

Using the Growth Mind-set approach to narrow the gap

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To discuss this case study, please contact us via email customersupport@camdenlearning.org.uk



Key Points

Our aim was to use evidence based practice to close the attainment gap between children entitled to Pupil Premium and others

Purpose

What were your reasons for doing this development work?

We had two groups at either end of the attainment spectrum who were not achieving their potential: children used to succeeding who were not prepared to take risks in case they failed, and children who were overly dependent because they lacked confidence in their own learning. We looked at evidenced-based research from a range of sources such as the EEF Sutton Trust and the work of Professor Carol Dweck on Growth Mind-sets. To have a growth mind-set is to understand that fundamental qualities like intelligence and talent are not fixed, but developed by effort, hard work, taking risks and learning from others.

Who were the identified target learners?

All children, but especially those at either end of the attainment spectrum who were unwilling to take risks in their learning.

What were your success criteria?

- To make sure we were engaging children who were not taking risks in their learning because of fear of failure or overdependence.
- To narrow the gaps and remove the ceiling in attainment.

What did you do? (What success criteria did you use?)

Embracing the principle that intelligence and talent can be developed by effort and opportunity demands a re-appraisal of pedagogy and changes in methodology. Here are some of the ways in which our growth-mindset approach manifests itself: - A change in the way we praise children (all adults – teachers, teaching assistants, parents) so that we are developing their understanding of effort. We have a bank of praise expressions.

- We work on brain science with children, exploring how neurons connect, that it is like a muscle you need to exercise with practice, and the impact of nutrition, sleep

and hydration.

- We use stick picks (coloured sticks with a name on each) to randomly select learning partners every week. Learning partners sit together for lessons. They may not always be doing the same work, but always support each other's learning.

Working with a different learning partner each week means children form relationships with children other than their current friends, and are drawing on a range of qualities and ideas present in the class.

- We do not use ability grouping at all, thus removing the ceiling for learners.

- We have three levels of challenge: green (mild), yellow (spicy), and red (hot).

Children self-select challenges, learning very quickly how to self-select at an appropriate level. If they are not good at self-challenge (eg if they are new to the school, we have high pupil mobility) the teacher will support them in choosing their challenge level.

- Planning of activities that require challenges with an element of failure built in: investigations, trial and improvement, open-ended tasks, etc. to develop children's resilience in learning.

- No-hands-up, but instead thinking time and stick picks. Every child has to think to prepare the answer – it might be their name next. We emphasise that mistakes are part of learning – if you are not making mistakes, you are not challenging yourself.

FAIL = First Attempt In Learning. (Hands go up only to ask a question.)

- Learning Stops – an opportunity to help children learn to use feedback effectively. It might be a successful piece of work, or a learning mistake that will help the learning of all the class. Their work might be shown under the visualiser. There is no stigma attached to a learning mistake, because children appreciate it is part of learning.

- Peer assessment with their learning partner, using success criteria and thinking of ways of improvement.

- Growth mind-set is embedded in the whole school culture, so all displays are illustrating and promoting the principles.

- Research time for staff. They are given a day to read and research, and try things out, embodying the growth mind-set approach. We have a lesson-study approach to CPD. In researching with their class, they can use IRIS videoing equipment to simultaneously film themselves and the children, and view it back in split screen. They present their research to their colleagues in INSET sessions.

- In assemblies we explore role models who have invested effort to achieve success, and there are many, eg Albert Einstein, JK Rowling, Michael Jordan.

- It is also about wider school life: our Reception children go to forest school weekly, we have adventure activities, sporting activities, visiting art and music, etc. All our children are trying lots of things and not missing out because they are scared of failing or showing themselves up.

What specific teaching resources did you use?

The work of Carol Dweck including resources and films available on the internet were especially useful

Outcomes and Impact

What has been the impact on pupil learning and teaching?

100% of all teaching is judged good or outstanding. Our teachers have a growth mind-set themselves and are willing to take risks to improve their practice.

- Attitude – our children have developed a really positive learning attitude, taking risks in their learning
- Lifting the lid on achievements – children love the challenge
- Children are putting in more effort and practice – they understand the purpose when they see the brain science and see the impact.

Evidence of impact on pupil learning and teaching/leadership

Results for all children are high. There has been a huge impact on the lower attaining children, they are really holding their own. In 2014 100% of Pupil Premium children achieved level 4 in English and Maths.

[How the attainment gap has narrowed](#)