



Hopatcong Borough Schools

Press Release

Mindfulness Matters!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, May 10, 2017

Dr. Joanne Mullane, Hopatcong Acting Superintendent of Schools, Announces

First graders in Mrs. Linda Blazier's class have spent time this year learning how to be "mindful", or how to consciously focus on their thoughts and feelings, being fully aware of the present moment. Research has consistently shown that children in today's world are under unprecedented levels of stress, but that practicing mindfulness can help reduce stress, and/or manage how we react to stressors.

Blazier, a yoga-lover herself, first became intrigued by mindfulness in the classroom leading up to "musical yogini" Kira Willey's April 2016 visit to Hudson Maxim School. After a summer conference also highlighted mindfulness in the classroom, Blazier decided, with Principal Katherine McFadden's support, to implement these practices into her own classroom for the 2016-2017 school year.

Each morning, students begin their day with a pre-recorded intention for the day from Kira Willey, in which students are asked to "Think about how you would like the rest of your day to go. Finish this sentence in your mind: 'Today, I'm going to be . . . ' "and then make it happen. Throughout the week, students are offered various options for daily mindfulness practice: Color Me Calm; Enlightened Listening (musical selections ranging from New Age, to classical, to jazz); Serene Stretching (yoga practice); Bucolic Breathing (guided breathing exercises, teaching breathing techniques to use during times of stress, anger, frustration, etc.); or Tranquil Thinking (guided positive self-talk). Results have been remarkable: students have shown increased focus, an ability to better self-regulate, and greater empathy towards peers.

In early April, Blazier attended a national conference presented by Learning & The Brain in Washington, D.C., entitled "POSITIVE, RESILIENT MINDS: THE SCIENCE OF PROMOTING STUDENT GRIT, GRATITUDE AND SCHOOL SUCCESS", where participants spent three days learning brain- and research-based techniques and methodologies for bringing mindfulness, gratitude, kindness, and empathy into their classrooms. The take-away was tremendous, and Hudson Maxim has already begun implementing some of the suggestions for fostering kindness and empathy school-wide, including encouraging parents to nominate their children who have shown "un-selfie" acts of kindness, to be highlighted on the Daily Announcements. Additionally, students in Mrs. Blazier's class now end each day by reflecting on and highlighting the successes they personally experienced that day.

Bringing mindfulness into the classroom has reinforced to students that their emotional needs are important too. Allowing students to have ownership of their own minds, bodies, and feelings transforms the way they learn and gives them incredible tools for success in life!