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Spring 5-9-2020

# Valuing The Success of Failure: Reflective Journaling and Mistake Acceptance

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Valuing The Success of Failure: Reflective Journaling and Mistake Acceptance

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**Abstract**

This study examined ninth-grade students' acceptance of their own mistakes in the classroom. The author implemented a journaling process twice a week in an attempt to give students a positive perception of their academic failures in a school setting. She collected data by using surveys, interviews, reflective writing, and a focus group. On top of this, the researcher asked about student perceptions of the journaling process as applied to the acceptance of their mistakes. Surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics and were graphed. The constant-comparative method was used to understand major themes. This resulted in four major findings which included the following: students became more aware of their responses to and from others, they had a deeper understanding of the fact that mistakes are valuable, they understood how their perceptions of themselves played a role in accepting mistakes, and journaling gave them an outlet to express their emotions with mistakes.

### **Valuing the Success of Failure: Reflective Journaling and Mistake Acceptance**

I was sitting in an environmental-science class my junior year of high school. I raised my hand to read a paragraph aloud. As I stumbled upon the word *matte*, I read the word out loud: “*mat-tay*.” A group of students nearby started giggling. What was so funny? “It’s pronounced *mat*.” “Oh.” In perspective, this was not that big of a deal, but as a sixteen year old, this meant I would never raise my hand to answer again. I imagine that Mr. Hendley (all names are replaced by pseudonyms) thought nothing of this. In fact, mistakes happen every single day. Students internalize these mistakes every day.

“I don’t want to sound stupid but…” is a sentence stem I heard almost every day during a year-long clinical teaching placement for an M. Ed agree. I regularly witnessed students answer questions incorrectly and cringe. I routinely stood in silence waiting for a student to attempt an answer as they all looked around hoping someone else would do it. As a teacher, I hoped that someone would answer; I wanted to embrace incorrect answers and teach from them. While I valued the learning that came from mistakes, I wished the students would understand this for themselves. I wanted to find a way to solve this issue and that is why I attempted to implement reflective practice with journaling. My hope was that this would give students a chance to understand the value of their mistakes as they wrote about their own experiences.

Although no student is alike, nobody loves to be wrong. Within my clinical teaching experience, I made mistakes all of the time. However, it is through these mistakes that I learned the most. In fact, I will never pronounce *matte* incorrectly ever again.

### **Purpose**

As a clinical teacher, I recognized the fear students had of making mistakes. This continued to happen despite teachers making it very clear that mistakes were welcomed. Instead of embracing their incorrectness as a learning opportunity, they chose to shield themselves. I wanted to implement a possible solution to this clear issue through journaling. I created the term “mistake acceptance” for this study. This referred to the personal acceptance of mistakes that were made in the classroom. I was interested in determining if students were willing to be more accepting of their mistakes after the implementation of classroom journaling. The purpose of this research was to explore classroom journaling as a possible means for increasing students’ mistake acceptance by answering the following questions:

**Research Question:** How does journaling enhance students’ acceptance of their mistakes in a ninth-grade classroom?

**Sub Question:** What are ninth-grade students’ perceptions of mistake acceptance with the implementation of journaling in the classroom?

This study took place during my year-long clinical teaching placement at Copper Canyon High School (all names are Pseudonyms). This school was in a medium-sized West Texas town that had a population of about 122,000. Copper Canyon High School was one of three high schools in the district. It had a student population of 1,830. Looking at demographics, the majority of the student population were White or Hispanic. A good portion of the school population was considered economically disadvantaged based on the amount of students that qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. My particular placement was in a ninth-grade pre-AP geography classroom.

### Literature Review

Research has shown that students are much more willing to perform a task if they hold the belief that they will be successful (Jones & East, 2009). As teachers, we constantly encourage students to stretch their minds and learn from their mistakes. Educators talk about growth mindset (Dweck, 2010), encouraging students to focus on how far they have come rather than where they are stuck. Generally, teachers have an understanding that the classroom should be a safe, positive, and productive environment (Makar & Allmond, 2018). Although his theory is applicable to second language learning theory, Krashen (1982) discussed the importance of the affective filter. This is essentially a filter that takes emotional variables into consideration that either enhance, or hinder learning (Krashen, 1982). When students answer questions incorrectly in a classroom setting, it often results in academic teasing (Dietrich & Hofman, 2019). This does not contribute to a positive classroom environment where students feel free to make their mistakes. In other words, this ridicule does not successfully lower the affective filter which ultimately causes students to be fearful of failure in the classroom setting.

In her research, Tulis (2013) focused specifically on teachers' responses to student mistakes. She wrote that negative reactions from classmates were not commonly displayed when students performed errors out loud in the classroom. However, she discovered that students had negative reactions to their mistakes when it was the teachers that displayed the negative reactions (Tulis, 2013). DeBrincat (2015) discussed this same idea in an article where he described this phenomenon in a history classroom. He reported that there is an "important role that error plays in teaching and learning" (DeBrincat, 2015, p. 10). Smith (2010) wrote that teachers should reconceptualize failure to develop persistence with teaching and learning experiences. She

argued that teachers should use mistakes as an opportunity to reframe the concept of failure and demonstrate its critical role in the classroom (Smith, 2010). These studies demonstrated the teacher's role in students' acceptance of their mistakes.

Eggleton and Moldavon (2001) found that textbooks and teachers commonly will attempt to point out possible mistakes before they happen. This in turn could make students more self-conscious and wary of answering questions that they could possibly answer incorrectly. However, it is argued that ultimately students should use their failures as a learning opportunity before the teacher or a textbook proactively tries to solve this issue (Eggleton & Moldavon, 2001). Shallenberger (2015), who is in the field of international education, reflected on the importance of making mistakes and learning from them. Although it is common to be fearful of mistakes, students should learn to embrace them (Shallenberger, 2015).

Carter, DeTine, Spero, and Benson (1975) noted in their study of peer acceptance and school-related variables, that academic ability, grade point average, and IQ were several factors that students take into consideration when accepting peers. This study ultimately gave evidence that students are somewhat aware of where others stand in their schoolwork. In turn, this could be a possible factor in students' fears of failing academically in front of others.

Journaling has been applied several times in an attempt to improve student responses or writing. In her book, Bromley (1993) discussed different types of journals that can be used in a classroom. Some examples include literature response journals, personal journals, or home to school journals. Parikh, Janson, and Singleton (2012) described the use of video journaling within student internships and how it gave interns a platform to share personal thoughts and feelings. Jones and East (2009) explored journaling and how it could be used to empower

first-graders. They discovered that journaling could be used to boost first-graders' confidence in their writing abilities (Jones & East, 2009). All of these educators, researchers, and authors wrote about the idea of journaling being a reflective practice. Reflection served as the theoretical foundation for the journals we implemented in the classroom.

