Understanding Mindsets and Fostering a Growth Mindset in Your Classroom

Scenario Answers

Task 1: “Elizabeth, I know how you feel. It’s so disappointing to have your hopes up and to perform your best but not to win. But you know, you haven’t really earned it yet. There were many girls there who’ve been in gymnastics longer than you and who’ve worked a lot harder than you. If this is something you really want, then it’s something you’ll really have to work for.”

He also let Elizabeth know that if she wanted to do gymnastics purely for fun that was just fine. But if she wanted to excel in the competitions, more was required.

Elizabeth took this to heart, spending much more time repeating and perfecting her routines, especially the ones she was weakest in. At the next meet, there were eighty girls from all over the region. Elizabeth won five ribbons for the individual events and was the overall champion of the competition, hauling home a giant trophy. By now, her room is so covered with awards; you can hardly see the walls.

Task 2: Scenario # 2 fosters a fixed mindset.

Task 3: Mr. Vinn can tell Justin that they have just started working on this kind of problem and with enough practice and effort he will improve his strategies to solve this kind of Math problems. Then, it will feel as easy as the other Math problems he can do easily. He just needs to calm down and try the new strategies they have learned. He will realize that there is no reason to get frustrated.

Task 4: Scenario #3 fosters a fixed mindset.

Task 5: Mr. Knoll responds to his student, Jayne, by saying that he has a lot of other extracurricular activities in which he is involved. He might not have had enough time to practice piano lately, yet, once he puts extra effort and practices more often and regularly he can play well and make fewer mistakes. He can give examples of famous pianist and explain that they have practiced many hours everyday and many years to be able to play in concerts. If he really wants to do that he can accomplish it with hard work. Mr. Knoll should also emphasize the importance of playing for fun. It is necessary that Jayne enjoys playing since the more he enjoys the more he will want to play and improve.

Task 6: It is obvious that Martha is a performance-oriented learner and she believes that if she asks questions her friends will think she does not know anything and she is dumb. Therefore, she tries to act like she already knows everything, thus does not ask any questions. The reason she does not take her test out to talk about her mistakes is probably because she has mistakes, which means for her that she is not smart enough not to make any mistakes.

Task 7: In a tutorial group after school, Martha joins one of the tables. The other students get quiet for a moment as she sits down and she says “Can I join you to discuss my mistakes because I really would like to understand why I made those mistakes so that I do not do them again in the next test”. The others have their tests on the table and are talking about their mistakes so she takes her out as well. When she is asked questions by the tutor, she responds by saying, “I think it is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but I am not sure. It looks like I keep mixing these concepts”. At the end of the tutoring session, when students can ask more questions, Martha tells her that even though she understands some concepts better she thinks she needs more help with the same concept.

Task 8: Anthony has a fixed mindset and thinks that he does not need to study Spanish because he is naturally talented in learning foreign languages.

Task 9: The teacher responds by saying, “Anthony has a lot of exposure to Spanish in his home. Don’t forget, his grandmother is there and she can only speak Spanish. Anthony practices his Spanish every time he communicates with his grandmother.” Practice is very important for learning a foreign language. The more you practice the better you get at a foreign language. Therefore, you should not miss any opportunities to practice your Spanish.

Adapted from Dweck, C. (2006). Mindset: The New Psychology of Success. New York: Random House.