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Impact Of Mindset Interventions During Morning Meeting On Student Motivation And Classroom Community

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IMPACT OF MINDSET INTERVENTIONS DURING MORNING MEETING ON STUDENT MOTIVATION AND CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

by

Megan Schoaf

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education.

Hamline University
Saint Paul, Minnesota
May, 2017

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To my husband who has taught me what true love is and makes me smile everyday.
To my mother who has been my biggest supporter and best friend.
To my father who has always made me laugh and shown me strength.
To my sister who is the brightest and best person I know.
To my brother who has toughened me up and protected me at the same time.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

Kindergarten is a time where our little people are just learning the basic fundamentals of life. They are learning to share, use kind words, and to not hold their potty too long. It is also the first time for many children to face challenges, try new things, and probably have their first interactions with failure. This crucial time in school can set the tone for the rest of their education.

I was a student that always loved coming to school, from the very first day of kindergarten all the way up until now where I enter school as an educator. I am very aware that back when I was a student, and now that I am a teacher, not everyone has that same outlook on school. I often hear my students use phrases such as “it is too hard” or “I can’t do it.” They give up before they even try. The students who use these phrases are stuck with a fixed mindset.

Dweck (2006) explained fixed mindset as a “belief that your qualities are carved in stone” (p.10). With this mindset you believe you are either smart or not smart, capable or not capable. When thinking with a fixed mindset, failure is devastating. To be a “smart” individual means you do everything you can do to avoid failure and you constantly feel as though you have to prove yourself. Students who come to school everyday with a fixed mindset will not take risks
to push their own learning in fear that they might not be successful. They will cower at problems that stretch their thinking and cease to find solutions when all it takes is a bit of effort.

Growth mindset, on the other hand, is described by Dweck (2006) as believing that qualities can change through effort and perseverance. Students with a growth mindset will not be thrown off kilter when a challenge comes their way. Rather, they will strive to find solutions and not give up at the first sign of adversity. Students with a growth mindset see failure as an opportunity for learning, not as a black mark against their character. This mindset lends itself to being successful because it leads to confidence, persistence and a drive to take risks.

As an educator, I play a role in helping my students develop a growth mindset. I want to find the best way possible to build my students up so they believe in themselves and their own capabilities. I want them to see failure not as a bad thing but rather as a learning opportunity. I want them to stand up after falling down every time. The language and prompting I use can help this development and put my students on the right track. One time of day I feel would be extremely beneficial in purposefully implementing growth mindset language is during our daily morning meeting.

Morning Meeting was developed as part of the Responsive Classroom approach (Kriete, 2003). It consists of getting together in a circle with the whole class, greeting each other formally, sharing news, performing a group activity, and then reading a message together about the day’s activities. Meetings take place every morning and set the tone for the rest of the day.
Morning Meeting is a pivotal time to build trust within the classroom. This trust is essential in helping students change their minds about who they are as learners. Morning Meeting is also a time to move beyond being individuals stuck in a room together and move towards being a community who learn and grow together. Kriete (2003) believes that Morning Meetings have the power to transform classrooms into a group that is caring and supportive. This consistent positive language and interactions bind a class together into a tight-knit community.

My goal for this study is to find if using uplifting and positive language that emphasizes perseverance during Morning Meeting will help students internalize these ideas and help spread this message to others. The more positive views we have on school and friends in our class, the tighter the classroom environment will be. If we learn to lift each other up and trust each other, we can become risk-takers in our learning and not be afraid to make mistakes. We can encourage each other when failure happens and push each other to new limits.

My Upbringing

My mindset about my learning was acquired when I was just a little girl. I was raised in a very loving and supportive family. Before going to bed every night my parents would sit beside me and say the same poem, “Apple of my eye; princess of my heart; very, very smart; and the prettiest girl in the world.” This repetitive saying sank into my heart and built me up from a young age. I truly believed all of these words gave me confidence in myself as I entered school.

Entering kindergarten I already had a firm grasp on what I know now as letter identification, sound-letter relationships, and high frequency words. I was reading books before I
began school. A large part of this advantage was because I knew deep down in my heart that I was capable of reading and that I was good at it. Although there were points of struggle in my learning, I never once believed I would fail. I knew with perseverance and hard work I could make it through any difficulty. I give thanks to my parents for enforcing this mindset at such a young age.

I also had several teachers that helped me develop my growth mindset, even if I was not aware of it at the time. One of these was my piano teacher, Terri. I began lessons with Terri at the age of five after expressing interest to my parents. At first, piano seemed to come naturally to me. Terri would boast at how gifted I was and told me over and over how proud she was of my hard work. It was not until she gave me Beethoven’s “Fur Elise” just two years into my lessons that I realized that there was still a lot for me to learn. I struggled through my first week attempting to learn the first page of the song. At my next lesson, I floundered through the piece, embarrassed and afraid that Terri might lose her faith in me as a pianist. I felt completely defeated. Instead, when I looked up at her, she was smiling. She praised me for my effort and told me how she struggled with this song when she was first learning it too. She told me that I should practice a little more than usual but she knew I could do. I did just that, and before I knew it I was dazzling my family with my rendition of the song. I did not let my initial failure keep me down, but took in Terri’s words of encouragement. I now have the attitude that with effort and patience, I can play anything on the piano.
In elementary school I had another influential teacher. I was placed in “Advanced Learning Program” or ALP as we referred to it. In this class, we would delve into higher-level thinking problems and worked in groups on puzzles and problems to practice learning in a social context. My ALP teacher, Mrs. Storm told us that every problem had a solution and that we were not allowed to give up until we find a solution that works for us. I developed this mentality throughout my entire school career, including now as a teacher. There are problems out there that are taxing but for every problem there is a solution and I will not give up until I find it.

My goal as an educator is to instill this same attitude in every single one of my students. My experience in ALP was wonderful, but limited because the class that met had only 10-15 students in it. The majority of the students did not have Mrs. Storm and possibly were not being told that they can find solutions if they do not give up on themselves. I hope to be the teacher that can reach all students whether they come in as high-achievers, average, or below grade-level. It does not matter where they come in as long as I can help them believe that with hard work they can achieve.

Experience with Fixed Mindset

I first heard of the concept of fixed vs. growth mindset at a Leveled Literacy Intervention training. I remember watching a TED talk about how fixed mindsets plague people of all ages. The more I listened, the more intrigued I became and I started to evaluate my own thinking. My supportive upbringing both at home and at school has helped me develop a growth mindset, which has driven me into success. I feel empathetic for those who did not share the same
mindset. How unfortunate it is that there are people who are holding themselves back from reaching their dreams.

I started performing literacy interventions about a week after my training and learning about mindsets. My first interaction with a lively and energetic second grade girl will stick with me for a very long time. I remember being entranced by her personality as she told me about herself. When I asked her what her favorite thing to read is, her whole demeanor took a turn. She turned her head to the floor and quietly told me, “I hate reading, I can’t do it. It’s way too hard and I’m really bad at it.” I could feel her hurt and embarrassment of having to share these thoughts with me. I automatically reflected back on my training and knew that the hill this little girl and I would have to climb was not all about learning accuracy, comprehension and fluency but more about changing her attitude about herself and her capabilities.

I noticed fixed mindset in my kindergarten classroom as well. It broke my heart to listen to five-year-olds explaining how they were dumb and that tasks were too hard. Several times I found that my students were giving up before they even tried. They were scared of failure and would rather take the easy and unproductive route.

I now know that I need to make purposeful changes in my teaching to help motivate these students and help them change their mindsets. They should be looking at challenging problems as a thrill and as a puzzle and they should persist through difficulties even when it is hard. When reflecting on my day, I know that growth mindset prompts and language can be used at anytime,
but a place where I feel I can ingrain positive thinking repetitively is during our daily Morning Meeting.

**Morning Meeting in my classroom**

Morning Meeting is a treasured time in my classroom. My first two years of teaching I was in third grade and second grade. I always felt as though I was missing something at the start of each day. I began implementing Morning Meeting in my second year as a second grade teacher after reading an article about the importance of starting the day consistently. I was hesitant at first that it would become monotonous and that it would not have a positive impact on my class. I was very wrong about that. Now, in my fifth years of teaching, I can say that the three years I used this method started much smoother than the two years that I did not. Morning Meeting has become a very precious time where students can share about themselves, be silly with each other, and get ready for the learning that is to come.

In kindergarten, Morning Meeting is very important, especially at the beginning of the year. Students are entering the classroom with minimal and sometimes no classroom experience. This initial gathering sets the tone for the classroom environment. It lets them know that this is a place of caring, forgiving, perseverance and kindness.

In 2003, Kriete explained how Morning Meeting is a time where students practice academic skills while also expressing important beliefs and learning to value relationships. I have experienced how powerful Morning Meeting can be in starting each day in a positive way and preparing students for the upcoming learning tasks they will be completing. I find this time
of the day to be calming, fun, and essential to our learning. Since this time is so beneficial in creating a supportive classroom I chose it as my focus time to use growth mindset language and see if it has lasting effects on my students.

Research question

My research question is **what impact do mindset interventions during Morning Meeting have on student’s motivation and building community in a kindergarten classroom?** I want to see if repetitive, purposeful and positive language can play a role in helping all my students internalize a strong belief in themselves as learners and develop an attitude of perseverance.

This is an important topic because we see far too many circumstances of students dropping out of school and not realizing their potential. According to Camera (2015), in 2012 as a nation, America had approximately 750,000 students not graduate from high school. Although this number is in decline compared to past years, it is still far too many students not graduating. Why do so many students feel like they cannot be successful in school? Why do they feel as though their best option in life is to give up on their education? If they were given more consistent and positive feedback from their teachers and parents would they have the right mindset? Would they have given school another try?

Summary

Our mindset plays a vital role in determining which path we are going to take in life. Those with fixed mindsets believe they were born with certain abilities and there is nothing they can do about it. This leads to a lack of motivation and a negative view on school (Dweck, 2006).
Those with growth mindsets believe that there are no limits on their abilities and that with hard
work and determination they can move past failures and turn them into successes (Dweck, 2006).
I hope to help all of my students develop a growth mindset so that they will not set limits on
themselves, take risks in order to learn, and grow from their failures rather than letting it keep
them down.

I researched using growth mindset language and interventions consistently during my
morning meeting and the effects it had on my student’s mindset, motivation, and classroom
community. I hoped to find that repetitive prompting will help them truly believe in themselves
as learners. I also wanted to find specifically what actions and words work for students in
developing their growth mindset. I examined the effects of these purposeful and positive prompts
on classroom community to see if we would grow together as learners and become a class that is
not afraid to take risks.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

My research question is **what impact does mindset interventions during Morning Meeting have on students’ motivation and building community in a kindergarten classroom?** Major categories of this research topic include mindsets, motivation, building community, Morning Meeting, and mindset interventions. Mindsets affect several parts of the classroom including student motivation, classroom community and students’ images of themselves as learners. A teacher’s language, attitude, and consistency play a significant role in how students see themselves as learners and how they interact with each other throughout the day. Morning Meeting is a time where a class gets together daily and grows as a community. This is an opportune time for teachers to help instill the idea that everyone can learn and grow through hard work and persistence. Mindset interventions are direct and purposeful ways of communicating what mindsets are and ways to help build positive, growth mindsets.

Mindsets

**Fixed mindset.** Fixed mindset is the belief that one is born with a set amount of capabilities in all areas including academics, physical abilities, social and emotional traits (Ricci, 2013). Those with a fixed mindset believe that capabilities are carved in stone. According to Dweck (2006), with a fixed mindset there is an emphasis on appearing smart. Achieving high
grades, winning a trophy, and getting a pat on the back for being intelligent would all be considered the end goal.

