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Abstract

If students believe the possibilities for attaining knowledge are boundless, they will be capable of reaching those heights. However, if students feel as though they are restricted by what nature and genetics have gifted them, their learning will remain within those boundaries. This is what stands as the difference between a growth and fixed mindset, which affects will be analyzed pertaining to student progress and motivation in literacy. A third-grade class was observed over six weeks to explore what the teacher believes about her students' reading abilities as well as what the students believe about their reading abilities. These beliefs were compared to actual reading ability levels of the students to measure the accuracy of perceptions held by the students and the teacher. Three students of ranging reading ability levels, along with the teacher, were the main focused population in this study. Findings revealed three main themes present across all participants involving valid perceptions. Self-talk encouraged the participants to continuously have positive thoughts about learning and not limit their potential capabilities. Setting goals prepared participates to conquer challenges and persevere through failures. Progress was witnessed in the three targeted students' reading abilities after modeling the teacher's growth mindset ideology.

Key words: growth mindset, elementary literacy, reading motivation, perceptions, self-talk, goals.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

Introduction

"I give up. This is too hard. I will never get it." These statements of frustration are too often heard in an elementary classroom when students with a fixed mindset are confronted with a challenge. The over-arching goal for reading teachers is to develop a love for reading and witness growth in their students. Research indicates the majority of fourth graders across the nation are not meeting proficiency levels on reading assessments (Illinois Report Card, 2019). Based on this statistic, it is evident that educators are not reaching all students in reading instruction, and innovations and alternatives need to be introduced. Strategies are being explored in the classroom through teaching students to access growth mindsets, which can have an impact on student performance (Elish-Piper, 2014; Kraft, 2019; Massey, 2016; McCutchen, Jones, Carbonneau, & Mueller, 2016; Petscher, Otaiba, Wanzek, Rivas, & Jones, 2017). Success is primarily due to the amount of effort exerted. Grasping onto a growth mindset with the belief that abilities can be extended and enhanced could possibly contribute to literacy growth. Students have to strive for progress and greatness; it does not come without hard work and faith in one's potential, both by the student and his or her advocators. There cannot be an expectation for students to grow without lighting this trigger in their minds. Remaining as static students will not progress them into lifelong readers. A person's mindset predicts his or her future accomplishments; the person will see growth or stillness.

Purpose of the Study

Elementary students' mindsets, specifically third graders, were analyzed concerning their reading abilities, feelings, and attitudes towards reading. The classroom teacher's self-perspective and beliefs of her students' capabilities were also analyzed in the case study. In

addition, instructional strategies implemented by the teacher and positive student interactions that portray growth mindset ideals were noted. The researcher conducted this study by visiting the selected classroom over a six-week period and gathering data by observations, journaling, and interview sessions with the teacher and ranging ability-leveled students. Due to a large percentage of elementary students across the nation not reaching grade proficiency levels in reading, there is a need for research to be conducted on the efficiency of strategies. This is in hopes of teachers implementing new strategies, specifically growth mindsets, in efforts to increase student reading abilities.

Research Questions

The following provides a concise list of the targeted research questions to explore:

1. What are the three participants' perceptions of their ability to read compared to their actual reading levels?

2. What is the teacher's perception of her students' abilities to read compared to their actual reading levels?

Significance of the Study

Students need to become directly knowledgeable about mindsets so they can understand their self-perceptions. Through modeling, teachers and parents can encourage this belief in the development of skills onto children who then can believe in themselves. Sequentially, students need to accept responsibility for their own learning experiences and challenges presented to dictate their level of effort exerted. With a growth mindset, there will be a progression in skills. This individual belief in how students view themselves is detrimental to their success in school. When students believe they permanently belong to a low-level grouping in reading and do not have confidence in moving forward, they believe their intelligence is fixed and cannot be altered.

Students must understand the value in improvement and the possibilities of progression.

Reading skills are intertwined throughout all elementary content areas. It is crucial for students

to be proficient in reading as "for most children, performance in the classroom is an adequate

indicator of reading progress" (Adlof, Perfetti, & Catts, 2011, p. 205). Indicators of students

falling behind their grade-leveled peers include reading instructional levels below the projected

grade level texts as well as decoding difficulties, comprehension difficulties, or a combination of

both. Consequently, this skill level gap is not only seen in reading classes, but across all classes

due to content and assessments typically being presented in the form of students utilizing their

reading abilities. Strategies need to be emphasized in elementary classrooms to combat low

reading proficiency levels in order to set students up for success.

Limitations of the Study

Since only one third-grade classroom will be involved in data analysis, the findings may

not yield the same results if reproduced in another classroom. Furthermore, the results cannot

represent the population as a whole due to the small sample size. Components acting as

limitations in regard to generalization include the age level of students, the number of students

included in the class, the geographic location of the school, the lack of diversity in the student

population, and the school climate. Due to the structure of one person collecting the data, there

will not be a second person to rationalize the researcher's determinations. Also, there will not be

an interrater reliability check. There are not any delimitations included in the study because the

researcher will presume the role of an observer in the classroom instead of immersing into the

environment.

Definitions of Terms

1. Mindset: "The view [someone] adopts for [himself/herself]" (Dweck, 2006, p. 6).

2. Fixed Mindset: "Those who believe their talents are innate gifts" (Dweck, 2016, p. 1).

3. Growth Mindset: "Individuals who believe their talents can be developed (through hard work, good strategies, and input from others)" (Dweck, 2016, p. 1).

4. Comprehension: "Ability to understand extended written texts, as indicated through answering questions, recalling, or summarizing stories" (Perfetti, 2010, p. 300).

5. Decoding: "The conversion of letter strings to phoneme strings. Word identification includes both decoding processes… and the retrieval of word-specific representations that uses knowledge about a word's spelling to identify it" (Perfetti, 2010, p. 292).

6. Vocabulary: "Knowledge of the meaning of a word" (Perfetti, 2010, p. 292).

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Growth Versus Fixed Mindset

Before diving into the aspects of obtaining a growth mindset and the role the mind plays in a student's reading performance, one must first recognize the characteristics of a growth mindset. Conversely, it is essential also to understand the counterpart –a fixed mindset. Fixed mindsets can be depicted as "beliefs that intelligence and skill potential are set at birth," whereas a growth mindset is defined as "a belief that one's intelligence and skills can always evolve and develop" (Clark, Enriquez, & Calce, 2018, p. 28). Growth mindsets are often associated with positive thinking. People with a growth mindset are continually setting goals to challenge themselves and push out of their comfort zones. They believe they can acquire new skills with a clear focus and commitment. On the opposite end of the spectrum are people controlled by a fixed mindset. These people believe they possess their traits, and these cannot be changed. They were destined to be who they currently are and have already found their natural talents.

Critical qualities of attaining a growth mindset include being open-minded, creative, and fluid (Clark et al., 2018; O'Keefe, Dweck, & Walton, 2018). Determination and drive are also vital components (Clark et al., 2018; Elish-Piper, 2014; Kraft, 2019; Petscher et al., 2017). Not only do these character traits belong to a road of academic success, but they also impact a child's emotional and social well-being. Having a growth mindset is not constrained within the four walls of a classroom; it applies to all environments in life. A student learns to deal with conflict by viewing another student's side of a story. On the cross-country team, a student needs perseverance to get through running that last mile. One child continues to practice flexibility by balancing two sports teams, high-honor roll, family responsibilities, and a social life at a young

age. There is a choice left within children to decide whether to take on each arising day with a growth or fixed mindset, but the ending result will prove to be drastically different depending on their chosen path.

In a publication that connects the importance of grit to success, a growth mindset is distinguished from a fixed mindset. Some contrasting examples are included in the table drawn: a person "is inspired by others' successes" and "learns from feedback" while possessing a growth mindset; a fixed mindset, whereas, is defined as a person who "is threatened by others' successes" and "ignores useful feedback" (Elish-Piper, 2014, p. 60). In analyzing these differences, it may seem as though a person with a fixed mindset refuses assistance and inspiration from others. People with fixed mindsets believe they are born with their defined, unchangeable abilities. Others that could stand as advocates or role models will be composed of different genetic abilities. Therefore, people in the fixed mindset community do not believe that their qualities align with others, and they are not destined for the same outcome. Those with a growth mindset see the benefits of learning from others who have mastered skills that they themselves have not yet mastered. If someone else can conquer a challenge, there are no excuses for someone with a growth mindset to think that they cannot do it as well.

Other researchers define and clarify mindsets into simpler terms. It is argued that the opposite mindsets construct their differences based on a single word – change (McCutchen et al., 2016). People with a fixed mindset do not believe their abilities can change; they were born with these abilities, and there is nothing to do to alter them. In contrast, people with a growth mindset believe their abilities are subject to change. They are not constricted with innate abilities; they can develop these talents into what they desire them through effort and determination. An educator in the reading field can compare these two extremes to static characters who do not

change (fixed mindset) and dynamic characters who are continuously changing (growth mindset). However, it should be recognized that efforts progressing into a growth mindset are placed on a spectrum. A person's mindset is rarely in totality of being at one end of extremes.

Influencers

School climate. People learn from mentors and authority figures they associate with, such as educators and guardians. Children also are greatly influenced by their physical environment. Too often, schools are assessed solely by overall student performance. There is a need to include school atmospheres and attitudes when critiquing student academic achievement levels (Meyer, 2019). Teachers set the weather in the classrooms every day. They decide whether it is going to be rays of sunshine or bolstering thunder. The climate of the entire school is not only witnessed in each classroom; it is a collective whole of the building, such as between offices, hallways, and amenities.

Additionally, a school's climate is evident in the attitudes and beliefs of the school's leaders. One can assess this tone the minute they walk into the building. Students need faculty members who will meet their needs not only academically, but also emotionally and cognitively. Teachers, administrations, and faculty members must model a growth mindset for all students. Here are some examples: Teachers present a standard math problem and solve it four different ways. Principals attend professional development conferences and implement ideas that could be monumental to student and faculty success, willing and open to failure, and ultimately learning from all experiences. Students see each other's perspectives in arguments and effectively come to a compromise. These all pertain to the workings of a growth mindset with a positive school climate.

Students can use a growth mindset to influence their self-concepts and the world around them. They can empower others instead of following stereotypes and injustice; the student choice is up to them (Clark et al., 2018). Diversity, in all its forms, comprises a majority of schools in the U.S., and it continues to grow. Students developing a growth mindset can reach out to peers feeling alone and isolated by embracing their points of view. Teachers can honor all of their students' backgrounds by incorporating various literary works dedicated to specific genders, sexual orientations, races, and religions. Educators must step out of their own comfort zones to promote diversity and acceptance. Focusing on a growth mindset will aid in breaking down social barriers and educational boundaries.

Teachers. Commonly, teachers are thought of as advocators in the school setting. The prospect of student success is centered around a teacher revealing a personal growth mindset. Conversely, "teachers with the fixed mindset create an atmosphere of judging" (Dweck, 2006, p.197). Without the belief that *all* students can progress, teachers will not experience growth in *all* of their students. Teachers who evaluate students with a level of unchanging intelligence and skillsets will see struggling students remain at the bottom of the rankings. Teachers who believe all children are capable of developing their abilities and are not stuck where they started have the potential of pushing lower leveled students to the top. Educators with growth mindsets are the fundamental factors to student success (Clark et al., 2018; Dweck, 2006; Massey, 2016). They must continuously believe in each child so these students can believe in themselves. Students need someone to admire, and it takes positivity from that influencer to give students the belief of being able to accomplish their goals.

Continuing on the topic of model influencers, researchers describe how teachers must instruct students and consistently integrate opportunities to model positive, developmental

thinking in order for students to become aware of their ever-changing attitudes (Massey, 2016; Meyer, 2019). Challenges should be presented throughout instruction to give students opportunities to preserve through difficult tasks. The teacher and peers will soon be encouraging all to take risks and embrace mistakes as opportunities to learn a new skill. When fostering a growth mindset atmosphere, negative self-talk should be combatted.

A teacher's presence and beliefs inevitably affect the classroom learning environment. Due to the countless hours teachers and students spend in the same vicinity, research shows that there could be a connection between the teacher's mindset to the student's mindset. Teachers who deliver praise in recognition for the amount of effort given are encouraging the development of a growth mindset and self-controlled habits rather than teachers praising ability levels. A teacher's attitudes are not confined to the delivery of content and strategies. They are exhibited through a teacher's behavior, thoughts, and actions (Massey, 2016; McCutchen et al., 2016; Meyer, 2019). Students are sensitive to how their teacher behaves and decide to mirror these attitudes if encouraged and driven enough. Without being introduced to a growth mindset by the teacher or another authority figure, students are not likely to become knowledgeable about the flexibility of their brains and endless cognitive potential.

Educators and parents taking on the roles of advocators ultimately desire for their children to become lifelong learners and readers. Authority figures in children's lives are encouraged to showcase and support the qualities held in a growth mindset. By first being shown the thought process and actions of a growth mindset, "children will begin to internalize these ideas and incorporate them into the way they approach their schoolwork and goals for life" (Elish-Piper, 2014, p. 61). Promoting a growth mindset pushes students to continuously take

risks to make learning experiences through the pathway of reaching success. They will try new activities and out-of-the-box strategies for solving problems.

