PERCEPTIONS OF 6TH GRADE CONTENT-AREA TEACHERS REGARDING

GROWTH MINDSET STRATEGIES

by
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the wonderful bunch of people I call my family, those here and those who have gone before us.

To my late and wonderful husband, David Wayne Lewis, the love of my life and father to my three amazing children. You always supported me in pursuing my passions. I stuck to the plan, Baby! I pray I have made you proud.

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Abstract

Background: Students in America face many challenges during their middle school years that social and emotional learning competencies can help. Growth mindset, one of the social and emotional learning competencies, has been defined as when people believe that their abilities can be advanced through dedication and hard work; that intelligence can be developed. Having a growth mindset can have a positive impact on student achievement. Teachers' ways of thinking and understanding are vital components of their instructional practice and are important influences on the way they conceptualize tasks, implement initiatives, and engage students. **Purpose**: The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of five sixth-grade teachers regarding growth mindset strategies and their perspectives regarding the implementation and effectiveness of such strategies. This study was guided by the research question: What are the perceptions of sixth-grade content-area teachers regarding growth mindset strategies and their influence on students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions? This study will contribute to the literature as it can draw attention to the perceptions of teachers and their role in the effective implementation of growth mindset strategies. **Methods:** This qualitative case study used a social network sample to select five sixth-grade teachers on a suburban middle school campus currently implementing a campus-wide growth mindset and social and emotional learning initiative. The campus initiative includes professional development, expert speakers, a campus character cadre, and school-wide social and emotional learning and growth mindset lessons. The researcher collected data from semi-structured interviews with each of the five participants, a follow-up member checking interview, and the researcher's reflective notes. After collecting the spoken words of the teachers from the

interviews, the researcher analyzed their responses to discover patterns and factors that contributed to understanding the perceptions of the teachers. From the data collected, the researcher organized the patterns and focus areas, conducted word frequency tests, and created word clouds to identify and illustrate emergent themes. **Results:** The findings revealed that sixth-grade teachers on a campus implementing social and emotional learning and growth mindset initiatives perceive such measures as important for student social, emotional, and academic success. However, though frequently promoted in the district and on the study campus, teachers perceived an apparent lack of explicit professional development to build the efficacy of educators in those areas. The teachers viewed building relationships, being accessible, and encouraging risk/mistake tolerance as key strategies in developing growth mindset thinking. Moreover, teachers believed any initiatives to develop mindset should include the right amount and block of time and detailed training for those interested. **Conclusion:** Teachers view the development of growth mindset thinking as important for the social and emotional health and academic success of students. However, explicit professional development is needed to support those educators interested in implementing the strategies and initiatives to develop those skills. This study can help to further the conversation and garner the support these teachers need to make a positive impact on the growth mindset of their students.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

If it were not for my spiritual grounding and growth mindset, I would not be where I am today. Growth mindset is when people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work, that brains and talent are just the starting point. This perspective creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great success in life (Dweck, 2006). It is the mindset that helped me persevere through the most difficult period of my life – the death of my husband from cancer. Though mine is an extreme application of growth mindset in one's life, it does explain why I am so passionate about understanding growth mindset. If having a growth mindset could help me through something as difficult as the death of a loved one, imagine what it could do for students facing difficulties in their lives. When I read Carol Dweck's Mindset: The New Psychology of Success book for the first time, a research study she did regarding depression and growth mindset had a profound effect on me. To summarize, she concluded that due to a growth mindset, the more depressed the students were, the more determined they were to confront their problems, keep up with their schoolwork, and go on with their lives (Dweck, 2006).

As an educator, I appreciate that teachers play a crucial role in shaping a student's confidence and outlook on school - and even life. Our students face a number of challenges during the middle school years such as puberty, bullying, dating and other issues. Many preteens struggle with anxiety or exhibit behavioral problems (O'Donnell, 2018). According to a recent UNICEF study, teens in the US rank in the bottom twenty-five percent among developed nations in measures of well-being, life satisfaction and relationship quality (Adamson, 2013). It is crucial that teachers understand the growth

mindset and do everything in their power to unlock that learning potential in their students. That is my goal in this study, to ascertain the perceptions of teachers regarding growth mindset and use that knowledge to help their students to improve their skills, achieve greater growth and be more successful. I want for our students that which worked for me. I want them to be able to persist and persevere in the face of adversity; to be resilient in the face of trials and tribulations. I want them to be the phoenix from the ashes of their lives.

Statement of the Problem

In understanding the concepts centered around this study, one must consider several key questions. Why have the topics of social and emotional learning and growth mindset garnered such intense interest in the educational arena? Can they really be the "silver bullet" to the problem of student achievement, performance, and success in life? Where do the issues of teacher perceptions, instructional strategies, and professional development fit into the conversation? An analysis of these issues is central to the research, development, and completion of this study.

Why has social and emotional learning and growth mindset become so crucial in the educational arena? As the understanding of social and emotional learning and growth mindset improves, their importance in the educational arena becomes more apparent. There is a growing demand from educators, business leaders, scientists, and parents to provide today's students with a more well-rounded education that prepares them for success in school, at work, and in life. The many individual and societal benefits of social and emotional learning have the potential to meet that growing demand (Dusenbury, Dermody, & Weissberg, 2018). As an organization, the Student Success Network (SSN),

has established a clear connection between social and emotional learning and growth mindset through their framework which involves two components – behaviors and mindsets. Within their behavior component lies self-advocacy, problem-solving, self-regulation - key interpersonal skills. Within the mindsets component lies growth mindset, belonging, and academic self-efficacy (Student Success Network, 1970). With the increased emphasis on student achievement and success in this nation's educational system, reaching high standards is important. Having a growth mindset can help meet those standards (McCutchen, Jones, Carbonneau, & Mueller, 2016).

Why should social and emotional learning and growth mindset be taught in schools? More than two decades of research demonstrate that education promoting social and emotional learning gets results (CASEL, 2019). Adding a social and emotional program to the school curriculum can lead to several real-life benefits for students (CASEL, 2019). School-based social and emotional learning programs not only improved children's social and emotional learning skills but also improved their mental health/behavioral problems and their standardized achievement test scores (AEI/Brookings, 2015).

How do teachers impact the process of developing a student's growth mindset thinking? A teacher's classroom approach shapes whether their students believe they are born with fixed academic skills or can grow them (Sparks, 2019). Educators who embrace the growth mindset approach are recognized as having adopted the viewpoint of a life-long learner always seeking to improve their lives and the lives of others. Educators, policymakers, and researchers agree that teachers have a significant impact on student learning. They also know that effective teachers do more than promote academic

learning—they teach the whole child. Teachers help promote the social and emotional

learning skills students need to be college and career ready, such as collaborating with

others, monitoring their own behavior, and making responsible decisions (Yoder, 2014).

What curriculum and instruction strategies and professional development

measures are needed to support the educators interested in utilizing social and emotional

learning and growth mindset with their students? It has been noted that teachers influence

student social and emotional competencies. They do this through the teaching practices

they implement in their classrooms and through the use of their own social and emotional

competencies (The SEL School, 2019). The Center on Great Teachers & Leaders

identified ten teaching practices, those that focus on social teaching practices and those

that focus on instructional teaching practices (The SEL School, 2019). Both sets of

practices represent instructional strategies that can be used in classrooms to support

positive learning environments, social-emotional competencies, and academic learning.

Just knowing these strategies exist is not enough; however, teachers need to know how to

effectively employ these strategies in their classrooms. That is where professional

development comes into play. If teachers are not aware of their own social and emotional

development and are not taught effective instructional practices for social and emotional

learning, they are less likely to educate students who thrive in school, careers, and life

(Schonert-Reichl, Kitil, & Hanson-Peterson, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine teacher perceptions regarding growth

mindset teaching strategies at the middle school level. The goal is to ascertain the

perceptions of teachers regarding growth mindset and their views regarding the

implementation and effectiveness of growth mindset strategies. This study will contribute to the literature as it can draw attention to the perceptions of teachers and their role in the effective implementation of growth mindset strategies. This understanding of teacher perceptions is an important first step in taking that knowledge and using it to identify any professional development measures necessary to support teachers in their mission to help students improve their skills, achieve greater growth and be more successful in school and out through effective social and emotional learning.

Research Question

What are the perceptions of sixth-grade content-area teachers regarding growth mindset strategies and their influence on students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be approached from different perspectives. From a personal standpoint, having a growth mindset has had a profoundly positive impact on my life. It has helped me thrive in the most challenging situations. From a practical standpoint, research shows that growth mindset instruction would boost the academic achievement of students (Roeser et al., 2013). Looking at it from a global point of view yields even more significant evidence for the study and implementation of growth mindset thinking. Individuals working from a growth mindset perspective find meaningful work, build better habits, and stay current in the future of work (MacKay, 2018). They are more likely to develop into positive and productive citizens of our global community. The insights gained from this study can inform and influence my personal life, the teaching profession, and society in general.

Personal - Having a growth mindset has helped me overcome some of the most challenging times of my life. When I am faced with an obstacle, I do not shrink away but instead push through. I want that for my students. When I began teaching sixth grade gifted and talented students, I was introduced to the concept of growth mindset and knew it was a topic I wanted to further study and understand. I could appreciate its value in helping my students achieve higher levels of performance in and out of the classroom. Based on what I have learned through my research, I believe it was my growth mindset thinking that helped me overcome tragedies in my life and still flourish (Dweck, 2006). I want the same for my students; to be able to handle the adversities in their lives and rise above them.

Practical – Social and emotional learning promotes important school outcomes, including improved academic achievement for students (Roeser et al., 2013). Teacher instructional practices influence the growth mindset of their students. Truly meaningful experiences for educators and students are possible only if and when social and emotional learning moves beyond the theoretical to the practical. Moreover, that means embedding social and emotional learning throughout the school all day. Not only does it boost academic achievement, but it also enhances connectedness, lowers the rate of problem behaviors such as aggression and negative affect, and improves psychosocial functioning in both children and adults (Frezza, 2018). Students with a growth mindset tend to have higher achievement and performance. Researchers are finding that teaching a growth mindset raises achievement test scores, as well as students' investment in and enjoyment of school (Dweck, 2010). The move toward practical application of social and emotional measures is expanding. A growing number of school-based social and emotional learning

programs have been found to be effective. States have adopted social and emotional learning standards. School districts have implemented effective social and emotional learning programs (McKown, 2017). The educational arena is embracing the positive outcomes of social and emotional learning and growth mindset thinking.

Big Picture – Inadequate levels of social and emotional functioning are increasingly recognized as central to many of our nation's public health problems - substance abuse, obesity, violence (Damon, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). Enhancing these social and emotional skills can have an impact in multiple areas and therefore has the potential for positively affecting individuals as well as community public health (Damon, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). More specifically, people with a growth mindset find meaningful work, build better habits, and stay current in the future of their work (MacKay, 2018). Growth mindset individuals tend to do better on the job, in relationships, and in life. They are typically mentally healthy individuals who can handle adversity in their lives in appropriate ways. On the national level, social and emotional learning enjoys bipartisan political support, perhaps because of the strong and consistent scientific evidence that it helps children and provides a foundation for productive citizenship (McKown, 2017).

Definition of Terms

The following definitions of key terms will enable the reader to better understand the context of this study.

Social and emotional learning: Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive

relationships, and make responsible decisions. CASEL identifies five social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2019).

Growth mindset: Growth mindset is when people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work, that brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment (Dweck, 2006). Growth mindset is a belief or attitude. It requires self-awareness in seeing one's control over the present and future, and could lead to responsible decision making (Gulbrandson, 2016).

Teaching strategies: Teaching strategies refer to the procedures, techniques, methods, and models that teachers employ in the classroom. They comprise the thoughtful planning and processes that a teacher uses for instruction, the series of activities and interactions teachers employ to facilitate student learning (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2012).

Perceptions: Perceptions are a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression; the way someone thinks or feels. (Cambridge Business English Dictionary: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Dispositions: Dispositions are patterns of actions, demonstrated over time. They encompass a teacher's attitudes, values, interests, self-concept, and motivation (Hunzicker, 2013).

Conceptual Framework for the Study

In identifying the theoretical framework for the concept of growth mindset, several theories come into play - theories such as Bandura's (2001) social cognitive

theory and Dweck's implicit theories of intelligence – incremental and entity (Dweck and Leggett, 1988). Social cognitive theory provides a framework to explain the way individuals learn and behave through a triad of reciprocal influences – behavior, environment, and cognitive (Bandura, 2001). Implicit theories of intelligence are the beliefs that individuals hold concerning the malleability of personal characteristics such as intelligence, ability, and personality (Dweck and Leggett, 1988).

In understanding how Bandura's social cognitive theory came into existence, one must recognize that before Bandura developed his social cognitive theory, he formed two other theories – observational learning theory and social learning theory (Bandura, 1986). These precursors to the social cognitive theory lacked the inclusivity of the motivational and cognitive processes. Once developed, Bandura's social cognitive theory included each of these components as well as the key social and emotional learning concepts of goal-setting, self-efficacy, and self-regulation (Bandura, 1986). The social cognitive theory explains a reciprocal determination, that behavior changes as a result of interaction between the three factors – behavior, environment, and cognition. The behavior factor involves self-regulated learning through adaptation and the use of strategies. It includes one's skills, practices and self-efficiency as derived through self-observation, self-judgement, and self-reaction. The environmental factor involves the learning environment and classroom setting. It includes culture, social norms, one's access to the community, and one's influence on others. The cognitive factor, also referred to as the personal factor, involves the affective state of self-efficacy as influenced by one's performance and physiological state as well as the observation of peers, teachers, and

self. It includes one's knowledge, expectations, and attitudes and has an influence on one's thoughts and actions (Bandura, 2001).

Dweck's implicit theories of intelligence fall into two categories – entity and incremental. In Dweck's entity implicit theory of intelligence, individuals believe that a given personal attribute is largely a fixed entity that is difficult to change and develop (Dweck and Leggett, 1988). In contrast, in Dweck's incremental implicit theory of intelligence, individuals believe that personal attributes are relatively malleable, amenable to change and development (Dweck and Leggett, 1988). This incremental theory of intelligence conceives of intelligence as cultivatable; that individuals may become more intelligent through their efforts. On the ontological level, this malleable theory sees human attributes as dynamic properties that can be developed. On the epistemological level, to understand the dynamic nature of the human reality, one cannot rely solely on the measurement of human attributes at a particular moment in a particular context but rather understand the processes that mediate behavior and the behavior that mediates the outcomes (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995).

Dweck has come to use the terms growth mindset and fixed mindset to represent her incremental and entity implicit theories. The incremental implicit theory of growth mindset explains the increased self-regulatory processes evident in goal setting (Hanson, Bangert, & Ruff, 2016). Growth mindset theory is part of the social cognitive model of motivation and learning as it describes the learner's need for a belief in establishing and maintaining a sense of prediction and control over one's experience in the world (Hanson. 2016). These key components of social and emotional learning when paired with Dweck's (2006) incremental implicit theories of intelligence helped shape the

framework for growth mindset theory. Based on this explanation of the development of the social cognitive theoretical framework and its influence on implicit theory development, one can clearly see how Dweck (2006) established the growth mindset concept and theory.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

Introduction

This study focuses on growth mindset, a concept identified to be in the realm of social and emotional learning. It encompasses the idea of teaching the whole child – not just academically, but socially and emotionally as well. This review of literature explores six general concepts – growth mindset, social and emotional learning, culturally responsive teaching, teacher perceptions, teaching strategies, and professional development - in its analysis of established research and literature on the topic of growth mindset teaching strategies and the perceptions teachers have in regard to their efficacy in improving student knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Growth Mindset

Growth mindset is the belief that one's basic qualities are things one can cultivate through one's efforts, that everyone can change and grow through application and experience (Dweck, 2016). In her book, Dweck (2016) contends that we do not just "get" a growth mindset. We move toward it by making a journey. We first must understand that we are really a mixture of the two mindsets – fixed and growth. Our task is to understand what triggers our fixed mindset and how to handle those triggers. Just knowing about growth mindset can cause a big shift in the way people think about themselves and their lives.

Dweck asserts that a growth mindset will help produce perseverance and resilience, two qualities that could alter the trajectory of student engagement in today's society into a more positive direction. Dr. Dweck and her Stanford colleagues accumulated a body of evidence that demonstrates that a growth mindset encourages

children to construe failures and setbacks as opportunities to learn and improve rather than as evidence they are permanently lacking in ability (Duckworth & Eskreis-Winkler, 2013). In her "mindset and depression" study Dweck found that "the *more* depressed people with growth mindset felt, the *more* they took action to confront their problems…the worse they felt, the more determined they became!" When they taught people the growth mindset, it changed the way they reacted to their depressed mood (Dweck, 2016).

