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Tasha Booker

City Year Columbus

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Growth Mindset for Mentors Toolkit

Tasha Booker, Executive Director City Year Columbus, October 2016

<https://www.mindsetkit.org/growth-mindset-mentors>

Abstract

- Deeper understanding about the importance of growth mindset to help students succeed prompted City Year, an education nonprofit fueled by national service that works in high-need schools in 28 cities, including Columbus, to partner with Stanford University's Project for Education Research that Scales (PERTS) and MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.
- Together, as part of the U.S. Department of Education's Mentoring Mindsets Initiative, this nonprofit-higher education partnership developed a new research-based resource for mentors nationwide, the Growth Mindset for Mentors Toolkit.
- City Year piloted this online resource in partner schools in Columbus and Miami in early 2016; control sites were in Chicago and Little Rock. The toolkit was designed to help mentors encourage growth mindsets in students.
- Research by psychologist Carol Dweck demonstrates that having a growth mindset helps students retain confidence, perseverance and resilience and cultivate positive decisions, in addition to performing better in school.
- PERTS is conducting a randomized control trial based on survey data gathered from City Year's full-time AmeriCorps members in both the treatment and control sites to better understand the impact of this toolkit on mentors and their ability to cultivate a growth mindset in the students they serve.

Program Goals

- Explore the impact of the Growth Mindset for Mentors Toolkit on mentors' understanding of and ability to support student acquisition of a growth mindset
- Demonstrate the value of this toolkit for mentors and students nationwide
- Examine the extent to which City Year's diverse, full-time AmeriCorps members, who are trained in youth development practices, provide both academic coaching and social-emotional support, and are "near-peer" (older than the students they serve but young enough to relate to students' perspective), may be uniquely positioned to encourage a growth mindset
- Improve toolkit, based on feedback from the field and outcomes from pilot

City Year Overview

Founded in 1988, [City Year](#) is an education organization dedicated to helping students and schools succeed. Diverse teams of City Year AmeriCorps members provide high-impact student, classroom and school-wide supports to help students stay in school and on track to graduate from high school, ready for college and career success. A proud member of the AmeriCorps national service network, City Year is funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, local school districts, and private philanthropy from corporations, foundations and individuals.

In 2016-2017, City Year's 3,100 AmeriCorps members are serving 205,000 elementary, middle and high school students in 300 of our nation's highest-need schools, across 28 U.S. cities.

Metrics & Evaluations

- PERTS surveyed more than 450 City Year AmeriCorps members at the treatment sites in Columbus and Miami and the control sites, Chicago and Little Rock, pre- and post-intervention with a range of questions about growth mindset, beliefs about mentoring and actual mentoring practice.
- AmeriCorps members at treatment sites participated in a series of on-line mini-lessons (interactive and videos) contained in the toolkit, and participated in three in-person conversations to reflect on the materials and growth mindset, facilitated in a group setting.
- PERTS is currently measuring the impact of the intervention through analyzing student social-emotional learning and academic outcomes captured through the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), math and reading assessment scores, and student grades in math and English Language Arts.



Data & Highlights

Final student-level results from the pilot were not available at the time of writing. However pre-post changes in mentor survey outcomes as a result of treatment were observed and are included below:

- Compared to a control group, treatment-group AmeriCorps members in Columbus and Miami showed **an increase in their endorsement of the belief** that their lowest-performing students can perform at a high level.
- The treatment had a **statistically significant effect on beliefs that students can be helped with mentoring**, that mistakes are an opportunity to learn and that mentors should focus on process feedback for student learning.
- The Growth Mindset for Mentors Toolkit had a **96 percent approval rate** – mentors overwhelmingly rated it as helpful and practically actionable.
- Self-reported growth mindset of the mentors **did not change** after using the toolkit, but mentor ratings before engaging with the toolkit were already near maximum level.
- Feb. 25, 2016, **officials from the U.S. Department of Education** visited Livingston Elementary School in Columbus to observe City Year AmeriCorps members working with students and engaging with the toolkit.

Responses to Toolkit:

"Showing our students that mistakes are just as teachable as succeeding, if not more so," wrote an AmeriCorps member, "allows them to run at problems full force without worrying or being embarrassed about having a misstep."

"Great inventors and educators know that struggling is an essential part of learning, growing, and ultimately succeeding," said Assistant Secretary Nadya Chinoy Dabby, who visited Livingston Elementary School in Columbus in February.

"That is why it was especially exciting to watch mentors work through the toolkit and better understand how they – and their students – can learn and grow from the challenges they are facing," Dabby said.

Partnering Organizations

PERTS, Stanford University's Project for Education Research that Scales, is an applied research center that develops, tests and disseminates learning mindset resources.

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, which is dedicated to expanding the quality and quantity of youth mentoring relationships for the nation's young people, was the lead designer of the Growth Mindset for Mentors Toolkit.

Raikes Foundation, which provided support the Growth Mindset for Mentors Toolkit, partners with innovative organizations and creative thinkers who are making lasting, positive change in the lives of young people

Next Steps

In the 2016-17 school year, City Year plans to expand the toolkit to 12 sites across the country, with approximately 1,200 AmeriCorps members serving 100,000 students in 120 schools.

AmeriCorps members will participate in 4.5 hours of training, including self-directed online engagement with the toolkit and facilitated dialogue sessions.

Questions about growth mindset and the toolkit will be incorporated into surveys completed by City Year AmeriCorps members to capture the impact of this tool in the field.

Contact Info

Tasha Booker
City Year Columbus
tbooker@cityyear.org
cityyear.org/columbus

