

One Teacher's Mindset Journey



November 4, 2015

Throughout the year, I plan to share with you the stories of teachers throughout the state who have implemented growth mindset strategies in their classrooms, schools and districts. My goal for all of us is to learn how these strategies have the ability to transform the possibilities for all of Florida's students. Susan Marino, the 2013-2014 Walton County School District Teacher of the Year, has shared her story below:

I was introduced to Carol Dweck's book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* as a gift from the Florida Department of Education during the 2015 Florida Teacher of the Year Roundtable in Orlando. We were tasked with reading the first two chapters before our July meeting, but I don't think there was a person in the room who was able to stop after the first two. Our discussions began within small groups and we quickly realized how simplistically powerful and life-changing the content of the mindset approach could be for ourselves. I related quickly to how I couldn't "get" geometry in high school and just went through the motions to survive. Another teacher mentioned his disassociation with sports due to perceived lack of athletic ability, and another on how difficult it was to speak in public. Eventually, through further year-long exploration of the mindset concept with the Florida Teacher Lead Network, we directed our focus on how to help students and fellow teachers use mindsets to transform our everyday efforts and resilience in the face of failures.

In addition to Spanish, my middle school students at Emerald Coast Middle School (ECMS) are learning about growth mindset – the belief that abilities can be developed through commitment, hard work and the right strategies and supports. Based on Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck's research, students with growth mindsets perceive mistakes and setbacks as opportunities for learning. They understand that their brain is like a muscle, and surmounting challenges makes their brain develop stronger connections for learning. I instruct my students that developing a growth mindset can be as simple as changing your thoughts or your words when faced with difficult tasks. Students are rewriting fixed mindset statements into more growth oriented ones. Our class' planner board has a section for reinforcing growth mindset messages to serve as visual reminders of the possibilities. In our hallway, all ECMS students pass by a "Change Your Mindset..." bulletin board for daily encouragement. We get a lot of brain exercise in "la clase de español," both when thinking about mindsets and using a second language!

You can continue reading Susan's mindset journey [here](#).

All the best,

Abbey Stewart

Teacher Liaison

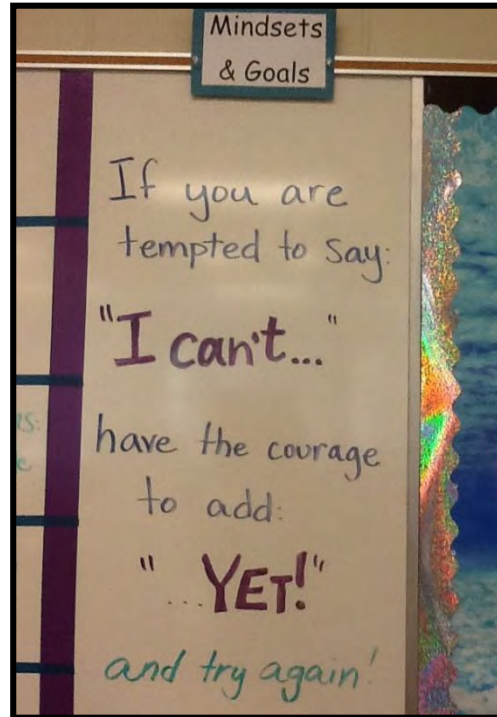
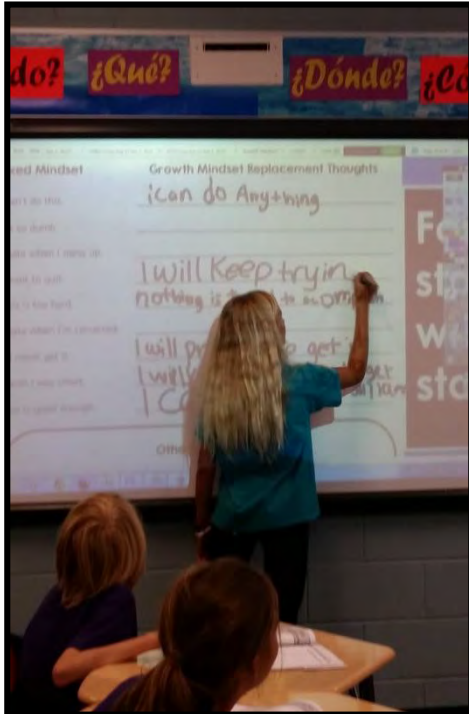
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Examples from Susan Marino's Classroom & School



Classroom Connections

Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!

The Florida Department of Education is proud to announce the 8th annual 2016 Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! initiative, scheduled for January 25-29, 2016. We are once again partnering with First Lady Ann Scott, the Florida Lottery and the Department of Environmental Protection to promote the importance of reading and literacy in Florida schools. This year's theme is "Literacy Changes Our World!" and we will focus on citizenship and civic engagement.

Students are invited to participate in a service project contest, through which students can become ambassadors of literacy and good citizenship in their schools, homes and communities. The deadline to submit projects is December 11, 2015 [online](#) or by contacting the Just Read, Florida! Office at JustRead@fldoe.org or 850-245-0503.

Harvest of the Month

Florida's Farm to School Harvest of the Month (HOM) is an educational program developed by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services that highlights a different Florida-grown product each month. HOM cultivates a healthy food and farm connection by increasing students' exposure to seasonal foods while also supporting local farmers. At the beginning of each month, classrooms that register will receive a collection of materials that highlight a different Florida fruit or vegetable that is in season during that month. By using the materials in your classroom, you are helping to connect students to the bounty of produce grown locally in the Sunshine State.

[Register](#) now for Spring 2016! Registration will close on November 30, 2015 and space is limited.

Visit the [Florida Farm to School webpage](#) for more information.

Hot Topics in Tallahassee

2015 Family Engagement in Education Month

Governor Rick Scott has proclaimed November as Florida Family Engagement in Education Month and the department is proud to host a number of internal and external events to celebrate the value of partnership with families in the lives of our students.

This year's theme, "One Team...One Dream," captures the essence of the relationship between all education partners as they unite to support the education of children.

To assist in providing Family Engagement in Education Month materials to your schools, a toolkit has been created that can be accessed at <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/family-community/activities-programs/parental-involvement.stml>. Governor Scott's proclamation can also be accessed via the website.