According to Dweck (2016), growth-oriented teaching unleashes children's minds. Great teachers believe in the growth of their students' intellect and talent and are fascinated with the process of learning. They maintain high standards and a nurturing atmosphere. They teach students how to reach those high standards (Dweck, 2016). Renowned educators, Jaime Escalante's and Marva Collins' growth mindsets encouraged them to not underestimate their students' potential to develop. Each of them taught their students to overcome immense obstacles to achieve academic success. For their socio-economically disadvantaged students, this was a life changing lesson. Dweck (2016) used the example of Marva Collins to illustrate that a great teacher is honest, firm, and shows that she cares about the success of her students. Another study focusing on the influence of teachers on growth mindset, the Falko Rheinberg study, found that teachers who preach and practice a growth mindset produce students who perform at higher levels than teachers who preach and practice a fixed mindset (Rheinberg, 2001).

Educational Context of Growth Mindset

With the increased emphasis on student achievement and success in this nation's educational system, reaching high standards is important. Having a growth mindset can

help meet those standards. Having a growth mindset helps with greater future academic

achievement (McCutchen, Jones, Carbonneau, & Mueller, 2016). Many studies have

been conducted exploring the effectiveness of growth mindset practices in the classroom

setting. Such studies include Zakrajsek (2017), who examined whether reading books out

loud to a group of students could promote a growth mindset. In Education Week's

"Studies Hit on Ways" (2014), Carissa Romero presented new research from three

studies which utilized interventions to develop growth mindset and suggested a method

of scaling mindset findings to be effective at increasing student achievement and for

practical use in schools. One of the studies noted that teaching students that intelligence

can be developed – that, like a muscle, it grows with hard work and good strategies – can

help students view struggles in school not as a threat but as an opportunity to grow and

learn. They can move from thinking they are dumb into knowing that hard work and good

strategies will make their brain stronger (Yeager, Walton, & Cohen, 2013). In another

study, rigorous randomized experiments using brief messages and exercises designed to

reinforce this growth mindset improved student achievement over several months

(Paunesku, Walton, Romero, Smith, Yeager, & Dweck, 2015). Hochanadel and

Finamore (2015), in a study conducted in collaboration with the U.S. Army and the

University of Pennsylvania, examined what educators can do to foster grit and a growth

mindset as a predictor of retention and persistence. Tecker, Quiroz, Carlos, and Webb

(2017) conducted a study that examined teacher and student perspectives of the

effectiveness of various growth mindset instructional strategies and achievement results

after a growth mindset intervention was conducted by the classroom teachers. Nagle and

Taylor (2017) used a qualitative self-study to document the impact of the implementation

of a personal learning plan in developing a growth mindset in middle school students. Both Mrazeks, Ihm, Molden, Zedelius, and Schooler (2018) noted, in their article, the results of five studies testing how the growth mindset of self-regulation can change effort in meaningful ways that may affect the willingness to attempt challenging tasks and perseverance.

Growth Mindset and Grit

The constructs of grit and mindset have been brought into focus among educators seeking to shape non-cognitive skills to positively impact measures of success from academic achievement to life outcome. Recent evidence suggests that the two constructs are moderately correlated (Myers, Wang, Black, Bugescu, & Hoeft, 2016). It is important to understand the uniqueness and similarities of growth mindset, grit, and social-emotional learning in order to improve measurement and understand their implementation as this may help to break these non-cognitive skills down into manageable parts allowing them to be subject to intervention (Myers, Wang, Black, Bugescu, & Hoeft, 2016). In studies of school-aged children, Duckworth and her colleagues found positive associations between grit and growth mindset, leading the authors to speculate that growth mindset may contribute to the propensity for goal commitment and sustained effort (Duckworth and Eskreis, 2013). Therefore, shaping a growth mindset may be an intervention pathway to help an individual develop grit. As researchers have found, someone who is gritty 'approaches achievement as a marathon' (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). These individuals are not deterred by boredom or setbacks, but rather they remain steadfast toward their goals (Duckworth et

al., 2007). Motivation for the gritty individual is long-term, whether that is to be a top-notch researcher or to win an Olympic gold medal.

A person with a growth mindset also believes in the efficacy of hard work and dedication to improve their abilities, but may not necessarily hold a definitive reward in mind as the outcome. Instead, these individuals self-regulate their learning on a regular basis, characterized by goal setting, goal operating and goal monitoring (Burnette et al., 2013). In their study, these researchers sought to further understand the similarities and differences between grit and growth mindset since growth mindset is a belief system that favors hard work and performance monitoring and grit is a combination of long-term effort. Both grit and growth mindset are related to staving off distractions, whether it be in pursuit of a goal or learning in general (Burnette et al., 2013). Though the research of Myers et al. (2016) is one of the first of its kind to explore similarities and differences of neural mechanisms of these two noncognitive constructs, it does have some limitations. As more attention is brought to these skills in education, further validation in larger samples will be necessary in order to appropriately accommodate diverse populations before beginning to think about widespread translation to intervention. They did demonstrate that both grit and growth mindset show associations with cognitive-behavioral control networks (Myers et al., 2016). Their efforts also brought forth the awareness that updating and regulating learning strategies based on new information is critical to learning. The knowledge gained from studies such as theirs may help develop neurobiological models of non-cognitive skills relevant to education. The new models can serve as a step to validating the brain basis of non-cognitive skills in order to better understand targeted interventions and more generally, the development of skills such as

grit and growth mindset. The models could also complement similar models of academic skills, such as for reading and math, that have attracted far more attention to date (Myers et al., 2016). The research conducted by Myers et al. (2016) focused on the neurobiological connections between growth mindset and grit. The combined works of Dweck (2006) and Duckworth (2010) approached the association between the two attitudes from another angle – hope. In regard to grit, hope is the expectation that our own efforts can improve our future. It has nothing to do with luck and everything to do with getting up again (Duckworth, 2010). It is this optimistic approach to interpreting adversity that aligns with Carol Dweck's (2006) growth mindset research. Students with a growth mindset are grittier than students with a fixed mindset. Growth mindset and grit go together (Duckworth, 2010).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) emerged as a major concept in this review of literature due to the many common characteristics it shares with the conceptual frameworks for social-emotional learning and growth mindset theory. Embedded throughout the body of knowledge for each of these topics are the concepts of environment, emotion, academics, culture, norms, and society to name a few. A more comprehensive analysis of research and literature on the framework and foundation of culturally responsive teaching can serve to further one's understanding of these crossover concepts.

Culturally responsive teaching has been defined many times and in many ways. It has been defined as a method that necessitates inclusion and authenticity one that emphasizes that all people, especially teachers, should learn about and respect

themselves, one another, and all other people in honor of their many diverse cultural characteristics (Brown, 2007). Gay (2002) defined culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. Culturally responsive teaching is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and cultural frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have a higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly (Gay, 2000). Culturally relevant teaching is also defined as a pedagogy of opposition specifically committed to collective as well as individual empowerment (Ladson-Billings, 1995). A generally held misconception is that culturally responsive teaching is just another name for multiculturalism. Some confuse culturally responsive teaching with diversity and inclusion. But in reality, culturally responsive pedagogy offers students opportunities in the classroom to develop the cognitive skills and habits of mind that would prepare them to take on more advanced academic tasks. It elevates the learning capacity of students (Gunn, 2018). Culturally responsive pedagogy is when students are engaged in complex thinking – their brains grow (Gay, 2010).

Five Tenets of Culturally Responsive Teaching

After analyzing the work of Gay, Ladson-Billings, and Nieto in developing a conceptual framework for culturally responsive teaching, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) determined that there are five fundamental tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy. The five tenets they identified were identity and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching the whole child, and student-teacher relationships.

First, the tenet of identity and achievement includes the concepts of identity development, cultural heritage, multiple perspectives, affirmation of diversity, and public validation of home-community cultures. The concepts included in this tenet take into account the identities of both the teacher and the student as it is the belief that students and teachers cannot be separated from their culture. Under this tenet, culturally responsive teaching clearly lets students know that individually and collectively their voices are heard, that they matter, and that their presence and contributions are valued (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011). This embracing of diversity affirms it as an asset and begins to diminish the idea that the non-White model is wrong or inferior. It forces one to understand that all races are valuable (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011).

Second, the tenet of equity and excellence addresses the concepts of dispositions, incorporation of multicultural curriculum content, equal access, and high expectations. Simply put, equity involves providing students with what they need. It is not equal opportunity as equal opportunity does not acknowledge that students have different needs. In the incorporation of multicultural content, educators are cautioned not to be guilty of only the simplistic, symbolic, and meaningless tasks of eating ethnic and cultural foods, dancing, singing, and reading folktales. Rather, be deliberate and intentional in bringing students and faculty from a variety of cultures into the academic environment. The focus should not be on cultural inclusions during a specific time of year but on interweaving the acknowledgement and inclusion of cultures throughout the entire academic process (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011).

Third is the tenet of developmental appropriateness which includes the concepts of learning styles, teaching styles, and cultural validation of the psychological needs of

motivation, morale, engagement, and collaboration. The culturally responsive educator must know where students are in their cognitive development and how diversity in culture informs developmental appropriateness. This tenet not only focuses on the implementation of activities designed to meet the cognitive, emotional, social, and psychological needs of the students, it also integrates teaching styles and student learning styles. Under this tenet, the culturally responsive educator is cognizant of the dominant and sometimes racist, non-inclusive ideology prevalent in the American education system. While teachers must practice within the context of this standardized curriculum, they can also embrace opportunities to incorporate additional views of achievement to allow those who do not experience achievement through the standard curriculum to obtain success. Good developmentally appropriate pedagogy is more than teaching content. It is about teaching students so that they are able to learn and transfer such learning into various other environments (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011). This tenet is a call for more than just an awareness about discrimination and cultural difference. Teachers have to possess sound "pedagogical knowledge and skill as well as the courage to dismantle the status quo" (Gay, 2010).

The fourth tenet, teaching the whole child, is closely related to developmental appropriateness. It is a theme that includes the concepts of skill development in a cultural context, home-school-community collaboration, learning outcomes, supportive learning community, and empowerment. This tenet notes how teachers should be sensitive to how culture, race, and ethnicity influence the academic, social, emotional, and psychological development of a student. Teaching the whole child not only entails recognizing the student's cultural group behaviors but also their individual behaviors as well. When

students observe a teacher's desire to learn about them beyond the classroom, it can have enormous power to motivate and invite learning. Children bring a wealth of culturally-based ways of doing, seeing, and knowing to school (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011). These funds of knowledge - the essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information that households use to survive, to get ahead, or to thrive represent a potential major social and intellectual resource for the schools (Moll, 1992). The astute culturally responsive educator leverages these "funds of knowledge" into academic achievement for the child (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011).

The fifth tenet in culturally responsive teaching is student-teacher relationships. This theme includes the concepts of caring, relationships, interaction, and classroom atmosphere. It recognizes that teachers are an important significant other in the lives of students because of the amount of time spent in schools. Students need to know teachers care. Teachers should recognize and respect their students for who they are as individuals and as members of their cultural group (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011). Understanding the link between culture, communication and cognition is crucial to successful student-teacher relationships. The culturally responsive educator demonstrates a connectedness with all their students and encourages that same connectedness between their students. Together, they build a classroom community making it a safe place in which to nurture everyone's cultural identity. This theme notes that teachers need to expand their individual classroom to be inclusive of the entire school community through collaboration with colleagues and the surrounding community (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011). Providing caring interpersonal relationships is a hallmark of the culturally responsive pedagogy teacher (Gay, 2010).

Three Propositions of Culturally Responsive Teaching

In seeking to further understand the conceptual framework for culturally responsive pedagogy, one could take a closer look at the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995). In her handling of the topic, she described the pedagogy she studied as "culturally relevant" and central to the academic success of children who have not been well served by our nation's public schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995). She defines culturally relevant teaching as a pedagogy of opposition committed to collective as well as individual empowerment. Her framework for culturally relevant pedagogy is centered around three criteria or propositions – students must experience academic success, students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Proposition one- academic success - requires culturally responsive teachers to attend to students' academic needs, not merely make them feel good. They should get the students to choose academic excellence as they must achieve academic success. Proposition two – cultural competence – requires that students maintain some cultural integrity as well as academic excellence. Culturally responsive educators utilize students' culture as a vehicle for learning. Finally, proposition three – critical consciousness – requires that students develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that encourages them to critique cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities. Culturally responsive teachers expect their students to engage the world and others critically (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Character Profile of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Although called by many different names such as culturally relevant, sensitive, centered, congruent, reflective, mediated, contextualized, synchronized, and responsive, the ideas about why culturally responsive teaching is important in making classroom instruction more consistent with the cultural orientations of ethnically diverse students and how it can be done are all the same (Gay, 2010). In developing a character profile of culturally responsive teaching Gay (2010) identified eight descriptors, distinguishing traits, or qualities. She characterized culturally responsive teaching as validating, comprehensive and inclusive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, emancipatory, humanistic, and normative and ethical.

Culturally responsive teaching is validating in that it acknowledges the legitimacy of cultural heritages, builds bridges between home and school experiences, uses a wide variety of instructional strategies, teaches students to praise cultural heritages, and incorporates multicultural information in all subjects taught in schools (Gay, 2010). Culturally responsive teaching is comprehensive and inclusive in that it teaches the whole child by developing their intellectual, social, emotional, and political knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. It is multidimensional in that it encompasses cross-curricular content, learning contexts, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, classroom management, and performance assessments (Gay, 2010). Culturally responsive teaching is empowering in that it enables students to be better human beings and more successful learners. This empowerment translates into academic competence, personal confidence, courage, and the will to act. Culturally responsive teaching is transformative in that it defies the conventions of traditional educational

practices with respect to ethnic students of color and is very explicit about respecting

their culture and experiences. It then uses these experiences as resources for teaching and

learning (Gay, 2010). Culturally responsive teaching is emancipatory in that it releases

the intellect of students of color from the constraining manacles of mainstream canons of

knowledge and ways of knowing by making authentic knowledge about different ethnic

groups accessible to students. The validation, information, and pride this generates is

both psychologically and intellectually liberating (Gay, 2010). Culturally responsive

teaching is humanistic in that it is ultimately concerned with the human welfare, dignity,

and respect of the various individuals and groups who comprise the United States and the

world. Finally, culturally responsive teaching is normative and ethical since culture and

education are inseparably linked. It is both the normal and the right thing to do to

incorporate cultural diversity into educational processes designed for ethnically, racially,

and socially diverse students (Gay, 2010).

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) emerges as a major concept in this review of

literature due to the connections between growth mindset and the identified competencies

of social and emotional learning. The competency of self-awareness explicitly recognizes

a growth mindset as central to the ability accurately assess one's strengths and

limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism (CASEL, 2019).

Social and emotional learning also shares several key characteristics with the conceptual

frameworks for culturally responsive teaching and growth mindset theory. Embedded

throughout the body of knowledge for each of these topics are the concepts of

environment, emotion, academics, culture, norms, and society to name a few.

What is Social and Emotional Learning?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2019). Social and emotional learning enhances students' capacity to integrate skills, attitudes, and behaviors to deal effectively and ethically with daily tasks and challenges. CASEL's integrated framework promotes intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competence. There are five core social and emotional learning competencies that can be taught in many ways across many settings – self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2019).

Self-awareness is the ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. It is the ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset." Self-awareness includes the concepts of identifying emotions, accurate self-perception, recognizing strengths, self-confidence, and self-efficacy (CASEL, 2019). Grit, growth mindset, and mindfulness are all elements of social and emotional learning by this definition. Growth mindset also entails setting and achieving goals, which is a key component of another of the social and emotional learning competencies, self-management. As growth mindset is defined as a belief or attitude, it requires self-awareness in seeing one's control over the present and future, and could lead to responsible decision making (CASEL, 2019).

Self-management is the ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. It is the ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals. Self-management includes the concepts of impulse control, stress management, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal-setting, and organizational skills (CASEL, 2019).

Social awareness is the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It is the ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. Social awareness includes the concepts of perspective-taking, empathy, appreciating diversity, and respect for other (CASEL, 2019).

Relationship skills is the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. It includes the ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed. Relationship skills include the concepts of communication, social engagement, relationship-building, and teamwork (CASEL, 2019).

Responsible decision-making is the ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. It is the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others. Responsible decision-making includes the concepts of identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, evaluating, reflecting, and ethical responsibility (CASEL, 2019).