There are dangers when it comes to having a fixed mindset. Hong and Lin-Siegler (2012) point out that one danger is that students are not able to accept failure. Instead of bouncing back, many students blame failure on insufficient intelligence rather than examining their effort or learning strategies. This is seen often when the subject being learned is challenging or the individual is facing difficult school transitions.

Fixed mindset plays a role in what career a student might decide to go into, not necessarily in a positive way. In math and science, many students and adult scholars alike believe that success comes from inherent aptitude and that it cannot be taught (Lin-Siegler et al., 2016). They do not see the effects of perseverance, good strategies, or learning from others (Lin-Siegler et al., 2016). This attitude makes many women and minorities feel less than welcomed in these fields because of the idea that only white-males are innately good at science and math (Lin-Siegler et al., 2016). Our world could be missing out on amazing scientists, engineers, mathematicians, doctors and more because there is this false belief.

According to Ricci (2013), fixed mindset is problematic for both students who struggle and advanced learners. Students who do not perceive themselves as smart, do not believe they can be successful and do not put in their best effort. Advanced learners on the other hand become obsessed with appearing smart (Dweck, 2006; Ricci, 2013). Often, they begin to avoid situations
in which they might fail, afraid of the risk of seeming like a failure (Dweck, 2006). When this occurs, there is a ceiling that these students will reach in their lives and will never persist past.

Fixed mindset can also lead to superiority and entitlement (Dweck, 2006). The famous pro-tennis player John McEnroe is a prime example of someone with a fixed mindset who let it go to his head (Dweck, 2006). He spoke down to everyone from opponents to his staff when he did not get his way (Dweck, 2006). He found ways to blame every one of his losses on anything other than himself such as the sun getting in his eyes, being too hungry or too full, or the humidity of the court (Dweck, 2006). He never took the time to examine how he could change his own behavior or train against distractions in order to be more successful (Dweck, 2006).

**Growth Mindset.** Growth mindset is the belief that all of our abilities are malleable and that with consistent effort, help from resources, and patience, we can achieve anything (Dweck, 2006). Dweck (2006) explains how we are all born with an intense desire to learn. When we are first learning to walk, we are not worried about humiliation or failure. We try and try again until it is an action we do not have to think about. Eventually, over time and with more experience with failure, some people change to a fixed mindset to shift the blame off their own lack of effort (Dweck, 2006).

Growth mindset in the classroom helps students in many ways. When students believe their own intellectual abilities can change, they are more likely to take on challenges, learn from mistakes, and exert ongoing effort. This can lead to greater success (Lin-Siegler et al, 2016). Children who possess growth mindset persevere past barriers and instead use their failure in a
positive way (Ricci, 2013). This is not saying that failure is always easy. Even for those with
growth mindset, failure still hurts. Putting time and effort into something and then not being
successful initially is not optimal for anyone. The difference is that people with a growth mindset
do not let this failure keep them down. They believe there are still paths to success. They
examine what went wrong and use this knowledge to try a new way to solve their problem
(Dweck, 2006).

With a growth mindset, it does not mean that we all start on the same playing field. We
are all born with innate strengths in specific areas. Strengths can develop in many ways including
physically, creatively, socially or academically. We should develop students in their areas of
strength but not ignore those who are not initially strong in certain areas. They can become just
as successful, if not more than those who have intrinsic abilities (Ricci, 2013).

**Brain-based research.** There is brain-based research behind the theory of growth and
fixed mindset. Ricci (2013) explains that neuroscientists are currently researching
neuroplasticity, which is the ability of the brain to rewire or adapt itself throughout our lives. We
can witness neuroplasticity when examining someone who is recovering from a stroke. We can
watch as their continuous effort helps change their brain and allow them to be mobile and speak
again (Ricci, 2013).

Neuroplasticity promotes the idea that we are not born with a limit to our intelligence but
instead can reshape our brains to learn new things. Neurons make new connections when you
learn something new. These connections become stronger with practice and effort. The more
connections, the denser your brain is. The more density, the “smarter” you are.” (Ricci, 2013, Step 4: Educate Teachers About the Brain section) This fact is important for students to know, even at a young age. Everything they learn, whether it be a small thing like where to put their backpack to a big thing like knowing all the letter sounds creates connections in their brain and is working on improving density. Dweck (2008) states that students beliefs’ about their brains, whether fixed or growth, have a deep impact on their motivation, learning, and school achievement.

**Potential.** Potential can be a tricky concept to discuss. Those with a fixed mindset believe that everyone has a certain potential and once they reach it there is not much more to be done. The problem with this is that these people never see if there is still more they can do. Dweck (2006) tells us of the Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, who a is a great example of this. Many people probably thought he reached his potential after winning ten gold medals at the 2008 Olympics. If Michael Phelps had a fixed mindset, he probably would have given up then, thinking that there was nothing left for him to accomplish. However, Phelps went on to win eight more gold medals in the 2012 Olympics and 5 gold medals in the 2016 Rio Olympics. He still has much more “potential” in him.

Ricci (2013) believes that our potential is never really fulfilled. The possibilities of our success are infinite if we do not give up when failure occurs. As a person goes on to experience more in life, they continue to grow and learn. With age, these experiences become more
challenging and sophisticated (Ricci, 2013). We never reach our full potential because it is impossible to reach. We can continuously strive to learn more and grow.

**Resilience.** Another word that correlates with mindset is resilience (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). Resilience, in this case, can be thought of as any positive behavioral or emotional response to an academic or social challenge (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). According to Pawlina and Stanford (2011), “Building resilience means fostering children’s sense of agency (the knowledge that they are in control of their actions) and self-efficacy (the belief that they are competent and capable) and developing a framework for approaching problems (p. 30).” With a growth mindset, comes resilience.

Schools are places that offer skills, opportunities, and relationships that promote resilience. Students who historically struggle in school can be successful by being involved in an environment that promotes resilience (Nolan, Taket, & Stagnitti, 2014). When emphasizing potential to change, we can better prepare our students to face challenges with resilience. What students need are mindsets that shape challenges as something they can overcome with effort, learning from others, and patience (Yeagar et al., 2012).

**Teacher impact.** Ricci (2013) did a study with elementary students in kindergarten through 3rd grade. The author found that with this particular group of students, all kindergarteners had a growth mindset. They all believed that they were capable of learning and that they were smart. When surveying 1st graders, 90% had a growth mindset, 2nd graders went down to 82%, and the big jump happened when speaking to 3rd graders. It dropped down to only
58% students with growth mindsets. Ricci found that 60% of students going into 6th grade believed they were born with specific strengths and weaknesses. This is an alarming statistic. It means that over time students start to lose their belief that they can accomplish anything they set their minds to. They start to cave into the idea that there is nothing they can do to better themselves. This belief leads our students to quit when they really need to keep trying. What is it that makes students lose their belief in themselves as learners as time persists?

It is understood that teachers play a significant role in their students’ mindsets. They are models who show their students how to manage challenges and problems (Nolan et al., 2014). Educators need to be aware of their impact on their students and make sure that they are doing everything they can to promote growth mindsets in their classrooms. One way to do this is to move beyond focusing on students’ grades and cognitive ability tests and towards challenging and teaching them to create solutions (Hochanadel et al., 2015). Cognitive ability tests do not measure how smart an individual is, but rather their developed ability (Hochanadel et al., 2015). If a child has never been exposed to certain reasoning processes, the results of the tests are null and void (Ricci, 2013).

**Mindset Summary.** It is important that educators are promoting growth mindset in their classroom. Students need to believe that their intellectual ability is malleable based on their effort and persistence in order to be successful. Those who believe that their intelligence is fixed are terrified of failure, lack effort in areas that they think they might not be successful in immediately, and can develop an attitude of entitlement.
When thinking with a growth mindset, there is no “potential” to acquire because the options are limitless with what one can do. With perseverance and hard work, anything is obtainable. With this mindset, resilience is also built. Students realize that they can learn from their mistakes and failures and go farther than they had ever imagined.

Teachers play a pivotal role in their students’ mindsets. The language they use, the attention to effort rather than grades and tests, and their persistence in teaching about growth mindset all are important in the success of their students. Growth mindset instills the idea that students can achieve anything if they set their minds to it. With this thinking, motivation to work hard and not give up goes through the roof.

**Motivation**

**Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.** Intrinsic motivation means that one has an internal desire to do well (Crow, 2015). Extrinsic motivation means that there needs to be some sort of external reward to help motivate action (Crow, 2015). Rewards can include money, stickers, prizes, or a high grade. Crow (2015) points out that typically students just entering school have an abundance of intrinsic motivation but sadly, with time, that natural excitement for learning seems to diminish for many. Hidi, Vallenrand, and McCombs found that when students lose their motivation they are more likely to receive poor grades, drop out of school, and not become lifelong learners (as cited in Crow, 2015).

Extrinsic motivation is something that can go away or be less than ideal. For instance, if a student who is extrinsically motivated receives a poor grade on a test, they most likely will lose
their motivation to study for the next test because they have lost their belief that they are “smart.”

When students are intrinsically motivated, they engage in activities not for the reward or the grade but for their own satisfaction. Those with growth mindset find intrinsic motivation in learning because they know they are bettering themselves (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). A student who receives a poor grade on a test will not look at it as a defeat but rather as an opportunity to discover where they need more work, study in that area, and be successful the next time around. The research question in this study is asking what impact growth mindset language will have on motivation. By instilling a growth mindset, intrinsic motivation will be established throughout the classroom.

There is a theory called Achievement Goal Theory which states that the goal structure of an environment affects student’s motivation, engagement, and achievement (Rozen & Kramarski, 2014). There are two types of environments. One environment conveys to students that learning is important, effort is valued, and all students can be successful if they try. The other environment revolves around extrinsic motivation and doing better than others. This environment is detrimental to students who begin as less abled (Rozen & Kramarski, 2014). These students struggle when faced with competition and eventually lose motivation to try.

**Connections to emotions.** Learning and motivation are connected to our emotions. Rozen and Kramarski (2014) state that “motivational-emotional regulation refers to students’ thoughts, actions, and behaviors when learning that affect their efforts, persistence, and emotions when performing academic tasks” (p. 78). Imagine feeling only embarrassment or failure when
reflecting upon learning. Why would anyone want to put effort into learning new things if this is how they connect to learning?

Educators should strive to connect positive emotions to learning in order to help motivate students to persist past challenges and rise up to solve problems. Teachers can put a positive spin on the concept of “failure” to help motivate students to get back up and try again (Pawlina et al., 2011). Discussing with students how failure happens to everyone and showing them how failure does not stop them are ways to help put a more positive outlook on failure for students and help promote a growth mindset.

Another common feeling about learning in schools is trepidation. With high levels of competition, some students feel less capable than their peers, which then leads to a lack of motivation. If they do not believe they can do well right away, why even try? This is a hazardous viewpoint to take. We need to instill the idea that learning is not about outperforming peers but, rather, outperforming previous personal attempts. We should not be emphasizing competition amongst each other but rather competition amongst a student’s own achievements (Martin, 2015).

Increasing motivation. Newhouse (1990) states that attitude impacts human behavior. It is a matter of personal opinion and is formed through experiences and education (as cited in Hacieminoglu, 2015). Teachers can help educate students to obtain attitudes of positivity, growth, and perseverance. With these new attitudes, students can create optimistic viewpoints
about themselves as learners, which in turn can affect their academic performance in school (Lin-Siegler et al., 2016).

