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# BRINGING MINDFULNESS TO SCHOOLS

Talk About Wellness Initiative  
Final Report



Talk About Wellness  
Broadening the view of education

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**“ I have great hope that others will carry this work forward – that it will not be another passing trend but will become an integral part of our culture.**

Marilyn Neagley, TAW founding Executive Director



YouthCatalytics

This report was prepared by Jennifer Smith, MA-CMHC.  
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## INTRODUCTION

**M**indfulness as a concept has been practiced throughout the world for ages, but its public debut in the U.S. came during the 1970's, when Jon Kabat-Zinn began studying its clinical applications with chronic pain and stress management. Kabat-Zinn, founder of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). What early researchers learned about the benefits of mindfulness practice was primarily focused on its impacts in adult populations, and those with clinical diagnoses.

When Talk About Wellness (TAW) began its work in 2004, bringing mindfulness approaches into school settings was new and virtually untested. TAW entered this field early on and hit the ground running – it got into schools quickly, tested different approaches, developed trainings and materials for teachers and student-teachers, and figured out how to conduct meaningful evaluations. As a result, TAW's body of work represents a significant contribution to

our understanding of how to bring mindfulness efforts into schools, and of the effects of mindfulness on teachers and their students.

Why was TAW's work so important? Because today, schools' jobs are bigger and more complex than ever. They must address an enormous array of student social-emotional needs while at the same time preparing them effectively for a newly competitive adult world, and do it all under ever-shifting federal and state mandates and funding. That is why it is so critical to test and expand promising approaches, like mindfulness, that have potential to meet as many needs as possible.

This wrap-up report introduces readers to the use of mindfulness in schools, its current evidence base, a description of TAW's work, and what they learned that can be implemented by other communities. TAW's goal was always to impact whole child wellbeing, not to focus only on students with particular challenges, but instead to explore how better social-emotional wellness through mindfulness could improve outcomes in the overall learning environment, and provide lifelong tools.



## WHY BRING MINDFULNESS TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Schools are under a great deal of pressure, both socially and politically, to improve student outcomes, and to do so while meeting the needs of a diverse array of students. From the charter schools movement to school uniforms to pay incentives for teachers, approaches have varied widely and targeted different parts of the problem. Successes have been scattershot and limited. One new approach that has attracted considerable attention in the last few years is mindfulness.

Mindfulness practices in schools are a potent means of advancing social-emotional wellness – the spectrum of knowledge, attitudes and skills that contribute to children’s readiness to learn and their ability to collaborate with teachers and peers. Systematic approaches to promoting social-emotional learning (SEL) have been linked to schools reporting better academic results, positive student-teacher interactions, and reduced problem behaviors (Brackett & Rivers, 2013). It is now understood that children’s wellness depends on the functioning of many interrelated factors – cognitive, social, emotional and physical – and that the best way to promote success in one area is to address all of them (Diamond, 2010).

According to authors of one recent meta-analysis of mindfulness-based interventions in school settings, “Mindfulness can be understood as the foundation and basic pre-condition for education. Children need to learn to stop their mind wandering and regulate attention and emotions, to deal with feelings of frustration, and to self-motivate. Mindfulness practice enhances the very qualities and goals of education in the 21st century.... attentional and emotional self-regulation, but also prosocial dispositions such as empathy and compassion, self-representations, ethical sensitivity, creativity, and problem solving skills” (Zenner et al., 2014). Although advocates of “wellness” have long called for increased attention to the whole person, it is only recently that U.S. federal education legislation has included a mandate to promote students’ social and emotional learning (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.).

Understandably, as schools respond to new directives and attempt to balance the many demands they face to improve their performance in academic and other areas, districts have experimented with a variety of approaches – some more targeted and effective than others. In terms of the emerging evidence base for this kind of work, there is considerable overlap between programs focused on SEL and those addressing mindfulness. In other words, SEL programs often

**“ My most challenging student in terms of aggressive and impulsive behavior now visibly takes a deep breath in and out to ‘get to a calm place’ before problem-solving.**

Elementary Teacher

include mindfulness-type activities, and mindfulness programs often engage children in talking about their feelings. So are SEL and mindfulness the same thing? Not exactly. According to Linda Lantieri, cofounder of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and creator of the *Inner Resilience Program* (Tides Center, n.d.), SEL works from the “outside-in” whereas mindfulness works from the “inside-out” (Zakrzewski & Lantieri, 2015). Cultivating both together is better than taking an either-or approach because increasing mindfulness gives students better self-awareness and access to the skills they need in the present moment. If teachers are also trained in mindfulness, they are more likely to model pro-social behaviors for their students, and teach the abilities needed to pay attention, calm down or sit still, rather than simply discipline children for not doing so.

**“ I had a lot less discipline to manage, fewer ‘time-outs’ or visits to the ‘opportunity room.’ Also, there were noticeable changes to the mood of students, which allowed for greater focus and participation in the classroom.**

Teacher

# THE SCIENCE BEHIND MINDFULNESS

Research on the effectiveness of mindfulness-based programming in school settings has been emerging from the field for about a decade. Rigorous studies on the use of mindfulness techniques in other settings, and research on the impacts of SEL-based programming, can also increase our understanding of how mind-body activities are likely to affect teachers and students. This section will review current literature that informs and supports TAW's approach.



Williamstown (Vt.) Elementary School

## Mindfulness in Schools

Although studies on the effectiveness of mindfulness-based programs in schools are sometimes limited by small sample sizes and less than rigorous design, solid evidence is building of the positive impacts mindfulness programming can have on students. For example, findings from a recent analysis of 24 studies on mindfulness activities showed large, statistically

**“ Many kids come to school and they haven’t had breakfast, or they’ve seen acts of violence, and [yet] they are expected to learn optimally.... If you are going to be in an environment like a classroom, why not help them actually get into an alignment, calmness, clarity, and emotional regulation where they can be open to what is available for them? Then you create a community of learning.**

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Harvard Magazine, 2013

significant effects on students’ cognitive performance, and smaller but still significant effects on resilience and stress measures (Zenner et al., 2014). Other studies have shown increases in elementary students’ behavioral regulation, self-awareness, and attention (Flook et al., 2010), as well as reductions in aggression and social problems (Parker et al., 2014). In one recent study of 409 low-income and ethnic

minority children in California schools, teachers reported improved classroom behavior that included children’s paying attention, self-control, participation, and caring/respect for others (Black & Fernando, 2014). Studies have also shown that mindfulness activities can lead to lower levels of school-related anxiety (Carsley et al., 2015).

Variations in approach, target populations and evaluation methods make comparing the impacts of various programs difficult. However, authors of one analysis concluded that training teachers in mindfulness was likely the best model in cases when it can result in more mindful teaching as well as direct exposure to mindfulness activities for a diverse group of students (Zenner et al., 2014). In fact, studies examining the impacts of mindfulness training on teachers find numerous benefits for students in their classrooms. For example, an evaluation of the *Inner Resilience* program showed statistically significant improvements in aggression, depressive mood, frustration and perceptual sensitivity among 3rd to 5th graders. Furthermore, those students at higher risk for school problems appeared to benefit even more than their peers (Simon et al., 2009).

Other studies evaluating the impacts of mindfulness training also reveal that teachers associate improved mindfulness with a sense of well-being and teaching self-efficacy, better classroom management, and improved relationships with students (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). In one study of 1,100 teachers from 23 schools, higher levels of teacher mindfulness positively correlated with overall perceptions of empowerment (Watts, 2009). In graduate-level social work students, mindfulness training as part of professional development was associated with increases in the ability to act with awareness, make observations and accept scenarios without judgment (Napoli & Bonifas, 2011), all skills important for teachers. And finally, a control-group study on the impacts of *Inner Resilience* on teachers and students in NYC showed that the program had significant benefits for teachers – with statistically significant reductions in stress, improved mindfulness, and an increase in relational trust among colleagues (Simon et al., 2009).

Underlying the relatively new use of mindfulness in school settings is a large body of evidence pointing to the impacts it can have on the mental health of children and adults generally. Studies with adults have long shown

evidence that mindfulness training can lead to lower levels of perceived stress and physical pain, increased attention and memory capacity, and improved mood and immune function (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Mrazek et al., 2013). For example, a pilot study found that mindfulness training improved executive functioning in both adults and adolescents with attentional

problems, leading to better sustained attention and less distractibility than could be accomplished with medications (Siegel, 2010). Current neuroscience research now also shows us that these “felt” effects are reflected in the structure and function of the brain itself.

For example, mindfulness meditation has been shown to reduce pain by activating regions in the brain associated with self-control, and by deactivating the thalamus. Other studies in this same analysis suggest that mindfulness meditation may improve chronic pain by preventing some of the long-term effects of pain on grey and white matter, in essence providing better neuroplasticity (Bergland, 2015). A study by the Center for Advanced Imaging showed that long-term meditators had increased cognitive activity compared to novice meditators in regions of the brain associated with monitoring, engaging attention, and attentional orienting (Brefczynski-Lewis et al., 2007). Finally, in one recent study – one of the few that has examined placebo effects by offering a fake meditation series to some participants – follow up brain scans indicated that those who participated in a real mindfulness retreat had more activity in regions of the brain that process stress, and relate to focus and calmness, and reduced levels of bodily inflammation at a four-month follow up (Creswell et al., 2016).

