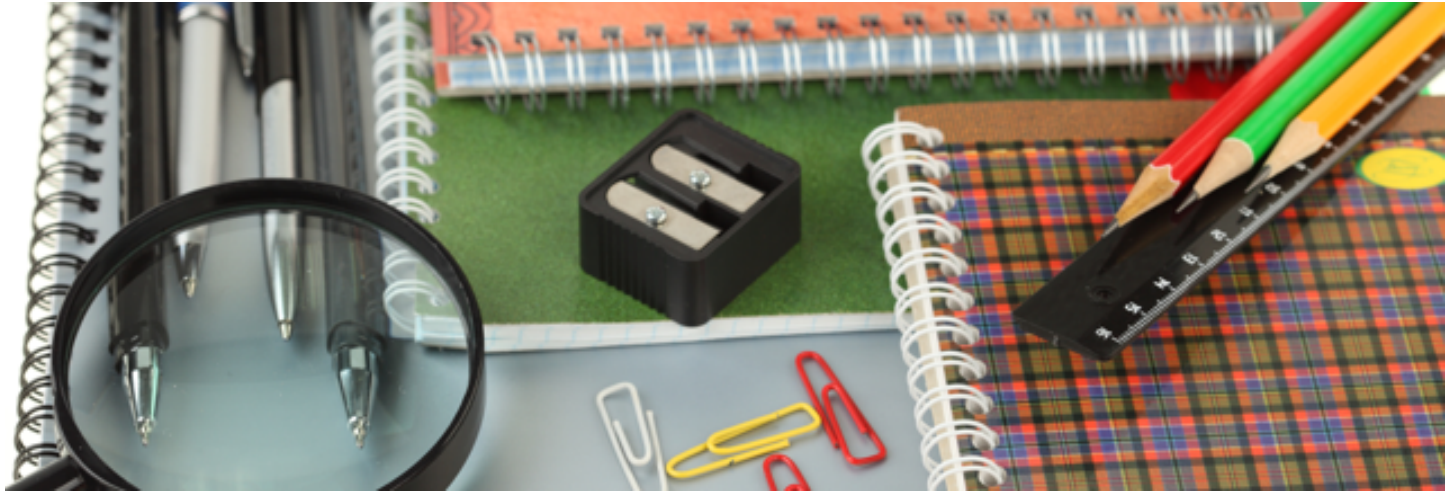


MINDFULNESS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS



“Stress among children is estimated to have increased 45% over the past 30 years. The good news is that building emotional health and resiliency can help children concentrate, learn, interact more successfully and deal with other stressors they may face in their lives”

- The Psychology Foundation of Canada

MINDFULNESS HELPS CHILDREN

Studies show that mindfulness fosters many of the same benefits and positive changes in children as it does for adolescents and adults.¹

Mindfulness develops deep social and emotional learning, resilience, self-regulation, attention and focus, and increases positive social behaviour.

¹ Napoli, M., Krech, P.R., & Holley, L.C. (2005) Mindfulness Training for Elementary School Students. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 21(1)*, 99 – 125.

START MINDFULNESS EARLY

The early years are when personalities, behaviours and competencies begin to take shape and this remains with children into adolescence and adulthood.²

Starting mindfulness early not only supports the development of healthy minds and hearts during these crucial years, it means children are better equipped to deal with the difficulties of adolescence. The more mindfulness training they have, the greater the resilience and skills to navigate a challenging world.³

“Teaching kids tools to manage what is now the norm, a hectic daily life, is as important as teaching them to read.”

- Susan Kaiser Greenland

² Collins, W. A. (1984). Development during middle childhood: The years from six to twelve. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

³ Zenner et al (2014). Mindfulness-based interventions in schools—a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Front. Psychol.*, 30 June 2014.

MINDFULNESS PROVIDES DEEP SEL

There is clear evidence that explicit social and emotional learning (SEL) instruction improves academic outcomes and is suitable for class-wide student engagement.⁴

Mindfulness provides SEL in a particularly powerful way. It improves attention and allows students to develop a meta-awareness of their thoughts and emotions. A recent study of grade 4 and 5 students taught a 15-lesson mindfulness and SEL program found a 20% gain in social-emotional competencies and skills.⁵

SELF-REGULATION

Mindfulness helps children self-regulate by teaching them to be aware of the thoughts and emotions that drive them to act out, and creating space to choose to act differently.

A study of 409 children in K-6 given a 5-week mindfulness program found student behavior improved significantly in all four areas measured—paying attention, self-control, classroom participation, and respect for others—and these gains were maintained seven weeks later.⁶ Other studies have also shown reduced behaviour problems,⁷ with a recent study finding a reduction of 24% in aggressive behaviors.⁸

⁴ Gov't of Ontario, *Supporting Minds – An Educator's Guide to Promoting Students' Mental Health and Well-being*, Draft Version 2013, p.18

⁵ Schonert-Reichl et al (2015), Enhancing Cognitive and Social-Emotional Development Through a Simple-to-Administer Mindfulness-Based School Program for Elementary School Children: A Randomized Controlled Trial, *Development Psychology*, Vol. 51, No. 1, 52–66.

⁶ Black, D. S. & Fernando, R., Mindfulness Training and Classroom Behavior Among Lower-Income and Ethnic Minority Elementary School Children, *J. of Child & Family Studies*, Oct 2014, Vol 23, Issue 7, 1242-1246.

⁷ Meiklejohn, J. et al. (2012), Integrating Mindfulness Training into K-12 Education: Fostering the Resilience of Teachers and Students. *Mindfulness*, 1(1), 291-307 (meta-analysis)

⁸ Schonert-Reichl et al, *supra*.

REDUCED ANXIETY

It is well established that mindfulness reduces anxiety in elementary school children.⁹

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

There are different factors that mindfulness develops that help a student's academic success, such as an increased ability to focus and pay attention and decreased anxiety.¹⁰ In fact, at its heart, mindfulness is training in attention.

A recent study showed an improvement in math achievement scores of 15%.¹¹

POSITIVE SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS

With mindfulness training, students naturally develop more positive social behaviours. They are less stressed, more in touch with their thoughts and feelings, and less on autopilot. A recent study found a 24% gain in positive social behaviors.¹²

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.

Discover Mindfulness is an Ontario-based, non-profit whose mission is to be a hub for information and a catalyst for the integration of mindfulness into education as a means to overall well-being for educators, students, families and society.

See our other fact sheets at:
discovermindfulness.ca/tool-kit

To see the detailed studies, please visit
discovermindfulness.ca/evidence

⁹ Meiklejohn, et al, *supra*.

¹⁰ Meiklejohn, et al, *supra*.

¹¹ Schonert-Reichl et al, *supra*.

¹² Schonert-Reichl et al, *supra*.