Using Rubrics to Promote a Growth Mindset
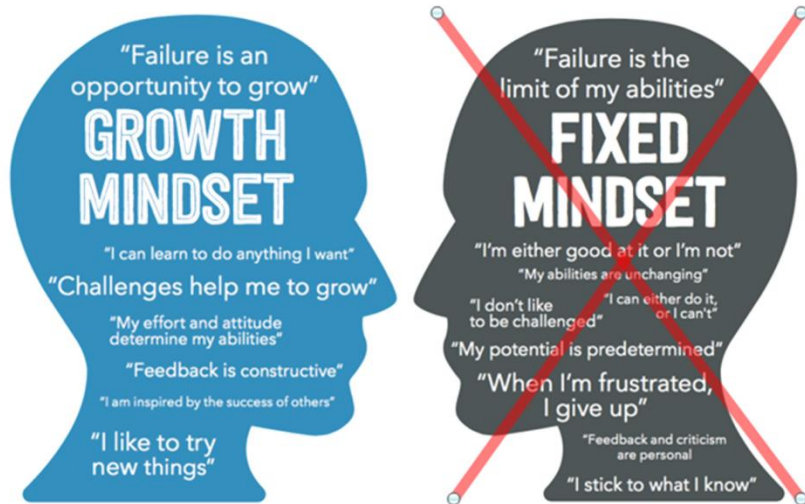
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The language we use and the actions we take profoundly impact student learning. Let's use the language of *growth mindsets* (Dweck, 2015) in our rubrics.

Rubric Category

Referring to task performance and product quality in terms of generic **L4**, **L3**, **L2**, **L1**, and **L0** (aka. level **R**), communicates the wrong message – that it is all about the *grade* and not about the *achievement* of learning outcomes and course expectations. So, let's re-label these using the language of growth mindsets – in a word, *yet (*Dweck, 2014). In *BrightSpace* (or *Moodle*) one might reword the generic labels as shown below.

Mindset-consistent Levels	☺ Exceptional! (L4) 4 points	☺ Well Done! (L3) 3 points	☺ Almost There... (L2) 2.4 points	☺ Not Yet... (L1) 2 points	☹ Not Done Yet or Needs Work... (L0) 0 points
Criterion 1					
Criterion 2					
Criterion 3					
Criterion 4					
Overall Score	☺ Exceptional! (L4) 12.8 or more	☺ Well Done! (L3) 11.2 or more	☺ Almost There... (L2) 9.6 or more	☺ Not Yet... (L1) 8 or more	☹ Not Done Yet or Needs Work... (L0) 0 or more

These are aligned with conventional boundaries: 80%, 70%, 60% and 50%

Yes, it is useful to have *congratulatory* messages for **L3** and **L4**. These students met expectations.

What about the others?

These were renamed to encourage a growth mindset. *Almost there* signals that, with a little more work, the provincial expectation may be met. *Not yet* is a stronger signal. For **L4**, *not done yet or needs work* encourages and suggests next steps – it is better to encourage than to signal the failure that is usually associated with **L0**.

But, why stop there?

Remember, *all* students can grow!

Overall Feedback

Use *overall feedback* at the end of a rubric to encourage:

- a growth mindset;
- reflection;
- self-advocacy; and
- ownership of their learning;

at each level.

These are aligned with conventional boundaries: 80%, 70%, 60% and 50%. (In this exhibit, the rubric scores range from 0 to 16.)

Level Name*	Start Range*	Description	Feedback
☺ Exceptional! (L4)	12.8		Very well done! Exceptional work! There are always things that you can do to improve what you do (the *process*) and the *product*. What worked well? What did not? Reflect on these to improve how you get things done!
☺ Well Done! (L3)	11.2		Well Done! Reflect on your learning, both what you did (the *process*) and the *product*. What worked well? What did not? This should help you improve how you get things done!
☺ Almost There..			Almost there! Let's put a plan together so you can improve this to meet expectations, ok?
☺ Not Yet... (L1)	8		You're not there yet. Let's learn from what you did so far. What did you do that you should continue to do and what did you do that you should stop doing? Reflecting on these, let's put a plan together so that you can meet expectations.
☹ Not Done Yet (	0		Let's see what we can do about this. You seem to have had a hard time getting this activity done. Let's put a plan together for you to complete this task, ok?

Though intended as a starter-set, comments like these may be customized[1] or used *as-is*. Either way, be sure that comments align with the activity associated with the rubric.

Your feedback is very welcome!

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References

Dweck, C. (2014). *The power of believing that you can improve*. Retrieved May 7, 2019, from TedTalks: https://youtu.be/_X0mgOOSpLU

Dweck, C. (2015). Carol Dweck Revisits the 'Growth Mindset'. *Education Week*. Retrieved May 7, 2019, from https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/09/23/carol-dweck-revisits-the-growth-mindset.html

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[1] You may need to modify the *Start Range* each of the overall feedback items anyway so, while you are there, verify that the feedback comments are consistent with your intentions.