Existing literature on the direct effects of mindfulness on children and adolescents has largely focused on the application of Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) therapy, a clinical approach developed by Kabat-Zinn. MBSR has been demonstrated to be effective with youth who have learning disabilities, depression and anxiety (Sibinga et al., 2011). For example, a randomized clinical trial that followed 102 adolescents receiving outpatient treatment showed that MBSR reduced symptoms of anxiety, depression, and bodily distress, and increased the quality of young people’s self-esteem and sleep (Biegel et al., 2009). In another study of 34 adolescents diagnosed with learning disabilities, a mindfulness meditation intervention was linked to decreases in the intensity and nature of anxiety, enhanced social skills and improved academic performance (Beauchemin et al., 2008). A small study on the use of MBSR with urban teens who were HIV-positive also showed statistically significant reductions in hostility, and general and emotional discomfort (Sibinga et al., 2011).

### Mindfulness and Social-Emotional Learning

As noted earlier, social-emotional learning (SEL) is a holistic process of teaching children to recognize and regulate their

“ Simple activities like working with ‘breathing buddies’ can develop the pathways in children’s brains related to concentration, improving their ability to notice what they’re thinking and feeling, as well as return to focusing on a particular task when their attention wanders.”

CASEL, 2014

own emotions, understand the emotions of others, build and sustain positive relationships, and make decisions that help them achieve their goals – all of which are necessary if children are to learn effectively (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], n.d.). Mindfulness activities can support the development of SEL skills, and in particular attentional skills, which develop independently from other skills, according to CASEL’s co-founder Daniel Goleman. Simple activities like working with “breathing buddies” can develop the pathways in children’s brains related to concentration, improving their ability to notice what they’re thinking and feeling, as well as return to focusing on a particular task when their attention wanders (CASEL, 2014).



School-based interventions targeting mental health and SEL in students have been shown to positively impact academic performance, SEL skills, and classroom behavior (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010). In one review of 52 different studies, authors found that SEL interventions led to an 11% improvement in academic performance, a 25% increase in social-emotional skills, and a 10% reduction in classroom misbehavior, anxiety and depression for up to six months following interventions (Durlak et al., 2011, as cited in Weare & Nind, 2011). Based on their analysis, authors also identified several factors associated with program effectiveness, including: integrating interventions into the general classroom curriculum; focusing on SEL skills with younger students to provide a base, and offering booster sessions to older students; training teachers and other staff to provide programs directly (rather than relying on outside professionals); and taking a “whole-school” approach with teacher education, liaison with parents, parent education, community and outside agency involvement (Weare & Nind, 2011). One longitudinal study, the Seattle Social Development Project, also indicates that effects can be long-lasting for comprehensive SEL programs. By following 808 elementary students who received an SEL intervention from 1st through 6th grade, researchers demonstrated that participants had significantly lower lifetime rates of violence and heavy alcohol use at age 18 than their peers not in the program (APA, 2010).

# TALK ABOUT WELLNESS: THE JOURNEY



## Getting Started (2004-2006)

The Talk About Wellness (TAW) initiative began in 2004 with the goal of bringing experiential practices, built on the social-emotional learning (SEL) movement, to teachers and children in Vermont. While in early stages project leaders often described the work as an effort to address “spirituality,” as the project evolved, its language shifted to focus more on “mindfulness” – a term that has a more secular connotation better suited to school settings. Although there tends to be some overlap in the types of activities that SEL and mindfulness programs in schools offer, TAW’s focus was on integrating contemplative practices into existing school wellness programs. (For a complete description of mindfulness activities, see the Appendix on page 16.)

After initial planning, during the 2005-2006 school year, TAW partnered with Champlain Valley Union High School, located in Hinesburg, Vt., to pilot an approach that offered meditation and yoga activities directly to 32 10th-grade students through its health program. TAW’s initial pilot also included consultation with teachers to add a “spirit” dimension to their existing wellness curricula, and a targeted communications plan that would make the new program appealing to students – for example, an off-campus retreat for sophomores included one afternoon of mindfulness-related activities, and stickers with mindfulness quotes were distributed to the 350 students at the retreat. A small evaluation of the pilot project yielded strong qualitative evidence that students enjoyed engaging in mindfulness activities. As a result, the following school year (2006-2007), the program was expanded to include additional wellness teachers and students from all grade levels.

In 2006, TAW began to shift its focus from providing yoga and meditation activities directly to students to training educators themselves in mindfulness approaches that they could use both in their classrooms and in their personal lives. The reason for this shift was twofold. First, it had become clear that by promoting mindfulness among educators, TAW could both reach more

students and influence the entire school culture, creating demand for the approach by demonstrating to teachers and administrators that it worked. Second, research had already established that supporting teacher wellbeing was correlated to improved academic outcomes for children. TAW’s new, narrower focus led to the creation of several graduate-level teachers’ courses designed to help educators and school staff develop an experiential and personal understanding of mindfulness, as well as tools for using mindfulness-based techniques in school settings with children. The evolution of TAW’s approach aligns with research showing that the most effective school mindfulness programs engage teachers directly in learning how to incorporate mindfulness into existing curricula (Zenner et al., 2014).

## Refining the Approach (2007-2010)

TAW’s first master’s-level course, led by Aostre Johnson, EdD, professor of education at St. Michael’s College, took place in Chittenden County, Vt., in the spring of 2006, and included 14 educators from the Chittenden South Supervisory Union, as well as three counselors and one teacher from South Burlington School District. The second course, in 2007, was led by mindfulness instructor Jackie Kaufman in Saint Albans, located in rural Franklin County, Vt. This course had 20 participants with a waiting list. It was becoming clear that mindfulness appealed to a wide range of educators: in attendance was a male high school “teacher of the year,” a middle school teacher from a rural district, and voc-tech educators teaching hairdressing. This mix of attendees allowed educators at different levels and in various roles to develop, for the first time, a common language and shared experiences around mindfulness; bridging gaps between colleagues in this way was an unintended benefit. Two additional graduate courses were developed and offered in 2007 and 2008, and were taught jointly by Johnson and Sam Crowell, professor emeritus from California State University at San Bernardino and adjunct faculty at St. Michael’s College in Vt., where the classes were held (see our interview with Johnson on page 12).

Starting in 2008, as an outgrowth of the first graduate course, TAW launched a partnership with South Burlington School





District's Wellness and Resilience Program, based on the *Inner Resilience* framework developed by Linda Lantieri. *Inner Resilience* aims to integrate social-emotional learning and contemplative practices in school settings, and was developed and piloted in New York City after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks (Tides Center, n.d.). South Burlington is the second largest city in Vermont, with an estimated population of 19,000 people. There are five public schools in the district – three elementary, one middle school and one high school. One of the city's private schools also participated in training. TAW provided funding for instruction and materials, and worked on program planning.

Forty-one South Burlington educators received training in the program's K-8 curriculum and self-care mindfulness practices during a series of retreats, workshops and professional development events during the first year. Care was taken to coordinate TAW activities with existing programming and to reduce additional demands on teachers as much as possible. During the following year (2009-2010), a second cohort of teachers and staff from the district joined the program and continued alongside veteran participants to engage in monthly group meetings, one- to two-day retreats and weekly classes in mindfulness practices. Outside consultants were engaged to formally evaluate the results of the district's partnership with TAW.

In this first formal evaluation, conducted in 2009, data was collected via standardized measures, pre- and post-program surveys, classroom logs and follow-up interviews. This study found a statistically significant decrease in participating educators' perceived sense of stress, as well as an increase in calmness, happiness, work satisfaction and other factors associated with mindfulness. Of the 41 teachers, administrators and staff who participated in the 10-month series of trainings,

**Of the 41 teachers, administrators and staff who participated in the 10-month series of trainings, 84% said the project had a serious or moderate impact on their personal lives, and 90% reported a serious or moderate impact on their professional lives.**

Youth Catalytics, 2009

the third and fourth grades. The most common benefit reported by teachers was an observed increase in students' abilities to calm themselves. Although the 84 students who participated reported mixed effects on their own ability to learn and focus, 77% of students said that such activities could benefit some children and should be offered in school (Youth Catalytics, 2009).

As the project continued in South Burlington during the 2009-2010 school year, a quasi-experimental mixed-methods study was conducted to replicate earlier findings about whether participation led to a perceived reduction of stress in teachers; increased teacher awareness of and attention to the present moment; and whether the amount of "mindful practice" completed by individuals affected the degree of impact. Again, data was collected via standardized measures and pre-/post-program surveys; this time, 61 teachers and staff participated (21 were veteran participants who had also been in the prior cohort). Results showed statistically significant increases in participants' sense of mindfulness and well-being, and significant decreases in perceived stress (MacNeil, Gray & Quintiliani, 2011).