Parents. Along with teachers, parents play a pivotal role in standing as role models to their children. With the intention to gain clarity on the subject of parental influencers, a reading initiative was analyzed. In the study, parents immersed themselves in the growth mindset role in order to facilitate reading practices at home with their second graders. Growth was documented after a three-month period, and less growth was observed after seven months. The examiners gathered that parents who held an initial extreme fixed mindset who were converted to a growth mindset during the study witnessed the most growth in their student's reading performance. The main lesson to be taken away from this experiment is that instead of being zoned in on performance, parents were told to encourage effort. Revealing to students that someone sees how much they are trying can be enough to accelerate their motivation. When effort goes unnoticed, a student can wonder why they are trying in the first place, especially if they end up failing. Interventions driven solely by skill performance will likely result in frustration. However, when student effort is in the equation, these skills are mastered (Anderson & Nielsen, 2016).

Advocators should become aware of the "importance of providing student feedback that praises the learning process rather than the person" (Massey, 2016, p. 52). Parents who are uneducated about a growth mindset believe that their child's capacities are controlled by nature. Unfortunately, if students are not praised for taking positive risks, they will likely forfeit when faced with frustration. Parents intervening with a growth mindset allow students to practice until a new skill is acquired. Furthermore, praising students' intellectual abilities can be dangerous for their inner determination. Children repeatedly applauded for their gifted intelligence will be

afraid to attempt risks outside of their expertise, which in turn will limit their potential for growth (Dweck, 2006). Rather than embracing their foundational confidence from being called the "smart kids," these students avoid challenges that could result in failure and plummet their reputations of natural abilities.

In general, studies show that parents with a growth mindset are better equipped to support their children to attaining success in school and also overcome academic failures (Anderson & Nielsen, 2016; Elish-Piper, 2014). Connecting the definition of a fixed mindset with this statement, it only seems fitting because people with a fixed mindset do not recognize progress and development in the first place. When they only see the starting point and end line, being blind to the track in between, they cannot lead the way to success.

Student Ownership

Even though educators and parents can push for student reading success, a child's drive comes from intrinsic motivators such as an immense joy for reading. The power behind a student's growth lies in the hands and mind of that independent student (Afflerbach, 2016; Richardson, 2015). Advocators can tirelessly encourage students to develop a growth mindset; however, they cannot do it for them. Showcasing both scenarios, growth and fixed mindsets, can help lead children to literacy achievement. This modeling will show students the endless possibilities for a lifetime constructed on a growth mindset. Conversely, portraying a fixed mindset will also open their eyes to the adverse effects of a restricted environment. Risks, new experiences, and learning tools should be age appropriate. Challenges presented need to be realistic for children to believe they are possible outcomes. For instance, a teacher should not recommend texts to students that surpass their frustration levels in hopes of challenging them.

Growth mindset influencers always look for opportunities to improve and take risks. Once a positive environment is established, students will take more control over their own learning (Meyer, 2019). Some boundaries must be set before goals can be achieved. It only makes sense that students must feel safe in their environments before engaging in unfamiliar actions, positive actions that is, because the outcome might be uncertain with the possibility of failure. If the students know their outcomes will be judged in a negative light, they are not likely to engage in something new. Student behavior and actions are ultimately controlled by each child. However, the atmosphere students are placed in can be an indicator of what kind of mindset they will have and what risks they are willing to take. A scenario specific to literacy instruction is when students are asked to read out loud in front of their peers. In a classroom atmosphere enriched with growth mindsets, struggling students will be more willing to volunteer and take the risk of encountering unknown words to pronounce for the first time in hopes that they will be encouraged.

Some students who fixate around the idea of their abilities remaining static succumb when faced with challenges. They do not want to put forth the effort required to overcome obstacles that do not come naturally to them. With this fixed mindset, they will not learn from their mistakes because they are afraid of facing them in the first place. In contrast, students who mold a growth mindset will believe in their opportunities to advance, which results in an increased dedication to academic performance (Dweck, 2006; Elish-Piper, 2014; Massey, 2016; McCutchen et al., 2016; Kraft, 2019; Petscher et al., 2017). Students that strive towards a growth mindset are looking to progress, even if they are faced with challenges. The journey taken to overcome these obstacles is what results in growth. However, students must believe in themselves and visualize their achievements before overcoming difficulties. Teachers can make

students feel comfortable when confronting reading barriers by helping students set realistic

goals and continuously monitoring them. The purpose of progress monitoring is to show

students how they can progress over a period of time. For example, this could be with an

improvement in independent reading level, percentage of accuracy, words read per minute, or

comprehension questions.

Without the belief of success, there will only be failure. To resist this, the most optimal

way to learn is by getting out of the comfort zone, making mistakes, and learning what to do next

time (Clark et al., 2018; Elish-Piper, 2014; Petscher et al., 2017; Richardson, 2015). One will

not grow by completing the same tasks from day to day. Growth is witnessed from the uphill

battle after failure. Those who are afraid to fail will never know what they could accomplish

from the array of possibilities outside of their fixed interests.

Reading Application

Students' self-efficacy and active influencers can yield promising results in reading.

Throughout their reading process, proficient readers are constantly self-monitoring throughout

their reading process. Teachers must give adequate preparation for students to engage in

reflective reading strategies. After briefly previewing a text, students taken over by a fixed

mindset will decide their level of interest and effort they will put into reading it. On the other

hand, students ignited with a growth mindset are open to areas outside of their familiarity. As a

result, it is likely to increase the student's text comprehension. Students must receive instruction

on how to self-assess their reading by utilizing strategies and implementing a growth mindset

(Afflerbach, 2016). Students will reflect while reading to check for understanding and, ideally,

utilize strategies the teacher has set forth to help when word recognition is not automatic. The

teacher's role is essential for the students' abilities to self-assess.

Students' self-assessment skills that monitor their comprehension while reading forms self-efficacy. Once students establish this accountability while independently reading texts, children's focus is "learning-oriented rather than performance-oriented" (Valencia, 2011, p. 389). With this shift in focus, children are reading for long-term progressions instead of short-term accomplishments. For example, a performance-oriented goal is for students to read a chapter from their chosen novels and write a summary of what they have read. The students could skim through the chapter without grasping a full understanding and still successfully summarize it. A learning-oriented goal for this same assignment is for students to be fully engaged in the reading by rereading when a disconnect in comprehension occurs and using context clues to decipher unfamiliar words instead of skipping over these essential learning opportunities.

Children eventually have to take control and find it within themselves to do it alone. "Motivation, self-efficacy, and making correct attribution for reading performance are essential for reading success" (Afflerbach, 2016, p. 417). A growth mindset makes this possible. Students will believe in the ability to develop new skills, integrate new words into their vocabulary knowledge, and enhance a new, enjoyable reading experience. Fixed mindset believers feel constrained to their abilities and natural talents. Research suggests that students with reading difficulties do not readily recognize breaks in their understanding of a text, and they do not frequently make the attempts to try and fix these gaps (Adlof et al., 2011). When students do not take on the responsibility and put in the effort to increase their levels of comprehension, they are not learning to their full potential. Reading is the ultimate tool for learning, but if students are not comprehending what they are reading, learning will not occur.

Analyzing struggling readers, whether it is decoding, comprehension, or a combination of both, many students do not believe they can succeed. A commonality between struggling readers is not to persevere when coming across difficulties, and they do not take responsibility over their reading techniques (Afflerbach, 2016). Low-performing students tend to have lower levels of self-efficacy and determination (McCutchen et al., 2016). Furthermore, it can be predicted that students with remedial reading skills do not want to take ownership of the skills they need to work on. Struggling readers with a fixed mindset believe they were not intended to be good readers and will never attain the skills needed to advance. It may appear that they do not believe in themselves.

Students who lack self-confidence will not push themselves to accomplish their goals. A scenario describes of a girl refusing to pick up any book that she believes to be above her independent reading level, meaning it will contain unfamiliar words and possibly present a challenge (Elish-Piper, 2014). Students with fixed mindsets will abstain from engaging in learning opportunities that present the possibility of failure (Massey, 2016). If students continuously read books at their independent reading level, their reading abilities may remain stagnant. During instructional time, the text level will align with grade-level standards, and every word students come across will not already be located in their sight vocabulary. To effectively progress as readers, students need to be willing to try and decode unknown words and engage in strategies. When students instantly confess that they do not know unrecognizable words and refuse to confront the challenge, teachers are not given clues into the patterns students are having difficulties with, whether it is comprehension, decoding, or a combination of skills. Students who are open to approaching new words and continuously practice with difficult texts will witness achievements.

Readers naturally gravitate towards texts they are interested in, but this interest may set boundaries of familiarity and comfort. A different approach to discovering reading material with a growth mindset is to "expand people's interest repertoire, which perhaps can be helpful for making connections across areas and generating novel ideas" (O'Keefe et al., 2018, p.10). This can directly be related to student interest levels in reading. Without a doubt, children are more invested in texts that they are interested in and curious about. In return, this engagement will increase his or her level of comprehension. Too often, teachers will relentlessly parade the bookshelves to find that perfect match that sparks a child's interest, and hopefully, begin the journey towards a love of reading. If a child possesses a fixed mindset, a limited interest could be potentially harmful. When offered other texts, the child will not be open to developing another interest. Consequently, when the student is presented with texts outside of this interest, comprehension skills will suffer.

Preparing students to obtain a growth mindset before setting the stage of reading proves to be beneficial in students being open to interests outside of one's passion. In a study conducted that included 70 college students, one grouping read a text revolving around a fixed mindset, while the remaining students received a text promoting a growth mindset. All of the participants watched a documentary about black holes that the group consensus of opinions on the film was captivating and exciting. Afterward, students were instructed to read an advanced, domain-specific text about the same topic of black holes. Those introduced to the fixed mindset article showed the most dramatic drops of interest in the topic as compared to students set on the pathway of a growth mindset. Preparing students to obtain a growth mindset before setting the stage of reading proves to be beneficial in students being open to interests outside of one's passion (O'Keefe et al., 2018). Vocabulary knowledge is based on depth and breadth. Depth in

a subject will be more attainable in texts associated with a child's passion. The breadth will

lengthen while developing these interests by initially producing a growth mindset. Just as

teachers set a purpose for their students before reading a text, preparation for a growth mindset

could be the predicator to defining the purpose of being open to interest in the topic.

      After self-monitoring in reading, students are expected to showcase their efforts on

standardized testing. However, it is not solely up to the student's dedication, as "teachers have

large effects on students' achievement on state standardized tests" (Kraft, 2019, p. 1). The

mindset dictating first, the teacher, and then the students is directly related to student

performance. A study conducted by McCutchen et al. (2016) targeting standardized testing

across seven elementary schools located in the same district. The producers examined students'

state of mindsets through a questionnaire and tracked their standardized testing scores over the

time frame of two years. Although the overall trend in scores dropped for students considered in

both fixed and growth mindset groupings, students who classified with a fixed mindset averaged

scores that dropped at a much steeper slope than those with a growth mindset (McCutchen et al.,

2016). After analyzing these results, it shows that standardized testing can be a massive obstacle

for many students to overcome. Some experience feelings of anxiety, pressure, and fatigue.

Students will most likely face questions deemed difficult on these tests, so they are faced with

the dilemma to either quit or succeed. This respectively follows the lead of fixed versus growth

mindset students. The results indicate that students identified with a growth mindset showed

increased effort throughout the testing as compared to those with a fixed mindset.

Conclusion

      Having a fixed mindset causes people to remain constant and situated in ability levels.

They cannot build upon the foundations created inside of them. Mindset terms can be defined as

the following: "Some people lean more toward the view that interests are inherent in a person, simply waiting to be awakened or found – this is what we call a fixed mindset of interest. Others lean more toward the view that interests can be developed and that, with commitment and investment, they can grow over time – we call this a growth mindset of interest" (O'Keefe et al., 2018, p. 9). With the belief of nature serving as the giver of qualities and abilities, people associated with a fixed mindset cannot achieve their highest reading capabilities. On the other hand, those who strive for a growth mindset are driven to reach their full potential for whatever goals they have in mind, including success in literacy. The first step is having influencers model for students how to maintain a positive mindset, including teachers continuously progressing on their own reading abilities and interests. Dedication is the next requirement for students, as growth will not come without a disciplined mind and self-reflective reading strategies. These actions can be applied to a student's progression in reading by targeting and praising effort. To be successful, one first must make commitments to the mind and believe achieving goals is possible through practice and patience. An innovator of the growth mindset sums it up best: "Don't judge. Teach. It's a learning process" (Dweck, 2006, p. 186). Growth mindsets allow teachers to experience fulfillment and students access to success.

CHAPTER III

Methods

Theoretical Framework

There is a plethora of information pertaining to growth mindsets from the onset of Dweck's (2006) publication of *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. A qualitative study was conducted in efforts to find discoveries that are not observed in all general classrooms, as every individual class offers a unique environment. Before Dweck gave fixed and growth mindsets their current titles, they were referred to as "entity" and "incremental" theories of intelligence, respectively (Dweck & Molden, 2005, p.123).

Research suggests that people can assemble a combination of growth and fixed mindsets for various traits and forms of intelligence. For example, a student that has a growth mindset in physical skills is not necessarily motivated by a growth mindset in all aspects of life. There can be a mixture of self-perceptions, depending on the area of critique. Mindsets present relative concern in the area of education. Belief in a fixed mindset positions students to feel the need to prove skills and intelligence to others "often to the detriment to their learning" (Dweck & Molden, 2005, p.124).   In contrast, belief in a growth mindset provides the foundation for the possibility of all children being able to learn and grow.

