

Getting Started with a Schoolwide Mindfulness Program

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Mental health is top of mind for many in the United States these days and schools are taking steps to support the mental health of their teachers, staff, and students. One way that schools are offering support is through the implementation of schoolwide mindfulness programs. Mindfulness practices can be beneficial to student health and well-being, helping to reduce stress and boost attention and academic performance, among other benefits. Mindfulness practices can also reduce stress and burnout for teachers, administrators, and school staff.

If you are interested in starting a mindfulness program at your school, you need to do your homework first. Here are three steps you should take before getting started.

Have a Plan for Implementation

Every successful program begins with a plan, and a schoolwide mindfulness program is no different. Here are some questions to consider as you develop your plan:

- What's your vision for mindfulness at your school? Identify a long-term vision that defines the purpose for creating a mindfulness program and the goals you want to achieve (e.g., stress reduction, building social-emotional competencies).

- What are the key components of your school’s mindfulness program? Meditation and yoga are common components. Others include breathing and movement exercises, mindful nutrition, journaling, solo sit spots, and sensory and imagery experiences.
- How will implementing a mindfulness program contribute to a positive school culture and climate? Mindfulness activities should be inclusive and respectful of your school community’s diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

Secure Buy-In from the School Community

Many people are not familiar with mindfulness or have misconceptions about mindfulness practices. For educators in particular, adding a schoolwide mindfulness program might seem like “one more thing to do” and others might be skeptical whether it’s worth the time. That’s why you should have a plan in place to address initial resistance and secure buy-in from everyone in the school community, parents included.

A great place to start is to share research and articles about mindfulness and its benefits with teachers, administrators, and staff. Give them time to review these materials and become familiar with mindfulness. Be open to their questions and concerns. When New Roots Charter School started their [Take 30 mindfulness practice in 2015](#), some teachers were initially skeptical. By cultivating teacher support, establishing a routine practice in staff meetings, and sharing research documenting the benefits of mindfulness in educational settings, the school was able to ease minds and win over skeptics. Reports one teacher: “At first, it was difficult giving up even 30 seconds of instructional time. What I have found is that by taking 30 seconds and pausing before diving in, class time is actually more productive, students are more focused, and I am more focused.”

Communication with parents and caregivers is especially crucial before launching a schoolwide mindfulness program. Some parents and caregivers believe mindfulness practices like yoga are tied to religious practice. Be open about why your school is starting a mindfulness program and what the program includes. Invite parents and caregivers to participate in mindfulness activities with their students so they can see firsthand how it’s being implemented.

Offer Training and Resources

A successful and sustainable mindfulness program requires knowledge and skills acquisition as well as staying up to date with the latest research, trends, and practices. That’s why it’s important to provide regular opportunities for the school community to develop and deepen mindfulness practices. An initial training session for teachers, administrators, and staff can be a helpful tool to kickstart the program. Be sure to offer additional trainings throughout the school year or provide information for relevant trainings, online and in-person, that are available from outside organizations. Well-regarded resources such as [MindUp](#), [Mindful](#)

[Schools](#), and [Mindfulness in Schools Project](#) are great references for information and tools, and the organization [Mindful has a Best Practices for Bringing Mindfulness into Schools](#) webpage that includes research, case studies, tips, and practices for teachers and parents.

A schoolwide mindfulness program is one step you can take to build a positive culture and climate at your school. [Download the GreenPrint](#) to learn about additional best practices that support school culture and climate.