Resource packet **BLOCK SCHEDULING**  St. Michael’s

**Carol Dweck Revisits the Growth Mindset By Carol Dweck** **Published in EdWeek,** September 22, 2015

For many years, I secretly worked on my research. I say “secretly” because, once upon a time, researchers simply published their research in professional journals—and there it stayed.

However, my colleagues and I learned things we thought people needed to know. We found that students’ mindsets—how they perceive their abilities—played a key role in their motivation and achievement, and we found that if we changed students’ mindsets, we could boost their achievement. More precisely, students who believed their intelligence could be developed (a growth mindset) outperformed those who believed their intelligence was fixed (a fixed mindset). And when students learned through a structured program that they could “grow their brains” and increase their intellectual abilities, they did better. Finally, we found that having children focus on the process that leads to learning (like hard work or trying new strategies) could foster a growth mindset and its benefits.

So a few years back, I published my book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* to share these discoveries with educators. And many educators have applied the mindset principles in spectacular ways with tremendously gratifying results.

This is wonderful, and the good word continues to spread. But as we’ve watched the growth mindset become more popular, we’ve become much wiser about how to implement it. This learning—the common pitfalls, the misunderstandings, and what to do about them—is what I’d like to share with you, so that we can maximize the benefits for our students.

*A growth mindset isn’t just about effort.* Perhaps the most common misconception is simply equating the growth mindset with effort. Certainly, effort is key for students’ achievement, but it’s not the only thing. Students need to try new strategies and seek input from others when they’re stuck. They need this repertoire of approaches—not just sheer effort—to learn and improve.

We also need to remember that effort is a means to an end to the goal of learning and improving. Too often nowadays, praise is given to students who are putting forth effort, but *not learning*, in order to make them feel good in the moment: “Great effort! You tried your best!” It’s good that the students tried, but it’s not good that they’re not learning. The growth-mindset approach helps children feel good in the short *and* long terms, by helping them thrive on challenges and setbacks on their way to learning. When they’re stuck, teachers can appreciate their work so far, but add: “Let’s talk about what you’ve tried, and what you can try next.”

**“The growth mindset was intended to help close achievement gaps, not hide them.”**

Recently, someone asked what keeps me up at night. It’s the fear that the mindset concepts, which grew up to *counter* the failed self-esteem movement, will be used to *perpetuate* that movement. In other words, if you want to make students feel good, even if they’re not learning, just praise their effort! Want to hide learning gaps from them? Just tell them, “Everyone is smart!” The growth mindset was intended to help close achievement gaps, not hide them. It is about telling the truth about a student’s current achievement and then, together, doing something about it, helping him or her become smarter.

I also fear that the mindset work is sometimes used to justify why some students aren’t learning: “Oh, he has a *fixed* mindset.” We used to blame the child’s environment or ability.

Must it always come back to finding a reason why some children just can’t learn, as opposed to finding a way to help them learn? Teachers who understand the growth mindset do everything in their power to unlock that learning.

A few years ago, my colleague in Australia, Susan Mackie, detected an outbreak of what she called “false growth mindset.” She was seeing educators who claimed to have a growth mindset, but whose words and actions didn’t reflect it. At first, I was skeptical. But before long, I saw it, too, and I understood why.

In many quarters, a growth mindset had become the right thing to have, the right way to think. It was as though educators were faced with a choice: Are you an enlightened person who fosters students’ well-being? Or are you an unenlightened person, with a fixed mindset, who undermines them? So, of course, many claimed the growth-mindset identity. But the path to a growth mindset is a journey, not a proclamation.

Let’s look at what happens when teachers, or parents, claim a growth mindset, but don’t follow through. In recent research, Kathy Liu Sun found that there were many math teachers who endorsed a growth mindset and even said the words “growth mindset” in their middle school math classes, but did not follow through in their classroom practices. In these cases, their students tended to endorse more of a fixed mindset about their math ability. My advisee and research collaborator Kyla Haimovitz and I are finding many parents who endorse a growth mindset, but react to their children’s mistakes as though they are problematic or harmful, rather than helpful. In these cases, their children develop more of a fixed mindset about their intelligence.

