“Of all the hard jobs around, one of the hardest is being a good teacher.”
~Maggie Gallagher

“Good teachers know how to bring out the best in students.”
~Charles Kuralt

“Education is the key to success in life, and teachers make a lasting impact in the lives of their students.”
~Solomon Ortiz

“A good teacher is a determined person.”
~Gilbert Highet

“Without a teacher’s passion clearly on display in the classroom, how can we expect our students to develop their own passion for learning?”
~Jim Fornaciari

***As a teacher, you are the most influential person in your students’ lives at school!

--If you possess and model a growth mindset, “many students who start out lower in the class blossom during the year and join the higher-achievers.”

20 Dweck, 2007, p. 10

However, a teacher with a fixed mindset about intelligence has a self-fulfilling prophecy for his or her class. 21 If you believe learning is linked to pre-existing ability or intelligence, your students may not show much development throughout the year.

22 Yeager, 2016

--Everything you say and do affects your students, much like a parent shapes a child at home with all they say and do. Ask yourself, are you motivating or discouraging students? Respectful relationships between students and their teachers play a large role in student motivation.

23 Saphier, 2017
One’s mindset can be seen in various ways:

--nonverbal behaviors, the things you do looks like,
--the things you say sounds like,
--a visible attitude and emotions feels like.

FIRST—As an educator with influence over so many developing young minds, you must do an honest self-evaluation and reflect on some important questions as evidence of your own mindset.

1) Am I a lifelong learner?
2) Am I passionate about learning and the content I’m teaching?
3) Am I persistent in the face of challenges?
4) Do I believe all students are capable of learning anything with effort, or, do I catch myself thinking things like, “He’s not good at math,” “she’s not a good writer,” and “he’s not an honors level student.”
5) What is the culture of my classroom?

--A growth mindset classroom is multi-faceted. It is an attitude that shapes all that happens in the classroom, from the décor to the praise, and begins with the teacher. If a teacher does not have a growth mindset in all he or she does and says, the students most likely will not develop a growth mindset.

--To create a growth mindset classroom you have certain responsibilities, certain “must do’s” in order to make that happen!  
You must:

--Believe all students can learn and then make them believe it, too! The missing component in school reform thus far has been teaching students to believe in themselves and to act according to that belief.

--Establish high expectations that challenge all students, then give your students the skill set, a concrete plan toward achieving their learning goals, and support in their efforts. The more strategies students have in their repertoire, or “tool box,” the better.

24 Wiersema, 2015
25 Saphier, 2017
--Emphasize effort and progress (learning) over final outcomes (grades). Teach students to value effort and reconsider ideas and problems from different perspectives. Effort is a key element in the growth mindset and how students will learn, make their brains stronger, and continue to grow. Good grades will come if students are doing all they need to learn.

--Believe and instill in your students that, smart is not something you are, it is something you become with specific behaviors anyone can choose to do. Teach your students that with the right effort, “tools,” and support they can achieve their goals in academics, or in any area of their lives.

--Be a growth mindset role model for your class (and with your peers). All you say and do says what you truly believe. How you talk to your students is critical, but so is how you talk to your peers about your students. Always keep in mind, those students whom some find it easy to gossip about might have real problems at home. Be their biggest (maybe only) supporter, not just one more teacher frustrated with them.

-- Make sure your students understand that learning is a lifelong process, it is how one interacts with their life experiences on an ongoing basis, not just for a test, a grade, or a class.

--Encourage, model, and require your students to take on challenges, to take risks, to grow their brains, and to question fixed ideas about their potential. Continuously teach and reiterate the importance of them exercising their brains through learning that will challenge them; emphasize that coasting does not create brain growth. Make it a firm rule that students develop a tolerance for risk taking and mistakes. A student should never be teased or mocked for making a mistake or trying something they do not feel comfortable with yet, but rather that should be celebrated; risk-taking and mistakes are key parts of true learning.

--Take more time on each topic—"less topics, more depth!" 26 It is more important that students can ponder ideas, reflect on learning, question, and think critically about all they learn. It is critical thinking that will prepare our students for the innovative world of the 21st century.

--Diversify your lessons so students see themselves in your lessons and feel they have a place in your class/school. This is a necessary step in reducing the achievement gap. Reach out to families—the home-school connection is critical; you are part of a team that includes your students’ parents! I am a firm believer in monthly/unit newsletters; parents should be part of what is going on.

26 Sussman, 2017
Their understanding and support is an asset to your classroom. They need to hear from you for no reason at all, just to let them know their child is making a good effort or has an optimistic attitude; find something positive about each and every student, especially the more challenging students. Make sure if they need you, your Email is already part of their contacts because you have reached out to them.

--Be in purposeful pursuit of opportunities to help students learn and think differently every day. Remember, it is the teaching that is sustained over time that changes students' long-term beliefs and habits. Watch for and take advantage of scenarios in daily classroom life where you have the opportunity to convey belief in your students' abilities and build their confidence and success.

--Always be present to help, guide, and support your students. If you see a student struggling, first stop and remember: struggle is not a bad thing, it is working through this discomfort that helps them learn. Balance this with helping them to decide what other strategies they can try next if the one they are using is not effective.

--Offer timely, process-focused feedback on assignments and tests so the material is still fresh in students’ minds from when they originally did the work. This feedback should be another avenue to learning. From your suggestions and with your guidance and support, students should work to relearn and redo what they did not learn the first time around.27 The purpose of education is to learn, so no student should move on having missed understanding a section of material.

--Let there be no guesswork; explicitly discuss and analyze scoring rubrics with your students at the beginning of an assignment or project. Before they ever begin they must be clear about the expectations. Discuss exactly what they are and how they can be met.

--Set up personal meetings to discuss growth over time. Map out student growth and areas for improvement. Remember, growth is key in learning! Focus on growth and the effort that supports and reinforces the growth mindset. Establish a collaboration toward the common goal of their growth and learning between you and your students.

27 Barnes and Five, 2016
Remember...

--The most effective way to change one's mindset is to engage in new behaviors. It is not enough to teach brain malleability and put up posters with encouraging messages, you must be willing to reflect on and change your own language, behavior, and instructional decisions every day.  

--You must be willing to alter your own mindset about education, identify and teach students the strategies that work within each context area, and persevere through challenges, while modifying your strategies for differentiated learning. You must commit to changing your teaching methods while providing opportunities to promote self-discovery and awareness in your students. Seek teaching and learning strategies that appeal to students; force yourself to get out of your own personal comfort zone.

Key: A growth mindset in both teachers and students helps students to pursue learning, love learning, and learn successfully.

“Educators who embrace this philosophy strive to create developmentally responsive, challenging, empowering, and equitable learning environments in which young adolescents can develop the knowledge and skills to flourish in college, careers, and life.”

~Nicole Barnes and Helenrose Fives

--As you well know, a big challenge for today's teachers is the busy, demanding schedule. However, you must make time in your schedule to allow students to engage in the struggle and to find different ways to enable students to understand complex concepts. It is this reflective worktime that allows students to think more deeply. Developing a growth mindset takes deliberate effort and time on the part of the teacher and of the students. You must be able to show that effort is valued more than the correct answers; as I have said, if the effort and understanding are there, correct answers will follow. Emphasis needs to be placed on the developing tool box, or numerous strategies, it will take to reach the correct answers. “What answer did you get,” is not a growth mindset question, but rather ask, “How did you solve that problem” and

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28 Saphier, 2017
29 Moyer, 2012
30 Dweck, 2007
“what different strategies did you try?” Growth mindset calls for fewer assignments with more worktime and opportunity for revision.