



*The Be Project* assumes everyone can attain a high level of social and emotional awareness, calm focus and resilience. We believe our schools should be places of mindful attention, joyful learning and compassionate communication. Our goal is to build knowledgeable, aware, focused and resilient students and teachers. The foundation of this program is mindful breathing and intentional stillness.

We cannot remove all obstacles to learning. Schools today have high levels of stress from many sources and while we cannot solve every problem that schools deal with, we can provide coping strategies. Through the use of mindful breathing, students and teachers will learn to control the breath to manage stress levels and harness the learning capacity of the brain.

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## A Note from the Authors:

*The Be Project* came out of Kara Davies' experience using mindfulness to heal, empower and transform her life. When a mindfulness practice led to deeper meaning in her career and personal life, she felt called to share these principles with teachers, students and the community in an effort to improve collective quality of life. She began by asking, "what is best for this student or group of students in this moment?" She realized this world-view was useful in her work as a special education expert but also as a community value. Shouldn't every decision arise from what's best for our kids?

As the idea began to grow, she reached out to local mindfulness experts Erin Smith and Cindy Reed, along with Allison Nelson, a trusted colleague and school psychologist with a personal mindfulness practice. As the project began to mature in concept, Katie Scherrer, a children and family yoga practitioner, was added to the team. This team of five highly-qualified, dedicated women began to discuss and determine how to provide trauma-informed mindfulness practices to students and teachers. They were awarded a "What's Your Ambition?" grant from the Greater Clark Foundation and *The Be Project* was born.

Over the next year, core principals were determined and the curriculum developed. We were aware that in order to teach mindfulness, teachers would need to experience mindfulness and develop a mindfulness practice in order to share it with their students. The foundation of *The Be Project* is a mindful breathing practice. This practice helps to create hopeful, dignified, optimistic, grateful and empathetic people.

Mindful breathing is likely to have valuable effects on the emotional wellbeing, mental health, focus and physical health of students and teachers. Those benefits will spread to their families and friends, building a stronger community with each deep, mindful breath. Mindfulness is a gift that keeps on giving. It's a true grassroots initiative!

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# THE PARADIGM



The foundation of *The Be Project* is mindful breathing. This practice supports growth in the Four Pillars defined below, with growth in each Pillar supporting community values. Our community values diversity, equity, compassion, engagement, kindness and opportunity. Our values filter up through the Four Pillars to impact our being. By reinforcing values such as hope, dignity, optimism, gratitude and empathy, individuals support a healthy community and healthy members of the community.

## PILLAR 1 - THE BRAIN

By learning how our brains respond to stress, we use mindful breathing to quiet down the amygdala (the brain's stress center) and activate the hippocampus (the memory "storage vault") and the prefrontal cortex (the evolved area of mindful awareness and higher-level thinking skills).

## PILLAR 2 - AWARENESS

Mindful breathing fosters emotional and social competence, bolstering both our relationship with others as well as our relationship to ourselves. This leads to emotional self-regulation and empathy.

## PILLAR 3 - FOCUS

We can prime our brain for calm, clear decision-making using mindful breathing. This also sets the stage for long-term memory learning.

## PILLAR 4 - RESILIENCE

When we connect to the breath, we connect to the present moment. Neuroscience tells us that feelings of hope, gratitude and acceptance can only be experienced in the present moment. In this way, a mindful breathing practice leads to more resilient students and teachers.

# NOTE TO TEACHERS

When guiding students through mindful exercises, it is important to be mindful ourselves. As a teacher introducing mindfulness in the classroom, you may notice students responding with skepticism, nervousness, apprehension, passive observation or rejection of the practices. If given the freedom to choose, eventually most students will become curious and try. All of these responses are ok. As teachers, you may notice that these responses evoke in you feelings of judgement, frustration, fear, anger and desire for control. When presenting mindful experiences to our students, we should practice:

- Non-Judgment
- Acceptance
- Curiosity
- Consistency

## SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE CURRICULUM

The foundational practice of mindful breathing and intentional stillness is intended to be used on a daily basis, ideally on a few different occasions throughout the day. The length of duration for daily breathwork and intentional stillness should be determined based on the age and developmental level of your group of students. A general recommendation is that you practice mindful breathing and intentional stillness for one minute per grade level (i.e. two minutes for second grade, five minutes for fifth grade). Durations for middle and high school students may range anywhere between five to ten minutes or longer if appropriate (see Sample Lesson Plan #1: Mindful Breathing). Lesson plans can be used on their own or in conjunction with the existing curriculum. You may customize the lessons to meet the needs of your classroom.

# PILLAR 1: THE BRAIN

## Rationale:

Understanding how our brains work can be a powerful transformative tool in our box of coping skills. By understanding the root causes of our behavior, we can begin to uproot undesirable or ineffective behaviors and replace them with a more neutral default setting. Equipping our students with this information offers them power over their reactions to stimuli. When we begin to see things more clearly and have control over our being through mindfulness practices, we can feel a greater sense of control over ourselves and our environment.

## Connection:

This Pillar builds the mind-body connection. Research on mindfulness practices indicates that individuals with a mindfulness practice show increased activity in parts of the brain that control our ability to: self-regulate; learn from past mistakes; support optimal decision-making; maintain clear perception; improve self-concept; convert information from working memory into long-term storage; and access parts of our brain that manage complex thinking. We can actually change the way our brain works, reduce stress hormones in the brain and shrink our “fight, flight or freeze” mechanism. By redirecting our awareness, we can replace our tendency toward worry, stress, fear, anger, depression and anxiety with flexibility, calm, self-regulation, informed decision-making, peace and happiness.

## Sample “Be” Words or Sample “Be” Vocabulary:

- Be Knowledgeable
- Be Aware
- Be Informed
- Be Thoughtful
- Be Reflective

## Standards: Science and Breathing:

- Parts of the Brain and Their Functions:
  - The Limbic System
    - Prefrontal Cortex
    - Hippocampus
    - Amygdala
- Relation to Trauma:
  - “Fight, Flight or Freeze” Response
  - Higher-Order Reasoning

## Key Points to Understand:

### 1. Limbic System

The limbic system is the part of the brain that is responsible for our emotional lives and also for higher-order mental functions, such as learning and forming memories. The amygdala is the emotion center of the brain, while the hippocampus plays an essential role in the formation of new memories about past experiences. The amygdala is our brain’s alarm system that controls the “fight, flight or freeze” mechanism. When the amygdala is triggered, it causes the hippocampus to stop storing memories in our long-term storage and begins pumping the stress hormone, cortisol, into our brain. The result is that we stop taking in new information and cannot access the higher-order thinking skills in our prefrontal cortex.

### 2. Trauma

When the amygdala is triggered, memories become stored in the limbic region rather than in the cortex, and everyday triggers of those memories can set off our alarm system. In extreme cases, recurring trauma can become PTSD and can cause our amygdala (or alarm system) to become jammed, causing us to live in a constant state of alarm.

### 3. Cortisol

When students feel stressed, the stress hormone, cortisol, is released in the brain. Cortisol prevents us from retrieving information from the prefrontal cortex, with all of our information coming from the hippocampus instead. As a result of this, the only memories retrieved are those associated with the particular emotion or situation causing the stress. This reaction reinforces our negative perception of events and prevents us from taking in and processing new information using reason and logic.

However, research on mindfulness shows that we can reduce the size of the amygdala and reduce the amount of cortisol in the brain. Practicing mindfulness by engaging positive memories helps us to reduce cortisol levels while increasing dopamine, a hormone which improves feelings of hopefulness and motivation.

#### **4. Sensory Overload**

The RAS, or Reticular Activating System, is a bundle of nerve fibers within the Central Nervous System (CNS). The RAS plays a role in wakefulness, sleep, attention, behavioral modification and filtering information and is a portal through which almost all information passes to get to the brain. Mindfulness practices engage the RAS, allowing us to filter out unnecessary information (in order to make the best decisions), react more appropriately and perform tasks with higher precision.

# PILLAR 1 - THE BRAIN

## Sample Lesson Plan #1: Mindful Breathing

### Rationale:

Ideally, the foundational practice of deep breathing is done at least three times each day for at least one minute at a time (older students may practice for up to five minutes). As the foundation of the program, this lesson plan should be used daily, as often as needed. We suggest a minute or two of deep breathing at the start of the day, right after lunch and before any test or quiz. The more often you practice, the calmer the day will be overall.

### Objectives:

#### I CAN

- Identify what happens to my body (physically and emotionally) when stressed
- Practice the foundational deep breathing technique
- Recognize how deep breathing can be used to calm and focus the body and mind

#### I DO

- A breathing exercise to calm and focus the body and mind

#### I KNOW

- That mindful breathing is a powerful tool
- How to use deep breathing anytime and anywhere to feel more calm and more focused

### Lesson:

#### **As a group, brainstorm the following:**

1. What is stress?
2. What sorts of things cause stress?
3. What happens to our body when we're stressed? Identify the physical and emotional signs of stress. Take suggestions as to what we can do to calm ourselves. Then ask what we can do anytime and anywhere to feel calm (the answer is deep breathing).
4. Students should do 25 jumping jacks or run in place for one minute. Now notice your breath. List on the board adjectives to describe it (shallow, fast, etc).