*How can we help educators adopt a deeper, true growth mindset, one that will show in their classroom practices?* You may be surprised by my answer: Let’s legitimize the fixed mindset. Let’s acknowledge that (1) we’re all a mixture of fixed and growth mindsets, (2) we will probably always be, and (3) if we want to move closer to a growth mindset in our thoughts and practices, we need to stay in touch with our fixed-mindset thoughts and deeds.

If we “ban” the fixed mindset, we will surely create false growth-mindsets. (By the way, I also fear that if we use mindset measures for accountability, we will create false growth mindsets on an unprecedented scale.) But if we watch carefully for our fixed-mindset triggers, we can begin the true journey to a growth mindset.

**MORE OPINION**

*What are your triggers?*

Watch for a fixed-mindset reaction when you face challenges. Do you feel overly anxious, or does a voice in your head warn you away? Watch for it when you face a setback in your teaching, or when students aren’t listening or learning. Do you feel incompetent or defeated? Do you look for an excuse? Watch to see whether criticism brings out your fixed mindset. Do you become defensive, angry, or crushed instead of interested in learning from the feedback? Watch what happens when you see an educator who’s better than you at something you value. Do you feel envious and threatened, or do you feel eager to learn? Accept those thoughts and feelings and work with and through them. And keep working with and through them.

My colleagues and I are taking a growth-mindset stance toward our message to educators. Maybe we originally put too much emphasis on sheer effort. Maybe we made the development of a growth mindset sound too easy. Maybe we talked too much about people having one mindset or the other, rather than portraying people as mixtures. We are on a growth-mindset journey, too.

# ***Are Block Schedules the Stress-Buster Students Need?*** Tim Walker, *NEA Today,* March 4, 2016

Kerry Beton, a literacy teacher at Boeckman Middle School in Farmington, Minnesota, says there is more of a “calm” at her school this year.

“We have less behavioral issues because there’s less chaos in the hallways. The pace just seems to be little different, a little slower,” she says.

So what happened at Boeckman in between this year and last year? Beton credits the switch to a block schedule. Last fall Farmington’s two middle schools joined the district high school in transitioning to fewer, longer periods during the day – four 80-minute classes, instead of nine, 44-minute classes.

While Beton appreciates a less hectic day, the most valuable benefit of these longer periods is the opportunity for more in-depth learning. “Now we have the time to take the lessons further and really engage students.”

That is not to say that the new schedule doesn’t require adjustments from her colleagues, students, their parents and school staff. “This is definitely a work-in-progress,” Beton says.

Changing a school schedule is an enormously complex and often contentious business, but block scheduling, hardly a new idea, is making something of a comeback. The instructional limitations of a traditional schedule that have frustrated teachers like Beton have largely driven the renewed interest, says Dr. Michael Rettig, founder of [School Scheduling Associates](http://www.schoolschedulingassociates.com/) and a former professor in the College of Education at James Madison University.

“There’s been a desire to get out of that rut and give teachers a little more flexibility in the instructional strategies they can use in longer periods of time, which allow for deeper thinking and project-based instruction,” Rettig explains.

There is, however, another compelling issue that has come out of the shadows over the past few years, says [Denise Pope](https://ed.stanford.edu/faculty/dpope), senior lecturer at the Stanford Graduate School of Education and co-founder of [Challenge Success](http://www.challengesuccess.org/), a program that promotes student well-being and engagement in school.

“If you follow kids over the course of a school day, you’d see that they’re exhausted. The entire education system has created a pressure cooker for students and staff,” says Pope. “School is now all about the grades, it’s all about the test, the homework, and it’s really just a lot of jumping through hoops.”

