Tenth-Grade Student–Participants’ Perceptions of a Growth Mindset Curriculum: An Action Research Study

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to describe nine tenth-grade student-participants’ perceptions of a growth mindset curriculum based on the educational theory developed by Dweck (2006). The curriculum focused on the core aspects of Dweck’s (2006) theory: (a) understanding brain growth and neuroplasticity, (b) having a productive attitude about making mistakes and experiencing failure, and (c) expending effort and developing perseverance (Dweck, 2006). The teacher-researcher implemented the Growth Mindset Unit in a small high school in a coastal town in southern Maine during the teacher-researcher’s advisory class. The school has a proficiency-based grading system in which students benefit from developing a growth mindset in order to meet the districts’ competencies and standards. Data was collected using a pre- and post-test survey, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group. The teacher-researcher found that (a) there was an overall increase in the average growth mindset for the class, (b) the student-participants perceived the construct of growth mindset in the school’s proficiency-based system to be valuable, and (c) the student-participants felt there should be changes to the Growth Mindset Unit.
to make it more engaging. Changes were made and shared with the student-participants in a focus group setting. An action plan was developed to present to the ninth-grade advisory class teachers regarding growth mindset and how to
implement a Growth Mindset Unit. The goal would be to implement the Growth Mindset Unit for all ninth-graders in their advisory classes.

*Keywords:* neuroplasticity, growth mindset, proficiency-based learning and grading, action research, grit, advisory program, affective domain