

## Growth Mindset Thinkers

### Video: Leadership and Systemic Change

(ALAN SCHOENFELD:) It's all understood that we are a team whose collective responsibility is our individual and collective improvement, so that we work on it together. And I think that's a vitally important thing because in the United States at least, teaching is not treated in the ways that enable it to become the kind of profession it should look like. I want to see teachers empowered to do their best. And given the opportunities to do that. And that means changing the culture where it needs to be changed. And that's related to the question of leadership. Because in many school contexts, again in the United States, teachers don't have the kind of autonomy either individually or collectively that they might have, especially if there are high-stakes and other mandates that make it very difficult to do anything but what you know how to do. Because the cost of mistakes are so dear.

That's why -- well, I'll give an example and then do the "That's why." California for many years had a very basic skills end of year exam called the California Standards Test. No matter who the teacher was, if you went into that teacher's classroom in February and part of March, that teacher was drilling for the test. Because the consequences for the students and the consequences for the teacher were dramatic unless the kids did well. Now I mentioned earlier that we have clear evidence that says if you teach for skills, conceptual understanding and problem-solving, your kids will do every bit as well on the test, as if you just drilled them. But tell that to a teacher facing high-stakes consequences for the kid and for him or herself the month before the exam. Okay?

It takes a lone ranger. It takes a collaborative culture where administrators take responsibility and say I'm willing to accept these changes. And the first year of transition may be rough as we learn these new skills, but the payoff will be substantial. And we have every reason to expect that it will be. That I will back the department if it's a principal or if it's a province administration in making the steps that move toward the kind of richer instruction that we know works. And we will make the time. And in the short term, provide the kind of resources at the province -- at the school-level, that enable the school culture to build in such a way that it grows its own leaders if they don't exist.

And it really is a matter of building the cultures and growing the leadership infrastructure within schools within the districts. We're asking for stuff that's much more complex. I will never claim that teaching this way is easier. I will claim that it's much more rewarding for teacher and kids, and that everyone gets a lot more out of it. But the pathway to it is long and slow. And you get there by making a systemic commitment to it. If the leadership exists within a school, you capitalize on those people and help them move forward. If the leadership is nascent, but they don't yet have the capacity, you start by providing support, and you remove yourself as soon as that capacity is there.

But it's a long-term process. Because what we're really talking about is changing the system.