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### Informing Thinking of Growth Mindset in Middle School Urban Education

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Informing Thinking of Growth Mindset in Middle School Urban Education  
by

Alfred Daniel Hammonds

An Abstract of a Project  
in  
Creative Studies  
And Multidisciplinary Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Science

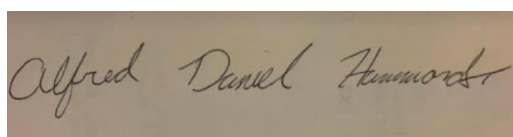
May 2021

Buffalo State  
State University of New York  
Department of Creative Studies

## ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

### **Informing Thinking of Growth Mindset in Middle School Urban Education**

This project outlines the importance of a growth mindset into the middle school classroom in urban education. Through intensive research and experimentation in the classroom, it was determined that there is a genuine need for growth mindset in the urban classroom due to the factors that make up a middle school classroom in an urban setting. In personal experience, the project highlights some of the intentional decisions and lessons learned from how students interacted with a growth mindset as well as looking at lessons learned by the instructor. Also highlighted are ways in which a growth mindset could be useful in curriculum development and student achievement for years to come. This project's view on growth mindset extends to outside of the classroom to involve impact that it could have on students personal and professional lives as well.

A rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in cursive script on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Alfred Daniel Hammonds".

Alfred Daniel Hammonds

May 19th, 2021

Buffalo State  
State University of New York  
Department of Creative Studies

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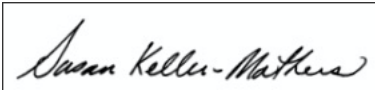
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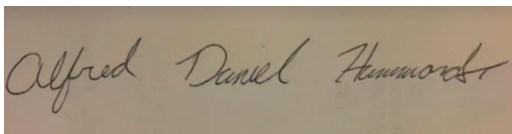
Dates of Approval:

May 19, 2021



Dr. Susan Keller- Mathers  
Associate Professor  
International Center for Studies in Creativity

May 19, 2021



Alfred Daniel Hammonds  
Student

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## Table of Contents

Abstract Title Page.....	i
Abstract of the Project.....	ii
Title Page.....	iii
Signatory Page.....	iv
Copyright Page.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
Section One: Background to the Project.....	1
Section Two: Pertinent Literature.....	4
Section Three: Process Plan.....	8
Section Four: Outcomes.....	11
Section Five: Key Learnings.....	22
Section Six: Conclusion.....	24
References.....	25
Digital Commons Online Permission.....	27



## **SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT**

### **Purpose and Description of Project**

The purpose of my project is to inform my thinking on the concept of growth mindset in middle school urban education. I have worked in an urban middle school for the past three years and before that, I worked in a K-6 building on the west side of Buffalo and a charter high school on the east side of Buffalo. While working in urban education, there is a distinct feel and environment that I have gotten used to. Being emotionally invested and connected to the students is a must with students. The old saying holds extremely true, “They don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”

In working with students, one of things that has shown itself clearly is the importance of a growth mindset within the classroom. A growth mindset is defined by a malleable outline that adapts and changes as an individual experiences different situations. I have found that middle school age students in urban education lack this type of mindset more often than not. Students often seem to make a mistake in some way, shape, or form and from there, mentally shut down. It becomes as if there is no way to progress forward and the mistake that they have made was a fatal one, no matter how small it was in actuality. The goal of this project is to inform my thinking on why this happens in students, and use this information to experiment with ways to change the response of students to one of continual effort rather than mental shutdown.

My personal goals for this project include:

- Identifying some of the main causes for why students shut down in a classroom automatically, regardless of encouragement from the teacher.
- To research curricula that deal with fostering a growth mindset in middle school or urban education classrooms.

- To provide an example of a growth mindset for my students by demonstrating what I expect from them myself.
- Identifying a collection of skills that students can lean on when they are tempted to opt out but that will push them to push themselves instead.
- Developing a method for how to introduce an atmosphere of growth in the classroom early on in the school year.

### **Rationale for Selection**

My rationale for this project comes from my love of working and connecting with students and a desire to see them take lessons that they learn in my classroom with them throughout their schooling. I believe that it is important for students to have a passion of wanting to grow and a desire to see things from different perspectives. One of the main reasons that I chose to teach social studies is because it gives a great opportunity for students to see history from many different lenses and perspectives. I would hope that this project allows for me to see the tendencies of my students and myself in order to come up with ways to change bad habits. I would also hope that students see new ways to look at failure as a way to grow and for them to see their own habits and tendencies so that they can look to change them as well.

