

Praise and Messages:

"The words we use are symbolic of the values that we hold."

~Duckworth

--**Everything you say to your students sends an important message.** The language you use is capable of changing lives; it can either support or hinder students' thinking processes. You need to continually ask what message your words are conveying to students. You can shut down students with criticism OR maintain high expectations with encouragement.⁸⁸

--**How you (and parents!) praise is crucial.** It is common place to tell a child they are smart, yet we now know this can lead to decreased learning and risk taking and can potentially affect one's sense of self. One should never praise internal characteristics, like intelligence, but rather one's actions, what one is in control of...it is empowering! Praise students' strategies, focus, effort, persistence, and improvement...put the **spotlight on the process of learning.**⁸⁹

--Growth mindset uses language to focus on the strategies and effort behind the achievement. This is considered **process-oriented feedback** ("You worked hard on that," or, "you used lively verbs in that story") instead of person-oriented feedback ("You are good at that," or, "you are smart").⁹⁰ It is most important to **focus on "how" one works, or, the process of learning.** You must emphasize the effort applied, the strategies used, the choices students made, the concentration used, and the persistence displayed...the actions that helped the student remain motivated, confident, and effective. Process-oriented praise lets students remain motivated and effective when faced with the inevitable setbacks in class and in life.

--You must be purposeful in seeking opportunities to help students learn and think differently. Students must be valued for trying and reconsidering ideas and problems from different perspectives, so they continue to grow. **You are responsible for monitoring your own language, actions, and instructional choices daily.**⁹¹ When introducing a new problem, never say, "This one is easy," but rather let them know that it may take a few tries before they get it and that's okay/part of the learning process!⁹²

⁸⁸ Enriquez et al, 2017

⁸⁹ Sparks, 2013

⁹⁰ Enriquez et al, 2017

⁹¹ Saphier, 2017

⁹² Sparks, 2017

--If a student's good grade took little effort, don't praise that particular accomplishment, that just means the task was too easy and resulted in coasting. ⁹³

--Sending the message: "You're so smart," creates a fixed mindset, if one is praised for a grade based on their smarts rather than their effort, this comes with the expectation that intelligence is fixed, that effort means they are not smart and is thus pointless. ⁹⁴

--Discussion around a students' work can send a fixed mindset message or a growth mindset message. Messages heard at this young, developing age provide a foundation for future decisions and actions...accepting challenges, continuing in the face of adversity, and remaining open to learning opportunities.

--Children on the negative side of the achievement gap have been getting a fixed mindset message their whole lives. To close the gap, you must change their beliefs in their supposed low ability and convince them of the benefits of becoming high-achievement students. (*This task will bring you face-to-face with your own beliefs.) ⁹⁵

**Discuss learning problems privately (help students to save face whenever possible), but improvements publicly and in detail, so others can learn from and model the steps those who were successful took. ⁹⁶

The Power of YET:

--A key component of the growth mindset is "the power of yet."

Yet should be a frequently used word in every classroom! If a student does not understand something or says they are not good at something, add "yet" to their sentence. They should never feel like *lack of understanding* is their outcome, but rather an uncomfortable step in the process of learning. Remind them that all things are possible with effort, learning new strategies, and extra

⁹³ Walters, 2014

⁹⁴ Sparks, 2013

⁹⁵ Duckor, 2017

⁹⁶ Saphier, 2017

help! "I'm not good at math!" needs to be followed by "YET," a plan, and support to learn the difficult concept.⁹⁷

--Students need to believe that what they do not understand or struggle with is always changing, it's fluid. A task may seem difficult, but then with mindful effort and practice the student can master it. The connections in his or her brain have become strong, and the task that was once difficult is now easy. It will soon be replaced with another difficult task to master as one continues to learn.

--If a student does all they are supposed to in the learning process and still does not understand something, it is critical you guide them in understanding exactly what the problem is and how they can overcome it, or frustration will ensue.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Ricci, 2015

⁹⁸ Dweck, 2010