



Equity Indicators in School Improvement Policies and Practices: Highly Effective Teachers and Teaching

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Session Summary

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Session Highlights

Presentation from Dr. Mary Murphy: Growth Mindset Cultures Support Equity, Persistence, and Performance

- >> Mindset – students experience the same classroom differently. Growth mindset is the belief that intelligence can be developed. Individuals with a growth mindset understand that abilities can be grown through hard work, effective strategies, and help from others when needed.
 - Growth vs. Fixed mindset: Typically, growth mindset is contrasted against a fixed mindset. This is the “old way” of thinking about growth mindsets. More recent interpretations reflect scholarship and research that people have both mindsets and we move between them based on situational cues.
 - Growth Mindset Culture is the belief that mindset is not just in our heads but is a combination of culture variables. It exists in our classroom, school, district environment as well as the state practice and policy environment. A growth mindset culture is the result of the perceived beliefs that powerful people in a setting (teachers, professors, supervisors, or bosses) have about our talents and abilities. The mindset culture is expressed through what instructors say and do. The norms, policies, practices, or teacher interactions with students communicate the belief that mindset is either fixed or can be developed.
- >> Growth mindset culture in classrooms: This model discusses the growth mindset culture at the classroom level and what it looks like. First, what are the teacher’s intentions? Do the messages, practices and interaction with students communicate the idea that students can grow and develop? Second, are these intentions reflected in the teacher’s implementation and what the teacher actually does? Third, are the teacher’s actions reflected in how students perceive and experience the classroom culture? When these three elements align, then we know we have a stronger growth mindset culture. This model applies at the school, regional and national levels as well.
- >> Examples of growth mindset culture research: To test these ideas, Dr. Murphy and her team explored two hypotheses:
 - Hypothesis 1: growth mindset culture might affect all students’ engagement and performance.
 - Hypothesis 2: growth mindset culture might have even stronger effects for students who belong to groups that are negatively stereotyped regarding intelligence and

ability (in our culture, Black, Latinx, Native American, first-generation college students, low-income students, women and girls in STEM). If students perceive that a teacher endorses a fixed mindset for their group, the perception creates a context of stereotype threat.

- The first study included 150 STEM faculty, 600+ courses, 7 semesters and over 15,000 students. On average, students performed better when faculty reported more growth mindset beliefs than when they reported more fixed mindset beliefs. Similarly, aligned with the second hypothesis, the racialized outcome gap was twice as large in courses taught by instructors who self-reported more fixed mindset beliefs.
 - The second study looked at whether students' perceptions of instructors' mindsets influence students' experiences in their actual classrooms. This study included 1,192 first- and second-year college students enrolled in more than 50 introductory STEM courses at 4 universities. Researchers concluded that when students perceived the instructor endorsed more fixed mindset beliefs, students experienced greater psychological vulnerability in that class and lower learning outcomes.
- » What can institutions and policymakers do? Address the mindset culture through use of specific instructional practices. "Mindset culture" is part of our new "Mount Everest." Some questions to consider: What are the cues for an audit of instructional behaviors aligned with growth mindset? Where are we encouraging inclusive cultures of growth? Where might practices, policies, norms, interactions signal an exclusive culture of genius?

Shared Resources

- » Global Mindset Initiative Paper 1: [Growth](#) Mindset Cultures and Teacher Practices