

November 30, 2015

what is the
PURPOSE?

When Grit Isn't Enough

to argue that "grit" and "growth mindset" are ~~not~~ insufficient frameworks for students living in poverty whose basic needs are not met.

The transformative potential in growth mindsets and social-emotional skills such as grit may be more applicable to students whose basic needs are already met.

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Back to Skills

The first time I heard a preschooler explaining a classmate's disruptive behavior, I was surprised at how adult her four-year-old voice sounded.

Her classmate "doesn't know how to sit still and listen," she said to me, while I sat at the snack table with them. He couldn't learn because he couldn't follow directions, she explained, as if she had recently completed a behavioral assessment on him.

Months before either of these children would start kindergarten, they had formed judgements about who was smart and capable of learning and who was not. They had absorbed ideas on why some students wrote their names neatly, and others broke crayons.

This precocious little girl talked about her classmate matter-of-factly and without any malice in a classroom where the teachers were well trained and supportive of a diverse student body that was racially and economically mixed.

Evidence (anecdote) illustrates how even children internalize "fixed mindset" judgments about behavior that is actually caused by external factors.

The transformative potential in growth mindsets and social-emotional skills such as grit may be more applicable to students whose basic needs are already met. When asking the question of why some children succeed in school and others don't, he said the educators and administrators tend to overestimate the power of the person and underestimate the power of the situation.

Comparison strategy - contrasting "Academic Grit"

Howard also provided two ways of considering the distractions that may affect a student's success in school. In the left column are questions typically asked to gauge a student's persistence or grit and that students respond to using a four-point scale, while on the right are questions that are more concerned with daily struggles a student may face. Howard argues for an academic climate that is as mindful of the question on the right as those on the left. [See his slideshow here]

vs. "Survival reality"

Focuses on internal discipline

New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones <i>definition of Grit</i>	I always have bus fare to get to school <i>Systemic barriers - shows that lack of focus is often actually a lack of resources</i>
I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest	I hear my parents talking about not having enough money for the rent
I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one	Whenever I get sick, I am able to go to a doctor
Setbacks don't discourage me	We always have enough food in our home
I finish whatever I begin	I worry about going to school safely
I have achieved a goal that took years of work	There are times when I have to stay home to care for younger brothers or sisters
	I know where I am going to sleep tonight
	I have at least one teacher who cares about me

Academic Grit
New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones

Crucial support - highlights that relationships are a ~~prerequisite~~ prerequisite for success, not just will power.