This study contributes to the existing literature by merging the practice of journaling with the idea that mistakes are a critical, positive, and important part of school and learning. I used a reflective journaling process in an attempt to create an environment where students were more accepting of their mistakes. On top of this, I was curious about students' perceptions. Journaling has been used previously to observe students' growth in content within an elementary classroom (Jones & East, 2009), but what would happen if journaling was used as a tool for addressing the need for mistake acceptance?

### **Methods**

This research included mostly qualitative data with a mix of quantitative data. This study took place in my year-long placement of clinical teaching in a ninth-grade world geography classroom. Since I had been in the classroom for a previous semester before, I had a good relationship with the students. I was familiar with most of their behaviors and habits. In the following sections, I explain my methods for the selection of participants, data collection, and analysis.

#### **Participant Selection**

Participants in this study included a total of three Pre-AP World Geography classes which contained about 61 students. All three classes participated in the journaling process. The students consisted of the following demographics: 42.5% White, 29.9% Hispanic, 10.3% Black,



8% Mixed, 6.9% Asian, 1.1% Native American, and 1.1% Pacific Islander. Of these students, nine were chosen for individual interviews based on survey responses. I was able to choose three students from each class. Furthermore, I chose three students who felt positively about their experience with making mistakes in the classroom, three who felt negatively, and three who stood on a more neutral ground. This allowed for a wide range of perspectives in regards to the topic. Parents were given an informational letter and asked to sign a consent form. Ultimately, I had 61 participants that had a signed consent form and signed an assent form themselves.

### **Data Collection**

This research is a phenomenological and mixed methods study. Data collection began with a pre-experimentation survey. The surveys were a great place to obtain “baseline data” (Hubbard & Power, 2003, p. 62). These surveys were not only used as baseline data, but also to identify students that were chosen for an interview. Every class period was given a pre-experimental survey (see Appendix A). This questionnaire contained a Likert scale and a few open-ended responses. This survey consisted of questions referring to students’ acceptance of their mistakes in the classroom. I was able to choose three students from each class. Furthermore, I chose three students who felt positively about their experience with making mistakes in the classroom, three who felt negatively, and three who stood on a more neutral ground. This allowed for a wide range of perspectives in regards to the topic. I initiated journaling in each class for about four weeks. This process was implemented twice a week. To begin, I started with a mini lesson that taught about the value of mistakes. The discussion was approximately five-minutes that was meant to contextualize the process as they began it. At the beginning of class, students typically began with a bell-ringer question. The journaling process was similar in

that they answered the question at the beginning of class when they first entered the classroom (see Appendix B). This took about five to seven minutes at the beginning of the class period. I was able to discuss the question afterwards and model my own experience with making mistakes, but did not elicit student responses out loud. At the end of the day, I read the student responses. I synthesized the entries and wrote a reflection with each journal question that was asked. Therefore, I wrote a total of eight reflections that reflected on the main themes and ideas that emerged from the journal entries.

On top of this, I used individual interviews within my research (see Appendix C). Interviews are used in order to share “values, beliefs, past experiences, feelings, opinions, attitudes, and perceptions” (Hendricks, 2017, p. 90). I included the nine students chosen from the surveys in this process. These interviews were about ten to fifteen minutes long.

### **Data Analysis**

In regards to data analysis, I analyzed the quantitative data from the Likert scale by tallying matching answers and placed this data in a graph. I used a bar graph to display student responses (see Appendix D). Qualitative data, such as journal entries and interviews, were analyzed in search of common themes. Interviews were transcribed and coded. I coded using a thematic analysis and the constant-comparative method. (Hendricks, 2017, p. 122). I searched for emerging themes using primary-cycle coding, later scanning through the larger findings in search of secondary-level codes (Tracy, 2013). Using the first 20% of my data, I created an initial list of level 1 codes. These level 1 codes were beginning themes I noticed within the data. I used this list to code the remaining data. From these codes, I created level 2 codes that emerged from similarities and relations among the level 1 codes. These were ultimately my major findings in

the data. I recorded memos for each of these level 2 codes which gave clarification for the codes meaning and significance (Tracy, 2013). All of these codes were placed in a codebook (see Appendix E). This codebook included the name of the code, the definition, an example, and a color code.

### **Findings**

After analyzing the data and applying the journaling process, I ended with four major ideas. I found that journaling enhanced students' acceptance of their mistakes by allowing them to be more thoughtful in their responses to and from one another, understanding their meaning and value of mistakes is to begin with, understanding how their perceptions of themselves plays a role in accepting mistakes, and giving them a platform to express their emotions towards mistakes. These findings developed within results of a student survey, journaling entries, and individual interviews.

### **Wait, You Make Mistakes Too?: It's all About Relationships**

I think that in order to solve a problem, it is important to understand the root first. I was a high school student once. I understood the fear behind making mistakes. As a clinical teacher, I was on the flip side. I wish I could have easily shown students that people were not thinking about their failures as much as they were. However, I easily inferred that this was mostly the main dread behind their failures.

When I first passed out the survey, I asked students about their fears. I asked what they believed made them fearful to make mistakes in the first place. The most common response was something along the lines of "if people didn't laugh or tease me." Some wrote more about feeling judged or embarrassed. This was something I read over and over again. "Teachers and

peers will think of them and judge them,” “scared people are going to ridicule me,” “they don’t want to be made fun of by their classmates.” The list of quotes goes on. Since the process was not one that was necessarily done out loud by anyone but myself, I felt nervous about pursuing it. However, I found that instead it was a source of comfort to see that others also had something to write about in their journal entries. In turn, this seemed to get some wheels rolling. Within my interviews, I came across several smaller themes under this larger umbrella. Ultimately, each theme came back to one idea; mistake acceptance came down to relationship.

After applying a journaling intervention in the ninth-grade classroom in which I was clinical teaching and interviewing nine students, I noted that students were more thoughtful when it came to relationships and responses in relation to mistakes. This was not only student-student, but was also teacher-student, and even family-student. In general, I noted that relationships truly matter when it comes to accepting mistakes in the classroom. This was something that was not only evident in survey responses, but also in the journal entries themselves. Positive relationship meant positive feelings towards failures.

