Stoke Reads

Mindset Kit

Keele University

City of Stoke-on-Trent
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Dear Educator,

Welcome to the Stoke Reads Mindset Kit. This toolkit has been designed by a group of academics, educational professionals and teachers to provide you with a selection of ideas to promote growth mindsets in your pupils. The idea of mindsets has been researched for over forty years, originally by Professor Carol Dweck and now by many others. This research suggests that we can have either a growth or a fixed mindset and this can affect our beliefs, ideas andbehaviours. Different behaviours have been associated with the different mindsets, as shown below...

**Intelligence is like a muscle - it can be developed**
- A desire to learn
- Enjoying challenges
- Trying hard = learning
- The successes of others are an inspiration

**Intelligence is fixed - it cannot be developed**
- A desire to appear clever
- Avoiding challenges
- Trying hard = not enough ability
- The successes of others are seen as a threat
Imagine you give your pupils a choice of two books. They can choose a difficult book with new words which will help them develop their reading, or an easy book which will not develop their reading skills. What could happen?

Some pupils have a fixed mindset; they are likely to choose the easy book. This is because they want to prove that they are a good reader by reading well with ease. This will be possible with the easy book. Should they choose the difficult book, while reading they may make some mistakes. They may have to try hard to understand the words and because of this, they worry that they are not a good reader. To get out of this situation, they say the book is ‘boring’ and ask to ‘go to the toilet’. A pupil with a fixed mindset doesn’t believe they can develop their intelligence, so not performing as well as they would like is a sign that they are not clever enough to overcome the challenge.

Other pupils have a growth mindset. They are unlikely to choose the easy book because they don’t think they will learn from it; instead they are likely to choose the harder book. Should they appear to be struggling with this challenging book they won’t mind, they see the harder book as an opportunity to learn new things. If they struggle with some of the words they are also more likely to keep trying. Performing badly is a sign that they are learning new things and growing their brain. At its heart, a growth mindset is the idea that our brains are like a muscle and that we can develop them with hard work.

Research suggests that mindsets can be changed. Promoting growth mindsets in pupils has been shown to encourage positive behaviours, such as a willingness to take on challenging tasks and persisting following a failure. Growth mindsets mean that regardless of their personal strengths and weaknesses, your pupils will not be limited by their beliefs of what they can and cannot do. Instead they will all be able to achieve their own personal best.
**A growth mindset**

**Intelligence**
A belief that your brain is like a muscle and you can grow your intelligence with practice.

**Effort**
If you believe your brain is like a muscle then working hard will grow your brain. Trying hard when faced with challenges is seen as a good thing.

**Failure**
Failure shows that you have not reached the required level yet. However, with effort and persistence you believe that you can succeed in the future.

**Learning Goals**
Challenges provide an opportunity to learn or develop a new skill. You might not succeed straight away but you see that by learning new things you will develop your intelligence.
Various strategies have successfully promoted growth mindsets in pupils. We have taken findings from academic research and worked with teachers to turn these into accessible ideas for your classroom. Even adopting a few of the ideas will help your pupils towards develop a growth mindset. It is important to only adopt ideas which you feel comfortable with and that fit with your classroom. We hope that you feel able to do one activity per half term, but the more you can do, the more you will promote growth mindsets in your pupils. If you come up with any other activities or techniques, then please share them on our Facebook group (Stoke Reads Mindset Kit).

If you only do one thing, make sure that you avoid using person praise which focusses on abilities, i.e. “You are really clever”. Instead use process praise which focusses on effort and strategies, i.e. “Well done for keeping going until you got this!”. This is explained in much more detail in the verbal feedback section.

We believe there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to promoting growth mindsets and the most important thing is to be reflective on your own practice and the impact it has had on your classroom. You may notice distinct and rapid changes in your pupils’ approaches to learning, or changes may be more subtle. Remember that this is an on-going journey and it is important to maintain growth mindsets over time using ideas from this toolkit or pupils may slip back into old ways of thinking.

Some researchers and teachers have tried to encourage growth mindsets by telling pupils about them and their effects. We wouldn’t recommend this because pupils are keen to please their teachers and may tell you they have growth mindsets even when they do not! Also, these ideas can potentially be confusing especially for younger pupils. The more subtle methods we recommend in this toolkit will encourage growth mindsets in your pupils without them realising what is going on!
Process praise is a simple way to deliver growth mindset messages to your pupils. We all provide feedback to pupils throughout the day. When pupils get things right we congratulate them and when they get them wrong we try to help them improve. The main idea behind process praise is to praise the process rather than the outcome or the child. When you praise the process you should focus on the effort or strategy used to achieve the end result. This can be used in any subject and can be delivered as written or verbal feedback. For example, you could say:

“Well done for **keeping going** with these questions. **Your concentration** was amazing!”