5. Students should now lie down or (if at desks) sit tall and relax their shoulders. Instruct them to (teacher reads the following slowly and in a calm voice):

*Close your eyes. Make your top lip touch your bottom lip. Now start to take deep breaths in and out of your nose. When you breathe in, imagine you are filling up your belly like a balloon. When you breathe out, feel the belly drop down (or, if they are sitting up, the belly button/navel will move back towards their spine). Let your breath be soft and relaxed. If you start thinking about other things, it doesn't matter. Just come back to watching your breath come and go. That's it.*

Continue in this way for at least one minute and up to five minutes. Before opening their eyes, they should be instructed to notice how their breath feels.

6. Now come back to the group. List on the board adjectives to describe the breath and body after the exercise (calm, soft, relaxed, etc). Ask why they think deep breaths help us feel calm and focused (slows blood flow, slows heart rate, slows neural firing in brain, allows us to focus on one thing, etc.) Refer back to what we learned about the amygdala in the previous lesson plan.

### **Modifications:**

As students become more experienced with the practice and with watching their breath, teachers can choose not to do the strenuous activity at the beginning of the practice as students will be more comfortable moving straight into breathing. It is important to note that students do also benefit from the movement involved in this activity.

# PILLAR 1 - THE BRAIN

## Sample Lesson Plan #2: Parts of the Brain

### Rationale:

All students should understand that this area of the brain is an important part of the limbic system and connected to the "fight, flight or freeze" stress response of the body. This is where we learn, analyze and comprehend.

### Objectives:

#### I CAN

- Understand the parts of the brain and how they control emotions and thoughts

#### I DO

- An activity to identify and label the three key emotional and thought centers of the brain (the amygdala, the hippocampus and the prefrontal cortex)

#### I KNOW

- How my brain responds to stress and how I can help to control the stress response to feel calmer and more focused

### Lesson:

The amygdala looks like two almonds deep in the center of the brain. So when we say, "you are driving me nuts," you have triggered the amygdala! The amygdala is reactive; if we are overly excited or under stress, the amygdala prevents neural information from getting to the prefrontal cortex correctly.

The hippocampus is another part of the limbic system. It stores and processes memories that the prefrontal cortex thinks are important. When information that indicates stress is passed along to the hippocampus, this results in poor judgement and knee-jerk reactions.

When we are calm and focused, the amygdala gets quiet and passes along information so that we can think and reason. When we are firing in our prefrontal cortex, we are being mindful, intentional and present. It's here that we make higher-level, reflective and rational decisions.

In small groups or through journaling, discuss a time you were so scared or angry that you made a poor decision. Consider how you might handle such events in the future.

## Modifications:

### Vocabulary Use:

- Older students may say “amygdala” while younger students may say “smoke alarm.”
- Older students may say “prefrontal cortex” while younger students may use the term “thinking center.”
- Older students may say “hippocampus” while younger students may use the term “memory storage vault.”

## Additional Resources:

- *Your Fantastic Elastic Brain: Stretch It, Shape It* by JoAnn Deak, Ph.D. 2010
- *The Monster Under Your Bed is Just a Story In Your Head* by Lisa Wemberger, 2017
- Hand Model of the Brain for KIDS YouTube video - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H\\_dxnYhdyuY&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_dxnYhdyuY&feature=youtu.be)
- “Just Breathe” by Julie Bayer Salzman & Josh Salzman (Wavecrest Films) YouTube video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVA2N6tX2cg&app=desktop>
- *Breathe* by Scott Magoon, 2014
- “Belly Breathe” Sesame Street video featuring Elmo, Common, and Colbie Caillet - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZbzDOpyIA>
- “Your Memory Under Stress” Brain Games Clip - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKzUSfzqh5A>

# PILLAR 1 - THE BRAIN

## Sample Lesson Plan #3: Square Breathing

### Rationale:

We suggest a minute or two of deep breathing at the start of the day, right after lunch and before any test or quiz. The more often you practice, the calmer the day will be overall.

### Objectives:

#### I CAN

- Practice square breathing to calm my mind and body

#### I DO

- Square breathing to feel calm and focused

#### I KNOW

- That the square breath can calm my mind and body

### Lesson:

#### **How to Take a Square Breath: Grades Five and Younger**

As you breathe, draw a square in the air with your finger. Breathe in slowly through your nose as you draw the first line of your square. Breathe out slowly through your nose or mouth as you draw the second line of your square. Breathe in slowly again as you draw the third line. Breathe out slowly as you draw your last line, connecting your square. Practice breathing several full square breaths. How do you feel? As you get the hang of this breathing exercise, you can stop using your hand to draw your square and simply visualize your square in your mind.

#### **How to Take a Square Breath: Grades Six and Older**

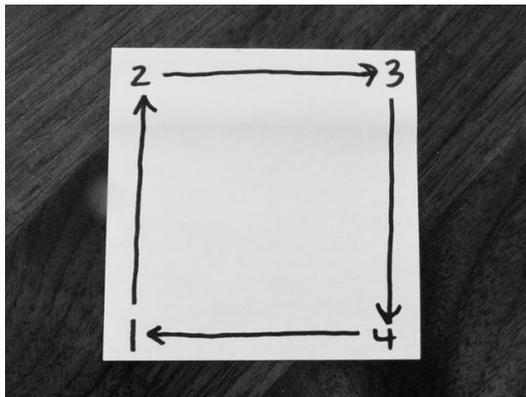
- Breathe in to a count of four
- Hold for a count of four
- Breathe out to a count of four
- Pause for a count of four
- Repeat

Model to students initially, drawing a square in the air with your finger. Begin in the lower left corner and demonstrate, using your finger to draw a square in the air. As they practice initially, they may draw their own “air square”. As they get the hang of it, they should drop their hand and simply picture the square in their mind as they breathe.

## Modifications:

### Option One:

Give each student a sticky note, have them label the corners and then add arrows like this:



They can gaze softly at their desktop note, starting at “1” and following the arrow up on the inhale. They then pause on the horizontal top line, exhale to mentally trace the downward arrow and pause again to close the box. Younger kids can also do this activity, breathing in and out throughout the tracing rather than holding the breath on the second and fourth lines.

### Option Two:

You can add mindful movement by creating a masking tape box on the floor or playground (make it large enough that students will naturally take four steps on each side). This combines square breathing with movement to fully embody the relaxation experience and help students get “into their body”.

Start in the lower left corner and breathe in while taking four steps up the left side. Hold the breath and take four steps across the top. Breathe out, taking four steps down the right side. Pause and then count to four while taking four steps across the bottom. Repeat for as much time as possible. With young children (under fifth grade), encourage them to pay close attention to their inhales as they walk on the first line, their exhales as they walk on the second line and so on, rather than manipulating the breath to match the amount of time it takes to complete their four steps.

**Teacher's Note:** As students increase their lung capacity, they can extend the amount of time from 4 seconds up to 7 or even 10 seconds.

## Additional Resources:

**Good for older students:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgzhKW08bMQ> Square breathing animated lesson

**Good for younger students:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxbdX-SeOOo> 4-7-8 breathing animated lesson

## PILLAR 2 - AWARENESS

### Rationale:

There is often more going on in our brains and our bodies than we are aware of at any given moment. We cannot accept or change what we are experiencing without first becoming aware of our thoughts and feelings and how they impact our actions.

Mindfulness can help us develop this awareness. We begin by purposefully noticing our own experiences and that awareness can then extend to the experiences of others. We can learn to see any situation from a variety of perspectives and to act with more compassion and less aggression in our interactions with others.

### Connection:

This Pillar builds our mind-body-heart connection. Learning to recognize and name one's own feelings and experiences is the first step toward developing empathy. With mindful breathing, we learned to watch thoughts come and go through the mind without judgment. In this Pillar, we apply that practice to the body by watching physical sensations come and go in the same way. We also practice holding others in non-judgmental awareness. Activities in this Pillar will help us identify what we are experiencing in the mind and body in various contexts, how those thoughts and feelings are expressed and the effects such expressions may have on others.

### Sample "Be" Words or Sample "Be" Vocabulary:

- Be Considerate
- Be Grateful
- Be Observant
- Be Kind
- Be of Service
- Be Intuitive
- Be Nurturing

### Standards:

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness

## Key Points to Understand:

### **1. A Word About Trauma:**

Experiencing traumatic events (such as abuse, loss, a natural disaster, etc.) can interrupt how our mind and body communicate. Because of this, connecting with our bodies and emotions can be difficult, even overwhelming, for those who have experienced trauma. The mindfulness activities described in this section (and throughout the curriculum) are best when offered in a way that is sensitive to the needs of those who have experienced trauma, without singling anyone out. This can be done by offering options that allow participants to choose their own comfort level whenever possible. For example, offer an instruction of closing the eyes or keeping the eyes softly open in a downward gaze, rather than just stating that everyone must close their eyes.

## PILLAR 2 - AWARENESS

### Sample Lesson Plan #1: Letting Thoughts Settle

#### Rationale:

This lesson provides students with a visual representation of their mind and a visual focal point to watch as they experience the benefits of a visual mindfulness practice. Taking time to watch the glitter settle in a snow globe provides a metaphor for the “dust” settling in their own mind. This can be a calming tool for teachers to use for students when their anxiety is escalated. Allowing a student to take a “time out” to sit quietly and watch their globe can provide a moment of calm before talking through the issue with a teacher or other adult.