Many students voiced their strong opinions about the fear that they had with making mistakes in front of others. In her interview, Lyndsea mentioned that “You don’t want to be wrong or do something embarrassing in front of other people.” I found that oftentimes the students were afraid of feeling stupid, being laughed at, or simply being embarrassed specifically when they made mistakes in front of others. These are all feelings that emerge when one is thinking about how others perceive him or her. However, through the journaling, many students noted that it was nice to see other people writing about their experiences with mistakes as well. In some ways, journaling united the students and showed them that they were not alone. I had

not anticipated the comfort that came with seeing everyone else writing down their experiences with mistakes. This in turn created seemingly more thoughtful responses to and from others. Students seemed to be on a united front, understanding that they could relate to one another in terms of accepting mistakes.

With this, it was also noted that response is not only critical among students, but teachers and families are also involved. Students whose families are more accepting of their mistakes demonstrated a higher mistake acceptance in survey results, and even spoke about this in their interviews. Usually it came down to the students' perceptions of themselves which held them back. I found that many students desired to have more positive responses from teachers or families when they made mistakes. During his interview, Micah even noted that these responses are "one of the most... *the* most important thing." Ultimately, they believed that this would lead to a higher acceptance of their own mistakes.

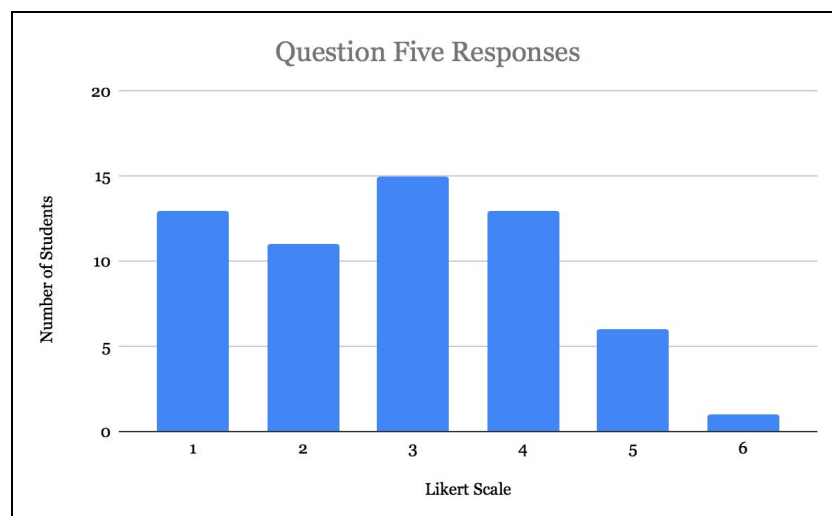
A lot of students mentioned that journaling about their mistakes and responses to mistakes allowed them to think about the way that they respond to others when they witness mistakes. Every student that I interviewed came to the consensus that they really do not think about others' mistakes. This even allowed them to push even further into realizing that others probably do not think about their mistakes as well. Even so, students discussed their desire to have teachers correct them because ultimately it will help others. I thought of this as a sort of web--family response to mistakes fostered student response, which fostered other students' responses, which emerged from teacher responses.

Overall, this theme is significant to the study because it demonstrates that the reflective practice of journaling enhanced students' mistake acceptance by allowing them to become more

thoughtful about the way that others view them, but even more importantly, how they view others. The journaling emphasized how important relationships really were when it came to accepting mistakes in the first place.

### **What is a Mistake and Why is it Helpful?**

Before I even collected data, I did not know the numbers I was dealing with as far as how students felt about making mistakes in the classroom. Once I had the actual data in front of me, as seen in Figure 1, I tried to think more intentionally about how each student individually viewed what a mistake was. Figure 1 displays Likert-scale responses. The number one means that the student is very unaccepting of their mistakes, and a six means that they feel good about making mistakes in the classroom. It was evident that I was dealing with mostly low and low-average mistake acceptance before beginning.



*Figure 1.* Survey responses. In general, how do you feel about making mistakes in the classroom?

After applying journaling in the classroom, I noted that students all have unique definitions and outlooks of mistakes. Since this is the case, the responses to journal entries

tended to be vastly different depending on how the student actually viewed mistakes in the first place (see Appendix F). On top of this, students continued to change and seemed to have a different view of mistakes as they completed the journal entries.

I noticed within journal entries that a lot of students believed that a mistake is an intentional behavior that could be prevented by conscious action. These are things that students mentioned could be solved simply if they chose to “work harder” or “pay more attention.” It is interesting because I did not necessarily think about it like this. In fact, I have always thought of mistakes as something that is unintentionally done; an answer that is incorrect, tripping on words (or feet), doing something without realizing etc. However, some examples of more intentional mistakes that were written about could be choosing not to study, turn in work, listen in class etc. Students often showed a sense of regret for choosing these behaviors; this regret shown through in journal entries and interviews. Joseph described this as a feeling of guilt: “I feel guilt, a lot of guilt. Like you know you should not have done that.”

In the pre-experimental surveys, almost all students had an understanding that everyone makes mistakes. This seemed to be a source of comfort for them. In fact, oftentimes it seemed that students felt the need to justify their own mistakes by mentioning that others also make mistakes. This was a common occurrence in journaling entries, survey responses, and individual interviews. A lot even mentioned that mistakes are fine to make “as long as you fix them.” In general, this showed that students understood that mistakes can be a route to learning and that they are common among all. They seemed to see the value that came from their failures, the hard part was accepting following through. Margot summed up her peers' responses pretty well in the fifth journal entry that asked why mistakes could be useful (see Figure 2).

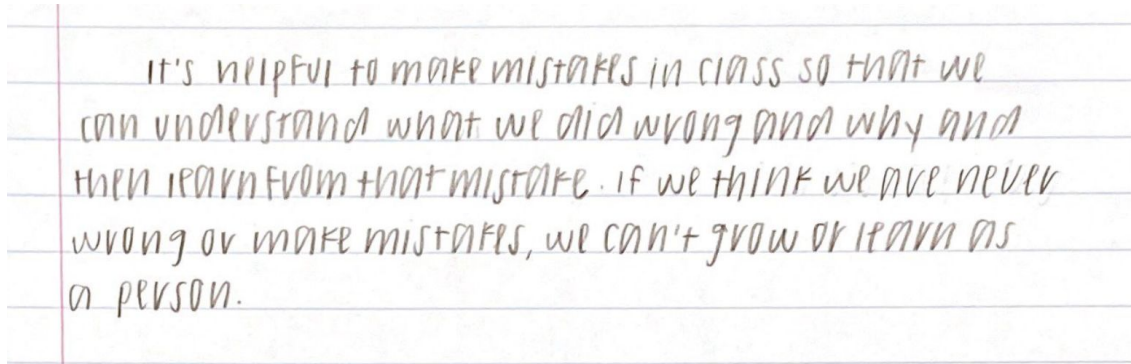


Figure 2. Margot's journaling entry.