“**Your choice** of colours in this picture is wonderful.”

“**You’ve worked really hard** and it really shows because…”

In contrast, person praise focuses more on the pupil and their talents, for example...

“**You really have a gift** for maths!”

“**Such a natural ability** for science”

“**You are such a great artist**”

Process praise helps pupils engage with their learning through the underlying messages it communicates. It focusses on what pupils actually did to achieve the goal. When you reward the *choices* that a pupil made, you are rewarding something which the pupil has control over. Let’s reconsider the process praise examples above. The underlined words are the target of the praise, these are all choices. Pupils can choose to work hard or use a particular approach. Praising this promotes a growth mindset as it suggests that the pupil has made a choice which led to their success. They are then more likely to take on challenges and persist following setbacks as their choices can impact their outcomes.

In contrast, think about the underlined words in the person praise examples above. They promote a fixed mindset because they suggest that it is what the pupil is, not what they have done, which has led to success. Pupils who receive this sort of praise may begin to fear not doing as well in the future, because they may no longer be considered to ‘have a gift’. They may become focussed on showing they are a ’great artist’ rather than developing their skills and they may not take on challenges or persist following a setback.
Should a pupil perform poorly in a task, it is very easy to offer feedback with a degree of ‘comfort’ associated with it. For example, “Don’t worry, not everyone has a maths brain”. This suggests to the pupil that the result was due to their ‘maths brain’ which they have no control over. Although this may seem comforting, it promotes a fixed mindset and suggests that they cannot improve in future. An important part of promoting growth mindsets is being honest about a pupil’s progress, suggesting ideas to help them improve and communicating that you believe that improvement is possible.

We all want our pupils to feel positive about themselves; however, please try to avoid using process praise when it is not warranted. We should only praise demonstrations of real effort, serious attempts at multiple approaches to a problem, or genuine achievement.

Also, if pupils are not performing well, you may be tempted to praise their effort as you may find it hard to give them other positive comments. Please try to avoid this if you can. If we give too much process praise it may not have the effect we desire. Pupils may come to view process praise as a ‘consolation’ for poor performance, or even worse, as something given to children who do not perform well.

Another approach to feedback which can promote growth mindsets is the concept of ‘yet’. This is an easy way to turn what might be a potentially negative piece of feedback into a growth mindset message. For example, ‘you are not quite there’ contains the negative sounding message that the pupil hasn’t achieved their potential. It also does not offer any reassurance that they might get there. However, if you add ‘yet’ onto the end, the feedback becomes a positive, encouraging message to keep going – ‘you are not quite there yet’. Importantly, this shows that you believe that they can achieve in the future.
Examples of growth mindsets can be found anywhere – don’t be afraid to include them in your lessons! You might find them in films, television shows or songs. Below are some examples of films you might have seen, with questions you could discuss with your pupils.

Kung fu Panda:

- Po faces lots of setbacks and isn’t very good at Kung Fu when he first starts training with Master SheeFu. What is it that Po does that helps him become great at Kung Fu?

Meet the Robinsons:

- When Lewis shows the Robinsons his machine to make the perfect sandwich and it covers them in peanut butter, why do they celebrate rather than telling him off like he expects?

Princess and the Frog:

- How does Tiana overcome the many challenges she faced and finally get her restaurant?
Music

Music is a great subject to help develop growth mindsets. We would recommend doing this by setting a goal of performing or creating a complex piece of music which will ‘stretch’ pupils’ abilities. Pupils can do this with tuned or non-tuned instruments.

The idea is to demonstrate the progress pupils have made, just like in the progress display or focussed practice which we cover later in the toolkit. If you have access to some way of recording practice sessions then do this during the first session and again in the final session. You can then listen to these recordings with your pupils, focussing on the progress they have made rather than the quality of the final performance.
Mindset books

Some great children’s books feature growth mindset stories. These can be an excellent way to explore growth mindset ideas, for example, during circle time. We would recommend that you read the book with your class and then discuss the growth mindset message. It is better to avoid ‘openly’ talking to your pupils about growth and fixed mindsets. Instead, when talking about a book, try to guide the discussion towards the behaviours, thoughts and feelings of the characters which illustrate their mindset. Here are some suggestions for books and questions you can use as a starting point:

**The Most Magnificent Thing—Ashley Spires**

“Have you ever got mad because you couldn’t do something?”

“The girl kept trying, even when she got it wrong. Do you keep trying or give up when you can’t do something the first time?”

**The Tortoise and the Hare—*traditional***

“Why do you think the tortoise won the race?”

