



Teacher Reflection and Action

Optimistic Thinking

Teacher Reflection: Fixed and Growth Mindset

Optimism: hopefulness and confidence about the future or the successful outcome of something.

As educators, we face the daily challenge of holding a sense of optimism, of hope and confidence, that every one of our students can fully learn the academic content and social engagement skills necessary for them to thrive in college, careers, and community life. One key to grounding our educational practices in realistic optimism is focused reflection, taking time to consider our current thinking and to adapt it as needed.

After viewing this 11-minute video, use the reflection questions below on your own or with a trusted colleague.

https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

REFLECTION

1. Which student(s) am I holding a fixed mindset about right now? What evidence shows that? (What have I thought, said, or done that helps me realize I am holding a fixed mindset about this student?)
2. How will I shift my attitude and actions today to develop a growth mindset about this student?

CONSIDER

- Being intentional about using growth mindset language when grading papers, commenting on assignments, and providing verbal feedback to students.
- Talking with parents about the importance of growth mindset and how they can nurture it in their children.
- Directly addressing the idea of fixed and growth mindset with students, helping them embrace the knowledge that they hold the power to change and grow in ways that are important to them.



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Modeling Optimism Through Storytelling

*"The longest journey a man must take is the eighteen inches from his head to his heart."
- Ramprasad Padhi*

Many inspirational authors and educators, including Steven Covey and Parker Palmer, have been inspired by this quote by Padhi. The power of personal narrative is unparalleled in our quest to capture people's attention, for helping them to remember what we want them to learn, and to promote a feeling of connection to us as educators and people. From our ancestors gathered around the evening fire, to families gathered around the dinner table, to enterprising motivational speakers, storytelling is widely understood to be a compelling and effective way to engage others in learning. The magic lies in moving beyond understanding this concept into truly feeling it: taking that vital 18" journey that connects our thinking selves to our deepest human experiences. Great teachers weave in elements of storytelling throughout the school day. "What's the example that will capture their attention as I launch this next unit of study?" "What anecdote can I share that might help them remember the process of long division or the story behind an important moment in history?" We notice our students' inspirational moments, thoughtful interactions, and daily triumphs and struggles, and then anchor them into our individual and collective memories by retelling them in the form of public appreciations. Michael Margolis says, "If you want to learn about a culture, listen to the stories. If you want to change the culture, change the stories." Intentionally developing an attitude and practice of Optimistic Thinking in our students is a way to help them change their stories. The stories we tell ourselves about the pleasures and pitfalls of daily life influence how we react. Being transparent with our students about how we built our skills toward holding a genuinely optimistic outlook on life increases their likelihood of doing the same.

WATCH:

Five-minute "Persuasion and the Power of Story" [video](#).

As you watch, record: What are the key elements of powerful stories? What makes stories memorable?

REFLECT

Who do I remember as a great storyteller? Why did their stories have an impact on me? When have I told a story that seemed to be valuable to my listeners? What contributed to that?

ACT

Use the Story Mapping Graphic Organizer to develop a 3–5 minute story based on your personal experiences involving growth and change, to share with your students.

STUDENT EXTENSION



After introducing them to the concept of our ability to build Optimistic Thinking, have students use the graphic organizer and conduct interviews with people they admire. Re-telling the resulting stories provides an opportunity to continue the discussion about intentionally developing skills that help people change and grow in positive ways.



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Story Mapping: My Journey

Sharing a compelling personal story will connect you, head and heart, with your students. Reflect on powerful experiences in your life that could make a meaningful story. As you do so, keep this in mind: “STAR moment” (Something To Always Remember): “What do you want the audience to feel? What do you want the audience to remember? What was the critical moment in the story? Make sure you know what message you want your audience to come away with, so that the story you’ve told is one your audience can retell, too.”

– Nance Duarte

BUILDING YOUR STORY: Web, write, weave

Prepare your own story to share with your students:

1. Watch the Marcus Wilson Journey Story [video](#). As you watch, record ideas or words that are the most compelling for you. What are his “STAR moments”? If you were only going to be able to share one minute of ideas from this story, what would the two or three most powerful thoughts or sentences be?
2. Consider any of these guiding questions...
 - Who or what helped you change for the better something about yourself or your life?
 - Who or what helped inspire you to pursue a particular direction or change?
 - How did that happen? Tell that story...
 - What obstacles did you overcome?
 - How did the struggle help make you who you are today?
 - What about this person or event helped you change?
 - What joy or satisfaction in your current life came from this?
3. Carefully reflect on the appropriateness of your story for your student audience. The line between personally compelling and “over sharing” is a vital one to draw.
4. Be transparent:
 - I felt strongly about (wanting to learn or do or become...)
 - o because (internal and external factors)
 - o and so...
5. Describe, using specific details, important elements that contributed to your accomplishment of this goal or change that you cared so deeply about. Naming the personal strengths that you used can help your students make similar connections for themselves.

Story Sharing Activity: Stories of Hope Reflection

Due: _____

INSTRUCTIONS:

Choose someone you look up to and admire to interview. Let them know that you're going to retell the story they share with you at school.

- Tell your interview subject some of what you've been learning about the power of practicing Optimistic Thinking.
- Ask them to think about someone or something that made a powerful difference in their life: a time when they made a choice to change that made their life better.
- Take notes or web to help capture the big ideas of their story, in the boxes below.

I interviewed _____

because _____

1. Describe a few things that you really admire about them and why. Ask if they can remember people or events in their life that helped them develop these characteristics.

2. What are some ways these characteristics helped your interview subject reach a goal or make a desired change in their life? How have these characteristics been helpful in being successful or feeling satisfied with life?

3. What advice or suggestions would your interview subject offer for someone who was trying to build these characteristics?

REFERENCES



Below is a list of resources that were referenced within this strategy document. You will find links to research and additional information that may be helpful as you continue your understanding of the content in this strategy.

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- Future of Story Telling. (2013, September 14). "Persuasion and the Power of Story: Jennifer Aaker."

Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AL-PAzrpqUQ>