Through data collection, I found that a lot of students revealed that they had a desire to see others' mistakes more frequently. This did not mean that journaling was necessarily a solution to the problem of fear that comes with mistakes, but was still helpful. This theme describes how students see and value mistakes in their everyday lives. The journaling process confirmed their ideas that everyone does indeed make mistakes, and allowed them to see the importance of them.

### **This is How I See Myself**

"I'm told often that I'm like... I mean it's not true, and I'm not being cocky, it's just that... they're like you're a really good kid, and you do really good in school and that you're really smart and that's what they perceive of me." Based on survey results, Keon had low mistake acceptance. With some interviews, I asked my students what they thought others perceived of them. Unexpectedly, if students felt as though they were perceived as "bright" or "smart," they were less likely to be accepting of their mistakes. Some students did not like this pressure put on them because they felt as though it negatively affected their participation in class. They did not want to risk failing in front of others. Students like Nick even felt that their



reputation was shattered when they could not meet the expectations that they had for themselves (see Figure 3).

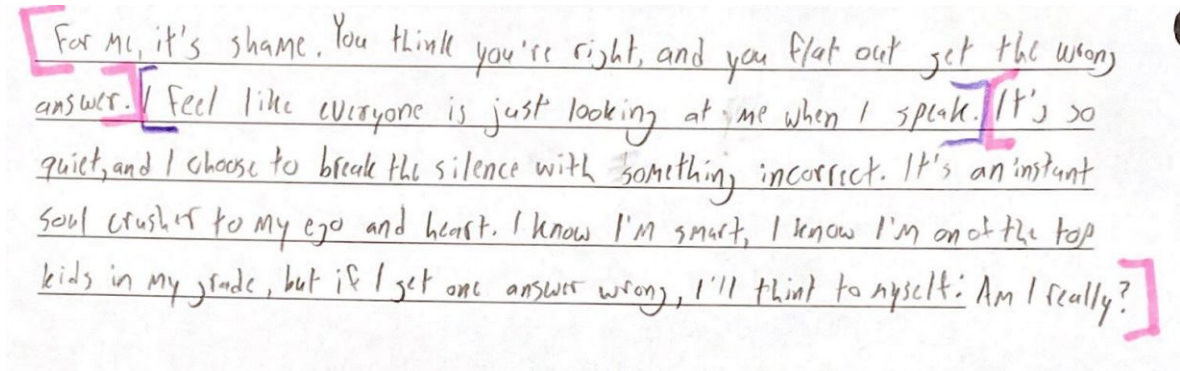


Figure 3. Nick's survey response. "I know I'm smart, I know I'm on the top kids in my grade, but if I get one answer wrong, I'll think to myself: Am I really?"

"Alone in a crowded room" is the phrase that comes to mind when I think about the way that students understand their own mistakes. After they do make said mistakes, they tend to believe that everyone is thinking about what they have said. When asked what students thought about watching others make mistakes, most mentioned that they did not even think about it. Some even said it was helpful to see others make mistakes because they became more aware of what they should or should not do themselves. I understand that this idea is not necessarily a breakthrough, as I have observed this behavior often with many teenagers in different realms of my own life.

One thing that was truly brought to my attention within students' answers to surveys, journal entries, and interviews was the perception that students have of themselves. Many students were able to reflect upon their personalities and how mistakes play a role within them. Some students even decided that their personality is truly what plays a part in their mistake acceptance. This includes Karoline, who mentioned in her interview that:

It just kind of depends on the person, like if they don't mind being wrong then they don't care about it as much. But if they take it very seriously... I really think it's just a personality thing because to be honest some people are way harder on themselves than other people. So I feel like that's a factor in a lot of it.

Some students felt as though nothing could be done about their fear of mistakes. In fact, several decided that being accepting of mistakes was something that "just happens" or is considered innate within one's personality. Interestingly enough, these same students reflected positively on the journaling entries.

It was eye-opening to see through the journal entries that some students identified correct answers or incorrect answers with acceptance from their peers. One student even wrote that she feels as though she fits in, or matters more, when she performs well in school. This is also seen in Hannah's journal entry where she reflected that being correct in class makes her feel, "kinda like I finally fit in with my friends." Some students understood that this is not true, and it simply comes down to putting in effort and working hard. Overall, students were able to use journaling as a platform to understand their self-perceptions. In some ways, it is all about finding one's place in the world. Mistakes are something that can help or hinder this. However, this is unique from relationships because oftentimes it comes down to what the student thinks of him or herself.

Since personality plays such a critical role in students' acceptance of his or her mistakes in the classroom, it is important to understand how they perceived their mistakes especially after applying journaling practices. I asked Lyndsea, the current valedictorian of her freshmen class, if she believed that the journaling process was helpful in reflecting upon accepting mistakes in

the classroom. Her response was “Yeah, because sometimes when you’re thinking about things in your head it seems more...extravagant than actually what happened.” This answer was common. Keon mentioned in his interview that when he makes a mistake that all “[he] can see is something more extravagant than what actually happened.” However, in the end he noted that he found “[the journaling process] helpful because it can make me be more accepting of my mistakes in front of everyone and not just focus in on what my peers think of me.” It seemed as though actually writing about mistakes gave at least those I interviewed, greater clarity and confidence towards themselves as they realized that they are worth more than their mistakes.

### **Mistakes Make Me... Feel Things**

“That process is good because it opens me up to how I feel about making mistakes,” Keon said when he was asked about his feelings toward the journaling process. I have noted that this practice enhanced student mistake acceptance as it gave students a platform to share their emotions. Some of them wrote about their feelings in the entries, and within interviews they mentioned that they had a positive experience with sharing their mistakes, reactions, and ideas that revolve around mistakes in the classroom. Within the journal entries, many students mentioned their fears, anxieties, disappointments, and even guiltiness that came with the territory of mistakes. However, it is also true that students shared several positive emotions that came alongside accepting their mistakes, especially when they were able to write about them. Brielle explained in her interview that this process “feels like it’s almost a third person point of view.” Through this, she can “reflect on what [she has] done and how to fix it and build confidence.”

