**Facilitator Narrative:**

**The Story behind Learning Mindsets**

The facilitators at Eskolta School Research and Design have worked with educators supporting struggling students for years. When they first began their work with schools, before they had become as familiar with some of the research you’ll explore today, there was a group of these educators who were coming together for regular meetings to share ideas with one another. At one point, they were talking about students they had worked with for weeks and months with no progress. They said it was like banging your head against a wall. But then, there was this moment when suddenly the students got it. It was like an epiphany, like magic, like “flipping a switch.” They knew that the students’ beliefs about themselves changed, and that in turn led those students to become more motivated at school. But the mechanism behind that change was mysterious.

Research tells us that moment isn’t magic; it’s not so mysterious. There are things we say and do that can help facilitate that change and help students achieve more. In 2012 the Consortium on Chicago School Research put together a report on factors that lead to student success. Cognitive skills and content knowledge were, of course, important, as we all know already. But the researchers also emphasized the importance of academic behaviors. Things like attendance, participation in class, organization, and ability to do independent work. What they found was that students who exhibited these sorts of readily visible, observable behaviors were much more likely to succeed after high school. The only problem, the big problem, is that they can’t really be taught directly. But teachers *can* influence what’s behind the scenes in a student’s mind. And behind the scenes, as it turns out, are learning mindsets.

When students change their mindsets, when they “flip the switch,” they reorient the way they think about themselves as learners. A change in mindset is a high-leverage starting point for changing behaviors. Coupled with the right set of strategies and support in a learning environment, a mindset shift can lead to changes in the way students act, participate, engage, and learn in school. And this is why mindsets are so important—they are a starting point to helping students become more engaged at school and really hold on to the things they learn.

**Three interrelated learning mindsets** that have been shown to have the greatest effect on student motivation and success are the **growth mindset** (“my effort leads to growth”), **value for learning** (“this work has value for me”), and **sense of belonging** (“I belong here”).