



Rubric for Assessing Schoolwide Mindfulness

Schoolwide Mindfulness: Our Approach

Mindful Schools invests in the social-emotional well-being of schools to ensure all members of the community can thrive. Our team understands the needs of schools because we have experience working as teachers, administrators, and direct-services providers. To ensure our approach is responsive to the current needs in education, we partner with five “lab schools” in California’s Bay Area to “test and learn” best practices. We infuse these learnings into our [Schoolwide Implementation Program](#), which empowers educators to become leaders in school transformation.

The Mindful Schools schoolwide approach is one that is grounded in mindfulness practice, builds on the strengths and values of the community, and integrates into the school’s existing structures and practices. We look forward to working together to help reach your school’s goals!

How to use this tool:

This rubric is designed to help you take stock of your school’s existing mindfulness programming and identify next steps that are most appropriate and manageable at this time. By breaking aspects of a very dynamic and complex change process into more discrete units, we hope that you can celebrate what’s going well and envision what’s possible, while also seeing that there is no one right way to proceed.

In order to encourage organic growth rather than a linear destination-focus, we frame this process as an inquiry. There are four core areas of inquiry to explore for assessing capacity around schoolwide mindfulness:

Nurturing the Capacity of Individuals	Nurturing the Capacity of the Community
1. How do people understand and practice mindfulness?	2. How does the mindfulness offering respect the culture/context of the school and people?
3. What skills do those who lead mindfulness practice demonstrate?	4. How is mindfulness integrated within the systems & structures of the school?

There are four key constituencies we consider when we assess schoolwide mindfulness: **staff, students, families, and administrators**. For some questions, your school may be in different stages of growth with different groups. This is normal. We have provided you the space to indicate different states of readiness for different constituencies where appropriate.

1. How do people understand and practice mindfulness?

To what extent is your mindfulness program grounded in practice?

We believe that practice lies at the root of transformation and that mindfulness offerings are only authentic when they are based on our own experience of mindfulness. **When bringing mindfulness to classrooms and schools, we encourage a/an...**

- **Embodied Experience:** In order to teach mindfulness, educators must cultivate their own mindful presence first and *then* offer the practice to others. We cannot teach what we haven't experienced for ourselves.
- **Kind & Curious Attention:** We aim to bring an attitude of kind and curious attention to ourselves and our experience, as well as how we relate to others. Some of the things we notice may be uncomfortable, and we recognize that learning to be with this discomfort is among the most transformative elements of a mindfulness practice.
- **Openness to What Arises:** Rather than only trying to achieve a specific state or destination, mindfulness asks us to also allow things to emerge naturally. This is a departure from the results-oriented culture that is sometimes prevalent in the United States.

	Exploring	Developing	Integrating	Sustaining
<p>What opportunities do each of the following groups have to practice mindfulness?</p>	<p>Some people may have expressed interest in mindfulness, but it is not currently supported or discussed in school.</p> <p>Groups may express disinterest or skepticism towards cultivating the qualities of mindful awareness or self-care.</p>	<p>Practice is largely developed on one's own and/or with support of apps. Those taking a mindfulness course do so in their free time or as an add-on.</p> <p>There is a growing sense of how and why cultivating the qualities of mindful awareness and self-care will make a positive difference in the lives and education of children and adults.</p>	<p>Regular opportunities to practice mindfulness are sought after and provided through official school programming.</p> <p>Mindful awareness and compassion for self and others is an integral part of relationships in the school community.</p>	<p>Rituals and routines of school life provide regular opportunities throughout the day to opt in to mindfulness practice.</p> <p>A majority of people have committed to cultivating the qualities of learning, living, and/or teaching in an embodied way.</p> <p>Kindness and curious attention are understood to be important parts of school culture.</p>
<p><i>Assess each group with their own checkmark:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Families <input type="checkbox"/> Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Families <input type="checkbox"/> Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Families <input type="checkbox"/> Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Families <input type="checkbox"/> Administration

2. How does the mindfulness offering respect the culture & context of the school and people?

To what extent is your mindfulness program context-specific?

