

Reinforcing Growth Mindset Throughout the Semester

There are numerous occasions for instructors to underscore the growth mindset sensibility in all that they accomplish throughout the semester. While growth mindset language should be included in the syllabus (as explored in additional resources in this toolkit) instructors can also highlight growth mindset concepts during their very first course sessions as they map out the semester to come. At the beginning of the course, professors can explain the concept of a growth mindset and emphasize that mistakes and challenges are growth opportunities. This is an excellent time to promote campus resources (such as the Student Success Center and the Detroit Mercy Writing Center) and call attention to how such services can be utilized. (Take care to provide contact information, locations, and model how to make appointments if scheduling software is used.)

Students can also benefit from hearing about the challenges their instructors have faced and how they overcame them (during their time as students and as professionals). As instructors introduce themselves to the students, they may highlight how they worked with a consultant at the writing center for a writing project or how they engaged in tutoring for a particularly challenging subject during their education. Providing students with real-life examples can help them grasp that all learners face challenges, but that with perseverance and dedication, they can achieve success.



Many resources within the CETL website call attention to the importance of providing formative feedback in courses and this practice also coincides with the concept of the growth mindset. By providing formative assessments, professors can deliver constructive feedback that focuses on improvement rather than simply assigning scores. Feedback may focus on student growth by highlighting areas for improvement and suggesting resources or strategies for further development.

When covering difficult or complex topics, professors can acknowledge the challenges and reassure students that it is normal to struggle at times. Instructors may provide additional resources like supplementary readings, videos, or extra practice problems to support students' learning. This is also an excellent time to emphasize the importance of preparation and study habits as key factors in academic success. Instructors may offer study tips and techniques, such as creating study groups, setting achievable goals, managing test anxiety, and exploring how this preparation can lead to success. Likewise, professors can make themselves available for one-on-one discussions during office hours to address individual student concerns or questions.



Finally, end-of-course reflection assignments create a space for students to think through how they met challenges throughout the semester, noting areas of improvement and growth. Students may be able to use these reflections as an opportunity to discuss the importance of lifelong learning and how a growth mindset can benefit students beyond the classroom. Incorporating a growth mindset into a college course can have a profound impact on their attitudes toward learning and their ability to overcome challenges. By consistently reinforcing the idea that effort and learning lead to growth, professors can help students develop the mindset needed for academic and personal success.