As a way to address current student needs and promote ever-changing practices, there is an "increasing promise is the introduction of mindfulness in education at all levels—for administrators, teachers and students, and their families" (Young, 2016, p. 30). Mindfulness cannot be condensed into simple meaning in the field of science and is relative depending on the application. When approached with the science behind neural plasticity, fixed mindsets do not prove to stand reasoning: "not only learning can take place, but entirely new or enhanced

capacities are developed within the brain" (Zajonc, 2016, p. 26). The definition of mindfulness has evolved, and it continues to reveal effective practices for individuals in self-development across several disciplines. At the basis of understanding mindsets, it is essential in "understanding education as a process of transformation" (Zajonc, 2016, p. 18). Educators do not want to see their students walk out of their classrooms at the end of the year as the same students who walked in on the first day. Students with growth mindsets can develop into whom they desire to be.

Purpose of the Study

The intention of conducting this study was to provide an understanding of how instilling a growth mindset in students can have an impact on student perception and performance in reading. At least one-third of fourth graders across the country are reading below grade level (Valencia, 2011). Clearly, current elementary reading instructional strategies need to be reflected upon if they are producing these results. This study provided purpose for teachers to apply relative practices into their reading instruction and decision-making steps to explore new strategies for interventions. People with a fixed mindset inaccurately view their qualities as overall positive or negative. Students who possess a negative view upon their reading skills are unlikely to give their full effort because they have little faith in themselves to attain monumental gains. In contrast, people with a growth mindset can pinpoint their ability levels on a spectrum instead of at the extremes. They allow themselves to work towards a goal to see progress gradually. Students must first acknowledge their starting points to measure dynamic growth over time (Dweck, 2006).

The overall purpose of this study was to analyze individual student perceptions of their ability to read compared to their actual ability levels. In addition, the teacher's perception of

students' abilities to read was compared to their actual ability levels and their own beliefs. The researcher hypothesized a positive correlation of students who obtain a growth mindset to their believed abilities to read. Furthermore, the researcher also hypothesized a positive correlation of teacher beliefs with students' perceptions of abilities to read, as well as their actual ability levels. Three students with ranging reading ability levels were carefully observed, and differences in their mindsets and motivation were analyzed. The classroom environment was reported in means of how and if a growth mindset ideology was reflective of student behaviors and actions. Subsequent exploration included the efficacy of a growth mindset on students' feelings associated with reading for joy.

Research Questions

1. What are the three participants' perceptions of their ability to read compared to their actual reading levels?

2. What is the teacher's perception of her students' abilities to read compared to their actual reading levels?

Rationale

　　Fill the elementary reading gap. The hope of a positive correlation between students developing a growth mindset and their self-perceptions of reading abilities were examined in order for results to be generalized to other classrooms in means of effectiveness. A qualitative study previously discussed resulted in a positive correlation between student growth mindsets and math achievement. However, the reading part of this study did not obtain any monumental findings to students' growth mindsets concerning performance (McCutchen et al., 2016). In another study revolving middle school students, participants completed training on how to embrace their growth mindsets that resulted in inflation of their math grades. A control group

was compared with an experimental group engaged in a growth mindset training. Both groups of struggling math students received direct instruction on study skills, but those who did not receive the growth mindset training did not show improvement in their math grades. The only difference was that the control group was not taught how to apply the new math strategies with a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). Besides the studies noted, few researchers have specifically targeted the subject of reading with students obtaining a growth mindset, even though there is an ever-present need to raise student reading levels to proficiency across the nation (Petscher et al., 2017). Reading is the foundation of every subject area in school, so it can be argued to be the most important for students to succeed in, not only for proficiency at grade level, but for compounding effects of future schooling years.

Connections have been made between growth mindset and student performance, yet there still leaves room for discovery of students' feelings connected to reading instead of strictly performance showcased with numerical data. In addition to exploring reading associations, "few studies on the relation between mindset and education outcomes in the elementary grades have been published" (Petscher et al., 2017, p. 3). A quantitative study was conducted to close these gaps, and a positive correlation was found with students who maintained a global growth mindset and reading mindset with reading performance (Petscher et al., 2017). The qualitative case study conducted involved third graders who represent the middle point of elementary years. During these early years, students are most moldable and able to retract from reading difficulties with proper instruction (Petscher et al., 2017; Samuels & Farstrup, 2011). Beginning elementary years are the most crucial for students to build foundational reading skills and understand their endless capabilities with a growth mindset.

Student potential. Every person decides what mindset to possess. Fixed mindset users are always trying to prove themselves and avoid failures to live up to their destined abilities. Conversely, growth mindset users confront challenges as an avenue to develop their abilities. Learning in the classroom opens up numerous opportunities each day for children to decide which pathway to take. Essentially, it is a choice left up to each student to make (Dweck, 2006). Educators need to reveal to students which mindset they choose to take on, along with the vast benefits of accessing a growth mindset in a rigorous learning environment. If students come into a classroom having fixed mindsets, it does not mean they are stuck in their beliefs for a lifetime. Beliefs can always be altered.

A specific difference that separates the two different mindsets is a view on effort. People with a fixed mindset are stuck on believing they do not possess a skill or quality if it does not come naturally without having to learn or practice it. Any effort is perceived as a burden and a sign of failure. Growth mindset believers view the process of putting forth effort as an essential part of learning (Dweck, 2006). Discovering student mindsets allow educators to understand their students' views on learning. It explains why some students get overly upset if they are not able to learn a skill on the first day and refuse to try new strategies. Understanding mindsets also gives meaning to the students who continuously try the extra credit problems or difficult challenges, even if the task presented is far above their current levels. After identifying student mindsets, educators can further develop their growth mindset students and express patience with current fixed mindset students.

Individual beliefs. There were no risks involved in the study since the teacher instructed on a routine basis, and the researcher did not interfere while observing actions and behaviors. Since there were no new risks associated with the study, the benefits to society stand as the focus

for the outcome. Readers will benefit from this study by first gaining knowledge about mindsets.

Without having exposure to the belief that one's mind can be developed, people could be fixated

on individual qualities that they believe are unchangeable. Learning about the growth mindset

will push people to take risks and face challenges that they otherwise might steer away from in

fear of failure. There lies significance behind moral assessment and reflection of oneself (Tracy,

2010). People educated on mindsets will be more aware of making conscious choices and

negative self-talk that will hold them back from reaching their full potential. This study will

impact the field of education by providing a platform for reading teachers to serve. The first step

is for educators to take on the growth mindset for themselves. Then, students can learn from

their teacher's daily modeling. Reading teachers who are not witnessing any growth in their

students should implement the growth mindset strategy into their instruction and track the

individual outcomes. Educators will see the difference observed in student motivation and their

joy for reading by expanding their brains' capabilities. The overarching goal of most educators

is to impact as many children's lives as they can. When educators take on the growth mindset,

they are instilling to their students that anything is possible in the presence of effort and

dedication. Giving students the gift of believing in themselves is a valuable investment.

Educators must find strategies to increase student self-perception of their abilities to

reveal their motivation and endless efforts towards reading. Once students are explicitly taught

and consciously informed of the benefits associated with the development of a growth mindset,

the hope is that they will exert their best effort in reading to reveal their highest possibilities.

The goal of this study was for children to perceive themselves as a continuous work in progress

and as a result, become aware of their reading capabilities. If students do not live up to their full

potential in reading, it is likely to impact all academic areas in school.

Design of the Study

In efforts to explore student progress towards a growth mindset and the potential impact

it has on self-perceptions of reading, a qualitative case study was conducted. Mindset can be

described as the view people have of themselves. People with a fixed mindset "believe

intelligence and abilities are innate," while people with a growth mindset "believe intelligence

and abilities have been developed over time" (Nottingham & Larsson, 2019, p. 4). A narrative

analysis served as the approach carried out in the qualitative case study to "put together the 'big

picture' about experiences or events as the participants understand them" (Schutt, 2012, p. 339).

Personal input from the participants provided the focus of data collection regarding their inner

beliefs and self-reflections.

The collection of data in the narrative analysis was viewed in a holistic standpoint to

accurately tell participants' stories, moreover the entire class's self-perspective system (Schutt,

2012). One documented incident of belief in a growth mindset did not stand as solid proof of an

overall mindset. Likewise, one student who showcased several demonstrations of a growth

mindset could not be generalized to every student's belief in the class. While viewing the

"narratives as a whole, rather than of the different elements within them," patterns emerged to

represent the third-grade class's ideology overall, not as individual participants (Schutt, 2012, p.

339). This led to a greater understanding of practices embedded in a growth mindset relating to

elementary students and results attained due to cultivated thinking.

Site

One classroom was the target location to closely observe a third-grade class that included

20 students. Also, a teacher who was a growth mindset advocator was examined over the course

of six weeks. These visits occurred at the beginning of the second semester of the 2019-2020

school year. The elementary school located in central Illinois was in a small, rural town with a

population of around 5,000 people. Diversity was not very prominent in this setting, as 95% of

the student population were Caucasian. Low-income students stood as a relevant grouping at

49% of the student population. Out of the total number of students in the school, 11% were

identified as having a disability, and there were no students identified as English Language

Learners (Illinois Report Card, 2018).

This specific classroom was chosen for multiple reasons. First, the researcher had a

purpose for investigating elementary students' mindsets in reading since there was a gap in

research. Third graders are situated in the middle of their elementary schooling, so it provided a

balanced average when referring to elementary students overall. Specifically with reading,

students who are reading on grade level in third grade can be classified as predominantly

independent, whereas students in lower grade levels usually need more assistance. Therefore,

the third-grade students observed and interviewed were old enough to have a relatively stable

understanding of their reading abilities as well as where they stood in comparison to peers of the

same age. Participants were trusted on their feelings associated with reading for joy. Younger

students might have confessed that they love reading and read by themselves every night when

their concept of reading referred to flipping picture books and making up their own version of

stories.

The chosen educator added to the purpose of designating this classroom as the ideal

location to conduct the study. The teacher was known as a leader in the school for implementing

growth mindset strategies into daily instruction. She believed in modeling a growth mindset for

her students and teaching them to instill the developing perspective. Nevertheless, she continued

to remain eager to perfect her craft. As a successful veteran classroom teacher who has not

changed grade levels for years, she did not have to put her energy into learning the content, presentation methods, or behavior management techniques. Consequently, her focus was set on developing her students to be the best versions of themselves and adequately preparing them for the future, not only in the knowledge of content, but being decent human beings in personal relationships and society.

Participants

Parents received a letter (Appendix A) that outlined the intentions of the study and the involvement of their children. Parents and students were instructed to sign the letter and return it if any student did not wish to participate in the study, but all students were allowed to participate. Students and parents were informed that participation was voluntary. Within this setting, the first method of selection for observations was focusing in on the third-grade class as a whole with all students who obtained parental permission to participate. The second method of selection for interviews targeted the teacher and three students of ranging reading ability levels based on criteria suggested by the teacher. The whole class convenience sample was chosen as the first method of selection to gain the most accurate portrayal of third-grade students and their relations to instilling a growth mindset. This pool was narrowed for the second method of selection for strictly viewing differing student reading ability levels on a spectrum to compare findings.

By choosing a struggling reader, grade-level reader, and advanced reader to target for personal questioning, the researcher explored the mindsets of students with various academic skill levels. It is widely known in the field of education that one piece of data cannot accurately represent a child's overall performance. A current data point cannot predict the success a child could foresee in the future due to unlimited learning possibilities (Dweck, 2006). Therefore, the

educator recommended the chosen three students for the current study based upon her overall

knowledge and relationships with students gathered from the first half of the school year.

Instruments

The collection of a variety of rich data sources included interviewing the teacher and

three targeted students, detailed classroom observations, interest inventories, and input provided

by the teacher. Interest inventories (Appendix B) were administered to students to gather initial

feelings about reading. Interviews were conducted with one participant at a time. Student

questions revolved around personal beliefs associated with their reading skills and attitudes.

Mindset questions were also addressed, such as knowledge and confidence of their abilities to

improve and levels of independence over their learning. Teacher input included informal and

formal reading data, lesson plans, and observed student behaviors and actions. Questioning

directed at the teacher indicated her perceptions on the students' abilities, as well as the class

overall, and predicted growth. Beforehand, the teacher was asked to suggest three targeted

students that would be best to participate in the interviewing portions of the study thoroughly.

The educator was also asked about reading strategies for instilling a growth mindset in students

and implementation methods, as well as establishing a classroom environment during

independent reading time.

Teacher interview questions.

1. How do you model a growth mindset for your students every day?

2. What are some strategies you implement to teach mindsets and get the kids engaged?

3. How would you describe this group of students' abilities in reading for your overall

class?

4. How would you describe the three targeted students' ability levels and predicted growth on an individual basis?

5. What do you predict the growth of students in reading will look like by the end of the year?

6. Describe the classroom environment during independent reading time.

7. How do you give feedback to students?

8. How do you motivate kids to have a growth mindset? What are the incentives?

9. If students are set on having a fixed mindset, what is your approach to try and encourage them?

10. How do you promote independence and student responsibility for their own learning, specifically with reading?

11. How do you motivate students to take risks and persevere through difficult tasks in reading?

Student interview questions.

1. How would you describe your ability level and skills in reading?

2. Being completely honest, how would you rank yourself in reading compared to the rest of your classmates? Why do you believe this?

3. Do you think you will be able to grow from this current ability? If yes, how will you be able to get better at reading?

4. Do you think you were born to be the reader you are today, and it came naturally, or do you think you had to put effort and hard work into the skills you have?

5. What is your usual reaction when your teacher corrects something you did wrong or offers a better way to do something?

6. How do you feel when you pick a book?

7. How do you feel about reading texts during lessons in school and doing work or

having discussions that go along with the reading?