When young students experience consistent, positive interactions with their teachers, they are more engaged and motivated to learn (Nolan et al., 2014). Teachers need to be interacting with their students in a caring and respectful way every day in order to build trust. With this trust, it will be easier to help motivate students to not give up in the face of adversity. Teachers can also help motivate students to be risk takers by creating an environment in which mistakes are accepted and expected. Teachers should deliberately make mistakes and respond appropriately to model these actions for the students (Nolan et al., 2014).

Motivation Summary. A student’s mindset plays a major role in their motivation to learn. Those with a growth mindset will develop intrinsic motivation, where they work for their own internal growth and are not discouraged by mistakes or failures. They will be more motivated to keep learning in order to be successful at the end. Those with a fixed mindset often look for extrinsic motivation. They thrive on prizes and grades, which leads to losing motivation if they do not receive the reward they were anticipating.

Educators can help motivate students intrinsically in many ways. Learning is often associated with emotions. Teachers who create an atmosphere where learning is a positive action will help students create positive associations. If the classroom has a strong community atmosphere, students are more likely to connect learning to happiness and fun. Building community is essential in intrinsically motivating students and promoting a growth mindset.
Community Building

Classroom atmosphere and its implications. The atmosphere of the classroom is a vital component for student success. Kriete and Davis (2014) state that taking risks is a key element of learning. Humans are more willing to take risks when they know that they are surrounded by others who respect and value them, no matter the outcome (Kriete & Davis, 2014). Cultivating a classroom that is friendly, warm, and safe is important in having everyone feel that they matter and belong (Kriete, 2003).

The first step in building a growth mindset culture is to create a school and classroom that values intellectual growth. To help develop this value, a classroom must be built on trust, caring, and acceptance (Ricci, 2013). This trust and acceptance needs to come from the teacher as well as peers. Classroom social environment plays a crucial role on student attitude, productivity, engagement, and achievement (Bandy & Keets, 2001).

Dweck (2006) recognizes that a fixed mindset culture leads to students who thrive on others’ failure. They want to see who is doing worse than them to make themselves feel better. This negativity permeates through the entire school. Instead of lifting each other up, everything becomes a competition and students never feel complete satisfaction with their learning.

Dweck (2006) goes on to explain that in a growth mindset culture, students do not seek to find who did worse, but instead who did better so they know they still have learning to do and can see areas they still need to work. Growth mindset also creates a classroom climate in which students lift each other up, celebrate the successes of their peers, and solve problems.
collaboratively. A classroom with a growth mindset culture is one where students are not fearful of peers’ judgment after they make a mistake. They know they have a supportive group of friends who will help guide them to the right path in a respectful way.

The teacher's role in building community. A teacher’s tone influences the mood and environment of a classroom dramatically (Anderson, 2010). Stone (2001) makes it clear that the guidance and leadership of a teacher is necessary in the creation of a culture that values respect, kindness, acceptance, and growth. Strong leaders define goals, affirm values, preserve safety in the classroom, encourage all, and clarify misunderstandings in a respectful and caring way.

Building a respectful, interesting, and trusting community is up to the teacher. The actions teachers take on a daily basis play a role in creating the classroom atmosphere. Children learn respect from watching adults and how they handle situations. According to Stone (2001), teachers have a substantial influence on their students’ behavior. By speaking directly and honestly to them, showing them respect and modeling appropriate words to use, students learn how to treat each other. When students witness adults acting mature, using appropriate language, and truly listening to others speak, they in turn learn these qualities and emulate them in their own actions.

A classroom with a growth mindset culture will be a place where students take risks without being hesitant due to humiliation, where students collaborate to find solutions, and where they feel good about themselves as learners. A teacher’s goal should be to influence children’s perception of themselves in a positive way. Stone (2001) states: “As individual
children see themselves mirrored in their teacher’s eyes as worth of serious interest, attention and approval, they come to feel good and worthy about themselves” (p.17).

**Community building summary.** A strong classroom community is a vital part of endorsing growth mindset. A classroom full of friends who trust each other is a classroom where risks will be taken, kind words will be spread, and positive emotions will be associated with learning and school. It is the teacher's role to move students from being individuals who were placed in a room by happenstance to a group of friends who learn together. This can be done by modeling kindness, respect, and trust everyday. The research question for this study is asking what impact mindset interventions have on motivation and classroom community. As seen throughout this section, having positive relationships in the classroom in which students support each other will help develop a growth mindset in students. Students will have more trust in those surrounding them and will be more likely to take risks in their learning.

A time of day that lends itself perfectly to building community is during Morning Meeting. Sitting down together everyday as a class, having fun and sharing stories help build the kindness and acceptance that is needed in the classroom. The sense of trust and belonging developed during Morning Meeting is essential in handling every challenge, conflict, and lesson through the entire year (Kriete, 2003).

**Morning Meeting**

*Responsive Classroom.* Morning Meeting comes from the Responsive Classroom approach. This approach is meant to help teachers develop respectful and trusting classrooms and
also help them take proactive stances on discipline (McTigue & Rimm-Kaufman, 2010). There are seven Responsive Classroom principles that are meant to guide teachers’ thinking as well as their actions. The Northeast Foundation for Children (as cited in McTigue et al., 2010) present the following seven principles:

(a) an equal emphasis on social and academic curricula; (b) focus on how children learn as much as what they learn; (c) the view that social interaction facilitates cognitive growth; (d) emphasis on cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control as critical social skills for children to learn; (e) a focus on knowing children individually, culturally, and developmentally; (f) an emphasis on knowing the families of the children; (g) the view that the working relationships among adults at the schools are critically important. (p. 7)

The principles strive to meet both the social and academic needs of students in their quest for learning (McTigue et al., 2010, p.6).

Three of the specific practices of the Responsive Classroom approach are Morning Meeting, Rules and Proactive Discipline, and a shift in teacher language. Morning meeting takes place at the beginning of class everyday. It has four main components, which include greeting, sharing, activity, and message (Kriete & Davis, 2014). Greeting is a time when children recognize each other by name and greet each other in different ways. Greetings can be simple handshakes, using different languages, or made silly through more dramatic actions. Sharing is the time for students to share some news or tell about themselves to the class. Students respond
to each other and ask questions about the news being shared. Activity is a time to do an inclusive
game, song, or poem that allows all students to interact and have some fun. Finally, the morning
message is a time where students read a daily note written by the teacher together. This
component works on academic skills and collaboration.

Rules and Proactive Discipline is a way to prevent disciplinary problems before they
occur. This approach uses consequences that logically follow the incident and take into
consideration the development and individuality of the child. Building a positive relationship
between the teacher and the student is key in making this approach effective in the classroom
(McTigue et al., 2010, p.7). Students help to generate these rules so that they feel a sense of
ownership and better understand the consequences of their actions. (Crabtree, 2016, p.10).

Finally, shifting teacher language is a key role in the Responsive Classroom approach.
Teachers should adapt their language to encourage process rather than praising product
(McTigue et al., 2010). Crabtree (2016) tells of the 3 “R’s” of teacher language within the
Responsive Classroom approach. The “R’s” include reinforcing, reminding, and redirecting.
Reinforcing means to offer a brief comment when noticing positive behavior. Reminding is not
necessarily giving the same instructions over and over again but rather asking the child to remind
you what they are supposed to be doing. This gives the child the opportunity take ownership of
their own actions and adjust as needed. Redirecting is used when a child is having a hard time
staying on task. It means to calmly but firmly direct the student to get back on track. If they still
struggle after three redirections they have to take a break in a quiet, designated area away from other students (Crabtree, 2016, p.10-12).

By shifting teacher language, students can better develop a growth mindset. It shows them that other students’ successes are not because those students are smarter but because they tried their best and persisted past hardships. Highlighting effort over product allows students to feel good about themselves as learners even if they need to make more than one attempt.

The start of the day. Kriete & Davis (2014) state that the first half hour of each day will likely influence the pace and flavor of the rest of the day. It will determine whether the challenges to come will be exhilarating or overwhelming. There needs to be positivity and consistency in the morning so that the day can start off on the right foot. Both students and teachers desire consistency and routine in the school day, particularly at the start of the day (Kriete et al., 2014, p.9). Winterman and Sapona (as cited in Bruce, Fasy, Gulick, Jones, & Pike, 2006) state that the predictability of Morning Meetings help children develop a sense of security and allows them to take more risks in their learning throughout the rest of the day.

Morning Meeting also helps to change the attitude of students. Those who come in tired, upset, or frazzled have time to cool down, share their frustrations, have a little fun, and feel like part of the group. They can change to being happier, excited, and ready to learn (Bondy & Ketts, 2001, p.148). With a positive attitude, students are more likely to be receptive of the idea of growth mindset. When they are excited to learn, they will be more persistent in their effort.
Morning Meeting also offers learning opportunities right away in the morning. There are literacy learning moments that present themselves throughout all four components of the meeting. The most significant literacy learning that takes place is the constant use of oral language. Students use their voices to greet each other, share, take part in the activity, and respond to the message. Hart and Risley point out (as cited in McTigue et al., 2010) that “oral language is the foundation for successful literacy development” (p.13).

**Community building during Morning Meeting.** A family dynamic created in a classroom encourages students to help and support each other more often (Bondy & Ketts, 2001). Morning Meeting presents the perfect time to help develop this dynamic. Children need to be taught how to get along and be respectful towards each other (Grant & Davis, 2012). Grant and Davis (2012) found that student’s attitudes towards each other were becoming more positive through the daily use of Morning Meeting. Students were able to communicate more effectively and appeared to act kinder to both students and teachers. This source supports the research question of how growth interventions during Morning Meeting impact community building and motivation by explaining the importance of classroom community and how it can be built within Morning Meeting.

Morning Meeting helps to create an environment of trust and respect, which in turn leads to student learning (Bondy & Ketts, 2001). When students become familiar with each other on a personal level they find connections amongst themselves and develop deeper relationships. Since
this time includes movement, music, games, and a time to share it provides every child the opportunity to show their individual strengths. Everyone can feel successful and loved.

Life skills learned through Morning Meeting. Boyd and Smyntek-Gworek (2012) found that a typical Morning Meeting takes only 10-20 minutes per day. That means that after 40 or so weeks of school in a year, 60 hours are dedicated to practicing not only academic skills but essential social skills as well. This consistent time helps students internalize all the important skills being taught during this time of day.

Brain research shows that there is a significant connection between emotions and cognition. Bondy & Ketts (2001) states: “Emotions drive attention and create meaning; they are the heart of learning” (p. 146). Social-emotional skills are vital both in and out of school. Social-emotional skills that are practiced during Morning Meeting include recognizing and managing emotions, showing empathy, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations appropriately (Kriete et al., 2014). All of these skills are imperative to being successful throughout one’s entire life. Modeling these abilities and practicing them daily will help students comprehend their importance.

Morning Meeting summary. Morning Meeting is one segment of the Responsive Classroom approach that includes greeting, sharing, activity, and morning message. It is a time where students come together, get to know each other, express feelings, and learn. There are several social skills that can be learned through Morning Meeting such as kindness, sharing, collaboration, and the ability to lift each other up. This is a prime time of the day to build
community, get students motivated for the day, and instill the idea of growth mindset. Mindset interventions can be put in place throughout all components of Morning Meeting.

**Mindset interventions**

Pre-assessing mindsets. Ricci (2013) discusses the importance of pre-assessing students, no matter what age, on their mindset. Like any subject matter or unit, it is important to find out what students know and what they believe before interventions are put into place. Perhaps, after pre-assessments take place, the teacher finds out that all of her students have a growth mindset in place already. In that case instead of “interventions” the teacher can teach lessons to help deepen their understanding of the power of the brain and use growth mindset language to help students increase their belief in themselves as learners. On the other hand, the teacher giving mindset pre-assessments might find out that a vast majority of her students believe that their intelligence is fixed and that effort does not play a part in their capabilities. In this case the teacher will have to introduce more consistent and immediate interventions, particularly with the students who feel this way.