Narrative surveys also suggested the program was personally and professionally beneficial. For example, noticeable or significant positive changes were reported by 89% of participants in their personal lives, and by 92% in their professional lives. Common themes that emerged from the

surveys indicated that educators felt better able to "stay in the moment," remain patient with students, calm themselves with deep breathing, and maintain lower classroom stress levels (MacNeil et al., 2011). Further, 80% of participants reported noticing positive changes among their students – students' ability to self-calm was the benefit most often cited. Educators

said their students seemed less anxious, needed fewer office referrals for disruptive or impulsive behavior, and had more positive peer interactions. Finally, 95% of participants agreed they would recommend the program to others, and those who explained why described connecting with colleagues in new ways, deepening relationships with other educators, and having an easier time listening to and accepting their peers.

Evaluation studies conducted on the South Burlington School District Mindfulness Program overall indicate its promise as a beneficial intervention for both educators and their students; however further study would be required to make conclusive

**Common themes that emerged from the surveys indicated that educators felt better able to 'stay in the moment,' remain patient with students, calm themselves with deep breathing, and maintain lower classroom stress levels**

MacNeil et al., 2011

84% said the project had a serious or moderate impact on their personal lives, and 90% reported a serious or moderate impact on their professional lives. Sixty-four percent of participants also reported a serious or moderate improvement in their relationships with colleagues, and 95% said they would "strongly encourage" colleagues to participate in mindfulness training (Youth Catalytics, 2009).

In addition, this evaluation assessed how bringing age-appropriate mindfulness activities into the classroom impacted students – 28 teachers and four counselors who underwent training implemented this work with five classes of students in

judgments about its impact on various populations in a variety of settings. For example, authors of existing studies suggest using a rigorous control-group design, additional validated measurement tools, and examining whether educators at different points in their careers benefit in different ways (for example, first-year teachers).

### Building for the Future (2011-2016)

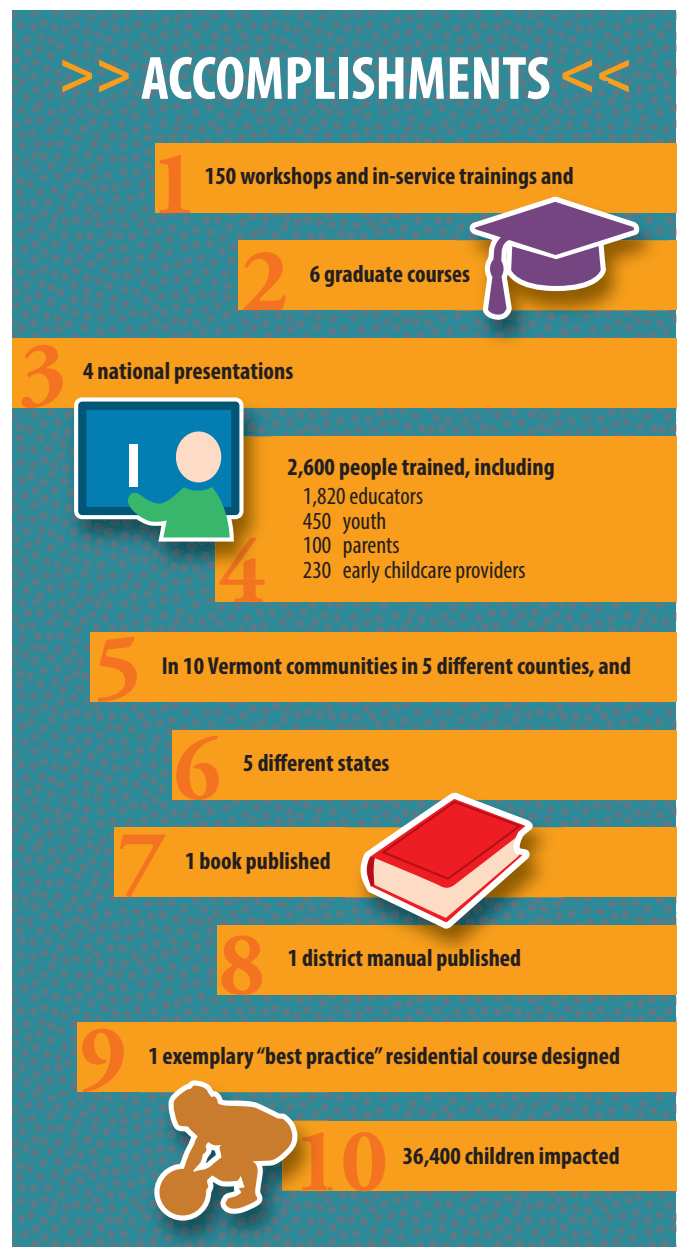
At this phase in the TAW initiative, leaders began to reach out in earnest to a broader national audience to share their successes and disseminate materials that could help carry the model into other schools and build sustainability for existing partners. In 2011, TAW published *Educating from the Heart: Theoretical and Practical Approaches to Transforming Education*, a book that describes the research basis and experiential underpinnings of TAW's approach to introducing "heart" and "spirit" into schools as a way to improve student outcomes (Johnson & Neagley, 2011). Also in 2011, South Burlington School District partnered with the University of Vermont (UVM) Environmental Program and College of Education and Social Services to bring renowned mindfulness scholar Jon Kabat-Zinn to Vermont to speak. The presentation, entitled "Mindfulness, Healing and Transformation: The Art, the Science, and the Adventure of Being Fully Human," was free and open to the public. The event drew more than 1,000 people from the Burlington area (see a link to the video recording in the appendix on page 16). Other presentations of TAW's and South Burlington School District's work occurred at a Center for Mindfulness conference in Norwood, Mass., and at the "Bridging the Hearts and Minds of Youth Conference" at the University of California San Diego Mindfulness Center. TAW also co-presented at conferences for the New England League of Middle Schools in R.I., and at school districts in Westfield, Mass., and Cooperstown, N.Y. South Burlington School District presented its work at Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, N.Y., and participated in a symposium at the University of Virginia's Contemplative Sciences Center.

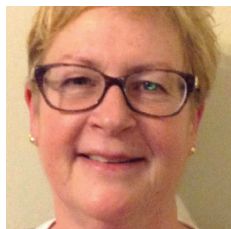
Meanwhile, in Vermont, the South Burlington School District continued, with TAW's support, to train teachers and staff, establish an internal training program, introduce coaching, and co-produce a mindfulness implementation manual that is the first of its kind. Over the course of eight years, the district trained over 160 teachers in practices related to *Inner Resilience* and mindfulness. The district's and TAW's efforts have since been nationally recognized for their district-wide approach and level of program integration (Kabat-Zinn, as cited in Boyce, 2016; Rechtschaffen, 2014). The district's updated manual, *Mindfulness in Public Schools: Building Wellness and Resilience in Our Children*, is now publicly available (South Burlington School District, 2016).

Between 2013 and 2016, TAW expanded training throughout Vermont and parts of New England to reach new audiences that included primary, secondary and post-secondary teachers, counselors and educational leaders; early childcare providers; expectant and new parents; and at-risk youth and youth leadership councils. In 2015 and 2016, TAW and the South Burlington School District also co-sponsored a five-day intensive course entitled "Mindfulness-Based Learning and

Teaching," taught by Susan Woods, a senior trainer with the Mindfulness-Based Professional Training Institute at University of California San Diego (see a full course description in the Appendix on page 17). Though TAW's work is concluding in December 2016, planning is already underway for a course to be hosted at St. Michael's College in 2017, and for "Courage and Renewal" teacher retreats.

Thus, the work inspired by TAW goes on, both directly and indirectly. Like all movements, the one toward introducing mindfulness to schools is at least partly propelled and sustained through its own ripple effects. Over the course of its 12 years, TAW trained 1,820 educators; if every person trained applied mindfulness techniques with just 20 children, they will have reached an estimated 36,400 young people, many of whom will go on to practice the concepts and introduce them to others.





Jody Smith is a retired elementary school teacher from the South Burlington (Vt.) School District. She participated in and later provided training to other educators through TAW.

**A**s a person, I found mindfulness to be really life-changing. It became a part of who I was and so naturally, it came into my classroom. Further training taught me how to bring these methods to children in my classes – in kindergarten through 2nd grades. And once I did that, everywhere I looked, I could see opportunities to bring mindfulness in. It helps children with self-regulation, anxiety, and home separation – which is very hard for the youngest children and their families.

If you really develop your own practice, it changes everything – how you hear kids, how you see kids. It keeps you in a

**“ If you really develop your own practice, it changes everything – how you hear kids, how you see kids. It keeps you in a grounded, anchored spot. When your students are escalating, you don’t escalate with them, and they can feel that calmness in you.**

grounded, anchored spot. When your students are escalating, you don’t escalate with them, and they can feel that calmness in you. It makes you more curious about what’s happening inside children, instead of immediately feeling stressed.

