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MINDFUL
CLASSROOMS

A Guide for Bringing Mindfulness into Your School

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WHAT CAN YOU DO TO BRING MINDFULNESS into your child's school? What are the best strategies, practices, and resources to implement a mindfulness program? Implementing a school-wide mindfulness program can take several years, so create a well-thought-out plan that includes presenting programming to parents and faculty. Be patient—making changes in schools can be a lengthy process. Here are a few things to consider:

WHY TEACH MINDFULNESS?

KIDS ARE STRESSED.

1 in 8 children in the United States suffers from Anxiety Disorders. ([National Institutes of Health](#))

1 in 5 children suffers from a mental health or learning disorder, and 80% of chronic mental disorders begin in childhood. ([Child Mind Institute](#))

TEACHERS ARE STRESSED.

According to research, most teachers experience job stress at least two to four times a day, with more than 75 % of teachers' health problems attributed to stress. ([National Education Association](#))

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

Studies show that the benefits of mindfulness may include:

Increased focus, attention, self-control, classroom participation, compassion

Improved academic performance, ability to resolve conflict, overall well-being

Decreased levels of stress, depression, anxiety, disruptive behavior

STEPS TO BRING MINDFULNESS INTO SCHOOLS

- 1 START WITH TEACHERS.** Teachers are the vehicle for integrating change into a school's culture. Is there a teacher who already has a mindfulness practice, and is willing to champion the effort to bring mindfulness into your child's school? If not, are there teachers willing to learn more about the benefits of mindfulness for themselves, as well as their students?
- 2 KNOW THE SCIENCE.** The research on teaching mindfulness to children is only in its beginning stages, yet there are studies that show its impact on both the body and the brain. Scientific evidence is an important component for bringing administrators and faculty to embrace your plan.
A few key studies:
 - A 2016 study in [Frontiers in Psychology](#) measured emotional well-being of 7- to 9-year-olds and found that a school-based mindfulness program improves higher-order thinking, and helps students become more engaged, positive learners.

- A randomized controlled study in the [Journal of School Psychology](#) on more than 100 sixth-grade students found those who completed classroom-based, teacher-implemented mindfulness meditation were significantly less likely to develop suicidal ideation or thoughts of self-harm than the control groups.
- A study of 4th and 5th graders published in [Developmental Psychology](#) found that students who received mindfulness training improved their cognitive ability and stress physiology, reported greater empathy, perspective-taking, emotional control, and optimism, showed greater decreases in self-reported symptoms of depression and peer-rated aggression, and were more popular.

3 ENGAGE FACULTY, ADMINISTRATORS, AND PARENTS.

Including parents and school staff—and ideally support staff, such as aides, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers—will provide the basis for the most effective implementation of a school-based mindfulness program. If there is hesitation or resistance to mindfulness, take the time to offer the facts, benefits, and science, and emphasize the importance of teaching mindfulness in school in an entirely secular way.

4 LOOK FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE

PRACTICES. Mindfulness in schools comes in different shapes and sizes—just like the kids—so research the programs that fit specifically with the ages in your school. There are some designed for the youngest ages, which differ in style and content from those designed for older grades.

WHICH MINDFULNESS PROGRAM IS RIGHT FOR YOUR TEACHERS?

There are a variety of programs you can consider recommending to teachers and administrators, or for your own training. Some are online, some use recordings, and some may require in-person training. Here are a few to consider:

[Association for Mindfulness in Education](#)

[Calmer Choice](#)

[CARE for Teachers](#)

[Compassionate Schools Project](#)

[Inner Explorer](#)

[Inner Kids](#)

[Inner Resilience](#)

[Inward Bound Mindfulness Education](#)

[Learning to Breathe \(adolescents\)](#)

[Mindful Life Project](#)

[Mindful Schools](#)

[Mindfulness Everyday](#)

[Mindfulness in Schools Project](#)

[MindUP](#)

[Peace in Schools](#)

[Resilient Kids](#)

[Still Quiet Place](#)

[Stressed Teens](#)

[The Kindness Curriculum](#)