Ricci (2013) describes two pre-assessments that could be used to help figure out what students believe. One pre-assessment focuses on what students know about the brain. The other displays whether a child thinks with a growth or fixed mindset. The pre-assessment about the brain initially takes shape as a classroom discussion in which the teacher will take notes or possibly record. The teacher starts off by asking, “What is in our heads and what use do we have for it?” The teacher will allow the open-ended portion of the question drive the conversation. The
teacher will then notice if the children have a high level of scientific knowledge of the brain, know a little about the brain, or know nothing at all. Notes will be taken of who is not participating and who seems to not have prior knowledge of the brain. These students might need more interventions in the area of brain-study. The next stage of the brain pre-assessment is to give students a sheet with an outline of a profile of a face. The teacher will have the students draw what they think the brain looks like to determine how much prior experience they have with the organ. If students show they do not have a lot of prior experience, the teacher has a starting point of teaching the basics of what the purpose of the brain is and how it functions.

The other pre-assessment is a survey that has to do with determining whether someone has a growth or fixed mindset. Depending on the class and age of the students, the survey can be done as a whole group publicly, a whole group with heads on a table to preserve anonymity, individually, in small groups, or on paper. The teacher can decide if there are just a few students that need to be individually surveyed to make sure they are not swayed by their peer’s responses. Students either give a thumbs up for yes or thumbs down for no (or respond with yes or no if they are given the survey individually). The teacher should state: “(a) Everyone can learn new things; (b) Some kids are smarter than others; (c) We can change how smart we are” (Ricci, 2013). If the students respond yes to (a) and (c) and no to (b) they most likely have a growth mindset. If students respond no to (a) and (c) and yes to (b) they are demonstrating that they have a fixed mindset. If they have another combination of yes’s and no’s this means that there still needs to be work done to internalize the concept of growth mindset.
Process over product. Educators need to be working with children as early as possible in developing a belief system that shows them that all children can succeed (Ricci, 2013). The words that teachers use can help develop this belief system. Rattan, Good, and Dweck (as cited in Lin-Siegler et al., 2016) explain that messages from teachers promote one mindset or the other. Therefore, what educators say and how they say it does matter.

Many times, teachers are heard saying, “You are so smart!” Although this does not initially seem like a detrimental saying, it can have detrimental effects on both the student being told it and the other students around them. Imagine having a classmate sit next to you that works hard, gets their work done, and always gets the praise “you are so smart” from the teacher. The student next to that child who does not always have the best product in the end, although they tried, begins to lose faith in themselves and stops seeing the point of hard work. The child who usually gets the “you are so smart” might not perform everyday and maybe one day does not have their usual product. The teacher then skips over their extrinsic praise and the student feels less than and starts to lose motivation.

Praising a student for being smart is like praising them for being tall. This implies it is something they have no control over rather than something that they are (Ricci, 2013). This type of praise leads to a fixed mindset in which students rely on extrinsic motivation rather than the intrinsic motivation of feeling good about themselves as learners (“Mindsets,” 2013). Instead one should modify to commend effort, such as “I can tell you worked very hard” (Ricci, 2013, Educate Staff About Praise for Students section).
Shifting mindsets. Shifting anyone's mindset is not an easy task and cannot be expected to happen immediately. It takes continuous effort to shift to a growth mindset when a fixed one has been ingrained for so many years (Ricci, 2013). This is why catching a fixed mindset at a young age might help students internalize the idea that they can learn and accomplish anything if they persevere past barriers and do not give up when failure happens.

Ricci (2013) explains how telling students real-life examples of how fixed mindset is harmful and growth mindset is helpful gives them an opportunity to synthesize the idea. The teacher could tell about a time a child was afraid her friends would laugh at her if she fell off her bike because she was still learning, so she gave up trying. The class can discuss how this would hinder the girl. Or a time that a boy really wanted to make the basketball team but he had never played basketball before. Should he believe that he is no good and never try out, or go outside and practice as much as he can and get help from friends to try to get better? Children can relate to these problems and understand how persistence offers more opportunities for fun and growth whereas fear of failure only holds one back.

Pawlina and Stanford (2011) say to further the discussion by having students think about a time in their lives that they had a fixed or growth mindset and to share about it. Was there a time they were too scared to try and never were able to do something? Or was there a time that they were afraid but did not let that stop them? This method could be used during the sharing portion of Morning Meeting. The research question of this study is **what impact mindset interventions during Morning Meeting have on motivation and community building in a**
kindergarten classroom. Connecting growth mindset to the student’s own lives during the sharing porting of Morning Meeting can help bring the students together on a deeper level and build trust amongst the class.

A constant and consistent use of phrases that help shape students into brave learners who are not afraid of failure help students internalize the ideas behind the messages. Some of these phrases include: always try your best, we learn from mistakes, and give it a try (Nolan et al., 2014). Another way to help students see the growth that they have made is to point out ways that they have grown. Use progress words such as: “remember when you couldn’t…but now you can!” (Pawlina & Stanford, 2011, p. 32). This simple phrase helps remind students of their own growth and gives them a positive outlook on learning something new. All of these phrases help build children’s confidence and growth mindset vocabulary, create positive attitudes, and foster problem solving skills.

During the message time of Morning Meeting, there is ample opportunity to implement growth mindset ideas. In the message, for several days, it can include something about “bouncing like a ball or flopping like a beanbag” (Pawlina and Stanford, 2011, p. 31). This adorable and effective simile can be used so even young children can fully understand the concept of perseverance. With physical visuals, the teacher can demonstrate how working past problems and mistakes means that someone is “bouncing like a ball.” They can keep going even after being down. “Flopping like a beanbag” on the other hand means that you stay down after disappointment and never get back up. With this attitude you never get to be successful.
Growing the brain. Educating teachers, students, and parents about neuroplasticity and how the brain is malleable is an important step in changing all the contributing people to a growth mindset (Ricci, 2013). Students need to be constantly reminded that they can get smarter and that every connection they make is growing their brain. Introduce the idea of “growing your brain” to students and explain how every little thing they learn and every problem they solve is making their brain stronger (Pawlina & Stanford, 2011, p. 32). Adding instruction about the brain and how it works increases motivation, provides a willingness to accept new challenges, and creates a more successful reaction to failure (Ricci, 2013).

One way to help “put a positive spin on the concept of problems” is to create a “challenge choice board” (Pawlina & Stanford, 2011, p.32). On this board, there are challenges or problems listed that can be accomplished through practice at school. For young children it could be jumping rope, remembering everyone’s name in the class, learning adding facts, or reading a whole book independently. Older children can have more advanced challenges such as solving the Rubik’s cube, answering a challenging math problem, or finishing a long book. Every time a student completes a task from the choice board, the class celebrates and examines how that individual grew their brain through hard work and perseverance. This could be done during activity time of Morning Meeting, where students can choose a physical activity to practice and “perform” for the group when they feel they have mastered it.

Example learning tasks. Ricci (2013) offers several learning tasks that would fit perfectly into the activity time of Morning Meeting. One learning task is called “Building a Neural
Network” in which it shows students how neurons build in the brain. Start by having students stand up in a circle and have a ball of yarn. Explain that every time they learn something new, a connection is made. Roll the yarn to a student and have them hold it. Show them that at first, the connection is not very strong; they have not practiced it enough to stay in their brain. So as they keep practicing (keep rolling the yarn to more students until everyone is holding onto a piece) the stronger it gets. After a ton of practice, the connection in the brain is solid and is stuck in there permanently. This is a great visual to show the importance of perseverance.

Another activity Ricci (2013) provides is “The Brain is Like a Muscle.” Bring in free weights, one and three pounds for younger children and five and ten pounds for older children. Have them each get a chance to try the lighter weight first. Discuss how things we already know how to do is like using a light weight. It is easy and we do not have to put much effort into it. Then switch to the heavier weight. Explain how it is a little harder than the lighter weight, but after a lot of exercise and practice with the heavy weights, it will soon also be easy, like the lighter weight. Bodybuilders keep working on a certain amount of weight until it is easy, and then they move onto harder weights. We can do that with our brains by putting a lot of effort into learning something new until it is easy. Then it means you are ready to try something more challenging!

Mindset intervention summary. Teachers play a significant role in the mindset that their students have. Through praising process rather than product, using consistent language that promotes hard work and persistence, offering real-life examples of why growth mindset is
important, and going through learning tasks together are all ways that teachers can help promote growth mindset during their Morning Meeting time of day. Pawlina and Stanford (2011) state it best when discussing how they implemented growth mindset in their preschool classroom:

We kept the following goals in mind: normalizing challenges and the effort needed to meet them; helping children look at problems from a place of empowerment; building strategies for children to apply in different situations; and fostering a community that seeks and supports learning and problem solving through a wide range of experiences (p. 31).

With such goals teachers can instill growth mindset in all their students, no matter their gender, race, exceptionality, or initial ability. Positivity and the right language can help any child flourish.

**Conclusion**

Instilling a growth mindset is important in leading all students to success. Someone with a growth mindset believes that with effort, persistence, help from others, and patience anything can be achieved. Someone with a fixed mindset on the other hand believes that one's capabilities are determined at birth and that if something is too hard, quitting is the best option. Teachers play a pivotal role in developing an atmosphere that promotes a growth mindset. In a classroom that encourages effort and persistence students develop strong intrinsic motivation to learn and build a class that supports each other's efforts and allows risk taking to occur. Teachers also have the ability to put a positive spin on mistakes and failures, which teaches students to learn from
mistakes and persevere past inevitable failures. Morning Meeting is a perfect time of day to focus on growth mindset because it is a time that emphasizes community, allows students to share about their experiences, and enables the teacher to subtly and consistently use language that will promote this mindset. Starting the day off on a positive note and consistently supporting the students is key in instilling a growth mindset.

Throughout this literature review I have exemplified why growth mindset is imperative to the success of all students and how it develops motivation and a tight knit community within the classroom. I explained why Morning Meeting is a great time to include mindset interventions to help develop growth mindset in students because it is a time where trust is built and respect is earned. In my research, I strived to find out if mindset interventions played a positive role in my kindergarten class. I determined if using specific interventions and language with my students raises motivation and deepens our classroom community. The next chapter examines my methods research more in depth.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Overview

My research question is *what impact do mindset interventions during Morning Meeting have on student motivation and classroom community in a kindergarten classroom?* In chapter two, I dove into research behind what growth and fixed mindset is and the effect that a mindset can play in a person’s success. I looked at how mindsets can affect motivation and relationships within a classroom. I also researched Morning Meeting and suggested interventions and language that can be put into place.

In this chapter I discuss the logistics of my research. I describe the participants of the study and the setting of the school. I delve into the research methods and tools used throughout the study. Finally, I discuss the data analysis techniques I used to determine if growth mindset interventions have an impact on student motivation and classroom community.

Qualitative Research

This study is based on a constructivist worldview, which is often found in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) states:

The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied. The questions become broad and general so that the participants
can construct the meaning of a situation, typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons (p.8).

The data I collect will be gained from observations, field notes, and videotapes of social interactions occurring in the classroom and determining if the interactions are being impacted by the interventions and language being deliberately used everyday. This is why I chose to conduct qualitative research for this study. This approach focuses on using words rather than numbers to interpret the data that is found. By focusing on language and interactions I am better be able to see how my research methods are affecting my students. My data collection techniques relied on accurate field notes and observations, mostly open-ended questioning during interviews and videotapes of the Morning Meetings.

