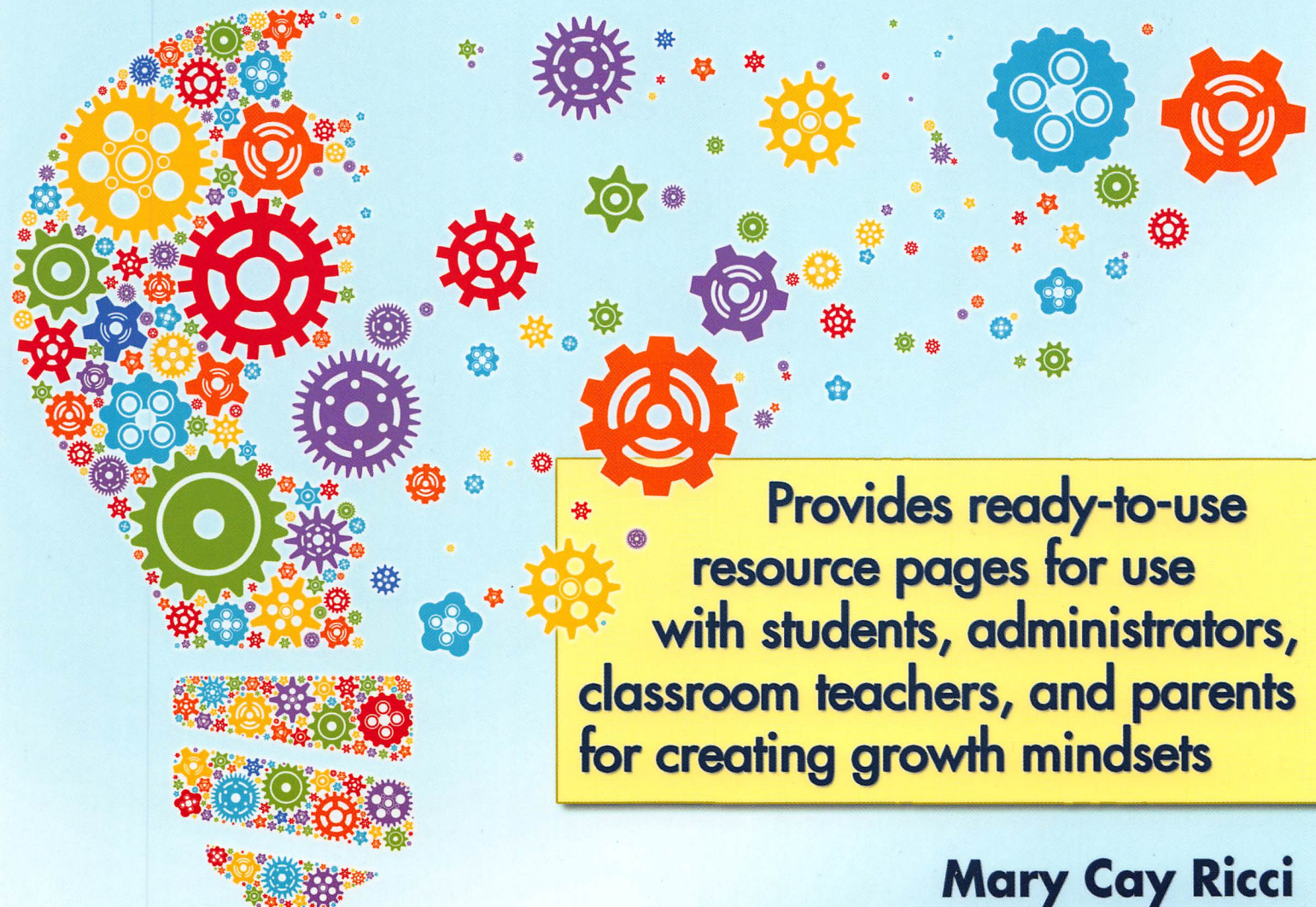


**READY-TO-USE  
RESOURCES FOR**

# **Mindsets in the Classroom**

**Everything Educators Need for School Success**



**Provides ready-to-use  
resource pages for use  
with students, administrators,  
classroom teachers, and parents  
for creating growth mindsets**

**Mary Cay Ricci**



## “Look Fors” in the Classroom

In *Mindsets in the Classroom*, “Look Fors in a Differentiated, Responsive Classroom” (p. 143) is provided as a way to observe and monitor a school or classroom’s journey toward both growth mindset and responsive instruction. What I have learned since developing that sample “Look For” list is that we need to first focus on just those attributes that make a growth mindset classroom. We can’t always get to the differentiated, responsive instruction until we have built the climate of growth, effort, resiliency, and possibilities in the classroom.