Kids also took this mindfulness practice home to their families. I had a weekly newsletter where I shared what activities we were doing each week, and there was always a paragraph included about mindfulness. After kids would practice in the classroom, they would get to bring home their ‘toolkits’ and use these items at home as well. I got calls and pictures from parents showing me their children practicing exercises at home, and teaching their younger siblings how to do them.

I had a student in a 2nd grade class who was very bright, and quite a perfectionist. He was used to things being easy for him, except one thing that didn’t come easy was art. When it was time to do art work, he would really fall apart. I kept teaching him the different practices and the breathing exercises. Then midyear, there was one day when he was getting very frustrated, and he looked over at me – he didn’t say anything – but he went over to our Peace Place and picked up a tool for breathing. I could hear him telling himself calming phrases, and then he came back and finished his work. That was the first time he had done that.

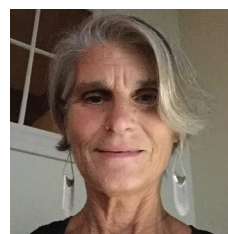
I had a kindergarten student with post-traumatic stress disorder who would have frequent melt-downs. He had a lot in his life he was worried about. We used the breathing exercises a lot together, and he also used the Worry Box, to put his

worries aside each morning. He especially liked the beanie baby practice where students put a ‘breathing buddy’ on their belly and give it a ride; that was a practice that carried over into his house.

Data shows that good teachers are burning out in five to 10 years. We’ve got to have something in place to respond to that, or we’ll be in very bad shape. In my district, this started from the top down, with administrators, which was excellent. We had administrators doing mindfulness practices at the

**“ Data shows that good teachers are burning out in five to 10 years. We’ve got to have something in place to respond to that, or we’ll be in very bad shape. In my district, this started from the top down, with administrators, which was excellent. We had administrators doing mindfulness practices at the beginning and end of every staff meeting, and it made a difference.**

beginning and end of every staff meeting, and it made a difference. It helps everybody. It’s imperative to have mindfulness as part of [teacher-to-teacher] mentoring. The other great thing about mindfulness, is that it’s flexible. There’s no one right or wrong way to do this, really. And teachers on the whole are very creative. They are able to bring mindfulness to their classrooms in wonderful ways.



Sheri Rand is a retired middle school assistant principal in the South Burlington (Vt.) School District. She participated in and later oversaw coordination of training and activities, and helped coordinate Mindfulness-Based Learning and Teaching courses with TAW.

I was trained by Patricia Broderick out of Penn State, in a program called *Learning to Breathe* – I did a three-day training on this curriculum, and we incorporated that at F. H. Tuttle Middle School. For two years, we had a program at the middle school, and we had every student experiencing this in grade 6 as part of a six-week program built into an SEL course. Over time it became more valuable, because elementary students were also experiencing mindfulness in the classroom. Our goal was that by 8th grade, students would have had enough exposure that they could access these skills when they needed them.

We couldn’t have done this work without TAW. Marilyn was an instrumental advocate with our district and our superintendent. We approached the program from the grassroots. We made many presentations to different groups connected with the schools – district leaders, the

superintendent, the school board – and we communicated about the science behind mindfulness. You need to keep the whole arena of mindfulness in a science-based frame so people understand there's research behind what happens in the brain and the body when you practice. The science takes the 'kumbaya' out of it.

**“ You need to keep the whole arena of mindfulness in a science-based frame so people understand there's research behind what happens in the brain and the body when you practice. The science takes the 'kumbaya' out of it.**

Our orientation in South Burlington has always been that it's an experiential program. It's not something you can learn in a book and then teach. It has to be alive in your own life. And it's a process. We decided early on, it would never be something that was dictated. It was highly recommended, and educators had support to participate, but it was never mandated. It spread by word of mouth. Over the years – by the fifth or sixth year – we were amazed at who was beginning to take the course. People saw firsthand what it could do.

**“ No matter what a student's background is, we all have the capacity to learn this. So it transcends socio-economic issues and challenges. Mindfulness has the potential to level the playing field.**

I was in education for 30 years. I started in guidance, then I was an administrator and then assistant principal. I have lots of experience working with students around changing their behavior. I questioned programs that were very cognitive – these taught students something, but they didn't teach them how to change their reactions. Mindfulness does that. No matter what a student's background is, we all have the capacity to learn this. So it transcends socio-economic issues and challenges. Mindfulness has the potential to level the playing field. And children can continue to practice in their lives outside school.



Aostre Johnson, Ed.D., is a professor of education at St. Michael's College in Colchester, Vermont. She led undergraduate and graduate-level courses through TAW, and co-edited the book *Educating From the Heart*.

We need mindfulness in our culture to balance the intrusion of a scatteredness that affects people's attention spans. Things like our near-constant connection to technology, being increasingly rushed, asked to split attention on multiple tasks – these things affect us. It's generally understood in the field now that students are experiencing more anxiety than they used to, that they're less able to focus, and less able to dig deeply and reflectively into materials. Mindfulness represents a necessary corrective to all of that.

**“ It's generally understood in the field now that students are experiencing more anxiety than they used to, that they're less able to focus, and less able to dig deeply and reflectively into materials. Mindfulness represents a necessary corrective to all of that.**

Talk About Wellness had a great effect in Vermont. It brought the idea of mindfulness to so many individual educators and districts in the state. It planted so many seeds in Vermont, and really advanced the understanding of mindfulness in the state dramatically; I can't imagine where we'd be without it.

TAW funded a number of speakers to come to St. Michael's College, and exposed many, many students to mindfulness that way. And not just any speakers – these were teachers that were practicing it in their classrooms. In other words, after training and engaging teachers, TAW then supported them to share their experience. Students are much more likely to listen to fellow teachers, and these speakers could be very specific about what they did in their own classroom. I can personally testify that my graduate students picked up methods that they are bringing into their classrooms. My undergraduate students are likewise inspired – and some of them will stay in Vermont, but others will return to other states and integrate these ideas wherever they go.

**“ I can personally testify that my graduate students picked up methods that they are bringing into their classrooms. My undergraduate students are likewise inspired – and some of them will stay in Vermont, but others will return to other states and integrate these ideas wherever they go.**

Our summer course at St. Michael's is a two-week course on mindfulness. TAW's sponsorship has really enriched that experience by enabling us to bring in extra teacher speakers, and a nationally known speaker, Sam Crowell. It also allows us to add other nice touches, like offering students food and a retreat-like setting. We'll also add some nature-based work as well; it's more home-like. TAW's contribution makes it more than an academic course, and transforms it into a combination of a retreat and learning.



Daniel Rechtschaffen, MFT, is founder of the Mindful Education Institute, and leads mindfulness trainings for schools and communities around the world. He provided training to teachers and led activities with children in the South Burlington (Vt.) School District on multiple occasions between 2008 and 2010.

There are a lot of schools and some school districts who have been doing this work for maybe two to five years, but the Burlington area was an early adopter and TAW was the spark for that. Often it's just a little private school that's bringing us in to train teachers; it's rare to have a whole district. TAW took a great integrative approach – they brought in a lot of different people and a lot of different activities and professional development. That level of integration is unique.

What I never want to see is a top-down curriculum in a school. No teacher wants yet another curriculum to memorize or another standard to adhere to. It's best if you approach it like, 'Here is a wellness offering for you, the teacher. And if you like it,

and if it's going well, then we can talk about bringing it to the kids.'

**“ TAW took a great integrative approach – they brought in a lot of different people and a lot of different activities and professional development. That level of integration is unique.**

We want to be mindful before we can teach mindfulness. I'm not interested in a credentialing program – though I know some people who are – where someone gets that stamp that says 'you're mindful!' There's a myth that we'll wait until the teacher is perfectly mindful before we can begin. We're trying to create a culture of awareness, a culture of compassion, a culture of mindfulness. If that community has a goal of being mindful, that's what we want.

We want the teachers to be in a place of mindfulness themselves. This is not a behavior modification tool. We don't want teachers saying, 'I want this for my students, so they're better behaved, but it's not for me.' The teachers have to be willing to look at themselves as well – that's the minimum requirement.

## CONCLUSION

Mindfulness programming in schools is now almost commonplace. If most school districts have not yet adopted it as a whole-school, fully integrated approach, hundreds of schools have at least embraced its concepts partially, in certain programs and with certain young people. As an early promoter and investigator of mindfulness programming in schools, TAW deserves credit for helping to drive this transformation. In retrospect, it is possible to point to some of the factors that made its impact possible – factors that can inform other organizations that will carry forward this work.