Impact of Social and Emotional Learning

Findings from more than twenty years of research from multiple fields and sources demonstrate that education promoting social and emotional learning gets results (CASEL, 2019). Social and emotional learning interventions lead to academic outcomes and improved behaviors. Based on a meta-analysis of 213 studies involving more than 270,000 students, social-emotional learning interventions that address CASEL's five core competencies increased students' academic performance by 11 percentile points, compared to students who did not participate in such social-emotional learning programs. Students participating in social-emotional learning programs also showed improved classroom behavior, an increased ability to manage stress and depression, and better attitudes about themselves, others, and school (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). The impact of social and emotional learning has demonstrated that it can be long term and global in that it can have a positive impact up to 18 years later on academics, conduct problems, emotional distress, and drug use (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Social and emotional learning programs yield multiple real-life benefits for the students involved. Research shows that 57% more students in schools with a social-emotional learning program improved their skills compared to students in schools without a social-emotional learning program, 27% more improved their academic performance, and 24% more improved their emotional well-being and social behavior (Mahoney, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2018). Evidence also indicates that social-emotional learning programs can improve lifetime outcomes, help reduce poverty, and improve economic mobility for participating students. There are statistically significant associations between social and emotional skills in kindergarten

and key outcomes for young adults years later. Social-emotional learning decreases the likelihood of them living in or being on a waiting list for public housing, receiving public assistance, having any involvement with police before adulthood, and ever spending time in a detention facility (Damon, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). Social-emotional learning competencies are critically important for the long-term success of all students in today's economy. They even provide a good return on their investment. Research has shown that the average return on investment for six evidence-based social-emotional learning programs is 11 to 1, meaning for every dollar invested there is an $11 return (Belfield, Bowden, Klapp, Levin, Shand, & Zander, 2015).

Social and Emotional Learning Approaches

Research has shown that social and emotional development can be fostered and social-emotional skills can be taught using a variety of approaches such as explicit social and emotional learning skill instruction, teaching instructional practices, integration with academic curriculum areas, and organizational, culture, and climate strategies (CASEL, 2019). Effective social-emotional learning approaches often incorporate four elements represented by the acronym SAFE – sequenced, active, focused, and explicit. Sequenced indicates that the approach involves connected and coordinated activities to foster skills development. Active describes the active forms of learning to help students master new skills and attitudes. Focused is the component that emphasizes developing personal and social skills. And finally, explicit which refers to targeting specific social and emotional skills (CASEL, 2019). The employment of multiple approaches across multiple settings supports the premise that the educational goals of social and emotional learning are more likely to be achieved when evidence-based approaches are used to reach students in all

settings where they spend their time — in classrooms, throughout the school, in the home, and out in the community.

The Social and Emotional Learning Classroom

Social and emotional learning in the classroom takes shape in a variety of ways. It is promoted through explicit instruction, often using an evidence-based program, and should also be integrated across classroom instruction and academic curriculum. Social-emotional learning plays an important role in classroom climate—for example, how teachers build relationships with students, how students build relationships with each other, and how conflict and discipline are addressed (CASEL, 2019). Nurturing, safe classrooms with caring teacher-student relationships are critical to social and emotional learning. These types of supportive classrooms depend on adults who themselves have strong social-emotional learning skills (Jones et al, 2015) and can effectively use evidence-based strategies for developing students' social and emotional competencies in culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate ways. These strategies include explicit social and emotional learning instruction, embedding social-emotional learning into academics, and elevating student voice (CASEL, 2019).

The Social and Emotional Learning School, Family and Community

Students interact and learn not only in classrooms, but throughout school hallways, cafeterias, playgrounds, school buses, etc. A school's policies, procedures, physical structures, collective values, norms, relationships, and overall climate shape how students engage in social and emotional learning. Additionally, research indicates that school leaders who model, support, and prioritize social and emotional learning may be

the single most important factor for the successful implementation of social and emotional learning programs (Devaney et al., 2006).

Students are better able to learn and apply social and emotional learning knowledge when it is practiced and reinforced both in the school and the home. When schools and families cultivate authentic partnerships, social-emotional learning programs are more effective (Albright & Weissberg, 2010) and are linked to improved academic performance, increased student engagement, and reduced school dropout rates (Greenberg et al., 2003).

Community partners and organizations can work jointly with schools to align efforts, contribute to social and emotional learning, and strengthen the impact of social-emotional learning both in and out of school (CASEL, 2019). Similarly, schools can expand upon the efforts of community partners that focus on social and emotional learning by reinforcing effective strategies during the school day.

Teaching Strategies: Curriculum and Instruction

Another major concept to come from my review of the literature was the array of teaching strategies identified as being effective in the development of growth mindset. These curriculum and instruction strategies range from those associated with the teaching practices teachers employ to the quality of their interactions with students. They also include a variety of interactions between the students themselves.

Dweck's studies (2006) demonstrated that teaching students that their brains were capable of changing when faced with challenges helped them persevere (Hochanadel and Finamore, 2015). During the school year is the perfect time for teachers to reinforce routines, cultivate strong work habits, and build classroom communities using mindset

strategies. One growth mindset strategy is to teach students about brain development and how learning affects the brain. Incorporating active learning methods such as memory retrieval, elaboration, reflection, and generation are also suggested instructional strategies for developing a growth mindset (Hochanadel and Finamore, 2015). Other practical applications of growth mindset strategies included normalizing mistakes, reframing language to be more process-oriented, teaching positive self-talk and using data and reflection to set and track student progress towards a goal. Research indicates that involving students in the learning process from the beginning encourages them to invest in their learning success (Robinson, 2017).

Ten Teaching Practices

After conducting an extensive review of existing research, the Center on Great Teachers & Leaders identified ten teaching practices that occurred most frequently across the CASEL programs and scholars they analyzed (Yoder, 2014). These ten practices can be divided into two types of teaching approaches: those that focus on social teaching practices and those that focus on instructional teaching practices. Both sets of practices represent instructional strategies that can be used in classrooms to support positive learning environments, social-emotional competencies, and academic learning. Although both sets of teaching practices incorporate aspects of social and instructional interactions, social teaching practices focus on the development of social and emotional skills and providing the structures for students to learn those skills, while the instructional interactions provide opportunities for students to apply and further develop their social and emotional learning competencies (Yoder, 2014).

Social Teaching Practices

The first teaching practice - student-centered discipline - refers to the types of classroom-management strategies teachers use in their classrooms. In order to be effective at student-centered discipline, teachers need to use disciplinary strategies that are developmentally appropriate for their students and that motivate students to want to behave in the classroom. The second teaching practice - teacher language - refers to how the teachers talk to students. Teachers should encourage student effort and work, restating what the student did and what that student needs to do in order to improve. Teacher language should not be simply praise but should encourage students (Yoder, 2014). The third teaching strategy - responsibility and choice - refers to the degree to which teachers allow students to make responsible decisions about their work in their classroom. The teacher creates a classroom environment where democratic norms are put into place and where students provide meaningful input into the development of classroom norms and procedures as well as the academic content or how the academic content is learned. The fourth teaching strategy - warmth and support - refers to the academic and social support that students receive from their teacher and from their peers. The teacher creates a classroom where the students know that teachers care about them. They, in turn, care about one another (Yoder, 2014). The fifth teaching strategy - cooperative learning - refers to a specific instructional task in which teachers have students work together toward a collective goal. Teachers ask students to do more than group work. Students are actively working with their peers around content in a meaningful way. To implement cooperative learning effectively, teachers include five basic elements - positive interdependence, individual accountability, promoting one another's successes, applying

interpersonal and social skills, and group processing where the group discusses progress toward achieving a goal.

Instructional Teaching Practices

The sixth teaching strategy - classroom discussions - refers to conversations students and teachers have around content. During classroom discussions, teachers ask more open-ended questions and ask students to elaborate on their own thinking and on the thinking of their peers (Yoder, 2014). The seventh teaching strategy - self-reflection and self-assessment - are instructional tasks whereby teachers ask students to actively think about their own work. To self-reflect on their work, teachers should ask students to assess their own work. Here the teacher does not simply provide the answers and students look to see if they got the answer right or wrong. Rather, students need to learn how to assess more rigorous work against performance standards that the teacher has provided or those co-created in the classroom. Additionally, the process should not stop there. Students also need to think about how to improve their work on the basis of their self-assessments. The eighth teaching strategy - balanced instruction - refers to teachers using an appropriate balance between active instruction and direct instruction, as well as the appropriate balance between individual and collaborative learning. Through balanced instruction, teachers provide students with opportunities to directly learn about the material as well as engage with the material (Yoder, 2014). The ninth teaching strategy - academic press - refers to a teacher's implementation of meaningful and challenging work. It is an atmosphere where academic expectations focus on the teacher's belief that all students can and will succeed. Students in this setting should sense that academics are extremely important, that the teacher wants them to succeed, and that they have to exert

effort in challenging work in order to succeed. The tenth teaching strategy - competence building - occurs when teachers help develop students' social-emotional competencies systematically through the typical instructional cycle. This cycle involves establishing the goals/objectives of the lesson, introducing the new material/modeling, engaging students in group and individual practice, and ending with conclusion/reflection time (Yoder, 2014).

The ten teaching practices outlined above can be used in classrooms to promote safe and supportive classrooms, social-emotional competencies, and academic learning. They are particularly important given that a focus on social and emotional learning is a beneficial process for all students. Understandably, many of these practices are already being implemented by classroom teachers. However, even though these teaching practices are commonly used, they are rarely thought of in terms of social and emotional learning. Teachers know that social-emotional learning is important for student success (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Through these ten practices, educators can connect what they are already doing to also promote student social-emotional competencies.

Growth Mindset Strategies: The Coach

Certain teaching strategies have been proven beneficial in the development of growth mindsets in students. Along with many other strategies, Dweck (2006) recommends that educators expose students to the true and tremendous effort behind the accomplishments of their "heroes and heroines"; that they focus their feedback on the process of learning not the product the student created; and that they establish standards and goals that are challenging. Brock and Hundley (2016) in their Growth Mindset Coach

book, spotlight monthly growth-based themes which include strategies to strengthen not only the growth mindset of the teacher but others in the classroom and around the school as well. They begin in August with the premise that teaching is a practice, not perfection (Brock and Hundley, 2016). Here, the teachers familiarize themselves with the mindsets and set goals for incorporating mindset in the coming school year. In September, the "everyone can learn" month, educators teach the students about mindsets and create a climate of growth mindset with parents and students. In October, the "my brain is a muscle that grows" month, explicit instruction on neuroplasticity takes place along with other brain-based teaching strategies. In November, the "valued member of this learning community" month, the focus is on the teacher building relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. Student oriented strategies include lunch buddies, check-ins, and golden rule teaching. Parent oriented strategies include the use of newsletters, social media, and e-conferences. Strategies focused on building relationships with colleagues include book clubs, PLC groups, and cooperative teaching (Brock and Hundley, 2016). In December, the "we love a challenge" month, the focus is on communicating high standards and expectations as well as challenging students through equity based differentiated instruction.

January is "feedback" month where the strategies focus on distinguishing between person and process praise as well as on how to give and use effective feedback. Here the authors offer feedback stems to help teachers facilitate the growth development process. February, "a goal without a plan is a wish" month, focuses on how grit influences mastery and the difference between performance goals and learning goals. Since learning goals are the ones that lead to mastery (Dweck, 2006), strategies for developing a

learning-oriented classroom were emphasized. In "mistakes are opportunities for learning" March, the objectives focus on how to coach students through mistakes and developing mistake-friendly teaching strategies. Such strategies include providing examples, scaffolding, healthy competition, and constant feedback. In April, "the difference between not knowing and not knowing yet" month, strategies focus on distinguishing between formative and summative assessments and employing the "not yet" principle in the classroom. The idea is to emphasize the value of the learning process. In the book (Brock and Hundley, 2016), May is "I got this" month. The objectives focus on self-talk as an avenue in developing a growth mindset. It is also the time recommended to develop a growth mindset plan to learn something new and/or solve a problem.

Because the month of May also represents the end of the school year for the students, the remaining two months – June and July – focus on the needs of the teacher in developing, maintaining, and enhancing a growth mindset (Brock and Hundley, 2016). The month of June is the "I can't take care of others if I don't take care of myself" month. Here the strategies focus on teachers engaging in reflection activities and "sharpening the saw" in the areas of physical, social-emotional, mental, and spiritual health. The month of June is "a new day is a new opportunity to grow" month. Here, the strategies focus on teachers learning more tactics for confronting fixed mindset, getting the most out of learning opportunities, developing online personal learning networks, and researching more growth mindset resource to support their journey. Throughout the book (Brock and Hundley, 2016) provide a myriad of instructional strategies to support teachers interested

in cultivating a growth mindset in themselves, their students, and others around the school.

Growth Mindset Strategies: The Playbook

The efforts to help teachers with growth mindset strategies did not end with the Growth Mindset Coach for Brock and Hundley (2016). The next year, they wrote the sequel, The Growth Mindset Playbook (Brock and Hundley, 2017). In it, they outline ten 'plays' – series of strategies - in promoting the beliefs and values of growth mindset in the classroom. The first play – the best we can be – has students identify their fixed-mindset triggers then formulate responses that engage growth-mindset strategies. The second play – building positive relationships – is where the authors delineate ideas for educators to use when building relationships with students including morning check-ins, questions/answers, and positive messages. The third play – brain training – is where teachers help students understand brain plasticity and how it plays a role in learning. Suggested strategies for this skill include formative checks, entrance tickets, and 3-2-1 responses. The fourth play – mission metacognition – is when teachers help students understand metacognition, use self-assessment to gauge their practices, and employ thinking journals to reflect on and record their journey. Metacognitive strategies suggested in this section include activating prior knowledge, using metaphors, and peer assessment (Brock and Hundley, 2017). Play number five – after the fall – focuses on the role of failure in the development of a growth mindset. Instructional strategies suggested include rephrasing fixed mindset talk and employing if/then statements to identify potential obstacles and positive responses to them. Play number six – the shame game – focuses on strategies to identify shame, limit its use in the classroom and manage its

effect. Play number seven – the human connection – focuses on empathy in the classroom and its role in the development of a growth mindset. Unit objectives were to educate students on the difference between empathy and sympathy and teach them how to become empathetic friends. Suggested strategies include Socratic seminars, reflective practice, and role play. Play number eight – fostering a happy, collaborative classroom – focuses on creating an environment in which students can learn about themselves and each other (Brock and Hundley, 2017). Strategies for this endeavor include building a sense of community in the classroom, allowing students to establish fluid learning goals, establishing a sense of trust and reliability with the students. Play nine – increasing engagement – seeks to help teachers offer students more engaging, impactful learning experiences. Strategies outlined here include sharing one's enthusiasm, increasing movement, purposeful notetaking, and opportunities to perform or present. Finally, play ten – moonshots – encourages educators to step out of our comfort zones and set our sights on the moon. Here the authors (Brock and Hundley, 2017) suggest that teachers give students insight in to how and why they learn, encourage their big ideas, and promote their growth mindset. Strategies to accomplish this include integrating technology, personalized and passionate learning, networking, and engaging with subject matter experts.

Similar to their Coach book, Brock and Hundley (2016), end their Growth Mindset Playbook (Brock and Hundley, 2017) with self-care and reflection activities for the teacher to engage in. They suggest Kristen Neff's three-part plan for prioritizing self-care and maintaining a healthy work/life balance (Brock and Hundley, 2017). The first component of Neff's plan is to practice self-kindness. The next part is recognizing one's

shared humanity; a we're all in this together attitude. Finally, Neff encourages teachers to practice mindfulness – an awareness of the present. Suggested strategies to incorporate these components into one's daily routine include journaling, meditating, connecting, and self-care. Identifying the myriad of teaching strategies effective in the development of growth mindset in educators and students alike is vital in a teacher's journey toward growth mindset thinking.

Perceptions-Attitudes-Dispositions

The influence teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and dispositions have on the students they teach is another major concept that emerged from my review of the literature. Teachers are the single largest identifier of success for students in the classroom – more than programs, initiatives, and money. Teachers' ways of thinking and understanding are vital components of their practice. A teacher's beliefs are important influences on the ways they conceptualize tasks and learn from experience as their beliefs frequently involve moods, feelings, emotions, and subjective evaluations. Teachers' beliefs play a major role in defining their teaching tasks and organizing the knowledge and information they view as relevant to those tasks (Nespor, 1987). Though teacher's beliefs are implied, not always expressed, they often unconsciously inform a teacher's assumptions about students, the classroom, and the academic material to be taught. They often reflect the actual nature of instruction the teacher provides to students. These key instructional activities are the avenues through which the teacher's beliefs are translated (Kagan, 1992).

The perceptions, attitudes, and dispositions of the educators tasked with employing teaching strategies are an important component in the successful

implementation of growth mindset interventions. The relationships and the attitude of the teacher directly relates to the drive and success of the students. The mindset of the teacher is at the core of where thoughts, values, perceptions, and feedback to students originate (Dusek & Joseph, 1983). A teacher's classroom approach shapes whether their students believe they are born with fixed academic skills or can grow them (Sparks, 2019). The instructor who believes that only the smartest students will understand complex topics may see it as a waste to make large investments of time and resources into all students if only the brightest ones will understand anyway. Their choice and implementation of teaching practices could be influenced by the mindset they hold in regard to intelligence (Aragón, Eddy, & Graham, 2018). Instructors' academic mindsets can predict their students' motivation and achievement, so educational faculties are in a great position to create a growth mindset and grit infused environment by internalizing the motivation to persist (Hochanadel and Finamore, 2015). Growth mindset educators believe in the incremental implicit theory where abilities, skills, and talents are able to improve via effort and learning. This mindset drives their willingness and capacity to work hard and learn from all situations – both successes and failures (Clark and Sousa, 2018). Educators who embrace the growth mindset approach are recognized as having adopted the viewpoint of a life-long learner always seeking to improve their lives and the lives of others. According to Dweck (2006), growth-oriented teaching unleashes children's minds. Growth mindset teachers believe in the growth of their students' intellect and talent and are fascinated with the process of learning. They maintain high standards and a nurturing atmosphere. They teach students how to reach those high standards (Dweck, 2006). It is important to acknowledge the impact of an educator's

beliefs about intelligence when considering implementation of instructional practices, like growth mindset, that are beneficial to students (Aragón, Eddy, & Graham, 2018).