With remote instruction and distance learning being so prevalent, students (and adults) are seeing how important it is to be self motivated and the disadvantages of procrastination. One of my hopes would be that this time of distance learning can be used as a springboard for students to take interest in their own habits and move towards more intrinsically motivated growth. I strongly believe that intrinsic motivation is a major component of having a growth mindset. From my experience, students are normally motivated by extrinsic factors: rewards, behavior credits, candy, etc. Many students rely on these rewards to push them from one activity to the next. One of my goals is to tie intrinsic motivation with a growth mindset so that students

can learn to motivate themselves with their own goals as they progress through challenges. One of the activities that I do every school year is to have the students research their ideal occupation. They find out the schooling that would be needed, the salary, and even some of the responsibilities that would be required of them in that profession. The idea is for the student to understand the effort that would need to be put forth in order to obtain the job and excel at it. The idea is that by knowing that info, maybe some of them motivate themselves to get there.

Ultimately, my hope is that the learning that my students do inside the classroom extends to outside the classroom as well. I would like to think that because of some of the lessons that students learn in my class stick with them long after they leave.

## **SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE & RESOURCES**

### **Introduction**

The main goal of this project is to gather information about growth mindset in the classroom, apply it to an urban middle school setting, then experiment with ways in which this could be implemented. A secondary goal would be to track different trends that occur while experimentation is happening for further research.

### **Annotated Bibliography**

In order to learn more about growth mindset and to find new ways to introduce it to a class, I researched the topic of growth mindset in schools. This list shows studies and reviews of growth mindset in many different demographics including primary and secondary education, urban, suburban and rural education, and different demographics within the population of the school. It is important to me that I glean as much information as possible about growth mindset so that this study is as informative as it can be.

### **Perspectives on Growth Mindset**

This first research sample deals with an overall view on growth mindset. It contains a study on the effects of growth mindset on the brain, as well as a study on growth goals and how a renewal of a mindset can affect life overall. This second study offers a different perspective as it comes in the form of a quantitative as opposed to the qualitative studies that we normally see when discussing mindset and motivation.

Rhew, E., Piro, J., Goolkasian, P., & Cosentino, P. (2018). The effects of a growth mindset on self-efficacy and motivation. *Cogent Education*, 5(1).

Martin, A., Collie, R., Durksen, T., Burns, E., Bostwick, K., & Tarbetsky, A. (2019). Growth goals and growth mindset from a methodological-synergistic perspective: lessons learned from a quantitative correlational research program. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 42(2), 204–219.

Smith, S., & Henriksen, D. (2016). Fail again, fail better: embracing failure as a paradigm for creative learning in the arts. *Art Education (Reston)*, 69(2), 6–11.

### **Low Income and Urban areas**

This second sample of articles deals specifically with urban and low income areas. This part of the research will help me as I dive deeper into the effects of growth mindset on a specific demographic. It is my assumption that I will need to research the most in this area as the specific application of growth mindset into an urban environment as this is the area of research that I intend to learn the most about.

Gandhi, J., Watts, T., Masucci, M., & Raver, C. (2020). The effects of two mindset interventions on low-income students' academic and psychological outcomes. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 13(2), 351–379.

Brougham, L., & Kashubeck-West, S. (2017). Impact of a Growth Mindset Intervention on Academic Performance of Students at Two Urban High Schools. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1), 2156759–.

### **Application/Implementation of Growth Mindset**

This last sample of resources has to do with research dedicated to finding out more about growth mindset and intervention in application. This sample includes a study on growth mindset with rural adolescent girls and on the childhood teachers' thoughts on growth mindset. This sample will be used to help further my understanding of the growth mindset as a whole while finding out ways that it was best implemented from the perspective of the childhood teachers.

Burnette, J., Russell, M., Hoyt, C., Orvidas, K., & Widman, L. (2018). An online growth mindset intervention in a sample of rural adolescent girls. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88(3), 428–445.

Boylan, F., Barblett, L., & Knaus, M. (2018). Early childhood teachers' perspectives of growth mindset : Developing agency in children. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 43(3), 16–24.

Sawyer, R. (2019). The role of failure in learning how to create in art and design. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 33, 100527–.

