



Read Aloud Books to Develop Growth Mindset in Young Learners

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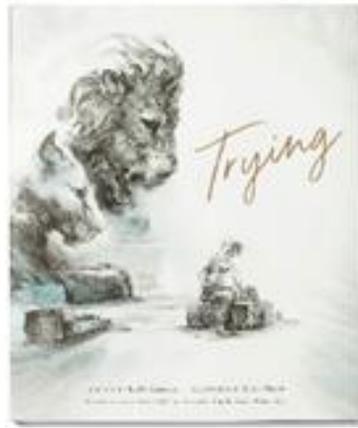
Abstract: *Development of a growth mindset is an essential component of a well-rounded elementary school curriculum and has been shown to have an important correlation with reading achievement. In this article, we provide selected recommendations for read aloud books to assist teachers as they strive to assist children in becoming confident, life-long learners.*

1. INTRODUCTION

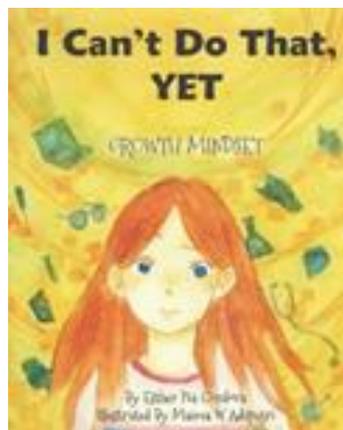
The importance of belief in one's self and the ability to navigate challenging situations is increasingly being recognized as a characteristic that supports learning, academic engagement, and social competencies. Known as growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), it is a self-belief that "intellectual ability is something they can develop through effort and education" (p. 34). In contrast, a fixed mindset holds that one's attributes remain static. Dweck explained, a "fixed mindset makes you concerned with how you'll be judged" (p. 22), which can lead to students avoiding new tasks or situations in which they may fail as a sort of self-protection mechanism and ultimately hinder progress. In essence, a fixed mindset believes in "a fixed ability that needs to be proven" while a growth mindset perceives personal characteristics as "a changeable ability that can be developed through learning" (p. 23).

The increasing influence of growth mindset is readily evident through a search of the literature, which yields studies of the influence of growth mindset for students seeking professional degrees as surgeons (Coppersmith et al., 2024), and engineers (Fray, 2018), extending to students in secondary and elementary schools (Stohlman, 2022). A recent study (Cai et al., 2024) demonstrates the importance of a growth mindset for reading achievement, noting that growth mindset has a positive influence on reading achievement when teachers provide high support for their students. Learners who possess a growth mindset tend to already associate reading performance with their work efforts; conversely, learners with a fixed mindset may view difficulties with reading as resulting from a lack of being capable. This aligns with previous research, which notes strong effects in improving growth mindset for students who experience academic difficulty (Sparks, 2018; Yeager & Dweck, 2020).

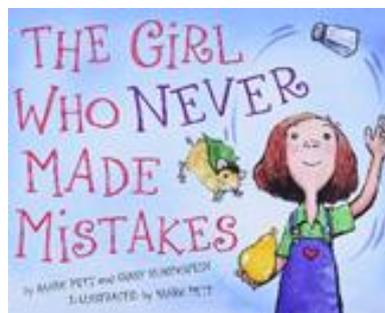
Developing a growth mindset can aid students in many ways. In randomized control study, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, students that received brief lessons about developing a growth mindset experienced positive paradigm shifts including beliefs about adaptability of their own intelligence, attitudes toward failure, openness to challenging academic tasks, and overall academic achievement (Zhu, et al., 2019). However, various barriers exist in developing a growth mindset. Factors that influence how a student develops a growth or fixed mindset include academic experiences, observing peers, deducing logically, taking societal cues, and formal learning (Limeri et al, 2020). Educators and the school experience can impact several of these recognized factors, so teachers may impart a profound influence on how students develop their mindset, especially with young students in elementary schools. A familiar, relaxed format for teachers to affect students' growth mindset is through read alouds and discussion. For this purpose, we present purposefully selected books that discuss or illustrate the growth mindset from unique angles. A synopsis accompanies each title to help identify which texts would be most applicable for each unique circumstance. All of the selected readings below are short and engaging. For the most comprehensive approach, multiple texts may be incorporated in a thematic unit about growth mindset.