Creswell (2014) explains the core characteristics of qualitative research. For my research, I used many if not all of these core elements. I researched in my own classroom with my students in their natural setting. was the primary instrument in data collection. I used multiple sources of data. I analyzed results both inductively (while data is being collected) and deductively (after data is collected to see if I need more data). Throughout the process I kept a focus on the learning of my students who are the participants in this study. I did not create a tightly prescribed plan so that I can make adjustments as data comes in and modify towards the needs of my students. I reflected on my role and my personal background and bias in order to understand how those experiences will impact my data. Finally, I developed a holistic account of my findings in order to create a detailed picture of the data.
Participants and Setting

I conducted my research in my own kindergarten classroom. The school I teach at is located in a suburban town located in the Midwest. It is comprised of approximately 890 students. 69% of students identify as White, 11% identify as Black, 6% identify as Hispanic, 13% identify as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% identify as American Indian. 7% of the school population is English Language Learner, 12.7% receive Special Education services, and 24.7% qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch program.

My classroom is comprised of 22 kindergartens who are either 5 or 6 years old. There are 11 boys and 11 girls in my class and they all participated in the study. There is one student who is on an IEP. His IEP states that he is diagnosed with depression and ADHD but because of his age more testing is being done to see if there are more diagnoses that would be appropriate for him.

Overall, it is a very typical kindergarten class. I have one student who is performing well above grade level in all academic areas but needs work in social skills. There are 3 others that are performing above grade level in math. I have 3 students who are struggling in most areas and need quite a bit of one on one time with either an interventionist or myself. There is an interventionist who comes in most days for 50 minutes. The rest of the students all are close to grade level and making progress at a typical rate.

Research Methods
Creswell (2014) describes how in a qualitative study, the plan of action should not be too tightly prescribed since the data analysis will be occurring throughout the entire process. This is beneficial towards this study because it allowed me to adjust my research methods as needed for my students. In order to triangulate my data, I used multiple forms of data collection techniques including interviewing before and after the implementation of growth language, taking the role as an active participant observer, videotaping lessons, taking field notes throughout the study and keeping a daily journal of my findings.

There was four stages in my research. The first stage was interviewing students to pre-assess their current mindsets and knowledge about the brain. Stage two consisted of conducting minilessons in order to teach students about their brain and introduce students to concept of mindsets and the terminology that goes along with it. Stage three was integrating mindset language and interventions into our daily Morning Meeting. The final stage was comprised of reinterviewing students with the same questions as the pre-assessment.

**Interview rationale and protocol**

A teacher needs to know students prior knowledge about the brain and their current mindsets in order to plan effective and differentiated instruction (Ricci, 2013). The pre-interview that I did with students was imperative in deciding what lessons needed to be taught, what language needed to be used and what interventions needed to be put into place. I analyzed the results of the interview after completion and decided what lessons need to be taught prior to the implementation of growth mindset language and interventions. I also used that information to
understand who had a fixed mindset so that I could pay particular attention to those students during the lessons and interventions in order to see if they demonstrated any change in their behavior.

The pre-assessment occurred during the school day whenever I got a chance to pull students one on one. The best time to pull the students was right away in the morning, during the managed independent learning portion of our literacy block, and the independent work time of our math block. The interview only took a few minutes per student since it is only consists of five questions so I completed it within a week. The five questions that I will ask the students are (Appendix B):

1. What is in your head?
2. What does your brain do?
3. Can we change how smart we are? (Why not? or How?)
4. If you try to do something new and it is really hard, what do you do?
5. If you had to choose between a puzzle you have solved before that is kind of easy or a new puzzle that is really tricky, what would you choose? Why?

The first two questions helped me identify what my student’s prior knowledge was about the brain. This information drove future lessons. If I found that my students did not know a lot about the brain and how it works (as I anticipated this to be the case with five and six year olds) I would do minilessons on the basics of the brain. I would show them a non-graphic picture of the brain and describe how there are neural connections being made every time we learn something
new and that is what makes us grow and become smarter. The last three questions of the interview will help me determine who has a growth mindset and who has a fixed mindset.

This interview is a modified version of the pre-assessment interview Ricci (2013) suggests. Ricci (2013) originally asked the brain questions in a separate setting than the mindset questions. The brain questions were also given in a whole class setting versus individually. For this study with kindergarteners, I decided to merge both the brain pre-assessment questions with the mindset pre-assessment questions for two reasons. First, at this age, students tend to be persuaded by others answers and will answer how they hear their peers respond rather than their own genuine response. Asking all the questions in an individual interview will help make their responses more accurate. Also, it is more time efficient to ask all the questions at one time rather than having two separate interviews.

Another difference between Ricci’s (2013) original pre-assessment and my interview is her mindset questions were all yes or no questions. I decided to make my questions open-ended so I could get a better understanding of my student’s mindsets and why they might have those mindsets in place. I felt as though giving my students the opportunity to explain their thinking was important in deciding what language and interventions are needed.

After pre-assessments are completed, the next stage of my study began. This stage consisted of teaching students about their brains and what mindsets are.

**Brain and mindset lessons**
Ricci (2013) stated there are copious amounts of studies that highlight the importance of explicitly teaching students about their brains. Educating students about neuroplasticity, strengthening the brain, and the limitless knowledge that we can acquire can help motivate students to take more risks and respond to failure in a healthier way. After I completed the interviews and had a base concept of where my students are initially I deliberately taught my kindergarteners about their brains, how they grow, and the mindset they must have in order to defeat challenges.

I introduced the concept of mindsets and mindset terminology to the students in a whole group setting (Appendix D). This occurred throughout minilessons during our literacy block. This portion of the research methods was flexible according to the needs of my students. The first lesson was a discussion about how we learn, and explicitly taught about growth mindset vs. fixed mindset. Language that I taught included growth mindset, fixed mindset, perseverance, “bounce like a ball”, “flop like a beanbag”, neuron connections, and “grow your brain” (Ricci, 2013; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011) (Appendix D). “Bounce like a ball” is a phrase that means to persevere past mistakes and keep trying. This phrase is used as a simile for thinking with a growth mindset. “Flop like a beanbag” is a phrase that means to give up when something is challenging or a mistake is made. This phrase is used as a simile for thinking with a fixed mindset. The phrase “grow your brain” is offering students a visual in learning something new and making neural connections (Pawlina & Stanford, 2011). In the second lesson, I read the book *It’s Okay to Make Mistakes* by Todd Parr. The class discussed the book and how making
mistakes can be a learning opportunity (Dweck, 2006). The third minilesson was be a community writing activity where students list goals they want to achieve and brainstorm ideas of how to accomplish these goals. We created a “Challenge Chart” where the student’s goals are listed (Paulina and Stanford, 2011) (Appendix E).

Once students were introduced to the concept of mindset, perseverance, learning from mistakes and growing the brain, I then began to incorporate growth mindset language and activities into our Morning Meeting. The goal behind this was to help deepen my student’s growth mindsets, increase motivation, and strengthen classroom community.

Mindset language and interventions during Morning Meeting

The concept of growth mindset and the practices that come along with it cannot be taught in a few lessons but instead needs to be experienced constantly throughout the year (Ricci, 2013). This fact is why I decided it would be best to implement growth mindset language and interventions daily during Morning Meeting. Kriete and Davis (2014) assert that Morning Meeting is a time for gaining more than just academic skills. It is also a time to develop essential social skills, build trust throughout the classroom and define how the rest of the day is going to go. I chose to implement growth mindset language and interventions during this time because the benefits of Morning Meeting transcends throughout the rest of the day. I was interested to see how the language we use in Morning Meeting affects the positivity, classroom climate and the rest of the school day for my students.
Morning Meeting consists of four components; greeting, sharing, activity, and message (Kriete & Davis, 2014). There are ample times throughout the Morning Meeting period in which growth mindset language can be used and mindset interventions can be put in place.

The start of the meeting is a perfect time to begin with growth mindset. When I was a child, my parents would chant every night to me, “Apple of my eye, princess of my heart, very, very smart, and the prettiest girl in the world.” Being told this over and over reinforced the concepts they were saying and made me truly believe it. Newton (2016) went on to state, “songs and chants are great ways to introduce and reinforce concepts” (p.74). This inspired me to begin each meeting with a chant that we all say and create simple actions for. It goes, “In this classroom we make mistakes, in this classroom we keep on trying, in this classroom we grow our brains.” I wanted to see how repetitive, positive rhetoric reinforces the three concepts.

The next component of Morning Meeting that lends itself to growth mindset is sharing. As stated several times throughout the literature review, there is a strong connection between emotions and learning (Rozen and Kramarski, 2014; Bondy & Ketts, 2001). I had students share about a time they learned something new and how it made them feel in order to help develop positive emotions towards learning new things. I also had students share about what they want to learn to do. We discussed as a class the steps they can take to help them accomplish their goals. I was interested in seeing how listening and connecting with other students about learning and growth mindset will impact the student’s ability to empathize with others and take on
suggestions for themselves. This portion of my research was adjustable according to student’s needs.

Activity is a time of Morning Meeting where students get to move around, sing a song or chant in order to get their brains and bodies ready for learning (Kriete & Davis, 2014). In this time, I incorporated several active growth mindset activities, one of which is the Yarn Ball Connection activity. Ricci (2013) explains of an activity that helps students see how neural connections are made and how they make the brain stronger. I had students stand up and ask if someone could share something they are trying to learn but still need some practice. That student takes a ball of yarn. I explained that every time that student practices whatever it is they want to learn they make a new neural connection. The student then gently tossed the yarn to someone across the circle while still holding onto it. The connection became stronger but he still needs some work. I had the students keep tossing the yarn until everyone has a piece. We will discuss how strong the connections are compared to when he first started. Now, I asked the students what would happen if the child stopped practicing, or gave up before they made all these connections. I guided the students to conclude that without all of the connections, the student would never master what he or she wants to learn or he or she will have to start all over again. The idea behind this activity is to strengthen students desire to persevere even when there are obstacles because in the end, with practice, they can accomplish anything. I did this activity many times to help instill this concept.
Another activity I did involves showing how the brain can grow stronger (Ricci, 2013). I brought in a light one-pound weight and a slightly heavier five-pound weight. I had the students safely pass the one-pound weight around and ask what they thought about it. We discussed how doing something easy that we already know how to do is kind of like lifting a light weight, it’s easy but we do not gain much from it. I then had them pass around the heavier five-pound weight. We had a quick discussion about how it is harder to lift this weight but if we would practice with it a lot, our arms would get stronger and soon it would feel just as light as the one pound weight. I guided the students to see the connection to our brains. When we try something new at first, it is really hard and you might want to give up right away. However, with practice, it will become easier and you will be ready to move onto harder things.

Finally, the last component of Morning Meeting is the message. During this time, the class reads a message about the day. Pawlina and Stanford (2011) describe discussing how we grow our brains and the benefits with students. During the research period, I added the phrase “this is how we are going to grow our brains” and included one or two standards that are going to be worked on. For example, if we were working on learning shapes, a part of the message will read, “We are going to grow our brains by describing shapes by how many sides they have.” This set up the students for the learning that is going to happen and included growth mindset language.

Final Interview
The final stage of my research methods was reinterviewing the students to determine if they have gained knowledge of the brain and if their mindsets have changed or deepened throughout the process. The same questions from the first interview were used. I compared the interviews to see what types of items changed, and which students made changes. I used this information in my data analysis.

Data Collection

The majority of data that I collected throughout the research period was descriptive observations taken in narrative form. This type of data collection is found in qualitative studies (Mills, 2007). While observing my students I attempted to better understand how specific teacher language can impact my students motivation and community of the classroom. I will be an active participant observer throughout the research period since I am an active participant in our Morning Meetings. This meant that I was constantly observing students behaviors, attitudes, and language throughout the meeting while I was also taking a part in the meeting.

