

## Growth Mindset Lesson Plan (+ additional activities)

**Time:** as needed

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**Materials for lesson plan:**

- ✓ The Dot
- ✓ Letter writing materials

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify situations where Vashti (character in The Dot) had a fixed or growth mindset, be able to name, discuss and use tools to help us have growth mindsets, and draw or write to an MSA friend about a time when they had a growth mindset just like Vashti.

**Procedure:**

1. Introduce the word **mindset** –ask students what they think It might mean (may write mindset and record responses)
2. Explain and record the two different types of mindset: **fixed and growth**. (May use open and closed with younger students.)
3. Ask students to turn and talk and come up with what the **difference** between two mindsets might be. Possible answers- “open is when you’re thinking about things, closed is when you’re not” and “open is when you want to talk about something, closed is when you aren’t willing to talk about things.”
4. Introduce definitions:  
**Fixed Mindset:** The belief that we’re born with a fixed amount of intelligence and ability.  
**Growth Mindset:** The belief that with practice, perseverance, and effort, we have limitless potential to learn and grow.
5. T may give a personal example of a time they had a fixed or growth mindset.
6. Elaborate with discussion of what someone with a each mindset might say: Students may add on.

Fixed or closed	Growth or Open
“This math is too hard,” “I can’t do this,” “I’m not going to try,” “I can’t make any friends,” and “No one here helps me.”	“This math is hard, but I’m going to keep trying,” “I can do this,” and “I don’t have any friends.... <b>yet</b> .”

7. Next introduce and practice the sign for each as they will identify Vashti’s mindset when reading The Dot. (fixed on the left and growth on the right with fingers wiggling)



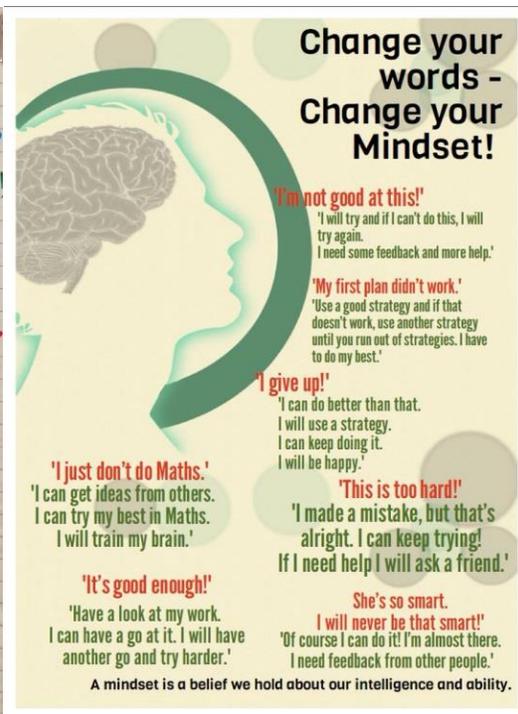
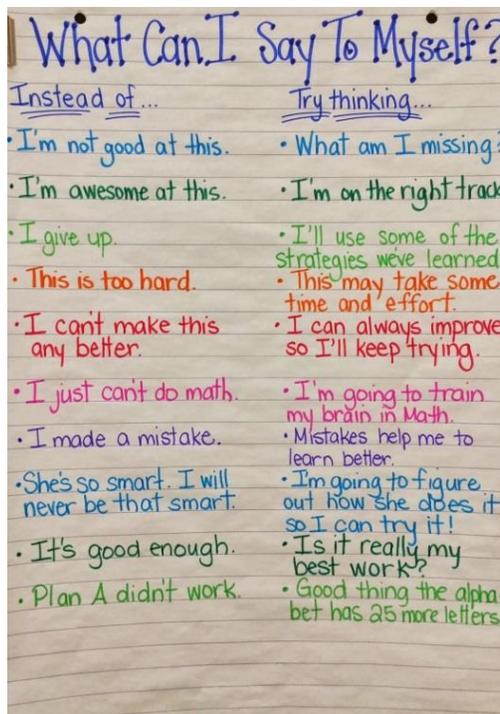
8. After students know the signs, begin reading and students can signal throughout the book.

