



Sample of a Winning Educator Initiative Grant Application

Litchfield Community Learning Center, Akron Public Schools

Grade Levels Encompassed by School: 6-8

Team Leader Name: Sandra Wilder, District Instructional Specialist

Project Title: Growing Student Mindsets That Invite Excellence

Amount Requested: \$10,000

Brief Project Description

“Growing Student Mindsets That Invite Excellence” project focuses on developing growth mindset in students in Litchfield Community Learning Center. Math and English Language Arts teachers will engage in an ongoing, workshop and job-embedded professional development focused on providing opportunities for students to develop growth mindset. Given that all math and ELA teachers will be invited to participate, this project will potentially involve all students in Litchfield CLC. It is expected that the positive impact on student growth mindset will result in significant improvement of student performance in math and ELA across all grade levels.

Anticipated Project Start and End Date: August, 2018 through May, 2019

Please provide a description of your proposed project in 500 words or less. Provide the need for the project, what K-12 grades are served, and what data informs and supports the stated need. Include the Learning Standards that are addressed by your proposal.

Litchfield CLC is a middle school in Akron Public Schools with approximately 559 students in grades 6-8. Since November 2016, Litchfield has been an International Baccalaureate (IB) school with all students engaged in the IB Programme. Litchfield has been struggling with student performance in both math and English Language Arts (ELA) across all grade levels. More specifically, in 2016-2017 the percentage of students who scored proficient or above on Ohio State Test (OST) in grades 6, 7, and 8 in mathematics was 17.5%, 20%, and 8.1%, respectively. The scores in ELA were also significantly below the gap closure target (of 77%) designated by Ohio Department of Education (ODE) with grades 6, 7, and 8 students scoring at 32%, 42%, and 23%, respectively. These scores indicate that most students may not be performing at grade level and are making far less academic progress given where they were last year, compared to similar students in the state.

Research on student achievement indicates that student success is directly correlated with students’ beliefs and attitudes toward learning, their ability to succeed, and self-efficacy. Students who have growth mindset are more successful in school and achieve at higher levels than their counterparts with fixed mindset. Therefore, it is critical that, coupled with academic supports, students receive instruction that fosters developing growth mindset. Growth mindset characteristics closely align with the IB learner profile attributes. These attributes, believed to help individuals become responsible members of local, national, and global communities, include students being inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective.



This project focuses on developing growth mindset in students in grades 6-8. Math and ELA teachers will engage in an ongoing, workshop and job-embedded professional development throughout the 2018-2019 academic year. As a result of this professional development, teachers will collaboratively implement growth mindset lessons (based on the work of Carol Dweck and as outlined in *The Growth Mindset Coach: A Teacher's Month-by-Month Handbook for Empowering Students to Achieve* by Annie Brock and Heather Hundley). More specifically, the monthly lessons will be implemented by math teachers one month, and ELA teachers the following month. In addition, all teachers during daily instruction will be mindful of students' mindsets and they will incorporate supports in their practice to promote grit, self-efficacy, and perseverance among students (as recommended by *The Growth Mindset Playbook: A Teacher's Guide to Promoting Student Success* by Annie Brock and Heather Hundley). Job-embedded professional development will be provided by District Instructional Specialist and Litchfield's Instructional Specialist, who will be monitoring and supporting the lessons, and working with teachers to build on their strengths and address any gaps regarding instructional practices that promote growth mindset in students. Given that all math and ELA teachers will be invited to participate, this project will potentially involve all students in Litchfield CLC. It is expected that the positive impact on student growth mindset will result in improvement of student performance in math and ELA across all grade levels (6-8).

How does the project prepare students for college and career readiness? At what transition point on the cradle-to-career continuum does your project fit? Please limit your answer to 250 words or less.

With Akron Public Schools high schools transforming into college and career academies in Fall 2018, ensuring that middle school students are well prepared to develop characteristics of an APS graduate will become even more critical. The main characteristics of a successful APS graduate include strong habits of mind, real world skills, social skills, contributing to society, and having a plan for the future. In particular, the strong habits of mind encompass student perseverance, persistence, grit, and flexibility. These are all characteristics that are typically exhibited by students who have growth mindset. Development and further strengthening of these characteristics among middle school students is the main objective of this project. As research indicates, students with growth mindset achieve at higher levels than students with fixed mindset, and are more likely to pursue college or career after graduating from high school.

The earliest transition point on the cradle-to-career continuum that this project aligns with is the Eighth Grade Math indicator. In order to master mathematical content at the rigor indicated by the state test, students need to be able to put in effort, stay on task, persevere in solving problems, and believe that they can learn challenging material. Developing growth mindset in students impacts every aspect of their lives, both academic and non-academic. With that said, development of growth mindset in middle school is expected to positively impact student achievement in both math and ELA. Therefore, the change in mindset will indirectly affect student achievement across the curricula in the ninth grade.