First, TAW went slowly, developing language and resources that educators and families would support. This meant avoiding all religious associations and materials. Next, TAW identified champions in a single school district, and created more as it went along. By funding extensive training of educators, it was able to create enough institutional energy and knowledge to create a well-defined program – one that it could evaluate and refine over time. In today's world of one- and three-year program grants, it is rare for any funding organization to be deeply involved with any single project over the long term. Yet developing institutional support and creating programs that really work is a slow, painstaking process, not a quick one, and TAW stuck with it long enough to learn lessons and help produce resource materials and training supports for the field as a whole.

TAW realized early on that, in promoting mindfulness in schools, it had to focus narrowly on the science behind it, and to expand that evidence through its own evaluation efforts. As the research emerged, interest among educators increased. To change the culture of public education, it had to communicate with several key stakeholder groups – the public at large, parents, educators, school systems themselves – in a variety of ways, through lectures, downloadable website materials, retreats, trainings, articles, even a book. Finally, South Burlington and TAW shared what they learned by co-sponsoring the creation of a practical how-to manual, the South Burlington School District's *Mindfulness in Public Schools: Building Wellness & Resilience in Our Children*.

After 12 years of hard work, TAW closes its doors in the belief that the energy and resources it poured into Vermont schools and beyond have institutionalized the practice of mindfulness in several core school districts and created the climate for change in dozens of others. Now it asks local champions in each of these districts to carry the movement forward.

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# APPENDIX

## RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

The following are tools and resources that educators can use to support personal and classroom practices. Find recommendations for children's books on pages 23-24

<b>TOOLS</b>	Stress Squares, Chimes, Mandala Coloring Books, Finger Labyrinths, Hoberman Spheres. More tools for Peace Corners can be found at <a href="http://www.officeplayground.com">www.officeplayground.com</a> .
<b>PROGRAMS/ MODELS</b>	Calm Classroom at <a href="http://www.calmclassroom.com/">www.calmclassroom.com/</a> MindUP at <a href="http://www.thehawnfoundation.org/">www.thehawnfoundation.org/</a> Mindful Schools at <a href="http://www.mindfulschools.org/">www.mindfulschools.org/</a> Pilot Wellness Curriculum at <a href="http://www.talkaboutwellness.org/">www.talkaboutwellness.org/</a> Center for Courage & Renewal at <a href="http://www.couragerenewal.org/">www.couragerenewal.org/</a>
<b>AUDIO &amp; VIDEO RECORDINGS</b>	Mindfulness, Healing, and Transformation: The Art, the Science, and the Adventure of Being Fully Human [Video] at <a href="http://www.retn.org/show/mindfulness-healing-and-transformation-art-science-and-adventure-being-fully-human">www.retn.org/show/mindfulness-healing-and-transformation-art-science-and-adventure-being-fully-human</a> <i>Building Emotional Intelligence: Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children</i> [Includes Audio CD] (Goleman, D. & Lantieri, L., 2014) <i>Calm Down Boogie: Songs for Peaceful Moments and Lively Spirits</i> [Audio] (Rose, B., 2007) <i>Still Quiet Place: Mindfulness for Children and Mindfulness for Teens</i> [Audio] (Salzman, A., 2007 and 2010) <i>I Can Relax! A Relaxation CD for Children</i> [Audio] (Pincus, D.) <i>Mindful Moments for Kids</i> [One-minute mindful activities] (Willey, K.) <i>The Art of Meditation</i> [For adults] (Goleman, D.) <i>Guided Mindfulness Meditation</i> [For adults] (Kabat-Zinn, J.)
<b>BOOKS</b>	<i>Mindfulness in Public Schools: Building Wellness and Resilience in Our Children</i> (Horstman, J. [Ed.], 2016) <i>Building Emotional Intelligence: Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children</i> [Includes Audio CD] (Goleman, D. & Lantieri, L., 2014) <i>Educating from the Heart: Theoretical and Practical Approaches to Transforming Education</i> (Johnson, A.N., & Neagley, M.W. [Eds.], 2011) <i>Mindful Happiness</i> (Quintiliani, A. R., 2013) <i>Learning2Breathe: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention and Performance</i> (Broderick, P. C., 2013) <i>The Mindful Child: How to Help Your Kid Manage Stress and Become Happier, Kinder and More Compassionate</i> (Greenland, S. K., 2012)
<b>APPS</b>	Calm.com at <a href="http://www.calm.com/">www.calm.com/</a> Insight Meditation Timer at <a href="http://www.insighttimer.com">www.insighttimer.com</a> Stop, Breathe, and Think at <a href="http://www.stopbreathethink.org">www.stopbreathethink.org</a> Smiling Mind at <a href="https://itunes.apple.com/au/">https://itunes.apple.com/au/</a> Take a Break! at <a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/">https://itunes.apple.com/us/</a>



## MINDFUL MOVEMENT

Adapted from:

Musical Yoga Adventures [Audio] at [www.musicalyogaadventures.com](http://www.musicalyogaadventures.com)

Body Poetry: Yoga Cards [Card Deck] at [www.roylco.com](http://www.roylco.com)

Yoga Pretzels: 50 Fun Yoga Activities for Kids and Grown-ups [Card Deck] (Guber, T. & Kalish, L.) at [www.barefootbooks.com](http://www.barefootbooks.com)

### Training in the South Burlington Wellness and Resilience Program

A manual *Mindfulness in Public Schools: Building Wellness and Resilience in Our Children* is available for purchase online at [www.mindfulnessink12education.com](http://www.mindfulnessink12education.com) (South Burlington School District, 2016). Marilyn Neagley, TAW founding Executive Director, can be contacted via her website, [www.marilynneagley.com](http://www.marilynneagley.com).

## COURSE OUTLINE

### 5-Day Intensive Mindfulness-Based Teacher and Educator Course

Required Texts (to be read in advance of the course):

- South Burlington School District (2016). *Mindfulness in Public Education-Building Wellness and Resilience in Our Children*. Burlington, VT.
- Kabat-Zinn, Jon. (1994). *Wherever You Go, There You Are*. Hyperion: New York, NY.
- Rechtschaffen, D. (2014). *The Way of Mindful Education*. W.W. Norton & Co: New York, NY
- Srinivasan, M. (2014). *Teach Breathe Learn*. Parallax Press: Berkeley, CA. (Recommended)

#### DAY 1

9:00 a.m.

Bring the group together; spend a moment or two listening to the sound of the chime/bells. General welcome from the teacher-presenters.

Teachers introduce the structure of the next four days of training. **Days 1 & 2** are based on developing an experiential and personal understanding of mindfulness and how that relates to teaching mindfulness-based techniques in the classroom and other school settings. **Days 3 & 4** have two main themes: didactic presentations from teachers already using mindfulness in the classroom, and time set aside to work on writing out action plans that implement mindfulness-based strategy/techniques relevant to each participant's setting (whether teacher, counselor, principal or superintendent). Progress on these plans will be reported in coming months.

In dyads, ask participants to introduce themselves to each other and answer the following questions:

- Why is it important for you to be here?
- What brought you here?
- What do you hope to gain from this experience?

10:15 a.m.

What is science telling us about mindfulness-based programs, interventions and techniques?

10:45 a.m.

Break

11:05 a.m.

**The raisin exercise.** This exercise demonstrates that by using all six senses as a way to “be” with the experience of the moment, we can obtain valuable information about the experience. Why is this important? (Too often the mind is on automatic pilot and therefore not present to the reality of any experience as it is arising in the present moment. Much of mindfulness practice is based on this present-moment orientation. We have to remind and train the mind to do this.)

11:20 a.m.	Inquiry into the raisin exercise.
11:45 a.m.	Make explicit general important teaching points from the raisin exercise.
Noon	Lunch (in silence)
1:00 p.m.	Process the transition out of silence. What is showing up?
1:30 p.m.	Mindful movement
2:00 p.m.	<b>What's important about a present-moment focus?</b> Discussion on stress. Break the group up in dyads. In silence (5 minutes), make a list of acute/chronic stressors. Then discuss in the dyads (5 minutes) what they have discovered. In the big group, make this a general discussion of acute and chronic stressors, identifying internal and external stress. Tie this into the practice of mindfulness and how this relates to teaching, school-related administrative work and school counseling. Participants' homework for today going forward is to notice their reactions to moments of stress – body sensations, breath, thoughts and emotions.
3:00 p.m.	Break
3:20 p.m.	Sitting mindfulness practice. Awareness of body and breath.
3:35 p.m.	Inquiry into the sitting practice.
4:00 p.m.	In dyads, discuss the day. What questions do I have? Note: reminder about noticing any stress reactions through the evening and into the morning. This could be from calling home and talking to family, responding to emails, work related telephone calls, etc.
4:30 p.m.	Close (Evening free)
<b>DAY 2</b>	
9:00 a.m.	Begin with chime and sounds, poem. Short sitting meditation practice of 10 minutes. General check in.
9:30 a.m.	Discussion of what participants noticed about stress reactions. What showed up? Using circle of awareness, bringing mindfulness to how one can break the conditioned cycle of reactivity when one meets stress – “responding to” rather than reacting.
10:00 a.m.	Mindful movement into sitting mindfulness practice.
10:30 a.m.	Inquiry into the experience of mindful movement and sitting practice. Make this relevant to teaching in the classroom, as well as for school counselors.
10:45 a.m.	Break (in silence)
11:05 a.m.	Sitting mindfulness practice and choice-less awareness.
11:20 a.m.	Inquiry into the experience of the sitting practice.