## Conclusions

The three major themes that I investigated were the overall findings on growth mindset and intrinsic motivation, the effect and implementation of these practices and mindsets in urban and low income areas, and curricula and plans that show the implementation of a growth mindset. From initial research, I think that the latter two areas are the ones that I will have to delve more into and find more information about. It is these two areas that I feel that I am most unfamiliar with and from researching more, I believe that I will have a much more fruitful time in implementing best practices into the classroom.

## SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

### Plan to Achieve Goals and Outcomes

- Research growth mindset
- Research growth mindset in different classroom demographics and environments
- Research growth mindset curricula
  - By researching specific plans that already exist, I believe that I will be able to take some best practices from these plans and use them in my classroom during the experimentation phase.
- Growth mindset implementation in the classroom
  - This part of the plan involves coming up with a specific plan and tracking method for implementing growth mindset practices and intrinsic motivation into my own classroom. As it stands currently, I am not sure whether or not I want students to know about this implementation explicitly or not.
- Experimentation
  - The experimentation phase of this plan is very abstract still. How or what I will take into the classroom depends on information that I am able to obtain from research.
- Record Data/Analyze trends
  - This step ties into the “implementation in the classroom” step as I will have already come up with a way to track my findings. The second half of this step will be to analyze the data and find specific trends. This step might also include a way to what I learn with me into future academic years.



## **Project Timeline**

### **January**

- Initial meeting and organization of project guidelines
- Concept Paper Draft

### **February**

- Concept Paper Submission
- Building momentum - Expanding on project idea
- Continuing with research in three major areas (emphasis on research in urban environments and implementation of growth mindset curriculums).

### **March**

- Sections 1-3
- Growth of literature review section of the project. Update resources found with an emphasis on resources that have procured major findings.

### **April**

- Implementation of project
- Sections 4-6
- Development of plan for implementation of growth mindset curriculum into my personal classroom.
- Come up with a method for tracking results of findings.
- Begin to implement best practices.

### **May**

- Submission of project
- Track findings and analyze data

## **Evaluation Plan**

My evaluation plan is still very much under construction. I would like to be able to inform my thinking by doing the following:

1. Conduct research on growth mindset, intrinsic motivation, and the like.
2. Conduct research on what efforts have been made to implement growth mindset and intrinsic motivation in urban and low economic areas.
3. Conduct research on curricula specifically aimed at improving growth mindset.
4. Developing a plan to implement and experience growth mindset in my own classroom with my own students.
5. Experiment with different methods of implementing growth mindset in the classroom and track the findings.
6. Analyze the data found and discover trends that can be used and improved for years to come.

## **SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES**

For this project, I did research on three major topics that would inform my learning on the topic of Growth Mindset in Middle School Urban Education. The first topic was the general perspective of growth mindset and what it means to have a growth mindset. The second topic was looking at all of the factors that go into considering schools in an urban or low income setting. This topic dabbles in growth mindset, but mostly has a focus on what types of education exist in this setting as a basis for where growth mindset could be needed. The last section is the actual application of growth mindset in the classroom. This section deals with the curricula that has been produced thus far and how it would fit into an urban educational setting. Lastly, I added a personal implementation/experimentation section for thoughts that I had as I experimented with applying my findings from my research.

### **Perspectives on Growth Mindset**

Based on all the research being done around growth mindset, there's quite a bit to sift through. Carol Dweck (2006) is one of the major contributing members that focused on growth mindset and its inception. Specifically in schools, when you look at all the different ways that growth mindset is used in the classroom, the temptation can be to give up once you don't see results immediately. From everything found on the topic, it seems as though those who venture into a growth mindset need to be patient. However, those who have the patience and the endurance to stick with it have great results, especially in the younger grades. This is because a growth mindset is so good for children at younger ages. When students are learning how to formatively think and process the way that they do things, they are much more susceptible to use failure as a springboard for growth, and therefore adopt a growth mindset.