8. If you get stuck on an unknown word in your reading, what do you usually do?

9. If you had the choice to read a picture book that was below your reading level or a

chapter book that was above your level, which would you pick and why?

10. When do you feel like you are an intelligent kid?

11. How do you feel when you get a bad grade? What about a good grade? What do your

parents and teacher say in both situations?

12. What task did you put hard work into today? Did you learn anything new?

Data Collection

The researcher observed during reading instruction and independent reading times to

analyze targeted students' actions and behaviors related to mindset. Students included in this

classroom received 60 minutes of direct reading instruction and 30 minutes of sustained

independent reading time each day. Teacher strategies, delivery methods, and modeling were

noted when a growth mindset approach was utilized during reading instruction. Student and

teacher relationships were observed, such as the teacher praising effort and the student's

reaction, as well as students advocating for one another. There were not any risks involved in

this study as the researcher was not immersed in the classroom environment, but rather taking on

the role of an observant.

Researcher's role. While visiting the classroom to collect observation notes, the

researcher did not participate in any part of the classroom lessons or intervene with student

behaviors. The teacher instructed students and responded to student discipline in the same ways

she would on any typical school day. The participants were studied and represented from an

emic focus to showcase their perspectives in the classroom instead of the influence of the

researcher (Schutt, 2012). On the first day of arrival, there was a brief introduction of the

researcher and stated purposes of her being in the classroom so that the elementary students did

not feel concerned with her presence and be assured of their safety. The researcher was

welcomed with a warm greeting of the classroom teacher as a previous relationship was already

established.

When the researcher was pursuing her undergraduate studies, the classroom teacher

observed was the researcher's cooperating teacher during her student teaching practicum. In this

way, she was the researcher's most impactful mentor in her pre-service teaching career. Since

the classroom teacher showcased to her students that she trusted the researcher, the students were

more comfortable in their usual setting to carry on with usual behaviors. Besides, the researcher

did not interview students until a few observation visits had been conducted so the students could

become acclimated to the researcher being in the classroom. The targeted students chosen for

interviews hopefully felt more comfortable answering questions and opening up about personal

thoughts. Being situated in their usual setting with a routine instructional schedule promoted

students to act under natural conditions without disruption from the researcher's presence.

Confidential measures. The district, school principal, and teacher predetermined the

permission to conduct this study before observations took place. Interviews were audio-recorded

on the researcher's phone to refer back to when taking notes for transcribing accurate responses.

Interviewing settings were private for students and the teacher to reveal information as they

pleased. No one, aside from the researcher and faculty sponsor, had access to the audio

recordings. Observation notes, interview sessions, and the final analysis were written by

replacing student and teacher names with pseudonyms in order to protect identities. The input and data provided by the teacher were also recorded using pseudonyms. Interest inventories were completed by students in the classroom and collected by the researcher with particular caution that student names were not on them.

Students who were excluded from the study due to not obtaining parent permission would not have been recorded in observation notes or interviews, but this was not a concern since all students were eligible to participate. The primary faculty sponsor was the only person with access to the data, subject identifiers, and audio recordings besides the researcher. This was for the purpose of collaboration for analysis and discussion of findings. Audio was transferred to a flash drive and stored in a locked cabinet along with the data notes, analysis findings, interest inventories, and consent forms. The audio recordings were deleted upon completion of the thesis defense. All of the data collected will be destroyed after three years.

Organization of gathering data. The researcher kept note of detailed observations in the classroom by the method of journaling. A targeted focus to investigate was student self-perceptions on reading abilities and feelings towards reading. Additionally, the teacher's modeling of embracing a growth mindset for her students was recorded because she stood as their leading influencer. Along with observations, the researcher's reflections and thoughts were written after each classroom visit through the journaling process in order to keep a record of how themes between data were initially observed. As time progressed, along with the gain of familiarity within the setting through weekly classroom visits, the initial research concepts could have been refocused as new findings arose. A continuation of data would have been collected with a direction in this new light and routinely analyzed upon each visit.

Notes were recorded chronologically and classified by the dates that the researcher visited the classroom. Journaling was decided as the best recording method by the researcher due to the flexibility in actual writing, such as additions and reflections, free access, and it being a single person observation project. Collaboration occurred with the faculty sponsor after data was collected and the analysis stage commenced, but journaling was sufficient for the situation of one person note-taking. In regards to the interviewing portion of the study, the participant was taken to a private area and asked open-ended questions by the researcher. The sessions were recorded on a cell phone for the researcher to transcribe upon completion. These measures were taken so that the most accurate data could be collected from the participants, and it was not left up to reading notes taken or recalling responses from memory.

Data Analysis

A substantial amount of data was collected over six weeks through journaling observations and reflections of the behaviors and actions of 20 students and the teacher, as well as the transcription of interviews with three students and the teacher. After data was gathered and recorded, the researcher read through the entire collection of notes and transcriptions chronologically according to the dates of investigation. The record of data was read through three different lenses, including literal, reflective, and interpretive. When the researcher reviewed the text in literal form, it was analyzed for factual information and direct events. For the reflective viewpoint, the researcher acknowledged any personal opinions or background stances that influenced an understanding of the text. The interpretive structure was constructed by the researcher's meaning from the data collected (Rosala, 2019).

Any piece of evidence that appeared to be of vital significance to the focus of the investigation was highlighted. Matrixes were created to organize data points into preliminary

categories that revealed the strength of connection between points (Schutt, 2012). The material was annotated with reactions and thoughts, including the notation of surprising information, further questioning of data, and possible relationships across data points. During the process of analyzing the findings, the research questions were readily posted so that the specific purpose of the study stood as a constant focus when determining the value of the data. The data included a mixture of attitudinal data, in which students' beliefs about themselves were showcased, in addition to behavioral data, encompassing the observations made of the students' and teacher's actions (Rosala, 2019). There was also a combination of explicit descriptions from the scene and the researcher's interpretations of what took place.

Once the highest priority data points were determined through highlighting journal notes and printed out transcriptions, these pieces were cut out to separate essential findings from material that was not considered as central concentration. Then, the highlighted notes were taped to sticky notes to allow for the material to be easily transferred from one grouping to the next when needed. Two different colors of sticky notes were utilized to distinguish between interviews and observations, along with a written label of which participant the information involved. For the next sorting stage in the textual analysis, the sticky notes were placed into groups of similar findings. This act of grouping provided a visual in which the groups formed into themes. Coding was used to label groupings based on a description of the data included. A key was created that described in detail what each grouping stood for, as shortcuts were written as the labels in categorizing the sticky notes. The list of codes helped the researcher stay organized and aided in the assurance of not reusing any material that already belonged to a category (Rosala, 2019).

After the researcher believed the essential data points were all assigned a category, she collaborated with her faculty sponsor to critique her conclusions. In-depth questioning occurred to confirm that all data pieces supported each coding description. Individual findings were reviewed to rate the value in relevance to answering the research questions. This was in efforts of choosing data to include and data to discard from the final writing. Also, groupings were analyzed to promote triangularization, in which more than one data source led to an overall finding. By organizing the data in this method, all of the data could be seen in one viewpoint. Analyzation led to an open determination of connection points and contradicting points. Finding relationships between categories arose in the formation of themes. Multiple pieces of data from various sources came together to create a theme in methodological triangulation (Hays, 2004). These themes stood as the core findings to answer the research questions of the study and to confirm the proposed hypothesis. Researcher subjectivity included a pre-established relationship with the teacher. The teacher in the study was the cooperating teacher for the researcher during student teaching, so the researcher had exposure to the teacher's established routine and demeanor two years prior to the initiation of this study.

CHAPTER IV

Data Analysis

A substantial amount of data was gathered over the course of six weeks of visits to a third-grade classroom. Findings included a collection of observational field notes taken during literacy blocks, specifically broken down into independent reading time, morning meetings, English-Language Arts instruction, and reading centers. Student interviews were conducted for the three participants of ranging ability levels, as well as with the teacher. All students included in the class anonymously completed the reading interest inventory. The purpose of this study was to explore student and teacher perceptions of student reading abilities while positioned in a growth mindset environment. The teacher provided current student ability levels through STAR testing results, which documented assessment scores from the end of second grade (May), beginning of third grade (August), middle of third grade (January), and the most current results (March). These assessment results were reviewed to evaluate the actual current ability levels of students in comparison to student and teacher beliefs. A variety of data sources were gathered to analyze the formation of student and teacher perceptions on reading abilities. Instilling a growth mindset in students shapes their beliefs about their reading abilities and impacts the outcome of reading motivation and performance.

Research Questions

Two research questions provided the focus of researcher exploration in the classroom. The first question targeted the three students of ranging ability levels to understand what they believed their reading abilities were compared to their current performance levels. The second question addressed the teacher's beliefs of her students' abilities levels compared to their actual ability levels. A case study analysis from the collection of qualitative data, including student

interviews, classroom observations, and assessment results provided by the teacher, is outlined

for each of the three participants. The teacher's perception and student performance levels were

captured through the teacher interview session, classroom observations, interest inventory

completed by students, and data reports. Comparing student perceptions next to their grade

equivalent levels and growth revealed on various assessment data points exposed how their

beliefs reflect accurate thinking for their actual reading performances and motivation levels. The

teacher showed to have an extensive influence on her students' beliefs as well as progressing

through a growth mindset to shape her own beliefs of her students. Specifically, perceptions are

what people believe about themselves and their capabilities. Lydia, Lawson, and Alex were

selected out of the chosen classroom to respectively represent high, middle, and low ability

leveled students. Choosing students with a range of reading abilities was driven by the curiosity

if there would be different thought processes of self-perceptions depending on the ability level of

the student.

An analysis covering each of the three targeted students is provided to evaluate the level

of understanding the students had with their individual beliefs correlating to their actual ability

levels. The teacher's influence on student behavior is intertwined within each of the students'

studies to represent interactions she had with her third-grade students. All three participants

showed to have parallel beliefs about themselves compared to actual performance levels in

reading. It can also be concluded that the teacher's beliefs about her students were valid when

compared to current reading ability rankings. Through the coding process of analyzing the

collection of qualitative data, it was evident that the teacher and each participant shaped their

reading perceptions by utilizing self-talk and setting goals, and the validity of their beliefs was

expressed through their progress in reading. These themes are outlined in each of the following

student studies. In efforts to protect the identity and privacy of participants, all names have been

changed.

Lydia

The first student to be discussed is one of the highest reading ability-leveled students, and

she was a reliable representation of the top-tiered students present in the third-grade classroom.

Self-talk. When people talk to themselves, whether silently in their heads or a whisper-

tone out loud, the expressions turn into their beliefs. Through the interviewing process, Lydia

revealed that she was pretty good at reading, but not the very best in her class. She confessed

that she was situated higher in her reading abilities in comparison to many of her peers. Lydia

reminded herself, "I read really well… I am a strong reader." After providing general statements

about her reading abilities overall, she stated that she raised above others in spelling. She

supported this statement with concrete evidence by stating that she moved forward onto the

fourth-grade spelling lists while the majority of her classmates were still progressing on the

third-grade lists. Lydia confessed that when she recognized she had made a mistake, she would

get this bad feeling in her gut. Mrs. Weaver recognized her own weaknesses of needing to take

risks and admitted to times she has failed to her students by saying she felt it in her gut. After a

task or mission did not go as planned, Lydia told herself not to give up. If she would give up,

she claimed that she would never know what the outcome of achievement could have been if she

would have just been determined.

Therefore, it was worth it, from her perspective, to see reading tasks through until the

end. Even when reading became challenging, Lydia faced it with determination and worked

even harder. When asked how she formed her current reading abilities, she said, "I think I had to

put hard work and effort into the skills I have." Lydia did not like to score below 60 percent on

Accelerated Reader (AR) comprehension tests that students regularly completed because that

would indicate that she did not understand what she was reading. Regarding not passing AR

tests, she stated, "I never have [failed], and I never will if I keep up what I am doing right now."

The words that she told herself in her mind are what she believed about herself, and she

visualized them to become a reality.

     Goals. Lydia responded with certainty that she could improve her reading skills. Within

the period of the short interview conducted with this high-achieving reading student, she referred

to setting goals to challenge herself seven different times. Looking back on her progress

achieved, she stated she could succeed because "I pushed myself, and I got there." Lydia

collaborated with her mom and teacher to track her literacy goals in a specific section in her

school binder. Spelling tests were an area in which Lydia noticed a weakness within her

abilities, so she set the vision that follows: "I had a goal to get a good score on tests, and I get

good scores on tests." Another goal Lydia intended to reach was to earn 100 Accelerated Reader

points and read all of the Bluestem books by the end of the school year. Accelerated Reader was

a commonly used testing platform for students to check their understanding by completing a

series of comprehension multiple-choice questions after reading a book. The length and

complexity of the text, as well as the student's performance on the assessment, determined how

many points were earned. Bluestem was a category of books in the library that had won

prestigious national awards, and these novels tended to be more challenging chapter books.

     Lydia gravitated towards these selections when picking out her books because she felt

most intelligent when reading long texts and then earning a perfect score on them. However,

Lydia was conscious of picking out books that were just right to support her reading progress.

Her teacher explained the purpose of the dot system to the class one day during AR time: "I give

you a dot because that is what you are capable of. If you go below that level, you are not feeding

your brain." To monitor this, the student usually stayed within her recommended dot level when

choosing books in the library. If the student was confronted with a lower-leveled picture book or

a complex chapter book, Lydia responded by saying she would absolutely pick the chapter book.

She was thrilled when pulling a new text off the shelf, but she would become nervous that the

text might be too challenging or too easy of a read. As she noticed her classmates earning more

AR points at a faster rate, Lydia concluded that she was not one of the best readers in third grade.

