Integrating Mindfulness into Social and Emotional Learning

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Acknowledgements

K-5 Teachers and Students

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Mindfulness

“Paying attention, on purpose in the present moment, non-judgmentally”

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness for Beginners, 2012
Activity: 3 Minute Breathing

• Awareness (1 minute)
• Gathering (1 minute)
• Expanding (1 minute)

Adapted from Segal, Williams and Teasdale, 2002
Background

Educators

• Self-awareness through reflection
• Self-management through calm breathing

Students

• Skills and practices taught through lessons
  • Self-awareness
  • Self-management
  • Social awareness
  • Relationship skills
  • Responsible decision making

Open Circle Class Meeting structured to foster empathy and compassion

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2012 Collaboration

Weaving Strong Connections in Learning, Reflection and Mindfulness

• Introduce reflective and mindfulness practices
• Encourage sharing and leveraging these practices to enhance working conditions
• Enhance capacity to implement SEL with students
• Develop and pilot lessons and activities

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Collaboration Results

Significant increases for participating educators in the following areas:

- Emotional Self-Awareness
- Optimism
- Inspirational Leadership Related to SEL
- Influence (Communication and Advocacy)
- Situation Analysis (Identify, Assess, Reframe)
2014-2015 Pilot

Mindfulness Training Cohort
Integration of mindfulness practices and activities into Open Circle teacher training

Piloted Practices & Activities
Mindfulness practices and activities to pilot for themselves and with students
Mindfulness Practices in Open Circle Training

3-Minute Breathing Space
Body Scan
Calm Breathing
Chair Yoga
Discoveries Worksheet
Feelings Check-in
Journal Writing
Listening for Strengths
Listening to the World Around You

Mindful Eating
Partner Reflection
Pause Button
Problem-Solving
Guided Imagery
Reflective Questions
Walking Meditation
What Color are Your Feelings?
Some Lessons Already Addressed Mindfulness

• Being Calm
• Listening Skills
• Recognizing and Naming Your Feelings
• Body Language
• Getting Calm When You Feel Upset
• Positive Self-Talk

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Infusing Mindfulness in the Open Circle Curriculum

Lessons: Enhanced with more mindfulness content

Practices and Activities: An activities section dedicated to mindfulness

Children’s Literature: A section highlighting specific children’s books with mindfulness themes

Vocabulary: Reflection vocabulary was threaded throughout all lessons and at the end of each unit, as well as, with the community building activities
Enhanced Lessons – An Example

Your Brain

Amygdala

Frontal Cortex

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Reflection

Pausing and asking yourself questions about an experience

How am I doing?

What did I learn?

Grades K-5

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Think about something you have worked on this week related to your job responsibilities (either by yourself or involving others)

Reflect on that experience and ask yourself:

1. What went well? What influenced that?
2. What was challenging? Why?

With a partner, briefly share your reflection.
Mindfulness Training Cohort

October 2014 - April 2015

• 27 teacher cohort participated in Open Circle training with mindfulness introduced as a key focus areas and threaded through all 4 days.

• Teachers experienced a number of mindfulness practices and activities and were encouraged to introduce these activities with their students.

• Teachers provided feedback through:
  – Paper evaluations at the end of training days on use of mindfulness practices for themselves and with their students
  – 3 surveys sent via SurveyMonkey to gather data on effective mindfulness practices used and reported outcomes (February, April, June 2015)
Pilot Research Findings

Use of Mindful/Reflective Practices

- Top 3 mindful practices used with students were **Calm Breathing** (85%), **Asking Reflective Questions** (65%) and **Pause Button** (35%)*

* Survey 2 also indicated Partner Reflection used 30%

- Top 3 mindful practices teachers used for themselves were **Calm Breathing** (80%), **Personal Reflection** (50%), **Yoga** (30%)

Frequency of Teachers’ Personal Use of Mindful/Reflective Practices

- 55% reported using mindful/RPs sometimes, 15% often, 15% always, 15% rarely
Teachers’ Reflections on Students

• Students are calmer and can process better; appear more focused
• Students love it when we say we are going to practice a mindful activity
• They notice their surroundings more
• Enhances student concentration and moods; students seem to get along better
• Some parents using strategies at home with family members
• Students are more reflective
• Students are able to calm themselves on their own

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Qualitative Feedback

Teachers’ Reflections on Themselves

• It is helping me to keep myself more in the present moment, which is something I find very challenging

• I’ve really tried to be purposeful in my plans for my students

• To relax and know that everyone is just doing your best
Next Steps

- Integrate mindfulness pilot design into standard Open Circle teacher training design going forward
- Connecting mindfulness to new gratitude pilot project
- Open Circle staff continuing to practice mindfulness and sharing reflections on their experiences
Guiding Questions for Further Research

• How aligned are theoretical frameworks of SEL and mindful awareness/contemplative practice?

• Might greater alignment enhance the work in each field?

• What are the key components of approaches in each field and how are they similar or different?

• What are common definitions or indicators of high quality implementation?

• What are the standards for research?

• What do we know from research about the readiness of programs for broad dissemination?
mindfulness
Thank You!

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