It seems as though the writing process gave students a chance to understand mistakes in the first place. Many students mentioned that they replayed emotions in their head when they

thought about their experiences with their shortcomings that occurred, especially in the classroom. While it is not surprising in any way, students were also able to share their experience that they had when it comes to pressure from schools. It seems as though this plays a major role in their acceptance. While I am completely aware that students often discuss this topic among themselves, it isn't very often that they are prompted by their teachers to talk about this subject. I think if journaling continued, more emotions could be exposed, and the teacher could even use these emotions to guide teaching and instruction.

In the same nature, being that students had different outlooks of mistakes, this also held true with students' emotional responses to and from their mistakes. Within the journaling entries and surveys, a wide range of emotions were discussed. Some students even wrote that they "feel normal" or "nothing" when they are incorrect in class. Once again, I think that this connects a lot to the fact that personality truly does play a larger role in the students' acceptance of their mistakes.

### **Limitations**

While I was able to collect plenty of data to especially understand students' perceptions of mistake acceptance after journaling, I was unable to understand how the journaling actually enhanced their acceptance to the fullest extent. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States, the schools were shut down, and my process was left somewhat incomplete. My intentions were to apply the journaling at least twice more in the classroom. With that, I was going to conduct a focus group interview and a post-journaling survey that contained the same questions as the pre-journaling survey. This is so that I could compare and contrast answers about accepting mistakes before and after. I would have been able to measure the success of the

journaling with a more quantitative approach. Therefore, some limitations have occurred.

However, the perceptions I was able to collect were vast. I interviewed only nine students among three class periods, but I was lucky that this group of students was diverse not only in their perceptions of mistake acceptance, but also in their demographics.

### **Implications for Teachers**

Elisabeth: So when you see other people make mistakes, what is your train of thought?

Keon: “Oh it’s just that. Like there’s nothing wrong with it. They just made a mistake, and it’s gonna help them get better.”

I do not believe that the idea of understanding that mistakes can be helpful and valuable in everyday life is a groundbreaking one. However, I think that it is something that is really difficult for students, especially adolescents, to wrap their heads around. I learned that allowing students to process their mistakes gave them a chance to understand their own thought processes on a deeper level. The students were able to learn from this process because they could see that the mistakes that they often replayed over and over again in their heads, were not as big as they thought. They felt connected to others while they all were able to express their mistakes and feelings towards them in their journaling entries. Overall, the journaling process enhanced student mistake acceptance because it allowed for them to understand how relationships, personality, emotions, and their outlook of mistakes actually play a role in their acceptance.

While I had four larger themes that emerged from the data, I found that two of the four seemed to have a larger impact on students’ acceptance of their mistakes. These themes being relationship and personality. I do not believe that the journaling process necessarily revealed this, but instead magnified it. Something that I had discussed often within teacher education is the

idea that one-size does not fit all and that relationships are one of the most important factors of a successful classroom. With the journaling entries applied, my findings did not necessarily surprise me. I appreciated that the journaling was able to enhance my perception that I had of each student and therefore improve the relationship that I had with them.

To draw a conclusion, I believe that the journaling process was successful. The last journaling entry that students responded to inquired students' reflections toward mistakes in the last few weeks. Micah summarized the responses well when he wrote:

Something I've realized about making mistakes in the classroom is that a lot of teachers want you to make mistakes. If the students didn't make mistakes and were perfect, teachers wouldn't be needed. I think some teachers like mistakes because it shows that you're trying.

If I were to continue this process in the future, I would want it to be something that is more consistent and routine. As students experience mistakes, I would like for them to be comfortable enough to share these mistakes with others. This all comes back to the value of having a safe environment. A smaller theme that emerged in the data was that students want to see and understand failure more often. Micah wrote in a journal response that "I would feel more comfortable to make mistakes if more people made mistakes." If this can become something that is "okay" in the classroom, I believe that the improvement of students' mistake acceptance would expand greatly. This process also gave me a chance to understand my students on a deeper level. I found that I made subconscious assumptions about how many of the students viewed

their mistakes. It was also fascinating to me that students like Nick, who seem so confident, actually felt cut deep by making mistakes.

I would recommend that teachers who attempt to implement this process use it as a platform to understand their students on a deeper and more intentional level. On top of that, I would think it helpful to create a cycle of journaling prompts that can allow students to reflect on different mistakes throughout the academic school year. Through time, it might be interesting to see how students' outlook and perception of mistakes might change. With this, I would be curious to see the discussions that might follow in a morning meeting or within class in general.

For further research, I am wondering how teachers can develop deeper relationships with students in regards to mistakes. Within her interview, Naomi expressed that she would like to see time in class that is devoted to developing relationships. She believed that this would give her a more positive outlook on her mistakes. While I believe relationships in general can assist with students' mistake acceptance, I am curious if there are any specific practices that can show students that the success that can come from failure is real. Through this, I would hope to show students that "mistakes happen everyday, and like everyone else on this planet, I too make mistakes."

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**Appendix A**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mistake Acceptance Survey**

1. You have been asked a question in class that you don't know the answer to. How likely are you to attempt an answer?

Not likely at all  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6  
Very likely

2. You are answering a written question and you are unsure of the answer. How likely are you to attempt an answer?

Not likely at all  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6  
Very likely

3. You are confused about what is happening in class. How likely are you to ask for help?

Not likely at all  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6  
Very likely

4. How confident are you in your answer when you raise your hand in class?

Not confident at all  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6  
Very confident

5. In general, how do you feel about making mistakes in the classroom?

Not great at all  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6  
Super great

Why do you think students are afraid to make mistakes in school?

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What do you think would make you feel more comfortable making mistakes in school?

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**Appendix B****Journaling Prompts**

- Write about a time you made a mistake.
- Write about a time you learned from your mistake.
- How do you feel when you answer a question correctly in class?
- How do you feel when you get a question incorrectly in class?
- Why do you think it would be helpful to make a mistake in class?
- What do you think it means to have a growth mindset?
- How can a growth mindset help you accept your mistakes?
- Reflect on the last few weeks. What is something you have realized about making mistakes in the classroom?

