



# Encouragement and recognition of effort increases achievement in the classroom

Achievement in the classroom begins with students that are ready to engage with learning and doing challenging work. This readiness and engagement happens when students see their intelligence and abilities as something they have the power to develop over time. Viewing intelligence, ability and talent as something that can progress is called a *growth-mindset*.

Research demonstrates that a growth-mindset leads students to value effort and persistence, known collectively as *grit*.<sup>1</sup> We now know that grit is the single most important predictor of success in both students and adults.<sup>2</sup>

So it's not surprising that we're seeing incredible things happen in classrooms that cultivate a growth-mindset and support *gritty* student efforts. These classrooms achieve more, showing greater short-term student accomplishment and even better long-term success.<sup>3,4</sup>

# Show me the *grit*

Grit and a growth-mindset are part of the same branch when it comes to student achievement:  
*Growth-mindset + Grit = achievement.*

In other words, students that believe their talents and abilities can be developed (growth-mindset) and persist in efforts to develop their abilities (grit) have the greatest success.

Teachers can establish both grit and a growth-mindset in their classroom by recognizing and encouraging effort and improvement. Classroom strategies that actively encourage students to value their own effort and improvements create schools with resilient, persistent learners that achieve more. In contrast, classrooms without active encouragement and recognition strategies have lower achievement and students languish in a fixed view of their abilities.



Putting forth effort, working hard and seeking challenge in an environment without active encouragement strategies is not the natural response for most students. To gain achievement from a growth-mindset and gritty efforts classrooms must incorporate strategies that showcase, praise and encourage student efforts and improvements.<sup>5</sup>

**"Praising students for the process they have engaged in — the effort they applied, the strategies they used, the choices they made, the persistence they displayed — yields more long-term benefits."**

**Carol S. Dweck, PhD**

*Stanford University professor and leading researcher  
in the field of motivation and learning*



## Praising effort and improvement is powerful

By recognizing determination and praising effort teachers create more teachable students. Ultimately, students that receive active praise and encouragement in the classroom are taught to value improvement, seek challenges, enjoy effort, and be resilient.<sup>5</sup>

Interestingly, students that naturally excel in school benefit just as much as those that must work harder. This is because learning and achievement inevitably involves setbacks and defeat, especially when dealing with challenging material or developing problem-solving strategies.

Students in classrooms that encourage and praise hard work will persist and achieve more. However, if there are not classroom strategies to actively track progress and effort then even the top students fail to realize their potential.<sup>6</sup>

# Every student benefits



*In a study of several hundred 5th graders*, students were given questions from an IQ test. The questions increased in difficulty, with the first 10 questions being the least challenging. After the first 10 questions, they were either congratulated for *being smart* or *working hard*. Those praised for being smart rather than working hard became discouraged as the questions became harder and asked for easier questions.

Even the scores on an easier set of questions showed a decline compared to the equivalent set of questions they answered previously. Whereas, the students that were praised for the process of working hard showed interest and enthusiasm in solving the harder questions and their scores improved notably on the easier set of questions given afterwards.

Actively encouraging students to value progress and effort in the classroom benefits students that generally have an easier time with subject matter just as much as students that struggle more.<sup>6</sup>



# Compelling results

*Project for Education Research That Scales (PERTS)* is an applied research center at Stanford University focused on implementing and testing academic motivation strategies that raise student achievement.

PERTS has large long-term programs in place at middle and high school levels that utilize praise and encouragement strategies around growth-mindset and grit development. They have published some impressive and compelling preliminary outcomes.<sup>7 8 9</sup>



11% increase  
in GPA across  
all subjects and  
courses

Improved conduct  
scores, especially  
among students with  
lower starting scores

Struggling students  
show 14% higher rate  
of earning satisfactory  
or higher grades

Higher scores  
on standardized  
reading and math  
assessment

# Best practices for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom

The challenge for educators is how to integrate recognition and encouragement practices into their classrooms. Leveraging technology is fundamental to a successful strategy.<sup>10 11</sup> However, it's important to find a solution that provides praise and encouragement opportunities that flow with varied teaching styles and curriculum. Successful solutions will have these 5 components:<sup>10 11</sup>



Research and great teachers show us that when we create exciting dynamic classrooms geared to foster student growth and achievement great things happen. Students become problem-solvers and strategic thinkers that seek challenging work and enjoy learning new concepts.



**RedCritic Teacher** is a classroom management app for encouraging improvement, praising effort and recognizing accomplishments.

Visit [www.redcritterteacher.com](http://www.redcritterteacher.com) to learn more.

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