Increasing Perseverance in Math:
Evidence from a Field Experiment in Norway*

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Highlights
- Investigate how schools can increase students’ perseverance in math by shaping students’ beliefs in their abilities to learn in a real effort experiment.
- Find persistent treatment effects on students’ perseverance and academic performance in math three weeks after our treatment.
- Subsample analysis demonstrates that the treatment effect is entirely driven by students who initially had less of a belief in their ability to learn.

Abstract:
Research by psychologists and economists demonstrates that many non-cognitive skills are malleable in both children and adolescents, but we have limited knowledge on what schools can do to foster these skills. In a field experiment requiring real effort, we investigate how schools can increase students’ perseverance in math by shaping students’ beliefs in their abilities to learn, a concept referred to by psychologists as “mindset.” Using protocols adapted from psychology, we experimentally manipulate students’ beliefs in their ability to learn. Three weeks after our treatment, we find persistent treatment effects on students’

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