Mindfulness Matters & Makes a Difference

Presented by: Kathy Goecke, Kristin Britt, Heather Robinson, & Lacey Melguizo
We believe that there are seeds of great potential within every child. Mindfulness is a tool to help those seeds grow.
Meet Kathy

- 36 Years in Education - Iowa and Texas
- 29 Years in Administration - Currently Principal at GHE
- Believe that Students learn best Conceptually and Authentically
- Student Agency and Personalized Learning should drive what we do for kids
- I had been waiting for IB my whole career!
- Nana to Aubbie and Ava......best job ever!
Meet Kristin

- 14 years in education – Hawaii & Texas
- Educational journey
- Lessons from poverty
- I love to garden
- Mindful Mother of 3... hardest and most rewarding job ever!
Meet Heather…

- 5th year in education-China and Texas
- Taught at Grandview Hills Elementary for 2 years
- Took a year off to attend graduate school full-time at UT. My graduate program had a strong emphasis on mindfulness which is when I first started learning and implementing mindfulness in my own life.
- Came back to Grandview as the counselor- The dream job! My favorite school with amazing kids!
- I have the best job ever helping kids!!
Meet Lacey

- Mindful Mother of my 2 greatest teachers.
- Over 20 experience working in disease prevention & education as a RDH.
- Founder of Unscripted Heart (2016)
- 2016–2017 Completed 300 hour mindfulness meditation teacher training
- 2016–2017 Completed and taught 95 hour Kids Life Mastery coaching certification.
- Loves photography
- On a mission to bring the simple, yet profound benefits of mindful practice into the lives of others.
WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

“Mindfulness is skillfully paying attention on purpose to the present moment with acceptance.”
WHY MINDFULNESS?  
WHY NOW?

We are living in a different world than we grew up in. In this fast moving age where so much is expected of educators and students, we need a simple and effective way to address the overall health and sustainability of learning environments as well as the well-being of each and every person in the school community.

Toxic stress is real and mindfulness is proving to be an effective and simple solution to calm the nervous system and promote whole body well-being.

From the Mindful Schools Research

- **ANXIETY**: 1 in 3 adolescents will meet criteria for an anxiety disorder by 18 years old.
- **TRAUMA**: 46% of all children in the U.S. have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE)
- **DISTRACTION**: Kids spend up to 9 hours a day on digital entertainment, excluding homework.
- **ISOLATION**: 40% of high school seniors report that often feel lonely and left out. Social media connection is creating disconnection.
- **STRESS**: 61% of educators report feeling stressed out.
- **MENTAL HEALTH**: 51% of teachers say that their mental health is not good.
- **BURNOUT**: Public school educators are quitting their jobs at the highest rate on record.

https://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/why-is-mindfulness-needed-in-education/
WHY MINDFULNESS? WHY NOW?

We have a mental health crisis on our hands and the mental health of our youth is getting worse, not better.

Data from Mental Health America:

“For the 6th year in a row, Mental Health America (MHA) released its annual State of Mental Health Report, which ranks all 50 states and the District of Columbia based on several mental health and access measures. The report also takes a look back on the trends of the last 6 years and shows that many are still not receiving the treatment they need.

Most alarmingly, the data show that the mental health of our youth is getting worse, not better. Major depression in youth has increased 4.35 percent over the last 6 years – meaning over 2 million youth have severe depression. Shockingly, almost 60 percent of youth with major depression do not receive any mental health treatment.

Children are not the only ones in trouble, adults are suffering as well. “

https://mhanational.org/issues/mental-health-america-printed-reports
Story of Mindfulness and Grandview Hills Elementary.

- Brought Lacey to Staff - FOR STAFF
- Staff Benefitted and Wanted Students to Benefit as Well
- Lacey began working Informally in Classrooms
- Saw Amazing Gains with the Students who did Mindfulness
- Trained Whole Staff and Implemented Mindfulness with Fidelity
- Training Students to be Mindful Leaders
Mindfulness is a practice....

that can be more easily understood when it is felt in the body. Let’s play a game and have a mindful moment.
WHY MINDFULNESS IN THE CLASSROOM?

Students learn best when they are calm, feel safe & connected. Mindful practice provides the tools to regulate the nervous system.