The development of a mindset-only observation tool for students and adults proved to be more challenging—in part because of what I learned by going into various schools and classrooms to try it out. I identified certain behaviors and statements that I would expect to see and hear from students in a growth mindset classroom and specifically looked for these things. What I learned after visits to many classrooms is that it is not necessarily about what you see and hear, but it is equally important to note what you don’t see and hear. For example, in many of these growth mindset classrooms, I never heard one student say things like: “This is too hard,” “I can’t do this,” or “I will never understand this.” In fact, in one fourth-grade classroom, the teacher asked the students to draw a picture depicting an aspect of the story they had just read. I listened very attentively as students worked on this task and I admit that I expected at least one student to say something like, “I can’t draw!” “This looks terrible,” or “Can I draw stick people because I am no good at drawing people?” I did not hear one student say anything about the task or his or her perceived ability to draw—they were all engaged and appeared to be thinking very carefully about what they were drawing. In fact, throughout my visit to many classrooms in this school, I never once heard students say anything about giving up or not being able to do something.

Resource 55: “Look Fors” in a Growth Mindset Learning Environment (pp. 134–135) provides a list of things that could be observed over time in a growth mindset classroom. This can be used by administrators or professional development educators as they walk through their buildings. It can also be used as a reflection tool for teachers motivated to have a growth mindset classroom environment. This is not an all-inclusive list, but provides a starting point for school and individual teacher goal setting. Remember, it takes a growth mindset teacher to have a growth mindset classroom.

## Growth Mindset Sentence Samples for Educators

While visiting with a middle school that was working toward a growth mindset environment, I asked the school’s leadership team what kinds of resources would be

## **“Look Fors” in a Growth Mindset Learning Environment**

### **Expectations**

- Teacher believes that all students can achieve at high levels.
- Equitable access to advanced learning experiences exists for all students.
- Students and teachers believe in the ability to develop intelligence: students have a conceptual understanding of neural connections.

### **Cultivation of Psychosocial Skills/Noncognitive Factors**

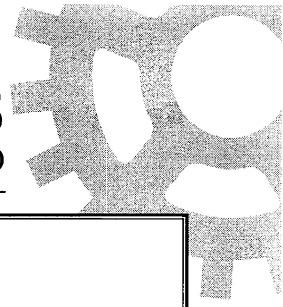
- Deliberate instruction/cultivation of perseverance, resiliency, grit, and persistence is ongoing.
- Students are given opportunities to safely struggle (not graded) in order to build neural networks and develop resiliency.
- Instructional strategies that nurture/promote higher level thinking are imbedded in everyday instruction.

### **Classroom Environment**

- A growth mindset class culture is evident—students are not saying “I can’t.”
- Teacher feedback/praise is based on effort, process, and strategies used.
- Failure is looked at in a positive light. What can be learned from the error or lack of success?
- Grades and scores are not emphasized.
- Students are not “labeled” in the classroom: “gifted,” “resource,” “ELL,” “on-level,” etc.
- Students are given opportunities to set their own goals and reflect on the outcome.

### **Students Might Be Saying**

- I don’t understand this yet.
- My neurons are not connecting yet.
- If I practice I will get it.
- I am not going to give up.
- I can feel my neurons connecting.
- Can I try something more challenging?



## Teachers Are Saying

- You are not quite there yet, but keep trying/practicing.
- I like the way you persevere/persist through that task.
- Let's think of a new strategy when you try this again.
- I am proud of the way that you struggled through that task.
- "Yet"
- I can see the effort you have put into this and your determination to do this well.
- Can you think of a way to make this more challenging for yourself?

## Things Seen in the Classroom

- Visual reminder/triggers to have a growth mindset (e.g., poster, neurons, etc.).
- Students grouped flexibly and working at multiple levels.
- Quotes about perseverance and positive reminders about failure.
- Displayed student work shows corrections, redos, and growth.
- Stickers and displays are effort based.

most helpful to them. Their response was that they would like to have a list of sentence stems or samples that all adults in the building could use as they adjust to using growth mindset language. This list would be available to all adults: office staff, cafeteria, maintenance, etc. Resource 56: Educators' Growth Mindset Sentence Samples (p. 137) is a list of growth mindset sentence starters. This is not comprehensive, but will give school staff a good idea of what we should be saying to our students.