She told herself that she was capable of making advancements in reading because this student

pushed herself as far as she could go. The effort she put into her hard work was not for her

parents or teacher, but all for herself to witness the achievements she attained. Mrs. Weaver

believed that after students started to develop a growth mindset, they motivate themselves to

succeed. When asked the question of what drove her ambition to succeed, she responded with

the following: "I feel like not just to get the grade, [but] just to have the feeling that I did good on

the test and that I read."

     Progress. Lydia claimed that she did not like reading in years past, and she had to

"change her perspective" to like reading. Discussing her love for chapter books, she said she

pieced together how the lesson formed throughout the pages. When confronted with an

unknown word or stuck on a task, Lydia first would try to problem solve on her own. After she

exhausted her greatest efforts, she would seek assistance from a classmate that she believed

might have the knowledge she desired to gain. Finally, if they could not figure it out in

collaboration, Lydia would give in and ask for guidance from her master teacher. Mrs. Weaver

encouraged her students to share the knowledge that they gained. When the teacher overheard a

student asking another classmate to help him define an unknown word, Mrs. Weaver vocally

supported the collaboration. Even though Lydia believed the top readers were those with the most points who read the fastest, she still read at her own steady pace in order to grasp all of the details from the text.

To aid students in preparing for whole-class discussions, Mrs. Weaver shared supplemental resources to the text with her students. Instead of setting a strict plan for where she wanted the discussion to lead, she left it up to the students to guide it. In this student-led activity, she explained how "they will invite other students into the conversation if they see someone that's not participating." Class discussions were a time that Lydia looked forward to during reading instruction. She came prepared with her thoughts about the text, but she continued by saying, "I get to hear my classmates' perspectives of the book and then switching over to my perspective to see how different they are." The researcher observed Lydia taking a leadership role during all class discussions. On one occurrence, she started speaking at the same time as a peer who had not yet contributed to the conversation. Mrs. Weaver politely asked Lydia to allow the other student to share her thoughts first to give all students a chance to be heard. The teacher explained in a morning meeting one day that whenever people speak, they would say what they already know. When they would stop to listen to others, that was when learning occurred.

After listening to her peers, she evaluated their contributions and allowed them to change her original viewpoint if she was convinced enough. The student has modeled this open perspective from her teacher. In her interview session, Mrs. Weaver said she continually learned from her students and was open to hear from them. Mrs. Weaver expanded to say that her classroom environment was full of like-minded people, meaning her students and herself were regularly looking for chances to develop their abilities. Lydia engaged in pleasurable reading outside of the classroom by reading to her younger siblings at home, and she provided the

following reason: "I feel like they need to be read to sometimes." She practiced self-reflection

after independently reading and recognized when she utilized her reading abilities to their full

potential. Self-reflection was also practiced on the outcome of her performance on

comprehension tests. She knew she digested the context of the book if she earned a good grade

and "understands what the author was trying to say or what the lesson was." The student said

receiving constructive feedback was not always the easiest to hear, but if she needed to be

redirected, it was for the best because it would only assist her in becoming a better reader. When

she ever had difficulties with schoolwork, her parents first responded by asking what they could

do to support her, and then they asked their child what she could do for herself at school. Lydia

instantly became disappointed in herself after not performing up to her personal expectations in

reading. She believed it was usually an accurate reflection of knowing she did not read the book

very well, specifically in not understanding what the author was trying to say. She did not allow

insufficient grades to defeat her as she said, "All you can do is move on from that."

To outline this student's progress in terms of assessment and progress monitoring

measures, Mrs. Weaver first addressed that the range of growth might have been limited because

of the student's current advanced level. However, the teacher stated that this did not mean she

would not grow. Lydia's score on the latest STAR reading test report placed her at a 5.0 grade

level equivalent. Although she did not show any growth from the beginning of the school year,

Lydia held a steady ranking for her reading abilities at the top of third graders in the 81st

percentile. While listening to Lydia read aloud during AR time one morning, the researcher

instantly detected that she was an advanced reader. She read with expression, appropriate

pauses, and held a steady, fast rate. Lydia achieved 100 percent accuracy for word recognition,

not counting self-corrections, in the high-leveled chapter book she read aloud. When she

skipped over a word, she went back to correct herself, which showcased consistent self-monitoring skills.

Lawson

The next participant was selected as an average reading student concerning ability levels seen in the third-grade classroom.

Self-talk. When Lawson was proposed with the question to describe his reading abilities, he responded by saying he was "around the average." He believed he was a good reader, but definitely not the best. To clarify, he ranked himself as six out of ten for his current reading abilities. However, when asked to compare his abilities with those of his classmates, he decreased his ranking to four out of ten. Lawson stated that reading was not that hard of a task to engage in, and he believed it was relatively easy. Although he believed this, he still confessed to making mistakes and experiencing failures. Mrs. Weaver used real-life examples of herself when she had either experienced a growth or fixed mindset and brought it to her students for them to learn from her. The teacher went to the extent of stating that she celebrated whenever students failed because it meant they were challenging themselves and had the opportunity to grow from it. She stated: "It's ok to fail because you know the longer you believe that it's not, the harder it is to get that out of your mind." When Lawson got stuck on an unknown word or could not comprehend the text, he listened to what his gut was telling him and could feel the need for support. These instances did not stop Lawson from practicing his reading skills because he viewed failures as learning experiences. He stated, "When I learn something new, I get smarter. And it does not just make me think I'm smart. It does make me more smart."

His favorite part about interacting with texts was his search for learning something new, whether that be factual information in nonfiction texts or a lesson from the characters in a

fictional read. This student attributed effort and parental influence to the reading abilities he

acquired. Lawson always reminded himself that he could do whatever he set his mind to. He

described this through an internal conversation: "Myself tells me that I can do it, and if myself

tells me that I can do it, well then I can do it!" Improvements in reading were a big focus for this

student as he told himself how he could reach "higher and higher" for his goals. He did not

believe making accomplishments was possible without first picturing the end result. The teacher

described how the progression of a growth mindset had to start with her. If she did not believe it

herself, her students would never begin to believe in it. After modeling self-talk, Mrs. Weaver

explained that the students caught on and began to incorporate it into their daily lives. Mrs.

Weaver promoted vision statements for her students and modeled it by repeating positive

mantras. To motivate himself, Lawson claimed, "You have to vision it like [his teacher] says.

You have see it, before you see, it so you can see it."

Goals. This student, categorized as having average reading abilities for the third-grade

classroom, believed that he could grow in his skill set. Throughout the interview session,

Lawson discussed his passion for learning in five different instances. When posed with the

question of his general feelings towards reading, he stated that he enjoyed reading because "I get

to learn something new, and I like learning." When given the option of reading a picture book or

a challenging chapter book, Lawson would pick the chapter book. Lawson claimed that he

usually selected books that were above his dot level, and he performed well on the AR

comprehension tests. When students came up to Mrs. Weaver and said that they were interested

in a book higher than their dot level, she encouraged them to take on the challenge as long as

they could handle it. She gave students the freedom to pick out their own books because she

believed in her students to assess their current reading capabilities. Students found books to fit

their specific needs and promote challenges. In addition, Mrs. Weaver provided the tools to support her students' learning while still holding them accountable. Students recognized when they needed to read passages at a lower Lexile level, listen to a text read aloud online, or write notes out to prepare for their discussions. Lawson described reading as an experience to relax or partake in a journey of learning something new. To expand on his desire to learn, the student described his reading practice as the "knowledge that I gain."

Mrs. Weaver expressed that she used keep her goals to herself because she was afraid of failure. After adapting to a growth mindset, she purposely told her students about her ambitions so that they could keep her accountable for reaching them. Lawson kept a futuristic goal constantly circulating through his mind to drive his work ethic. He had a strong passion for space and wanted to work for NASA when he grew up. This goal was what motivated Lawson to work hard in reading as he recognized his aspirations: "I have pretty hard goals when I grow up. Big ones. And I want to be able to do them."

Progress. Mrs. Weaver explained to students that the purpose of nonfiction texts was the author trying to "grow your brain," whereas nonfiction reads were intended to "grow your heart." This student gravitated towards informational texts because of his strong passion for learning facts and expanding his rich vocabulary. At the same time, he claimed that fictional books could be useful in revealing to students how to have a better mindset. Pointing out when students or characters utilized a growth mindset or instances when they should have switched their thinking was Mrs. Weaver's specialty. For example, a student in class projected, "I know I can't." The teacher, along with some other classmates, gasped. Mrs. Weaver added the word "yet" to the end of the student's phrase to represent the progression she should take moving forward. She explained to her class: "Your thoughts are your roommate. They hold you accountable."

Lawson examines how his teacher modeled character analyzation during read-alouds and student interactions, and then he could apply the thought processes to identify growth mindsets in his independent texts. He believed the secret behind becoming a better reader was by reading numerous books. Lawson's first approach to figure out the meaning of unknown words was to strategize and work through it himself. Next, he relied on the help of a friend who was reading close to his proximity. If they were not able to decipher the meaning together, they turned to their teacher to learn the new vocabulary term. When the researcher asked how he knew he could perform well, Lawson recounted all of the previous books he has read in his time.

This student gratefully listened and applied the corrections his teacher provided him. Lawson's reaction to feedback was to increase his effort and work on mastering his skills, as well as learn from his mistakes. The teacher continued to praise effort because she believed that was what made students work harder and keep their motivation up. Instead of looking at corrective feedback as a negative form of communication, Lawson stated that he would get to be a better reader from applying what his teacher suggested he needed to improve. It was not a surprise to his parents, teacher, or classmates that Lawson was passionate about developing his reading abilities because they were aware of his mindset to "just about try on everything." Lawson confessed to be being disappointed in himself after receiving a lousy reading grade. He emphasized that the disappointment only resided in himself because "I know that I can do good, but I didn't."

Overall, Mrs. Weaver believed that her students would produce exceptional gains throughout the school year in reading because their effort and motivation were high. Lawson was an ideal candidate to represent how students grew in reading due to their effort put forth. Mrs. Weaver indicated that his growth in reading abilities stood as one of the top gains out of her

class. The teacher believed that every student would grow at least one year in their reading

abilities and be at grade level by the end of the year. This student proved to make drastic gains

in his reading scores gathered from the STAR testing report. From the testing in January to the

latest testing administered in March, Lawson almost reached a whole year's worth of growth.

Lawson surpassed a year and a half increase with over two months of his third-grade year

remaining.

Ranging around the 50th percentile on the January testing, his gains pushed him above the

average to the 74th percentile by March. The researcher asked the student to hear him read his

book of choice aloud during independent reading time. Lawson read at a medium pace that

fluctuated throughout sections of the text. It was observed that he substituted original words for

other real words of graphic similarity. However, Lawson went back to accurately repeat the

whole sentence after catching his mispronunciation miscues on a few occasions. He read in a

monotone with the absence of expression, and he showed high accuracy for stopping at

punctuation. The format of the text presented in the picture book chosen was not

straightforward, so Lawson had some difficulty following which sentence was supposed to be

read first on the pages. He was fully invested in the content as he stopped to analyze the

illustrations before flipping to the next page.

Alex

This participant provided a representation of the lowest tiered students in the class

regarding current reading abilities. He was one of the few students in the class eligible to receive

daily interventions from the reading specialist.

Self-talk. During the interview, Alex was hesitant and unsure when responding that his

reading abilities were "maybe good." He continued in this manner by ranking himself as a good

reader compared to others in his class. Alex was working on moving up to the next reading level

of books to choose from in the library organized by colored dots, and he claimed he was ready

for this promotion to the next color. To expand on this, he stated that he was ready to increase

his reading level because the level he was currently instructed to choose books from was "the

lower dot." Mrs. Weaver encouraged self-talk for struggling students by writing positive

mantras on their desks. A common one she wrote was, "you know more than you think you

know" to promote developmental mindsets for her students.

Alex felt intelligent when picking out his books for independent reading time because he

told himself, "I can read it… and I can take a test. I can get 100 on it." This outcome was not

easily achieved for this student. He believed that he had to put "a ton" of effort and hard work

into acquiring his reading abilities. Without exerting effort into reading practice and tasks, Alex

did not believe he could advance in his ability levels and skills. Not only did Alex tell himself to

be mindful of his amount of effort put into reading, but he also reminded himself to "stay calm

and have self-control" to keep himself on track and not get distracted. He believed it was crucial

to read because he knows he could always learn new information through texts.

Goals. Alex set goals for himself because he believed his reading abilities could improve.

He was motivated to make advancements in reading to earn perfect scores on his AR

assessments because that is what gave him the greatest thrill in reading. When given the option,

Alex would choose a chapter book over a picture book "because that will get me to my goal." In

order to get better at reading, he believed he needed to increase his AR test averages. Mrs.

Weaver reiterated how important it was for her students to stay on track with their AR goals,

specifically by maintaining their comprehension test percentages. Alex set out to reach his AR

goal by earning 100 percent on his AR tests. As a result of achieving perfect scores on AR tests,

he believed his reading abilities were "good" compared to his classmates. Instead of occasionally

playing around in his desk, Alex recognized that he should stay focused if he wanted to meet his

goals in reading. Even though he told himself not to become distracted, he realized that he

would get off track and made mistakes at times. However, Mrs. Weaver encouraged her students

to not "sit in their hole" when mistakes were made. Instead of facing their mistakes with a fixed

mindset, she modeled how to shift their thinking to view failures as opportunities to grow.

