

Growth Mindset

Video: Case Study Math Camp

(JO BOALER:) When we brought in these 81 kids from camp that was really interesting, we had asked to bring in these kids from kind of underserved communities and particularly kids who had had bad maths experiences. So we had these four classes of kids and the first days, you know the first day, besides the fact they all said they weren't a math person, they also were very quiet, they were very withdrawn, and they started to see that we really valued their ideas and they, as the time goes in it becomes amazing how all the kids are excited and joining in. They said to the researchers when they were interviewed, I would never put up my hand in math class in school because I know that the teacher values one idea on one person but here, we know the teachers value all of our ideas, and they talked about how group work was completely different, normally in group work it's all about one person and people being put down and how in the group work it was about all of the ideas coming together. But the kids were transformed, they increased their test scores, they took a district test before they came to us, they spent 18 days with us in camp, 18 maths lessons, we gave them the same test at the end and they improved on average by 50 percent across the 81 students. And they would tell you that they totally changed their views about themselves and what they could do. And we had very powerful interviews with them saying, you know, I thought I wasn't a math person, now I know that I can do math, I can do anything. That belief transformed them and then they were in classrooms as they said when their ideas were valued, the different perspectives were shared and valued. And I remember one of the interviews, one of the children said to the interviewer, you know they trusted us. And the interviewer said, what do you mean they trusted you? And they said, well, we had rolling chairs, there were wheels on our chairs. And it, that was such an interesting comment to me because no, at no point did any of the kids wheel around on their chairs. But the fact that they were in an environment where they had wheels on their chairs, and then they also talked about how one day we gave them sugar cubes, they gave us sugar cubes, we could have eaten them. But they, you know it, they said like, it was, at school we're very restricted but here we were just free and it was about running free with our ideas as well as, you know, physically being allowed to do things.