#### Objectives:

##### I CAN

- Learn how to help my busy thoughts settle

##### I DO

- Create a snow globe and use it to calm my busy mind

##### I KNOW

- How to use my unique snow globe at home to support my mindfulness practice

#### Lesson:

**Teacher’s Note:** Having a snow globe to shake as you read the script is useful.

#### Script:

*Do you have a snow globe? You shake them up and marvel at the snow falling over the miniature scene inside. Now imagine your brain is the glass and the snow represents all of the thoughts and emotions in your mind. When we are under stress (and our amygdalas are firing), it’s just like the swirling snow. When we get caught up in our thoughts and emotions, it can be difficult to clearly see the impact on our perceptions and decision-making.*

*But when we set the snow globe down and it becomes still, the snow starts to settle. Our minds are just like that! When we become still (intentional stillness) and practice mindful breathing (foundational breath), it’s like the snow settling at the bottom. Look*

*how clear the water is now! It's so much easier to focus on the scene inside and to see things clearly. Sometimes the snow will settle quickly and sometimes it takes longer. But that's ok! Let's make our own snow globes.*

### **Now what?**

1. Choose your figurine and have your teacher hot glue it to the inside of the jar lid. Let it dry.
2. Fill the jar with half water and half glycerin.
3. Add 3 teaspoons of glitter.
4. Screw the lid back on. For younger kids, add a bit of hot glue to the lid so they can't unscrew it.
5. Shake it up!

*Find a comfortable seat and shake your snow globe. See if you can follow just one piece of glitter as it drifts downward in your globe. Be aware of your breath as you watch the "storm" (turbulence) in the globe calming itself. If you lose track of your little piece of glitter, simply find another to watch. As you watch the glitter settle, let your mind settle itself too. Now perform a body scan (see Sample Lesson #2: How Do I Feel?) What do you notice about the body? About the breath? About the mind? (Remember to practice radical (non-judgmental) acceptance at this point.)*

### **Modifications:**

Older students can work on deep-belly breathing while the glitter is settling. They can practice longer ten-count breathing, focusing on the pause in between breaths.

### **Additional Resources:**

#### **Materials Needed:**

- Small glass jars (baby food jars are perfect)
- Plastic figurines (like plastic animals)
- Glycerin (it makes the glitter float better; available at any craft store)
- Water
- Glitter
- Glue (a hot glue gun work best)
- DIY snow globes from [www.theDIYdish.com](http://www.theDIYdish.com)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpv7hvzTgiA>
- *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* by Kerry Lee Maclean. Albert Whitman and Company, 2014

## PILLAR 2 - AWARENESS

### Sample Lesson Plan #2: How Do I Feel?

#### Rationale:

The body scan is a mindfulness practice in which we non-judgmentally notice, in turn, the physical sensations occurring in each of our body parts. We aren't trying to change our bodies in any way; we are simply paying attention to how they feel in this particular moment. Some places may feel relaxed, others may feel tense and some places may give us no feeling at all. Simply pay attention to what your experience is right now. The mind may wander off into stories or memories; this is fine. Each time that you notice that it has happened, simply bring your mind gently back to body and to the practice.

#### Objectives:

##### **I CAN**

- Identify my physical and emotional feelings

##### **I DO**

- Practice the body scan

##### **I KNOW**

- How to recognize and name my emotions and identify how they feel in my body

#### Lesson:

There are many body scan recordings and scripts available online that you may choose to use for your own practice or to share with others. The following is a sample body scan script for sharing with students.

##### **The Body Scan**

*Begin by lying down comfortably on your back or sitting with your back tall and your feet flat on the floor. Allow your eyes to close (if they are willing) so that you can more deeply connect with your body. This is a safe place where you can feel comfortable resting with your eyes closed for the duration of this practice. Feel your breath coming into and out of the body. Where do you feel your breath in your body? There is no right or wrong answer; just notice where you feel your breath right now.*

*Now, notice your feet. What sensations do you feel in your feet? Notice all the parts of your feet: the toes, the bottom of the foot, the heel, the top of the foot, the ankles. Remember, you aren't trying to make anything special happen. Just notice what you feel, notice if it changes and notice if there are any blank spots. Just notice.*

*Now, let go of your feet and notice your legs. Notice all the parts of your legs: the shins, the calves, the knees, the thighs and even up into the hips. Just notice what you feel and where you feel it.*

*Now, let go of the hips and legs and notice the middle of your body. What do you feel in your stomach? What do you feel in your back? What do you feel in your shoulders? What do you feel in your throat? Try not to use words to label what you feel; rather, just be with the feeling itself. Remember, there is no need to judge your experience. These sensations are not good or bad...they just are.*

*Now, let go of the midsection and notice your arms and hands. Notice how each part of your arms and hands feels right now. Notice the sensation of your clothing on your arms. Notice the sensation of anything the arms and hands may be resting on. Notice the sensations in all parts of the arms. Feel your elbows. Feel your wrists. Feel each fingernail.*

*Let go of noticing the arms and hands and begin to notice your face and head. Notice the front and back of the neck. Notice your mouth and jaw. Notice your eyes and the space between the eyes. Notice the top of the head. And the back of the head. Has your mind wandered away? If so, that's fine. Gently come back to noticing your face and head.*

*Now, feel your entire body, together and whole. Notice the breath coming into and out of the body. Just rest here for a few more moments, breathing and noticing any feelings that arise and fall away in your whole body.*

*Thank you for practicing the body scan. Take a few moments to end this practice by gently wiggling your fingers and toes and then blinking your eyes open.*

## Modifications:

### **Feelings Freeze Activity (Elementary Activity)**

Put on a piece of music (ideally without lyrics) and have a “freeze” dance, with a feelings twist. Each time you pause the music, name a different emotion. When the music starts back up, dance and move your body as though you felt that emotion (i.e. sad, angry, scared, happy, silly). When the music pauses, freeze in a way that shows that same emotion until the next emotion is named and the music begins again. End the dance by dancing in whatever way expresses how you actually feel right now.

### **Feelings Journal Activity (All-Ages Activity)**

Have students keep a Feelings Journal. Take a brief pause at random times throughout the day in which students connect with their physical feelings, their emotions and their thoughts. Indicate that it is time to get out your Feelings Journal by ringing a bell or chime. Have pages in the Journal with headings for students to describe what they feel in their minds, hearts and bodies. Allow students to draw or write their responses. Encourage them to quickly scan their bodies and minds as practiced in the body scan before doing this activity. This Journal should be kept private so students can feel safe exploring their honest feelings. It may help students connect with this activity if you are willing to share your own example, such as:

In my mind, I am thinking a lot about today’s math test.

In my heart, I feel nervous.

In my body, I feel like my stomach hurts.

In my mind, I am thinking about being with my friends this weekend. I wish school would end quicker!

In my heart, I feel happy and excited to be with my friends and annoyed that I have an hour left at school.

In my body, I feel my heart beating fast and my leg bouncing.

## Additional Resources:

- *The Feelings Book* by Todd Parr, 2000
- “Body Scan” from *Still Quiet Place: Mindfulness for Young Children* by Amy Saltzman, MD. This body scan recording is freely available on the Insight Timer meditation app (<https://insighttimer.com/>) and on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvGb7eNSkpl>).
- “What Do I Feel” from *Breathe In: Children’s Songs for Mindfulness and Awareness* by Lianne Bassin, 2014

## **PILLAR 2 - AWARENESS**

### **Sample Lesson Plan #3: Talk Back!**

#### **Rationale:**

We all engage in self-talk, which is what we say to ourselves (out loud or silently) as we go about our day. The way we talk to ourselves when we experience a challenge influences what we believe we can do. For example, we may try to draw a picture and find that it doesn't come out right. If we experience negative self-talk, we may express that there is something flawed about ourselves ("I am terrible at drawing") or blame someone or something else ("these crayons don't work").

Positive self-talk is more confident and optimistic ("I'm still learning how to draw but this looks pretty good. Next time it will be even better"). The first step to controlling our self-talk is to become aware of it. How do we talk to ourselves and about ourselves when we are successful? How about when we make mistakes?

#### **Objectives:**

##### **I CAN**

- Learn what self-talk is and how to use positive self-talk

##### **I DO**

- Pay attention to my self-talk

##### **I KNOW**

- How to use positive self-talk

#### **Lesson:**

Have students practice noting. Noting is a variation of mindful breathing in which the practitioner pays attention to the thoughts as they come and go through the mind. When a thought arises (i.e. "I'm bored"), simply note it by silently saying "thought," and then return to resting the awareness gently on the breath.

Have students breathe mindfully in this way for a short period of time. When the practice is over, have them reflect on what kinds of thoughts they noticed about themselves. Remember, there is no need to judge the thoughts as good or bad. This practice is simply about noticing the thoughts as they are, as these thoughts are continually going

through the mind without our awareness, influencing what we believe about ourselves, others and our world.

### **Reframing Activity (All-Ages Activity)**

Have students work together in small groups. Give each group an example of a negative self-talk statement (i.e. “I’m terrible at spelling”), and have them work together to change the statement into a more positive example of self-talk (i.e. “spelling challenges me more than some other skills. I can be successful at spelling by taking my time and checking my work”). Then have them share their statements with the whole group.