Professional Development

The critical need for professional development when it comes to social-emotional learning is another major concept that emerged from my review of the literature. So, what's holding educators back from experiencing the very real benefits of social and emotional learning, including better academic performance, greater self-efficacy, and higher quality relationships? For many, it's a lack of training. A recent national survey found that although four out of five teachers are interested in social-emotional learning professional development, only 55 percent have received it (Frezza, 2018). Professional development to support teacher knowledge, effective pedagogy, and practices enhances effective social-emotional learning implementation. Research also shows that social and emotional learning programming is more effective when evidence-based programs are adopted and implemented with fidelity (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). Professional development is by far the most effective strategy schools and school districts have to ensure great teaching for every child every day. Professional development could make all the difference in the success or failure of any implementation game plan. The strong demand for social-emotional learning training is real as it affects not only the students but the teachers as well. Building their own social-emotional learning competencies can help teachers manage and reduce their stress and more easily cultivate the social-emotional learning competencies in their students. Ways for educators to promote growth mindset thinking include personal readings, reflection, journaling, and professional development (Clark and Sousa, 2018). If teachers are not aware of the

consequences of fixed mindsets, particularly how a fixed mindset might negatively impact their regard for their students, then they are less likely to be persuaded to implement an intervention that can be beneficial for the majority of students. For the implementation of interventions, effectively delivering a message about mindsets might be important (Aragón, Eddy, & Graham, 2018).

Training and continuous support are necessary to ensure that instructional leaders at the district and school levels, as well as teachers, understand social and emotional learning standards and can implement evidence-based programs and practices with fidelity. Social and emotional learning requires the same level of support to provide high-quality, effective instruction as does literacy and numeracy (AEI/ Brookings, 2015). When educators are armed with a precise understanding of the psychology of mindsets, they can create improvements in academic outcomes (Yeager, Paunesku, Walton, & Dweck, 2013). However, many teachers lack the essential training necessary for the implementation of academic mindsets. A solution to this problem would be to use or develop validated programs to instruct teachers on how to effectively foster growth mindsets among students. This could be accomplished through the proposal, development, implementation, and assessment of existing teacher training materials; then, offering validated training to teachers during existing professional development (Rattan et al., 2015). One program possibility involves training specialists who can help teachers learn about the latest experimental findings on instructional practices that promote mindsets and then use continuous improvement processes to make these work reliably in their classrooms. Just as it is common for a school to have instructional coaches to help teachers, it is possible to imagine mindset coaches who inform improvement in schools

(Yoder, 2014). These professionals would not develop new theories about mindsets but would, rather be trained to work with teachers to acquire and respond appropriately to evidence about the effects of their classroom-based mindset practices. Organizations such as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching have begun to train improvement specialists to help teachers implement small changes to improve students' mindsets and increase learning behaviors. Through this kind of small-scale improvement research, teachers and improvement specialists have identified leading indicators of long-term knowledge acquisition. If this feedback process is repeated over many cycles with many practitioners, schools or districts might amass a large evidence base for effective practices (Yoder, 2014). To bridge the connection between social-emotional learning and the work that educators are already doing, educators need access to tools, supports, and resources on social-emotional learning that are integrated into existing teacher evaluation and professional development systems (Yoder, 2014). Through this and other professional development measures, educators interested in developing the mindsets of their students will be informed in the best practices for implementation into their instructional processes.

Conclusion

This review and synthesis of the literature focused on understanding the concepts centered around the topics of social emotional learning and growth mindset and why they have garnered such intense interest in the educational arena. As most educators are aware, problems facing students and schools are complex and multi-determined. There are no silver bullets, but growth mindset interventions can be helpful for student learning. Teachers with a growth mind-set don't just mouth the belief that every student can learn;

they are committed to finding a way to make that happen (Rheinberg, 2001). When students are given the belief that they can grow and learn in school, that they are not limited by fixed inability, and that they belong and are valued, they are then motivated to take advantage of the social and educational resources in school and beyond (Yeager, Paunesku, Walton, & Dweck, 2013). Adding a social and emotional program to the school curriculum can lead to several real-life benefits for students (CASEL, 2019). However, the perceptions and beliefs of the teachers can make all the difference in the implementation of such programs as teachers have a significant impact on student learning (Yoder, 2014).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This study used a qualitative approach to examine the perceptions of teachers in regard to growth mindset teaching strategies at the middle school level. The qualitative approach to research was chosen because many of the characteristics of qualitative research align with the attributes of the study being done. The qualitative approach to research has seen an increased use in educational research over the years (Shank & Brown, 2007). This study was a form of educational research. The qualitative approach to research allows researchers to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the researcher sought to understand the meaning teachers place on the growth mindset strategies used in the classroom.

As a middle school educator, the researcher recognizes that students in America face a number of challenges during the middle school years such as puberty, bullying, dating and other issues. Many preteens struggle with anxiety or exhibit behavioral problems (O'Donnell, 2018). Social-emotional learning competencies have been identified as being critically important for the long-term success of students in today's economy (CASEL, 2019). Growth mindset, one of the social-emotional learning competencies, is when people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work (Dweck, 2006). Research has shown having a growth mindset can have a positive impact on student achievement (McCutchen, Jones, Carbonneau, & Mueller, 2016). Educators, policymakers, and researchers agree that teachers have a significant impact on student learning. They help promote the social and

emotional learning skills students need such as collaborating with others, monitoring their

own behavior, and making responsible decisions (Yoder, 2014). A teacher's beliefs play

a predictive role in the achievement of their students (Hochanadel and Finamore, 2015).

Therefore, by definition, the qualitative approach was the appropriate choice for the

researcher to use in exploring the social and human conditions of growth mindset on a

middle school campus and the perceptions of teachers regarding the instructional

strategies to promote it.

As an educator on the middle school campus being used in this study, the

researcher knows the campus has begun to cultivate a social-emotional learning

environment through core values and character-building activities. The unique position of

the researcher as a case within this study provided an even closer look at the situations

and conditions on the study campus yielding a richer, and deeper knowledge of the

contexts in which other study participants were operating. Understanding that a teacher's

perceptions influence students prompted this researcher to want to identify those

perceptions as they relate to the strategies teachers are being asked to implement. Since

the qualitative research approach is an inquiry process for understanding and exploring

social or human issues, it was viewed as the appropriate approach to use for this type of

study (Creswell, 1998).

In a qualitative research study, the research question often begins with asking how

or what in its initial investigation into what is going on (Creswell, 1998). The nature of

the research question for this study lent itself to the qualitative approach in that it asks the

question: What are the perceptions of sixth-grade teachers? Qualitative research is

typically conducted in the natural setting of the participants in order to get a clearer, more

realistic picture of the dynamics involved. This study was conducted in the natural setting

of the participants, teachers in their school, further supporting the selection of the

qualitative approach for this study. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to

assume the role of an active learner who can tell the story from the participant's point of

view. This characteristic of the qualitative approach aligned with the focus for conducting

this study. The goal of this study was to tell the story from the viewpoint of the

perceptions and experiences of the teachers. Such a viewpoint ascribes to the qualitative

approach to research (Creswell, 1998).

Methodological Framework

Within the qualitative approach to research being used for this study, the

framework associated with case study methodology was utilized because the goal of the

study was to gain an in-depth understanding and analysis of the perceptions of middle

school teachers in their natural setting (Creswell, 2014). The case study design of inquiry

involves the researcher using a variety of data collection procedures within a specific

time and in a particular place (Creswell, 2014). By definition, the case study design of

inquiry is an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case over time. It is conducted

through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information

(Creswell, 1998). The defining characteristics of the case study design of inquiry made it

the appropriate choice for this study. In determining whether to use a case study

framework for research, the researcher must first identify the "case" with clear

boundaries for the study (Creswell, 1998). The boundaries for the case are usually time

and place. For the purposes of this study, the case being studied was a group of

individuals, namely a group of five sixth-grade teachers. One of the boundaries in this

case was the location, a middle school campus. The other boundary was time, during the academic school year. It should be noted that the interviews and their resulting data, quotes, and summaries took place between May and June of 2020 via Zoom sessions with the study participants.

Another feature considered in the selection of the case study design is the determination of the contextual information to describe the setting for the case (Creswell, 1998). For case study inquiry methods, the context of the case involves situating the case within its setting. This setting could be from a physical, social, historical, or economic perspective. For the purposes of this study, the contextual setting was a middle school campus in a suburban school district in the southeast region of Texas which has embarked on a school-wide initiative to implement social-emotional learning into its culture and campus community. The campus of approximately 1,200 students services sixth through eighth grade students. The student population is diverse with 32% of the student population being Hispanic; 28% Asian; 24% White, and 10% African American. Approximately 27% of the students receive free or reduced lunch.

A third feature considered when deciding upon the case study design of inquiry is the wide array of information available to the researcher about the case. The multiple sources of information associated with case study inquiry include observations, interviews, audio-visual material, documents, and reports (Creswell, 1998). For this study, the researcher collected information from initial interviews, member checking interviews, and researcher reflective journal notes. Case study, a common method in qualitative research, aims to understand a particular phenomenon by selecting a particular example of that phenomenon as the focus of the study (Efron, 2013). This investigation

sought to understand the perceptions of middle school teachers and selected sixth-grade teachers at a local middle school to study.

Participants, Sampling Design, and Data Collection Methods

This qualitative case study examined the perceptions of teachers regarding growth mindset teaching strategies at the middle school level. For this investigation, the case being studied was a group of individuals, specifically five sixth-grade teachers on a middle school campus. This study employed sampling and data collection methods associated with case study inquiry.

Sampling

Samples for qualitative research tend to be small because an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question. That might even be single figures (Marshall, 1996). The three broad approaches to selecting a sample for a qualitative study are convenience, judgment, and theoretical samples (Marshall, 1996). For this study, the researcher used a social network sample to select the participants. A social network sample is the least rigorous technique as it simply involves selecting the most responsive subjects from a social network. For this study, the subjects were sixth-grade teachers on a campus where social-emotional learning and growth mindset initiatives were being implemented. A judgment sampling technique, also known as purposive sample, is a common form of sampling. In it, the researcher actively selects the most productive sample to answer the research question (Marshall, 1996). In purposive sampling, the researcher specifies the characteristics of the population of interest and locates individuals with those characteristics (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In employing the purposive sample technique, the first criterion for selection for this

study was that the subjects were sixth-grade educators on the campus in question. The second criterion was that they were active participants in the campus-wide social and emotional learning initiatives by participating in campus professional development sessions on social and emotional learning and conducting the weekly lessons provided by the school.

Participants

This researcher employed a social network and purposive convenience sampling protocol in the selection of participants for this study. Permission to conduct this study was sought from the University IRB. Regarding setting, this research study took place in a large suburban school district in southeast Texas. The school in which this study took place is a sixth to eighth grade middle school campus of approximately 1200 students. The teachers for the study were recruited through electronic mail (email). There are 32 sixth-grade teachers on the campus, 10 are male and 22 are female. Of these 32 teachers, five of them were selected to participate in this study. Once all the necessary paperwork was secured, the researcher began the data collection procedures. It should be noted here that the researcher, being a sixth-grade teacher on the study campus, was also considered a participant in this study as her reflective journal notes were used as data in the study.

Data Collection

Qualitative studies view the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection. They collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants (Creswell, 2014). The six most common data collection methods for educational researchers are tests, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observations, and existing data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). For this study,

one of the data collection methods the researcher used was semi-structured interviews to answer the research question: What are the perceptions of sixth-grade teachers regarding growth mindset strategies? Appendix A provides an example of the interview protocol for this study which includes the interview questions being asked of the study participants.

Interviews are conducted in-person and can freely use probes, prompts to obtain response clarity or additional information. Interviews are an interpersonal encounter where the researcher can build a rapport with participants through a friendly, impartial, and trust-building environment. They are a method for obtaining in-depth information about participants' thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, feelings, etc. (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). There are many types of interviews, which include structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, and non-directive interviews (Kajornboon, 2005). This researcher used a combination of question formats, structured to allow for some standardization of the information and semi-structured to leave room for flexibility in probing and exploring certain subjects in greater depth (Patton, 1980).

A second source of data the researcher used for this study was her array of reflective journaling entries compiled over the course of the development and conduction of the study. These critically reflective notes provided a parallel exploration of the researcher's experiences regarding the use of growth mindset strategies. Through this critical and reflexive approach, the researcher was able to examine not only her own personal and professional contexts as they relate to growth mindset strategies, but apply them to understanding the contexts of the participating teachers and the campus as well (Reed-Danahay, D., 2017). Employing her reflections and notes in this manner served to

illuminate the resonance between the experiences of the researcher and the study participants, the metaphorical connections between the two (Conle, 1996).

Measures and Instruments

The sources of the data collected by the researcher for this study were interviews, initial and member checking, that the participating teachers engaged in and the reflective journal entries the researcher maintained throughout the study. As a sixth-grade teacher on the campus the study was being conducted, the experiences and reflections of the researcher served as a critical and reflexive parallel exploration of teacher perceptions regarding growth mindset strategies (Reed-Danahay, D., 2017). In-person interviews were the method for obtaining in-depth information about the participants' thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, feelings, etc. (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The researcher used a combination of question formats to allow for some standardization of the information gathered while leaving room for flexibility in probing and exploring certain subjects in greater depth (Patton, 1980).

As part of rigorous data collection, a researcher provides detailed information about the instrument being utilized and includes sample items from the instrument so that readers can see the actual items used (Creswell, 2014). This researcher developed and used an interview protocol for asking questions and recording answers for the interview data that was collected as part of this study (Creswell, 2014). An interview protocol is a form about 4-5 pages in length with approximately five open-ended questions and ample space between questions to record responses to the teachers' comments. Appendix A provides an example of the interview protocol for this study.

Employing an interview protocol enabled this researcher to take notes during the interviews about the responses of the teachers. It also helped organize thoughts on things such as headings, how to begin the interview, how to conclude the interview, and other ideas (Creswell, 1998). Using an interview protocol for the data collection tools provided a framework within which questions could be developed and sequenced, and decisions could be made about which information to pursue in greater depth as the interviews progressed (Patton, 1980). The interview protocol design for this study combined the interview guide approach with the standardized open-ended approach. This enabled the researcher to have several basic questions worded precisely while permitting more flexibility to probe, explore certain subjects in depth, or even venture into new lines of inquiry (Patton, 1980). An additional interview with the participants was held to provide them with the opportunity to review, confirm, and clarify the data that was collected from them as a form of member checking the data. Appendix A provides an example of the interview protocol for this study.

Data Screening and Analytic Procedures

To produce data that would answer the study question and help to draw conclusions regarding teacher perceptions about growth mindset strategies, the researcher used multiple methods of data collection and analysis tools. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with individual participants, follow-up interviews for member checking, and the researcher's reflective journaling notes. The audio files from the interviews were listened to and the transcriptions carefully analyzed to identify important ideas and descriptive information. This data information was then compared to the reflective journal entries of the researcher to discover resonating patterns and similarities

and as validation of her personal journal and memo writing. As a researcher/participant, the researcher was able to tell and analyze her story while at the same time analyzing the stories of the participating teachers for resonating concepts and perceptions. The multiple interpretations of the data along with returning the transcribed interview data to participants for member checking served as forms of triangulation of the data.

After collecting the spoken words of the teachers from the interviews, the researcher engaged in several phases of discourse analysis to evaluate their responses to discover patterns and factors that could contribute to understanding the perceptions of teachers regarding growth mindset strategies (Mogashoa, 2014). Various triangulation strategies were employed to ensure trustworthy results for this study. The researcher asked the same research questions of different study participants, collected data from different sources such as her journal notes, and generated a rich, thick description of the interview data and journal notes. She also included member checking of the interview data as a measure to confirm her data. The method of returning an interview or analyzed data to a participant is known as member checking, respondent validation or participant validation. Member checking is used to validate, verify, or assess the trustworthiness of qualitative results (Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F., 2016). The Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) recognizes member checking as a method of rigor that ensures that the participants' own meanings and perspectives are represented and not curtailed by the researchers' own agenda and knowledge (Birt, L. et al., 2016).