     Progress. This student representing the lowest grouping of reading abilities would much

rather be practicing math or playing in physical education rather than reading. Thinking about

the scenario if he put the same amount of effort into reading that he put into his favorite subjects

of math or physical education, he responded that he could "get hundreds and move up" to a

higher dot. When asked why he does not like to practice his reading skills, he stated, "You keep

on reading, reading, reading, which is the boring part." He explained that he reread his book

three or four times before feeling prepared to test on it. Even though he did not enjoy reading the

texts multiple times, he did it in order to perform well on comprehension AR tests. Students

were instructed to read for 15 minutes each night for homework, and Alex preferred to reread his

same picture book of choice at home instead of repeatedly during independent reading time in

the mornings at school. Alex liked to read short texts. Before asking for assistance, Alex solved

tasks or detected the meaning of challenging vocabulary words by himself. Once he was truly

stuck, he sought out a reading expert to share the knowledge. When the classmate proved not to

hold the answer either, Alex went to the teacher for support.

     This student claimed to postpone taking an AR test on a book that he believed was too

difficult for his ability level. He would practice his rereading skills until he fully understood the

meaning of the text and felt prepared to test. Instead of giving up on challenges, Alex said, "No.

I work." He attributed his effort of getting perfect scores on comprehension tests by reading the pages carefully. The researcher asked the student about choosing books at the library, and he earnestly stated that he must only pick out books that are within his color of dots for fiction and nonfiction. Alex was happy when a teacher came over to correct and support his learning because he wanted to improve his reading skills. His teacher's feedback philosophy was to make it as immediate as possible and positive whenever she could. Alex stated that sometimes he did not perform well on class quizzes or participate in discussions because he did not give his full attention all of the time; he easily became distracted by objects in his desk or his mind wandering. Mrs. Weaver affirmed this by stating in her interview session that at the beginning of the school year, Alex came in with behavior issues that prevented him from reaching his full potential. Not only did this student show gains in his level of focus and effort exerted throughout the year, but his reading gains were also reflective of this step up in ownership.

Alex was not afraid to ask an expert when he needed guidance on reading instruction, and a few experts were assigned to engaging one-on-one with him when extra support was needed on instruction or specific tasks. Students looked up to the high reading ability-leveled students and modeled after them. His teacher stated how she allowed her highest reading students to take on leadership roles and be in charge of helping other peers that might have been struggling. By viewing her expert students as resources, the teacher utilized them to strengthen their advanced abilities while simultaneously teaching others.

The teacher categorized her class overall as low readers at the beginning of the year in comparison to the many years of third-grade classes she has taught. By the end of the year, Mrs. Weaver believed her students would "be right where they need to be" and prepared for their fourth-grade year. Standing as one of the lowest reading students in the class, Alex scored a

grade and a half below the benchmark of third graders. Over the summer, he dropped

approximately a whole grade level. He has made a little lower than half a year progress on the

latest assessment and over a year's growth from the beginning of the year, ranking in at the 9th

percentile. It was evident that his scores were not consistent.

From listening to Alex read aloud during independent reading time, he kept a steady,

slow pace throughout the text. The researcher noticed that he made frequent pauses to mentally

decode words before attempting to pronounce them aloud. Another strategy Alex used to decode

words was to whisper individual sounds and segment the word to himself before putting the parts

together. He utilized this strategy to make sure he was pronouncing the word correctly, or at

least thinking he was, before saying it aloud to the researcher. At times, he did not realize when

he made a mispronunciation. He was inconsistent with self-corrections, and he did not catch all

of his miscues. The first time reading through a sentence, Alex tended to switch out simple

words for other real words that did not make sense. Then, he practiced self-monitoring by going

back to correct the whole sentence when he realized he had made a miscue.

Conclusion

From the collection of data gathered over a six-week period, triangulation was achieved

by combining a variety of data points in efforts to answer the proposed research questions. The

teacher and three targeted students expressed accurate beliefs involving the students' reading

abilities. The teacher disciplined her mind to believe her students' reading abilities could always

grow from their current rankings. Through the process of modeling a growth mindset way of

being, the teacher influenced her students to believe in themselves positively and believe that

their reading abilities could be developed. Self-talk, goals, and progress shaped the participants'

perceptions of their reading abilities. Without progression into growth mindset beliefs, it could

be questioned where these students' reading abilities and motivation levels would currently rank.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Instilling a growth mindset in students attributes to their motivation to enhance their reading abilities. Three main themes including self-talk, goals, and progress were formed in efforts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the three participants' perceptions of their ability to read compared to their actual reading levels?

2. What is the teacher's perception of her students' abilities to read compared to their actual reading levels?

The purpose of this study was to investigate how a teacher instilling a growth mindset in her students helps motivate them to develop their reading abilities. The accuracy of student and teacher beliefs were also explored in efforts to compare their perceptions with realistic skill sets.

Perception can be defined as the beliefs people hold over themselves. People participate in self-talk by telling their brains to believe something is true, particularity if their abilities are capable of performing up to their desired expectations. Self-talk is one component that shapes a person's belief system. Mrs. Weaver demonstrated to her students how she positively talks to herself, and they followed her lead. All three participants of varying ability levels revealed accurate perceptions of their true ability levels. The teacher also accurately recognized where her students currently ranked in their reading abilities while supporting their learning pathways.

The point of setting goals is to hold oneself accountable in the progression of skills. Having a growth mindset is essential in the process of creating and achieving goals. Monitoring progression and setbacks allow the student to reflect on what strategies are working best for that individual and when interventions are needed. Goals shape students' beliefs of what they believe

they can accomplish and where they believe their abilities currently rank on a spectrum. For example, if a student is setting advanced reading goals and continuously achieving them, it will lead the student to believe he is a proficient reader. Conversely, if a student is setting goals below his grade-level and struggling to achieve them without strenuous support, he will believe that he is not as strong of a reader as others in his class. Most importantly, students who instill a growth mindset recognize that with effort and hard work, their reading abilities will progress, even if it is not at the same rate as the highest leveled student sitting next to them.

Progress is a representation that growth has been achieved. Every student makes advancements at a different rate, and learning is not always on a constant slope upwards. Mrs. Weaver showed her students that failure is a natural part of the learning experience when risks are involved. All three students showed a progression in reading skills from the beginning of the year. Growth was not only witnessed in numbers from their STAR test reports, but also in the mastery of skills observed in the classroom and taking on leadership roles during literacy blocks. After following the teacher's lead of believing in constant development, the students practiced self-talk and set high goals in order to achieve gains in their reading abilities.

Self- talk

Self-awareness of progression. Two targeted students, Lydia and Lawson, explained a feeling that rises in their gut when they have made a mistake. Using the word "gut" could be credited to the teacher for saying it when she had made mistakes in her own life. The saying has transferred over to the students' vocabulary. It was an accurate perception of not performing to the best of their abilities and the feeling associated with knowing they could have done better.

To stay focused on his intentions, Alex reminded himself to "stay calm and have self-control" through self-talk. This might be done in a whisper voice or a conversation with his

inner thoughts. Self-control is a word Alex picked out at the beginning of the new year to be mindful of each day. When his mind wandered off track, he set himself straight by repeating his chosen one-word by using self-talk. This simple practice directed Alex back to his present goals and empowered him to eliminate the distractions. Perceptions that truly reflect current reality were revealed when Alex admitted precisely how much effort he has to put into reading. Alex explained how reading does not come as a natural process for him, and he has to put in hard work to witness any progress.

A commonality between all three students is that they believed effort contributed to the makeup of their ability levels. Without hard work and determination, they claimed that they could not have made the gains in reading that placed them where they are now. These beliefs were accurate because the indicated students were not static in their reading journeys; data clearly shows that growth has been made, and they were not confined within their naturally gifted intelligence bands. Growth was shown from ranges of the lowest reading tier of students to the highest.

Specifically, Lydia, Lawson, and Alex believed their hard work and effort put forth was what caused them to make gains in reading. Lawson also believes his father influenced his reading pathway by triggering his interest in space and provided encouragement for him to succeed. Lydia strongly believed in her determination to get through challenging reading tasks, and she was a futuristic thinker who was always planning her next steps to reach higher goals she proposed for herself. Alex believed that without effort in the equation, progression in reading would not have been possible. These accurate perceptions provided concrete examples of how a growth mindset impacted the motivation students possessed to develop their reading abilities further.

After analyzing Lawson's interview session, it was evident that his chosen mantra was "I can." He told his mind to believe in himself to grant him the motivation needed to push forward. By viewing his most current progress, he proved to himself that exponential growth was possible, and he was capable of developing his reading skills. It was not a debatable topic in his mindset afterward; he could do it, and he would do it. Lawson also captured his teacher's famous mantra: "You have to see it before you see it so you can see it." When students modeled after their teacher's self-talk, they told themselves to vision their accomplishments before even taking the first step at conquering them. By visualizing the end goal at the beginning, it was easier for students to map out the checkpoints needed to get there and believe in themselves to reach that final step. Lawson knew his reading skill potential was endless, and repeating motivational self-talk prepared the foundation needed for him to experience growth.

Belief in ability to grow. When asked by the researcher, Lydia, Lawson, and Alex each responded by saying they believed they could improve on their individual reading skills. This commonality represented that the students utilized a growth mindset concerning their reading abilities. As Mrs. Weaver described that she first had to establish the classroom environment of progression with growth mindsets, she influenced each of the students to believe their reading abilities could grow. By showcasing consistent growth mindset beliefs, Lydia was always pushing herself to be the best she could be. She competed with herself to obtain growth, and it was likely that she downplayed the description of her advanced reading abilities because she was not the absolute highest reader in the class. Lydia will always see room for herself to grow as long as she holds true to growth mindset ideals. She was precise in mentioning why she believed she was above proficiency levels in spelling by working on the fourth-grade lists. Lydia was accurate in her beliefs and capabilities of passing her comprehension tests. She told herself that

she would not fail any of her tests if she kept putting in the tremendous effort she proved to exert on a daily basis. Knowing she was doing everything in her power to improve, Lydia told herself the hard work was worth it because she knew she had exquisite reading skills in her repertoire.

In his accurate statement of beliefs, Lawson knew there was room for improvement in his reading abilities. Lawson was directly on target comparing his perception with reality by using the word "average" to describe his reading abilities in his third-grade class. He also told himself that practicing reading was not challenging once he was situated in a growth mindset and exposed his drive for learning. When the researcher asked Alex about his goals, he projected how he was ready to move up to the next recommended colored dot. This belief could be concluded as an accurate perception after analyzing the book selections Alex read from during independent time, as well as his recurrent passing rate on comprehension tests.

Good readers. All three students shared the foundational belief that they were good readers. Specifically breaking down each participants' perceptions, Lydia did not give herself the highest praise in her reading abilities that she deserved. She believed she was an advanced reader, but not the highest in the third-grade class. After analyzing the latest STAR testing report, Lydia scored within the 81st percentile and read two whole grade levels above her current placement in third grade. Although she was categorized as a student with advanced reading abilities, there were other students in the class that had a grade equivalent of over three grades above the benchmark. Confessing she was a strong reader reflected factual data and valid observations obtained by the researcher. Some examples included how Lydia led numerous morning meetings and class discussions over the text, had perfect accuracy and mature prosody while reading her independent chapter book aloud and ranked multiple grade levels above her position in third grade.

To move onto the average reading ability-leveled student, Lawson accurately described his reading skills to be situated around the middle on the rating scales he provided. It was interesting to note that he placed himself higher at six out of ten when first asked about his own reading beliefs, yet when he was asked to compare himself to his classmates, he believed he was around four out of ten. These ratings, of course, average out to five out of ten, which precisely placed his beliefs in realistic terms as he was the participant representing the population's middle-tier for reading. Even though he proclaimed he was not the most robust reader in the class, he was still situated in a growth mindset by categorizing himself as a good reader.

The final participant's descriptions of his current reading abilities were not as transparent at first glance. In the interview session, Alex first hovered around the word "good" to explain how he believed his abilities were in reading. This was an inaccurate perception because this student was one of the lowest in the class. Moreover, he continued this strain of beliefs by ranking himself as a "good" reader compared to his peers. Mrs. Weaver encouraged her students to maintain a positive mindset, such as in the direct manner of writing positive self-talk quotes on their desks. If Alex continued to see the words "you know more than you think you know" every second in front of him at school, his mind could have led him to believe that he was a good reader due to the teacher's effort to shape their mindsets. Above all, Alex classified his current recommended levels for nonfiction and fiction texts as a lower dot. Therefore, he could recognize his current lower reading abilities with accuracy while still setting high, realistic goals to aid in growth.

Freedom and choice of actions. Since the teacher established an environment based on a growth mindset ideology, everyone in the room was driven to develop their abilities continuously. Sharing this common belief system infused a flow of positivity throughout the

classroom, and all were motivated to support each other in progressing towards individual goals.

The three students each expressed positive self-talk directly related to learning. Students had a

choice of whether or not to put effort into their learning experiences, and students in this third-

grade classroom understood the detrimental effects of not putting in the effort. This could be due

to the teacher's constant praise regarding student effort.

 First, Lydia continuously connected the determination she possessed in academics to her

learning experiences. She motivated herself by saying to never give up on challenges because

the result would be worth it. Lawson conceptualized his increase in intelligence each time he

learned something new. He told himself that he was getting smarter, and he affirmed his self-

talk with each fact or lesson he digested from a text. Alex positioned himself in a growth

mindset in reading by telling himself that he was on a perpetual cycle of learning when

interacting with texts. Instead of casually reading, he set a purpose for expanding his

vocabulary, increasing his fluency, building upon his prior knowledge, intaking factual

information, and finding applications to the real world. Learning is an act of possessing a growth

mindset. People who hold beliefs in a fixed mindset think they already hold all of the skills they

are ever going to get. Students in this third-grade classroom positioned their minds into

believing growth is attainable because they have burning passions for learning. They must first

open their minds up to the possibility of improving their skill sets in reading for it to happen.

