

MindsetMaker™ and LeaderKit Implementation

CASE STUDY

SCHOOL PROFILE

Fiske Elementary School is a school with 350 students in grades K-5, located in the Metro West suburbs of Boston. Despite its location in an affluent community of Wellesley, Fiske is a diverse school due to its status as a magnet school for the district's English language learners and its proximity to the town's low-income housing complex. Hence, Fiske is diverse with respect to socio-economics, language learning, and special education status.

OVERARCHING GOAL:

Close the achievement gap with high needs students (ELL, SPED, minority populations, and low income).

ACTION PLAN

The plan grew from a small staff-led team who had previously developed and implemented an anti-bullying initiative throughout the school. This small team was joined by the new incoming principal, who had previously done some growth mindset work in another school district. The plan took shape when the anti-bullying consultant for the school district started referencing Dr. Carol Dweck's growth mindset approach to learning and how this related to peer-to-peer mistreatment.

The anti-bullying plan was based on the idea that students could learn from their mistakes during social interactions, so behaviors could be changed and future mistakes could be avoided. The emphasis was on the learning without placing a judgment on students for their peer-to-peer mistreatment. It was this work that sparked an interest in the growth mindset.

Using components of the LeaderKit, the principal presented Fiske staff with the opportunity to learn and share more about Dr. Dweck's work. In one activity, staff took part in a "jigsaw sharing" activity. Following their selected readings and discussions, they decided to work on teacher praise in a year-long study. All staff agreed to examine when and how to praise students with the hopes of encouraging students to apply more effort, learn more, and show greater gains in achievement.

In this first year, in addition to components of the LeaderKit, *Mindset* was purchased for all staff. The expectation was that staff would read *Mindset* for greater understanding of Dr. Dweck's approach. News of the mindset work was also shared with parents through weekly newsletters, and a parent book group was formed to read and discuss *Mindset*.

The first year, the focus was on changing praise from performance-based to effort-based. Teachers practiced providing praise specific to effort and connecting student actions to outcomes. Staff shared their understandings, their confusion and reported on the challenge of changing their own mindsets away from performance-based, vague praise like "Good job."

"If I need to praise students for their efforts and find many of students completing assigned work with little effort, I now have to make work more challenging for some of my students, so I can praise them for their efforts."

Teacher observations were used to verify changes in practice and provide support. When the initial data was shared with the teachers, they saw that they needed more practice, deeper understanding, and more support. Using tools from the LeaderKit, a group of Fiske teachers created praise sentence frames to assist. One 5th grade teacher's comment uncovered an exciting realization. She said, "If I need to praise students for their efforts and find many of students completing assigned work with little effort, I now have to make work more challenging for some of my

students, so I can praise them for their efforts.”
Eureka!

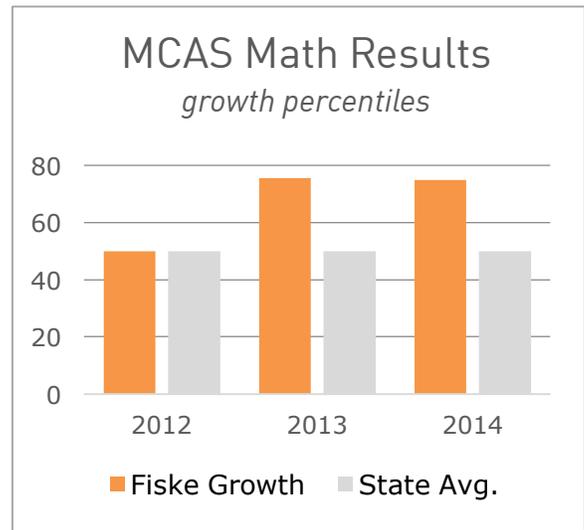
A second round of classroom observations showed a dramatic spike in effort-based praise. (See figure 1)



At the conclusion of year one, the teachers were encouraged by initial results and sought out more resources and tools to keep learning and improving. Fiske sought out and was awarded a local grant to use MindsetMaker™, an online professional learning course for all faculty and staff to use in the following school year.

The MindsetMaker™ course covered everything from planning, to assessment, to learning about a teacher’s own mindset and those of his/her students. Information gleaned during teacher discovery and practice was shared in person and online. At grade level meetings, in the teachers’ lounge, and throughout the hallways, staff discussed and questioned common teaching practices. The school’s new common vocabulary was forged from language presented in the videos, articles, and activities Fiske staff engaged in.

The teachers felt good about their newfound knowledge and skills, and were excited to see what standardized test scores revealed: teachers with growth mindsets cultivate students’ growth mindsets, which leads to increased motivation and higher achievement.

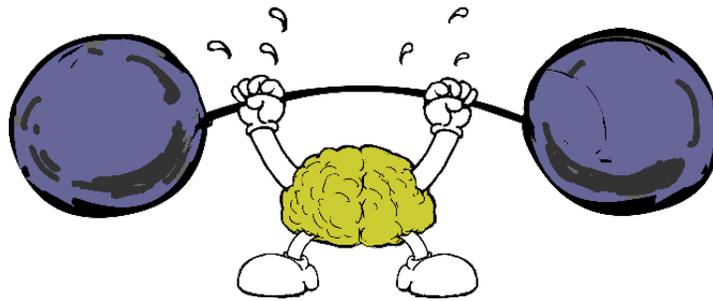


RESULTS

Both teacher-reported and standardized test gains were powerful. Student growth percentile in math MCAS scores rose dramatically in 2013 and were maintained in 2014. (See figure 2) Student growth percentiles show how much learning each student has achieved from year to year regardless of their level of proficiency. In Massachusetts, each child is placed in a cohort based on their test scores and then measured against their like-scoring peers in next school year. Typical, average growth in the state is 50, high growth is between 60-80 and very high growth is greater than 80. Many Fiske fourth and fifth graders realized student growth percentiles in the 90-range and the school aggregate is 75.

CONCLUSION

At Fiske, growth mindset discussions and continued individual and group professional development has become part of the school culture. In developing annual teacher goals, teachers often reference a growth mindset as part of their approach. The growth mindset culture has paid off in collegiality, student learning and achievement gains, and in closing the achievement gap for at-risk populations.



About Mindset Works

Mindset Works was co-founded by one of the world's leading researchers in the field of motivation, Stanford University professor Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D. and K-12 mindset expert Lisa S. Blackwell, Ph.D. The company translates psychological research into practical programs and services to help students and educators increase their motivation and achievement.

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