In addition to discourse analysis (Mogashoa, 2014) the researcher analyzed the data using Creswell's (2014) data analysis approach for qualitative research. This process

begins with the raw data then organizes and prepares it for analysis. After reading

through the data to get a sense of the whole, themes, or emerging patterns, the researcher

analyzed the data to generate categories and descriptions. The researcher then looked for

any interrelating themes or descriptions in the data as it related to the emergent general

categories. Interview transcripts were downloaded into an available word frequency

generator program to conduct word frequency tests to identify any emergent themes from

the interview data. The researcher employed this word frequency analysis to generate a

textual and pictorial representation of the data and its relation to the research question.

The word clouds generated from the word frequency tests were then used to graphically

illustrate the emerging themes.

Essentially, to ascertain the perceptions of teachers regrading growth mindset

strategies and activities in their classrooms and on their campus, the study participants

were interviewed and the data from these interviews was analyzed. Word frequency tests

were conducted on the data to identify major concepts, factors, and themes. Word clouds

were generated to illustrate those emergent themes pictorially for a rich, thick description

and depiction of the data. Additionally, the reflective journal notes of the researcher were

used to deepen the understanding of the context in which the study participants were

working by providing more insight into the background and experiences of educators on

the study campus.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to ascertain the perceptions of sixth-grade content area teachers regarding growth mindset strategies on a middle school campus. In this chapter, I present the analysis of data collected. I also provide demographic data on the study participants. Note that pseudonyms identify the five participants so as not to reveal their true identities. Though this is a qualitative case study where the primary source for the data comes from interviews with the five participants, it should be noted that the researcher is embedded in the research field because she, too, is a sixth-grade teacher on the study campus. Her experiences, reflections, and narrative will serve to also respond to the research question for this study: What are the perceptions of sixth-grade content area teachers regarding growth mindset strategies on a middle school campus. By incorporating the lived experiences of the researcher alongside the spoken perceptions of the participants, this study seeks to devise a common interpretation that is richer and stronger, a more comprehensive understanding of growth mindset on a middle school campus. Her story blended with their stories to become the campus story.

In the Beginning…The Researcher and the Campus

Before there were consent forms, Zoom interviews and transcripts, there was an educator who in 2014, after 22 years in education, was moving to a new district, campus, grade level, and content area and a campus determined to develop the social and emotional competencies and character of its students. The educator mentioned above is the researcher for this study, me. The campus mentioned above is the one being examined in this study, my campus. As a sixth-grade social studies teacher on the study campus, my

lived experiences and insight will serve to narrate not only my story but that of the campus as well.

When I arrived in 2014, the campus principal was an administrator who believed in building relationships with students and staff. She implemented programs, committees, and activities to encourage such bonding. Even after she left the campus, the focus on social and emotional learning continued. Inspired by the district's core values of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship, the campus administrative team under new leadership began a deliberate and concerted effort to develop positive character traits in the students on campus. Being a new member of the staff during that time exposed me to various people, programs, and practices that led me to want to understand more about social and emotional learning and growth mindset.

As a new social studies teacher, I felt compelled to learn as much as I could about my content area, my district, and my campus. I found that there was a common thread that connected the three – social education. At each conference, workshop, and meeting I attended, I learned how critical positive character traits, citizenship, and social education were to the overall success of our students and our society. I could appreciate my role in the advancement of these concepts within my circles of influence.

My role in the development of social and emotional learning on campus expanded in 2017 when I joined the campus Character Cadre. This team of teachers volunteered to pilot the Responsive Classroom Morning Meeting initiative on campus, to build a stronger sense of community. The lessons learned led to increased effort being devoted to the concepts of social and emotional learning and growth mindset. For me, holding Morning Meetings with my classes throughout the day, (We called them Class

Conferences in the afternoon class periods.) helped to build a community of learners who positively supported one another in and out of the classroom.

The year 2018 was pivotal for the campus as it began a school-wide social and emotional learning and growth mindset initiative, Mindset Monday. The theme for the year was set - mindset. A core team of teachers had attended a district Character Conference during the summer and were integral in providing videos, weekly quotes, character dares, discussion questions, and activities. Regarding the implementation of Mindset Monday, one of our assistant principals noted, "It's not about perfect. It's about effort. And when you bring that effort every single day, that's where transformation happens. That's how change occurs."

In the fall of 2018, the District brought in one of the presenters from the summer Character Conference, Houston Kraft, to work with all the intermediate teachers to support their use of the Character Strong curriculum in their schools. To hear him speak, I heard Roberta Flack's, Killing Me Softly with His Song playing in my head. The lyrics, "And there he was, this young boy, a stranger to my eyes. Strumming my pain with his fingers. Singing my life with his words." Here was Houston Kraft, a young man, speaking truth into my educational existence, telling my life with his words! Then he said something that will stick with me forever, "Social and emotional learning is the solution for the school shooter". His statement hit me right between the eyes and pierced my heart. I knew then that I would strive to be an integral part of developing the social and emotional learning and growth mindset of as many people as I could. As I looked around me, I saw many of my campus peers nodding and smiling in agreement. It had begun.

Participants

This study used social network sampling to select the five participants who contributed data to the results in this section. Once the sampling of participants was secured, all participants were contacted via electronic (email) mail. The email included information about the research study, participant consent form, and asked if they would volunteer for two virtual interviews. All participants gave consent for audio-recording of the interview by checking off a section on the participant consent form and providing their signature.

All five participants are sixth-grade teachers representing the four main content areas of math, science, social studies, and English/language arts. All five participants have been teaching on the study campus for at least five years. Ms. Dru has been teaching for 14 years with all 14 years being on the study campus. She teaches social studies and has a bachelor's degree in history. Ms. Dru is currently working on her master's degree in instructional technology. Ms. Dee has also been teaching for 14 years with seven years on the study campus. She teaches mathematics and has her master's degree in education. Ms. Deb has been teaching eight years with six of those years being on the study campus. She teaches language arts and has a bachelor's degree. Ms. Deb is currently working on her master's degree in library sciences. Mr. Deo has been teaching for nine years with five of those years on the study campus. He teaches social studies and has a bachelor's degree in history. Mr. Dan has been teaching for twelve years with five of those years being on the study campus. He teaches science and has a master's degree in educational leadership. The researcher in this case, whose narrative is also included in this study, has been

teaching for 28 years with the last six years being on the study campus. She teaches

social studies and currently holds a master's degree in instructional technology.

Process

The purpose of this qualitive case study is to ascertain the perceptions of sixth-

grade content area teachers regarding growth mindset strategies on a middle school

campus that employs school-wide growth mindset interventions and activities. The

virtual, Zoom, interviews conducted for this study were 20-40 minutes long per

participant. An interview protocol form was used to conduct the interviews. The

interviews began with four professional background questions, followed by a set of

twelve semi-structured questions. Once each interview was completed, the resulting

Zoom audio recording was saved. The researcher used the Google voice typing tool to

transcribe each interview. The researcher then carefully reviewed each transcript for

accuracy and clarity. Participants were provided with a copy of their interview transcript

for member checking purposes. Participants were asked whether the transcript accurately

captured their responses and if they had any comments, questions, or clarifications

regarding the document. All participants were then assigned a pseudonym and any

confidential information was replaced with a pseudonym or stricken. Upon completion of

the research study, all transcribed interviews and audio-recordings were destroyed in

accordance with the University's Institutional Review Board.

Results

Once all interviews were carefully transcribed and member checked, they were

organized and prepared for analysis. It should be noted that during the interview process

the researcher recognized that the interview questions seemed to cluster into one of four

general categories or focus areas. So, she began her data analysis by identifying the interview questions that corresponded to each of the four focus area categories. The data from the semi-structured interviews with the five participants was then downloaded into Wordart.com to generate word frequency tables and word clouds for further analysis.

Four Focus Areas

Focus area #1 centered on the participants' understanding of growth mindset and social and emotional learning. The research questions that corresponded to Focus Area #1 were questions #1 and #2. Focus area #2 centered on the participants' perceptions of growth mindset strategies in the context of their classrooms. The research questions that corresponded to Focus Area #2 were questions #4-#8. Focus area #3 centered on the participants' perceptions of growth mindset activities on their campus. The research questions that corresponded to Focus Area #3 were questions #9-#11. Focus area #4 centered on the participants' perceptions of professional development as it relates to social and emotional learning and growth mindset. The research question that corresponded to Focus Area #1 was questions #3. A synopsis of the participants' responses to the interview questions in each focus area was generated from an analysis of their responses, the corresponding word frequency tables, and the word clouds. The following table illustrates the resulting information.

Table 1

Synopsis of Participant Responses to Clusters of Interview Questions

Focus Area #1: Perceptions of Growth Mindset and Social and Emotional Learning **(interview questions #1, #2)**
Synopsis: Growth mindset is a way to think about knowledge and how people learn and know; that intelligence and the mind can be constantly developed through work.
Synopsis: Students and educators need to learn a lot of things about social and emotional growth and failure.
Focus Area #2: Growth Mindset Strategies in the Classroom **(interview questions #4-8)**
Synopsis: Students need more mindset time.
Synopsis: Students need to feel safe learning.
Synopsis: Build relationships with students so they know it's okay to try growth mindset.
Synopsis: Teachers need to change their words to let kids know that it is safe to take a risk and try something new.
Synopsis: Students need to know it's okay to be bad at something as long as they try and want to learn.
Focus Area #3: Growth Mindset Activities on Campus **(interview questions #9-11)**
Synopsis: Students work in small groups on growth mindset, especially on Tuesdays.
Synopsis: Teachers believe promoting growth mindset is good, but feel that more time is needed to educate students.
Synopsis: To develop a growth mindset, adults need to be open with students and people need time to set goals so they can grow.
Focus Area #4: Professional Development **(interview question #3)**
Synopsis: Though the topic does come up, there is not enough training for those interested in developing their growth mindset and social and emotional learning on campus or in the district.

Focus Area #1: Perceptions of Growth Mindset and Social and Emotional Learning

      For the past two years, the study campus has been promoting the development of

positive character traits, social and emotional learning, and growth mindset. After the

inspirational and informative presentation by Houston Kraft for all the intermediate

schools in the district, the faculty and staff of the study campus continued with their

recently launched Mindset Monday initiative. In 2019, the study campus maintained its focus by implementing Timberwolf Tuesday. Though similar in content to Mindset Monday, Timberwolf Tuesday was made more teacher friendly by the Character Cadre who provided ready-to-use weekly lessons for all homeroom teachers. In light of these initiatives and activities, the researcher sought to ascertain the participants' general perceptions of the concepts of social and emotional learning and growth mindset.

Focus Area #1 corresponded to the first two questions asked of the participants which sought to ascertain their general perspectives on growth mindset and social-emotional learning. Participants were asked:

1. What is your understanding of a growth mindset?
2. What do you say to the idea that social and emotional learning and growth mindset are just another educational fad?

When participants were asked about their understanding of growth mindset, each of them shared their unique perspective of growth mindset. Mr. Dan defined growth mindset as a "state of mind by individuals who believe that with dedication and hard work individuals can expand their thinking and knowledge base in a positive manner to promote their wheelhouse of knowledge for the future." Ms. Deb saw growth mindset as "the difference between knowing that you might not know it yet but that you can learn it, that things might be more challenging for you than other people but it's still something that you can learn if you keep your mind open toward it." Ms. Dee viewed growth mindset as "one constantly changing and constantly evolving." Ms. Dru said growth mindset was "the idea that one's intelligence can be developed further; that it's not just

quickly learning but retaining; developing knowledge." Mr. Deo felt that growth mindset was "the idea that in order to do something the best possible way there has to be experimentation and that will result in a lot of situations that look like failure for the purpose of learning."

As the study participants shared their general understanding of the concept of growth mindset, I struggled to contain my excitement. Being a teacher on campus with these educators who, based on their responses, hold a working knowledge of growth mindset as having the qualities of being challenging, persistent, developing, and constantly evolving and expanding was reassuring (Dweck, 2016). To me, it marked a solid starting point for future progress in growth mindset development on our campus. For the past few years, I have worked to build a comprehensive understanding of growth mindset through independent study, conferences, workshops, and doctoral coursework. My campus administration has sought to develop the growth mindset of its staff and students through staff development and weekly lessons for the students. In the two years of the initiative, the perceptions of the teachers interviewed demonstrated that progress was being made. They had a working knowledge of growth mindset. I could see a thread of my research running through their responses and it felt good to know that the campus was on the right track with its efforts.

In an analysis of participant responses regarding growth mindset several common word choices emerged. Table 2 and Figure 1 below, the word frequency table and word cloud, illustrate the most common terms related to growth mindset which also comprised the researcher's synopsis of the participants' responses.

Table 2

Word Frequency Table for Growth Mindset Responses

Term	Frequency
Know(ledge)	6
growth	5
Learn	4
Think	4
Way	4
Intelligence	2
Developed	2
Constantly	2
Mind	2
Work	2

Figure 1

Word Cloud for Growth Mindset Responses

Growth mindset is a way to think about knowledge and how people learn and know;

that intelligence and the mind can be constantly developed through work.

When participants were asked, "What do you say to the idea that social and emotional learning and growth mindset are just another educational fad?" all disagreed with the notion of growth mindset and social-emotional learning being considered a fad. Mr. Dan indicated that he had just recently engaged in a conversation on the topic of social and emotional learning with a colleague. He went on to say that in the past five years he has noticed a need for more widespread district training on social and emotional learning; that if the "student and educator are really not in a positive state of mind then their best work will never ever show up."

Ms. Deb, in her disagreement with the idea of social and emotional learning and growth mindset being an educational fad, went on to say that,

> When new things are learned through research in education, they call it a fad; whereas if it were in the medical field it would be a breakthrough. Why do people think we are not trying to grow and change in this field like they do in every other one. I don't think it's a fad. I think it's a discovery of where they have held studies and done research and have learned that there is a difference; that growth mindset impacts education and how to reach students.

Ms. Dee said "I don't think it's another fad. I think it's just putting a term with something that we already do and maybe don't even realize that we do. I think it is a buzzword…but I think we already do a lot of the things. It's just putting a word or definition to what we're already doing." Ms. Dru said "No, I totally disagree. I have never considered that social and emotional learning is a fad. Actually, in order to be an

effective teacher, I must address and help develop the social and emotional abilities of my students and meet their needs."

Mr. Deo noted that when he goes to conferences and conventions, that "it can feel like people are trying to just get their names out there by pushing it; that it can feel that way". He went on to say that he agrees that social and emotional learning and growth mindset should be promoted. He noted that,

> We have to be able to teach how the mind works. We have to be able to teach them how growth mindset could potentially help them respond to failures and situations that can make young people feel very upset and very helpless. We don't teach that properly. A student just believes that they are the failure, like their life is a failure and that leads to things like school violence. Things like that have become a lot more common over the last few years, so I don't think it's a fad. I think it needs to be a permanent part of education. I think children should know how their minds work. Failure here doesn't mean that I'm a failure. I can move past this and learn from it and become better because of it.

Through their responses, study participants noted how they viewed social and emotional learning as important and something educators should use to help students understand themselves and their relationships with others (CASEL, 2019). Mr. Deo's comments struck a chord with my own experiences at conferences and workshops. It appeared the concepts of social and emotional learning and growth mindset were a bandwagon many were trying to jump on. Sometimes I found it difficult to discern between those who could genuinely help me deepen my understanding and improve my practices from those who just had a gimmick or shortcut to sell. I found the most useful

sources were those who were classroom educators who had put the research into practice in their classrooms. I found an overwhelming array of resources about social and emotional learning and understood the position of the study participants on the topic. Because I view social and emotional learning as critical for myself, my students, and society, I invested time and attention into learning as much as I could. I seek to put the research into practice within my educational circles of influence.

In an analysis of study participant responses regarding social and emotional learning several common word choices emerged. Table 3 and Figure 2 below, the word frequency table and word cloud, illustrate the most common terms related to social and emotional learning which also comprised the researcher's synopsis of the participants' responses.

Table 3
Word Frequency Table for Social and Emotional Learning Responses

Term(s)	Frequency
Student	7
Learn, educator	6
Emotional, failure	5
Need, growth, lot	4
Social, mindset, years, know, mind, work, life, school, teach	3

Figure 2
Word Cloud for Social and Emotional Learning Responses
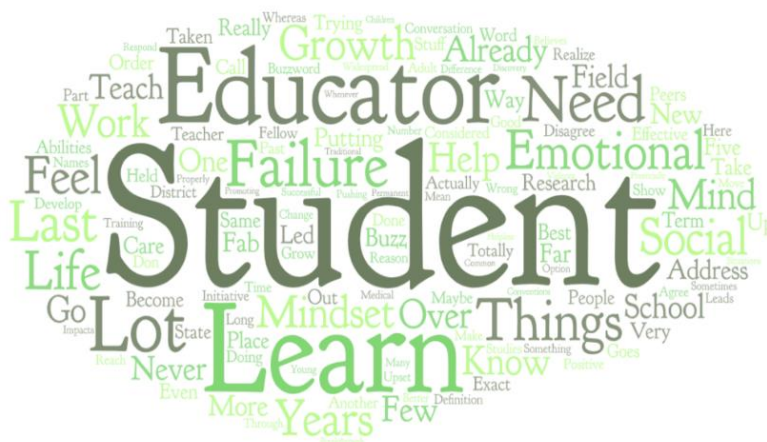
Students and educators need to learn a lot of things about social and emotional growth

and failure.

