Lesson 7

TYPES OF MISTAKES

Grades: 2–12

Materials:

- Prepared blank chart that will be filled in during the lesson with the four types of mistakes either on sticky notes or written in

- A video, possibly previously viewed, such as *Snack Attack* (2015) or one that is newer to the students such as *Last Shot* (Widodo 2016)

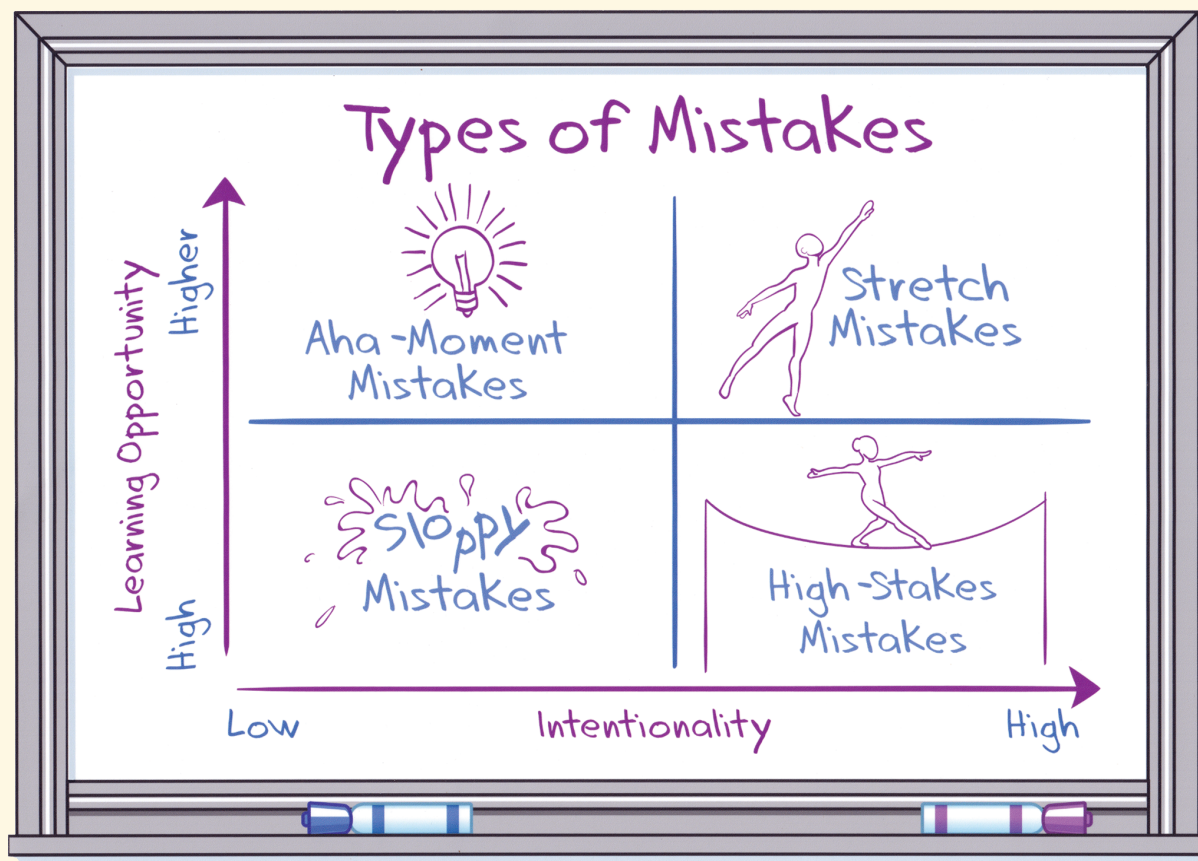- Students sitting with partners to talk with

Special notes:

This lesson is adapted from the work of Eduardo Briceño. To read more on his ideas about mistake types see "Mistakes Are Not All Created Equal" in Mindset Works (Briceño 2015a).

Lesson steps:

1. Begin by talking about how there are different types of mistakes. That even though we often talk about how all mistakes have something to teach us, some teach us more than others and some might not be worth the risk if we can avoid them. "If you look at this chart, you can see most mistakes fall on these axes. They go from least purposeful to most. And from least amount of learning that happens because of them to most."

2. Discuss the following mistakes (see Figure L–3), either adding them to the chart or pointing them out as you talk:

a. Sloppy mistakes are mistakes that happen because we just weren't as focused as we could be, we were in a rush, or we could have handled the situation better in another way. These are pretty low-consequence mistakes, and we didn't mean to make them.

b. Aha moment mistakes are mistakes that we learn something by doing them that we didn't know before. This

Types of Mistakes

Higher / High — **Learning Opportunity**

Low — **Intentionality** — *High*

Aha-Moment Mistakes

Stretch Mistakes

Sloppy Mistakes

High-Stakes Mistakes

Figure L–3 **Types of Mistakes**

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usually happens when our aim is one thing but something unexpected happens along the way so that we learn from that unexpected thing.

c. Stretch mistakes are the best kids of mistakes. We learn a lot from them and we thought we would. They happen when we try something new or just outside our ability so we mess up a bit, but learn a lot.

d. High-stakes mistakes are the worst and we want to avoid them. We know we're doing something hard so we might make a mistake, but the cost of the mistake is very high and often what we learn is not very large or not worth it.

3. If possible, give an example for each kind of mistake from a classroom experience the students would connect with. So, if you're a math teacher, use a math example. Or if you're an elementary teacher, this could involve anything across the disciplines. "The other day when we had a fire drill, remember how I started to head toward the wrong exit door? You all reminded me that we were exiting out a new door now. But we had gotten pretty far down the hall before we realized the mistake. I was totally meaning to get you to the right spot—so my intentions were pretty high, and if it had been a real fire it definitely could have been a high-stakes mistake. But, because it wasn't a real fire, it ended up being a stretch mistake."

4. Explain that it is often easier to spot these mistakes first when you see someone else making them. So today the class is going to watch a short video where the characters make mistakes. The students will watch the video with the lens of spotting mistakes, then try to identify the type of mistake they see. "Keep an eye out for any mistakes you see. Then when you see one, look up at the chart and think about what type of mistake it could be."

5. Play the short film, stopping immediately following the first mistake made by a character, and then again at least once more immediately following a mistake, giving students a chance to share what they noticed and the type of mistake they believe they saw.

6. *Optional:* Ask students to think of a mistake from their mistakes boxes or résumés and see if they notice a pattern.

7. Close with letting students know that we all make all of these kinds of mistakes. But, as learners, we want more of our mistakes to be in the stretch area than anywhere else. However, it can be interesting to notice patterns of types of mistakes we tend to make and when. (Like making a lot of sloppy mistakes and hardly any stretch mistakes when we're tired.)