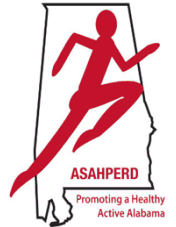


Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset Feedback in Health & Physical Education



The language teachers use in health and physical education shapes how students view effort, ability, and learning. These tables highlight the difference between fixed mindset feedback and growth-minded feedback, showing how intentional words can support confidence, persistence, and skill development.

Growth-Minded Feedback: Physical Education vs. Health Education		
Focus	Physical Education (Movement-Based)	Health Education (Classroom-Based)
Effort	“I can see the effort you’re putting into each attempt — that effort helps your body learn the skill.”	“The effort you’re putting into thinking and reflecting is helping you understand this topic.”
Learning	“Your body is learning through practice, even when the movement isn’t perfect yet.”	“Learning health concepts takes time — each question helps your understanding grow.”
Mistakes	“That miss gives you information — what can you adjust on the next try?”	“That response shows where learning can grow — let’s think it through together.”
Struggle	“Struggle is part of learning new skills — let’s break the skill into smaller steps.”	“Struggle means you’re learning something new — let’s slow it down.”
Improvement	“Your practice is paying off — look how your movement changed.”	“Your effort to study and reflect is showing in your understanding.”
Persistence	“Sticking with this challenge is how skills develop.”	“Staying engaged with the material helps learning deepen.”
Comparison	“Your progress is about your learning, not anyone else’s.”	“Understanding grows at different rates — focus on your own learning.”
Confidence	“You’re building confidence through practice.”	“Confidence comes from learning and understanding.”

Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset Feedback in Physical Education		
Situation	Fixed Mindset Feedback	Growth-Minded Feedback
A student struggles to catch a ball	“You’re just not very coordinated.”	“Your hands weren’t ready yet—let’s try a softer toss so you can practice getting in position.”
A student avoids a skill	“Some kids just aren’t athletic.”	“You haven’t practiced this yet. Every athlete starts somewhere.”
A student fails at a new movement	“You need to try harder.”	“What part felt hardest? Let’s break it into one small step.”

A student learns quickly	“You’re a natural!”	“You picked that up fast because you focused and kept adjusting.”
A student makes repeated mistakes	“You keep messing this up.”	“Every rep is teaching your body something—what did you feel change that time?”
A student compares themselves to others	“They’re just better at sports.”	“They’ve had more practice. Your progress is about you, not them.”
A student gets frustrated	“Calm down—it’s not that hard.”	“This is challenging, and that’s where learning happens. Let’s reset and try again.”
A student succeeds	“See? You’re good at this.”	“Your practice paid off. You stayed with it.”

Conclusion & Key Takeaways

The words educators use in physical education and health education shape how students understand effort, learning, and their own potential. While the settings may differ, gym versus classroom, the message is the same: learning is a process, not a trait.

Key takeaways:

- Feedback communicates beliefs about ability and learning.
- Growth-minded language emphasizes effort, process, and progress.
- Mistakes are information, not evidence of failure.
- Students develop confidence when feedback focuses on what can be learned, not who they are.
- Consistent language across physical education and health education reinforces a culture of growth.

When teachers intentionally choose growth-minded feedback, they create environments where students feel safe to try, struggle, and improve.

Reflective Question

Think about the last piece of feedback you gave a student. Did your words describe their ability or their learning?

Challenge:

Choose one moment this week to intentionally shift your feedback to highlight effort or learning and notice how the student responds.