<b>11:45 a.m.</b>	What is this practice pointing to? Make this relevant to teaching in the classroom, as well as for school counselors.
<b>Noon</b>	Lunch (not in silence)
<b>1:00 p.m.</b>	Qui gong for 15 minutes and classroom application at middle level (visiting teacher/presenter).
<b>2:00 p.m.</b>	Nourishing/depleting exercise. Process: How can I bring mindfulness practice to those things I cannot change? Responding to any situation regardless of whether it is acute/chronic or internal/external?
<b>3:00 p.m.</b>	Break (not in silence)
<b>3:15 p.m.</b>	Gratitude film by Louie Schwartzberg.
<b>3:30 p.m.</b>	Dyads: What am I grateful for? (One person speaks at a time, without interruption, for two minutes.)
<b>3:45 p.m.</b>	In dyads, discuss the two days. How might mindfulness practice be relevant in my everyday life? Teach the three-minute breathing space.
<b>4:15 p.m.</b>	Summarize past two days.
<b>4:30 p.m.</b>	Close (Optional Chair Massage 4:30-6 p.m.)
<b>DAY 3</b>	
<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	Begin with listening to the chime, poem and longer sitting mindfulness practice.
<b>9:30 a.m.</b>	Do you teach SEL or mindfulness in your school? Explain/discuss.
<b>9:40 a.m.</b>	Break and go to areas for upper and lower classroom applications.
<b>9:45 a.m.</b>	Presentations: Room 1 (Elementary Teacher) & Room 2 (Upper-level Teacher)
<b>10:45 a.m.</b>	Break
<b>11:00 a.m.</b>	Presentations: Room 1 (Alternate Elementary Teacher) & Room 2 (Alternate Upper-level Teacher)
<b>Noon</b>	Questions/discussion. Review resources and materials (children's books, CDs, materials list for a peace corner, etc.). Conclude at 12:20 p.m.
<b>12:30 p.m.</b>	Lunch
<b>1:30 p.m.</b>	Return to large group.
<b>1:35 p.m.</b>	Mindful movement for children/calming practice for children (group participates), via two presenters, 15 minutes each.

<b>2:05 p.m.</b>	Action plans, overview regarding credit/outline & report plans. Role playing and presentations/ action plan reports for Day 4. Address personal and professional plans. Discuss, answer questions. Form teams or do individual action plans, if time allows.
<b>2:45 p.m.</b>	Self-led sitting mindfulness practice.
<b>3:00 p.m.</b>	Break
<b>3:15 p.m.</b>	Begin work on action plans in group or individually. Instructors will assist.
<b>4:15 p.m.</b>	Closing mindfulness practice
<b>4:30 p.m.</b>	Close
<b>DAY 4</b>	
<b>9:00 a.m.</b>	Begin with listening to chime, poem, sitting breathwork and silence.
<b>9:30 a.m.</b>	Break out groups to practice leading sitting practice and one other activity with students.
<b>10:30 a.m.</b>	Questions/discussion
<b>11:00 a.m.</b>	Complete action plans.
<b>Noon</b>	Lunch
<b>1:00 p.m.</b>	Present South Burlington School District mindfulness program model. Review requirements for receiving training credit, date of follow up meeting and what will be expected. (Provide requirements in writing.)
<b>1:20 p.m.</b>	Demonstration of mindful movement poses for children and applications by a school counselor.
<b>2:20 p.m.</b>	Q and A session.
<b>2:30 p.m.</b>	Break
<b>2:45 p.m.</b>	Three-minute breathing space.
<b>2:50 p.m.</b>	Present action plans (two groups/3 minutes per person).
<b>4:10 p.m.</b>	Write a brief letter to yourself which will be returned to you at follow-up session. Include: Why you came, what you learned, and what you will take away, personally and professionally.
<b>4:20 p.m.</b>	Review and Closing Circle
<b>4:30 p.m.</b>	Farewell

## DAY 5

Day 5 is a retreat day held six months later, in November. The follow-up day includes reporting out on action plan progress.

Supplies: Chimes, resource materials, pens, paper and envelopes, handouts

### About the Intensive Course

- **Design:** The original outline was designed by Talk About Wellness based on experience from previous courses and workshops. It was refined by lead instructor Susan Woods, MBSR/MBCT, who has advanced degrees in clinical social work. The course was developed and administered via a public/private partnership between Talk About Wellness (Marilyn Neagley) and the South Burlington (Vt.) School District (Sheri Rand), with graduate credit provided by Saint Michael's College (Vt.).
- **Locations:** The first four days were held at a local resort that provided outdoor space; the last day was held at a rural retreat center/sanctuary.
- **Schedule:** Offered in two consecutive years (2015 and 2016) for four days in April and one day in November.
- **Focus on Adults:** The course begins by offering instruction in mindfulness-based practice for the adult teacher, counselor, school nurse or administrator.
- **Classroom Practices:** On the third day, the focus is on classroom applications (taught by classroom teachers and counselors trained in mindfulness-based practices), followed by action planning. The last day allows for role playing/teaching and presentation of action plans.
- **Accreditation:** Three graduate credits were offered. Re-certification credit was also available.
- **Scholarships/Funding:** Talk About Wellness, through its funders, offered scholarships equal to 50% of tuition to each person who registered. This course typically exceeded the posted limit of 20 participants, with 32 attendees the first year and 36 the second year. Scholarships were provided in recognition of the requirement that teachers use their professional development funds for more academic courses, and helped teachers reserve their funds for competing courses. In 2016, the overall cost of providing the course was \$40,000, half of which was covered by the teachers' 50% tuition payments through professional development funds, the other half by TAW (not including the cost of graduate level credits, which were paid directly by participants).

## WORKSHOP OUTLINES

### Mindfulness in Education PreK-5 (Half Day)

This workshop, developed by Marilyn Neagley, is an introduction to mindfulness-based practices in a public school setting. Typically it is followed by an educator-led workshop; see page 22 for three educator-led workshop outlines.

- Inquire about current experience with mindfulness and learn what grade levels are represented.
- Begin by listening to chime, and then all sounds in the room to center awareness. Ask: What are participants looking for? What challenges are they facing? (Most report high levels of stress and distraction in many of the children.)
- Discuss stress, effects on well-being, fight or flight response, neuroscience, and mirroring. Focus on body sensations and behavioral changes when in fight mode and when in flight mode. What changes do we see in society that reflect fight or flight responses (i.e., fight might be reflected in road rage or bullying; flight in substance abuse).
- Discuss neuroscience research. Mindfulness, if practiced daily, has the potential to assist with stress reduction, emotional regulation and focused attention. Mindfulness offers an experiential foundation for social and emotional learning, helping the child understand why certain behaviors occur and learning what tools may help in managing certain thoughts and emotions. Discuss the power of self-awareness coming from outside mirroring such as grades, social status, the media, etc., versus self-awareness from befriending the inner landscape.
- Offer to lead an introductory (5-8 min.) formal mindfulness practice, such as mindful sitting and noticing the breath, thoughts, emotions and physical sensations, without judgment. Discuss. Remind the adults that this work begins with them; place oxygen on one's self first, before helping another. (Those who don't want to participate may observe.)
- Share a story of how pausing and recalibrating can allow for kinder or more respectful responses to challenging situations.
- Offer to lead an informal practice, i.e., mindfully listening to another. (For example, ask: "What brings you joy?")

- Each person in a dyad speaks for 2-3 (timed) minutes, uninterrupted. The listener sits with full attention and presence. Discuss.
- Another informal practice is mindful eating, whereby a raisin, apple or other fruit is savored in silence, noticing the details of the object and, later, the responses in the mouth. Discuss.
- All instruction emphasizes the importance of having a personal practice before teaching others and the importance of building upon relevant neuroscience research and avoiding all religious associations or materials in public schools. For example, the word yoga is replaced with mindful movement or stretching and breathing; singing bowls are replaced by simple chimes or bells, etc.
- Questions?
- Break, followed by afternoon sessions led by educators.

### **Educator-led Workshops**

The following workshops were led by two teachers and one counselor who have had mindfulness training and can demonstrate ways of bringing mindfulness-based practices into the classroom, including:

- Morning Greeting: "It's a great day"; Look into the eyes of your neighbor – "Your eyes look (color) today"; or passing a breathing toy such as a Hoberman sphere in a circle, in silence.
- Peace Corners: (time-in rather than time-out) for a child to take a few moment to self-regulate.
- Mind and Body: (Ex: Shake and relax/sit perfectly still...feet are quiet, etc.)
- Relating to Academics: Book lists related to mindfulness/SEL themes such as kindness and gratitude.)
- Easing Transitions, etc.: Silence, brief breathing activity, relevant book reading.
- Closing the Day: Sing or send kind thoughts out to a pet, a relative, the world....
- Standing in the Fire: Drawing upon personal mindfulness practice for the adult when challenged.