## Appendix C

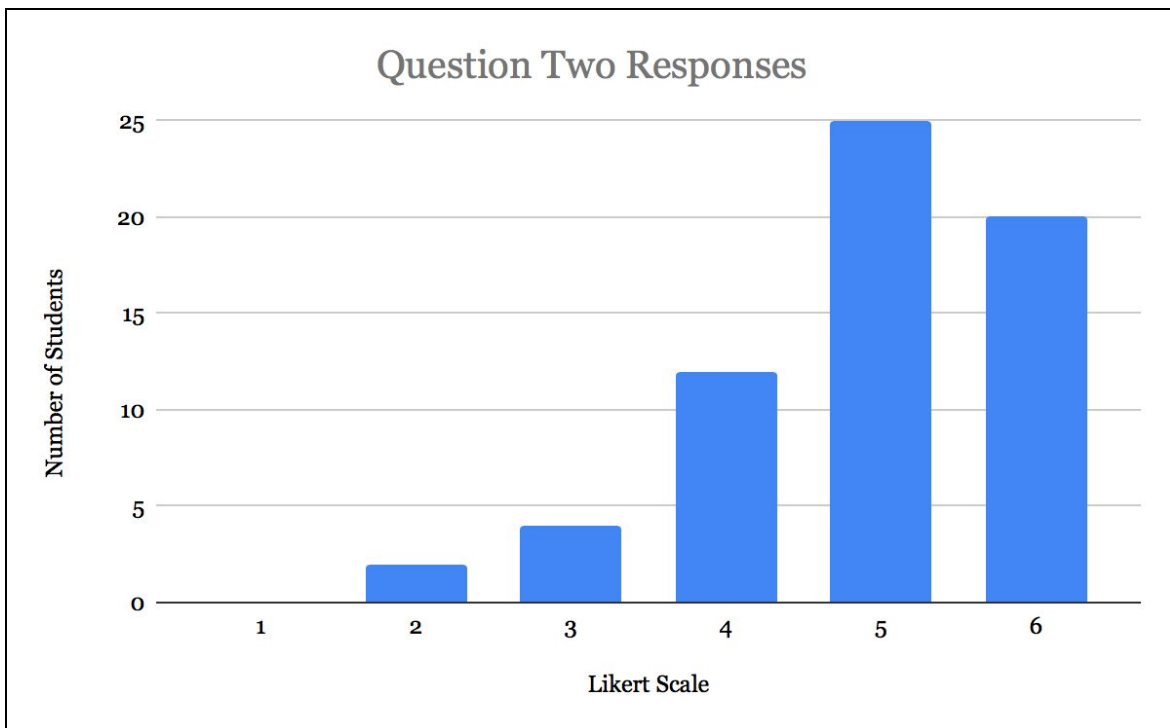
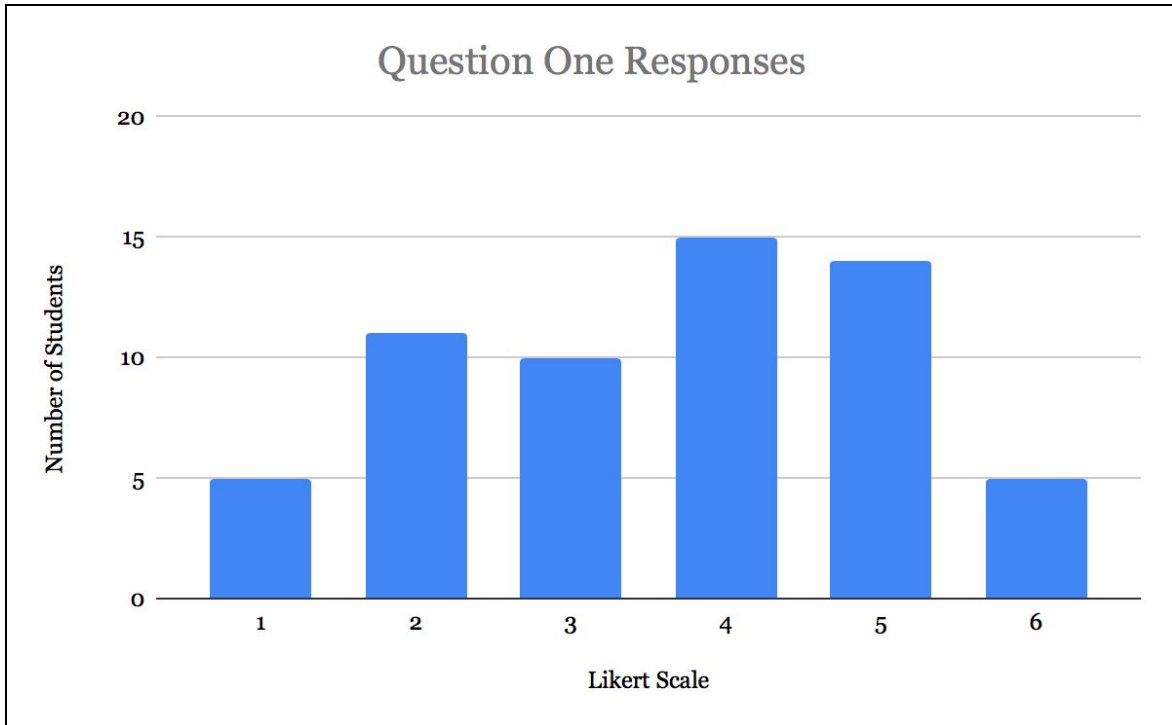
### Individual Interview Protocol