This activity can be extended by having students draw how each of the statements might make them feel. For the group portion of the activity, keep this exercise generalized by providing each group with a statement to work on. Follow up with an individual portion of the activity in which students can identify a negative self-talk statement from their own experience to work on reframing into a more positive statement.

### **Modifications:**

Variations can include journal reflections for older students on their own self-talk and how they might reframe it to be more positive. In addition, exercises can include a portion where students write down negative thoughts and reframe them before crumpling up the thoughts and throwing them across the room for others to retrieve and read out. This removes the statements from individuals by making them more anonymous.

### **Additional Resources:**

- *Ish* by Peter Reynolds, 2004
- *Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon* by Patty Lovell, 2001

## PILLAR 2 - AWARENESS

### Sample Lesson Plan #4: Different and the Same

#### Rationale:

Empathy is understanding how another person feels. The first step in developing empathy is learning to recognize our own feelings and how we express them with our bodies and our behaviors. We can then learn to recognize how others are expressing their feelings. When we are able to recognize how others express their feelings, we can then identify with times where we have felt similarly or imagine what it might be like to feel what they are feeling. This is empathy.

#### Objectives:

##### **I CAN**

- Learn what empathy is and how to empathize with others

##### **I DO**

- Practice essential friendliness toward myself and others

##### **I KNOW**

- How I can empathize with others

#### Lesson:

This meditation is based on loving-kindness, a traditional meditation practice for building awareness and compassion. In order to be sensitive to students' varied experiences, be sure to give them lots of options as they practice this meditation. If at any time they feel uncomfortable, they can simply come back to the very first step (sending well wishes to themselves) or practicing mindful breathing instead. This practice can be done sitting or lying down; you just need the practitioner to be comfortable without falling asleep. There are many recorded versions of loving-kindness practice available.

#### **Essential Friendliness Mindful Activity**

**Teacher's Note:** This script may be a bit too long for younger children (third grade and younger). Modify for this age group by reducing the four repeated lines to one line ("May I be happy and safe," "May you be happy and safe," etc.). You can also shorten the meditation at first by including just the individual, someone they love and someone they are neutral toward.

*Begin by feeling the breath come into and out of your body. Simply notice the breath wherever you feel it as you inhale and exhale, inhale and exhale.*

*Now feel the space of your heart in the middle of your chest. There is no need to do anything special. Just notice what you feel.*

*We are going to practice a friendliness meditation by silently repeating well-wishes for ourselves and others. As you silently repeat the well-wishes, imagine that you are dropping them into the space of your heart (just like you would drop a coin into a wishing well) and notice what it feels like. Today, we will practice by using a few phrases that I will tell you. When you do this practice on your own, you can use these or make up your own.*

*We'll begin with ourselves. See yourself in your mind. Let's silently send ourselves some good thoughts. Remember, we just repeat these inside our mind, like we are dropping them into the wishing well of our heart. There is no need to say them out loud.*

*May I be happy.  
May I be healthy.  
May I be peaceful.  
May I be safe.*

*Just notice what it feels like to send these good thoughts to yourself.*

*May I be happy.  
May I be healthy.  
May I be peaceful.  
May I be safe.*

*Now, instead of sending these good thoughts to ourselves, we will send them to someone close to us, someone we love very much. Think of someone who you care about that it would be easy to send these good thoughts to. This could be a person who takes care of you, a close friend or even a special pet. See them clearly in your mind. Now, just like before, we will silently send these good wishes to them.*

*May you be happy.  
May you be healthy.  
May you be peaceful.  
May you be safe.*

*Imagine that your special person or pet could feel these good thoughts coming from you. Notice what this feels like in your heart.*

*May you be happy.  
May you be healthy.  
May you be peaceful.  
May you be safe.*

*Now, let the image of this special person fade and bring to mind someone you don't know very well. For example, this could be someone you see in the hallways at school but have never talked to or a person you recognize from your neighborhood. Know that this person, just like you, wants to be happy and safe in their life. Just like you, this person feels joy, sadness and fear. Let's see what it feels like now to send these same wishes for peace and happiness to this person whom you don't know very well.*

*May you be happy.  
May you be healthy.  
May you be peaceful.  
May you be safe.*

*Now bring to mind someone who is challenging for you. This could be someone you have had a disagreement with or whom you don't particularly like for some reason. Know that this person too feels the same kinds of feelings that you feel and longs to be happy. We'll send good wishes to that person now. If at any time this feels uncomfortable, simply go back to sending the well wishes to yourself again, like we did at the beginning.*

*May you be happy.  
May you be healthy.  
May you be peaceful.  
May you be safe.*

*Finally, let's send the thoughts of kindness and goodwill to all people everywhere. Those we know and those we don't. Those we like and those we don't. What would the world be like if all people everywhere were able to be peaceful, happy and free?*

*May we all be happy.  
May we all be healthy.  
May we all be peaceful.*

*May we all be safe.*

*To close our practice, simply come back to mindfully watching your breath come into and out of the body as you inhale and exhale until you hear the bell.*

## Modifications:

### **Go for a Storywalk (Elementary Activity)**

Have students look through picture books that show characters expressing a variety of emotions. Have them pick an image that shows a character feeling a way that they have felt at some time too. In pairs or small groups, have them discuss the following questions:

1. How does this character feel? How do you know?
2. When have you felt this way? **Teacher's Note:** In order to be trauma-sensitive, make it optional for students to share their responses to this question.
3. What has helped you when you have felt this way in the past?
4. What could you do if you see someone else feeling this way?

### **I Feel, I Act (Middle and High School Activity)**

Have students role-play various situational responses in small groups. Give each group a dilemma (i.e. someone bumps into them in the lunchroom and they drop their tray of food). Give each student a piece of paper with a scenario on it (i.e. you didn't eat breakfast and you don't have any more lunch money; you're excited to hang out with your best friend after school; someone called you a name in the hall and you felt embarrassed). Then give each student one minute to act out how they would respond to the dilemma based on their specific scenario.

When each student has had a turn, have them discuss as a group what the experience was like. How did the situations and feelings of the various characters influence how they responded? Can you think of any real-life situations where someone's feelings could influence how differently they respond to a challenge?

## Additional Resources:

- *My Friend Maggie* by Hannah Harrison, 2016
- *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox, 2006
- *The Peace Book* by Todd Parr, 2009
- “Loving Kindness” from *Still Quiet Place: Mindfulness for Young Children* by Amy Saltzman, MD. This body scan recording is freely available on the Insight Timer meditation app (<https://insighttimer.com/>) and on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijtjiCdj5sA>).

# PILLAR 3 - FOCUS

## Rationale:

Why do we feel so stressed out all the time? The human brain responds to any sort of stress as if we are in immediate danger. This results in involuntary physical changes, setting off the “fight, flight or freeze” stress response. But mindful breathing can lower stress and sharpen focus.

## Connection:

This Pillar helps us learn to calm down and respond to stress reflectively. This Pillar (working with Pillar 1) builds on our understanding of how the brain works, specifically the interplay between the prefrontal cortex, the amygdala and the hippocampus. We’ll introduce experiential activities to help students and teachers prime their brains for calm, mindful decision-making. Lesson plans will offer specific instruction on mindful breathing, intentional stillness and using the five senses to engage and explore our world. These experiences form the bedrock of mindful awareness and focused attention. The more we understand what calm focus feels like, the easier it becomes to access.

## Sample “Be” Words or Sample “Be” Vocabulary:

- Be Focused
- Be Intentional
- Be Deliberate

## Standards: Calm and Emotional Regulation

- Self-Regulation
- Breathing
- Sensory Scanning
- Calming the Fragmented Mind

## Key Points to Understand:

### 1. **The Power of Practice:**

Focus is a skill that can be cultivated with practice. Our thoughts throughout the day are generally of the past or the future, but through a practice of awareness of the present moment, we can improve our ability to direct and sustain focus.

Learning to direct, control and sustain our focus can lead to better, more efficient planning and reduced stress.

## PILLAR 3 - FOCUS

### Sample Lesson Plan #1: Focusing Through Taste

#### Rationale:

This mindful eating exercise allows students to harness their ability to focus by intentionally exploring every sensory aspect of consuming a bite of food. When students experience this heightened sense of focus, they will then have the ability to generalize that directed focus across various settings through repeated practice.

#### Objectives:

##### **I CAN**

- Focus my attention on a particular sensation

##### **I DO**

- Practice a sensory meditation through mindful eating

##### **I KNOW**

- That focus is something within my control

#### Lesson:

##### **Resources Needed:**

Small piece of food such as a raisin, a small piece of chocolate or a slice of orange, Clementine or apple.

##### **Instructions:**

Before beginning this exercise, inform your students that they will be provided with a small piece of food, and that they should refrain from consuming the food until instructed to do so. In addition, the teacher should explain to students that this will be a different type of eating. They are going to eat the food as slowly as possible, while really taking time to notice all the sensations the food has to offer. Have your students sit up tall in their seat and invite them to place the bottoms of their feet on the floor. Ask them to close their eyes and begin practicing mindful breathing by taking three deep, full breaths.