### Student Goal Setting

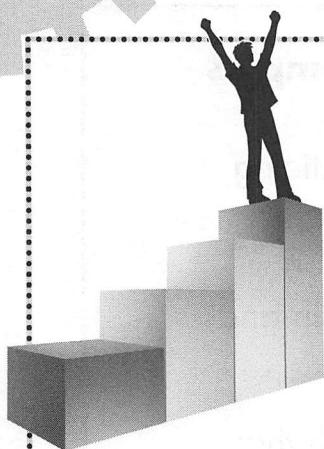
Students of all ages should engage in setting and working toward learning goals too. What a better place to start than setting growth mindset goals? Once students begin learning some of the tenets of a growth mindset, they can begin setting individual growth mindset goals. Some examples of these goals include:

- ⊗ I will work longer at trying to figure something out. I will not give up quickly.
- ⊗ I will have high expectations of myself.
- ⊗ I will ask questions when I can't figure something out.
- ⊗ I will review all of my work and modify or redo it to improve it.
- ⊗ I will no longer think or say "I can't do this" or "I don't get this." I will continue to try or seek help.
- ⊗ I will request time after class to work with my teacher or a study buddy to make sure that I understand.
- ⊗ I will spend time every day practicing \_\_\_\_\_ skills.
- ⊗ I will try to approach things in a new way if I am not yet having success.
- ⊗ I will ask for more challenging work if the work presented does not require much effort.

Resource 57: My Growth Mindset Goal (p. 138) provides an example of a tool for student mindset goal setting. It allows students to identify one goal at a time and estimate the amount of time they need to work toward the goal. Students must also identify any strategies that they are using to meet the goal and give some examples of how they met or did not meet the goal. For example, if the student goal was "I will review all of my work and modify or redo it to improve it" then an example might be "I completed my chapter questions during lit class and stood up to turn it in when I remembered my goal. I sat down and read each question again and made sure my answers were complete. By doing this, I realized that I had an incomplete answer—this gave me an opportunity to improve my work before turning it in." Resources 58 and 59 (pp. 139 and 140) are samples of completed goal forms. Joseph's example is one where he met his goal, and Catherine's example shows that she has not yet met her goal.

### **Educators' Growth Mindset Sentence Samples**

- You are not quite there yet, but keep trying/practicing.
- I like the way you persevered through that task.
- If you are not happy with your outcome, try again and think about doing it a different way next time.
- I am proud of the way that you struggled through that task.
- I can see:
  - The effort you have put into this.
  - How determined you are to do this well.
- Can you think of a way to make this more challenging for yourself?
- I am curious about your mistakes; let's work together to see what happened.
- I noticed you used this strategy; tell me a little bit about why you chose to do it this way.
- You must be proud of the way you embraced that challenging task.
- I see you used a new strategy after the first one wasn't working for you; that was a thoughtful decision.
- I am sorry, it looks like I wasted your time on that task; it didn't require much effort.



## My Growth Mindset Goal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Growth Mindset Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I hope to reach my goal by: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategies or things I might do to help reach my goal:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Check-in:** How am I doing toward this Growth Mindset Goal? Date: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I have met this goal    ☐ I have partially met this goal    ☐ I have not met this goal yet

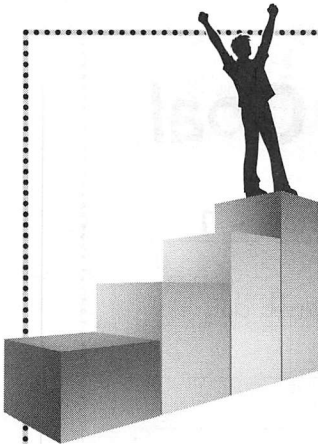
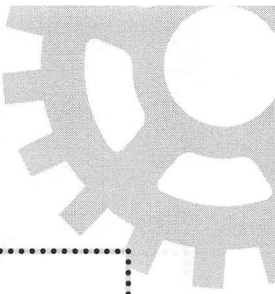
An example of something I did that made me realize that I have met, have partially met, or have not yet met this goal:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Some new strategies to try or my new growth mindset goal:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(If you have a new goal, get a blank Growth Mindset Goal form.)



## My Growth Mindset Goal

Name: Joseph

Date: September 7

**Growth Mindset Goal:** I will work longer when I am trying to figure something out. I will not give up quickly.

I hope to reach my goal by: September 18

Strategies or things I might do to help reach my goal:

Every time I get stuck on classwork or homework I will not automatically quit. I will try to figure it out in a different way or I will use resources like my book to try to figure it out. I will work a longer time until I figure it out but if I can't find the help I need, then I will ask the teacher or my mom for help.