- Research shows that mindfulness skills improve memory, organizational skills, reading and math scores, while giving students the skills they need to manage toxic stress.
- Reduces anxiety and stress by training the brain to reduce distractions. A distracted mind is not as happy as a focused mind.
- Improves emotional intelligence by enhancing emotional regulation and social emotional connection by strengthening the prefrontal cortex of the brain and increasing self awareness and self compassion.
- Improves academic success by increasing sleep quality and creating neuroplasticity in the brain which enhances resilience and grit.
- Better decision making skills by helping students and teachers reach conclusions by practicing responsiveness instead of reactivity.
The practice of mindfulness rewires the brain by increasing the prefrontal cortex access, strengthening the hippocampus, & decreasing the amygdala activation. This improves emotional stability and reduces our reaction to stress. This primes the brain to learn and grow in a positive way.
Mindfulness & the Stress Response in our Brains:

The reason that mindfulness works is because it trains the brain to deal with stress. Students learn better in an environment that is more emotionally positive. Research shows that the stress of teachers will negatively impact the stress of students and impact learning outcomes.
The Limbic System

The Limbic System is responsible for our emotional lives as well as higher mental functions such as learning and memory formation. The components of the limbic system work together to regulate some of the brain’s most important processes. It is the most primitive part of our brain and is responsible for governing our *emotional* behaviors.
Understanding our emotion is important in education. Emotion drives attention, which drives learning and memory. By understanding the emotions and the brain science around them we can better understand one another. We use mindfulness as a way to regulate emotions in the classroom. A stimulating and positive classroom experience enhances the overall well being of both students and teachers.

Let’s Get to Know our Brains....
Getting to Know and Love Your Brain

There are three big helpers in your brain. One helps you make smart choices. One helps protect you from danger. And one saves your favorite memories and your ABCs.

Can you name the three helpers?

Prefrontal Cortex (pre-cortical)
I'm prefrontal cortex—PFC, for short. I help you solve math problems and get to know your favorite book and TV characters. Give me time to work, and I can help you make friends or make the best decision in a tough situation.

Amygdala (uh-MIG-duh-luh)
I'm amygdala and I'm here to keep you safe! I react FAST. If there's serious danger, I'll help you run, freeze, or fight back.

Breathing to the rescue!
Breathe deep into your belly to stay calm and help your PFC work clearly.

Hippocampus (hip-pok-SAM-pus)
I'm hippocampus and I'm like a scrapbook in your brain! I store everything important that you want to remember—from your ABCs to the names of all the people in your family. When something happens to make you smile, I store that as a happy memory!

Amygdala

responsible for regulating emotions. It plays a role in learning and stress response. It sends out a fight, flight, or freeze response to stimuli and is the most primitive part of our brain.
The amygdala is a major part of the limbic system. It is the stress monitor in a child’s brain. Children are under more stress than ever, especially at school. When a child is frustrated, threatened, uncomfortable, or scared the amygdala activates. It goes into a stressed out state. Information cannot pass from the brainstem or sensory regions to the higher levels of the brain. Learning does not happen in this state. Memory is vital for learning. When a child “flips their lid” which is a stressed out state of negative emotions, memories cannot form so they struggle with short term and long term memory and children cannot learn. Information cannot get to the cortex and the child responds with fight, flight, or freeze due to the false alarm that the amygdala has set off.
When a child is in a positive learning environment and feels safe and inspired, the amygdala is not active and it allows information to freely pass to the higher levels of the brain. Memories are formed and executive function can occur. The amygdala is the emotional gate in the brain. Depending upon stress levels the gate can be open or closed. Whether a child has high or low stress or trauma emotions will affect where information goes to their brain.
HIPPOCAMPUS

plays a critical role in the formation, organization, and storage of new memories as well as connecting certain sensations and emotions to these memories.
**Prefrontal Cortex**

is the center for executive function. Regulates thoughts, emotions, & actions. Intelligence and decision making happens here as well. Vulnerable to stress chemicals and can get hijacked by the amygdala. Does not finish growing until 25 years of age.
- Increased trauma increases the likelihood of kids “flipping their lid” or going into fight, flight, or freeze mode.
- Traumatic stress can be associated with lasting changes in the hippocampus, amygdala, and prefrontal cortex.
- When there have been lasting changes made to the prefrontal cortex because of trauma, this causes trouble regulating emotional responses.
- Lasting changes to the amygdala typically causes traumatized individuals to lack emotional regulation skills.
TRAUMA & THE BRAIN

- A trauma brain vs. a healthy functioning brain
- Temporal lobes contain the amygdala, which regulates emotions
- Great News! Mindfulness helps to deactivate the fear center of the brain and strengthens the thinking and emotion regulation center!
- Practice makes progress

Heather Robinson
HOW TO PRACTICE
BRAIN TRAIN®

Step 1.) Put your mindful body on.

Step 2.) Take three deep breaths.

