



The Center for Teaching and Learning

at the Michael D. Eisner College of Education

CTL on the Cutting Edge

Project Connect

Research Questions

What is a “*mindset*”? CTL innovator Dr. Robert Brooks defined *mindsets* as “the assumptions and expectations we have for ourselves and others that guide our behavior” (Goldstein & Brooks, 2007). Brooks posits that teacher mindsets can have a profound impact on student outcomes and what happens in the classroom. If so, then how might teachers’ behaviors change if they are more aware of their own mindsets? What might we see in master teachers or their own student teachers if they discussed mindsets and engaged in critical thinking activities about their own mindsets? Those questions and more led to one CTL Innovation group to create Project Connect.

The Project

Project Connect is an opportunity to make meaningful "connections" with educators, specifically around the concept of *mindsets*. Project Connect focuses on infusing the concept of teacher mindsets into elementary schools by working with select master teachers who help to train CSUN student teachers. CTL Fellow Robin Mlynarik (Elementary Education department) collaborated with school-based professional development leaders Kathryn Coleman and Erin Studer to establish Project Connect in order to bring the CTL innovation of *Mindsets* and the work of Dr. Robert Brooks to Sylmar Elementary School, one of CSUN's partnership schools. The Innovation Leader (Jessica Tunney), Project Liaison (Robin Mlynarik), and five Sylmar master teachers meet throughout the school year and focus on delivery of knowledge, dispositions, and shared vocabulary, all around the concept of mindsets, islands of competence, and resilience. Together they work to understand how teacher mindsets connect to the school context and their individual classroom contexts. When the master teacher becomes comfortable with new information and ideas, they begin to implement ideas into their practice. In this way they model implementation for their student teachers and encourage student teachers to use these new strategies. The CSUN university supervisor (Mlynarik) is working with the master teachers to develop and refine mindset strategies and observe student teachers as they implement these strategies with elementary students. Formal and informal student teacher observations are being conducted with post-lesson conferences. Data collection will support research and further implementation of the Project and consultation with Dr. Brooks will be done throughout the Project.

What's Next...

Project Connect hopes to establish process and procedures to effectively implement various innovation concepts that can be used as a model in other schools, starting with the concept of *mindsets*. The project seeks to document how the theory of mindsets works its way into practice through the work of both master teacher and student teacher and effect children in their classrooms. The Center for Teaching and Learning has embraced this innovation and will move forward on future implementation, observation, research and publications.

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