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The Effects of Growth Mindset Intervention on Vocabulary Skills in First to Third Grade Children

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First and Last Name/s of Presenters

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Abstract

Halliwell et al.: The Effects of Growth Mindset Intervention on Vocabulary Skills i

The Effects of Growth Mindset Intervention on Vocabulary Skills in First to Third Grade Children

Students: Tonaysia Cohen, Tatiana Cruz, Iyana Gallen, Bethany Halliwell, Fiona Mullarkey and Julia Petrozzino

Mentors: Susan Gannon and Dawn Melzer

Major: Psychology

Growth mindset interventions aim to help children realize that through effort and perseverance their performance in the classroom can be improved (Dweck, 2006). This is in contrast to a fixed mindset, which is the belief that intelligence and talent are something we are born with and are not malleable. Although most children begin their academic careers with a growth mindset, by third grade fifty percent have shifted to a fixed mindset. This transformation is even more prevalent in children from low-income schools. In the current study, children between first and third grade from the Horizon Program were placed in a growth mindset intervention to investigate the effect of mindset on learning new vocabulary words. Children enrolled in the Horizon Program are from low-income environments and have literacy difficulties. Following the administration of vocabulary and mindset pretests, the students were given growth mindset training sessions focused on the brain and how it grows through learning, perseverance, and effort. Students were then given vocabulary lessons. At the culmination of the study, all students were given both a vocabulary and mindset survey post-test. Findings revealed a significant increase in the number of vocabulary words children knew and they used significantly more growth mindset words (e.g., practice, brain) in their responses on the post-tests. The results revealed that the students in the program not only greatly increased their vocabulary skills, but also benefitted by gaining a new perspective on the importance of hard work and perseverance.

Keywords: growth mindset, vocabulary, intervention, perseverance