**Script:**

*I will be placing a small piece of food (chocolate, raisin, orange) on your desk. Please do not touch the food or place it in your mouth until you are instructed to do so. We will be engaging in a mindful eating activity where we will focus our attention on the many sensations the food has to offer us.*

*To begin, I would ask that you find a tall seat at your desk and place your feet firmly on the floor. If you are willing, you may close your eyes or turn your gaze downward, looking past the tip of your nose.*

*Take a moment to turn your focus inward and begin your mindful breathing practice. Notice the air coming in through the tip of your nose, and your belly and chest filling up with the air. Exhale deeply and fully, releasing all the air from your belly and chest. Take three more deep breaths just like this.*

*Once you have taken three more deep, mindful breaths, open your eyes. Before we pick up the food from our desks, we will take a moment to imagine where the food came from. Picture the farmer that planted the orange trees. Visualize the orange growing, being nourished with sun and water. Picture the orange being harvested from the tree and being placed on a truck with all the other oranges. You can visualize the orange making the trip to the marketplace on the truck and being placed in the produce section at the store. (The script may be altered to reflect the type of food you have chosen.)*

*Now you may pick up your food and hold it in your hand. Take a few moments to study your food. What do you see? How does it smell? How does it feel in your hands? Before it even enters your mouth, you may imagine what it will taste like on your tongue. Now place the food into your mouth and without chewing, notice what it feels like on your tongue; the weight, the taste, the texture, etc. After you have felt the food in your mouth, you may begin chewing the food while noticing the taste and texture. As you swallow the food, imagine the food traveling down your esophagus and into your stomach giving nourishment to your body.*

### **Discussion/Journaling**

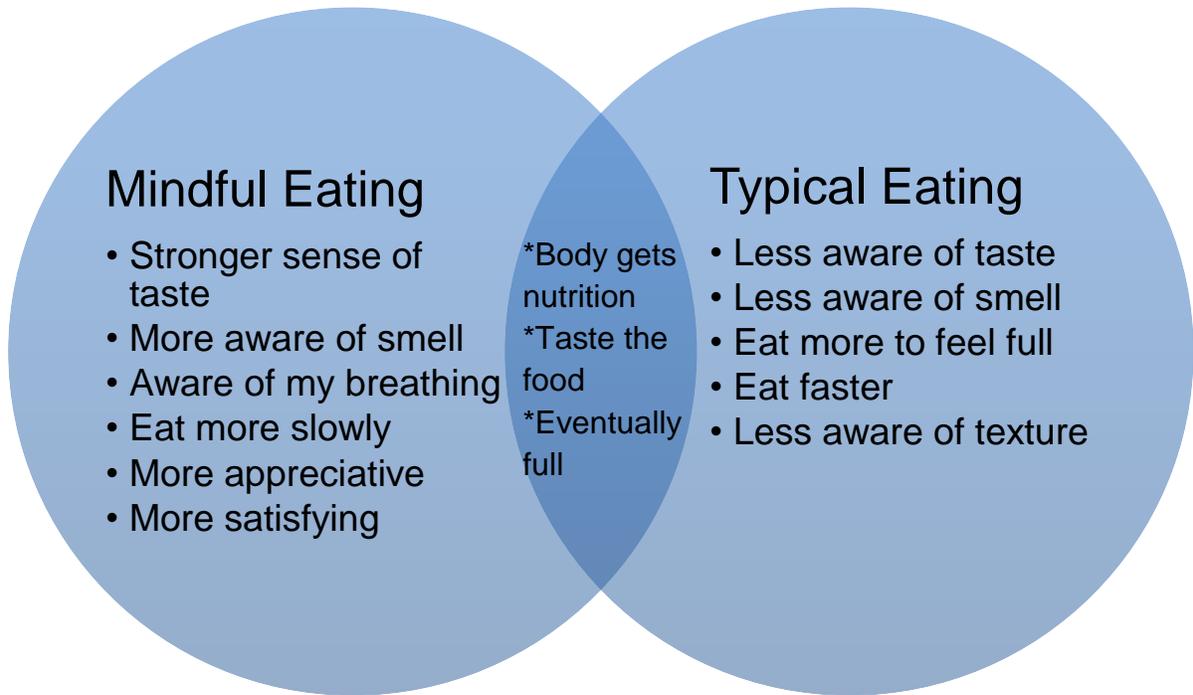
Once the students have consumed their food, you may engage them in a discussion regarding their experience or ask them to journal about it. Some questions or thoughts to pose may include the following:

1. How was this eating experience different from your typical experience?
2. Were there any additional sensations you noticed that you don't typically notice when eating?
3. How did your focus affect your eating experience?
4. Could you apply this deep level of focus to other parts of your life, such as reading, listening to a friend, playing a video game or on the ball field?

### **Modifications:**

#### **Comparing/Contrasting**

Students may develop either a T-Chart or Venn Diagram to compare their mindful eating experience with their typical eating experiences. T-Charts will allow the student to identify differences between the two experiences, while a Venn Diagram will allow them to compare and contrast the experiences. See examples below.



Mindful Eating	Typical Eating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger sense of taste</li> <li>• More aware of smell</li> <li>• Aware of my breathing</li> <li>• Eat more slowly</li> <li>• More appreciative</li> <li>• More satisfying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less aware of taste</li> <li>• Less aware of smell</li> <li>• Eat more to feel full</li> <li>• Eat faster</li> <li>• Less aware of texture</li> </ul>

## PILLAR 3 - FOCUS

### Sample Lesson Plan #2: Mindful Walking

#### Rationale:

This lesson allows students to practice focused concentration, mindful movement and intentional awareness of their surroundings. This experience provides students with a sense of focus, awareness and concentration that they can apply across various settings and circumstances.

#### Objectives:

##### **I CAN**

- Move my body while resting my mind

##### **I DO**

- A mindful walking exercise

##### **I KNOW**

- That I can practice mindfulness while also moving

#### Lesson:

Start by standing up. Can you simultaneously be tall and strong but also comfortable and relaxed? Lead the students through a minute of foundational breathing to get present. Just stand on the spot, being aware of your weight being transferred through the soles of your feet into the earth. Become aware of all of the subtle movements that happen in order to keep you from falling down.

Line up and walk slowly around the room, down the hall or outside if possible. Inside, kids may take off their shoes. Make sure that all cell phones are off. Tell students they may smile at others but not speak to them until the walk is finished. Walk naturally and at a normal pace but be aware of what is happening.

#### **Some Questions You Might Ask the Students:**

1. Which part of your foot leaves the floor last?
2. Do you notice any sensations in your ankles?
3. Are there things that feel unpleasant in the body?

4. Are you bored? Are you content? Are you irritated? Are you feeling happy? Just notice whatever emotions are present. Remember that no emotion or thought is wrong.

When the walk is over, end with one more minute of standing foundational breathing.

Then discuss, journal or draw about the experience.

## Modifications:

### **Change It Up: Specific Options for the Senses**

**Rainbow Walk (Vision):** Take a walk and look for something red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple. Keep going through the colors, in order, until the end of your walk.

**Sound Walk (Hearing):** Take a walk and mentally list all the different sounds that you hear.

**Let the Nose Lead You (Smelling):** Take a walk and mentally list all the different aromas that you notice. Observe any reactions to what you smell (i.e. did the smell of the lunchroom make your stomach growl? Did you wrinkle your nose when you smelled something unpleasant? What happened when you smelled something enticing?)

**Different Ways to Move:** How could you walk differently? How about on your tiptoes? Could you move faster? Slower? Can you take very wide steps? How about walking backwards?

## PILLAR 3 - FOCUS

### Sample Lesson Plan #3: Mindful Movement

#### Rationale:

This lesson provides students with an opportunity to learn about the mind-body connection through the practice of mindful movement. Instructors can move students through a series of postures that allow them to experience physical sensations as well as the mental effects of physical movement. Movements can easily be incorporated into brain breaks throughout the school day.

#### Objectives:

##### **I CAN**

- Move my body to relieve tension and quiet my mind

##### **I DO**

- Practice mindful movement

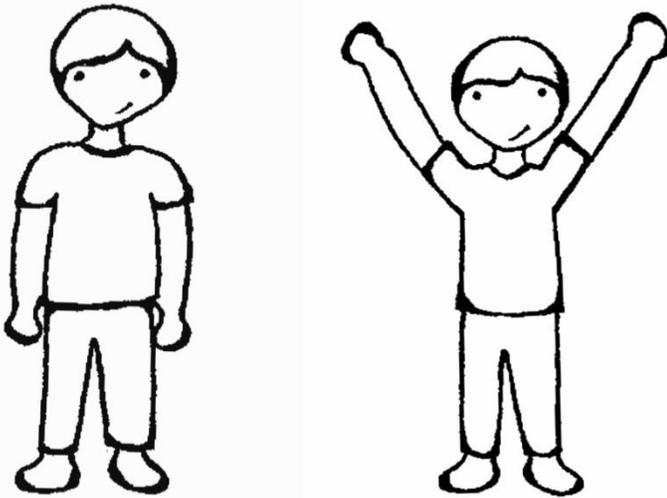
##### **I KNOW**

- Basic shapes through which I can move my body in order to experience a nice stretch, relieve tension and quiet my mind

#### Lesson:

The following postures can be used in a classroom setting without the need for special equipment such as yoga mats. An image of each posture is provided, along with instructions for how to come into the movement or shape. These instructions are reproduced with permission from the book *Stories, Songs, and Stretches! Creating Playful Storytimes with Yoga and Movement*, by Katie Scherrer, published by the American Library Association, 2017. More information available at [www.alastore.ala.org/detail.aspx?ID=11929](http://www.alastore.ala.org/detail.aspx?ID=11929).

