

# Reach for the Stars: My Promotion Address to the Manhattan Beach Middle School Class of 2018

Posted on June 14, 2018 by Mike Matthews, MBUSD Superintendent of Schools

Congratulations to the MBMS 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2018.

Your class has chosen the theme, “Reach for the Stars” for this ceremony. And why not? It’s way better than themes that Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh might have chosen:

- What’s the use?
- I shouldn’t even try.
- Nothing’s going to change.

*Reach for the Stars* is way better.

Everyone knows that if you want to become a better athlete or a better artist or musician, you need to practice, work, and learn from a good teacher or coach.

But for some reason, most people don’t believe that we can become smarter. People think that we were born with a certain amount of smarts, and that’s just not going to change.

Brain research has proven that is just not true. Just as you can reach for the stars and become a better athlete or a better artist, you can become smarter. Scientists and researchers call this a “Growth Mindset.”



Many brain researchers have shown proof of Growth Mindset, but some students and teachers still don't believe it. We have to convince students, parents, AND teachers that the growth mindset is real and needs to be utilized.

So how do you get smarter? How does this growth mindset thing work?

1. **Challenge yourself.** Try hard stuff. Find interesting problems and try to solve them. Push yourself. Don't take the easy way.
2. **Fail.** Learn from your failures. When you challenge yourself, you will fail. Brain researchers are saying that nothing promotes growth as much as learning from failure. We have teachers and students who define F-A-I-L as First Attempt in Learning. I love it.
3. **Explore new ideas through reading.** Care about something! Learn about it! Do you know how you become a better reader? By reading more. Fall in love with reading and you'll have something to enjoy your whole life and your brain will grow.
4. **Be careful with social media:** There are two big evils in social media: The first is FOMO – The Fear of Missing Out – because you focus on the cool things others are posting. Believe me, no one's life is super-duper awesome every minute. The real-life stuff we deal with is not what you see on social media. The second evil is the unfortunate propensity of some people to be mean and try to bring people down. Be careful.
5. **Take care of your brain.** Again, let's look at brain research and science. If you want your brain to grow, there are two most important habits you can develop: (1) get enough sleep. You need more than you think. Do everything you can to get that sleep. (2) Don't use drugs and alcohol. Your brain is growing and developing, and nothing can slow down that growth more than drugs and alcohol.

**Most of all, believe that your best and smartest days are ahead of you.** Brain research is on your side. Don't let others define your story. Set big fat hairy goals for yourself. Be OK when you fail, and try again. Never stop growing. Never stop reaching for the stars.

Congratulations again to the MBMS 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2018, to your parents, and to all of your great teachers who have made a difference in your lives.