**Please explain the specific outcomes you expect from the project. How will you measure success?
What evaluation tools will be used?**

There are two main expected outcomes of this project. The first outcome is teacher-specific, because in order to be able to foster growth mindset, teachers themselves cannot have fixed mindset. All participating teachers will experience positive impact on their mindset. At the beginning of the project, teachers will be administered a ten-item survey to determine if they have predominantly fixed or growth mindset (this survey is included in *The Growth Mindset Coach: A Teacher's Month-by-Month Handbook for Empowering Students to Achieve* by Annie Brock and Heather Hundley, 2016). Teachers will also be asked to share their current approaches to positively impacting student mindset. As a result of engaging in this project, all teachers with fixed mindset will experience change in their beliefs and at the end of the year survey, their scores will indicate the development of growth mindset. In addition, all teachers with growth mindset will improve their knowledge of instructional practices that contribute to development of growth mindset in students. Overall, it is expected that all participating math and ELA teachers will become more knowledgeable in instructional practices for promoting growth mindset among their students. At the end of the school year, teachers will be asked to share any new approaches to impacting student mindset that they have learned and employed in their classroom. The change in their knowledge (from the beginning to the end of the school year) will be measured by qualitative analysis of their responses. At the end of the year, teachers will also take the same ten-item survey to determine if their own mindset has been impacted by the participation in the project.

The second outcome of this project is student-specific. All students in grades 6-8 will be administered a self-assessment on mindset at the beginning and end of the school year (which will coincide with the beginning and end of this project). The self-assessment is included in *The Growth Mindset Coach: A Teacher's Month-by-Month Handbook for Empowering Students to Achieve* by Annie Brock and Heather Hundley, 2016. It is expected that the students who participated in the project will demonstrate significant change in their self-assessment pre and post-scores. (Ten points on the scale indicates strong fixed mindset, and zero indicates strong growth mindset). In addition, non-math and non-ELA teachers (who will not be implementing any growth mindset lessons in their classrooms) will be asked to reflect on the student mindset. It is expected that overall, teachers will notice improvement in student persistence, grit, self-efficacy, and flexibility (all characteristics indicating growth mindset).

Finally, student achievement in math and ELA throughout the academic year will be measured by respective Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). MAP will be used instead of Ohio State Tests, because the latter are administered in spring, and their scores are not reported within the same school year to help determine the impact of the project. In Spring 2017, ELA MAP test percentile for 6th grade was 37, for 7th grade it was 46, and for 8th grade it was 52. Math MAP test percentile for 6th grade was 28, for 7th grade it was 35, and for 8th grade it was 37. It is expected that during the implementing of the growth mindset project, all grade levels will see an increase in their MAP test percentiles, in both math and ELA.



Describe in detail any teacher professional development that will be a part of the project's implementation, including the use of one-on-one coaching.

This project encompasses a year-long, job-embedded professional development for all math and ELA teachers involved in the project. The major components of the training are outlined below:

1. During the school's first instructional improvement day (prior to the start of the school year) all ELA and math teachers will engage in a two-hour session focused on the importance of the "Growing Student Mindsets That Invite Excellence" project, the teacher and student expectations to ensure positive impact of the program, and the desired outcomes of the program for both students and teachers. At this time, teachers will also be administered a ten-item growth mindset survey (designed by Annie Brock and Heather Hundley) to determine where they fall on the mindset spectrum. The results of this survey will be used to inform the professional development for teachers on growth mindset. Teachers will share their current (if any) practices on how they ensure that their students develop growth mindset. Teachers will also be given their own copy of *The Growth Mindset Coach* book (Brock and Hundley, 2016) with the expectation to read it over the next couple of weeks.
2. Within two weeks of the start of the school year, all participating math and ELA teachers will engage in a full-day professional development session. One part of the session (approximately two hours) will be designed based on the results of teacher growth mindset survey. In order for teachers to impact student mindset, it is imperative that they themselves have growth mindset. This part of the session will be delivered by an expert on growth mindset, Dr. Matthew Deevers, Senior Research Associate for Summit Education Initiative.
3. The remainder of the session (approximately four hours) will be spent on collaboration between math and ELA grade level teams on how to most effectively and efficiently implement the growth mindset lessons provided in *The Growth Mindset Coach*. This work will be facilitated and overseen by the District Instructional Specialist, Dr. Wilder, and Litchfield's Instructional Specialist, Mrs. Nativio. The teacher teams will start their work by first constructing a SMART goal that will guide their work on growth mindset in the upcoming year. They will tailor their lessons based on the growth mindset survey given to all students during the first week of school. The coaches will ensure that the lessons are well planned and target strong habits of mind. Finally, teacher teams will create a calendar of lesson implementing which will be shared with the coaches and the principal who will be supporting the implementation of the lessons. In addition to growth mindset lessons, teachers will also discuss approaches to fostering growth mindset in their daily practice. They will use *The Growth Mindset Playbook: A Teacher's Guide to Promoting Student Success* by Annie Brock and Heather Hundley as their guide and resource for this work.
4. Building Instructional Specialist and District Instructional Specialist will join the teachers during the lesson implementation (growth mindset lessons are implemented once a month in each grade in either math or ELA classes). They will provide one-on-one job-embedded coaching to all teachers, ensuring that teachers are prepared for the lessons and are supported through the delivery of the lesson. The coaches will monitor that the lessons are implemented with fidelity, provide real-time coaching when