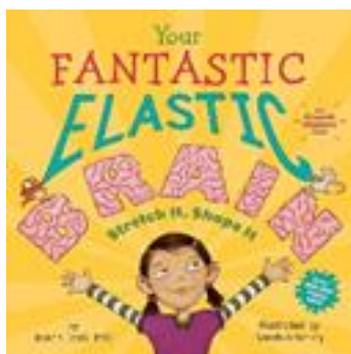
Trying By K. Yamada, 2021, A young boy observes a veteran sculptor and desires to produce skilled creations. Sage guidance from the sculptor helps the boy navigate the challenges of learning a new skill. Frustration and feelings of inadequacy are replaced with persistence and an acceptance of temporary shortcomings. Rather than focusing on an immediate outcome, the boy learns to appreciate the time and iterative process that is necessary in developing abilities. An important lesson taught is “when we make it safe to fail, we make it safe to succeed.”



I Can't Do That, Yet By Esther Pia Cordova, 2017, A young girl, Enna, meets potential future versions of herself. The various future Ennas are capable and successful in their respective various professions. Enna comes to realize the only difference between her current self and these future versions is the passage of time. With this gained knowledge, Enna feels enabled to try tasks she previously believed she could not accomplish. Now Enna believes that she will be able to successfully complete her challenges with sufficient practice and time.



The Girl Who Never Made Mistakes By Mark Pett And Gary Rubinstein, 2017, Beatrice executes the routine of her life perfectly and believes her lack of errors is a type of significant self-identity. This belief is further reinforced by her father and social circle who only know Beatrice as, ‘the Girl Who Never Makes Mistakes.’ Beatrice eventually avoids new experiences where she may fail. In addition, worry about making a mistake presses against her conscience until the day Beatrice finally has a public blunder. Following this, Beatrice realizes a levity in mistakes, begins to live her life with more creativity, and attempts new experiences with more joy. Beatrice establishes a new identity and is now called her genuine name of Beatrice.



Your Fantastic Elastic Brain by JoAnn Deak, 2017, Written as nonfiction rather than a narrative style, this book dives deeper into the components of the brain and their functions. The text relates a simple overview of how the mind is proficient in wiring itself for further development in a wide variety of tasks and attitudes. A central theme is that with enough exposure, the elastic brain can “stretch” the suitable regions increasing each components’ respective functions. For instance, “the amygdala influences fear, and new stimulus can grow it to improve bravery” (Deak, p. 17-18).



What Do You Do With A Problem by Kobi Yamada, 2021, This short book demonstrates how avoiding a problem may have a detrimental effect of continuing to enlarge the problem until it is addressed. Once the challenge is confronted, it is frequently more manageable and less threatening than previously believed. The book helps readers learn to reframe problems into a proactive self-belief: Inside each problem is a unique opportunity.



The Book Of Mistakes by Corinna Luyken, This unique book is primarily driven by the changing graphics rather than dialogue. The author begins a drawing, but keeps making mistakes such as a paint splatter on the page. Each successive mistake is then incorporated into the illustration as if it were intended. Throughout the book the picture continues to develop into a grandiose spectacle.

2. CONCLUSION

These six texts feature lessons on how to acquire a more productive outlook that enables action instead of discouragement when facing challenges. Combining such lessons with teacher read alouds, explicit instruction, and modeling, provides targeted lessons and opportunities may improve students’ self-

perception and motivation. Clearly, a focus on improvement of a growth mindset aligns with educators' ultimate goals of preparing students for academic and life success.

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