## STANDING POSE



### To Come into Pose

Simply come to standing with the feet close together and flat on the floor with all ten toes facing forward. Arms hang gently down by your sides and the spine is tall (see image).

**For Extended Mountain Variation:** From **Standing Pose**, lift the arms alongside the head, palms facing each other and thumbs facing behind you (see image).

**For Crescent Moon Variation:** From **Extended Mountain**, bring the hands together above the head. Keep both feet flat on the ground and bend over to one side, making a crescent moon shape. Come back to the middle and try the same shape on the other side.

**For Star Twist Variation:** From **Standing Pose**, move your feet apart to make a wider stance. Extend your arms out to the sides, directly from the shoulders. Now the head, hands and feet make five points, like a star. Fold forward, touching one hand to the opposite foot. Come back up to center and try this twist on the other side.

## CHAIR



### **To Come into Pose**

Begin in **Standing Pose**. Bend the knees and send the hips down behind you, as though you were sitting in an invisible chair. Sweep the arms up into the air as you hold the pose (see image).

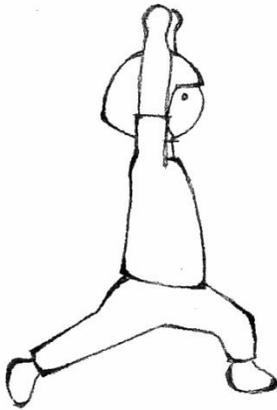
## FORWARD FOLD



### To Come into Pose

Begin in **Standing Pose** with both feet flat on the floor and toes facing the same direction. Make a slight bend in the knees and fold forward, bringing the hands to the ground on either side of the feet (see image).

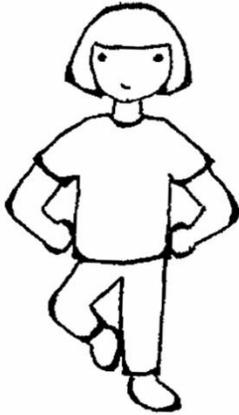
# LUNGE



## To Come into Pose

From **Standing Pose**, fold forward and place the hands on the ground. Take a big step back with one leg. Bend the front knee. The back leg is extended long, with the knee off the ground, the toes on the ground and the heel up. Lift the arms off the ground and into the air alongside the head with the palms facing each other (see image).

# TREE



## To Come into Pose

Begin in **Standing Pose** with both feet flat on the floor. Keep one leg strong, with the foot flat on the floor, as you come up on the toes of the other foot. Then turn that knee out to the corresponding side (i.e. if you are on the toes of the left foot, now turn the left knee out to the left side).

Pick up the foot and place it on the standing leg, either above or below the knee, but not on the knee (see image). Hands can be on the hips or out to the sides to help balance. This pose requires a lot of balance. Encourage students to move slowly, to stand near a wall or place a hand on the desk for support and to look at something on the ground in front of them that's not moving. If they wobble or fall, that's ok! Encourage them to come back and try again when they are ready and to enjoy the process rather than trying to balance perfectly. Remember to do both sides.

## Modifications:

Provided separately within each description.

## Additional Resources:

*Yoga 4 Classrooms* card deck by Lisa Flynn. This deck presents yoga and mindfulness exercises specifically designed for the classroom setting. All movements and activities can be done by students at desks, in their school clothing, with no need for any special materials. [www.yoga4classrooms.com/activity-card-deck](http://www.yoga4classrooms.com/activity-card-deck)

## PILLAR 4 - RESILIENCE

### Rationale:

Mindfulness provides individuals with tools to navigate reactions, make informed decisions and foster a sense of resilience, which is the capacity to recover from adverse experiences. The key concepts involved in creating resilience include motivation, hope, gratitude and responsibility.

According to Shame Resilience Theory (SRT), developed by Brené Brown (2006), individuals who are resilient exhibit specific behavioral and cognitive patterns which include the cultivation of hope, practice of critical awareness and engagement in structured gratitude practices. People who are resilient are resourceful, good problem-solvers, able to seek help when needed, capable of managing their feelings, adept at developing strong social support networks and are able to feel a true sense of connectedness with others in their communities. These patterns of behavior and thought can be developed and sustained with mindfulness practices.

### Connection:

Through the mindfulness practices in this Pillar, individuals will be able to: cultivate hope as they create space between their perceptions and reactions; understand persistence to be a necessary piece of life; and view hope not just as an emotion, but as a way of thinking.

Additionally, mindfulness practices enhance our critical awareness skills by increasing our ability to accept responsibility, sustain motivation and let go of negative behaviors that take the edge off discomfort and pain. Mindfulness allows us to persevere through difficult situations without denying responsibility for our actions and feelings. Finally, a regular gratitude practice is an integral component to developing and sustaining a mindfulness practice. Through structured practices, we begin to understand gratitude as an orientation (or way of thinking) that allows us to acknowledge connections with others that are grounded in compassion.

### Sample “Be” Words or Sample “Be” Vocabulary:

- Be Supportive
- Be Resourceful
- Be Brave
- Be Courageous

- Be Kind
- Be Connected
- Be Honest
- Be Optimistic
- Be Empathetic

## Standards: Acceptance, Gratitude and Trauma

- Motivation
- Hopefulness
- Gratitude
- Responsibility
- Relation to Trauma

## Key Points to Understand:

**Resilient people have patterns in common that are mindfulness practices:**

### **1. Cultivating Hope**

Using mindfulness skills to see hope not just as an emotion but as a way of thinking. This comes about when we are able to use mindfulness practice to put space between perception and reaction and see persistence as a necessary part of life.

### **2. Practicing Critical Awareness**

The ability to accept responsibility, sustain motivation and let go of numbing behaviors towards pain (the avoidance of which is part of natural brain operation) are the skills and emotional practice we need to lean into discomfort. These mindfulness practices create space between perception and reaction, allowing for an awareness of the dangers of numbing or not taking responsibility for difficult emotions as we develop the ability to move through challenging experiences. It is imperative to have the capacity to stay mindful in times of great stress and anxiety.

### **3. The Concept of Gratitude as a Structured Practice**

Practicing gratitude as an orientation or a way of thinking that includes acknowledgement of connection with others, grounded in compassion.

## PILLAR 4 - RESILIENCE

### Sample Lesson Plan #1: Pay Attention

#### Rationale:

Think of mindfulness as the concept, “Pay Attention”. For the things we hope and dream to happen, paying attention is an essential requirement. Often when things do not go well, it is because we were not paying attention to what we were doing, saying or thinking. When difficulties or difficult emotions wash over us, our bodies react with our natural instincts to avoid discomfort. Mindfulness is paying attention to what we are doing, saying and thinking during times of stress or anxiety. When we pay attention, we can better take responsibility for what is happening and stay motivated to move toward what we want for ourselves.

#### Objectives:

##### I CAN

- Pay attention mindfully

##### I DO

- Practice mindful listening

##### I KNOW

- How to pay attention mindfully

#### Lesson:

Select a piece of music with no words to play for the students. Before listening to the music, explain that you are going to listen mindfully, meaning that you will notice what you feel, see or experience, without judgement, as you listen to the music. If at any time you notice that you are thinking about something or judging something as good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, simply come back to the music and to your experience. Give this cue a few times throughout the listening, *“notice where your mind is right now. Wherever it is, is fine. Just notice, and come back to listening to the music.”* For very young students, limit this exercise to one to two minutes. Older students can practice for three to five minutes.

Read *The Man with the Violin* by Kathy Stinson. This book is based on a true event in which a world-renowned violin player played his priceless violin in a Washington D.C.

subway station. Though more than 1,000 people passed him, only 7 stopped to listen for more than a minute. After reading, discuss the following questions as a class or in small groups.

1. The book focuses on Dylan and his mom and describes Dylan as someone who notices things and his mom as someone who doesn't. Why do you think Dylan's mom doesn't notice things?
2. Why do you think so many people passed the violin player without stopping to listen?
3. What is something pleasant that you are able to notice during your day that you miss when you are rushing, distracted, worried, etc?

## Modifications:

**Lesson Plan Option One: Tactical Breathing:** The military uses square breathing (also called tactical breathing) with the philosophy, "if you don't know your emotions, you can't get done what you need to get done." When emotion washes over us, our body naturally reacts. Breathing gets us to a place where we can pay attention. (See Square Breathing Lesson Plan under the Brain Pillar.)

**Lesson Plan Option Two:** The next time you experience a difficult emotion, say to yourself "pay attention" and practice tactical breathing. Then set a time (one minute, one hour, the rest of the school day, etc) and pay attention to what you are doing, saying or thinking before you take action. Consider age-appropriate ways to do a reflective report of this.

## PILLAR 4 - RESILIENCE

### Sample Lesson Plan #2: Gratitude

#### Rationale:

Gratitude as a practice has demonstrated positive effects for the brain and body. When we practice gratitude, the parasympathetic part of our brain engages, calming our nervous system. When we practice gratitude, the brain releases dopamine to the prefrontal cortex, the part of our brain that controls logic and reasoning. Dopamine is a critical factor in engaging a student's reward and motivation system. By having your students practice gratitude, you encourage the development of a brain ready to learn.

