

PROFILE

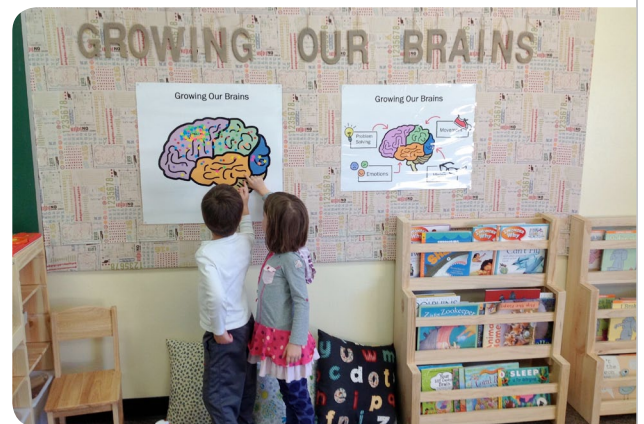
Mindset Works

What they are doing:

Mindset Works' mission is to enable a world in which people seek and are fulfilled by ongoing learning and growth. Core to this mission is the notion of a “growth mindset,” the idea that intelligence and abilities are qualities that are malleable, not fixed, and can be developed. The more students understand this, the better able they are to take an active role in their own academic development and do better in school. To that end, Mindset Works offers blended learning programs and instruction for students and a host of professional development activities for educators to help them bring the organization’s philosophy and approach into the classroom.

Two of Mindset Works’ cofounders, Stanford Professor Carol Dweck and research scientist Lisa Sorich Blackwell, had long been studying what motivates students. Their findings compelled them to develop and launch an online program called Brainology® in the early 2000s. Brainology, originally targeted at students in middle school, explains how the brain develops and provides a practical set of skills and strategies for applying that knowledge to learning and improving academic performance.

Mindset Works initially focused on students. But its leadership team quickly realized that it could have a greater impact if Mindset Works also took on the challenge of helping *teachers* help students develop a growth mindset within the school and classroom environment. With that aspiration in mind, the team pursued and obtained a contract with the US Department of Education in 2010. It funded expansion of Mindset Works’ offerings to include teacher training and provide additional resources to help schools cultivate a culture conducive to the development of students’ growth mindsets and, subsequently, individualized learning strategies. The Department of Education also funded Mindset Works to pilot its approach in nine US schools. This grant allowed the company to monitor progress in a relatively controlled setting and home in



Elementary school students use Mindset Works resources to talk about how brains develop.

on the factors that are most important in building growth mindsets and applying certain learning strategies in school settings. The company began this work in 2010 and now serves more than 500 schools using these programs, largely growing through word of mouth.

The organization currently offers a suite of tools for schools that includes the Brainology blended learning curriculum and the Mindset Works® EducatorKit, an online professional development course that explains the growth mindset and helps educators incorporate the concept into their everyday practice. The EducatorKit also offers teachers tools to support their own process of adopting and implementing growth mindset practices over time. Selected pieces of these resources are available at [Mindset Works' free resources page](#).

Mindset Works also is developing an online community for educators, providing a forum where they can reflect on their experiences, ask questions, and exchange ideas and insights about what they are learning. As one of the early participants of the pilot online network, Jill Osler, a staff development specialist at the Doniphan-Trumbull School in a rural Nebraska district explained in a blog post, "Learning about something is only half of it; being able to personalize, reflect, respond, and apply the learning is the other, more critical, portion." (The complete blog post is available [here](#).)

To integrate the Mindset Works approach into a school environment, often a champion at the district or school would expose colleagues to the growth mindset and Mindset Works resources. This then facilitates a team discussion and decision on diving deeper. Mindset Works' products are utilized to train all faculty and staff on growth mindset theory and practice. They learn how to cultivate a growth mindset within students and how to help students use their newfound knowledge to develop and apply productive learning strategies. This becomes a part of the school culture and itself an area of ongoing improvement.

With the support and encouragement of their professional community, the teachers take what they've learned into the classroom and integrate Mindset Works' concepts and strategies into their everyday teaching, including how they frame lessons and how they give feedback to their students.

To measure progress and to identify areas where the company can improve, Mindset Works conducts teacher and student observations and gathers feedback, and it tracks outcome data such as grades, test results, graduation rates, and teachers' perceptions of student behavior. The organization uses a process of research and iteration so that it can improve its offerings even as it continues to expand into new schools.

Mindset Works now serves more than 500 schools across hundreds of districts and continues to pursue deeper and wider impact, driven by the results the company has documented about the success of its efforts. As Bill Morones, principal at Florin High School in Sacramento, California, put it, "We had no idea that it could have such a powerful impact. It may be that these most important

discoveries about the human brain will revolutionize the way we think about motivating students and empowering educators.”

Mindset Works’ leaders see the implementation of Common Core State Standards as a promising window of opportunity to spread the growth mindset concept, as teachers and school leaders already are rethinking how they are teaching and how students are learning.

What they are learning:

- **School culture matters.** Working to develop a school culture that supports the growth mindset concept further strengthens the impact of Brainology and other techniques to help students understand how their brains work and apply that understanding to improve academic performance.
- **Sustained professional learning is critical to the success of this school culture work.** Teachers and school leaders need to develop a shared understanding of the mindsets, skills, and behaviors they seek to build in students. Moreover, when school leaders understand and become enthusiastic about the Mindset Works approach, they are better able to provide the resources, time, and support that teachers need to help students develop a growth mindset and productive learning strategies.
- **Continuous learning and iteration have helped the organization improve its products over time.** A process of constant, continuous learning—where educators test, report on, and hone the Mindset Works approach—is very important to Mindset Works’ continued success and its efforts to live a growth mindset as an organization.
- **A focus on mindset can have powerful implications across a school.** Mindset is a powerful foundation for school reform, as it tends to resonate with various constituencies and provides a framework that brings people together and encourages them to work collaboratively to improve.

This profile is one of a series of profiles on organizations focused on developing effective learners.

BOSTON
2 Copley Place, 7th Floor
Suite 3700B
Boston, MA 02116
Tel: 617 572-2833

NEW YORK
112 West 34th St., Ste. 1510
New York, NY 10120
Tel: 646 562-8900

SAN FRANCISCO
465 California St., 11th Fl.
San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: 415 627-1100