Your brain is the boss of your body, but YOU are the boss of your brain. This practice helps us to train our brain by practicing mindfulness.

Step 3.) Ring the bell and listen until you can no longer hear the sound.
Processing Session
What did you notice?
How do you feel?
How do you think kids would respond?
Can you think of ways to use this in your classroom?
Can you think of specific students who could really use this?
Mindfulness is the first step... and then Second Step

- Second Step and Mindfulness reinforce each other
- Both give tools to help with feelings.
- Second step addresses how to manage your body, and listening, and mindfulness is a tool to help student manage their body and listen
- Second step discusses noticing your own feelings and other people’s feelings- this is a perfect tie in to mindfulness
- Example of how to integrate the two:
  - Second step typically shows a picture of a scenario at the beginning of a lesson
  - In addition to asking students how the people are feeling in the specific situation, you can also ask, “How could mindfulness apply to this situation”
  - After practicing mindfulness in the mornings, you can ask students, “How could the mindfulness we just practiced help the people we looked at in the picture today?”
Mindfulness & Restorative Practices

When a flower doesn't bloom you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower

ALEXANDER DEN HEIJER
CHANGE IS INEVITABLE
GROWTH IS INTENTIONAL
Data

2015 - 2016
Math 33.7% Gap
Reading 23.6% Gap
Writing - 48.1% Gap
Science - 50.2% Gap

2016 - 2017
Math 32.6% Gap
Reading 34.1% Gap
Writing - 43.3% Gap
Science - 31.3% Gap

2017 - 2018
Math .6% Gap
Reading .6% Gap
Writing - .9% Gap
Science - .3% Gap

2018 - 2019
Math .5% Gap
Reading .3% Gap
Writing - 1.0% Gap
Science - .6% Gap
Data

District Initiative: Closing the Achievement GAP

District Goal: Decrease the gap (while continuing to increase performance for all) on STAAR between economically disadvantaged students and non-economically disadvantaged students achieving Approaching Grade Level to 20% or less on Math, Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Writing.

STAAR/STAAR-EOC Gap
Between Econ Dis and Non-Econ Dis Students
(All Grades Combined, Mod and Alt Versions Excluded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ Dis</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Econ Dis</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ Dis</td>
<td>68.1%</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
<td>91.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Econ Dis</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
<td>89.6%</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ Dis</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Econ Dis</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ Dis</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Econ Dis</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TEACHER TESTIMONIAL

“Mindfulness helps my students calm their thoughts and bodies so they can focus on their learning and behavior. I provide daily consistent times where my students can stop from the busyness of the day and just breathe and relax. It gives them an opportunity to reflect on their attention. I have intentionally incorporated mindfulness in my classroom the last three years and have noticed a significant impact on my students’ behavior. They have the skills and resources to be engaged and successful in their learning. “

Heather Reeves
Mindful Toolbox & Trainings
Elementary School Offerings

Contact Lacey for training and Mindful Teacher Toolboxes:

What you get for elementary schools: 2 hour staff training

The Mindful Words Challenge® workbook - how and why use it

Breathing Ball - How to practice mindful breathing

Chime - How to practice mindful listening

15 weeks of CE emails to support implementation into classroom.

www.unscriptedheart.com/mindfulness
Did you know that our brains have a negativity bias? It is easier to see the negative than the positive, which is why you have to build your gratitude muscle in your brains as a daily practice. Gratitude is an attitude of gratefulness. It is feeling good for what you have right now. The daily practice of gratitude can transform you. It can pull you out of negativity and give you a renewed sense of purpose and joy. The simplest way to practice gratitude is to create a daily ritual. This journal will help you do that—Gratitude also needs to be shared because if it can change you, then it can also have the power to connect and change communities.
Mindful Leader Program
Middle School & High School

Contact Lacey for training information and creative ways to bring mindfulness into your school.

We are currently creating a curriculum workbook to train students to be the leaders of mindfulness at their schools. This will be available for the 2020-2021 school year as well as training options.

We love working together in community to create sustainable and empowering options to bring mindfulness into schools.

www.unscriptedheart.com/mindfulness
Q & A session
Mindfulness Matters & Makes a Difference!

Contact us:

Lacey with Unscripted Heart
512-934-2150
lacey@unscriptedheart.com
www.unscriptedheart.com

Kathy Goecke
Kathy.sparksgoecke@leanderisd.org
(512) 570-6800

Kristin Britt
Kristin.britt@leanderisd.org
(512) 570-6800

Heather Robinson
Heather.robinson@leanderisd.org
(512) 570-6800