We believe that successful mindfulness programs are inclusive, equitable, and a reflection of the community that they serve. **When bringing mindfulness to classrooms and schools, we invite a/an...**

- **Invitational Exploration:** Aware of power dynamics inherent in leading people in mindfulness practices, participants—whether children or adults—must have a choice about the extent to which they participate and where they place their attention. Mindfulness should always be presented as a voluntary investigation of one’s lived experience in the world.
- **Inclusive & Expansive Practices:** When practicing mindfulness, we develop our capacity to welcome all bodies and all experiences that arise in practice. We also acknowledge that biases and judgments arise, and we practice responding to them skillfully, equitably, and compassionately.
- **Community Focus:** Mindfulness is an interpersonal practice that helps us to be in community with one another, so it is important to privilege relationships in both implementation and instruction. In growing a mindfulness program, we encourage an inclusive, collaborative process that engages teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community stakeholders alike, and use of communication structures that build trust and shared understanding.
- **“Season-to-Taste” Approach:** There is no one way to teach or incorporate mindfulness into school or classroom culture. The best approach is one that is specific to the existing structures, routines and values, and that makes sense within the particular learning environment.

	Exploring	Developing	Integrating	Sustaining
Inclusive and Expansive Practices and Invitational Exploration	Mindfulness practice may be required or mandated for all despite comfort levels of the participants. Mindfulness may be used as a “punishment” or otherwise required from people in positions of power.	Though skill and understanding vary, there is an exploration of identity, power, privilege, and implicit bias. Efforts are made to develop and nurture in individuals an understanding of themselves, how their background and experiences influence their perspective, and some tools to be more self-aware and intentional.	Recognizing and understanding systemic bias, power and privilege, Inclusive classroom practices are an expected, if inconsistent, skill of staff. New staff onboarding takes care to include exploration of these pieces of the work. The school actively nurtures confidence for children and adults to show up and express themselves in the most authentic way.	Dismantling systemic bias, interrupting power dynamics, and adopting more inclusive organizational practices are regular conversations and an expected norm. The full community works together to disrupt systems of oppression and transform schools to be supportive spaces for all students and families.

Cont'd	Exploring	Developing	Integrating	Sustaining
<p>Community Focus</p>	<p>Mindfulness is being explored by isolated individuals, with little to no collaboration across the school or organization.</p> <p>Where mindfulness practices are offered, they are seen as a self-betterment intervention, without any relational or interpersonal dimension.</p>	<p>A small group of stakeholders may be working together and sharing their experiences practicing and teaching mindfulness.</p> <p>During mindfulness practice, efforts are made to cultivate a sense of community and relationships.</p> <p>Families may receive one-way communication about mindfulness programs, but many are not aware of the school's mindfulness efforts.</p>	<p>Efforts are made to bring various stakeholders together to contribute multiple perspectives about how mindfulness fits within the larger school program.</p> <p>Community members regularly practice relational mindfulness.</p>	<p>The school community (including students) is seen as a resource to grow the program such that it doesn't have to be centered in the hands of a few in perpetuity.</p> <p>Mindfulness practices actively support a culture of connection and relationships are understood as something to be intentionally nurtured and sustained.</p>
<p>A "Season-To-Taste" Approach</p>	<p>Where offered, mindfulness practices are taken from the internet or pre-purchased scripts and recordings.</p> <p>If decision-makers show an interest in schoolwide mindfulness, they have a very prescribed idea of what a mindfulness program "should" or "will" look like at the school or organization.</p>	<p>A group of practitioners has training in a specific mindfulness curriculum or set of practices from an outside organization.</p> <p>Decision-makers take an inquiry-based approach, empowering community members to explore what it might look like to bring mindfulness practices in their specific context.</p>	<p>A group of practitioners is exploring in their own classrooms and experimenting with taking pieces from different curricula and integrating with ongoing ideas, current events, subject areas, school culture, etc.</p> <p>Belief in the value of using mindfulness practices to strengthen and support relationships is spreading.</p>	<p>A group of practitioners is resourced to adapt this work to the whole school community and the school's unique setting, culture, and needs.</p> <p>Mindfulness is integrated into school life such that it does not feel like a separate program. Members of the school community have a sense that the program "feels like ours" and/or "is how we do things here."</p>

3. What skills do those who lead practice demonstrate?

To what extent is your mindfulness program competency-based?