Since I am a participant in our Morning Meetings I was not be able to take many field notes during the meetings. It is not possible to remember everything that is said and done so I videotaped and/or audiotaped our Morning Meetings to review in the future. I transcribed the meetings, looking in particular for my use of growth mindset language as well as students’ language.

Throughout the research period I examined these tapes and determined if there was an appropriate amount of mindset language being used both by the students and myself. I was
looking to see if I was using growth mindset language at the start of each message, during sharing, activity, and the message. I adjusted my language if I felt that it was not being used frequently enough or too much. I also used the videotapes to analyze student’s motivation levels and classroom community at the beginning and throughout the research period.

Another data collection technique I used is to take field notes (Appendix C) throughout the entire day. Mills (2007) describes field notes as written records of observations. Taking notes about what is occurring as it occur is important in the validity and reliability of data because it helps me as the researcher to remember instances more accurately and allows me to reflect back on the past and compare it to the present. I kept a notebook with me at all times to take anecdotal notes on what I as seeing and hearing. I marked the date and time, who was involved in the observation, and what occurred. In particular, I observed closely to see if I could find students demonstrating a growth mindset by persevering past a problem and/or putting in their best effort to complete a challenge. I also took field notes on the language I heard the students using. I noted anytime I heard a student using phrases such as “bounce like a ball”, “flop like a beanbag”, or “grow our brains” (Pawlina & Stanford, 2011).

I also kept a journal where I reflected and commented on the day. Journaling offered me data in student motivation and classroom community, both which need to be monitored throughout the process in order to analyze it. If all I had is information from the start and end of the research, I would not have reliable data. Taking notes daily on the classroom atmosphere and
motivation of students gave me a better idea of the impact mindset language and interventions had on the class.

**Data analysis**

Data analysis occurred throughout the research period to determine whether I needed to make adjustments to my question, methods, or any other part of my study. Ricci (2013) describes how important pre-assessments are in determining what route to take with students in their journey to having a growth mindset. I interviewed students to better understand their knowledge of the brain and what mindset they currently had. The interview took place individually so I could be certain that students are not being persuaded by peer’s responses to the questions.

Although I was the primary tool in researching and analyzing the results of my students, I had a structured formal interview protocol put into place, which help my data, be more valid and reliable. The questions were both convergent (Yes/No) and divergent (open-ended) (Mills, 2007). I had a form (Appendix B) that asks the following five questions:

1. **What is in your head?**

2. **What does your brain do?**

3. **Can we change how smart we are? (Why not? or How?)**

4. **If you try to do something new and it is really hard, what do you do?**

5. **If you had to choose between a puzzle you have solved before that is kind of easy or a new puzzle that is really tricky, what would you choose? Why?**
The first two questions gave me an insight to the student’s prior knowledge about our brain and how it functions. I found that students did not have a lot of prior knowledge about the brain and how it works so I gave a mini-lesson explaining the basic concepts of the brain and the idea that the brain grows every time we learn something new and revisited that idea informally throughout the study.

The final three questions revolve around a student’s mindset. They gave me a picture of what the students believed and whether they live their lives with a fixed or growth mindset. If there were students with fixed mindsets, I would monitor them very closely through the process and involve them more frequently in our lessons in order for them to feel more connected to the idea of growth mindset.

I analyzed student motivation and classroom community by looking at my field notes and daily journals. Through these observations I determined if students were persevering past problems, trying new things, and working collaboratively as a result of the mindset interventions and daily use of mindset language.

Human subjects committee

In order to proceed with my research, I had to receive approval from the Human Subjects Committee (HSC) through the Hamline School of Education. The purpose of this committee is to ensure the safety and protection of all those involved in this study. The first step in gaining approval is to submitting a HSC Non Exempt Application form. After the application is submitted and accepted, I obtained consent from the principal of my school as well as all the
parents of my students in order to protect the rights of all of my students. In my consent letter (Appendix A) I explained to parents the purpose of my study, that their child would not be harmed from this study, that their child would remain completely anonymous and that they had the right to take their child out of the study at any time without any penalties. I explained to parents that if they decided to remove their child from the study they would still hear the mindset language and take part in the interventions but they would not take part in interviews or be mentioned in results.

To further protect my participants I handled the materials being used very carefully. All papers that I had (interview forms, anecdotal notes, journals) and digital files (video and audiotapes) were brought back and forth from my home to school everyday to ensure they are only being seen by me. After the completion of the capstone, I would shred all of the paper copies and I would keep the digital files on a flash drive, which I would keep in a safe at my home. One year after the completion of my capstone, the digital files would be deleted.

Summary

My research question is what impact do mindset interventions during Morning Meeting have on student motivation and classroom community in a kindergarten classroom? This chapter discusses the logistics of my study. This qualitative study was completed with kindergarteners in my class at the school that I work in which located in the southern portion of the Twin Cities. I obtained approval from the Hamline School of Education Human Subjects Committee, my principal, and the parents of my students before I begin my research. The methods I used include interviewing students, giving direct lessons about the brain and mindsets, implementing mindset
language and interventions during Morning Meeting, and finally reinterviewing students. I collected data through the interviews, field notes, videotapes of lessons, and daily journals. Data was analyzed throughout the research period in order for me to make adjustments to my methods according to my student’s needs. After my data was collected, I analyzed it to see if mindset interventions during Morning Meeting impact student’s motivation and classroom community. The results of this analysis will be discussed in chapter four. I examined whether students took on the language of growth mindset, persevered when faced with challenges, and/or built support systems within the classroom to help them reach their goals.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Overview

For the 2016-2017 school year, there were 21 students enrolled in my classroom during the time of the research. There were 10 girls and 11 boys all who participated throughout the entire research process. All data collection techniques including taping of lessons and interventions, daily observations, and pre- and post- interviews were done to address the research question what impact do mindset interventions during morning meeting have on students’ motivation and building community in a kindergarten classroom?

The research study was completed over a course of four weeks. The first week was to complete the initial interview. The second week consisted of giving four minilessons on the subject of the purpose and capabilities of the brain as well as the concept of growth mindset and the language surrounding it. The final two weeks were dedicated to daily growth mindset interventions conducted during Morning Meeting. The post interview was completed on the last two days of the study.

Pre intervention interviews

The pre intervention interviews were conducted between November 28th and December 1st, 2016. Prior to lessons and interventions, there had been no direct lessons on growth mindset language or concepts. Discussions about perseverance past failures had come up occasionally with individual students when needed but they were infrequent and not planned. The reasoning behind this was to gain an authentic perspective on how students view their own learning process and the capabilities of the brain.
The results of the interview indicated that 11 out of the 21 students had a growth mindset based on the overall answers to the 5 questions. These students ranged from achieving above grade level expectations to not meeting grade level expectations for this time of the year. These students had a basic concept of the purpose of the brain. Most responses to the second question “What does your brain do?” consisted of “think and learn”. They all believed that they could change how smart they are but had varying responses to how they could change their brain. Some responses included “make smarter choices”, “working really hard”, “going to school”, “keep practicing”, “my brain does it by thinking”, and “by doing something you haven’t done before”. These students also demonstrated growth mindset by showing a persistent attitude. When asked “If you to try do something new and it is really hard, what do you do?” they all responded with either “keep on trying” or “ask for help”. Finally, all of the students who had a growth mindset at the beginning of the study would choose a challenging task over an easy task that they’ve accomplished before. Some of the reasoning behind this choice included “to get more smarter”, “I like trying new things”, “I want to know how to do hard puzzles”, and “I could ask someone to help”.

9 out of the 21 responded with mixed responses indicating that they had a partial growth mindset. These students needed more information to have a stronger belief in growth mindset. These students ranged from achieving above grade level expectations to not meeting grade level expectations for this time of the year. To label these students as mixed in their mindsets they had to respond to some questions with a fixed mindset and some with a growth mindset. Every student had different responses that put them in the mixed category. Most mixed responses were labeled this way because of question three (can we change how smart we are?) and question 5 (if you had to choose between a puzzle you have already solved before that is kind of easy or a new
puzzle that is really tricky, what would you choose and why?) in the interview. Four of these students did not believe that they can change how smart they are in any way (question three). Six of these students would prefer an easier task (question five). Some of the reasoning included “I’m not putting it together”, “It would be too hard for me”, “It’s more easy, I don’t like hard ones”, and “I’ve tried a tricky one before and I didn’t like it”.

2 of the 21 students answered questions with a fixed mindset. Both students are achieving either at grade level or above grade level expectations in all academic areas. They are labeled with a fixed mindset because they had the belief that one can not change their intellectual ability. They also did not have much knowledge about what the brains purpose is and would choose to easy tasks over challenging ones in fear of failure. One of the two students responded that if they were trying something new and it was difficult, they would “give up if it was too hard”. I was surprised that these two particular students had a fixed mindset based on their abilities. Both work very hard on all tasks we do, complete assignments consistently, and seem to have a positive outlook on education. I would have predicted these two would have a growth mindset based on their performance in class. This is a clear display that even if a child is achieving at grade level, there may still be work to do in regards to mindset in order for them to keep their academic success. As these students become more challenged in school, based on their responses, their achievement levels would drop. It was important to find that they had a fixed mindset so that hopefully early on they could adjust to growth mindset and continue to have success in the future.

On my clipboard that I used to keep track of data, I kept the names of the students who came in as mixed or fixed mindset to use during the lessons and interventions. I tried to get them
more involved in the conversations and supported them consistently throughout the day with growth mindset language.

**Mindset Lessons**

Mindset lessons took place between December 5th and December 8th, 2016. There were four lessons total. Lessons took place during our reader's workshop time of the day.

The first lesson focused on our brain and basic knowledge of what the brain is and what it is for. The purpose of this lesson was to give students foundational knowledge of what the brain is capable of and how the brain can change. We discussed neuroplasticity, connecting neurons, creating a strong web in our brain, and strengthening our brain. Students were extremely attentive throughout the entire lesson. I displayed a non graphic picture of a model of a brain to the students and that instantly grabbed their attention. There was a mix of “that is so gross” and “that is so cool” amongst the class. I created a smartboard lesson that guided this lesson (Appendix D). We began by community writing what we thought the brain was for. The responses included (expand) “thinking, doing stuff, controls us, we have computers in our heads, to do math, and to talk”. This displayed that the class had a very rudimentary concept of what the brain does, but they were not aware of the capabilities the brain had to develop and grow. This group of students love to learn new, multisyllabic words so teaching them about “neuroplasticity” and “neural connections” really got them intrigued. I made a web on the board and discussed how we can persist and make stronger connections in our brain. They understood from the visual that every time they practice something, the connections (web) in their brain become stronger and they become better at the task.

The first day of lessons, a student started asking questions and showing interest in the brain by stating, “can we lose connections in our brain? Can our brain get weaker?” This
immediate interest in the brain displayed the impact the lesson had on the student. It also lead into a new conversation about sticking with something and the importance of practicing. The authentic conversation this lesson brought clearly displayed curiosity and interest in the brain.