We have learned that mindfulness is a way we can practice paying attention. Gratitude is also a practice. Gratitude can be mindfulness when we practice it as an orientation or a way of thinking that includes acknowledgement of connection with others, grounded in compassion. Like all things that are a practice, we must set up structured ways to do it.

#### Objectives:

##### **I CAN**

- Choose gratitude

##### **I DO**

- Make a Gratitude List

##### **I KNOW**

- How to focus my attitude on gratitude

#### Lesson:

Have students write or draw the things in their life for which they are grateful. As the educator, model this activity by sharing with your students some of the little things that you are grateful for in your daily life. Be mindful to share things that will resonate with your students from all walks of life.

Read the book *Gracias/Thanks* by Pat Mora. After reading the book, make a class Gratitude List. Get a piece of butcher paper, flip chart paper or posterboard and give each student an index card. Have each student write or draw one thing they feel grateful for on the card. Put all of the cards on the poster and hang somewhere noticeable in the

room. Have students take one minute of mindful breathing to observe the Gratitude List. Come back to this practice of mindfully breathing and acknowledging gratitude any time that you feel the class could use a reminder of the little things that bring them comfort and support in their families, school, etc.

## Modifications:

### Lesson Plan Options: Gratitude List

1. Establish a specific/structured time that occurs each day (i.e. after lunch, 1:11pm, before leaving school for the day, etc).
2. Ask each student to write a list of five things (or more) about that day for which they are grateful. Ask that one of the five things involve another person.
3. Build in an age/classroom-appropriate method of daily accountability (for example, they turn in a journal, there is time allotted to say things out loud, etc).
4. Set an age-appropriate length of time (one week, two weeks, the entire semester) as the time commitment.
5. When assigning the Gratitude List, let them know that some days there will be exciting things to write down, whereas other days will just be simple joys.

## Additional Resources:

- *Shame Resilience Theory: A Grounded Theory Study* by Brené Brown, The Journal of Contemporary Social Services: 2006, Vol. 87, No. 1, pp. 43-52
- *The Gifts of Imperfection* by Brené Brown, 2010
- *Rising Strong™ Curriculum for Certified Daring Way™ Facilitators* by Brené Brown, 2015
- Elementary Age Gratitude Resource: *Gracias/Thanks* by Pat Mora, 2009
- *Building Emotional Intelligence: Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children* by Linda Lantieri, 2014

## **PILLAR 4 - RESILIENCE**

### Sample Lesson Plan #3: Dealing with Difficult Emotions

#### **Rationale:**

As human beings, we naturally experience a wide range of emotions throughout the course of each day. As a society, we tend to praise and embrace the more positive emotions while unintentionally failing to address the difficult emotions properly. As educators, it is pertinent to our students' emotional and mental development that we provide them with the vocabulary to identify, space to experience and coping skills to handle the more difficult emotions. This lesson plan will allow students to identify and share their feelings, as well as provide them with strategies to work through the experience of difficult emotions.

#### **Objectives:**

##### **I CAN**

- Identify and share feelings in a supportive environment and learn ways to change a feeling state

##### **I DO**

- An activity to identify and name feelings. I will strengthen my vocabulary around emotions, calibrate my feelings and feel empowered to manage my feelings

##### **I KNOW**

- How to recognize difficult emotions and use my breath to cope with those feelings

## Lesson:

### Write the following words on the board:

Happy	Annoyed	Sorry
Anxious	Joyful	Disgusted
Afraid	Grumpy	Frightened
Guilty	Cheerful	Excited
Sad	Angry	Shy
Mean	Confident	Proud
Frustrated	Embarrassed	Worried
Nervous	Surprised	
Jealous	Tired	
Confused	Bored	

Have each student write down each emotion they are currently feeling and label it from 1-5. For example, under “angry,” a 1 might be simply annoyed while 5 would be boiling hot mad.

### Discussion or Journal Questions:

1. Do you ever have mood swings? Describe them.
2. What are some things you shouldn't do when you are feeling very emotional?
3. Have you ever been confused about your feelings?
4. Is it important to understand what you are feeling? Why? What can happen if you don't?
5. Is it okay to sometimes feel sad? Why or why not?
6. When you are really down, sad or angry, what do you do?
7. Should we stop and think about how we want to express our emotions? Why or why not?
8. Do you think your moods sometimes affect the way you make choices? In what way?

## Modifications:

### **Foundational Breath:**

Who controls how you breathe? You do! So here's a challenge. Next time you're upset, feeling nervous or can't get to sleep, close your eyes and take five deep belly breaths. After the five breaths, open your eyes. Do you feel better? Discuss as a group.

**Teacher's Note:** The Foundational Breath is great to do as a class if you need to take a break, to turn the day around or to get calm before a test. You should also remind your students about the breath anytime they are visibly upset. The more they practice, the easier it becomes to self-regulate difficult emotions.

### **Try the "Legs Up" Pose:**

Restorative postures like this one slow down breathing rates and relax muscles. "Legs Up" pose lowers blood pressure and reduces brain arousal associated with anxiety and the "fight, flight or freeze" response.

### **How to Do "Legs Up" Pose:**

Sit on the floor, close to and facing a chair. Turn the chair so that the seat of the chair is facing you. Lie on your back and elevate the legs with the knees bent. Place the back of the calves so that they are entirely supported on the chair seat. While in "Legs Up" pose, keep reorienting attention to the breath (suggested time in "Legs Up" is about three minutes for grades K-3 up to five minutes for grades 4-12). To come out of "Legs Up" pose, lift calves off the chair while keeping knees bent and upper body resting on the floor. Roll onto the right side into a fetal position, cross the left arm over to the right side, place left palm on the floor in front of the chest and press the upper body up to a seated position.

# Connections to Kentucky Standards

## Kentucky Department of Education On

## Health Education/Practical Living

Health education provides students with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for making **health-promoting decisions**, achieving health literacy, **adopting health-enhancing behaviors**, and promoting the health of others.

Comprehensive school health education includes courses of study (curricula) for students in pre-K through grade 12 that address a variety of topics such as alcohol and other drug use and abuse, healthy eating/nutrition, **mental and emotional health**, personal health and wellness, physical activity, safety and injury prevention, sexual health, tobacco use, and violence prevention. Health education curricula should address the National Health Education Standards (NHES) and incorporate the characteristics of an effective health education curriculum. **Health education assists students in living healthier lives.**

Qualified, trained teachers teach health education.

In Kentucky schools, we will deliver classroom instruction that addresses the physical, **mental, emotional**, and social dimensions of health; develops health **knowledge, attitudes, and skills**; and is tailored to each age level. It will motivate and assist students to maintain and improve their health, prevent disease, and reduce health-related risk behaviors.

### **National Health Education Standards:**

- Standard 1** Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.
  
- Standard 2** Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.
  
- Standard 3** Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to enhance health.
  
- Standard 4** Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

**Standard 5** Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.

**Standard 6** Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.

**Standard 7** Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

**Standard 8** Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.

Retrieved from <http://education.ky.gov/curriculum/CSH/wholechild/Pages/Health-Education.aspx>

Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/index.htm>

# **Project Lead the Way Standards For**

## **Biomedical Sciences**

### **Human Body Systems Course**

#### **Lesson 2.1 The Brain**

The goal of this lesson is for students to investigate how the brain coordinates communication around the body and integrates the function of many systems to assure the body's continued homeostasis. Students will build the central nervous system on their skeletal model. They will explore the specific functions of each region of the brain by creating a detailed map of both structure and function and by completing an optional sheep brain dissection. Students investigate the particular experiments that were used to map the motor cortex and the language center in the brain. Students will explore how the brain sends and receives electrical signals and how electricity is generated and propagated through human systems.

#### **Standards**

##### **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts AS.R.1 - Reading**

###### **AS.SL.1 - Speaking and Listening**

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

###### **AS.SL.2 - Speaking and Listening**

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

##### **Next Generation Science Standards**

###### **HS.LS1.2 - From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes**

Develop and use a model to illustrate the hierarchical organization of interacting systems that provide specific functions within multicellular organisms.

###### **DCI - LS1.A - From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes - Structure and Function**

Systems of specialized cells within organisms help them perform the essential functions of life. (HS-LS1-1)

###### **DCI - LS1.A - From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes - Structure and Function**

Multicellular organisms have a hierarchical structural organization, in which any one system is made up of numerous parts and is itself a component of the next level. (HS-LS1-2)

#### Science and Engineering Practice - Developing and Using Models

Develop, revise, and/or use a model based on evidence to illustrate and/or predict the relationships between systems or between components of a system.

#### Science and Engineering Practice - Analyzing and Interpreting Data

Analyze data using tools, technologies, and/or models (e.g., computational, mathematical) in order to make valid and reliable scientific claims or determine an optimal design solution.

#### Crosscutting Concepts - Patterns

Observed patterns in nature guide organization and classification and prompt questions about relationships and causes underlying them.

Different patterns may be observed at each of the scales at which a system is studied and can provide evidence for causality in explanations of phenomena.

#### Crosscutting Concepts - Cause and Effect: Mechanism and Prediction

Cause and effect relationships can be suggested and predicted for complex natural and human designed systems by examining what is known about smaller scale mechanisms within the system.

