



Helena College

Bringing out the best together



Like all good schools, at Helena College we are constantly reviewing our teaching and learning programmes and while there are times when these discussions focus on what we are teaching, the more important conversations are always about how students learn. One of the most interesting areas of the discussion about learning is the concept of mindsets.

Discussion around mindsets became prominent several years ago when many people read the book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, by Stanford University professor Carol Dweck.

Through her research Professor Dweck determined, the view that you adopt of yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life. This belief about ourselves often marks the difference between our willingness to be persistent and strive for success through innovation and creativity, or to accept our levels of achievement depend on who we are, and how we are made up. The terms for these two ways of thinking are a growth mindset and a fixed mindset.

A fixed mindset believes your qualities are set in stone. You are who you are and characteristics such as intelligence and creativity are fixed traits, rather than something that can be developed. Alternatively, a growth mindset is the belief that our personal traits can be cultivated through effort and we can grow and change through our varying experiences. In other words, we can learn and become better at something, over time and at any age.

As educators and parents, we should be encouraging a growth mindset in all our children. With a growth mindset, children are open to new ideas, to investigate, to enquire, to seek to understand more,

and to show what they know. A student with a growth mindset approaches new tasks as an opportunity and accepts, while sometimes searching into the unknown can be a challenge, and they might not always succeed, the benefits outweigh the risks.

The concern for those with a fixed mindset is they are often not prepared to seek out new ways of doing things, because what they know, what works for them and any deviation from this might lead to failure. Of course, this limits a student's opportunity for growth in his or her own learning.

At school and at home, we can help stimulate a growth mindset in students by considering the way we communicate with them. Providing feedback about something they have completed as simply good or bad, limits their thinking. Giving praise is important, but so too is encouraging children to think about the ways in which they approached tasks. Questions to encourage a growth mindset include:

- What was your strategy in planning for this test?
- Can you explain this answer in a different way?
- How could you find out more about this topic?
- What would happen if you added another variable?
- If you did this a different way, would the result be the same?
- Ok, so that didn't work out the way you hoped, what will you do differently next time?

At Helena College we aim to nurture lifelong learners. Developing a growth mindset is an important part of this journey.

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