Writing in *The New York Times,* Vicki Abeles asked, [“Is the Drive for Success Making Our Children Sick?](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/03/opinion/sunday/is-the-drive-for-success-making-our-children-sick.html)” Pope says yes, particularly in high schools where the pressure to excel has reached alarming dimensions. Until recently the issue been ignored or at least shrugged off as some sort of rite of passage on the road to success.

“More parents and educators are now seeing what that stress does to the body, what it does to the psyche and what it does to student engagement,” Pope says. “They know stress is a problem and they want solutions.”

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## **A Saner School Day**

The majority of schools still operate on a traditional seven-period schedule, with each class lasting between 40-50 minutes. Block scheduling, a popular alternative for some schools, can mean different things to different people because there is no one-size-fits-all model. The most prevalent template is the “A/B” schedule in which students sign up for eight classes every school year, taking four of them on the ‘A’ days and the other four on the ‘B’ days. All classes meet for longer periods, usually around 80-90 minutes. Under the less common “4×4” model, students split up their eight courses into two semesters, again meeting for longer periods.

Pope says a block schedule creates a “saner school day” by slowing down the pace, reducing homework and freeing up more time for hands-on learning and collaboration – “the things that we know will make the learning stick better and take some of the pressure off students.” Pope also advocates starting school later.

Skeptics doubt many high school students can stay engaged or focused for a 90-minute period and point out the possibility that students who miss one or two classes will fall further behind than they would under a traditional schedule. In addition, others argue that students can better retain material taught in specific subjects, such as math and foreign languages, if they meet every day.

It is these and many other concerns, says Michael Rettig, that require all stakeholders – the administration especially – to see to it that districts carefully evaluate whether a block schedule is in fact the right solution. The process to create and transition to the new schedule must be deliberative and transparent. According to Rettig, a two-year process is optimal.

A collaborative committee that includes teachers, parents, students and administrators needs the first year to research and design the schedule. The second year is spent planning the implementation, which, among other requirements, calls for professional development for teachers to adjust to the curriculum and instructional changes. An evaluation process is also key. Last but not least, schools need to develop a communication plan for the public.

Winning over the community – parents in particular – can be tricky terrain to navigate. “I’ve seen town meetings go bad around a schedule change because of angry parents who may not understand what’s really behind it,” says Pope.

At Saratoga High School in 2015, music teacher Michael Boitz served on a district-wide committee, composed of educators, students, parents and administrators, that was charged with looking at schedule changes to alleviate student stress at this high-achieving school. Boitz was thrilled to participate. The changes he had seen in students over the previous few years were alarming.

“Everything was different – their expressions, their demeanor, their moods. There was a loss of focus. Many of them looked pretty desperate,” he recalls. It’s the “fear factor,” says Boitz – the fear of not taking enough Advanced Placement courses, the fear of not getting the best grades, the fear of not getting into the best college.

The committee spent months studying alternatives to the current schedule, analyzing data, reviewing other schools’ schedules, and consulting with experts (including Denise Pope). A consensus eventually formed around a specific block schedule proposal that included 85-minute periods, weekly tutorials and a later school start time of 8:40 a.m.

Members were soon taken aback by the strident opposition of a small group of parents, even before the proposal was formally introduced at a district board meeting in January. Concerns included the fewer instructional minutes and the later school start time. The tone at the board meeting was, to put it mildly, animated.

The committee’s proposal was scuttled, although the board did soon adopt a scaled-back version that, among other changes, added a little more time to the instructional blocks and moved the school start time back to 8:15 a.m. The new schedule in Boitz’s view does not take the necessary measures to significantly reduce student stress or foster the collaborative, individualized learning he believes the original proposal would have delivered.

The parents who opposed the committee’s recommendation say they were left out of the process and were not aware that major changes to the schedule were coming. Boitz remains proud of the committee’s work and is not sure what else it could have done differently. “Maybe some people just don’t believe in the cause.”