### **Nancy Baker: Kindergarten teacher and mindfulness instructor for PreK-5**

- Begin with short movement...music. Aquarium, using green boas as seaweed and moving slowly to the music. Alternate breath awareness (stillness/silence) with movement/music.
- Explain tools for beginning to bring mindfulness to the children: Linda Lantieri's CD in her book, *Building Emotional Intelligence*; Amy Salzman's CDs, and the *Calm Classroom* program.
- How children get started: During the first six weeks of each school year...introduce each mindfulness activity and the peace corners. Integrate with Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program.
- Offer several breathing practices such as blowing a small pinwheel, blowing bubbles on the playground, using the Hoberman sphere, tracing the five fingers of one hand with the index finger of the other hand...slowly inhaling to the top of the thumb, exhaling to the heel of the hand, inhaling to the top of the index finger, exhaling to the heel of the palm, etc.
- Children can be taught to exhale (blow) carbon dioxide to the trees and inhale oxygen from the trees when learning early science. Or, can wrap in blankets to "cocoon in silence" when learning the stages of a butterfly.

### **Jody Smith: Kindergarten teacher and mindfulness instructor for PreK-5**

- Begin with a PowerPoint showing the materials used in the classroom such as the elements of a peace corner or themes for the Mind and Body session following recess on most days. One of the younger children can be the "Lucky Dog of the Day" who chooses a theme for the Mind and Body segment. Themes may be "sending kindness," "breathing buddies," etc.
- An example of Mind and Body would be to begin with a breathing practice such as lying on the floor with a rubber duck on the belly, watching it rise and fall with each inhale or exhale, followed by listening to a CD that sends kind thoughts to one's self, each other and the world. The session might close with everyone in a circle and the teacher holding an energy ball. If everyone holds hands the ball beeps and lights; if the chain is broken, the ball goes dark and quiet. The children then talk about how they are connected and how their feelings are felt by others.

- Parents are informed by newsletter and given peace corner materials for the home.
- Books are central to reinforcing the mindfulness and social/emotional skills students are learning. (See book list at this end of this section.)

### **Carol Wheeler (PreK-12) School Counselor**

- In PreK-5, the counselor does a weekly 45-minute intervention in each classroom and also provides parent programs. An example of a second grade classroom intervention begins with handing out copies of labyrinths, the paths of which are to be traced by finger. One or two children have difficulty with focused attention such that they give up. The labyrinths are collected. Everyone is asked to find his/her breathing buddy (stuffed animal), lie down and slowly inhale and exhale the “buddy” up and down, in silence. Next, everyone is called over to assemble a large-piece floor puzzle. Each piece has a consecutive number. The children are asked to notice when their number is next so they can, in silence, cooperatively and successfully, complete the puzzle while reviewing the sequencing of numbers. To conclude, the labyrinths are re-distributed (without saying “let’s try again”) and all of the children trace the pattern with ease!
- SEL can be taught in many ways but one is to learn to be aware of the emotions. A program such as “Zones of Regulation” can be taught and combined with mindfulness-based practices to help teach the “why” of emotions while learning tools that help regulate emotions.
- District-wide, monthly emails from the counselors suggest “Mindful Moments” to remind teachers that there are tools for their classrooms and themselves.
- Conclusion of workshops: Workshops typically conclude with a Q & A period, the sharing of resources and an evaluation.

### **Classroom Book List from Instructor Jody Smith**

*Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda* by Karen Lee MacLean  
*Digby Takes Charge* by Caroline Jayne Church  
*Fill a Bucket* by Carol McCloud and Katherine Moutin, M.A.  
*Take the Time – Mindfulness for Kids* by Maud Roegiers  
*A Good Day* by Kevin Henkes  
*The Feel Good Book* by Todd Parr  
*The Very Cranky Bear* by Nick Bland  
*Grumpy Bird* by Jeremy Tankard  
*Grumpy Cat* by Britta Teckentrump  
*One* by Kathryn Otoshi  
*You are Not Your Thoughts* by Brian Despard, and Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn  
*Mean Soup* by Betsy Everitt  
*Me First* by Helen Lester  
*Peaceful Piggy* by Kerry Lee MacLean  
*Pete the Cat – I Love My White Shoes* by Kimberly and James Dean  
*Pete the Cat – Rocking in My School Shoes* by Kimberly and James Dean  
*Pete the Cat and His Magic Sunglasses* by Kimberly and James Dean  
*Quiet Place* by Douglas Wood  
*Taking Kindness with Me* by Jackie Chappell  
*Take a Deep Breath* by Sue Graves  
*“Slowly, Slowly, Slowly,” said the Sloth* by Eric Carle  
*Peaceful Piggy Meditation* by Kerry Lee MacLean  
*Big Al* by Andrew Clements and Yoshi  
*Swimmy* by Leo Lionni  
*The Big Mistake* by Lenore Rinder  
*The Little Engine that Could* by Watty Piner  
*The Feel Good Book* by Todd Parr  
*The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown  
*Another Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown  
*The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn  
*If You Plant a Seed* by Kadir Nelson  
*Breathe* by Scott Magoon  
*Stretch* by Scott Menchin  
*Anh’s Anger* by Gail Silver  
*That’s Good! That’s Bad!* by Margery Cuyler

## Good books on empathy

*Stand in my Shoes* by Bob Sornson

*Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes

*Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi

*Invisible Boy* by Patrice Barton

*Hey Little Ant* by Phillip Hoose

*When Sophie Gets Angry* by Molly Bang

*The Dot* by Peter Reynolds

*Ish* by Peter Reynolds

*Elmer* by David McKee

*One* by Kathryn Otoshi

*It's Okay to be Different* by Todd Parr

*Master of Mindfulness* by Laurie Grossman and Angela Alvarez & Mr. Musumeci's 5th grade

*What Does it Mean to be Present?* by Rana DiOrio

*A Walk in the Rain with a Brain* by Edward M. Hallowell, M. D.

*Your Fantastic Elastic Brain, Stretch it, Shape It* by JoAnn Deak, Ph.D.

*Charlotte and the Quiet Place* by Deborah Sosin

## **MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES**

The following activities are mindfulness-based practices designed to address stress management, emotional regulation, and focused attention or awareness with children.

### **Activities for Younger Children (Grades PreK-4) for Easing Transitions**

- **Listen to a Chime:** Ask children to close their eyes and focus attention on the sound, indicating when the sound can no longer be heard by placing hands on knees.
- **Breathing Buddies:** Each child has a small stuffed animal that may be brought from home or supplied in the classroom. They lie on the floor in silence with the "buddy" on their bellies and breathe in a deep, relaxed way that causes the buddy to rise and fall.
- **Hoberman Sphere:** This handheld sphere provides a visual representation of the expanding and contracting breath. A student may use the sphere individually or the class may form a circle and pass the sphere from student to student. One breathes in to expand the sphere and breathes out to contract the sphere. This is done in silence.
- **Still Stones:** This can be a child-led practice. Everyone chooses a place to lie down on the floor, in silence, with eyes closed as a child "leader" chooses and begins relaxing music (with teacher assistance) and goes around to each person and places a polished river stone, first on the forehead, then in the palm of each hand, and finally on the thigh, just above the knee. This is done in three successive rounds. If there is time, each stone can be removed by the leader. If not, the music is stopped and the activity ends with the children returning their stones to a container.
- **Peaceful Corner ("Time In"):** Create a "sit spot" or "quiet corner" of the classroom to help facilitate ways of calming emotions and centering. Suggestions include books that remind the child of various themes such as quiet, being in nature, gratitude, kindness, and so on. Such books when previously read and discussed can provide ongoing touchstones and reminders. Other objects may include mandalas to color, music to listen to with earbuds, finger labyrinths, a rocking chair, etc. Be sure to include a three-minute timer. ("Sit spots" can be created outdoors as well.)
- **Snow Globes:** Use a snow globe or a lidded jar of water mixed with sparkles or some other substance such as sand. Beginning with a brief conversation about how busy our minds can be, show how, when shaken, everything becomes cloudy but how it all settles down when still. A song such as "My Mind is a Clear Blue Sky" is a nice optional conclusion.
- **Water Walk:** Ask children to remain silent, fill a bowl of water, and walk in a procession without spilling a single drop; then quietly empty each bowl into a pitcher listening to the changing sound as the pitcher fills and then return to his or her seat. Very young children may first practice with cupped hands or an empty bowl.

### **Activities for Middle Schoolers and Early Teens (Grades 5-8)**

- **Seven Breaths:** Ask students to close their eyes and slowly take seven breaths. (This takes approximately 30 seconds.) Ask if it's possible to take a half minute each day to relax and breathe.



