

Developing a Growth Mindset

Dear Teachers

Your students do have natural talent, abilities and intelligence in some areas but that's not the end of the story. These things are not fixed traits. Some may have a gift for story writing, art, maths or sport, but it needs to be grown. Some may not be good at science, history or working with others...YET!

Whatever the case for each student in your class, the reality is that natural talent, abilities and intelligence are developed over time. Through effort, persistence, practice and focused attention.

The brain is a highly adaptive organ - it changes like a muscle through a process called neuroplasticity. From the cradle to the grave our brains are always changing. The malleable brain is the most interesting, meaningful discovery of the last 15 years that has a huge impact on the education of young people.

Help your students and help them to understand the growth mindset.
Smart is not something you are, it's something you get.
Fit is not something you are, it's something you get.
Good at sport is not something you are, it's something you get.

Jonathan Thurston had to learn to catch the football the same way everyone else does. Einstein learned how to start counting to 10, just like everyone else. Every skill we can perform has been acquired through applying ourselves to it -reading, walking, talking, swimming, riding a bike.

Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.

Benjamin Franklin

Stop telling your students that they are smart, gifted, talented, bright, clever or a "natural". This might "pump up their tyres" and make them feel good for a moment but it doesn't help them keep growing their abilities. They can't control how naturally gifted they are so don't praise them for it.

Instead, praise them for their efforts, persistence and the way they tackle challenges when they arise. They can control these things and this will grow their abilities. Real learning only occurs when it is hard, when it stretches them. As Master Shifu says in Kung Fu Panda 3, "*If you only do what you can do, you'll never be more than you are now.*"

How do students respond to the struggle of learning? How hard do they work at growing their talent, abilities and intelligence? Let's encourage the *process* of learning.

We should encourage the behaviour that we want to see the most. Value the *process*, more than the *performance*, then the performance will look after itself. What teachers understand and say makes a difference. Teach your students the growth mindset and help them thrive in learning and in life.

Sincerely
Luke McKenna - *a teacher who cares*

Key points

Whilst some students do have natural talents, abilities and intelligence in some areas, they are not fixed traits.

Natural talents, abilities and intelligence are developed over time through effort, persistence, practice and focused attention.

Smart is not something you are, it's something you get.

Fit is not something you are, it's something you get.

Good at sport is not something you are, it's something you get.

To foster a growth mindset praise them for their efforts, persistence and the way they tackle challenges that arise

Luke McKenna

Unleashing Personal Potential founder, Luke McKenna is an educator and author who specialises in working with schools to build growth mindsets, resilience, wellbeing and leadership for all students. Over the last 10 years, he has worked as a classroom teacher and school administrator. Since establishing Unleashing Personal Potential, Luke has worked with educators and students across Australian Primary and Secondary schools from the Independent, Catholic and Public sectors.

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