

Growth Mindset Language for Communicating with Teachers

As leaders support teachers in the refinement of their practice, using growth-minded language helps teachers accept feedback and learn from it. It is important to give teachers formative feedback about their progress so they can see their growth and specific opportunities for improvement. It is also important to communicate that obstacles are to be expected, but that leaders have high expectations that all teachers can overcome them.

Use these language frames when communicating with teachers in emails, during lesson studies, in staff meetings, and in conferences.

When the teacher is succeeding with strong effort:

- You should be proud of your persistence in this area. It was worth all the extra effort!
- Even when the content is challenging for your students, you keep at it until they learn.
- I can see that you've worked hard to listen to feedback and grow from it.
- You are always improving!
- You have put so much energy into making improvements to your practice. It must have taken a lot of perseverance to get your students to be so successful.
- I can tell you have put a lot of preparation into your lesson planning. Your students are really benefiting from your hard work.
- Remember for a moment how challenging this class was when you first started the year. Look at how far they have come!
- All that hard work and deliberate effort is paying off!
- It's exciting to see the difference in your lessons now when I compare it to earlier observations.
- I can see you have learned a lot about (differentiating/formative assessment/behavior management/etc.) because _____.
- You used to have a hard time with (differentiating/classroom management/etc.), but over time, and with your commitment to improve, you have made amazing gains. You should be proud of yourself!

When the teacher has shown improved effort:

- I can see improvements in your classroom/instruction. What have you been doing differently in your planning/preparation?
- I can see improvements in your students. What have you been doing differently in your classroom?
- You are continuing to make gains in these areas. I can see a difference in this work compared to your earlier work.
- I see you are listening to the feedback and changing your practice accordingly. It's working! Keep it up!
- You have been focused on improving this area of your practice for a while now and you didn't quit! I can see you improving daily.
- Your hard work to improve student agency is clearly evident in your students' abilities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- You are growing so much as a teacher. It's exciting to see this achievement!
- I can tell that you have struggled to learn this new method. Way to go for taking a risk!
- You had a setback with those rigorous new standards, but you didn't give up. I'm proud that you were undaunted by a challenge.
- I noticed you took the initiative on that team task. You stepped outside your comfort zone, and you will be a better teacher for it!

- I can see that you have been trying new things to meet the needs of your students.
- You put a lot of effort into getting timely feedback to your students, and it makes a big difference in their learning.

When the teacher is not putting forth much effort:

Note: In this category, the teacher could be someone whose students are underperforming or else someone whose students are doing adequately - regardless of the (low/poor) quality of teaching (for example if the student population is traditionally high-achieving).

- It's great that you have that skill down. What can you take on next so you can grow as a teacher and improve learning outcomes for students?
- It looks like you aren't really challenged by this method of teaching. Do you think you're ready to step outside of your comfort zone to try something new?
- I think you are ready for a new challenge in your class/practice/subject area/career.
- Sometimes we don't want to try new things when we are afraid to make mistakes. But we have to learn to be vulnerable, because we need to model for the students that mistakes are how we learn!
- New standards can be overwhelming and intimidating. Share your feelings with your students. Demonstrate that this is an opportunity for all of us to stretch and grow!
- At times you seem afraid to take on new challenges. How can we make it feel safe to take risks?
- How can we best support you and respond to what you need?
- You are not showing much enthusiasm for teaching lately. Can we discuss ways to inspire you and breathe new life into your practice?
- Remember why you chose to be a teacher. You are here to make a difference!
- In leadership, we sometimes say, "'good' is the enemy of 'great'."
- Education is an exhausting career. I understand. But when we are improving and growing, we can still feel very motivated and energized. What would be exciting for you to work on or learn about?
- I really respect the years of experience and practice you have in education. I also have a perspective of education that I would love to discuss with you.
- Are you pleased with your current results in teaching and your students' learning outcomes? Why/why not?

When the teacher is struggling despite effort:

- I know that lesson didn't go as well as you had planned. Let's look at this as an opportunity to see how you can improve next time or identify current performance gaps.
- What did you do to prepare for this? What could you do to prepare differently next time?
- You are not there **yet**. Let's talk about what actions you can take to get there.
- I expect you to make some mistakes. This is how we learn what we need to focus on. What's important is that you identify the areas in which you can grow and target those for improvement.
- I know you are struggling, but you are making progress. I can see your growth in behavior management/building relationships/communicating learning goals.
- So you're not there yet. But look at how much progress you made on this. Do you remember how much more challenging this was for you last month?
- Anything worth doing does not come easily. What do you need support in so that you and your students can be successful?
- If we don't even try, we automatically fail. That is more embarrassing to me than setbacks.

When the teacher is discouraged and feeling helpless:

- I know that you are feeling discouraged lately. Here are some strategies you can try that I think will make a big difference.
- I do not expect you to know how to do this already. I am here to help you learn these new ways of doing business.
- These performance metrics are skills that are learnable. If you isolate each metric and practice with your students, I know you will improve.
- Your teaching will improve with more practice. I don't think you've practiced enough to develop your ability in this area.
- The curriculum is more challenging so we expect teachers to struggle with it at times—but you'll master it with time and effort.
- Juggling all the balls of teaching can be challenging, but it is just a set of skills. You have mastered new skills before, so I'm confident that you can do it again.
- If you haven't had the right kind of feedback and practice, you may feel as if you're not capable. Just because you are having a hard time now, it doesn't mean you will always find it this difficult.
- What parts of differentiating/classroom management/group work/assessment are difficult for you? Let's look at them together so we can see where the hang-up is.
- How can I best support you to grow as a teacher?
- What do you love about teaching? How can we capitalize on your passion to improve student outcomes?
- What do you think would be a starting point for improvement?

Growth-Minded Feedback Re-Framing: *Change to growth-minded feedback...*

...from this:	...to this:
Your class is so awesome.	You are focused on creating independent learners, and as a result your students are using great strategies for studying, managing their time, and practicing new material.
Your students are so well-behaved.	I can tell you've worked hard to build a relationship with your students because their behavior shows they respect you.
Nice job today!	When I saw you teaching today, I noticed that the students were really learning and enjoying the process. Nice job instilling a love of learning in your class!
You are a natural-born teacher!	You clearly enjoy teaching, because you are so attentive to the details, and you are always working to be the best teacher you can be.