 Alex felt confident in his intelligence when it came time to select his independent book

from the library. He confessed, "I can read it… and I can take a test. I can get 100 on it." This

was an accurate perception of his capabilities in reading because Alex chose texts on his

recommended dot color, which correlated to his independent reading level. Mrs. Weaver

explained to students the importance of their dot system for choosing books was to make sure

they were not reading books below their level. When students consulted her about choosing

books above their dot color, students had to assess their current abilities and decide if it would be

too difficult or well-suited for them. However, students still had freedom of what books they

picked off of the shelf. These students purposely chose challenging books that they believed

would best support the progression of their reading skills. The selections associated with Alex's

colored dots should have been the right fit for his abilities, and he practiced self-talk by

reminding himself of his past perfect score streaks on comprehension tests for appropriate level

texts. Through this self-talk, Alex established a vision after recognizing his current abilities in

reading and past performances. He set his mind up for success while putting in the effort needed

to turn his goals into reality.

Goals

     Love for learning. Although the three participants' levels of reading for pleasure might

have varied as much as their ranging ability levels, some degree of enjoyment was witnessed

through each of their expressions about reading. Mrs. Weaver believed that once students start

to ease into growth mindset beliefs, they would see their reading progress before their eyes and

further enjoy the process. To start with Lydia, she claimed that as she transitioned into third

grade, she shifted her feelings towards reading and discovered a love for it. This transition can

be viewed as a change from a fixed to a growth mindset about her reading abilities. At the

beginning of the school year, she was willing to put newfound effort into something she

genuinely enjoyed. Once she established truthful perceptions on her high reading ability levels,

she developed a firing passion for growing her advanced capabilities. An example of her reading

passion was witnessed in her regular read-aloud sessions she conducted with her younger

siblings. Lydia knew her siblings needed exposure to texts at a young age to start developing basic skills for learning how to read.

Lydia was an ideal candidate to portray what intrinsic motivation looks like in an elementary student. She revealed that the effort she put forth in her reading practices was not for anyone besides herself. Making gains in reading made her feel powerful and proud. Although Lydia was a high achieving student who performed well, she described that her exceptional motivation in reading class was "not just to get the grade." She expanded on this by stating it was the desirable feeling she would get after knowing she read a book to the best of her abilities, and it was reflective in her testing scores.

Lawson most enjoyed learning new facts and vocabulary words presented in nonfiction texts. His interest resided heavily on space topics, so when given the opportunity, he focused on nonfiction texts to learn facts that would support his futuristic plans of working for NASA. He was aware of his goals and had a plan set forth to achieve them through the process of developing his reading abilities. Moving onto a student who did not vocalize his enjoyment of reading as readily as the other two participants, Alex admitted that he liked reading shorter texts much more than interacting with long texts. He stated that he does not like rereading the same text at school in back-to-back practices. The rereading strategy could be overdone and no longer well-executed by the reader, and it led to feelings of boredom and fatigue from practicing the same routine. In terms of participation in class, Alex recognized that he would do better and have increased levels of enjoyment for reading instruction if he would remain focused for the time he was supposed to be engaged in a task. It was an accurate perception that this student was not progressing at times or enjoying his reading experiences due to the amount of effort exerted, which was not related to his beliefs on his level of intelligence.

Challenges. Overcoming difficulties is a way for students to validate perceptions of themselves. After accomplishing something that was labeled as a challenge empowers students to believe their abilities can take them farther than they could in the past. This is a sign of growth. To model goal setting, Mrs. Weaver regularly informed her students of her ambitions and the steps she was taking to reach her goals. Students followed her lead and shared their aspirations with their classmates so that they formed a support system and accountability partners. All three students, if given a choice, would pick a challenging chapter book over a picture book. They were not fearful of taking risks to push their minds to the next level. Getting out of their comfortable reading zones was how gains were achieved.

Lydia believed she could accomplish her goals by pushing herself as far as she could go. After using the word "challenge" seven times in her interview, it was evident that effort was a significant portion of Lydia's strategy to making advancements in reading. She contemplated her book selections because she wanted to make sure she was challenging herself while not falling into her frustration level. She recognized the importance of choosing a text that best supported her reading abilities while still desiring to improve from the text interaction.

Lawson challenged himself with his futuristic goal of working for NASA always ringing in the back of his head. This vision kept him on the track moving forward to one day make it a reality. He recognized that he has "pretty hard goals… big ones" that he saw himself accomplishing by sticking to a growth mentality. He will keep improving his reading abilities until his mind tells him it is not possible. Alex recognized his need to put more effort into his reading practices. He understood that he needed to stop playing around in his desk during instruction if he wanted to see significant growth in his reading abilities. The biggest challenge Alex was working to overcome was to remain focused on his reading goals in sight. He planned

to provide his mind with motivational self-talk, and he set intentions that would push him to succeed.

   Accelerated Reader **points.** From the students' responses about goal setting, the Accelerated Reader platform was a main focal point regarding achievements in reading. Students individually set goals of points to earn with the teacher each quarter while considering their current reading levels. More complex, larger chapter books were worth more points than base-level picture books. Dot colors were assigned to students to help them target which texts were best suited for their reading level.

   Lydia usually stayed within her recommended dot color when choosing books. She knew the fit of book levels was chosen for her specifically and best represented her independent capabilities, so she did not see a logical reason as to why she should venture outside of her range unless a text drastically catches her interest. On another end, Lawson tended to choose books above his dot level. He claimed the teacher and librarian did not catch him in the act because he consistently performed well on the comprehension tests. As a result, he believed it might have been time for him to bump up to the next level. It was clear that Lawson wanted to challenge himself past his recommended reading level. If he was not choosing books within an appropriate range of texts, he would most likely not have performed as well as he did on the comprehension tests and could have been redirected by the teacher who monitors his progress. Alex claimed to strictly stay within his dot level for picking books because he knew he had the highest chance of earning all of his AR points from a text he was capable of understanding.

   As Lydia saw other students surpassing her points accumulated, she believed she was not the highest reader in the class. This student attributed a person's ability level with the number of AR points they achieved. Her goal of earning 100 points could have reflected on a desire to

increase her perception of her reading abilities. She also set a goal to read Bluestem books, which were long chapter books. She was probably rationalizing these would earn her a vast amount of points. Lydia might have also wanted to raise her number of points achieved in efforts of her classmates viewing her as the top reader in her class. Earning a perfect score and reading long chapter books made Lydia feel most intelligent, most likely because she associated AR points very closely with achievement levels. She set goals to perform well on tests, and she carried out these goals in reality. By making a plan and visioning it to be reached, Lydia worked to achieve the desired outcome.

Lawson did not seem as attuned with setting goals based on AR points as much as he was concerned with the knowledge he could gain from reading. Alex showed the opposite viewpoint in his feelings toward AR points. He believed that in order to develop his reading skills, he needed to increase his average comprehension test scores. To attain this goal, he visualized himself earning 100s on tests. Alex did not read for enjoyment so much as he read to achieve points. He attributed his perfect score streaks as being a proficient reader and on an adequate level of his classmates. Motivation was in this student's drive to achieve perfect scores on AR tests, as that is what made him most happy in reading.

A contribution of Lydia and Alex's perceptions were based on the AR points system. If a student in their class had numerous AR points stored, then peers might have been led to believe the student had strong reading abilities. The line of this thinking could be accurate, depending on the situation. Since the teacher and librarian closely monitored student book sections and score reports, it was more likely that these students' perceptions hold accuracy. Students who are advanced readers would be picking out higher leveled, longer, and more complex books that would be worth the most points. These individuals would likely be reading at a moderately

faster rate than many of their classmates since the vast majority of words they came across in their texts would be automatic, and fluency rates would also likely be high. In this way, they would be accumulating more points over a shorter time when compared to lower ability leveled students who were reading simpler, shorter texts that were not worth as many points. The teacher enforced students to reread short picture books at least three times before testing while they are only required to read chapter books once through.

Progress

View failure as learning experience. Mrs. Weaver displayed to students that there was no harm in failing as long as students put their best effort in and regrouped afterward. She pushed them to take risks and not become complacent in their reading abilities. By using her own failures as an example in front of the class, students witnessed first-hand how greatness could be achieved after being knocked down. She told her class personal stories and described the pathway she took in rebuilding to success so they could model after her actions and thoughts. In the rare instances that Lydia received an unsatisfactory grade in reading, she reflected on her reading experience and recognized that she was not actively engaged in understanding the text to the degree that she should have been. This occurred when the text selection surpassed her frustration level. She evaluated her mistakes and learned from them with a prominent growth mindset attitude. When bringing up a bad grade to her parents' attention, along with the disappointment tone in her voice, they first asked how they could support her learning, but follow up by investigating what their child could do while at school to work on the specific skills addressed. Instead of trying to fix it themselves instantly, Lydia's parents put the responsibility into their child's hands so she could personally learn how to solve issues herself.

Lawson and Alex shared the same immediate feelings of disappointment that Lydia felt after receiving a grade that did not match the performance of their best abilities, yet they put together a plan of action instead of dwelling on it. The average reading ability leveled student, Lawson, became upset with himself because he believed and knew he could achieve greatness, but did not live up to his own expectations. He visualized greatness being produced from his reading abilities, so when success was not the outcome, he had to push himself to do better in the future.

Learning from others. Collaboration was vital in Mrs. Weaver's third-grade classroom. She promoted students to learn from one another by the structure of her desks in groupings to make knowledge from others easily accessible. Also, she insisted that students learn from experts in the class instead of first coming directly up to her. To optimize individualized time spent with struggling students, she assigned an advanced student to teach a struggling student on skills the advanced student previously mastered. The three participants vocalized a shared strategic plan when coming across an unknown word while independently reading or facing frustration while working on a reading assignment. First, they all responded that they try to solve the challenge themselves through perseverance. Then, the students asked a competent classmate to assist them with the difficulty they are facing to work in collaboration. Alex went to the extent of using the word "expert" to describe peers he gathered guidance from, which showed his ability to pinpoint those who possessed high reading abilities. When these two methods were exhausted, the participants would go to the teacher for guidance. The students were not seeking out an answer from the teacher after the first sign of struggling. They held strong beliefs about their reading capabilities; therefore, they knew they must put the effort in to

solve challenges instead of taking the easy way out retrieving an answer and not learning from obstacles.

The three participants were all willing to learn from others, which was an essential characteristic of implementing a growth mindset. During class discussions, Mrs. Weaver set the platform to ensure it was student-led conversations. She wanted students to learn from students, and she participated more in the role of being another student instead of the role of strict authority. However, Mrs. Weaver did monitor student participation and intervened if particular student leaders became too dominant in the conversations as she wanted all students to have a fair chance at contributing. As a result of the discussions being organized in this open format, Lydia evaluated her viewpoint after listening to her classmates' perspectives on a text. She was open to hearing their critique and the possibility of changing her original perspective on a debate. Sequentially, Lydia was not positioned in a fixed mindset for her thinking process since she was willing to learn from others. These students were also learning from the authors' words they were reading. Lydia states that in fictional chapter books, she pictured the lesson forming with every page turned. Lawson expanded on this realization by stating how in fictional books, the characters could reveal how to have a better mindset. The students took the lessons from the texts they interacted with and applied them to their own lives involving positive mindsets.

Lawson displayed intrinsic motivation with his apparent drive to learn. He shared the same beliefs as Lydia with the focus being on what he could learn instead of what grade he could achieve. He viewed reading as an enjoyable activity where he was appreciative of the learning experiences brought to him through texts. His overall purpose set before reading each time was to expand upon the knowledge already stored in his brain. By believing he can learn, Lawson

prepared his mind to take in new information. It is not a surprise that Lawson used the term "learn" five times in the short interview session.

        Feedback as a positive. All students agreed that receiving constructive feedback from their teacher promoted their learning progress positively, even if it was sometimes difficult to hear on tasks that the students already put hard work into. They utilized critique to grow instead of contract in the disappointment of their actions. Lydia could recognize her weaknesses with her teacher's guidance when receiving critique because "if I need it, I feel like it helps." Although she generally did not like making mistakes from the perfectionism in her, she did like learning how to correct them for the next time. After hearing feedback from the teacher, Lawson listened carefully and applied the corrections to do better in the future. Alex was also accepting of his teacher's critique, and he was grateful to have someone there to support his learning progression.

        Self-monitoring. The researcher also noted that across the ranging ability levels, every student was conscious of self-monitoring while reading their chosen AR book aloud. They addressed mispronunciations by returning to the start of the sentence and corrected their miscues. This strategy was to aid in the reader's comprehension because by making a mispronunciation, a full understanding of the content was not attained. As the researcher refrained from intervening in any of the students' reading processes, the participants were in charge of their own learning experiences and stopped to correct their mistakes to make sure they understood what the author was portraying.

        Students in the indicated classroom practiced strategies to get the most out of their reading interactions. Lydia might have believed that those who earn the most AR points were the top readers, but she still made sure to take her time while reading to intake all of the author's

details carefully. This held multiple purposes because it not only strengthened her comprehension skills, but she also realized that the details would appear on the tests. She knew the importance of fully understanding what the author was trying to convey, and she did not rush the process. Lydia cared about her reading assessments so she could self-reflect on her level of understanding.

