

Module 1a  
Participant Guide

Developing a Culture of  
Academic Optimism

# Meeting the Challenge: CT Core Standards Success for English Learners and Students with Disabilities



Grades K–12

*A Professional Learning Series for  
School Teams Dedicated to the Success  
of ALL Students*

### Connecticut Core Standards Systems of Professional Learning

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The *Meeting the Challenge* project includes a series of professional learning experiences for school teams on Connecticut Core Standards Success for English Learners and Students with Disabilities.

Participants will have continued support for the implementation of the new standards through virtual networking opportunities and online resources to support the training of educators throughout the state of Connecticut.

Instrumental in the design and development of the *Meeting the Challenge* materials from PCG were: Dr. Barbara Flanagan, Mary Ellen Hannon, Michelle Wade, and Melissa Pierce.

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## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Pre-Assessment–Academic Optimism.....	4
<b>PART 1: WHAT IT TAKES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Activity 1: For Student Success, We Believe it Takes... ..	6
<b>PART 2: ACADEMIC OPTIMISM .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Activity 2a: Do You Believe ALL Students Can be Successful?.....	8
Activity 2b: Identifying the Tenets of Academic Optimism Within Your School .....	10
<b>PART 3: GROWTH VS. FIXED MINDSET .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Activity 3: ABC...Plus One Protocol.....	14
Activity 4: What’s the Link? .....	20
<b>PART 4: BUILDING A PLAN FOR SCHOOL-WIDE ACADEMIC OPTIMISM .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Activity 5: Developing an Action Plan for Academic Optimism.....	22
Session Evaluation.....	24
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>25</b>

## Morning Session Agenda

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### Developing a Culture of Academic Optimism

- Introductory Activity: Pre-Assessment Interactive Poll
- What it Takes for Student Success
- Academic Optimism
- Growth vs. Fixed Mindset
- Action Planning
- Session Evaluation

**Introductory Activity**

## Introductory Activity

### Pre-Assessment–Academic Optimism

**Instructions:** Using your cell phone, answer the poll statements below regarding Academic Optimism and Growth Mindset. As fellow participants begin to answer, the results will show on the screen.

<p><b>Statement 1:</b> I believe all students can be successful with the new standards based on our current programs and supports. (Y-N)</p>
<p> </p>
<p><b>Statement 2:</b> I have the tools at my school or district to ensure all students are successful. (Y-N)</p>
<p> </p>
<p><b>Statement 3:</b> I believe that with training and support, my colleagues can gain the ‘Academic Optimism’ to work collaboratively and improve all students’ achievement levels no matter what their individual needs are. (Y-N)</p>
<p> </p>
<p><b>Statement 4:</b> When it comes to planning and implementing the new Connecticut Core Standards (CCS) for all my students, I consider my skill level to be _____ (a. basic; b. intermediate; c. advanced; or d. expert).</p>

**Part 1: What it Takes for Student Success**

## Part 1: What it Takes for Student Success

### Activity 1: For Student Success, We Believe it Takes...

#### DESCRIPTION

In school teams, participants determine what they believe is necessary for student success. Once that has been determined, they will create a statement for their school.

#### DIRECTIONS

1. In school teams, brainstorm what it takes for students to be successful at your school.
2. Group the ideas into categories that incorporate similar themes. You may use sticky notes to make this easier.
3. Using the themes from your brainstorming session, on chart paper, develop a school statement of what it takes to be successful. Your statement should begin with **“At (your school name), for students’ success it takes....”**

#### Discussion Prompt:

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When you finish developing your statement, discuss whether other staff members at your school would agree with your statement. Why or why not?

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**Part 2: Academic Optimism**

## Part 2: Academic Optimism

### Activity 2a: Do You Believe ALL Students Can be Successful?

#### DESCRIPTION

Participants view a video of an elementary school that depicts a high level of Academic Optimism. While watching the video, participants record where they see high levels of Academic Optimism within each of the three components.

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Watch the video and use the Note Catcher on the next page to highlight how staff create an environment of high expectations and Academic Optimism that connects with students and parents.
2. After the video, discuss each area of Academic Optimism and where it was found within the school, citing evidence.

#### RESOURCES

- Video: *César Chávez Elementary School: What makes a great school?* Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qruX\\_1vyJhA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qruX_1vyJhA)
- Video Reflections Note Catcher

## Video Reflections Note Catcher

Note Catcher	
Adult Actions that Demonstrate Academic Emphasis and High Expectations	
Adult Actions that Demonstrate High Levels of Support	
Adult Actions that Demonstrate High Levels of Relational Trust and Efficacy	

### Discussion Prompt:

Where did you find a high degree of Academic Optimism within the school? What evidence shows their belief that ALL students can be successful?

