination today. Let's pay attention to the messages our brain is sending as we tackle a difficult task. First, let's try \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_."

Plan one classroom period to do the "Feel It" activities. Choose to do one or two of the activities with your students.

FEEL IT –ACTIVITIES:

The following are possible activities you could use to have students feel their mindsets. (From Developing Growth Mindsets in the Inspiring Classroom, Kryza, Duncan, Stephens, 2011.)

 •Take a Quiz (linguistic or logical): Give students a surprise quiz on what they've been learning in your class.

 •Try Toothpick Puzzles (logical): Have students try to solve a toothpick puzzle. Many examples and solutions at various levels can be found at: http://www.madras.fife.sch.uk/departments/maths/toothpickworld/index.html

 •Tie knots (visual/tactile): Provide rope and written directions with no pictures and have students try tying knots.

 •Visual Word Puzzles (visual/linguistic): Give students word puzzles to complete within a given amount of time.

 •Tangrams (visual/tactile)

 •Build a Tower of cards (tactile)

 •Do Riddles (linguistic)

 •Do Sudoku (mathematic)

 •Run an Obstacle course/scavenger hunt (kinesthetic)

REFLECTION: After each activity, we ask students to respond to the following questions:

 ◦So, how did you feel before you started this activity? What were you saying to yourself?

 ◦What did you feel and say to yourself during the activity?

 ◦How did you feel and speak to yourself after the activity?

Students then categorize their comments into growth- or fixed-mindset categories. Alicia and her students then collected phrases that growth-mindset learners say to themselves. Alicia posted their phrases on an Anchor Chart in the classroom. (See www.inspiringlearners.com to see her chart and read more about creating growth mindset anchor charts.) Any time her students use fixed-mindset talk, Alicia or their peers kindly remind each other that they can choose better self-talk from their list. It's become a fun way to support each other throughout the year. She also showed her students the You Tube clips called Escalator Failure. Once the kids discuss how silly it is to be stuck on an escalator, Alicia notes that this is what fixed-mindset behavior looks like in the classroom too. Now when her students are being fixed minded, they will lovingly ask each other, "Hey, are you stuck on the escalator?" They remind each other that there are other ways to respond when things get hard in the classroom. The Anchor Chart is posted as a reminder of other choices of self-talk the students can. On her classroom blog, students write about how they use their growth mindsets outside of school. Macy says, "I won't say 'I will not/I can't.' I will try my very hardest to accomplish what needs to be done and be the best that I can be." Alexis writes, "The growth mindset I use at home is reading every night 15 minutes. At school I re-read the caught ya's after going over them."

Alicia's students have learned to "feel" their mindsets and have created a support team to help each other shape new ways of talking to themselves when the learning gets tough.

In our book, "Developing Growth Mindsets in the Inspiring Classroom," we have lots of more ideas to help teachers get started. You can order the book and find many free support resources, including lessons plans, on our website. www.inspiringlearners.com.

We would love to hear from you about your use of these activities. Let us know what you plan to use by commenting below!

About Kathleen Kryza

Kathleen Kryza is a life-long learner, world traveler, an experienced teacher and an outstanding international presenter/coach/consultant. Kathleen is passionate, informed and committed to bringing the best educational practices to schools and teachers, so that they can help ALL students succeed. She has taught general education, special education, and gifted and talented students. Kathleen has also worked with students of varying socio-economic and multi-cultural backgrounds She has taught and co-taught a variety of content areas at both secondary and elementary levels.

Kathleen is the co-author of the Corwin Press books, Inspiring Secondary Learners (2007), Inspiring Elementary Learners, (2008,) Differentiating in the Real Classroom (2009) and Winning Strategies for Test Taking. Kathleen is featured in the video, Differentiating Instruction in the Intermediate Grades, Bureau of Education and Research (BER), 2008. She has presented has presented for school districts locally, nationally, and internationally for over 22 years on various educational and motivational topics. (Differentiated Instruction, Reading and Writing for Understanding, Inclusion Co-teaching, RTI and more...)

Kathleen also coaches and consultant for districts. Kathleen differentiates instruction to meet districts and teachers' learning needs though modeling lessons in classrooms, and by observing and guiding schools and teachers as they grow their skills

