Mindfulness in Classrooms

Tammy Masopust

Beech Hill Elementary
School Counselor
Mission and Vision

**Vision:** Dorchester School District Two desires to be recognized as a “World Class” school district, expecting each student to achieve at his/her optimum level in all areas, and providing all members of our district family with an environment that permits them to do their personal best.

**Mission:** Dorchester School District Two leading the way, every student, every day, through relationships, rigor, and relevance.
Tammy Masopust is a School Counselor at Beech Hill Elementary, a National Certified Counselor (NCC) and a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). She has a passion for helping students overcome obstacles to happiness, wellness and learning. One of her favorite theoretical orientations of psychology is Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) which teaches that events themselves do not cause problems and distress, rather the way people react to those events is what causes stress.
Mindfulness in Classrooms

In this experiential session, participants will:

- learn what it means to be mindful
- examine the benefits of mindfulness
- participate in a variety of mindfulness activities including
  - mindful breathing
  - brief mindfulness guided meditation
  - body and thought awareness
  - mindful listening
  - focused attention

At the end of this session, participants will be able to practice basic mindfulness on their own, guide students through basic mindfulness activities, obtain additional resources for learning more about mindfulness, and will be able to teach students at least ten mindfulness techniques.
Contact Information

Tammy Masopust MEd, NCC, LPC
School Counselor, Beech Hill Elementary

emasopust@dorchester2.k12.sc.us
(843) 821-3970
What is Mindfulness?

“Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally.”

-Jon Kabat-Zinn, Creator of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

“Mindfulness is paying attention with kindness to yourself, other people, and the world around you.”

- Susan Kaiser Greenland, Author of The Mindful Child and Mindful Games
Mind Full, or Mindful?

“Mindfulness is a practice of paying attention to the present moment on purpose with kindness and curiosity.”

https://srwc-mb.ca/mindful/

http://www.calm.com/schools
Mindfulness is:

- Evidence-based: numerous studies point to its effectiveness
- Universal: anyone can do it
- A way of being, not just something to do
- Not a religious practice, but can be cultivated in any religious context
- A group of techniques and practices
- A form of meditation

https://positivepsychology.com/history-of-mindfulness/

https://leftbrainbuddha.com/is-mindfulness-a-religion/
Not all meditation is the same.
Scientific Evidence

“Hundreds of scientific papers are published every year showing positive links between mindfulness meditation and a wide range of benefits. “

- New York Times — The Mindful Child
- KQED News — What Changes When a School Embraces Mindfulness?
- Washington Post — Harvard Neuroscientist on the physical effects Mindfulness
- Harvard Business Review — Mindfulness Can Literally Change Your Brain
- The Atlantic — Should Schools Teach Kids to Meditate?
- Wellcome Trust — 7-year study about mindfulness in UK schools
- Mindful Nation UK — Report by the Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group
- “Room to Breathe” — documentary on mindfulness in schools by Russell Long
- San Francisco Chronicle — Meditation Transforms Roughest San Francisco Schools

https://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/research/
https://www.calm.com/schools
Who is Practicing Mindfulness?

**Corporations:**
Google
Apple
General Mills
Intel
Aetna
Goldman Sachs

**Sports:**
L.A. Lakers
Chicago Bulls
Boston Red Sox
Chicago Cubs
Atlanta Falcons
Seattle Seahawks
Misty May-Trainor
Kerri Walsh
Derek Jeter

**Military**

**Schools**
Mindfulness is for Everyone

- Increase calm
- Decrease anxiety and symptoms of stress
- Improve listening skills
- Increase focus
- Improve relationships
- Increase gratitude and kindness for self and others
- Improve working memory
- Sleep better
- Manage pain better

https://www.headspace.com/blog/2017/05/05/8-reasons-for-mindfulness/
https://www.mindful.org/category/science/mindfulness-research/

PEACE
It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. It means to be in the midst of these things and still be calm in your heart.

Unknown
DoingGoodTogether.org
Mindful Classrooms

- Improved attention
- Emotion regulation - less reactivity
- Compassion for others and self
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Common language and strategies

https://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/research/
“Mindfulness Changes the Brain”

1 **Amygdala**  Aroused when detecting and reacting to emotions, especially difficult or strong emotions such as fear. This part of the brain is less activated\(^\text{10}\) and has less gray matter density\(^\text{11}\) following mindfulness training.

2 **Hippocampus**  Critical to learning and memory, and helps regulate the amygdala. This part of the brain is more active\(^\text{12}\) and has more gray matter density\(^\text{13}\) following mindfulness training.

3 **Prefrontal Cortex**  The part of the brain most associated with maturity, including regulating emotions and behaviors and making wise decisions. This part of the brain is more activated following mindfulness training.\(^\text{14}\)

https://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/research/
Mindful Breathing

The **Sympathetic** nervous system mobilizes the body's response under stressful circumstances; it initializes the 'fight or flight' response of the body.

The **Parasympathetic** nervous system controls the homeostasis of the body. **Diaphragmatic breathing**, or slow **abdominal breathing**, can stimulate the vagus nerve and lower the body’s stress response.

https://psychology-spot.com/vagus-nerve-anxiety/
Mindfulness Meditation Practices

- Increase calm / decrease anxiety and symptoms of stress
- Improve listening skills and focus
- Improve gratitude and kindness for self and others

https://www.mindfulschools.org/resources/

http://graceduckworth.com/events/family-meditation/
Mindfulness Meditation Practice

Increase calm, decrease anxiety and stress:
1. Mindful Breathing meditation for adults
2. Mindful Breathing for children- Alphabreaths, Breathe like a Bear, Mindful Kids Activity Cards
3. Breathe with the Shape
4. Sigh

Improve listening skills and focus:
1. Listen to the chime and take 2 full breaths
2. Listen for sounds (Breathe Like a Bear)
3. Grounding exercise
4. Mindful eating
5. Mindful movement, gentle stretch
6. Mira’s Game (stone)

Improve gratitude and kindness for self and others:
1. Beans and Rice
2. (video) https://movingart.com/gratitude-revealed/

If time:
Breathe with the shape
Intentional breathing

https://www.destressmonday.org/6-gifs-help-relax/
Books of mindfulness activities

Mindfulness activity cards

Children’s story books

Mindfulness curriculum
Additional Resources

Mindful- Website, Magazine, and App  https://www.mindful.org/
Mindful Schools- Website  https://www.mindfulschools.org/
Calm- Website and App  https://www.calm.com/schools
Headspace- Website and App  https://www.headspace.com/

Exploring Mindfulness in Schools (videos)
https://www.mindfulschools.org/category/video/

Fun Mindful Breathing Ideas
https://www.mindfulschools.org/?s=fun+breathing