## Activity 2b: Identifying the Tenets of Academic Optimism Within Your School

### DESCRIPTION

In school teams, participants identify the components of Academic Optimism present in their school. In addition, they will identify priority areas that need focus to build a culture of Academic Optimism.

### DIRECTIONS

1. Review each area of Academic Optimism and the list of components that lead to a stronger belief that all students can be successful.
2. Reflect on your current school culture and note whether each component is present within your school. If present, provide evidence of where it may be observed.
3. If an action item is not present, determine as a team whether that should become a school priority and focus.
4. After completing the table below, as a team, read the discussion prompt on page 12 and discuss.

### Creating a School Culture of Academic Optimism

Academic Emphasis	Is this component part of your school culture? If so, what evidence do you have?	If it is not present, do you believe it should be a school priority and focus?
High but achievable academic goals for <b>ALL</b> students: high rigor		
Learning environment is orderly and serious		
Attitude or interventions that show students will not be allowed to fail		

Students are motivated to work hard		
Students respect academic achievement		
Teachers hold each other accountable to high student achievement		
<b>Collective Efficacy</b>	<b>Is this component part of your school culture? If so, what evidence do you have?</b>	<b>If it is not present, do you believe it should be a school priority and focus?</b>
Expectation and support for high individual teacher efficacy in knowledge and effective use of impactful instructional practices		
Focus on problem solving rather than upon blame		
All teachers are “data informed” about their effectiveness		
Provides confidence regardless of obstacles, motivates to challenging goals, and supports persistence until successful		
Reinforces and enhances trust and academic success		

Relational Trust	Is this component part of your school culture? If so, what evidence do you have?	If it is not present, do you believe it should be a school priority and focus?
Demonstrates 5 facets: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness		
Cooperation sets the stage for effective student learning; distrust makes cooperation virtually impossible		
Trust and cooperation among students, parents, and teachers influence regular school attendance, persistent learning, and faculty experimentation with new techniques and resources		

**Discussion Prompt**

How will the addition of priority areas for focus change the culture of your school? How much effort will be needed before you begin to see a difference within the school?

**RESOURCES**

- Creating a School Culture of Academic Optimism Template

**Part 3: Growth vs. Fixed Mindset**

## Part 3: Growth vs. Fixed Mindset

### Activity 3: ABC...Plus One Protocol

#### DESCRIPTION

ABC...Plus One is a reading strategy protocol for small groups to explore ideas, areas of agreement, and connections. Each participant selects and records responses to specific prompts on the Note Catcher on page 15.

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Review the ABC...Plus One process in your group. Provide each team member with a letter from A to D.
2. Starting on page 16, read the article *Creating a Growth Mindset in Your Students* and in the appropriate box on page 15 record:
  - One thing with which you **Agree**
  - One **Big Idea**
  - One **Connection** to your current work
3. **Round 1:** Each member shares their **Agree** box without elaborating about why they chose that item. When all **Agree** boxes have been read, Person A offers a summarizing paraphrase of what has been said. He or she then leads a short discussion among the group about what influenced members to write what they wrote.
4. **Round 2:** Each member repeats the process with the **Big Idea** box. Person B leads the discussion.
5. **Round 3:** Each member repeats the process with the **Connection** box. Person C leads the discussion.
6. **Round 4:** Each person locates the fourth box on the Note Catcher and writes how this information might be used or applied. Members repeat the process with Person D leading the discussion.
7. Small groups share insights with the larger group.



### ABC...Plus One Note Catcher

Actions	Reflections from Article
<b>A</b> <b>Agree</b>	
<b>B</b> <b>The Biggest Idea</b>	
<b>C</b> <b>Connection to Our Work</b>	
<b>+1</b> <b>Application to Our School</b>	

#### Discussion Prompt

How can this protocol help to clarify the main ideas of the reading while transferring the understanding to your school setting?

#### RESOURCES

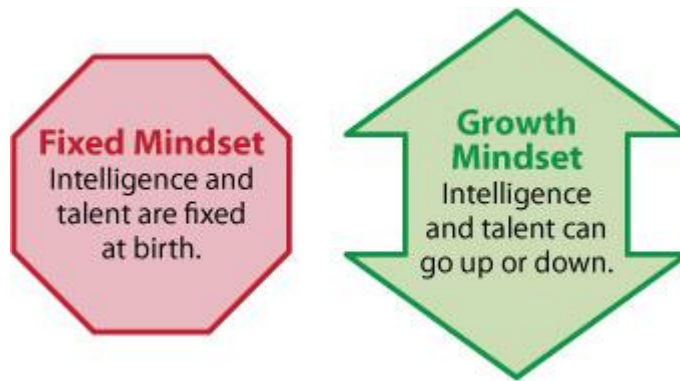
- Article: Thoughtful Learning. (2012) *Creating a Growth Mindset in Your Students*
- ABC...Plus One Note Catcher



## Creating a Growth Mindset in Your Students

Submitted by King on Tue, 2012-03-27

Belief that you can become smarter and more talented opens the doorways to success. That’s what twenty years of research has shown [Carol Dweck](#)<sup>[1]</sup> of Stanford University. She has identified two opposing beliefs about intelligence and talent, beliefs that strongly impact our ability to learn.



