

Educationally Speaking
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“If you think you can, you can. And if you think you can’t, you’re right.” This quote, attributed to Mary Kay Ash is significantly relevant in relation to student learning. There is substantial research that shows that student beliefs about competence greatly influence how they approach learning and challenging situations. Student beliefs about competency *will be influenced* by a variety of factors including their prior successes and failures, teacher expectations, and parental expectations.

Some students believe that intelligence is a fixed attribute and that students either are intelligent or not intelligent. Other students see intelligence as a changeable attribute, something that can be grown and be strengthened over time. The application is that students who believe that intelligence is fixed will not try challenging or difficult learning because they will conclude that they lack the intelligence to be successful. For students who believe that they can develop greater intelligence, there is increased likelihood that they will try harder or persevere longer when challenged with difficult learning situations.

As parents, we have a major role in student beliefs. To what extent do we recognize and praise progress of our students? Or, does recognition occur only with perfection or the meeting of expectations? Are we able to help students see the relationship between effort and competence? Do we communicate the belief that intelligence can be grown and strengthened?

The school year is well underway and students have experienced varying levels of success and are probably responding in a variety of ways based upon both their beliefs about intelligence and their actual performance. As we continue to work with our students, let’s keep in mind that, “Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.” – Anonymous.

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