9. Guiding questions as you read:

- What is Vashti like at the beginning of the book? What is her mindset and why?
- How is Vashti changing and why?
- What tools is she using to change?
- How is she different at the end of the book than at the beginning?
- What kind of mindset does she have in the end?
- What do you think the little boy will do? What is his mindset?
- (Upper grades—tie back to neuroplasticity\*\* If Vashti and the little boy had known about how their brains are fantastic and elastic (as you now know!) how would the story have been different?

10. Ask students if there was a time that they ever felt like Vashti? What happened, what did they do?

11. Discuss different tools that they can use to keep a growth mindset:



12. Lesson Activity: Letter Writing and Exchange for MSA Brainbuilders

K-K: Draw picture and one supporting sentence to you K friends about a time when something was difficult for you but you used a growth mindset strategy to persist!

1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>: Write a letter to another MSA friend about a time when something was difficult for you but you used a growth mindset strategy

to persist!

\*We would like to post photos of some letters on the wiki page!

Giver	Receiver
K1	1 <sup>st</sup>
1 <sup>st</sup>	K1
K2	2 <sup>nd</sup>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	K2
3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>

EXCHANGE!

**Conclusion:**

As classes exchange letters, take time to read them and keep growth mindset alive in the classroom! According to previous research, letter writing and exchanging is a powerful tool to instill growth mindset strategies when kids share and hear from other kids!

**Optional Extension Activities:**



Activity 1: Teaching Kids to Struggle Paper Activity  
<https://blog.classcreator.io/teaching-kids-to-struggle-growthmindset/>

Activity 2: Growth vs. Fixed Mindset Poster or Bulletin Board (Kahn Academy)

Using your students' input, make a two-column poster on the beliefs and behaviors of a growth mindset and how it compares to a fixed mindset.

Urge students to map out how beliefs influence behaviors which ultimately lead to results. If they need scenarios to help them brainstorm, use the examples below or create your own!

What are the behaviors/thoughts of people that believe intelligence can be developed when:

- ...they put a lot of effort into practicing for a basketball game but still lose?
- ...they don't understand what they are learning in math class?
- ...they are not putting any effort into a project but got an A anyway?

Use this as a reference throughout the year to help students recognize when they have a fixed mindset and to give them ideas on methods to shift towards a growth mindset. Here's an example of what this poster might look like.

FIXED	GROWTH
I'm not that good at this	What am I missing?
I'm awesome at this	I'm on the right track
I give up	I'll use some of the strategies we've learned.
It's good enough	Is this really my best work?
I just don't have a math brain and I never will	I'm going to train my brain in math.
Plan A didn't work	Good thing the alphabet has 25 more letters.

## The Dot by Peter Reynolds

**At the beginning...** Vashti didn't think she could draw and was frustrated → no confidence

**Now...** she has confidence. ~ McKenna  
she is working harder ~ Max L.

**Turning Point** → when she realized her dot was actually good. ~ Jacob  
→ I can make a better dot! ~ Brendan  
→ her name on dot! ~ Peyton

**Lessons learned:** YET

- Never say, "never" - Zoya
- Never give up - Paulina
- Think about the positives and not the negatives ~ Brendan
- Keep trying ~ McKenna
- Don't think so much about past failures but enjoy the present as a gift - Peyton
- Believe in yourself - Olivia
- If you try, you can do better - Maya
- Practice makes perfect → if you keep trying, you can do great things ~ Alex
- You control your actions and what you can and can't do ~ Peyton
- Always try! ~ Jessica

### Activity 3: Power of Yet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLeUvZvuvAs>

Show video and discuss the power of yet! Make a class chart of things everyone can't do...YET! May tie in Vashti from The Dot again (like example chart.)

# HOW TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS

## Growth Mindset

What to say:

“When you learn how to do a new kind of problem, it grows your math brain!”

“If you catch yourself saying, ‘I’m not a math person,’ just add the word ‘yet’ to the end of the sentence.”

“That feeling of math being hard is the feeling of your brain growing.”

“The point isn’t to get it all right away. The point is to grow your understanding step by step. What can you try next?”



## Fixed Mindset

What not to say:

“Not everybody is good at math. Just do your best.”

“That’s OK, maybe math is not one of your strengths.”

“Don’t worry, you’ll get it if you keep trying.”\*

\*If students are using the wrong strategies, their efforts might not work. Plus they may feel particularly inept if their efforts are fruitless.

“Great effort! You tried your best.”\*

\*Don’t accept less than optimal performance from your students.



SOURCE: Carol Dweck