The American classroom is changing quickly. More power and responsibility are being put on the students to control the outcome of their own education. With the influx of more technological resources at the student's disposal, it is not surprising that the education system is asking students to take more initiative in their learning. With this comes the idea of "intrinsic motivation" and "growth mindset". A new and rapidly changing ideal is coming to the classroom and it involves students making their own growth goals that they themselves set. The days of teacher centered learning that involved lectures and overhead projectors is coming to an end. We as a culture have evolved into a delivery-based economy. Whenever you need something, it is at your fingertips with the click of a button. Children see that and expect the same with their education. Gone are the days where students would sift through a dictionary or a textbook for an answer to a challenging question. With Google as the primary search engine on any computer, students can have whatever answer they require within seconds. So the question becomes, how does one motivate students to grow and continue to be motivated by their own learning?

One of the first ways discussed in known literature was to have students set personal and growth oriented goals (Martin, 2019). These personal growth goals that children are setting will help move the focus away from competitive grading and comparative mindsets between one another and put the focus more on the betterment of oneself and specifically the achievement of oneself. A theory and research practice that pairs well with this idea is the incremental theory of intelligence (Dweck, 2006). This theory states that people continually build on the base knowledge that they already have. Many times, people are practicing this theory anyway. For example, when children see a hot stove and put their hand on it, they quickly learn not to touch that stove again out of fear of that pain. In the same way, adults who make grave mistakes in relationships change the way that they treat others so that the same negative result does not repeat itself. The goal of implementing the incremental theory of intelligence in the classroom is

to make students aware that this is something that they are doing subconsciously. When students are aware, they will hopefully start to do this intentionally. When intentional, personal growth is the focus as opposed to comparative and competitive growth, students will start to see sustainable progress in their work.

Another major principle that is at work in growth mindset is that students will be much more willing to participate in trial and error when they are sure that the environment that they are conducting this in is safe and secure (Konner, 2010). Students who believe that they will be ridiculed and punished for failure are much more likely to give up at the first hardship than press on to see the impending success. In the United States education system, many times students are subconsciously taught that failure is a negative result and will lead to disappointment every time (Smith, 2016). It is instilled in them that failure or success is an innate part of their identity; essentially it is telling students that if they succeed they are destined to be a successful person and failure leads to a failing and weak character overall. This takes away from the incredible tool that failure can become. Failure can be used as a way for students to see the shortcomings of themselves and their projects. When students embrace failure as a natural part of growth and see it as the tool it is, they are preparing themselves to do the same in life. What I have found is that students who have intrinsically learned that failure is a negative thing tend to procrastinate more and give up faster than those who use failure usefully. This is because those students are trying to avoid failure and the negative feelings and connections that come with it. Even if those feelings aren't realistic and have been perpetuated into something much larger than reality, the fear that those feelings come into reality causes people to avoid failure at all costs.

Lastly, one key concept of growth mindset is the fact that it (as well as general intrinsic motivational practices) should be implemented on a consistent and individualized basis rather than on a larger scale (Bedford, 2017). This concept is much easier said than done, however. One

thing that has seemed to be far-reaching in terms of success is the practice of praising the effort of the students rather than the result. This simple focus will be two fold in implementation. One, it narrows the focus of the students to really look at the amount of effort that they are putting into their work instead of the grade that they will inevitably receive. Two, when students are focused on the effort of their work as a whole, teachers will have an easier time finding the “failure points” and using those to help the student progress. When students are worried about the final product and grade, the effort and steps put into producing the final product become a moot point. It is important for students to see that effort is paramount when it comes to having a growth mindset.

### **Low Income and Urban Areas**

Many times, when people see low income in urban areas, especially in education, they think that these students are beyond help. What I aimed to see was to observe if these students in low income areas could really use a growth mindset more than others. When I've taught in the urban classroom, it has been my experience that students who fail tend to give up quickly. My goal at targeting these areas for growth mindset is to change the perspective on failure. Failure should be a jumping off point for these students to see new and creative ways to grow.

Oftentimes, because students in low-income areas tend to see more hardships from a financial and social standpoint, it has been my view that they tend to have thicker skin. It would seem as though this community takes failure as something to hide and move on from, almost as though it never happened in the first place. One of my largest goals was to show my students that failure is something to embrace, talk about, and learn from.

One of the larger results that has been found in literature surrounding growth mindset is the time that it takes for the results to be seen in an effective manner. Yeager and Dweck (2012) were noted for saying that developing a growth mindset regiment can impact academic behavior

over time. Part of the reason for this is because it would take time to implement and introduce a growth mindset program into the classroom. The students also have to see the benefits of buying into the growth mindset as well.