Though the fixed mindset has traditionally held sway, many recent studies show that the growth mindset better represents our abilities. Our brains are much more elastic than previously thought, constantly growing new connections. IQ and talent are not fixed, but are mutable based on experience and attitude.

In her book [Mindset](#)<sup>[2]</sup>, Dweck outlines the dramatic effect that these opposing beliefs have on learners:

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
Wants to <b>prove</b> intelligence or talent.	Wants to <b>improve</b> intelligence or talent.
Avoids challenges for fear of failure.	Engages challenges to improve.
Gives up in the face of tough obstacles.	Persists in overcoming obstacles.

Avoids hard labor.	Sees labor as the path to success.
Treats criticism as an attack.	Treats criticism as an opportunity.
Feels threatened by others' success.	Feels inspired by others' success.

As you can see from this chart, the fixed mindset leads to many of the learning and discipline problems in school, while the growth mindset leads to optimal learning. Recent articles in [Scientific American](#)<sup>[3]</sup>, [Wired Science](#)<sup>[4]</sup>, and the [New York Times](#)<sup>[5]</sup> cite numerous studies that support Dweck's conclusions.

In one such study, urban Milwaukee students who were at risk for mental retardation were entered into an intensive education program prior to first grade. After the program, a control group scored an average of 83 on the Stanford-Binet IQ test, but the students who had worked in the program had an average IQ of 110. That's an average gain of 27 points, moving from borderline retardation to "bright" intelligence.

[Alfred Binet](#)<sup>[6]</sup> created the IQ test for a very similar application—to raise the intelligence of Parisian schoolchildren. In *Modern Ideas About Children*, he wrote the following:

"Never!" What a strong word! A few modern philosophers seem to lend their moral support to these deplorable verdicts when they assert that an individual's intelligence is a fixed quantity, a quantity which cannot be increased. We must protest and react against this brutal pessimism. We shall attempt to prove that it is without foundation.  
... With practice, training, and above all, method, we manage to increase our attention, our memory, our judgment and literally to become more intelligent than we were before.

## How Can I Create the Growth Mindset?

Clearly, if we can shift students from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset, we can eliminate many learning challenges and classroom-management issues. But how can we make this mental shift?

### 5 Steps to Growth

Here's an easy 5-step process to fostering a growth mindset in your classroom:

1. **Believe it.** You can't instill a growth mindset in students until you have it yourself. Start by recognizing your current mindset. It determines the way that you interpret experience.

- **The fixed mindset is focused on judgment.** Positive experiences mean that you are smart or talented or both. Negative experiences mean that you are dumb or talentless or both.
- **The growth mindset is focused on improvement.** Positive experiences mean that you are on the right track. Negative experiences mean you have a chance to make changes and grow.

These mindsets manifest most clearly in the self-talk in your head. Whenever you hear a judging bit of self-talk such as “I’m just no good at this,” stop it and replace it with improvement talk: “I want to become better at this.”

2. **Teach it.** Now that you are shaping your own mindset toward growth, you can teach your students to do so as well. Tell students they can improve their IQs and talents—which are not fixed. Present the evidence you find in this article and in other resources. Teach students that education is not something someone else gives to them. Education is something they must grab for themselves.
3. **Model it.** Show students how to recognize judging thoughts, how to stop them, and how to replace them with growth thoughts. Make the rule that judging thoughts spoken aloud in your class will be stopped, and the student will need to rephrase the idea as a growth thought. By doing so with external dialogue, you help students recognize judging thoughts in internal dialogue. You also help students monitor each other and shift their thoughts toward growth.

Don't Say	Do Say
I'm so stupid.	What am I missing?
I'm awesome at this.	I seem to be on the right track.
I just can't do math.	I'm going to train my brain in math.
This is too hard.	This is going to take some time.
She's so smart, she makes me sick.	I'm going to figure out how she's doing it.
It's fine the way it is, and yours isn't any better.	That's an interesting idea for improvement.

“I am not discouraged, because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward.”