## **‘Stop, Wait, and Listen’**

Aaron Eick, a social studies teacher at Horlick High school in Racine, Wisconsin, doesn’t necessarily believe that a block schedule is a bad idea, but he is skeptical of some of the touted benefits such a switch would bring to this small, urban district. In January 2016, the Racine Unified School District announced that its two high schools would complete this transition for the 2016-17 school year.

“There is about a 50-50 split among our educators about the wisdom of moving to a block schedule,” says Eick, who is also president of the Racine Education Association (REA). “But what we are united around is the need to slow this down, take more time, and make sure it’s done right. We want a voice in this process.” REA is urging the district to “stop, wait and listen,” suggesting that the schedule be implemented the following school year to provide the necessary planning and professional development so that staff can hit the ground running.

“The research is clear. You need more time than a few months before the beginning of the school year to properly train staff,” Eick says. The district is moving forward with the plan.

Rettig points out that a common pitfall is a process that is seen as a done deal, and that an administration is “faking the involvement” of the various stakeholders and constituencies. The result? “You’ve poisoned the water and it doesn’t really matter what you come up with,” Rettig says.

“Any time you change one small part of the system, you end up altering the whole thing,” adds Pope. “You’re changing the teacher schedule. You’re changing bus schedules. Everyone’s affected. An important piece of the puzzle is maybe not to take on too much too soon.”

Although he believes a school’s instruction and overall climate can be improved by a well-designed and executed block schedule, Rettig urges districts to understand the enormous challenges of the process and to check their expectations.

“A school’s schedule is not the most important factor in student achievement. There are so many other variables. Given the enormous challenges around switching schedules, schools just need to understand that they’re not getting a cure-all.”

Practice Set--Two Teachers/Same Goal

Activity: Setting Goals and Objectives

**Goal:** Differentiate Instruction

Teacher #1: 30 year veteran

Is this enough information to set objectives?

Need to assess this person’s strengths and weakness to determine what areas need to be a priority. Also need data points

More information—strong on classroom management, knows content area well. Uses traditional methods of evaluation (unit tests, written reports). Uses same lesson plans year in and year out.

What might be a measurable objective for Teacher #1

And you must keep in mind What are realistic and attainable check-ins?

Objective #1: Objective #2:

Check-ins: Check-ins:

Teacher #2: Second Year Teacher,

Again, what more information do we need? Very creative, respectful of student learning differences, scaffolds lessons, weak classroom management skills, avoids contact with parents.

Working with a partner, set a measurable objective for Teacher #2

And you must keep in mind: What are realistic and attainable check-ins?

Objective #1: Objective #2:

Check-ins: Check-ins:

Now let’s try it for yourself (Add a Column ME: June 2017 if have not yet done so or connect to articulated SMART goals)

STATED GOAL:

Objective #1: Check-ins:

TRADITIONAL MATH UNIT

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| TOPIC: Associative, Commutative, and Distributive Properties; Order of Operations |
| ACTIVITIES  1. Direct instruction on the order of operations (PEMDAS): parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division,addition, subtraction.  2. In-class exercises on the order of operations.  3. Direct instruction on the associative and commutative properties: (a + b) + c = a + (b + c); ab = b Å~ a  4. In-class and online exercises on the associative and commutative properties: simplify –12x – 5x + 3a + x.  Justify each step.  5. Direct instruction, in class and online exercises, on the distributive property: a(b + c) = ab + ac; simplify  2(4x + y) – 2x  6. Review chapter in preparation for test. |
| ASSESSMENTS  1. Quiz on associative property, commutative property, and distributive property. For example, name the property a + b + 2 = a + 2 + b; write the product using the distributive property: 6($5.95) =  2. Quiz on order of operations: (3 + 4) 6 – 12. + 4  3. Chapter test on properties and rules.  4. Homework problems on the properties and rules. |