(focus on the fact that he kept trying whilst the hare thought he was so good he didn’t need to try)

“Would you keep going if you thought you might not win a race?”

**Ish—Peter Reynolds**

“Why do you think Raymond doesn’t like his drawings?”

“Have you ever given up because you didn’t think that you could do something?”
**Giraffes Can’t Dance—Giles Andreae**

“When the lions tell Gerald he can’t dance—how does this make Gerald feel?”

“Do you think what the lions said should have stopped Gerald from dancing?”

“Has anyone ever told you that you can’t do something? Did you let it stop you like Gerald did?”

**The Dot—Peter Reynolds**

“What do you think when you can’t do something?”

“Have you ever told yourself that you can’t do something like Vashti does?”

“Would could you do to get better at things you find tricky?”

(Guide pupils towards the idea that Vashti practised her art)

**What Do You Do With an Idea—Kobi Yamada**

“Why do you think the child doesn’t want to share their idea?”

“What happens if we don’t ‘take a risk’ by sharing ideas or trying new things?”

You can borrow all of these titles from the library service. Please call **01782 238446** for more information.

If you find any other titles which have worked for you, please share them on our Facebook group.
Focussed practice is when pupils work on developing a *specific* skill. This could be a skill which they have chosen and agreed with you, or one that you have set for them. Pupils can be given 5 to 15 minutes on a regular basis to practice this *specific* skill. The key is that pupils date and keep their work. This allows you and your pupil to observe the progress they have made as a result of the focussed practice. You might choose to do this daily or weekly at a time that fits into your class schedule. An example is on the opposite page.

This idea is entirely flexible and can be adapted to your timetable and current topics. Here are some ideas:

- Practicing drawing is a great activity to start with because it can be tied in with any topic. It gives you an opportunity to explore how focussed practice works and drawing allows your pupils to easily see the benefit of regular practice.

- If you allow pupils to choose the focus of their practice then they should agree it with you before they begin. It is important that they will develop a particular skill, just practicing ‘drawing’ is not appropriate, but practicing ‘drawing houses’ is.

- Focussed practice can be used for many skills and subjects, but make sure that the progress which pupils make will be observable. For example, if the topic is times tables then pupils should be able to receive a score. This can be self-marked, peer-marked or marked by you so that pupils can see their scores improving over time.

- How often you decide to run a focussed practice is entirely up to you. You can do it at the start of the year, every term or as a constant feature in your class.
Focussed practice might look something like this:

**Week 1**

Monday—Explain what focussed practice is and ask pupils to think about their chosen skill

Thursday and/or Friday—Agree and write down each pupil’s chosen skill

**Week 2–5**

Every Friday—Focussed practice (pupils date and keep their work)

**Week 6**

Monday—collect in work

Tuesday—Thursday—make a *progress display*

Friday—spend some time with your class reflecting on the progress they have made
Class Dojo

To help you keep track of your classes’ growth mindset behaviours, you could use a token reward system such as ClassDojo. It works on most platforms – iOS, android, web browser etc. and it is free! You can find it at www.classdojo.com. There are two types of feedback/tokens you can give: ‘positive’ or ‘needs work’. You can customise these categories and set how many points children receive for each behaviour, from -5 to 5. Pupils who display growth mindset behaviours can then be noted and rewarded. In this section, we are going to focus on how to use ClassDojo (or another token rewards system) to promote positive growth mindset behaviours. ClassDojo also includes a series of videos you could use to help introduce growth mindset ideas, these are covered in the Mindset Videos section later on.

If you decide to use ClassDojo (or another token reward system) you need to plan what you want the rewards to be, e.g. a certificate at 50 points and ‘money’ to spend in the school shop at 300 points. You may want to decide if, and when points are converted into ‘real world’ prizes, this could be constantly (i.e. when you reach 50 points) or at particular points (i.e. who has the most points at half-term). Whatever you choose, you do need to make sure this is clear to your class before you begin.

Don’t forget that you can either download the app or use a web browser to access ClassDojo. This means you can use it on any device with internet access wherever you are from the playground to a school trip!
ClassDojo allows you to associate positive and needs work behaviours with points. We recommend that you only use positive reinforcement to promote growth mindsets.

Our suggestions for positive behaviours:

- On Task +1
- Participating +1
- Working hard +1
- Learnt from a mistake +3
- Kept going when it got hard +2
- Encouraged another +3

The ‘view reports’ section of ClassDojo emphasises the percentage in the doughnut graph; this is the amount of feedback pupils have received which is positive and needs work. We suggest that you use just the positive score (in the green circle) as a way of keeping track of points given to reward positive behaviours.