### **Factors to Consider**

The two major factors that I would consider to be important in terms of urban education in low income areas are the students finding personal value in their education (Gandhi, 2020) and students having a low esteem of their own potential (Brougham, 2018). These two factors are interesting to consider because they aren't definite across all students from these areas, but it does seem to be a hindering factor when it comes to growth mindset and intrinsic motivation. Many times, when middle school students are asked what they want to be when they grow up, they answer with something that is motivated by making a lot of money or something that gets them famous. While some of them have loftier and more concrete goals, the ones who have chosen one of the former occupations tend to place very little importance on education and the schooling that they would need in order to accomplish their goals. When they are alerted to the fact that the goals that they have placed are outlandish and not easy to obtain, the students first try to argue, then when presented with evidence, usually give up and try to find something "easier" that will still result in some form of fame or money. The reason that I bring up this specific example is to show one way that middle school students, specifically in urban settings, tend to devalue their own education. This lack of focus on their schoolwork is a cyclical trend that continues to be harmful for the students well into their futures. Students have issues with understanding why education is so important to their future and once they do realize, they have fallen behind and made it too hard for themselves to progress forward.

The other major factor to consider is the lack of self esteem and value that students from this background tend to put on their personal potential. Many times, students will not have much ambition for attainable, realistic goals. Their goals will be the grandiose type, like mentioned above. I believe that one reason for this is because of the lack of importance that these students have put on their own growth. Students who are taught the value of growth in their work and the patience of making personal goals to accomplish see the results of their hard work pay off. What I have observed from working in this environment is that many students do not put a value on their schoolwork, effort, or potential which can be incredibly detrimental in the long run.

### **Application/Implementation of Growth Mindset**

One of the most important areas of research in this brief literature review was to see how others have implemented growth mindset strategies and practices in established classrooms. Although I have sprinkled findings throughout my previous research, I thought that it was necessary to show the ways that people have specifically connected their students to a growth mindset that the students can take with them. From previous research, I have found that overall, growth mindset practices are usually somewhat effective if the strategies are implemented by someone who is patient and is willing to put in the time and effort to see that their students effectively use these practices.

In a study conducted by researchers at North Carolina State State University, it was found that some evidence of proper implementation of growth mindset practices is whether or not the students in question have self regulatory strategies in place (Burnette, 2018). Proper growth mindset strategies allow for students in question to be able to take feedback that they receive and use it effectively to grow at their own pace. Students who have a fixed mindset and see setbacks as a roadblock oftentimes need positive reinforcement to move forward and continue on. When students constantly need this type of support, it spreads the teacher thin and makes it almost



impossible for the teacher to help all of the students that are struggling. Therefore, the proper implementation of growth mindset allows for a much more effective and regulated classroom in which everyone grows as they need to. As mentioned, when students are self regulating, they can use positive and negative feedback as a tool to grow. This in turn increases their academic return because they are able to continually produce work that exceeds their previous attempts. So in saying that, it benefits students, teachers, and the whole school to use growth mindset strategies. This will increase student performance and engagement if used correctly.

The issue that is seen oftentimes in schools is that it takes both time and resources in order to effectively see results in this area. Coupled with that is the fact that, depending on the home life of the students, not everyone will take advantage of the growth mindset strategies that are being put into place. This being said, it can be hard to convince school administrators to implement a practice that isn't fully researched, will take time and resources to implement, and will not work for a possible majority of students. When there are so many other strategies in question that provide more concrete results, it is not surprising that many schools do not wholeheartedly take the time to train their teachers and therefore their students on the effectiveness of growth strategies. Another issue found is that there is still much to be learned about effectively implementing strategies of changing mindset in early childhood. Will those practices that are taught truly stick and have lasting effects if not cultivated properly?

In the future, the need for students to have high literacy skills and math mastery will decrease in favor of students who can effectively problem solve in creative ways (Boylan, 2018). Students will need to be much more in tune with their creative problem solving facilities in order to succeed in a changing world. More and more, we see students who are not fully prepared to take on the world because of social inadequacies or because of a lack of understanding of skills needed to truly succeed. In recent studies, it has been shown that the need for children's social

competence and coping skills has played a major role in the development of their learning styles. With the demand for developed and autonomous students growing, the way that children learn in schools must also improve and grow with it.