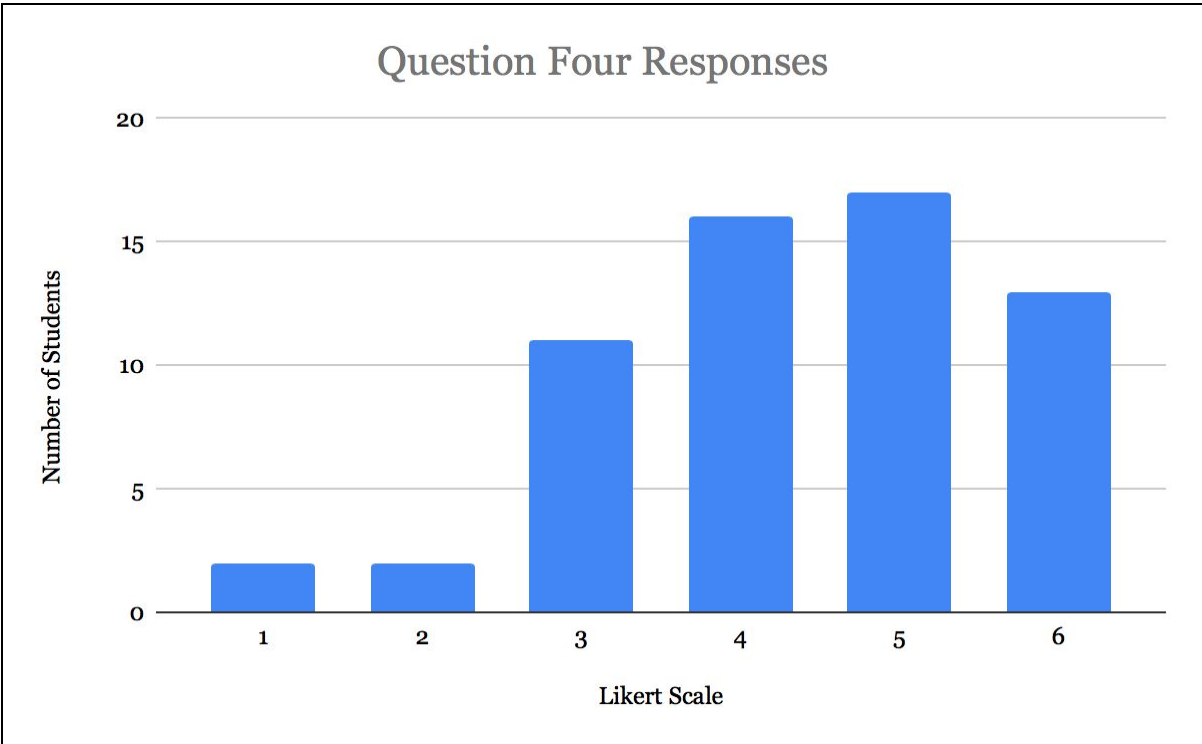
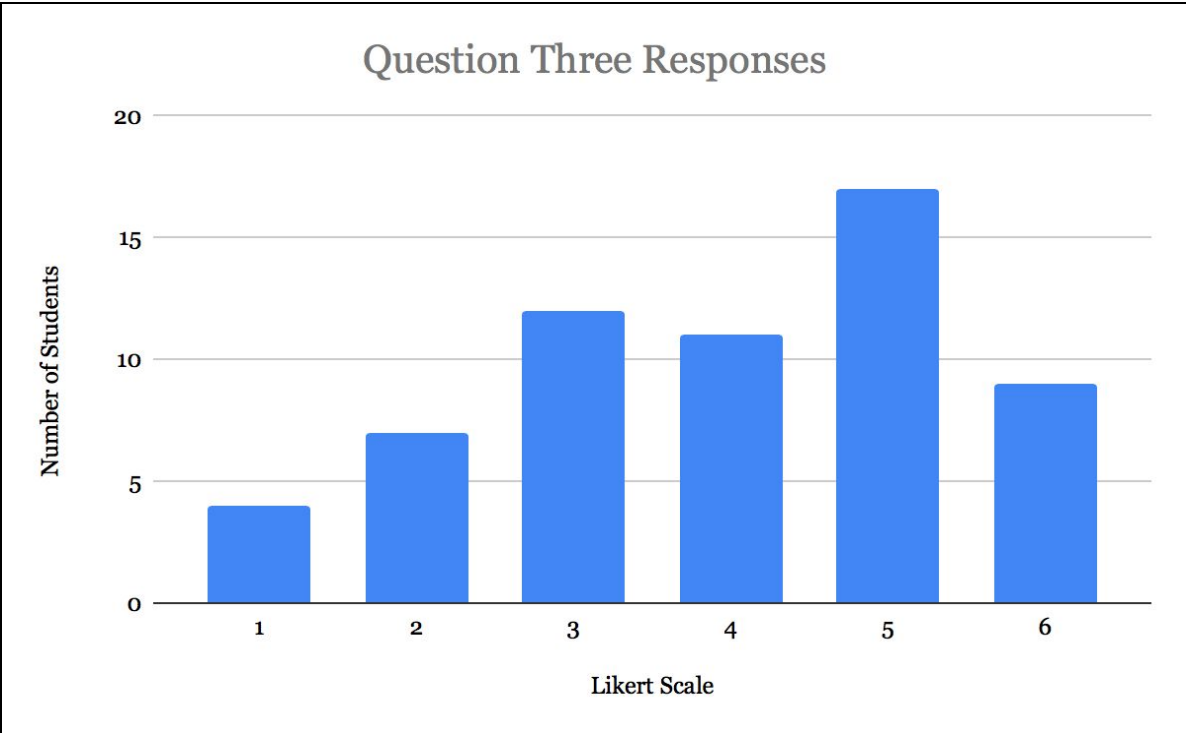
- Is school a place you feel at ease in? Why or why not?
- Tell me about a time you learned from a mistake.
- How do you feel about making mistakes in front of your peers?
- When you see other people make mistakes, what is your thought process?
- What makes you afraid to make mistakes?
- What makes you unafraid to make mistakes?
- What do you think would help you feel more comfortable making mistakes?
- Describe the journaling process we have been practicing in class.
- Do you feel like journaling (having a reflective process) is helpful to you in terms of accepting the mistakes you make? Why or why not?

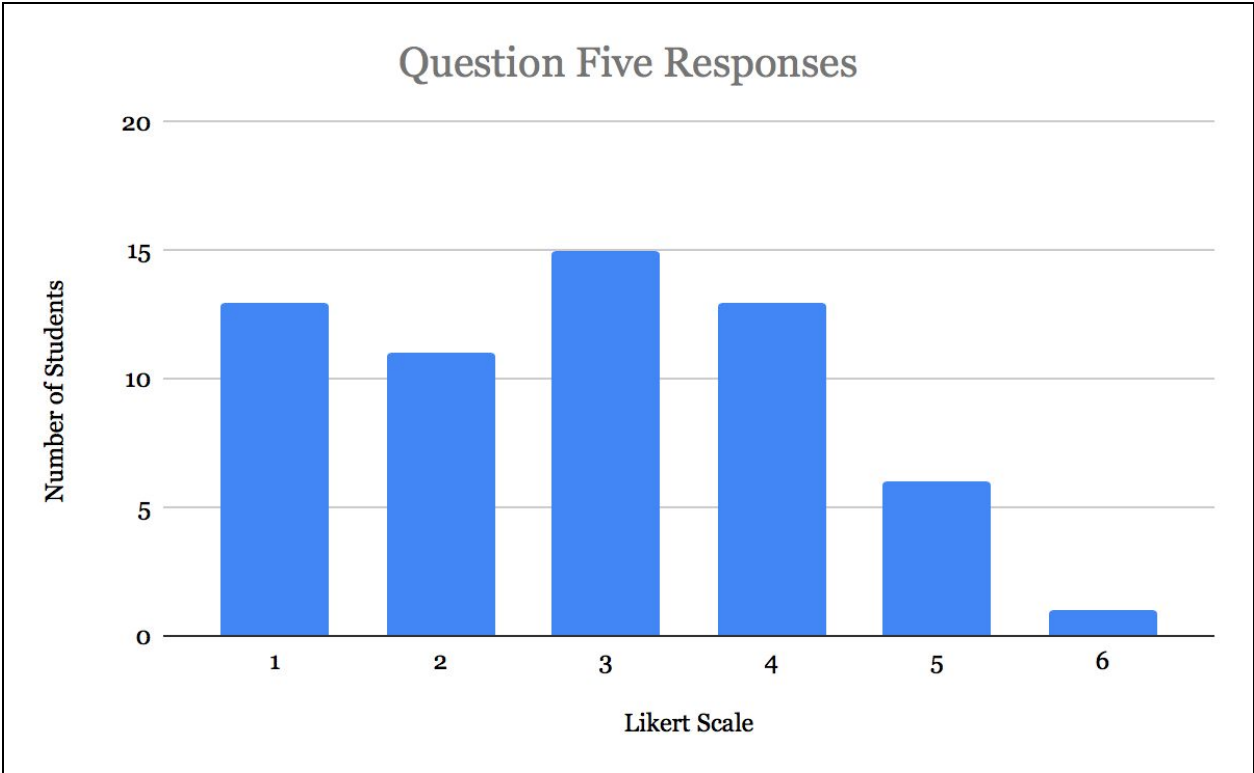
Questions may vary and additional questions may be asked depending on the answers of the participants.

