

Active Schools Fife: Mindset coaching through sport

BACKGROUND

Darren Wilson is a co-ordinator for Active Schools in Fife. His work includes training teachers about the potential for active gym lessons to contribute to pupils' development across the curriculum. He sees growth mindset as something which can be taught through activity and sport as

well as in the classroom, to the overall benefit of individuals. Taking the champions course provided Darren and colleague Ronan with resources and connections to other professionals as he and colleagues developed teaching materials.

“ A lot of teachers see the gym hall and the classroom as two separate places, using the gym hall sessions for fitness rather than to build competencies. ”

ONLINE RESOURCE

Darren and Ronan are creating an online mindset resource called *Active Minds* to integrate into Fife council's project 'Our minds matter'. The purpose of their resource is to provide information to educators and parents about the theory of growth mindset and suggestions of language to use and phrases to avoid in order to develop a growth rather than fixed mindset. It is also proposed to have an area for educators to share ideas and ask questions about specific aspects of learning and teaching within a moderated environment, with Active Schools providing feedback and signposting in a forum-style setting. Being part of the forum on the champions course gave the idea to create a similar resource:

“There was so much sharing of information, but only really between people who already have an interest in that. So we wanted to create a place where everyone could go.”

The Active Schools team seek to help teachers see the potential of PE lessons to teach resilience as well as fitness. The online resource will be available to all, enabling a consistent message to be given to children across all their sport and activity experiences: in school PE teaching, sports coaching, and community groups – all the areas Active Schools target.

SHARING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

Darren was invited to speak to a group of parents and carers of a primary school about growth mindset in the context of activity and sport, presenting ways they can help support children adopt a growth mindset. They discussed and challenged fixed mindset trends around help with homework (e.g. parents saying 'I'm rubbish at maths, I can't help you with that'), gender stereotyping (e.g. dad takes son to football classes, mum takes daughter to dancing), and physical activity (e.g. parents not

having time to take children out to play, and offering screentime instead).

"A lot of people would have left with loads of things to do, or loads of things to think about, anyway."

The school saw it as valuable, extending their in-school mindset work to home. It has also meant that parents know about the resource that Active Schools provides:

"It's been good for me as well in terms of the school. When I go into the school now and I see parents, they know who I am and they'll ask things, or they'll email and say 'have you got anything to help with this'. So it's been quite good. And it's been good to integrate sport into the school, because they're seeing that we're doing work on that, and the effect that can have on the child. Rather than just being a football club they see the learning."

USING MINDSET TO ENCOURAGE TEAMWORK IN SPORT

"I think what was letting them down was when mistakes were made they were passing blame and getting at each other."



A local youth basketball team invited Darren to present a session about mindset, learning and feedback to improve their training and teamwork.

He invited the team members to share ways in which they speak to each other during training and games and challenged them to consider how what we say impacts play, feeling and future behaviour.

"We did group sharing, writing down what team mates had said to them at the last two games, and how it had made them feel. Most of it was negative. ... We've got a moral obligation – not everyone's going to be sporty, but we use sport to make them better people. You don't go into your work and laugh at your boss... We spoke about manners and things like that."

The coach reported that it made a difference for four weeks of practice, after which the coaches reiterated the messages and together the club created a team ethos. "It was like they led their own learning."

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