Alex also confessed that he was able to achieve perfect scores on his AR tests by reading the pages carefully. From one of the highest ability-leveled students to one who struggles with reading, students in the class believed that paying attention to details and comprehending the texts would progress them into more proficient readers. Along with focusing on details gathered from the text, Alex regularly practiced close reading skills. He reread his chosen picture books around three to four times before attempting a comprehension test, and he refused to test until he believed he fully grasped an understanding of the text. Rereading led to increased accuracy on word recognition and comprehension.

In turn, Alex realized that practicing his rereading strategy would likely result in a higher comprehension test score than if he would read the book once through. This also meant more points accumulated for correct answers in the student's mind, which was parallel to enhancing his reading abilities. He did not want to sacrifice any points due to not believing he reached a level of understanding of the text, so Alex was willing to put forth the extra effort with challenging texts in order to earn a high score. To further develop his plan of action, the student could establish a precise purpose for rereading each time instead of engaging in the text with the same intentions each time. This suggestion is supported by the reasoning that the student becomes easily bored when rereading the same text cover to cover several times in a row.

Lawson knew that the most effective way to progress his reading abilities was to be reading frequently. The more a person reads, the better reader he or she will become. This student also frequently engaged in rereading the text similar to the way Alex did. Lawson believed he could perform well on assessments because he knew his high level of exposure to texts from school year so far. He recognized that it takes practice to make advancements in reading, and he was fully willing to put the effort forth. Lawson set his focus on his capabilities and potential instead of pinpointing his mindset on what he had not achieved.

Growth. Mrs. Weaver placed her class' reading abilities towards the lower end of the third-grade performance spectrum to describe how her students were coming into third grade. She believed her students would master the necessary skills to be prepared to enter fourth grade at the closing of the school year. To support this, she believed in her students to put in the effort required to conquer challenges and make these gains. Mrs. Weaver's perception of her overall class' ability levels proved to be accurate when compared to the latest STAR testing report. Out of 20 students in her class, only three scored under third-grade proficiency levels. The report categorized one of these struggling students under the intervention category, while the other two fell under the urgent intervention category.

The interest inventory given to the entire class revealed a common theme. Students were asked the following question: What is the most important thing your teacher has taught you this year? Out of the collection of responses, 15 students used the words "mindful" or "positive" to express how they have grown in Mrs. Weaver's class. Some students expanded to explain how they utilized a growth mindset within the classroom and also outside of the classroom in the real world. It is clear that the teacher has influenced her students to believe in their abilities to grow.

The three targeted students all made growth in their reading abilities from the beginning of the year in August to the present month of March. Starting with Lydia, she entered the third grade at a reading level multiple grades above third-grade status. Her scores remained consistent from the STAR data taken from several testing dates. The teacher recognized the student's high ranking, yet she did not believe her abilities would remain stagnant. It was important for the student to recognize the difference between coming in as an advanced third grader in reading and maintaining the high level where she was currently. If advanced students do not receive enrichment, it is easier for them to drop in their ability levels. Lydia was one who did not have any issues with continuing to challenge herself and not become complacent, but the teacher needed to continuously focus on further mastery of skills. As she was still far above grade level, there was not as much rapid growth that could be witnessed compared to students who were staggering below grade level. As most reading instruction was geared around the third-grade standards, it is logical that Lydia did not make the same gains that she would have made if the class content was catered around her ability level. She had already mastered the third-grade skills, so that is why it was vital that Lydia was selecting books based on her individual independent level instead of the baseline third-grade level.

Lawson projected an average representation of grade-level peers at the 55th percentile on the STAR test administered in January. This student surpassed the expected average growth the teacher proposed for every student making a year's worth of growth in reading. His tremendous growth by the March testing could be attributed to the belief he holds in himself to succeed, along with the increased amount of effort put forth in developing his reading abilities. This student made over a year and a half's worth of growth, and the school year was still in session

for a few months. The question could be raised of where this student would currently be if he

did not hold the growth mindset beliefs that drive him to achieve this great success.

Alex's STAR test results followed an inconsistent path of high and low points. Mrs.

Weaver claimed this could be linked to behavior issues that were much more prevalent at the

beginning of the school year than they are now. After revealing how much she believed in Alex

and teaching him the ways he could also believe in himself, growth was achieved. His highest

score was at the end of his second-grade year until he broke the record on the latest testing in

March. Over the summer between second and third grade, Alex dropped a whole grade level on

his reading assessment. Even though he was still below grade level, Alex raised his grade

equivalent score over a year's worth from August to March. He must have believed that his

reading abilities were capable of developing from the amount of progress he made in third grade,

even though he might be resistant to view reading as a pleasurable activity.

Conclusion

Limitations. The first limitation to be discussed is the small sample size. Only one third-

grade classroom, targeting one teacher and three ranging ability leveled students, provided the

population for this study. Therefore, the themes of self-talk, goals, and progress shaping

students' beliefs about their reading abilities might not be generalized to all classrooms. This is

due to the specific grade level of students, number of participants focused on as well as included

in the class overall, location of the school, homogeneity present among the student population,

and the established school climate. Only one researcher was responsible for classroom visits, so

observations and interpretations from the setting could not be confirmed by a second witness.

An interrater reliability check was not conducted. Since the researcher did not intervene with

typical classroom instruction or influence the participants in any way, there were not any delimitations to be included.

Future research. In efforts to reproduce similar themes and validate the generalization of findings across all classroom environments, further research needs to be conducted. The objective of studies should be to investigate students' and teacher's perceptions of students' reading abilities compared to their actual ability levels while positioned in an environment with a growth mindset advocator as a teacher. Suggestions for areas of exploration include other grade levels, especially primary, middle, and secondary levels. Various subject areas outside of reading could also be explored, along with examining schools located in populations outside of a rural setting. Expanding the sample size by investigating multiple classrooms and targeting more participants could be another suggestion for further research on this topic.

Summary. Instilling a growth mindset in students changes their perspective on what they believe about their reading abilities and makes them more reflective of their actual ability levels. Convincing students to believe in themselves and their capabilities start with teacher modeling and continuous support. Student perceptions are shaped by self-talk, goals, and progress. What students tell themselves in their minds becomes they genuinely believe they are capable of achieving. By setting high goals, students take ownership of their learning and confront challenges to make gains in their reading skills. Students are motivated to further develop their abilities with the effort put forth once they witness the progress they continue to make. These three themes are shown in Appendix C with a visual outline of commonalities between all participants. Teachers must believe in all of their students, no matter their current reading ability levels, so that students can believe in themselves. The potential students possess for developing their reading abilities is endless.

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Appendix A: *Parent/Student Consent Form*

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

Your child is invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jenny Reid (and faculty sponsor Dr. Amy Davis) from the Curriculum and Instruction Department at Eastern Illinois University. Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary. **This form only needs to be signed and returned if you DO NOT wish for your child to participate.** Please feel free to ask questions about anything you or your child do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

I was a student teacher in Mrs. Kelly's classroom two years ago and was thoroughly impressed with her teachings on growth mindset. I am currently pursing my master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction with a Reading Endorsement at EIU and taught fifth grade last year. I am conducting research on growth mindsets, specifically with students' perceptions on their abilities to read and their motivation. I will be observing the classroom environment to see how and if a growth mindset ideology is reflective of student behaviors and actions. Additionally, I will explore the efficacy of a growth mindset on students' feelings associated with reading for joy.

I plan to come into the classroom once/twice a week for six weeks. If more data collection is needed, the time frame will be extended an additional two weeks. The data collection period will start in January after students return from winter break. My data sources include interviewing the teacher and some students, detailed classroom observations, student interest inventories pertaining to feelings towards reading, and input provided by the teacher. Interviews will be conducted with one child at a time in a private setting and will be audio recorded to refer back to explicit responses. Student questions will revolve around personal beliefs associated with their individual reading skills and joy for reading. Mindset questions will also be addressed, such as knowledge and confidence of their abilities to improve and levels of independence over their learning.

There are no risks involved since Mrs. Kelly will instruct on a normal basis and I will observe actions and behaviors. Interviews will take place in privacy, and audio-recordings will not be shared. Anonymous interest inventories will be collected by the researcher and kept in confidentiality. This study will impact the field of education by providing a platform for reading teachers to serve from. The first step is for educators to take on the growth for themselves. Then, they are able to be the models for their students to learn from. When educators take on the growth mindset, they are instilling to their students that anything is possible in the presence of effort and dedication. Giving students the gift of believing in themselves is a priceless investment.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by the following means: Interviews will be audio-recorded on the researcher's phone to refer back to when taking notes to transcribe accurate responses. No one aside from the researcher and faculty sponsor will have access to the original audio recordings. Observation notes will be taken replacing student names with pseudonyms. Interest inventories will be completed by students in the classroom and collected by the researcher with special caution that student names are not on them. Input and data provided by the teacher will be recorded using pseudonyms. Students who are excluded from the study due to not obtaining parent permission will not be recorded in observation notes or interviews, and their interest inventories will not be collected by the researcher. The main faculty sponsor, Dr. Amy Davis, will be the only person with access to the data, subject identifiers, and audio recordings besides the principal investigator. This is for the purpose of collaboration for analysis and discussion of findings. Audio will be transferred to a flash drive and stored in a locked cabinet along with the data notes, analysis findings, interest inventories, and consent forms. The audio recordings will be

deleted upon completion of thesis defense. All of the data collected will be destroyed after three years. The researcher is considering publishing in an educational journal upon completion.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If your child volunteers to be in this study, he or she may withdraw at any time without consequences or penalties of any kind.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Graduate Student Researcher:
Jenny Reid
jmreid@eiu.edu

Faculty Sponsor:
Dr. Amy Davis
Addavis7@eiu.edu

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL   61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

Only return this form if you do not wish for your child to participate in the study. If this form is not returned, your child will be included.

I **DO NOT** wish for my child, _____, to be a student participant in the investigation described.

_____   _____
Student Signature   Date

_____   _____
Parent Signature   Date

Appendix B: *Interest Inventory*

DO NOT write your name on this sheet

Reading Interest Inventory

With 5 smiles being the happiest and 1 being the worst thing ever, how do you feel about reading assigned books and texts in class? Color in the number of smiles to respond.

What about your feelings toward reading books you get to pick out and read during independent time? Color in the number of smiles to respond.

Tell me about your reading abilities. Do you think you can improve in reading or feel stuck at the level you are at?

What do you tell yourself to become a better reader? What kinds of activities could make you a better reader?

What is the most important thing your teacher has taught you this year? How do you apply this to your own life?

Appendix C: *Commonality Chart*
The data that is highlighted represents a commonality between all indicated participants.

	Self-talk	Goals	Progress
Mrs. Weaver	• Feeling in gut • Praised effort • Vision quotes • Established growth mindset environment • Believed in reading improvement in all students • Wrote positive mantras on desks • Positive feedback on reading skills →believed good readers • Explained importance of dot system	• Explained enjoyment for reading after progressing growth mindset • Informed students of personal goals • Encouraged students to try challenging books • Set AR goals and monitored them with students	• Pushed students to take risks while recognizing defeat • Used own failures as example to learn from mistakes • Collaboration was key; desk formation, experts assigned leadership roles • Provided constructive feedback • Student-led conversations; all had a voice • Taught self-monitoring skills • Categorized overall class reading abilities as lower than previous years • Believed all students would be prepared for fourth grade year • Overall class described importance of mindfulness and positive beliefs
Lydia	• Feeling in gut • Need for effort • Determination • Believed in reading improvement • Not best reader in class • Advanced speller • Good reader	• Shifted feelings to love reading • Read to younger siblings • Motivated intrinsically, not for grade • Picked challenging books • Confronted challenges to make gains • Selected books within dot color • Goal to earn 100 AR points and read Bluestem books	• Reflected on difficulty with books in frustration level • Disappointed in bad grade • Pushed herself to learn from mistakes • Solved challenges herself, assistance from classmate, then teacher guidance • Leader in discussions; evaluated classmates' perspectives • Learned applicable lessons from texts • Utilized critique to grow • Self-monitoring; corrected miscues • Carefully read author's details • Tested multiple grade levels above third grade
Lawson	• Feeling in gut • Need for effort • Father influence • "I can" • Believed in reading improvement • Average reading abilities • Good reader • Visualized increase in intelligence	• Enjoyed learning facts and new vocabulary • Futuristic plan working for NASA • Motivated intrinsically, not for grade • Picked challenging books • Motivated by big and hard goals set • Selected books above dot color • Focused on knowledge he could gain through AR books to reach goals	• Disappointed in bad grade • Pushed himself to learn from mistakes • Solved challenges himself, assistance from classmate, then teacher guidance • Learned about mindsets from texts • Utilized critique to grow • Self-monitoring; corrected miscues • Constant practice with texts • Exponential growth from January to March testing, rose above third-grade benchmark
Alex	• Stayed calm and had self-control • Need for effort • Believed in reading improvement • Was ready to move up to next reading level • Lower dot level to choose books from • Good reader • Believed he could read and test well on his recommended books	• Enjoyed short texts • Did not enjoy rereading strategy at school • Lack of focus • Recognized need for more effort • Picked challenging books • Selected books within dot color • Goal to earn perfect scores on AR tests; increase comprehension score	• Disappointed in bad grade • Pushed himself to learn from mistakes • Solved challenge himself, assistance from classmate, then teacher guidance • Utilized critique to grow • Self-monitoring; corrected miscues • Carefully read author's details • Practiced close reading skills • Inconsistent scores; gained a year's worth of growth