You may want to setup your classroom so all your pupils are represented by the same monster avatar at the start of term. You could then allow them to customise their monster as a reward!
Written feedback

Process praise works in both verbal and written feedback and is an easy way to promote growth mindsets. As with verbal process praise, please don’t feel like you have to provide it on every piece of work. We have prepared some stickers for you to print out and use, they are available via the website address at the bottom of this page. If you have any suggestions for stickers please get in touch via our Facebook page. Below are some examples...

You found a good way of doing this

You’re not quite there yet, but you did a really good job ...

Well done for using your phonics to ...

Well done for taking the time to write your letters clearly

Well done for trying different ways to work out what that word meant

You really thought about how to do the best picture

You were careful and coloured in the lines

Well done, I can see that you have been practising this!

This is much better than last time

I can see a big improvement

Your practice is paying off!

Our stickers can be found here: http://bit.do/SRMindset
To encourage pupils to see how effort and practice can help them improve their skills, you can create a display to celebrate progress, rather than a traditional display of ‘final’ pieces of work. For example, if you decide to use the focussed practice idea and one of your pupils showed lots of improvement in their drawings of cars, you might choose to put that on the progress display. We recommend that if you use focussed practice, pupils should keep all of their work and reflect on their improvement. These pieces of work can then be part of the progress display to show your whole class how skills develop with practice. It might look something like this...

The progress display can be used for more than just art. If you do regular testing with your whole class, you could include these results on the progress display too. You might want to order your classes’ results by the amount of progress they have made. This will help you emphasise and celebrate their improvement rather than their final mark. You might choose to only display strong examples of progress from individual pupils or examples from every child. This depends on what you feel would work best in your classroom.
Successful people

Many successful people have had a growth mindset. You might be able to talk about their stories, for example in history, science and PE. The main growth mindset message to communicate to pupils is that these ‘great’ people were not born great and had to work hard to be successful. We are sure you know of some examples which will fit in with your schemes of work for different subject areas, but here a few ideas:

**Michael Jordan** – “I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life... that is why I succeed”

Michael Jordan applied to be on his high school basketball team. He didn’t make the main team and had to join the junior team. He said he was so disappointed that he cried for a whole week. But he picked himself up and tried harder than ever. He has said that throughout his career whenever he got tired he pictured his high school team list without his name on it and it drove him to keep trying.

“Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.” - **Nelson Mandela**

Nelson Mandela struggled against many obstacles throughout his life, even going to prison and yet he never gave up on his goal of equal rights for all people.

**Thomas Edison** – “I didn’t fail 10,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 10,000 steps.”

Thomas Edison went to school for only 12 weeks before having to be home schooled for being too ‘difficult’. He started a series of small businesses, some of which were not very successful at all. However, he didn’t give up and went on to invent over 1,000 different things, one of which was the light bulb.
**Winston Churchill** — “Success is the ability to go from one failure to the another with no loss of enthusiasm”

Sir Winston Churchill had many political successes and failures in his career until finally becoming Prime Minister at 62 years old. Many people believe it was his determination which helped him become such a great leader.

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**J.K. Rowling**—“Anything is possible if you’ve got enough nerve.”

The Harry Potter books were rejected by 12 publishers before being accepted. It was J.K. Rowling’s persistence and belief that she would succeed which enable the publication of the best-selling book series in history! She once described herself as ‘the biggest failure she knew’

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“My secret is practice. I have always believed that if you want to achieve anything special in your life you have to work, work and then work some more” - **David Beckham**

David Beckham showed promise as a footballer; at age 11 he won the Bobby Charlton Soccer Schools National Skills Competition. However, he knew that he needed to keep working hard to develop his skills. Even when he was at the top of his game he still practised every day.
Mindset videos

There are some great videos which you could use as a starting point to encourage discussion or just to communicate a growth mindset message. Here are a few suggestions to get started:

On the ClassDojo website, log in and navigate to your class. At the bottom click...

💡 ‘Big Ideas’

The videos have been designed with discussion questions in mind. They could be a great way get children thinking before having a growth mindset discussion. We recommend trying to watch all of the videos with your class. But, if you only have time for one, ‘Mojo puts it all together’ would probably be the best.

On YouTube search for :

Sesame Street—Don’t Give Up

This is a fun video, featuring a well-known musician and covers persisting with less academic skills such as throwing a ball.
Facebook

Please join our Facebook page, a place to share best practice, stories and your experience of using the Stoke Reads Mindset Toolkit...

facebook.com/groups/stokreadsmindsetkit

If you don’t use Facebook you can send an e-mail to our group address which will be posted to the group, the group e-mail address is...

stokreadsmindsetkit@groups.facebook.com
The Stoke Reads Mindset Kit was co-created between:

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