—Thomas Edison

4. Nourish it. Mindsets exist within a larger classroom culture. In your classroom, shift the focus from proving to improving, from product to process. An inquiry-based approach to learning facilitates the growth mindset by embracing challenges, obstacles, and criticisms as chief drivers of learning. Failure can be a great teacher if it is approached not as judgment but as opportunity. That mental shift frees you up as well. If you take some missteps as you are trying to shift the classroom culture, don't be embarrassed. Be empowered to improve.
5. Assess it. A classroom that focuses on summative assessment fosters an environment for a fixed mindset—assessment is all about judgment. A classroom that focuses on formative assessment fosters an environment for the growth mindset—assessment is about learning. That's not to say that summative assessments should be eliminated. Rather, when you focus on the formative side, the summative side becomes a rubber stamp that certifies the learning that students have been doing all along.

## Making Yourself Brilliant

In “[Learning to Read](#) <sup>[7]</sup>,” Malcolm X tells how, as a young man in prison, he started to acquire “some kind of homemade education.” He got a dictionary and copied every word on the first page, down to the punctuation. It took a day. On the next morning, though, he was proud of all the words he'd learned. So he copied the next page. And the next. And eventually, the whole dictionary. That dogged act helped Malcolm X to train his brain and to become one of the most literate and articulate people of the 20th century.

**How many Malcolm Xs are you teaching?** Help them see their potential. Make it clear to your students that they are responsible for their own intelligence and talent. They are even responsible for the mindset that helps them develop both. Help them to stop the thoughts that are stopping them, and to open their minds to a wide-open future.

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Source URL: <http://www.thoughtfullearning.com/blogpost/get-smart-become-talented>

## Activity 4: What’s the Link?

### DESCRIPTION

Participants make a connection between Academic Optimism and a Growth Mindset that can be supported or implemented within their school.

### DIRECTIONS

1. In school teams, draw a Venn Diagram on chart paper. Label the first circle, Academic Optimism and the second Growth Mindset.
2. Using sticky notes of the same color, individually brainstorm key points and big ideas regarding Academic Optimism that you have learned or discussed in the session and place in the diagram. Repeat the process using a different color sticky note for Growth Mindset.
3. As a team, examine both sections of the Venn Diagram. Move sticky notes that have a natural connection into the overlapping circles in the middle of the diagram that could be supported or implemented within your school.
4. Discuss ways of shifting the school culture through the link between Academic Optimism and Growth Mindset that supports all students becoming successful.

### Discussion Prompt:

What will be the most challenging task as you begin to shift the culture and mindset of teachers, parents, and students to one of Academic Optimism?

**Part 4: Building a Plan for School-Wide Academic Optimism**

## Part 4: Building a Plan for School-Wide Academic Optimism

### Activity 5: Developing an Action Plan for Academic Optimism

#### DESCRIPTION

In Activity 5, participants create an action plan to promote a culture of school-wide Academic Optimism.

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Using the Action Plan Template on the following page, begin to plan what actions will be taken to support a culture of Academic Optimism. Consider incorporating the components of Academic Optimism and Growth Mindset as you design your plan.
2. During the process, plan for obstacles (speed bumps) and detours that may occur during the implementation stage.
3. After completing the Action Planning Template use the Academic Optimism Journey Map (separate handout) to outline the steps in your plan. This journey map will support the school’s goal to develop a culture of Academic Optimism leading to increased academic achievement for ALL students. Keep in mind the ‘Who’ on the Academic Optimism Journey Map will be the group of stakeholders targeted for each action throughout the year.

#### Discussion Prompts:

When writing your action plan, what additional data might you need before you can solidify your plans?

What tools or supports may be needed for all stakeholders as they begin their journey to a Culture of Academic Optimism?

#### RESOURCES

- Action Plan Template
- The Journey to a Culture of Academic Optimism Map (separate handout)



## Action Plan Template

Focus Area:					
Month	Action Item <i>What specific steps need to be taken to accomplish the Action Item(s)?</i>	Intended Outcome <i>What will be observed and measured to indicate success?</i>	Who Will be the Targeted Group? <i>What group staff, parents, students will be the target group for this action step?</i>	Who Will be Responsible to Make it Happen? <i>Will there be a group involved or an individual person taking on the responsibility?</i>	Any Foreseeable Roadblocks or Speed Bumps? <i>How can they be planned for and addressed?</i>

Focus Area:					
Month	Action Item <i>What specific steps need to be taken to accomplish the Action Item(s)?</i>	Intended Outcome <i>What will be observed and measured to indicate success?</i>	Who Will be the Targeted Group? <i>What group (staff, parents, students) will be the target group for this action step?</i>	Who Will be Responsible to Make it Happen? <i>Will there be a group involved or an individual person taking on the responsibility?</i>	Any Foreseeable Roadblocks or Speed Bumps? <i>How can they be planned for and addressed?</i>

### Session Evaluation

Thank you for attending Module 1a. Your feedback is very important to us! Please fill out a short survey about this morning’s session.

The survey is located here: <http://surveys.pcgus.com/s3/CT-Module-1a>.

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