The second lesson was teaching perseverance by using the metaphor of bounce or flop. I brought in both a bouncy ball and a bean bag to demonstrate what the word perseverance means. Like I stated before, this class loves learning challenging words so they were very excited to practice this four syllable “grown up” word. The analogy “we want to bounce like balls when things are hard, not flop like beanbags” made it clear what it means to persevere. We then discussed how we can grow our brains by bouncing like a ball and never giving up. Students then went into their reader’s notebook and wrote about how they want to grow their brains (Appendix E). I found that most students chose to write about activities that they would work on at home such as learning how to ride a bike, play soccer or ride on a skateboard. One student wrote about learning how to draw a dog and another about reading a book. During sharing, we acknowledged the two writers who chose more academic topics in the hopes that others would be inspired to think about what a growth mindset looks like in the classroom. My student on an IEP for Emotional Behavioral Disorder and Attention Deficit Disorder took to this lesson very seriously. His parents even reported that at home he often refers to this lesson, asking his parents if they are going to be a bouncy ball or a bean bag. I was very pleased to see the impact these lessons were having already on the students. They were using the knowledge and ideas not only during school hours but at home as well.

Lesson three focused on the idea that mistakes are a necessary part of the learning process for everyone. We read the book It’s Okay to Make Mistakes by Todd Parr. The students were very attentive during the book because of the engaging illustrations and humorous context. After the
completion of the book, students discussed times they made mistakes and learned from it. This lesson was eye opening for all students. Some of the mistakes they had learned from included “falling off my bike and trying it again, then I didn’t fall off anymore”, “I didn’t know how tie my shoes for a long time but now I do”, and “I didn’t know how to write the letter f, I always wrote it the wrong way but I practiced a lot and know I can write it.” By the interest the students had during the conversation and the examples they were able to share, I could tell the students took to heart that not only was it okay to make mistakes but that it is necessary to help grow our brains. They understood that making mistakes is an important step in learning new things.

Lesson four was a review of the major concepts of the previous days as well as a community writing about ways that we will grow our brains. One student expressed how they went home and talked to their parents about growth mindset and their parents had never heard of it before. The student enthusiastically exclaimed, “I had to help them grow their brain!” A few other students echoed how they had to teach their parents as well. They were enthralled by the idea that they knew something that their parents did not. The community writing ideas were similar to the independent writing ideas. Most of the students responded with physical activities they want to accomplish such as growing in certain sports, learning how to do the monkey bars, and doing cartwheels. Although these are all areas that the students genuinely want to grow in, I was hoping there would be more academic responses. I believed that the students were understanding the basic concepts of growth mindset but needed to see more examples and work more with it in an academic setting. I ended the final minilesson stating, “You can do anything you want if you try your best, don’t give up, and learn from your mistakes.” I wanted to lead into the interventions with a positive message and teach the students that their effort can lead to great rewards.
Mindset Interventions

Mindset interventions occurred from December 9th through December 21st, 2016 for a total of nine days of interventions. Our morning meeting started each day with the chant “In this classroom we make mistakes, in this classroom we keep trying, in this classroom we grow our brains.” Growth mindset interventions were also performed during sharing, activity, and the morning message.

Trends that I found throughout Morning Meeting:

1. Students took on growth mindset language very quickly. Phrases such as “grow my brain” and “bounce like a ball” were used often and correctly. Students naturally took on the language and were exhibiting signs of metacognition. This was prevalent on the second day of interventions when students shared a way that they grew their brain at school. All were able to come up with something we had done at school that contributed to them growing their brain including writing their letters, practicing drawing stories and doing math.

2. Classroom community seemed high during sharing time. When students shared about ways they have grown their brains, the others would cheer or give high fives to the student sharing. In one case, a very shy girl who often elects to pass her turn during sharing, decided to share that she grew her brain by learning how to ride a bike. When the students cheered and hugged her she broke out in a smile that I had never seen on her before. Her joy and excitement spread throughout her face. Since then, this little girl has shared almost every day. Her confidence has been rising thanks to the support of her peers. Another example of the growth in community arose on the third day of interventions. I asked the kids to share a way that another student in the class helped them
grow their brain. I gave the students a few minutes to think independently, as I knew this would be a challenging question. I thought it would be important for them to see how the community around them are the best supporters and they could be a supporter of the other students in the class. Many of the responses had to do with students helping each other clean up their areas or saying kind and encouraging words to each other when they felt down. We discussed how this is helping others grow their brains because it is helping them learn empathy and kindness. I believe this was an amazing revelation for the students to see that they can grow their brains not just academically or in physical activities but in an emotional and social capacity as well.

3. Morning Message setup positivity towards learning for the rest of the day. Everyday on the Morning Message, I wrote about how we were going to grow our brain. Adding the simple phrase “We are going to grow our brain” helped students see the purpose in what we were doing which increased motivation throughout the rest of the day. When we arrived to the time of day that we mentioned in our Morning Message, I would revisit the message to remind the students of the purpose of the lesson and how it will help them grow their brain.

Classroom Observations

I took anecdotal notes throughout each day, writing anytime I heard a conversation or saw any actions that reflected an impact of our earlier lessons and interventions. After looking through copious amounts of notes that I took during the duration of this research study, there were several trends that arose.

1. The more we discussed growth mindset, the more naturally the conversation permeated into other parts of the day. On the second day of interventions, during our closing circle
at the end of the day, a student suggested that instead of sharing our favorite part of the day, we should share how we grew our brain. The class as a whole agreed to share a way they grew their brain. Over the course of the 13 days of lessons and interventions, I overhead 12 comments about growth mindset or learning from mistakes. I can only hope that there were more that I did not hear. These comments were heard throughout the day, from our writers workshop in the morning to the end of the day where we do our independent math stations.

2. Motivation to try challenging tasks rose throughout the research period. I often offer “challenge tasks” throughout the day, especially in math. I saw a rise of students choosing the challenge task that had never attempted it in the past. Although the students were often unsuccessful, I emphasized to them that by even trying these tasks, they are growing their brains and gave specific praises towards their efforts. The students that were new to the challenge task now worked in a small group with me. The purpose of this was to show them that getting support can be advantageous and to help them understand that even when tasks are difficult they can still be successful.

3. A positive atmosphere arose when discussing growth mindset and examining growth that was occurring in the classroom. I felt this especially at the end of the day when we shared ways that we grew our brain. One day, a student shared that they grew their brain by learning more about odd and even numbers. Several others perked up when they realized they had grown their brains in the same way. It was adorable and inspiring to see the support the students gave each other. More applause and high fives were given after students shared. The evidence of encouragement was unmistakable.

Post Interview
The post interview occurred on December 22nd and December 23rd. The results of the post interview was fascinating. 100% of the students answered all of the questions with growth mindset responses.

I was particularly interested in seeing the results of the two students who began the process as fixed mindset. While conducting the interventions during Morning Meeting, I tried to get them involved often and used them as examples to try and get them interested in the topic and thinking about their own mindset. I was impressed to see that both students now can see how connections can be made in the brain resulting in “growing” our brain. One of the students said if a task was challenging they would “keep trying until I get it” and the other said they would “ask for help and keep practicing”. Both students also changed their mind and decided they would choose a tricky task over an easy one so that they could “grow their brain”.

Overall Mindset Before and After Lessons and Interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fixed Mindset</th>
<th>Mixed Mindset</th>
<th>Growth Mindset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-interview</td>
<td>2/21 students</td>
<td>9/21 students</td>
<td>10/21 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-interview</td>
<td>0/21 students</td>
<td>0/21 students</td>
<td>21/21 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was wonderful to see that all of the students were impacted by the lessons and interventions. They had a strong knowledge of the brain and were using growth mindset language throughout the day.

Question 1: What’s in your head? (Brain)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brain</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-interview</td>
<td>18/21 students 86%</td>
<td>3/21 students 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-interview</td>
<td>21/21 students 100%</td>
<td>0/21 students 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All of the students were able to identify that inside of their head is the brain. This fundamental question is the basis of them realizing the importance of this organ.

**Question 2: What does your brain do? (Brain)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Think</th>
<th>Grows Our Brain</th>
<th>Learn</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-interview</td>
<td>16/27 responses 59.3%</td>
<td>0/27 responses 0%</td>
<td>5/27 responses 18.5%</td>
<td>6/27 22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-interview</td>
<td>11/34 responses 32%</td>
<td>6/34 responses 17.6%</td>
<td>13/34 responses 38%</td>
<td>4/34 responses 11.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some students gave multiple responses to this question. The first interview showed that most students understood that our brain is used to think, that was the majority of the responses. The post interview displayed that the students had a deeper understanding of the job of the brain. They were able to see that the brain not only thinks but more responded with grows our brain or learns. That is evidence that there was growth in their understanding of the brain’s function.

**Question 3: Can we change how smart we are? How or why not? (Growth vs. Fixed)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-interview</td>
<td>15/21 students 71.4%</td>
<td>6/21 28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-interview</td>
<td>21/21 students 100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question in particular shows the impact of the lessons and interventions. Although a majority of students did believe they were able to change how smart they are, they were not able to explain how they could do that. The post interview expressed not only that all of the students believed they could change how smart they are but also they had a better understanding of how they would go about this. Several students responded with “by trying new things”, “by never giving up” or “by growing our brains.”

**Question 4: If you try to do something new and it is really hard, what do you do? (Growth vs. Fixed)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Give up</th>
<th>Keep trying</th>
<th>Ask for help</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Some students answered with more than one response. One humorous response to this question in the pre interview was, “take it out of your mouth and see what it is.” I must say, working with kindergarteners always puts a smile on my face!

It is clear that in the follow up interview, all of the students were able to respond with a growth mindset. They were clear that when challenging tasks come around they have to persevere and keep trying. It was interesting to see that the number of students who would ask for help decreased from the pre to post interview. I can only speculate that they grew confidence in their own abilities and now rely more on their own persistence.

Question 5: If you had to choose between a puzzle you have solved before that is kind of easy or a new puzzle that is really tricky, what would you choose? Why? (Growth vs. Fixed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Easy Puzzle</th>
<th>Tricky Puzzle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-interview</td>
<td>9/21 students (42.8%)</td>
<td>12/21 students (57.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-interview</td>
<td>0/21 students (0%)</td>
<td>21/21 students (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, there was a complete shift in answers from the class. The nine students who chose the easier puzzle now saw the advantage in choosing the challenging one in order to grow their brains and learn something new. This idea will hopefully permeate into all areas of learning, that students will internally choose the more rigorous and self stretching tasks in order to grow themselves and reach for higher learning.

Summary
The research question for this study is *what impact do mindset interventions during morning meeting have on students’ motivation and building community in a kindergarten classroom?*

Overall, I found that all of the students in my class were positively impacted by the growth mindset minilessons and interventions that took place over the course of four weeks. I found that the more growth mindset language was used, the more naturally the kids started to use the language throughout the entire school day. They truly believed in themselves and encouraged each other in their learning journey. Relationships were built stronger through daily sharing of how we grew thus increasing the classroom community. I also witnessed higher levels of motivation throughout the day. Students were taking on more challenging tasks and completing work independently that they considered difficult.

The following chapter will conclude the research study. It will discuss the connection the study had to the literature review in chapter 2. It will also examine the impact the study has had on my teaching as well as its potential in helping other classrooms. Chapter five will also discuss the implications as well as the limitations of this study on teaching growth mindset in a kindergarten classroom.
Overview

It is imperative as an educator to help my students build confidence in themselves as learners. Implementing growth mindset language and interventions are one way to promote the idea that we are all capable of accomplishing anything. With this attitude, students are more motivated to persist past failure and achieve success in school.

The research question addressed in this study was *what impact do mindset interventions during morning meeting have on students’ motivation and building community in a kindergarten classroom?* This chapter will revisit the literature review and examine the information provided in that section compared to the results of the study. I will also explain how the study will impact me as an educator, and the possibility it has on impacting more than just my classroom.

Revisiting the literature review

In chapter two, the literature review of this study I researched several major themes that I was addressing in my research question including growth mindset, fixed mindset, Morning Meeting, motivation and community building.

