



BUILDING A GROWTH MINDSET THROUGH TEACHING STRATEGIES

To foster a growth mindset in students, consider using these Teach Like a Champion strategies that show that learning is a continual process.¹

Strategies

1. No opt out

Context: Students must put forth effort at all times to build a growth mindset. A situation that undermines the importance of effort occurs when a question is asked and a student responds, “I don’t know.” When “I don’t know” is normalized, it sends the message that effort is optional and reinforces a fixed mindset.

Description: When a teacher hears “I don’t know,” no opt out is an effective strategy that holds students accountable to the learning. No opt out occurs when a student is originally unable to provide a correct answer, but is then given appropriate scaffolds to provide the correct answer. This can look two different ways: a student can repeat a correct answer, or a student can complete an answer that another student starts (examples below).

Example 1 - Repeat a correct answer

Teacher	On the board we have 20 dots. How many groups of five do we have?
Student 1	I don't know
Teacher	How many groups of five do we have?
Student 2	Four.
Teacher	How many groups of five do we have?
Student 1	Four.

Example 2 - Complete an answer

Teacher	On the board we have 20 dots. How many groups of five do we have?
Student 1	I don't know
Teacher	Can you rephrase the question? What are we trying to do?
Student 2	Everytime we count five dots, that's one group. So if there were ten dots, I count two groups of five. The answer would be two.
Teacher	How many groups of five do we have on the board?
Student 1	Everytime I count five dots it's one group. I count five dots four times, so there are four groups.

¹ Lemov, Doug, 1967-. Teach Like a Champion 2.0 : 62 Techniques That Put Students on the Path to College. San Francisco :Jossey-Bass, 2015.



2. **Stretch it**

Context: When students do get an answer correct, teachers often respond by saying “good,” “yes,” or “that’s right!” When this happens, it signals that the learning process has ended and students can turn off their brains. Growth mindset is best internalized when the learning has no end – students can always push themselves to learn and grow more!

Description: The strategy of stretch it reinforces the notion that learning can, and should, always continue. This can be accomplished by responding to correct answers with follow-up questions that push student thinking and challenge student understanding. A great way to do this is to emphasize the “how” and the “why” of a problem.

Example 1 - Emphasize the “how”

Teacher	After reading the passage, what does the word “spiteful” mean?
Student 1	I think it means that the character wants to make others feel bad...
Teacher	How do you know this? Read us two sentences from the story that show us that the character is spiteful.

Example 2 - Emphasize the “why”

Teacher	What is the area of the triangle? Explain your process.
Student 1	The area is 10. I took the base of 5 ft. and multiplied by the height of 4 ft., then divided by 2.
Teacher	Why did you divide by two?
Student 1	Because the formula tells me to.
Teacher	But why does the formula tell us to?
Student 1	Because we can think of triangles as half of a square, and the area of a square is length times width.



3. Without apology

Context: Teachers often catch themselves using language that undermines a growth mindset. Phrases like “I know this isn’t the most interesting, let’s just get through it” or “this is on the test, so we have to cover it” implicitly send the message that learning is a task of compliance. A belief that content is boring or unnecessary is a self fulfilling prophecy.

Description: Teachers should strive to present academic content with language that highlights its importance. Any chance to learn about something new should be approached with excitement. Students often reflect the attitudes and mindsets of the adults around them. When academic content is presented as inherently valuable, without apology, students are more likely to approach it with a desire to grow.

Instead of: Teacher – Hey all, we are about to introduce a new concept, the document based question. Document based questions are really challenging but we need to tackle it before the exam. Even if you don’t find it useful to your daily life we just need to work hard and get it done.

Try this: Teacher – Hey guys, we are about to introduce a new concept, the document based question. This is really exciting because it’s going to stretch your thinking and challenge you to support your claims with primary sources. This is a super valuable skill – anytime you construct an opinion or argument, you should strive to use this approach and take advantage of primary sources. I also love how this content centers historical voices from the past, giving us a front row seat to what actually happened during critical moments of history.