Focus Area #2: Growth Mindset Strategies in the Classroom

From 2018 to the present the faculty and staff of the study campus continued

implementing Mindset Monday and transitioned to Timberwolf Tuesday. During this

time, as a researcher and educator, I sought to enhance my understanding and application

of social and emotional learning and growth mindset strategies in my daily practice. Due

to my involvement with the campus Character Cadre, I was afforded the opportunity to

attend a CharacterStrong workshop in late fall 2018. CharacterStrong is an organization

co-founded by Houston Kraft that provides training and resources to help make

implementing social-emotional learning and character education more manageable. This,

along with a Teaching Tolerance workshop I attended on my own and my doctoral

research on the topic continued to build my social and emotional competencies and

growth mindset and expose me to an array of classroom activities for my students.

As part of my doctoral coursework, I had the opportunity to conduct an action research project to identify specific procedures, methods, activities, and interactions that a classroom teacher could employ in the development of growth mindset thinking in students. From this research study I was able to generate a tangible compilation of strategies that positively impact the growth mindset thinking of students. The resulting document was used to provide the five study participants with a selection of strategies to ponder in their response to interview question #4 of this study.

Focus Area #2 corresponded to four different interview questions (#4-#8) asked of the participants. These questions sought to ascertain the participants' perspectives on growth mindset strategies in the context of their classrooms. Participants were asked:

4. Looking at this graphic, what are your thoughts about the growth mindset strategies listed.

5. As an educator, what do you believe is the best way to promote a growth mindset?

6. What impact, if any, has growth mindset had on your classroom as a whole?

7. What are some things do you think a teacher can do to promote a growth mindset in the classroom?

8. What are your thoughts regarding the idea that fostering a growth mindset is an effective approach to increasing academic achievement?

To begin this line of questioning, participants were shown a graphic of a selection of growth mindset strategies and asked what they thought of them, each of the study participants outlined the strategies they felt most resonated with them and their daily practice. Subsequent questions about growth mindset strategies such as what did they

believe was the best way to promote a growth mindset; what impact growth mindset had on their classroom; and growth mindset's effectiveness in increasing academic achievement yielded responses revealing the participants' perceptions about growth mindset strategies in the context of their classrooms and instructional practices.

Mr. Dan noted that "every single one of these (strategies) does have some validity" but thought that some of them warranted more individualized breakdown or explanation. He said, "You take these activities and strategies. I would need to break them down and have some sort of goals associated with each one." He did indicate that, of the ones listed, there were several he felt more strongly about than others. He stated that,

> Change the words probably should be number one. If you don't teach the words to students to where they are comfortable then they won't really feel comfortable enough to believe that they can do better. As an educator you have to change your own self first, really. The main thing with me is having a better mindset to believe in the students and give them that opportunity. I have seen over the years higher student engagement higher student success. Students who normally would be in their shell are willing to take chances and speak for themselves and feel comfortable about this is my idea. Knowing they could be totally wrong, but they're taking that chance; having that culture in the classroom - willing to take a chance. That's what I've noticed over the last few years, but it all started with me first.

Mr. Dan went on the say that "Some of the things that teachers can do to really promote this is to create that culture where students feel safe, when the students feel safe enough

to talk in their small thinking groups or their oral defense groups. If they don't have the belief that they're going to be safe, then it's just not going to happen." The other strategies Mr. Dan preferred were change the words to change the mindset, assign authentic learning opportunities, explicitly teach mindsets, encourage risk and mistake tolerance, establish high expectations, build relationships/be accessible, group students collaboratively, and assign challenging projects.

When asked the same set of questions, Ms. Deb said that "They (the strategies) were really great ideas. The list would be a good tool. Teachers who are already comfortable with it (growth mindset) will look at the list and see that they are already doing many of those things. Such a list would be a good tool to reinforce or support teachers." For the question regarding the best way to promote a growth mindset, Ms. Deb replied "I would think leading by example. It has been a discovery for myself over the recent years and getting to share that discovery with them." She recalled a recent experience where she was having a difficult time in a course in her master's program. She shared her struggle with her students. She noted that it "made me more aware of my own metacognition and allowed me to meet many of my students where they were at". She went on to note that the strategies that help her the most and the ones she currently uses are to explicitly teach mindsets, identify fixed mindset triggers, encourage risk and mistake tolerance, teach brain plasticity, build relationships/be accessible, teach metacognition, provide regular opportunities for meaningful reflection, and encourage students to set learning goals.

Ms. Dee said "They (the strategies) are just a lot of things that may come naturally to highly effective teachers. It would be good to have this printed out so you can

use it as one of the tools you can use from your toolbox. Post it to kind of remind you. Going to it when you're planning or when you're thinking about all that kind of stuff." For Ms. Dee, building relationships/being accessible was a key strategy. She said,

 A really big one for me is building relationships. That's a big thing for me and I continue to work on that with students, in building positive relationships and being accessible. So, I think just building the relationships with them has been really good. I really am surprised during distance learning how much I was still able to feel a connection with kids. I think that it was partly because of how strongly I believed in building relationships when we had them. Constantly checking in on them and letting them know that it's okay. You know, we'll get there. We'll get past your failing grades; we'll try again. Going back to the relationship thing, if you don't build relationships with them so they know what you're all about … you probably have kids that want to do well and want to make you proud if that makes sense. If you are just kind, it has a huge showing on not even just test scores but with kids wanting to be in your classroom and wanting to learn and wanting to do stuff.

Other strategies Ms. Dee liked were grouping students collaboratively, employing timely, process-focused feedback, cultivating a sense of purpose, using the word 'yet' in struggling situations, disciplining privately with dignity, establishing high expectations, and encouraging risk and mistake tolerance.

About the listed strategies, Ms. Dru said "I think they're great in many ways." For Ms. Dru, building relationships/being accessible was the most important strategy. She related it to establishing an environment of trust by saying that,

In my opinion to develop growth mindset, students must feel comfortable and safe

in their learning environment. When you begin to create those connections that

are made, trust is established and developed. Students will open their minds to

learning and feeling safe. In other words, they're willing to if they're safe. They

are willing to answer your questions, willing to try and willing to work their way

through a problem. It gives them an area, a safety zone. A teacher has to foster a

room of safety and trust to begin to reach true and deep growth mindset.

Other strategies preferred by Ms. Dru included encouraging risk and mistake tolerance,

changing the words to change the mindset, cultivating a sense of purpose, and grouping

students collaboratively.

For Mr. Deo, building relationships/being accessible is paramount. He said,

When it came to a lot of these students I had to actually work on building a

relationship with them so that I could be vulnerable and let them know that I have

plenty of imperfections of a human and things that I have had to work on and get

better at. Then we kinda build this mutual respect. For me growth mindset is how

you treat students and what you allow them to know about you. That's just in the

way that adults treat children. Honestly, it's the way that adults treat every

individual scenario. We have to exemplify and illustrate it with the individual

students on a daily basis like getting to know what's going on and trying to

recognize why they are having the struggles they are having and addressing that

individually with the person.

A second, possibly equally important strategy for Mr. Deo was changing the words to change the mindset, especially when it comes to encouraging risk and mistake tolerance. He said,

> Being more conscientious about the words that I use when speaking to the students, about things that have to do with risk-taking like finding a better word than maybe the word failure. Focusing on things like the word yet or words with a little more practice or with a little bit more time. Just pushing them to not give up prematurely. I think if we get students to a point where they know that they're allowed to not be equally good across the board in everything that they do or that the results are not as immediate as just about everything else in life. Telling kids from pre-k all the way to the end of high school that it is okay to make mistakes; it's just part of the experimentation. I think if students realize that it's okay to occasionally make that bad grade and realize that there's still another opportunity for them to achieve. I think they will be less likely to completely give up on something entirely. I think we can have less of that if we focused on growth mindset in our classes.

In addition to those strategies, Mr. Deo also indicated that he liked using the word 'yet' in struggling situations, teaching metacognition, discipling privately with dignity, and explicitly teaching mindsets.
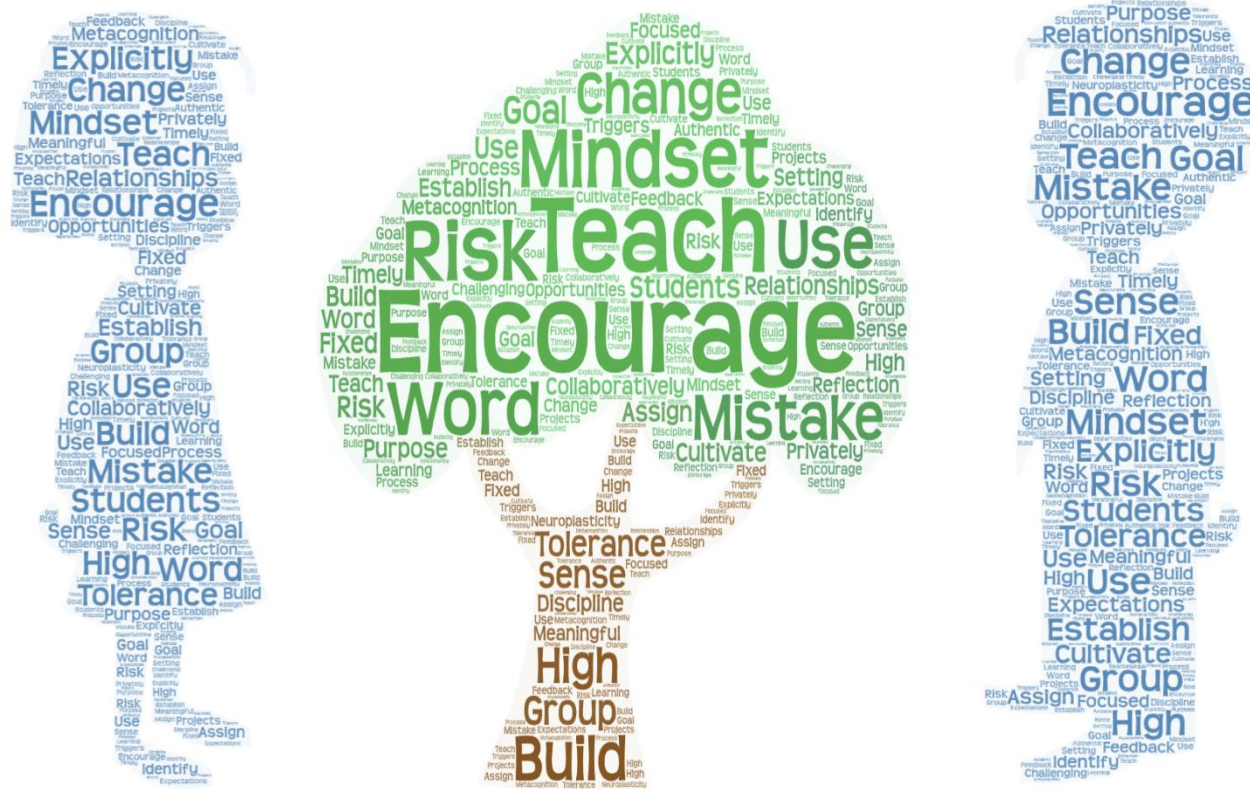
I do not know if my students for the past two years would consider themselves fortunate or unfortunate having me as their teacher, because the more I learned about growth mindset instructional strategies the more I used them in my classroom. From my extensive research, I developed a comprehensive list of research-based growth mindset

instructional strategies. I recognized that I could not implement all of them effectively, so I am phasing them into my instructional practice over time.

In analyzing my own practice as it relates to developing growth mindset thinking, I shared many commonalities with my study participants. Like the study participants, I placed high priority on building relationships and being accessible to students as a means for developing their growth mindset thinking. Further, I encourage my students to work collaboratively to meet the high expectations of the challenging learning activities in my classroom. Through Mindset Monday and Timberwolf Tuesday, I am able to explicitly teach about brain plasticity, mindsets, and metacognition. I frequently expanded those ideas into my social studies classes as a means of deepening the students' understanding and growth mindset thinking. Those weekly homeroom lessons were just what I needed to introduce the topics. Another commonality between the study participants and me is that we use many of the campus weekly homeroom lessons, challenges, and strategies to enhance what we do with our content-area students to promote their growth mindset thinking and social and emotional learning competencies (Brock & Hundley, 2017).

Table 4 and Figure 3 below, the word frequency table and word clouds, illustrate the frequency of which each of the growth mindset strategies was preferred by the participants.

Table 4

Word Frequency Table for Growth Mindset Strategies Participants Preferred

Growth Mindset Strategies	Participants
Encourage risk/mistake tolerance; build relationships	5
Use the word 'yet'; explicitly teach mindsets; group students collaboratively; change the words to change the mindset; teach metacognition	3
Establish high expectations; cultivate a sense of purpose; meaningful reflection opportunities; discipline privately; encourage goal setting	2
Timely process-focused feedback; teach neuroplasticity; identify fixed mindset triggers; assign challenging projects; assign authentic learning opportunities	1

Figure 3

Word Clouds for Growth Mindset Strategies Participants Preferred

Above all, teachers should build relationships with students and encourage them to

take risks and tolerate mistakes.

Focus Area #3: Growth Mindset Activities on Campus

Focus Area #3 corresponded to three different interview questions (#9-#11) asked of the participants. These questions sought to ascertain the participants' perspectives on growth mindset activities and initiatives on their campus. Participants were asked:

9. What types of growth mindset activities have you engaged in on your campus?

10. What do you think of the current growth mindset initiatives being implemented on your campus?

11. What suggestions do you have for growth mindset activities on your campus?

When asked questions about the growth mindset activities being implemented on their campus, the five participants shared their thoughts and suggestions. Ms. Dru said,

> On this campus, (we use) our T-Wolf Tuesdays, using core values, doing the temperature checks with our students. Many of the activities that we do the kids are participating, it's a quick learning and then a video we watch. I think that just reemphasizes what we are about. I'm very supportive of them. I like them. Though it takes a while to get everybody on board. It takes a while to get the naysayers out of the way and that's what I struggle with.

Regarding any suggestions that she might have, Ms. Dru said

> Children need to also see that adults can embrace silly and fun activities without losing control and mocking the activity. It's when you open the doors for kids to see that, they begin to consider approaching various teachers with needs.

Ms. Dee indicated that "T-Wolf Tuesday. Just giving kids an outlet for getting to know each other and building the positive relationships in your homeroom has been really good and just getting them to think about character." She went on to speak about how she considers her interactions with her colleagues integral to developing not only her growth mindset, but also the growth mindset of her students.

> I really enjoy talking with those ladies in my PLC's... monthly potluck which is like our department meeting. We would always talk and share during that time and it's just a safe place where everyone could just kind of share what was going on, struggles, positive things that were happening and just like bouncing ideas off each other. There's a lot of really great people on campus that I can trust to go to to help me evolve and grow in trying new things.

Ms. Dee noted that the administration also plays a part in developing growth mindset on the campus. She says,

> Having an administration like we do where they want us to try new things and do new things and take off and run with it and they're not micromanagers. I think as a whole our campus is able to do so much more and have more of a growth mindset because everyone is just open to it. It's not like you WILL do this. They let people be themselves. It's just imperative if you're going to have a growth mindset on your campus. It's a part of our DNA, our culture. I think it is one of the things that makes this campus so great. I appreciate when we are able to have time to work on our goals and work on our PLC stuff and do things that we want to do and we're given a choice where people could share things that they were really good at. I feel like that's really great to see your co-workers as presenters and giving people choice on

what they want to learn and grow with. I feel like they (administrators) do the best they can with giving us as much time as they can. Time is always a problem for teachers.

About any suggestions she had for growth mindset activities on the campus, Ms. Dee said "When people are given personal time to do personalized growth. They take you through the modules and you reflect and grow. I find those really helpful." She went on to say " I like when other colleagues are able to share great things that are working for them, that are helping them grow because maybe you can take a piece of that and help make you grow. I loved the district thing – the Grow360 Day." Then she added, "... just continuing to value our time instead of planning different things that people don't find as effective, build in time for people to connect with teammates."

When asked the questions about campus growth mindset activities, Mr. Deo said, I feel like we have Mindset Monday and T-Wolf Tuesday. Some of those seemed centered around teaching the kids a little bit about grit and about making mistakes, apologizing, forgiveness... a lot of these core skills that you need to have as a human being just to be a good human being. The fact that I know what it (growth mindset) is; the fact that I've been able to absorb the material means that the school is actually doing a good job promoting it. It is showing up in enough places and enough times for us to know that it exists and have a general idea of what it is and know that we're being pushed to employ it in our classrooms. So, I feel like we're doing a good job at it. I've seen an improvement in students over time as I have intentionally started treating them based on this idea.