Changes in systems may have various causes that may not have equal effects.

#### Crosscutting Concepts - Systems and System Models

A system is an organized group of related objects or components; models can be used for understanding and predicting the behavior of systems.

Models (e.g., physical, mathematical, computer models) can be used to simulate systems and interactions—including energy, matter, and information flows— within and between systems at different scales.

#### Crosscutting Concepts - Stability and Change

For both designed and natural systems, conditions that affect stability and factors that control rates of change are critical elements to consider and understand.

Much of science deals with constructing explanations of how things change and how they remain stable.

Retrieved from <https://www.pltw.org/our-programs/pltw-biomedical-science>

# 21st Century Learning Standards

Every 21st century skills implementation requires the development of key academic subject knowledge and understanding among all students. Those who can think critically and communicate effectively must build on a base of key academic subject knowledge. **Within the context of key knowledge instruction, students must also learn the essential skills for success in today's world, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration.**

## **LEARNING AND INNOVATION SKILLS**

Learning and innovation skills increasingly are being recognized as those that separate students who are prepared for a more and more complex life and work environments in the 21st century, and those who are not. A focus on creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration is essential to prepare students for the future.

### **CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING:**

#### **Make Judgments and Decisions**

- Effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims and beliefs
- Analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view
- Synthesize and make connections between information and arguments
- Interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best analysis
- Reflect critically on learning experiences and processes

## **LIFE AND CAREER SKILLS**

Today's life and work environments require far more than thinking skills and content knowledge. The ability to navigate the complex life and work environments in the globally competitive information age requires students to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life and career skills.

### **FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY**

#### **Be Flexible**

- Incorporate feedback effectively
- Deal positively with praise, setbacks and criticism
- Understand, negotiate and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions

### **PRODUCTIVITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

#### **Manage Projects**

- Set and meet goals, even in the face of obstacles and competing pressures
- Prioritize, plan and manage work to achieve the intended result

#### **Produce Results**

- Demonstrate additional attributes associated with producing high quality products including the abilities to:
- Work positively and ethically
  - Manage time and projects effectively

- Multi-task
- Participate actively, as well as be reliable and punctual
- Present oneself professionally and with proper etiquette
  - Collaborate and cooperate effectively with teams
  - Respect and appreciate team diversity
  - Be accountable for results

Retrieved from <http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework>

# Shared Language

**Acceptance:** A state of being in non-judgmental acknowledgement of the moment.

**Amygdala:** Part of the limbic system that encodes emotional messages in the brain. Considered the “smoke alarm” of the brain.

**Awareness:** A state of being consciously mindful.

**Body Scan:** To be aware of the different parts of your body and allow yourself to experience how each part feels without judgment.

**Consistency:** Steadfast adherence to a mindfulness practice.

**Compassion:** A feeling of sympathy for someone’s misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the suffering.

**Cortisol:** A steroid hormone associated with stress.

**Curiosity:** An inquisitive desire to learn or know about a moment.

**Deep Breathing:** Belly breathing with mindful attention. This is the foundational practice of *The Be Project*.

**Empathy:** The vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts or attitudes of another person.

**Focus:** The ability to concentrate on a single thing.

**Gratitude:** The feeling of being thankful.

**Hippocampus:** The part of the brain where memories are stored. The hippocampus is also part of the limbic system.

**Hope:** The feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best.

**Limbic System:** A collection of brain structures that control emotions and behavior.

**Locus of Control:** The idea that we have control over our lives and can influence events and their outcomes.

**Mindfulness:** A state where one focuses their full attention only on the present, experiencing thoughts, feelings and sensations but not judging them.

**Mirror Neuron:** A neuron that fires both when a person acts and when the observer performs the same action. Thus, the neuron "mirrors" the behavior of the other, as though the observer were itself acting. Connected to feelings of empathy.

**Neuron:** Brain cell.

**Neurosculpting:** The brain's ability to restructure its neural network based on new information.

**Optimism:** A tendency to look on the more favorable side of events and expect the best outcome.

**Prefrontal Cortex:** A part of the brain used in higher-level reasoning, decision-making and cognition. Our brain's "thinking center."

**Radical Acceptance:** Acknowledging and accepting your current reality (but remember that acceptance is not the same as approval).

**Resilience:** The emotional ability to recover quickly from problems.

**Self-Talk:** What we say to ourselves (out loud or silently) as we go about our day.

**Trauma:** An experience that produces psychological injury or pain.

## Additional Resources:

- *Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and their parents)* by Eline Snel 2013 (includes CD of guided mindfulness exercises)
- *The Monster Under Your Bed Is Just a Story in Your Head* by Lisa Wimberger 2017
- *Your Fantastic Elastic Brain: Stretch It, Shape It* by JoAnn Deak, Ph.D. 2010
- *Listening To My Body* by Gabi Garcia 2016
- *Master of Mindfulness: How To Be Your Own Superhero in Times of Stress* by Laurie Grossman, Angelina Alvarez, and Mr. Musumeci's 5th Grade Class 2016
- *Puppy Mind* by Andrew Jordan Nance 2016
- *The Lemonade Hurricane: A Story of Mindfulness and Meditation* by Licia Morelli 2015

## The Team:

**Erin Smith**, ERYT, CNT, MLS, is the owner of the OM place Yoga and Meditation studio, the author of *Sensible Wellness for Women* and the online host of a Yoga and Meditation channel for VHX and Eppic Films. She holds a B.A. in Elementary Education from Centre College and an MLIS from the University of Kentucky. She spent over a decade teaching at the elementary level before opening the OM place. She is a therapeutic yoga teacher with over 500 hours of training and is a Certified Nutritional Therapist through the Health Sciences Academy. She currently specializes in holistic rehabilitation for joint replacement surgeries, leading yoga teacher training programs and facilitating mindfulness workshops for groups of 4 to 400. She has studied and shared the art of mindfulness and meditation for over 40 years. She can be contacted at [erin@theOMplace.net](mailto:erin@theOMplace.net)

**Cindy Reed** is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, a Yoga and Mindfulness instructor and a Certified Daring Way™ Facilitator. After graduating Cum Laude from the University of Kentucky with a Masters Degree in Social Work, she began work at a Community Mental Health Center in Appalachia, eventually serving as Program Director and Clinical Coordinator. Her early training in Dialectical Behavior Therapy led her to pursue a deeper understanding of mindfulness strategies. As a result, Cindy became immersed in the world of Hatha Yoga and studied with renowned teachers Angela Farmer and Judith Lasater. She has been teaching Mindfulness-based Yoga and Meditation classes in addition to her Psychotherapy practice since 2003. Cindy is a Certified Facilitator of The Daring Way™ based on the research of Brené Brown. Currently, Cindy is a clinician at The Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center and has a private practice providing coaching services, Brené Brown workshops and consultation. In addition, Cindy offers Mindfulness-based Yoga and Meditation classes to the general public in Lexington, Winchester and Richmond, Kentucky.

**Katie Scherrer**, a former children's librarian, is known nationally for her consulting and training work helping libraries and educational organizations improve services to Latino immigrant communities through outreach and bilingual programming. She is also a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT). Since 2013, Katie has been teaching yoga and mindfulness to children in many settings, including libraries, yoga studios and schools. Katie graduated Summa Cum Laude from Capital University (Ohio) in 2004, traveled the world and received her Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree from Kent State University in 2009. She is the co-author of *Once Upon a Cuento: Bilingual Storytime in English and Spanish* and the author of *Stories, Songs, and Stretches! Creating Playful Storytimes with Yoga and Movement*. To learn more about Katie's

work, please visit [www.connectedcommunitiesconsulting.com](http://www.connectedcommunitiesconsulting.com) and [www.katiescherreryoga.com](http://www.katiescherreryoga.com).

**Kara Davies** received her BA in Arts Administration from the University of Kentucky, her MBA from Edinburgh Napier University and her MAT from Georgetown College. She is currently enrolled in the doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Morehead State University. Kara previously worked as the Director of Exhibits at the Explorium of Lexington, designing hands-on educational exhibitions for children and families utilizing a multiple intelligences approach. She then moved to Edinburgh Scotland where she obtained her MBA and went on to manage The Music Box, a music and performing arts center at Stevenson College Edinburgh. Upon her return to the U.S, she realized that it was her life ambition to work within education for change. She utilizes her leadership skills and experience in the arts to work with disadvantaged youth throughout the district. As a practitioner of mindfulness and yoga, she is passionate about the power of mindfulness to transform lives.

**Allison Nelson** is an alumna of Eastern Kentucky University who has obtained a B.S. in Psychology, M.S. in General Psychology and Psy.S. in School Psychology. Allison began her career working in the rural district of Pike County and now services Clark County Public Schools. She has been employed as a Certified School Psychologist in the state of Kentucky for seven years and works with student grades Pre-K to 12th. Through her practice in School Psychology, Allison works with students in individual and group settings to address educational, behavioral and mental health concerns. She has also provided and coordinated mentoring services in the school system for at-risk youth. Allison is trained in Safe Crisis Management techniques and is involved in conducting Threat Assessments for youth in crisis within the district. As a daily practice, Allison actively utilizes mindfulness on a personal and professional level and she believes that mindfulness is a useful tool that is universally beneficial for children and adults.