**Traditional Biography Unit: MS**

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| TOPIC: Learn about the important events in the life of a prominent person |
| ACTIVITIES   1. Read Biographies of Great Men and Women in History 2. Write a report on their activities 3. Create a poster to show what they accomplished 4. Present Your Person in a 5 minute Class Presentation 5. Students will take notes on one another’s presentation |
| ASSESSMENTS   1. Written Report of Important Person 2. Test on Information about Shared by All Students about their Subjects |

**Math Unit, Altered**

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| TRANSFER  Students will be able to independently use their learning to . . .  • Solve problems by simplifying them, using equivalent statements based on the properties of real numbers and the order of operations.  • Analyze when any rule in any system (language, law, math) is an essential principle or merely conventional. |

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| ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS  Students will keep considering . . .  1. Why and when is it important to come to agreement on procedural rules (in mathematics, sports/games, language)?  2. What important rules and conventions are required to make algebra “work”? How can we distinguish between essential  properties and agreed-upon, but arbitrary, conventions?  3. Why and how do we simplify algebraic expressions? | ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS  Students will understand that . . .  1. Mathematics is a language, and over the centuries mathematicians have come to agree on certain conventions, or ways of  doing things, so that we can communicate our intentions clearly and efficiently.  2. In mathematics, we accept certain truths as necessary to permit us to solve problems with logical certainty (e.g., the properties of real numbers), while other rules are conventions that we assume just for effective communication.  3. We can use the commutative, associative, and distributive properties to turn complex and unfamiliar |
| STUDENTS WILL KNOW (Content)  Students will know . . .  1. The commutative property and to which operation it applies  (and when it does not apply).  2. The associative property and to which operation it applies  (and when it does not apply).  3. The distributive property and to which operation it applies  (and when it does not apply).  4. The "order of operations" mathematicians use and why it is  needed.  5. What PEMDAS means.  6. What it means to simplify an expression. | STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO (Skills)  Students will be skilled at . . .  1. Recognizing and applying the commutative, associative, and  distributive properties to simplify algebraic expressions.  2. Using the convention of "order of operations" to perform  calculations and simplify algebraic expressions.  3. Recognizing situations where properties do not  apply or are optional.  4. Identifying equivalence that results from properties and  equivalence that is the result of computation.  5. Justifying steps in a simplifi cation or computation by citing  applicable laws, properties, and conventions. |

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

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| PERFORMANCE TASK(S):  Students will show that they really understand by evidence of . . .  1. Their ability to realize and apply the difference between (a) necessary logical implications and (b) arbitrary but needed conventions.  2. Showing that they see why PEMDAS is a convention while the associative, commutative, and distributive properties are logical foundations.  3. Using their understanding of PEMDAS and each property to solve problems and explain why the answers and steps are correct.  Tasks might include:  • PR Campaign for the Rules. Mathematical rules have gotten a bad rap—they confuse people, are used to torture math students, and are too complicated (say critics). You believe that the rules are logical, necessary, and not so mysterious when you really understand  them. (The real blame lies not on the rules but on people who force students to memorize rules they don't really understand.)  To help remedy this unfortunate situation, you have been hired by the National Mathematics Education Association to design advertisements that explain to peers and younger students why math rules and properties work—and what would happen if we did  not have them. Use practical and interesting real-world examples to illustrate your points. Use print, graphics (e.g., poster, website), music (song or rap), or video (e.g., iMovie) to sell your ideas.  • Algebra Study Guide. Create a portion of a study guide to help future algebra students understand the associative, commutative, and distributive properties. Make up an original, real-world problem that involves one or more of the properties. Include a detailed  explanation of the mathematical procedures and reasoning to explain how each property is used to simplify and solve the problem.  OTHER EVIDENCE  Students will show they have achieved Stage 1 goals by . . .  • Providing written or oral response to one of the fi rst three essential questions.  • Developing a journal of Rules for Success. The students will keep an ongoing journal all year of accumulating insight about which  rules and properties will lead to success in the study of algebra. Include examples that show the rule or property correctly applied,  as well as common mistakes. Answer the question “Why can’t you divide by zero? Is that a convention or property?”  • Passing all quizzes from the textbook on basic properties and order of operations (as in the original unit). Students should also troubleshoot examples and explain misapplications of the convention or property, and—at the end—explain the difference between a property and a convention. |