### **Personal Experimentation with Growth Mindset**

Within my own seventh grade classroom in the city of Buffalo, NY, I have implemented growth mindset practices. This section is where I found the most fulfillment as this is the section that I was able to see first hand what works, what matters, and what types of factors the students latch on to. One of my largest goals was to show my students that failure is something to embrace, talk about, and learn from. Students, especially those in middle school, see failure as an embarrassing and shameful experience. When they make a mistake or have trouble with something, their appearance is everything. My students would quite literally do anything to avoid looking bad in front of their peers. Part of the initial approach to growth mindset in my personal classroom was for the students to see how making mistakes is as natural as breathing. Those who make mistakes should actually be applauded because they put themselves in a position to learn! This however, was rarely the viewpoint of the students that I teach. There were factors to consider, emotions to figure out, and habits to form in this experimental phase. But through it all, I was able to procure some very interesting and worthwhile lessons that the students taught me about how to effectively use and implement a growth mindset in my classroom.

### **The Unintentional Reset of COVID-19**

The recent pandemic has caused a major shift in the way that we teach and learn. Not only has learning shifted to an online format, there has also been a reset in the social and emotional way that students think. When in the past students have been able to socialize and grow with their peers, they are now forced to learn alone or with their younger siblings. Even those who come to the building in a hybrid setting are only in two out of a total of five days a

week. What this has caused is an unintentional reset of growth mindset practices. When I see students on a Monday and a Tuesday, and teach them different strategies to grow from failure, by the next time I see them, those practices and senses are dull. They haven't used them at home, they have stress and other factors that contribute to emotion, and it is almost as though I need to reteach the same practices all over again.

This reset caused unexpected issues and tension with the implementation of a different mindset in the classroom. Instead of having five days from which to figure out how best to connect with the students and work to seamlessly integrate this new way of learning with them, I would have two days. And the two days weren't always guaranteed because students would often miss days in school and show up online if they had trouble getting to school that day. So one of the most important lessons that I needed to learn with integrating a mindset of growth in my classroom was working with what I had. If they were in school one day, I wanted to make sure that the day that they were present stuck in their brain. So I would try to connect with each student on an individual level. Some of the students took much better to the growth aspect than others. They were more adventurous and enjoyed being in a classroom rather than at home. Others were very reserved and shy. They had not been around others in weeks if not months and were very unwilling to go outside of their comfort zone for any reason. From this point, I started to track the students that I knew I could get to pick up on making concentrated efforts toward growth.

The other variable that presented an issue was fully remote learners. While I would love to help those students to adopt a mindset of learning and growth, it is much more difficult to explain the importance of "messaging up" and "making mistakes" to students who are all sitting at home, behind a screen, without being one on one. While I did have one or two fully remote

students who proved to want it, most of them stuck to their own ways of learning. This proved to be discouraging as the majority of my students are remote rather than hybrid.

### **Lead By Example**

One thing that I have found to be a major success in teaching growth mindset has been the practice of setting the example of what I look for in the students. Even if I don't explicitly state that the practices I'm using are for growth mindset, the students see my example, the success from it, and then want to implement it themselves. From tracking the students who took to learning more about growth mindset, I was able to pinpoint the students that I specifically wanted to set the example for. Those were the students that I would make deliberate mistakes around and even let them call me on those mistakes. I would then apologize and ask what they thought I could do better for next time. This would get a lot of the students (even those who weren't as keen to mess up themselves) into a mindset of empathy and consideration. Once in this mindset, it was truly incredible to see the ways that the students used one another's ideas to build on. This practice of setting the example of learning from failure even produced results in students who started as reserved. The students began to see that the environment of the classroom was a safe space that they could make mistakes in.

One interesting note about the above observation was seeing how students reacted to leaving the classroom, other students coming into the classroom, or even the mood of the class when I was present at a different time of the day. Each day that I wanted to specifically work on growth mindset skills, whether implicitly or explicitly, the students would need to be guided into the practice and shown examples to really see the best results.

### **Building on Success**

As with anyone, students tend to gravitate to successful methods. When I point out something good that one student does, all the other students in the class try to imitate that action.

What this has shown is that it is possible to recalibrate the brain of a student to see failure in the journey leads to eventual success. The other major area that this has caught my attention was the fact that the students are at the perfect age in middle school to implement a lot of these strategies. It is when they are young and impressionable that they are at their best to begin seeing how to learn from failure. Middle school is such a great age to start implementing some of these practices because the students are old enough to see failure, and old enough to problem solve how to fix their failure, without being too old and stuck in their ways to care about changing.