**Check-in:** How am I doing toward this Growth Mindset Goal? Date: September 14

☒ I have met this goal    ☐ I have partially met this goal    ☐ I have not met this goal yet

An example of something I did that made me realize that I have met, have partially met, or have not yet met this goal:

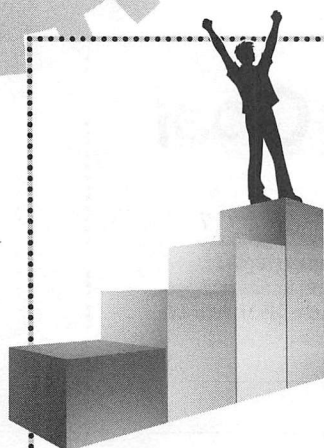
When I was working on my math assignment in school, I got stuck. Mrs. Davis was working with another group. So I decided to look at the notes on the board again and look at the example on my paper. I tried again and again until I finally figured it out.

Some new strategies to try or my new growth mindset goal:

My new goal: I will review all of my work and add things or redo it to improve it.

(If you have a new goal, get a blank Growth Mindset Goal form.)





## My Growth Mindset Goal

Name: Catherine

Date: September 7

Growth Mindset Goal: I will not think or say, "I can't do this."

I hope to reach my goal by: September 18

Strategies or things I might do to help reach my goal:

When work is hard for me I will visualize neurons trying to connect in my brain. When I start to think that I can't do it, I will try to persevere until it starts making sense. I will ask for help if these don't work.

Check-in: How am I doing toward this Growth Mindset Goal? Date: September 14

☐ I have met this goal    ☐ I have partially met this goal    ☒ I have not met this goal yet

An example of something I did that made me realize that I have met, have partially met, or have not yet met this goal:

My mind automatically goes to "I can't do this" whenever I feel challenged. I don't want to make mistakes so I give up.

Some new strategies to try or my new growth mindset goal:

Every time that happens I will talk myself out of a fixed mindset and talk my way into a growth mindset. I will remind myself that making mistakes is part of learning something new. I will put a small picture of a neuron on the corner of my desk to remind myself that my brain is getting stronger when I think hard. I will adjust my target date to September 30.

(If you have a new goal, get a blank Growth Mindset Goal form.)

On a visit to a middle school, I noticed that every student had a paw print paper cutout on his or her locker with an individual goal written on it. (The paw print was connected to the school's mascot.) The locker placement was to remind the students of their goals every time they went to their lockers. Some of the goals that I noted included:

- ⊗ I will practice reading every night in order to improve my independent reading the second quarter.
- ⊗ I will work to become more organized this quarter.
- ⊗ I will ask for extra help when I don't understand something in math.

I also noticed that many of the goals were grade oriented, such as, "I will get good grades this quarter." The idea of placing a student's personal goal on a locker is terrific, however, students must be guided to develop a process goal rather than a grade goal. They should think about things they might do: persevere, practice, work longer, seek help, be more optimistic, demonstrate growth, and so forth, rather than focusing on grades, scores, or making the honor roll. The process goals will naturally lead to more success.

Another option is to encourage students to reflect on many growth mindset goals over time. The students can establish the goals themselves or you can provide the goals and they can reflect on them each week, month, or quarter. Resource 60: Student Growth Mindset Self-Reflection (p. 142) provides an example of a tool where students can work specifically toward each goal and determine if they always, sometimes, or have not yet met the goal.

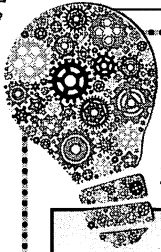
Ideally, monitoring and evaluating a growth mindset environment should be written into your school improvement plans. Year one goals might focus solely on:

- ⊗ Growth mindset feedback and language
- ⊗ Teaching students about growth mindset
- ⊗ Building a conceptual understanding of the brain with students
- ⊗ Deliberate cultivation of noncognitive skills—perseverance, resiliency, and grit

Year two goals might be:

- ⊗ Parent education
- ⊗ Responsive instruction and equitable access to advanced learning opportunities

Using some of the data tool samples in this chapter can provide ways for measuring your school growth mindset goals and contribute to maintaining a growth mindset environment.



# Student Growth Mindset Self-Reflection

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Beginning Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Reflection Date: \_\_\_\_\_

| Growth Mindset Behavior                                     | Always/<br>Sometimes/<br>Not Yet | Reflection<br>Dates | Examples/Evidence |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| I reflect on my learning.                                   |                                  |                     |                   |
| I help set my own learning goals and I monitor my progress. |                                  |                     |                   |
| I try different strategies if I am not having success.      |                                  |                     |                   |
| I am improving my perseverance.                             |                                  |                     |                   |
| I visualize my neurons connecting.                          |                                  |                     |                   |
| I reflect on and learn from my mistakes.                    |                                  |                     |                   |
| I do not avoid challenging tasks—I welcome them.            |                                  |                     |                   |
| I am becoming more resilient.                               |                                  |                     |                   |
| I ask an adult when I need help.                            |                                  |                     |                   |