**Altered Unit: Art and Leadership Grades 5-8**

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| ***Transfer: Student will use their learning to***   1. ***Make the connection between a society and its values*** 2. ***Understand an individual, we must include the context in which s/he operates.*** | | |
| ***Curriculum Standards***  ***Subject:***  ***Will vary***  ***Literacy:***  ***READING***  *1.Close reading of text; Making inferences. Cite textual evidence when writing or speaking*  *2.Analyze the development of characters over the course of a text*  *4.Interpret text in context and the impact of word choice on tone*  *7. Integrate and evaluate diverse media.*  *9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes.*    *WRITING*  *1.* *Support claims in writing using sufficient evidence*  *2.* *Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex idea*  *3.* *Write narratives, fiction, poetry to show awareness of concepts*  *4.* *Produce clear and coherent writing.*  *6.* *Use technology*  *7.* *Conduct short research*  *9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research*  *SPEAKING AND LISTENING*  *2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats*  *4. Present information, findings and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the information and argument* | ***Enduring Understandings***    ***EU1. There are timeless qualities of leadership.***  ***EU2. Circumstances affect leaders***  ***EU3. Leaders display both strengths and weaknesses***  ***EU 4. Leadership can be expressed in many forms*** | ***Essential Question(s)***    *EQ1. What makes a good leader?*  *EQ2. How does society show its values through the arts?*  *EQ3. How does one lead through art?* |
| ***Knowledge (Students will know)***  *1.* *Specific qualities of Leader X (character from literature/historic figure)*  *2.* *Specific qualities of Contemporary Political Figure*  *3.* *Criteria for good leadership of an historic figure*  *4.* *Criteria for leadership of a contemporary political candidate* | ***Learning Objectives / Skills***  ***(Students will be able to…)***  *1.* *Conduct research on a contemporary political candidate*  *2.* *Identify the qualities of leadership in a work of art (fiction, cartoon, painting, song, etc)*  *3.* *Assess if an individual meets the established criteria for leadership in the expository format*  *4.* *Produce a written assessment of leadership*  *5.* *Create an assessment of leadership* |
| ***Assessments/Evidence of Student Understanding***    ***Written report evaluating the leadership qualities of the contemporary political candidate in response to the question: What Makes a Good Leader?.***  ***CEPA: Create a work of art that shows the leadership qualities of a contemporary political candidate.*** | ***Instructional Resources & Materials***    ***(will vary by Grade and Subject)*** | ***Vocabulary***    ***(will vary by Grade and Subject)*** |

LESSON 1 (ELA)

Select a work of art—a poem, painting, story. Be sure in includes an identified leader. Have the students discuss what makes this character or figure a leader. Establish a list of criteria for leadership. Write this list up formally and be sure to define key terms. Have students cite evidence from the work of art that substantiates these qualities of leadership.

Alternative: Learn about a famous artist. How did s/he contribute to society and serve as a leader in his/her society?

LESSON 1 (HSS)

Select an historic figure and provide information about him or her to the students. Have the students discuss what makes this person a leader. Establish a list of criteria for leadership. Write this list up formally and be sure to define key terms. Have students cite evidence from the information you provide that substantiates these qualities of leadership.

LESSONS 2-3 (HSS and ELA)

Identify a list of candidates running for political office. Have students work in pairs or small groups and select one of these candidates. Do research on the candidate. Have students respond to the question: Is this person a good leader? They should use the criteria established in Lesson 1 to answer this question. They will present their answer in two formats: An Essay and a Work of Individual Art

LESSON 4 (HSS and ELA)

Students create a work of art that conveys the leadership (or lack there of) of the contemporary political figure. They will show this work of art to their classmates and explain how their individual displays leadership.