Regarding suggestions for campus growth mindset activities, Mr. Deo said,

Adults have to be able to be vulnerable with the students or students will still see us as just as group of people trying to be perfect and we have these really high expectations of them. I think if we can find a way to pull that veil back just a little bit and let them in on the fact that we are all working on things, I think that would be healthy for the students. They need some kind of mentoring that shows them what life is really like and that they are allowed to make those mistakes.

Ms. Deb's comments regarding campus growth mindset activities included her noting that "I've done the very intentional ones, the Timberwolf Tuesdays. I have my students reflect a lot at the end of each unit. And then they also set goals at the end of each reflection based on that. Now that you know this about yourself and your growth, what's your new goal?" Regarding her thoughts on the campus activities, she says,

I think they are extremely good in theory. I think they are terribly important and should be a priority across the campus. I think that it is the right idea. It just wasn't as effective in all the classrooms. It was very effective in some. But if we're all about equity and teacher's first-time instruction is important, then it should be applied to that as well and it wasn't. I don't feel like it was effective in the way it was done. I believe that it would be better suited in a different setting. If you wanted it to be equitable across, I think it would be better to be in a different setting than in a homeroom with the same kids you see Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday. And that is because it's stretching all the teachers to do that. So, if you don't have a teacher who's leading with their own growth mindset, they are fixed on 'this is stupid, this is stupid'. Giving it a nickname of terrible Tuesdays or whatever. Then that's not fair to that group of students and

they're missing out because even if you are faking, it's not going to build that same sense of community.

Ms. Deb goes on to say,

I would also suggest a bit more explicit training. Even though teachers would roll their eyes, maybe the training not on how to better teach students growth mindset but recognize it in yourself as a teacher. That would hopefully open communication about... the problem was a lot of teachers didn't have a growth mindset about building a growth mindset in students.

Regarding the questions about campus growth mindset activities, Mr. Dan said,

The main growth mindset activity that comes to mind is when the school does a Mindset Monday, but I think for that to work you have to have buy in from the staff. So, at the moment, the campus's majority believes in the concept of mindset and is heading in the right direction. There is the Mindset Monday initiative. But as far as that goes, I really think that's it that somebody can put a name to. It's happening and it definitely needs to happen more. Especially with the emotional state of the world at the moment.

When asked what suggestions he had for campus growth mindset activities Mr. Dan said,

I think if we had mindset initiatives for teachers like here's the two things... The administration needs to promote 2-3 growth activities max. If we try to do twelve or one a month, it's just too many. One's too little, maybe two is too little, too. Three is probably a good number."

To continue in discussing suggestions, Mr. Dan went on to say,

In a nutshell, give it tangible steps that are small. Be able to label them so that

everyone knows, these are my goals. As a campus you can walk into any

classroom and say 'Hey, what are your mindset goals, your growth mindset

goals?' As long as they're able to name what those are then you're definitely

moving in the right direction. Breaking it down into a simple plan for the year, we

can preach growth mindset but if nobody knows what direction it is then no one's

going to know. There needs to be clear defined goals that everybody can stand

behind and really be accountable for. What are your mindset goals, your growth

goals and what have you done to accomplish that this quarter this nine weeks?

Actually, have a true authentic meeting to discuss what you've done. At that point

someone will be held accountable.

When asked if this would be "just one more thing" for the teachers, he responded,

Of course it is. Absolutely, but it depends on what your mindset is. If it's just one

more thing, then maybe you really shouldn't... A true educator is going to do

everything; learn everything that they need to promote the emotional well-being

of the student.

Mr. Dan echoed my sentiments when he said a true educator will do everything

and learn everything to promote the emotional well-being of students. The effort and

attention I have given to learning all I can about social and emotional learning and

growth mindset and putting it into practice is evidence of my desire to be a true educator.

When my campus implemented Mindset Monday and Timberwolf Tuesday, I

enthusiastically reviewed the lessons beforehand and met my students at the door with an

attitude of excitement and anticipation for what we were about to do together. I think that

enthusiasm flowed over into my students who often embraced the activities and gave them their full attention. However, such was not the case for all students. As study participants indicated in their responses, not every student had the benefit of a teacher who implemented the initiatives with integrity. That was evident to me when, in my attempt to extend the lessons into my social studies classes, many students had not experienced the initial activity in their homeroom class. This revealed to me that more needed to be done to get teachers on board with the program.

I agree with study participants who noted that many staff members know what social and emotional learning and growth mindset are. That is a positive testimony to the efforts of the administration and a move in the right direction. Like Ms. Dee, I see the administration as being one that is supportive of educators attempting new things for the benefit of the students. The administration fosters a growth mindset mentality among the staff. However, like the study participants, I also recognize that more time and training might be needed to ensure the staff is proficient in implementing the initiatives with fidelity (AEI/Brookings, 2015). For those who are not implementing the activities, it may not be an issue of simply not wanting to, but rather an issue of not understanding why or how to implement the activities. I would like to assume good intentions and proceed from there.

In an analysis of participant responses regarding campus growth mindset activities, several common word choices and concepts emerged. These terms and concepts were then used to compose the synopsis statements for the focus area. Table 5 and Figure 4 below, the word cloud and word frequency table, illustrate the researcher's

synopsis of the participants' responses for the interview questions related to growth

mindset activities on their campus.

Table 5
Word Frequency Table for Participant Perceptions of Campus Growth Mindset Activities

Synopsis Key term(s)	Frequency
Growth, mindset, need, students	3
Time	2
Work, small, groups, Tuesday, teacher, believe, promoting, good, feel, more, educate, develop, adults, open, people, set, goals, grow	1

Figure 4
Word Cloud for Participant Perceptions of Campus Growth Mindset Activities
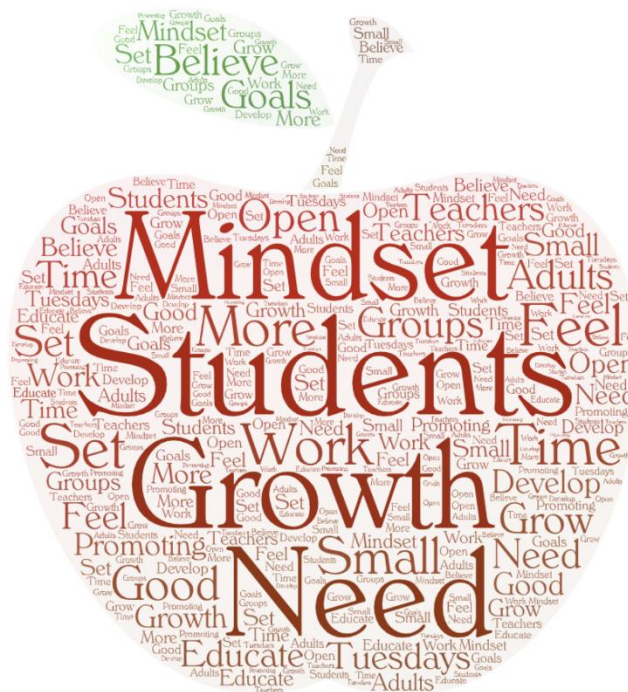
Students need more growth mindset time.

Focus Area #4: Professional Development

Over the last two years, as the study campus was implementing its Mindset Monday and Timberwolf Tuesday social and emotional learning and growth mindset initiatives, select Character Cadre teachers attended professional development sessions and returned to facilitate the activities on campus. As a teacher on the campus and member of the Character Cadre, I have been able to take advantage of such training. Additionally, as part of my doctoral research, I have attended outside professional development sessions, conferences, and workshops. Combined, these activities have deepened my understanding of character traits, social and emotional learning, and growth mindset.

However, when it comes to professional development for the entire staff on topics centered around social and emotional learning and growth mindset, there were just a few offerings to mention. At the district level, Grow360 was conducted in spring of 2019. It consisted of educators from around the district presenting sessions on a variety of topics. Though there was a wide selection of topics, only a few were about social and emotional learning and growth mindset. Teachers had a choice of which sessions to attend. There is no data on whether the study campus teachers attended any of the social and emotional learning or growth mindset sessions.

In the spring of 2019, there was one professional development session that touched on social and emotional learning and growth mindset classroom strategies, a presentation by Rick Wormeli. The administrative teams of the study campus along with those of three other intermediate schools combined resources to bring Mr. Wormeli in for a one-day session on standards-based assessment and grading. In his presentation, Mr.

Wormeli did mention the impact certain assessment and grading practices could have on the social and emotional learning and growth mindset of students.

In the fall of 2019, the study campus conducted its own version of Grow360 where campus teachers and instructional coaches presented a variety of professional development topics. None focused exclusively on social and emotional learning or growth mindset, though several did mention a connection to character traits, social and emotional learning, and growth mindset. My teaching partner and I conducted a session on how to effectively use timely, processed-focused feedback and an emphasis on effort over outcomes through retakes and redoes. We sought to offer another avenue for the development of growth mindset thinking. The session was well received and through follow-up feedback we learned that it was being attempted by many of our colleagues. The seed had been planted.

Focus Area #4 corresponded to interview question #3. This question sought to ascertain the participants' perspectives on any professional development for growth mindset and social and emotional learning they had received. Participants were asked:

3. Tell me about any training or professional development you have received on social and emotional learning and growth mindset?

When participants were asked this question about professional development they had received on social and emotional learning and growth mindset, they shared their thoughts, experiences, and recommendations. Mr. Dan noted that,

I do believe that the school and the district that I work for do preach growth mindset, but I can't think of any true authentic professional learning that I have

attended on campus. They may have had supplemental trainings on your own or over the weekend but honestly nothing really comes to mind that I've attended. There's definitely talk about it... but as far as a training actually goes nothing visible.

He also said "I really think the campus that we are at more so than other campuses that I've worked does have the growth mindset of wanting to do better for their students. I think we just need a little bit more direction - go down this road take a left and then take a right. Then we have clear and concise goals and then I think everything will fall into place."

Ms. Deb noted that she participated in a book study on the book Mindset in a previous district and that recently she attended a couple of behavior classes offered by the district that "talked a lot about the effects of the social-emotional on the physical". In her suggestions for campus activities Ms. Deb said "I would also suggest a bit more explicit training, even though teachers would roll their eyes. Maybe the training not on how to better teach students growth mindset but recognize it in yourself as a teacher."

Ms. Dee said,

I am lucky enough to be a part of the T-Wolf Tuesday, the character cadre. That group of teachers has been lucky enough to get some professional development with that. I feel like we usually do some things during our PLC's too, like those one-day planning days. Our coach always does some reflection and group activities before we get to start planning and stuff which I find really helpful.

She went on to say,

Instead of planning different things that people don't find as effective... but

building in time for people to connect with teammates that they may not get to

connect with through team meetings or faculty meetings. I like when other

colleagues are able to share great things that are working for them, that are

helping them grow because then maybe you can take a piece of that and help you

grow. And I loved the district thing -The Grow360 Day.

About her professional development experiences, Ms. Dru said

Off campus, I listen to other colleagues give workshops about growth mindset and

the development of intelligences. I have gone to them because that is what I am

interested in. I know we had some social and emotional learning professional

development courses on campus but not many. I don't think we have near the

level of training that we need to meet the emotional needs of these students.

Mr. Deo said,

I didn't hear the word until I was in (this district), so everything that I have done

has been through the district. It's been conferences, teacher meetings, and PLC's.

That's just where that topic has come up and we spend time discussing it and

hearing about it from counselors and instructional coaches. It has all just been

through the district. It's just part of what we do.

It was clear to the researcher that although there was not a uniform definition of a

growth mindset on the study campus, that the participants did have a basic understanding

of the concept. They perceived it as important but needed more information. This is most

likely because there has been very limited professional development directly related to

the topic (Frezza, 2018). In an analysis of participant responses regarding professional

development, several common word choices and concepts emerged. Table 6 and Figure 5

below, the word frequency table and word cloud, illustrate the most common terms

related to professional development and also comprised the researcher's synopsis of the

participants' responses.

Table 6
Word Frequency Table for Participant Perceptions of Growth Mindset Professional Development

Key term(s)	Frequency
Develop	5
Those	4
Campus, mindset, interested, emotional, think, training, district, book	3
Growth, social, learning, need, meet, feel, group, teacher, professional, planning, coach, attended, nothing, talk, study	2

Figure 5
Word Cloud for Participant Perceptions of Growth Mindset Professional Development

Though the topic does come up, there is not enough training for those interested in developing their growth mindset and social and emotional learning on campus or in the district.

Summary

This study was designed to answer the research question: What are the perceptions of sixth-grade content area teachers regarding growth mindset strategies on a middle school campus? There were four focus areas represented in the narratives and throughout the initial interviews with the five study participants. The first focus area asked about the participants' perceptions of growth mindset and social and emotional learning. Participant responses revealed that they viewed growth mindset as a way to think about knowledge and how people learn and know; that intelligence and the mind can be constantly developed through work. Regarding social and emotional learning, Participant responses revealed that students and educators need to learn a lot of things about social and emotional growth and failure. The second focus area asked about growth mindset strategies in the classroom context. Participant responses revealed that students and teachers needed more time to engage in growth mindset learning. The consensus was that teachers need to take the time to build relationships with students so they feel safe and know it's okay to try and learn something new. This represented a combination of their top two strategies, building relationships/being accessible and encouraging mistakes/risk tolerance. The third focus area asked about the campus-based growth mindset activities. Participant responses revealed that though teachers engaged in the weekly activities, more time was needed to educate the students. The themes of relationships and safety emerged as crucial factors in developing a growth mindset in students. The fourth focus area asked about the availability of professional development for educators interested in improving their skills in the areas of social and emotional

learning and growth mindset. Participant responses revealed that, though the topics are discussed quite a bit, there is a lack of explicit training on campus and in the district.

The data generated from study participant responses shows that they believe for learning environments to promote a growth mindset, they must be safe, positive, and engaging. Emotional safety emerged as a common theme. Study participants felt that feeling safe to make mistakes and having trusting relationships was an important factor in promoting a growth mindset in students. Upon further analysis of the data, especially as it relates to growth mindset strategies in the classroom, Table 7 and Figure 6 below, the word frequency table and word cloud, were generated from the synopsis statements for Focus Area #2. The researcher feels that these represent the summative responses of the study participants regarding growth mindset strategies on a middle school campus.

Table 7
Frequency Table for the Summative Perceptions of Participants

Synopsis Key Term(s)	Frequency
Students, need	4
Know, try	3
Mindset, safe, learn	2
Okay, something, more, time, feel, build, relationships, growth, teachers	1

Figure 6
Word Cloud for the Summative Perceptions of Participants

To develop a growth mindset, teachers need to take the time to build relationships with students, so they feel safe and know it's okay to try and learn something new.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to ascertain the perceptions of sixth-grade content area teachers regarding growth mindset strategies on a middle school campus. Though the primary source for the study data came from interviews with the five participants, it should be noted that as the researcher I was embedded in the research field because I, too, am a sixth-grade teacher on the study campus. My experiences, reflections, and narrative served to add background context and also respond the research question for this study. The responses of the five study participants were centered around four primary focus areas. The first focus area was centered around the participants' general understanding of social and emotional learning and growth mindset. The second focus area explained the participants' perceptions of growth mindset strategies in the classroom context. The third focus area was centered around the participants' perceptions of growth mindset initiatives and activities on the campus. The fourth focus area explained the participants' views regarding professional development for teachers interested in learning more about social and emotional learning and growth mindset instructional practices.

Perceptions

The perceptions of the five study participants were derived from data from a series of interview questions centered around four focus areas. Focus area #1 centered on participants' understanding of growth mindset and social and emotional learning. Here the emergent participant perception regarding their understanding of growth mindset was that it was a way of thinking about knowledge and how people learn and know; that intelligence and the mind can be constantly developed through work. Regarding social

and emotional learning, participants perceived it to be important; a concept that educators still needed to learn more about and teach to their students. The idea of teaching students how to handle difficulty and failure was also a recurring theme in participant perceptions of social and emotional learning.

Focus area #2 concentrated on participant perceptions of growth mindset strategies in the context of their middle school classrooms. Participants felt that it was of utmost importance to build relationships with students and be accessible to them to develop growth mindset thinking in the classroom. A second emergent perception was that encouraging students to take risks and view mistakes as tolerable situations would help develop their growth mindset thinking. Participants also felt that changing their words to be more growth mindset focused would make a big difference in how students viewed risk, mistakes, and failure.

Focus area #3 centered on participant perceptions of the mindset initiatives and activities being implemented on their campus. It should be noted that for the past two years the campus has been engaged in a school-wide initiative to develop positive character traits, social emotional learning competencies and a growth mindset through weekly lessons in homeroom classes. Generally, participants viewed the initiative as a positive measure; however, it was noted that more time was needed to educate students more effectively on growth mindset skills. Some felt that the homeroom context might not be the most effective option. The concepts of adult relationships and openness emerged as important in the campus initiative being successful in developing growth mindset thinking in students.

