

Mindful Schools

How Mindful Schools Can Help Your School

About Mindful Schools

Mindful Schools teaches children in public and private elementary schools how to be more mindful of their thoughts and actions. Our program brings **dramatic improvements in concentration, attention, conflict resolution, and empathy among students, building a calm climate in the classroom. This increases student aptitude and reduces teacher stress, allowing teachers to enjoy their work more.** We also conduct teacher training programs and workshops for hundreds of public and private school teachers, therapists, and other professionals in the education and social work fields.

Since its inception in 2007, Mindful Schools has brought a five week, 15 session mindfulness training program to **over 7,500 children and 450 teachers in 31 schools**, 77% of which serve low-income children. Our program is tailored for children and has evolved based on our experience teaching all these kids. The program is in high demand; we receive inquiries daily from all over the US and abroad. Our website (www.mindfulschools.org) has received hits from 49 states and 72 countries since its launch in March 2009, even without advertising.

The reason for our program's popularity is that it is tremendously beneficial to students and teachers. Many children come to school burdened by their home lives. Meanwhile, teachers are under enormous pressure to deliver, and need more effective tools for classroom management.

Mindfulness belongs in schools, and helps teachers and children by:

- **Increasing Attention Span:** creating more focus and better academic achievement
- **Improving Impulse Control:** making classroom management easier
- **Reducing Stress:** leading to happier and more effective kids and teachers
- **Building Community:** increased empathy leads to a healthier school community

Mindful Schools is a Community Outreach Program of Park Day School, which has been sharing resources with schools in The Oakland Unified School District for 18 years. Park Day School's Director Tom Little describes Mindful Schools as "the most compelling outreach program in our 18-year history of doing community outreach, and something that can transform every school."

Proven Benefits of the Mindful Schools Program

Based on surveys of 702 students and 35 teachers, we report the following data:

- **Teachers**
 - 96% say they have benefited personally
 - 94% say they will continue using mindfulness in their classes
 - Teachers say they have seen 78% of their students benefit from mindfulness
- **Students**
 - 93% say mindfulness helped them in their life in some way
 - 85% say they will use mindfulness in the future

- 61% say it helps them calm themselves down when they are upset
- 59% say it helps them focus better in the classroom
- 52% say it helps them make decisions

These results are supported by a vast body of research on the compelling effects of mindfulness on depression, anxiety, ADHD, and other serious disorders. These effects include:

- Integrating neurons from the brain stem, limbic system and the prefrontal cortex – resulting in positive executive function, bringing cognitive and emotional activation to desired levels.
- Strengthening of the left prefrontal lobes and insular cortex, which activate positive emotion circuits and allows us to experience empathy.
- Stimulating the parasympathetic nerve of the nervous system. This is the “rest and digest” side of the nervous system that counteracts the “fight, flight, freeze” side. For this reason, the parasympathetic nerve reduces stress and facilitates conflict resolution.

Mindfulness is used in over 300 hospitals and mental health clinics around the country because of its effectiveness. Our syllabus embodies the same concepts used in the medical community, but is adapted for children based on our experience teaching over 7,000 students.

Real-World Anecdotes

The following real-world examples qualify some of the major benefits of our program:

Better concentration:

- Telling children to put on their “mindful bodies” after recess can help them leave recess behind and be available for their lessons.
- “Can you come in after lunch today? My students focus better in math right after mindfulness.” - *5th grade teacher*
- “It helps because school is sometimes hard and mindfulness helps me cool down.” - *2nd grader*

Fewer discipline problems:

- “I had four children that were living in the office. Now they are back in my classroom, learning.” - *1st grade teacher at Fruitvale*
- “To date we have one suspension this year. We usually have 20 by now. We attribute this to the mindfulness program.” - *Lake Shore Elementary School, San Francisco*

Internalizing the benefits:

- A psychologist at Futures Elementary asked her students what tools they would use in the summer when faced with difficulties. Each student said they would use their mindfulness.
- “The thing about mindfulness is that when you are going to do something bad, you know it and you can stop.” - *5th grader*

- “When we asked our graduating 5th graders what they learned at our school, I was astonished that the vast majority of them wrote about mindfulness!”
- *Danielle Neves, principal of Sankofa Academy*
- 52% of our students tell us they have taught mindfulness to someone at home.

Teachers who are less stressed and enjoy teaching more:

- “I had decided this would be my last year teaching until the mindfulness program began at my school. Now I am rededicated to my profession.” - *East Oakland 1st grade teacher*
- “The mindfulness classes are really good for me. I am under a lot of stress and they cool me out and then I am much better for my students.” - *5th grade teacher*

Schools that have Received the Mindful Schools Program Since 2007

Oakland Public & Charter Schools					
Berkley Maynard	Bridges	Community United	Edna Brewer	Emerson	Encompass
Franklin	Fruitvale	Futures	Global Family	Hillcrest	Lazear
Monarch	New Highland	Met West High School	Munck	NOCCS	Oakland International High School
Piedmont Avenue	REACH	RISE	Sankofa		
Independent Schools					
Blue Oak	Head Royce	Park Day School	Prospect Sierra		Raskob
Public Schools in Sonoma County, Sacramento, and San Francisco					
Cinnabar	Clayton B Wire	Dunham	Lakeshore		

Program Cost

The standard fee for the program is \$600 per classroom. Our mission is to help as many children and teachers as possible, inspired by the public-private partnership program from which Mindful Schools evolved. We provide **subsidized programs for schools and other organizations that need it**, using contributions we get from schools paying full-fare.

To keep the program sustainable, we recommend training an individual on the staff (social worker, psychologist, learning specialist, or administrator) to continue the program once a week for approximately three hours after our five week program ends. That individual will receive our three levels of training (worth over \$1,000 per person) at a 50% discount.

If a school does not have a person available to continue the program (3 to 4 hours a week), we recommend that we return to provide follow-up once a week or twice a month. That fee would be approximately \$480 per day, covering all children in an average-size school.

For more information, please contact us:

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