What I found is that students who learned about the importance of failure would stick with the practices even after I was explicitly teaching them or modeling them. These students seemed to understand how this growth from failure led to continued success much more often than when they chose not to try or to remain silent instead of answering questions. At this point, I would utilize the enthusiasm of these students to goad the other students into participating. It didn't always take and it sometimes led to one on one conversations with the students that did want to mess up to grow. But from this, I learned another incredible lesson while teaching growth mindset. It takes a maximum amount of time and patience from the guiding teacher to really work with the social reality of the students and the temperament of the classroom in order to make the strategies to work. If the teacher rushes or becomes too impatient with the students not catching on, those who are interested in moving forward will see their interest as a bad thing or as perceived failure. So by rushing the integration of a growth mindset in students, one can actually do the opposite. As the research above states, one of the greatest ways to help the students is to follow up continually with past conversations and strategies that have worked for each individual student. Grouping or clumping students to accelerate retention of the lessons often ends up dissuading students from being interested or staying focused.

## SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNING

The key learnings of my project have been some of my favorite pieces. Many of my key learnings I've already discussed in my outcomes. Leading by example, using failure as a springboard for success, and building on the past success of each individual student are just some of the ways that I see growth mindset being used in an effective fashion.

One key learning that I believe to be paramount in growth mindset is the individualization of the practices used. For an adult, integration of growth mindset into everyday use would be a long and arduous process. One would have to essentially un-learn all of their old practices to implement new ways to live, process, and think. All of those new strategies would obviously be personalized as well. With students, this line of thinking is even more important. Due to teachers generalizing the ways that they teach their content areas, the temptation can be for teachers to generalize the way that they present and teach how to have a growth mindset. And while certain strategies will translate to a whole group practice, it is imperative at the start to help the students to see how personal this is. When the learning that students have is personalized to their specific needs, especially at the beginning of implementation, it helps the students to take ownership of their learning. This in turn helps the students to be more autonomous with the way that they work to retain their skills. It is heavily important that students see the need to callback to that these skills that they have learned at an early age.

Another key learning that I picked up on while experimenting and researching was how important it is to start students on the correct path of learning and growing at the proper age. The middle school age child is usually the perfect age to begin learning. At that age, students know when they have messed up, have seen how other people react to their failure, and can problem solve for how to avoid that situation again. While in this highly formative time in their lives, it is

crucial that students learn how important growth from failure is. Students who learn this skill at such an early age have proved that they can truly take on different obstacles as they present themselves.

Lastly, I have seen the need to model what I expect from my students. As with any lesson or behavior, modeling is a highly effective method of helping students to fully understand the expectations of a classroom or role. What I have found is that modeling of growth mindset practices also helps the teacher to understand the difficulties that students might have as they try to learn and grow with their own styles. By modeling, teachers will see firsthand some of the difficulties and challenges that students find in their education.

## SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

The purpose of my project was to inform my thinking on the concept of growth mindset in middle school urban education and from the work that I've put in, I believe that I have done that. Growth mindset is still a fairly new concept in terms of implementation in the classroom. The three main ways that I sought to inform my thinking were in the differing perspectives that exist when it comes to growth mindsets, the factors and traits of urban and low income areas, and the actual implementation of strategies related to growth mindset in the classroom. What I added on as the project continued was the application of growth mindset practices into my own classroom so that, much like modeling, I could see firsthand how effective the things that I was learning were. The personal application turned out to be incredibly fruitful as I was able to ascertain a vast amount of information that I don't think would have been possible had I not actually tried the practices. It was very important to me that the strategies that I was talking and writing about in this project were things that were feasible to use in the classroom. Many times, I have seen literature that advocates for a certain practice in the classroom, but that would never actually be possible to implement.

My hope with this project is that it can help others to inform their thinking on the complexities of growth mindset and to see how important it is to start these mindsets at an early age. Students who see the need to be autonomous with their thinking and learning style will see so much more success later in life.



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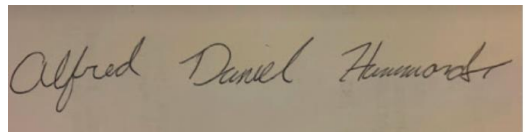
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A rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in cursive script on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Alfred Daniel Hammonds".

Alfred Daniel Hammonds

May 19, 2021