The most vital component of my literature was the research on growth and fixed mindset. Fixed mindset is the belief that one is born with a certain level of capabilities. A growth mindset is the belief that a person’s potential in all areas is malleable based on effort and perseverance (Dweck, 2006). As stated in the literature review, one’s mindset has a very strong impact on their success in the classroom, as well as other areas of their life. Someone with a growth mindset will learn from their inevitable mistakes, find help from others when tasks are challenging, and will
put unending effort into their learning. On the other hand, someone with a fixed mindset will be deterred from mistakes and will quit when tasks become challenging (Dweck, 2006).

Although I had some knowledge of the theory, it made me examine my own mindset as well as the language I used everyday in my classroom. It made me more aware of my impact on my students mindsets. If I want to help create students who have a positive outlook on their own learning, I need to set them up for success and guide them to believing in themselves. This in depth examination of the brain's power was fascinating and had a considerable impact on my own teaching. I know see the importance of explicitly teaching the power of the brain and our mindsets’ in order to help students develop a growth mindset.

The section in the literature review about brain based research and explicitly teaching about the brain was also very important. Ricci (2013) has researched how neuroscientists are studying the ability of the brain to change, also known as neuroplasticity. This notion promotes the idea that we have the ability to change our own brains.

I had never realized the importance of teaching about the brain’s functions and the affects it can have on a child’s motivation. After teaching just two minilessons on the brain and it’s capabilities, my students became very curious and started asking more questions. Whenever students learn something new, they still mention how they grew their brains. It is also motivational to use brain growth language with students when they are struggling. It reminds them that they learn from their mistakes and that failure is something that everyone goes through.

The data that I collected clearly aligns strongly with the findings of my literature review. In my literature review I discovered the importance of growth mindset, high levels of motivation, classroom community and the implications of teaching about the brain. After teaching about growth mindset in a consistent manner all of my students were shifted to having a growth
mindset and had a deeper understanding of the impact of their mindset. The students naturally adapted to the language and started to use it throughout the whole day.

I also witnessed several instances of high motivation and increased classroom community. Students were more willing to take on challenges throughout the day. One time of day I saw this repeated was during writing time. Writing in kindergarten consists mostly of drawing stories and then attempting to label pictures or write a sentence to tell what is happening in the story. Most students at this time of the year are just beginning to attempt writing words independently. I have several students who in the past had never felt confident enough to try writing on their own but after a few days of interventions, I walked around and noticed that more students were attempting to writing words without my support. After I gave them specific praise for their actions, I asked what motivated them to try and they all responded with “I’m growing my brain!”

Classroom community was running high as well. The climate of the classroom during our sharing time was extraordinary. The kids were beaming with support for the other students as they would share how they grew their brain. High fives and applause were a common occurrence, something that had not happened before during sharing time. The moment that stands out in my mind is when a student who is struggling in quite a few areas proudly exclaimed how she can now write the letter f, she even got up to the board and wrote it in front of everyone. The three little girls sitting near her embraced her tightly. The glowing look on this student’s face will stay with me for a long time.

Implications

One implication that this study has had on my classroom is a higher level of motivation throughout the school day. I have noticed that my students are taking more risks in their writing,
attempting to read independently, and often choose the more challenging task in math. It is very exciting to see how students are believing in themselves as learners and taking on more challenges in order to help grow their brains.

Another possible implications to this research study include getting all educators to take the time to teach specifics about the brain and about growth mindset. If every year students heard the same message, getting more deeper in the content the older they get, the more likely they will be to hold onto that mindset and truly believe in their own capabilities. As found in the study by Ricci (2013) students are more likely to develop a fixed mindset as they move into their intermediate years. If they are exposed to these concepts throughout their education, all students could possibly keep their growth mindset and have more successful results in school.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are that it was only done over a month's time. I realize that the students’ answers to the interview questions could possibly change over time. They had growth mindset language and interventions fresh in their minds while being interviewed.

It would be very interesting to reinterview the students at the end of the year and into the next school year to see if the interventions had a long term effect on the students self belief. To further the accuracy and data of this study, it could be done from year to year with the same set of students to show the long term impact of growth mindset lessons and interventions. The best case scenario is that the lessons learned from this study would be carried on from year to year and that growth mindset would be prevalent in all of the students who participated.

Where to go from here

This study has impacted me as a teacher in a very major way. I am always trying to find practical ways to engage my students and motivate them. The minilessons that were taught and
the simple interventions performed made a significant difference in my students motivational levels. I plan to teach about growth mindset with my future students and use this language frequently throughout each year.

For my students who are a part of this study, I returned to the lessons I have already taught when I noticed a slide back into a mixed or fixed mindset occurring. I also frequently use growth mindset in our Morning Meetings to keep the concepts and learning fresh in their minds and hopefully transfer these ideas into every facet of their life and years beyond.

Based on both the literature review and the data I collected, I also would recommend that every educator, no matter what age they teach, takes the time to directly teach their students about their brains and growth mindset and encourage them everyday with growth mindset language to help motivate them and build a stronger community within the classroom. The results of my study show that there are positive implications for teaching about mindsets on both motivation and classroom community. High levels of peer support and internal motivation lead to success for all students.

A possibly related research project that would coincide with this one would be to follow these students throughout their elementary years to see the true impact these lessons and interventions had on these students achievements. There could be two studies, one where they only hear the growth mindset lessons and interventions once and another where they keep developing their understanding of growth mindset and the brain in order to determine if the direct instruction has positive implications of their futures.

**Communicating Results**

I plan to communicate my results with my principal to show the positive impacts direct instruction about the brain and growth mindset can have. I hope this action encourages her to
explore addressing growth mindset with my colleagues to hopefully show them the benefits of discussing this with their classes as well. Teaching students about growth mindset in all grades would be beneficial for everyone involved.

I also plan to continue using growth mindset language and revisiting lessons as necessary throughout the rest of the school year. My students now have a good foundation of growth mindset but they will need more support and knowledge to help solidify their beliefs in themselves as learners. Implementing growth mindset language throughout the year will help instill it deeper in my students and bring their knowledge into future grades.

Summary

This study was based on the research question *what impact do mindset interventions during morning meeting have on students’ motivation and building community in a kindergarten classroom?* I set out to find if direct instruction about growth mindset and the brain would have positive impacts on my students’ motivation and create a stronger learning community within the classroom. Both my literature review and results of my study displayed that there was a positive impact in teaching about mindsets to my students. My students picked up the growth mindset language very quickly and started to use it in everyday situations. They also showed signs of heightened community through verbal encouragement and celebration when we shared ways that we grew that day.

I am very happy to see that this study has helped my students build confidence in themselves as learners. I hope to find that this research has also had a positive impact on their lives beyond our classroom and beyond this school year. Growth mindset can be applied to every aspect of life and I would love to see students grow in all areas of their life. These are amazing
students who I know will do amazing things with their lives. I hope to have had an impact on
them believing this fact about themselves.
Appendix A: Parent Consent Form

November 2016
Dear Parent or Guardian,
I am your child’s kindergarten teacher and a graduate student working on an advanced degree in education at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota. As part of my graduate work, I plan to conduct research in classroom from November 21st-December 23rd. The purpose of this letter is to ask your permission for your child to take part in my research. This research is public scholarship. The abstract and final product will be catalogued in Hamline’s Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository and that it may be published or used in other ways.

I want to study how growth mindset language during our Morning Meeting portion of the day affects student motivation and classroom community. Growth mindset is the belief that our intelligence can change with effort and persistence. Someone with a growth mindset believes that they can achieve anything as long as they persevere and learn from failure. I plan to add growth mindset language into our Morning Meeting consistently during our research period to see if it has a positive impact on student’s motivation and the classroom climate. I will pre-assess students to determine their initial mindsets about themselves as learners, implement the mindset interventions, monitor their motivation and the classroom community throughout the process, and then assess them at the end to determine if their mindset has changed or deepened.

There is little to no risk for your child to participate. All results will be confidential and anonymous. I will not record information about individual students, such as their names, nor report identifying information or characteristics in the capstone. Participation is voluntary and you may decide at any time without negative consequences that information about your child will not be included in the capstone.

I have received approval for my study from the School of Education at Hamline University and from the principal of Parkview Elementary, Nicole Frovik. My results might be included in an article for publication in a professional journal or in a report at a professional conference. In all cases, your child’s identity and participation in this study will remain confidential.

If you agree that your child may participate, keep this page. Fill out the duplicate agreement to participate on page two and return to me by sending it back with your child or copying the form in an email to me no later than November 10th. If you have any questions, please email or call me at school.

Sincerely,
Megan Schoaf
(952)431-8350
Megan.schoaf@isd196.org
Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Study

I have received your letter about the study you plan to conduct in which you will be assessing and observing students’ motivation levels, mindsets, and the classroom community. I understand there is little to no risk involved for my child, that his/her confidentiality will be protected, and that I may withdraw or my child may withdraw from the project at any time.

______________________________________________
Child’s Name

______________________________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature

______________________________________________
Date

Participant copy
Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Study

Return this page.

I have received your letter about the study you plan to conduct in which you will be assessing and observing students’ motivation levels, mindsets, and the classroom community. I understand there is little to no risk involved for my child, that his/her confidentiality will be protected, and that I may withdraw or my child may withdraw from the project at any time.

________________________________________
Child’s Name

________________________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature

______
Date

Researcher copy
Appendix B: Interview Questions Form

Mindset Intervention Interview Protocol

Student name: ________________________________________________

Date: ______________________

1. What’s in your head? (Brain)
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

2. What does your brain do? (Brain)
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

3. Can we change how smart we are? (Why not? or How?) (Growth vs. Fixed)
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

4. If you try to do something new and it is really hard, what do you do? (Growth vs. Fixed)
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
5. If you had to choose between a puzzle you have solved before that is kind of easy or a new puzzle that is really tricky, what would you choose? Why? (Growth vs. Fixed)

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix C: Field Note Observation Template

**Date:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name(s)</th>
<th>Time of Day</th>
<th>Mindset, Motivation, Community Building, or Other</th>
<th>Noticing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Smartboard Minilesson
What do we use our brains for?
• Thinking
• Doing stuff
• Controlling us
• Computers

Can we change our brains?

YES!
Neuroplasticity means to build connections in your brain to help it grow and become stronger. The more you practice something, the stronger your brain gets!
Everytime you practice something you are making neuron connections in your brain, which is making your brain stronger and smarter!

There are two ways to think...

**Growth Mindset**
- "I can do it if I try!"
- "If I keep practicing, I'll get better!"
- "I'm not going to give up!"
- "What can I do to get better?"

**Fixed Mindset**
- "It's too hard!"
- "I might not be good at it so I'm not going to try."
- "I'm never going to be able to do it."


We must have PERSEVERENCE!

Everybody makes mistakes!

When you have a growth mindset, you learn from your mistakes and do it better the next time!

When you have a fixed mindset, you get really angry when you make mistakes and give up when things are hard.
When you make a mistake or something is really hard you have two choices...

Bounce like a ball!  or  Flop like a beanbag

We can **Grow Our Brains** by:
- practicing,
- not giving up,
- trying to do tricky stuff,
- learning from mistakes,
- asking for help and
- showing perseverance!
Appendix E: Student Goals

We are growing our brains!

- gymnastics
- learning school math
- balancing on my bike
- basketball
- soccer
- walking on the treadmill
- winter sports (sliding)
- stronger muscles
- jump on monkey bars
- skateboarding
- on-ice skating
- cartwheels
- monkey bars
- na bike
- to be a better teacher
- cooking
- Mrs. Pennick
- hockey, skating
- There were 4 characters
- The only author has 2950 bugs
References