We believe that the capacity to teach mindfulness requires a core set of skills, strategies, and knowledge that is nurtured and developed over time. **When bringing mindfulness to classrooms and schools, we teach the use of...**

- **Shared Language, Vocabulary, and Agreements:** Because mindfulness can be described and experienced in many ways, we use a common set of terms when leading mindfulness lessons and when facilitating conversations about mindfulness. This language is secular, aligned to a common understanding of mindfulness, and promotes a supportive and healthy environment for practice.
- **Instructional Elements that Support Learning Intentions:** When we teach mindfulness lessons, we utilize structures that support inquiry and curiosity and that allow students to make meaning of their experience.
- **Trauma-Informed, Open, and “Safe-Enough” Practices:** We acknowledge that all people experience overwhelm in the nervous system to differing degrees. Adopting a trauma-informed approach that accounts for each individual’s stimulus tolerance on any given day is therefore important, regardless of who is practicing.
- **A Research-Informed Approach:** When we offer mindfulness in schools, we offer practices that are informed by scientific and educational research. We neither advance nor inhibit any specific religious tradition, encouraging curiosity about one’s personal experience (mental, physical, emotional) as if conducting an experiment.

	Exploring	Developing	Integrating	Sustaining
Shared Language, Vocabulary, and Agreements and Instructional Elements that Support Learning Intentions	<p>There is limited, minimal, or inconsistent training in how to teach mindfulness skillfully; those who offer mindfulness are doing so largely from their own reading and research.</p> <p>Mindfulness may be seen as goal-oriented toward achieving specific states for students (e.g., calm, quiet).</p>	<p>Some individuals have training in mindfulness, but those who offer mindfulness practices do not collaborate with one another or use a shared framework.</p> <p>Where it is taught, language and skills are not coordinated across classrooms or grade levels.</p>	<p>A cohort of staff interested in offering practices emerges and/or is convened.</p> <p>Those who teach mindfulness do so with consistent training in how to teach mindfulness skillfully, with an emphasis on facilitating practice.</p> <p>Common language and a framework emerges across multiple classrooms.</p>	<p>Teachers actively collaborate about how to skillfully offer mindfulness to students and provide each other with feedback to increase their skills and deepen their professional practice.</p> <p>Students’ experience of mindfulness is consistent across the school day and day-to-day, and most students would reasonably be able to demonstrate their understanding of mindfulness.</p>

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<p>Trauma-Informed, Open, and Safe-Enough Practices</p>	<p>Some faculty may have expressed interest in developing their capacity for trauma-informed instruction, but it is not currently supported or discussed in school.</p> <p>Children’s emotional lives/safety are seen as the domain of the counseling team.</p> <p>Mindfulness may be approached as a classroom management strategy to achieve compliance with behavior commands like stillness and silence. Students may perceive mindfulness as a form of behavior management or even punishment.</p>	<p>Some teachers have training in nervous system regulation and trauma-informed practices, and application of them is inconsistent.</p> <p>There is a growing sense of how and why cultivating the skills of trauma-informed care will make a positive difference in the lives and education of children and adults.</p>	<p>Regular opportunities to continue this learning are sought after and provided through official school programming.</p> <p>Teachers begin to connect their own experiences of nervous-system in mindfulness practice to their work with students.</p>	<p>Understanding nervous system regulation and teaching in a trauma-informed way is expected of all teachers and included in new teacher orientation and ongoing evaluation.</p> <p>A majority of people have committed to cultivating the qualities of learning, living, and/or teaching in this way.</p>
<p>Research-Informed Approach</p>	<p>Mindfulness is misunderstood among community members as a “woo-woo”, “new-age”, metaphysical, or decidedly religious practice.</p>	<p>There is mixed or limited understanding of the benefits of mindfulness but it is generally seen as something positive.</p>	<p>Mindfulness is understood by both those who teach and practice as a secular practice with promising initial research findings pointing to its potential benefits.</p>	<p>Those leading the school’s mindfulness initiatives regularly review literature for best practices and updated understanding of the benefits and effects of mindfulness practice and mindfulness in education.</p>

4. How is mindfulness integrated within the systems & structures of the school?

To what extent is your mindfulness program intentionally designed?