Focus area #4 centered on how professional development played a role in the development of growth mindset thinking in students. Study participants noted that a great deal of time and attention was being put into measures to promote positive character traits, social and emotional learning, and growth mindset; however, little explicit training was being offered to build educator efficacy in implementing them. They recognized the importance of such skills but felt that the campus staff needed more specific training and support in teaching them.

Trustworthiness and Triangulation

It should be noted that the researcher for this study is also a sixth-grade teacher on the campus in the study and works alongside the five study participants. Every effort was made to conduct this study in a trustworthy manner, one that accurately reflected the perceptions of the participants while concurrently including the perspective of the researcher. To portray the story accurately, the researcher interviewed teachers from four different content areas and had study participants review, confirm, and correct any misconceptions in the data collected through member checking. She employed direct quotes, context, and setting to provide a rich, thick description of the data collected focusing on key factors and patterns shared by the study participants. She examined the frequency of those factors, patterns, and themes to crystallize her thoughts into culminating statements accurately describing the perceptions of the study participants.

Future Research

With all that has been presented thus far, where can this project go from here? How else can this topic be examined to inform the practices of educators interested in social and emotional learning and growth mindset? Moving forward, it might be useful to

include more content areas in the conversation. For this study, the four core content areas were represented: math, science, social studies, and English language arts. A study including the perceptions of educators in physical education, fine arts, and technology might yield a different perspective about the impact of growth mindset thinking on student achievement. The inclusion of special education and gifted and talented teachers might also provide insight into how growth mindset thinking impact students in those contexts.

Another opportunity to explore the concept of growth mindset on a middle school campus would be to expand the study to include other grade levels on the campus. This study looked only at the sixth grade. Since the campus in question has been implementing its social and emotional learning and growth mindset initiatives for two years, exploring the perceptions of the seventh and eighth-grade teachers might yield an even richer understanding of educator perceptions of the campus-wide initiatives.

It is interesting to note that one of the study participants suggested that the perceptions of students should be explored in the school's efforts to develop growth mindset thinking on campus. What are students' general understanding of social and emotional learning and growth mindset? What strategies do students view as beneficial in the development of a growth mindset thinking? Do students view a growth mindset as helpful in their social, emotional, and academic development? What suggestions would students offer to their teachers who are seeking to help them develop positive character traits, social and emotional learning competencies, and a growth mindset? What do the students think of the campus-wide initiatives to develop positive character traits, social and emotional learning, and growth mindset? How different are the perceptions of the

sixth-grade students from those of the seventh and eighth-grade students, especially since the upper grades have been doing the activities for multiple years?

Finally, now that the campus has completed two years of implementation, a study exploring the efficacy and impact of the initiatives on things such as student achievement, student emotional well-being, bullying, discipline, and other measures could be conducted. What impact have these initiatives had on different aspects of student and teacher experiences on the campus? What data could be collected to measure those impacts? How would the data compare to the perceptions of the teachers and students? The concepts of social and emotional learning and growth mindset on a middle school campus provide many avenues for examination and exploration.

Recommendations

This qualitative case study was derived from my desire to understand the perceptions of my peers regarding campus efforts to improve the social and emotional learning and growth mindset of our students. I wanted to know where their heads were at before I started making recommendations about or jumping to conclusions about how our campus could do more to develop the social and emotional competencies and growth mindset of our students. I am fortunate to be in a district that supports the development of positive character traits and values the social and emotional health of its students. I am doubly fortunate to be on a campus that has taken those standards and committed human resources and instructional time to make them happen in even more meaningful ways. Though I will continue to improve on my personal practices to develop the social and emotional competencies and growth mindset of my students, I am also seeking to be an active participant in the efforts of my campus to do the same school-wide.

I would first like to recommend to the campus administrative team that off-campus explicit professional development be made available to those interested in furthering their skills in social and emotional learning and growth mindset. This could be in the form professional development provided by the district, the regional educational service center, or outside conferences and workshops. These professional development offerings should focus on efforts to operationalize social and emotional learning and growth mindset strategies, to move from theoretical to practical application measures that teachers can readily implement into their daily practices. A concerted search effort could yield an array of available resources already in place. Providing those interested in a repository of resources would help meet their professional development needs. To address budget concerns, instead of sending large numbers of teachers to expensive professional development, a train-the-trainer model could be employed. A core group of proficient workshop facilitators could attend the sessions and return to share their learning with others in their departments and on their campuses.

Moreover, because there is a school-wide initiative in place, there should be explicit school-wide training as well. This professional development could be a component of existing offerings rather than the burden of an additional session to their already packed schedules. These professional development offerings should also focus on efforts to operationalize social and emotional learning and growth mindset strategies, to move from theoretical to practical application measures that teachers can readily implement into their daily practices. These activities should be clear, concise, and inclusive; meeting the needs of campus educators to gain a working knowledge of social and emotional learning and growth mindset thinking. Though such sessions may not

answer every question for every person, they can provide an opening for those interested in continuing on the path of deeper learning and implementation.

As recommended by one of the study participants, there needs to be a more targeted, small scale, easy to implement approach to growth mindset strategies in the classroom. I recommend a simple "goal growth mindset strategies sheet" that teachers can use to identify their top three growth mindset strategies. These three strategies would represent a teacher's focus for the year, their low risk but big reward contribution to mindset education. The simplicity of the sheet could encourage reluctant staff members to make a more deliberate and intentional effort to improve the growth mindset thinking of their students.

I would also recommend, based on feedback from study participants, that the campus Character Cadre take a closer look on how to implement the weekly mindset initiative on campus. Its current format and timing may disengage some staff members. I would suggest surveying the staff for their options for implementation and collaborating to devise a plan that engages as many staff members as possible. As noted by the study participants, not everyone was on board which hinders the effectiveness of the initiatives and activities.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to answer a research question about the perceptions of sixth-grade content area teachers regarding growth mindset strategies on their campus. Based on the responses of study participants, campus sixth grade teachers believe that social and emotional learning and growth mindset are important educational concepts. Further, they perceive building strong relationships with students and encouraging

students to take risks and tolerate mistakes are crucial to developing their growth mindset. Additionally, though they appreciate the school-wide initiatives to develop positive character traits, social and emotional competencies, and growth mindsets, they feel that more time is needed to educate themselves, their peers, and the students. Regarding participant views on professional development, the consensus was that more explicit training was necessary with follow-up support for staff members to easily manage the implementation of mindset teaching in their classrooms. They view social and emotional learning and growth mindset as vitally important. They just need more time, training, and support to effectively implement them.

Some final thoughts. Though this research study was conducted to ascertain the perceptions of other teachers, I cannot deny how much I have grown and how much I have learned from being a researcher-participant in this process. Personally, when I began this journey I knew having a growth mindset played a big part in my resilient approach to adversity, challenge, and intellectual endeavors. It helps me maintain a positive attitude and an optimistic outlook even in my darkest hours. I saw myself in many of Dweck's (2006) research studies on growth mindset, grit, and high performance.

From a practical standpoint, as a middle school educator and professional development facilitator, this research validated the efficacy of growth mindset thinking as critical in unleashing the capabilities of our students and teachers. I learned that the learning communities built on the foundation of growth mindset thinking and social and emotional learning can have a positive and far-reaching impact. My experiences with my students and peers on my campus are evidence of this effect. Through even the small measures of weekly lessons and activities, I could see the seeds being planted. For

teachers like myself who expanded the relationship building efforts, growth mindset instructional strategies, and student engagement activities into our core content courses, the impact was even more apparent. This is just the beginning for my classes and my campus and I am excited to see where it goes.

However, it is from a more global perspective that I see our efforts having the greatest impact. I cannot help but smile when I think of the positive influence students from my school will have on their communities now and into the future simply because we have exposed them to critical social and emotional learning competencies and growth mindset thinking. From this research I learned I learned that people who operate from a growth mindset perspective are typically mentally healthy and tend to do better in relationships and in life. In light of current conditions in our nation and around the world, a few growth mindset centered, social and emotionally healthy young people can make a big difference in altering the trajectory into a more positive direction. It is my hope that all those touched by this research do a small part within their circles of influence to promote social and emotional learning and growth mindset thinking. I truly think the world would be a better place if we did.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol Form

Project: What are the perceptions of sixth-grade teachers regarding growth mindset strategies?

Date _____   Time _____

Location _____   Interviewer _____

Interviewee _____   Release form signed? _____

Notes to interviewee: Thank you for your participation. I believe your input will be valuable to this research.

Purpose of research: Examine the perceptions of sixth-grade teachers regarding growth mindset strategies on a middle school campus employing school-wide interventions and activities.

Interview Questions:

Demographic Information

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been teaching on this campus?
3. What subject(s) do you teach?
4. What is the highest degree you have attained?

Growth Mindset Perceptions

1. This research study is centered on a concept called growth mindset. What is your understanding of a growth mindset?
2. Some people say that social and emotional learning and growth mindset are just another educational fad. What do you say to that?
3. Tell me about any training or professional development you have received on social and emotional learning and growth mindset?
4. Looking at this graphic, what are your thoughts about the growth mindset strategies listed.
5. As an educator, what do you believe is the best way to promote a growth mindset?
6. What impact, if any, has growth mindset had on your classroom as a whole?
7. What are some things do you think a teacher can do to promote a growth mindset in the classroom?
8. What are your thoughts regarding the idea that fostering a growth mindset is an effective approach to increasing academic achievement?
9. What types of growth mindset activities have you engaged in on your campus?
10. What do you think of the current growth mindset initiatives being implemented on your campus?
11. What suggestions do you have for growth mindset activities on your campus?
12. Are there any questions, comments, or clarifications would you like to share that you think I could use in making this research more beneficial to the educational field?

Closure: Thank the interviewee. Reassure confidentiality of the interview. Ask permission to follow-up - transcript for them to check it over for accuracy and should anything else come to their mind.

Appendix B

IRB Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON

DIVISION OF RESEARCH
Institutional Review Boards

APPROVAL OF SUBMISSION

May 1, 2020

Anita Lewis

allewis8@uh.edu

Dear Anita Lewis:

On May 1, 2020, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Perceptions of Sixth-Grade Content-Area Teachers Regarding Growth Mindset Strategies
Investigator:	Anita Lewis
IRB ID:	STUDY00002160
Funding/ Proposed Funding:	Name: Unfunded
Award ID:	
Award Title:	
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• interview protocol form.pdf, Category: Study tools (ex: surveys, interview/focus group questions, data collection forms, etc.); • Study Participant Solicitation Letter.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • HRP-502a-Lewis, Anita L.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • HRP-503-Lewis, Anita L.pdf, Category: IRB Protocol;
Review Category:	Exempt
Committee Name:	Not Applicable
IRB Coordinator:	Sandra Arntz

The IRB approved the study on May 1, 2020 ; recruitment and procedures detailed within the approved protocol may now be initiated.

As this study was approved under an exempt or expedited process, recently revised regulatory requirements do not require the submission of annual continuing review documentation. However, it is critical that the following submissions are made to the IRB to ensure continued compliance:

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HOUSTON
DIVISION OF RESEARCH
Institutional Review Boards

- Modifications to the protocol prior to initiating any changes (for example, the addition of study personnel, updated recruitment materials, change in study design, requests for additional subjects)
- Reportable New Information/Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others
- Study Closure

Unless a waiver has been granted by the IRB, use the stamped consent form approved by the IRB to document consent. The approved version may be downloaded from the documents tab.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system.

Sincerely,

Research Integrity and Oversight (RIO) Office
University of Houston, Division of Research
713 743 9204
cphs@central.uh.edu
http://www.uh.edu/research/compliance/irb-cphs/

Appendix C
Participant Solicitation Communication

Greeting Fellow Sixth-Grade Teachers,

As many of you are aware, I am currently seeking a doctorate degree from the University of Houston. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the perceptions of teachers regarding growth mindset strategies. You're eligible to be in this study because you are a sixth-grade teacher at Westbrook Intermediate School who has participated in the school's Mindset Monday and/or Timberwolf Tuesday weekly lessons and professional development activities.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews with me. The interviews would take about an hour, using the online audiovisual media, Zoom. With your permission, I would like to audio/video record our interviews and then use the information to understand more about how teachers view growth mindset strategies. Records of your interview and your identity will be kept private and confidential. Research records will be stored securely and only I will have access to the records.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at 713-724-1726.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Anita L. Lewis, M.Ed.

allewis8@uh.edu

Appendix D

Participant Consent Form

Title of research study: Perceptions of Sixth-Grade Content-Area Teachers Regarding Growth Mindset Strategies

Investigator: Anita L. Lewis   *allewis8@uh.edu*   713-724-1726

Data from this research project may be included in doctoral dissertation research being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Cameron White..

Key Information:
The following focused information is being presented to assist you in understanding the key elements of this study, as well as the basic reasons why you may or may not wish to consider taking part. This section is only a summary; more detailed information, including how to contact the research team for additional information or questions, follows within the remainder of this document.

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?
You are being invited to take part in a research study about growth mindset strategies because you meet the following criteria: You are a sixth-grade teacher at Westbrook Intermediate School who participates in the professional development and weekly social and emotional learning activities on the campus.

What should I know about a research study?
    Someone will explain this research study to you.
    Taking part in the research is voluntary; whether or not you take part is up to you.
    You can choose not to take part.
    You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
    Your decision will not be held against you.
    You can ask all the questions you want before you decide, and can ask questions at
        any time during the study.
In general, your participation in this research study involves you answering a series of questions about your perceptions regarding growth mindset instructional strategies. You will be asked to share these perceptions in one-on-one interviews with the primary researcher. There is minimal risk foreseen in this study as the investigator has no administrative role at this case study site, nor will any confidential or identifiable information be shared with the site administrator or school/district employee. Any party may withdraw from participation at any time with no repercussions. There are no direct benefits to the researcher. Benefits of participation in the study include a contribution to scholarly research. There is no compensation to participate in this study.
Why is this research being done?
The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of sixth-grade teachers regarding growth mindset teaching strategies at the middle school level. The goal is to ascertain, through interviews, the viewpoints of sixth-grade teachers regarding growth mindset and their perspectives regarding the implementation and effectiveness of growth mindset

instructional strategies. This study is an important first step in identifying the next steps necessary to support teachers in their mission to help students improve their skills, achieve greater growth and be more successful in school and out through growth mindset and other social and emotional learning instructional practices.

How long will the research last?
We expect that you will be in this research study for 60-120 minutes, the expected duration of two interviews.

How many people will be studied?
We expect to enroll about 3-5 people in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?
If you decide to participate in this study you will be asked to complete the consent form prior to any
other arrangement. Any questions you may have can be answered at any time, but especially can be
discussed before signing the consent form. Once the form is complete, you will be asked to participate
in two 45-60 minute interviews via Zoom. You will be contacted by Anita Lewis (principal researcher) to arrange a time and a date that is mutually agreeable. Participants will be asked a series of questions on growth mindset instructional strategies and the interviews will be audio/video recorded for transcription purposes. Once the questions are answered the interviews will be concluded. The questions are semi-structured as to elicit a conversational response. All information will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used for all names of participating personnel.

☐ I agree to be audio recorded during the research study.
☐ I do not agree to be audio recorded during the research study.

Participants may still participate in the interview if they do not agree to be audio recorded. The audio
recording is for the purposes of better analyzing the findings.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?
You can choose not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you. Choosing not to take part will involve no penalty.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?
You can leave the research at any time it will not be held against you. If you stop being in the research, already collected data will be removed from the study record and you will not be required to do any further. You will not be asked to explain the extent of your withdrawal. You will not be asked for anything else.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?
There are no foreseeable risks related to the procedures conducted as part of this study. If you choose to take part and undergo a negative event you feel is related to the study, please inform the principal researcher.

Will I receive anything for being in this study?
There is no compensation or payment that the subject can expect to receive for their participation.

Will being in this study help me in any way?
We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include discussions that may lead to better social and emotional learning and growth mindset teaching practices. Other teachers may also benefit from your insights about social and emotional learning and growth mindset instructional strategies.

What happens to the information collected for the research?
Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. Each subject's name will be paired with a pseudonym, which will appear on all written study materials. The list pairing the subject's name to the assigned pseudonym will be kept separate from these materials. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization, as well as collaborating institutions and federal agencies that oversee human subjects research. We may publish the results of this research. However, unless otherwise detailed in this document, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential. A copy of the data from this research will be stored in Dr. Cameron White's office (FH 230) in the Curriculum and Instruction department for 3 years following completion of the research. All recordings will be destroyed once transcriptions are completed.

Who can I talk to?
 If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, you should talk to the research team Anita Lewis at allewis8@uh.edu or Dr. Cameron White at cswhite@uh.edu. You may also call Dr. White's office at 713-743-8678. The principal researcher (Anita Lewis) may be contacted at 713-724-1726.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Houston Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also talk to them at (713) 743-9204 or cphs@central.uh.edu if:
• Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
• You cannot reach the research team.
• You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
• You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
• You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Your signature documents your consent to take part in this research.

_____   _____
Signature of subject   Date

_____
Printed name of subject

_____   _____
Signature of person obtaining consent   Date

_____
Printed name of person obtaining consent