needed throughout the lesson, and look for areas of enforcement and refinement in regards to impacting student mindset that will be addressed during the follow-up meeting with the teacher.

5. All teachers are part of small, typically content-based Professional Learning Communities that meet weekly during the school year. After each lesson implementation (one a month) coaches will meet with the teachers participating in the program (during designated PLC times) to debrief. During the debrief, teachers will share their experience, perceived strengths and weaknesses, and areas for growth. The coaches will offer their constructive feedback, and collaboratively everyone will review plans for the next lesson.

6. During the school's last instructional improvement day (at the end of the school year), the participating teachers will meet for one final session. During this time they will reflect on their experiences implementing growth mindset lessons. They will share some of the best practices for impacting student mindset and devise a smart goal for the next school year to continue and build on this year's work. They will share this goal with the principal with a suggestion to include this goal as part of the school's 90-day plan for the next school year.

Please describe how technology will be integrated into the project and what instructional best practices will be implemented.

Growth mindset lessons that will be implemented throughout the school year are student-centered, with teachers acting as facilitators of student explorations, discussions, and overall learning. These lessons vary in their design. More specifically, some lessons incorporate small-group and/or whole class discussion, others include physical manipulatives and hands-on activities. There are also number of lessons that incorporate technology. The extent of technology use depends on the lesson. For example, some lessons use technology as a tool to ensure student access to videos, songs, and movies that foster growth mindset. There are also lessons that focus on extending positive relationships to student families through electronic newsletters, social media, class channels, and e-conferences. Finally, some lessons are done in virtual learning environment where students work on developing characteristics of growth mindset through creation of videos, presentations, storyboards, etc.

How will the project be sustained and/or replicated by others after the funding has ended?

Once developed and used in classrooms, teachers' daily practices of fostering growth mindset in their students will be continued in future years. These practices will become habits of good pedagogy that will, throughout this project, become seamlessly incorporated in teaching of core content (math and ELA). These daily practices require no additional resources and they will be used to sustain the developed growth mindset of Litchfield's students. The actual growth mindset lessons will be implemented in the future only with 6th grade students (7th and 8th grade students will have experienced these lessons, and their growth mindset will be fostered by their teachers).

The results of this project will be carefully analyzed to determine its impact on students' strong habits of mind, their growth and achievement in mathematics and ELA, and specifically their performance in 8th grade math (as one of the indicators on the cradle-to-career continuum). A significantly positive impact would be sufficient to advocate for the district to cover any costs of consumable materials in the future



years (which included only a small portion of the materials used in the project). The majority of the materials needed for this project are non-consumables (books, DVD, etc.) and can be used for years to come. In addition, in order to ensure that any new ELA and/or math teacher can adequately continue the work, the building instructional coach will provide one-on-one training prior to the start of the lessons in the future. The challenges and successes of this program will be shared on the district level (during instructional improvement days), and with other schools, in hopes of replicating it and impacting all APS buildings and their students.

What Makes This a Strong Request:

Project Need & Purpose: 15 Points Possible

The project clearly conveys the need for the project, using data to inform and support the need. It also clearly identifies where it falls on the cradle-to-career continuum. The project's timeline reflects a logical sequence of activities and indicates clearly when each major activity will end. ***Try this: can you identify the data-backed need for this project?***

Educational Impact: 30 Points Possible

This project clearly identifies the significant impact on student achievement, is aligned with Ohio's Learning Standards, links directly with Ohio's Learning Standards for social-emotional development, and clearly explains the means that will be used to evaluate project outcomes. ***Try this: can you identify the specific learning standards this project will advance?***

Research-Based Professional Development: 30 Points Possible

This project clearly explains the professional development for the plan, the type of research-based program or model will be used, and who will be providing ongoing one-on-one coaching. ***Try this: can you identify the type of ongoing coaching the educators will receive during the implementation of this project?***

Best Practices: 25 Points Possible

This application identifies the long-term impact of the project. It also demonstrates the use of research-validated instructional practices, and shows evidence of creativity, problem-solving, and the integration of technology. ***Try this: can you identify how this project will be sustained after funding is exhausted?***