**Year 11 – adopting a growth mindset**

**Dianne Marshall**

*Editor’s Note: The following text is an extract from one of Dianne’s Year 11 Presentation Day speeches.*

Each year I try to find something different to say at these presentation ceremonies. Usually during the year I see or hear something that resonates with me, especially for the Year 11 Presentation where I am trying to keep you motivated over the next year.

Recently I heard a presentation from Mark Scott, who is Secretary of our Department of Education. He was referring to Carol Dweck’s work on Growth Mindset. As a young researcher, Carol was fascinated by how some children wilt and shrink back from challenges and give up in the face of obstacles, whilst others enthusiastically seek challenges and become even more committed in the face of obstacles. Dweck, now a psychologist at Stanford University, eventually identified two core mindsets, or beliefs, about one’s own traits that shape how people approach challenges.

**Please see attached PowerPoint: *Year 11 – adopting a growth mindset (Dianne Marshall) PPT slides***

*Show Slide 1*



**Fixed mindset** is the belief that one’s abilities are carved in stone and predetermined at birth.

Who thinks they are not good at Maths or English?

When you are asked to do something you haven’t done before, do you make a list of all the reasons why you can’t do it, or it is not a good idea, or it is too risky? When you don’t do as well as you thought you would, do you say “I am just not good at that?”

**Growth mindset** is the belief that one’s skills and qualities can be cultivated through effort and perseverance.

* Do you like a challenge, learning something new, something hard?
* Do you keep at it until you get it right?
* Do you learn from your mistakes or setbacks?
* Do you ask for advice so that you can improve?
* Did you know that recent advances in neuroscience have shown us that the brain is far more malleable than we ever knew?

Research on brain plasticity has shown how connectivity between neurons can change with experience.

With practice, neural networks grow new connections, strengthen existing ones, and build insulation that speeds transmission of impulses. These neuroscientific discoveries have shown us we can increase our neural growth by the actions we take, such as using good strategies, asking questions, practising, and following good nutrition and sleep habits.

Let’s watch this short video.

*Show video:* <https://youtu.be/JC82Il2cjqA> *(Please note: You will need to edit or stop the video to avoid showing the material on Khan Academy.)*

Learning is a trial and error process. We all use different strategies to learn to walk, tie shoelaces, play a musical instrument or learn algebra – these are strategies that work for us:

* Did the child give up learning to walk because it was too hard or outside his or her comfort zone?
* Have you watched the different ways children do this?

Some crawl for ages and then stand. Others stand straight away, while some climb whatever is available, like legs and chairs. Did the child give up when someone learned to tie their shoelaces quicker and apparently, more easily than he or she did? It’s not just effort that’s important, because doing something which doesn’t work, over and over again, will probably produce the same result. We all need to adopt a **growth mindset** by learning from our mistakes, asking questions, watching what others do, trying different ways of doing things and practising until we get it right.

*Show Slide 2*



Here at [name of school] our teachers are always supporting students to find the appropriate learning strategy that will lead to success.

Persistence is very important. However an important lesson is that if you are stuck, it’s not just about more effort. You don’t need to re-double your efforts with the same ineffective strategies. Ask for help and find strategies that will lead to success.

Our Science teachers use the ALARM scaffold to help you learn. Do you like going to the Homework Centre? You are at a halfway point in your senior studies and it is time for you to *focus on your goals* and *work with your teachers* to develop your growth mindset and the strategies that will help you to be successful.

For most of you, by this time next year you will be in the final stages of your HSC examinations. It is time now for you to build upon what you have achieved so far. It is important that in a year’s time you can look back and know that you have given it your best.

One year is not really all that long in the context of your life. So my message today is simple. Focus on developing a growth mindset because the world of the future is going to be about taking on ill-defined, hard jobs that keep changing. It’s going to favour people who relish those challenges and know how to fix them.

At [name of school] we are committed to helping you become these type of people.

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Dianne has been Principal of Coffs Harbour Senior College since December 2013. Currently she is also a President of NSWSPC North Coast Region and a Member of the SPC Executive with the Student Wellbeing Portfolio and Senior Schools Interest Group. Her current interests include riding her e-bike, walking and reading.