- **Three-Part Breath:** From the top down. Slowly breathe to the throat, then deeper to the heart area and then deeper to the belly. Repeat three times. Teach awareness of how shallow the breath may be when under stress.
- **Anchor Breath:** Learn to do mindfulness-based meditation by learning to sit in silence, simply watching the breath. As thoughts come and go, just observe them and return to the breath, breathing in/breathing out. Just let thoughts pass by with no judgment. (This may also be done with awareness of feelings and emotions.)
- **Defying Distraction:** Simply sit with eyes closed practicing the anchor breath. Then test focus by purposely trying to distract with rattles, bouncing balls, etc. (This can be done with younger children, too. They love the challenge.)
- **Mindful Eating:** In silence, savor a small amount of food such as a raisin, grape, orange or apple slice. Notice the smell and flavor. Notice the tongue and teeth, saliva, the roof of the mouth, the swallowing muscles.
- **Sit Spot in Nature:** Just be with thoughts and sensations, noticing the air or sun on the face, the smells, and sounds, the changes. Optional: Encourage journaling, painting or vocally sharing afterward.
- **Walking Meditation:** Similar to a Sit Spot in Nature but in motion. Notice nature: the sky and clouds, the birds, plants. Be open to seeing and not drifting off into thoughts that are not part of here and now. Optional: Follow up with a question: Did you notice anything you had never experienced before?
- **Reflective Writing:** Choose a “reflective theme,” such as kindness, and allow 10 minutes for writing, or ask the students to write about what they like, who they are, or, after walking in nature, about what they observed or felt.
- **Nature Journaling:** Once a week, ask students to write about something they observed that they never noticed before. Note the date and weather conditions.
- **Natural Mandala:** In silence, go outside and collect objects that are personally meaningful. Come back to the group and on a large sheet of cloth or paper, place the objects in a circle design. Each person takes one turn at a time until all objects have been placed. Then anyone can change the arrangement and others can change the changes, experiencing cooperation while disagreeing, all in silence.
- **Mindful Movement:** Based on yoga, tai chi, qi gong, etc., mindful movement involves breath and body awareness and can be modified for various age groups. Younger children enjoy animal postures.

Reminder: Movement is so important for integrating mind and body and releasing energy, so remember the value of play, music, singing, swinging, dancing, drumming and laughter. Note: Those with chronic health conditions, disabilities, or other situations that may make them vulnerable to injury should consult with a physician before doing mindful movement exercises.

### Mindfulness for Adolescents

“Mindfulness provides a means of handling distress with intention and non-judgment via several proposed mechanisms:

- First, bringing attention to the present-moment experience of thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations shifts cognitive focus away from the past (such as a memory of a troubling incident) and the future (such as apprehension of impending trouble), thereby disrupting the connections between automatic cognitive interpretations and patterns of reacting.
- Second, focusing on present-moment internal and external experience broadens attention and allows for suspension of previously practiced patterns of reacting (avoidance or over-engagement), sometimes called de-centering.
- Third, the quality of non-judgment that is essential to mindfulness permits the observation of your experience without judgment or evaluation....The practice of orienting to experience with curiosity and acceptance strengthens tolerance for distress by altering automatic response patterns described previously. When practiced regularly, mindfulness can provide a powerful tool for restoring emotional balance and preventing engagement in harmful behavior.”

“...Attention is often seen as something separate from emotions, despite evidence from research and personal experience that shows how emotional states significantly affect the quality and the objects of our attention. In addressing emotional regulation through the teaching of mindfulness, attention is viewed as a skill that can be trained to observe the whole range of cognitive and emotional experiences that present themselves.”

*~ Excerpted from Broderick, P. (2013). Learning to Breathe: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention and Performance. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.*

“According to Linda Lantieri, a pioneering educator in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and mindfulness, the added value that mindfulness brings to conventional SEL is primarily in the area of its embodied practices, known to promote neuroplasticity; that is, structural changes in the brain region which have the potential to improve learning and memory, emotional balance, and cognitive perspective taking. Mindfulness practices put a solid experiential foundation underneath the more conceptually and cognitively-based SEL curriculum. They allow each child to regularly exercise the muscle of emotional balance through practicing being present and cultivating moment to moment non-judgmental awareness (my operational definition of mindfulness) in moments of relative calm, and then, over time, learning to maintain or recover a degree of equilibrium, even equanimity in the face of stressful triggers and threats. The muscle of mindfulness, when exercised regularly, especially if it is done playfully and with a light touch, makes it more likely that the children will be able to call on and make use of their SEL strategies under threatening and highly emotional conditions.”

*~ Excerpted from the foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn in Rechtschaffen, D. (2014). The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students. New York, NY: W.W. Norton Co. Ltd.*

### **Suggestions for Introducing Mindfulness to Adolescents**

At your first meeting, with clear intention and without rushing, walk to each student and either bend to their seated position or stand and shake each student’s hand while introducing yourself. Smile, and with eye contact from about two feet away, respectfully say, “Hello my name is... What is yours?”

Introduce mindfulness with information regarding the brain and responses to stress and to mindfulness practice. Treat mindfulness as a life skill or tool. Desired outcomes include feeling centered under stress; greater wellness; and kindness. With adolescents we sometimes begin with “The Storm,” and ask whether they sometimes feel like a storm is passing through them.

Demonstrate and lead a mindfulness “break” or pause, using activities such as the following.

- Learn to have an “anchor” breath or simply and calmly listen to a chime for 30 seconds, (approximately seven breaths).
- Do a brief body scan, noticing body sensations/tension, then noticing emotions, then noticing thoughts, all without judgment. OR, (15-25 min.) invite students to close their eyes and see a time when they were under a lot of stress. Choose the first thing that comes to mind. Notice how the face might have looked. What thoughts and feelings were occurring? How were the hands feeling? The stomach? Jaw? Eyes? Legs? Then come out slowly and discuss. Now visualize a time when in “the zone,” doing something that one is good at or enjoys. Follow the same line of questioning (Thoughts? Sensations? Emotions?) Discuss. Finally, invite students to visualize a time when they felt safe and relaxed. Follow the same line of questions. (Thoughts, sensations, emotions?) Discuss. Mindfulness practice helps us step back from stressful events and notice them before responding, rather than reacting mindlessly. When mindful, more time can be spent with focused awareness and a sense of calm.
- When meeting a challenge (public speaking, test taking, competing, social conflict) pause and check in with the breath. Is it high and tight? Take a few, slow, deep breaths to the belly and relax the hands, shoulders, jaw, eyes.
- When doing regular activities such as eating, washing hands, etc., pause to really notice where you are and what you’re doing. Or after eating or drinking a beverage, notice body changes, i.e., cooling, warming, satisfaction, stomachache, sleeplessness, etc.
- Encourage buddy systems so that students can remind each other to check in/center with their breath, take the “high road” when choosing words and behaviors.
- Seize small mindful moments by turning attention to the senses, seeing the sky, feeling or smelling the air. When you notice discomfort such as a headache, breathe to that spot. Take time away from ruminating on random thoughts with imagined “mini vacations” or listening deeply to music, trying to discern the instruments.
- Incorporate reflective reading and/or writing/art that relates to deeper values or ethics such as gratitude, joy, honesty, community, kindness, or belonging. Or explore stress, reactivity, mindfulness, silence, etc., through reading and writing exercises.

- Consider observations in nature, using the senses, and then writing reflectively. Choose a “sit spot” (outdoor in warmer weather) or in a room, just to be quiet, noticing the breath.
- Suggest mindful movement such as yoga, martial arts, tai chi, qi gong. All are methods of integrating breath work with body and mind in a relaxed way.
- Change your outlook. Smile, be kind and respectful, present and intentional. Assume the best from the other, even when the other is non-communicative.
- Change your language. Seek kinder ways of communicating or approaching challenging situations.

Obviously a single session will not develop a “practice.” In the meantime, though, one may be able to ask students if they would like to be exposed to or introduced to more mindfulness instruction. Five minutes is a long time for beginners. Tell them that experiencing the mind wandering and returning attention to the breath is what mindfulness practice is. So simple, yet so hard to do!

If certain students take a lead interest, they may grow into peer leadership positions and may be able to offer mindfulness on planned mornings, or after school.

“Mindful moments” help to ease transitions such as arriving at school or preparing for test-taking. In middle and high schools the easiest times for offering mindfulness practice are: wellness and health classes, advisories, counseling sessions, before or after school, mindfulness clubs, and through their teachers. Literature, writing, art, and science classes may incorporate themes related to mindfulness. For all ages, perhaps especially teens, mindfulness is most effective when balanced with physical activity.

*Key words: anchor breath, mindful pause, silence, intention, present moment, presence, non-judgment, reflection, centered, re-calibrated, calm, focused attention, awareness, creativity, caring, kindness, playfulness, spaciousness, equanimity, practice, gratitude.*