**Appendix D**

**Pre-Journaling Response Data**









## Appendix E

## Codebook

Code Name	Level	Definition	Example with color code
Response to and From Others	II	Reactions received from peers, family, friends, or teachers	"I usually wonder what they're thinking, and if there's like a way that I can help them."
Peer Perceptions	I	Peer reactions to the student in general	"...they're like you're a really good kid and you do really good in school and that you're really smart and that's what they perceive of me."
Teacher Response	I	Reactions and roles that a teacher has in a classroom setting, can be academic or emotional	"If students were aware that their teacher would respond positively and help them, they seemed to be more okay with it."
Relationships Matter	I	Realizing the importance of relationships	"but I think that some students are closer to their teachers than others and I think that you have to just kind of let those teachers in a little more because that really does help."
Family Involvement	I	The role that family plays in the acceptance of one's mistakes	"my parents are very accepting and they think that failure is the way to success and that making mistakes are a good way to learn from them, but other people could be like... other families might be... parents could be more strict on mistakes and failures."
Outlook of Mistakes	II	Understanding the usefulness and value of mistakes in any setting	"Oh it's just that. Like there's nothing wrong with it. They just made a mistake and it's gonna help them get better."
"It's Not as Big as I Thought"	I	Realizing that mistakes were not as critical as one thought	"Yeah, because sometimes when you're thinking about things in your head it seems

			more...extravagant than actually what happened.”
“As Long as You Fix them”	I	Understanding that mistakes are acceptable as long as they are fixed	“Many students wrote that “it is okay to make mistakes as long as you fix them.””
Modeling Mistakes	I	Wanting to have an influence from others’ mistakes	“I would feel more comfortable to make mistakes if more people made mistakes.”
Everyone Makes Mistakes	I	Justification in the fact that each person makes mistakes	“There are some things in life that everyone in their lifetime will do. One of those things are mistakes. Mistakes happen everyday, and like everyone else on this planet, I too make mistakes.”
Learning From Mistakes	I	Understanding how one can develop growth from making mistakes	“A general consensus was that learning arises from making mistakes. Failure is the best way to solve problems.”
Mistakes as Intentional Behaviors	I	A definition of mistakes that some students had; in other words, understanding mistakes as intentional behaviors	“It is interesting that most students seem to define their mistakes as a time where they consciously did something like skipped school, decided not to do homework, or mistreated someone.”
Emotional Outcome	II	An emotional response to one's own mistakes or other's mistakes	“Students expressed feeling awkward, embarrassed, weird, or insecure when they answer a question incorrectly.”
Positive Reflective Practice	I	Demonstrating or elaborating on a positive experience that came with journaling	“That process is good because it opens me up to how I feel about making mistakes”
Anxiety Provoking	I	Anxious responses within the self that come from not understanding a concept	“I’m a really outgoing person but whenever I get called, I get this social anxiety. I just really don’t want to answer.”

Pressure from School	I	School pressures that come from home, peers, teachers, or grades	"I'm really scared about my grades and if I make a mistake and I fail a test, you can only correct it to a 70."
Negative Reactions Towards Mistakes	I	Rejecting one's self when making mistakes	"Generally speaking, students demonstrate a negative reaction to incorrect answers in class."
Positive Reactions Towards Mistakes	I	Happily accepting mistakes	"A small handful of students were accepting of their mistakes, or mentioned that it did not bother them at all."
Value of the Self	II	Understanding how the perception of one's self reflects on mistake acceptance	"I'm smart. I'm on the top of the kids in my grade, but if I get one answer wrong, I'll think to myself: Am I really?"
Perceptions of the Self	I	Understanding the role of one's self among peers	"he's smart, he's quiet, he does his work, so he's smart probably."
"It's a Personality Thing"	I	Claims that the personality of a student plays a role in the acceptance of mistakes	"I really think it's just a personality thing because to be honest some people are way harder on themselves than other people. So I feel like that's a factor in a lot of it, that plays into it."
"Like I Matter"	I	Feeling as though one may fit in more with the absence of mistakes	One student wrote that it "kinda [feels] like I finally fit in with my friends."
Participation in Class	I	Mistakes having a positive or negative impact on the way that a student interacts in class	"[answering questions correctly] jumpstarts their desire to participate more in class, answer more questions, pay attention, and listen more."
"I Should Work Harder"	I	Understanding mistakes as something that should be worked harder at in order to be fixed	"Others wrote that [making mistakes] was a source of motivation to work more."

**Appendix F**

## Journal Response Examples

Stephen's journal entry:

A mistake I've made, I've done twice I'm not proud of but I'll say this I said something to someone that I shouldn't have. I regret it because it hurt them and affected both of us I feel guilty about still to this day and I learn from it to not do that same mistake ever again.

Matthew's journal entry:

One time I missed a week of school, my mistake was when I didn't do my make-up work. I got very behind.

Annaleise's journal entry:

My biggest mistake was not knowing my worth for the longest time. I let so many people walk all over me like a door mat and with every step I just felt more and more like garbage. It's my biggest mistake because it held me back from excelling in my classes and hobbies, it held me back from meeting the wonderful people I know now. Not knowing my worth made me weak... and that was my biggest mistake