We believe that mindfulness has the greatest impact when embedded in the structures, common practices, and norms of its context. **When bringing mindfulness to classrooms and schools, we encourage alignment with...**

- **General Readiness for New Programming:** Basic systems, structures, and relationships must be in place to support mindfulness programming. These include ongoing and meaningful communication structures involving parents and families, staff, and students as well as regular opportunities for individual and collective professional learning. When there is an absence of these basic elements, mindfulness programming is unlikely to be effective.
- **Integration with Curriculum and Supporting Structures:** Mindfulness programming is most successful when it is embedded in, and intentionally aligned with, a schools' core curriculum and overall Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programming and when it is evident throughout the school day, including in extra curricular offerings, athletics, guidance, and student support services. When this happens, students and educators deeply learn how to embody mindfulness.
- **Strategic Planning, Goals, and Measures:** Mindfulness programming should be incorporated into the school's overall planning and budgeting process. When schools develop and monitor their progress towards improving and extending their mindfulness programming, it has the greatest opportunity for sustained growth.
- **Organic Growth:** Guided by regular feedback and data from all stakeholders, we should offer only as much of a mindfulness experience as the system can successfully handle so that the program grows in a way that is sustainable. A small, successful implementation is far more impactful than scaling too quickly or broadly and alienating participants and/or stakeholders.

	Exploring	Developing	Integrating	Sustaining
General Readiness for New Programming (Including Communication and Professional Learning)	<p>The basic elements of a school's system are in place, from a supportive and reliable daily schedule to common curriculum.</p> <p>What professional learning happens is based on the initiative of individual staff members and is not supported by the school or district.</p> <p>Communication strategies rely on generalized tools such as memos, robocalls, and email. Few, if any, reciprocal communication structures are available for staff or parent feedback and collaboration.</p>	<p>While professional learning and staff meeting structures exist, they do not articulate an overall scope and sequence that builds staff knowledge, community, or skills over time.</p> <p>Communication is inconsistent, but efforts are being made to cultivate collaborative, supportive relationships between school leadership and staff, parents, and students.</p>	<p>There are consistent opportunities for staff professional learning including ongoing, intentional teacher PD tied to shared strategies for use with students.</p> <p>A school plan is in place and there is evidence that common structures and practices are being utilized.</p> <p>The school has common norms, accountability structures, and strategies for addressing discord that support deepening trust, collaboration, and communication.</p>	<p>There is a clear way of doing things in the school that is clearly articulated and understood by all who work there and readily shared with new staff in onboarding.</p> <p>Feedback from all stakeholders is embedded within the program to meet ongoing needs of the community.</p>

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<p>Integrated with the School Program, including Core Curriculum, Support Structures, School Culture, and Activities</p>	<p>Students rarely, if ever, learn mindfulness skills during the school day.</p> <p>SEL programming itself is new or little-known at the school or organization.</p>	<p>Students learn mindfulness only from certain teachers, and their experience of mindfulness is inconsistent.</p> <p>Mindfulness is a part of a set of SEL practices, but staff and students are unable to articulate how they complement one another or are distinct from one another.</p>	<p>Mindfulness is taught and practiced with coherence from year to year, and is present in certain key elements of the school's program.</p> <p>The school partners with community partners and service providers that align with the school's use of mindfulness practices.</p> <p>Teachers feel comfortable embedding mindfulness practice within whatever lesson, subject, or grade level activity they are leading.</p>	<p>Conversations about mindful pedagogy and mindfulness instruction are cross-disciplinary and look to integrate a variety of topics across subject areas</p> <p>Mindfulness is integrated into the core systems, structures and programming of the school.</p> <p>Those trained in mindfulness are a consistent presence, integrated into school life, and promote mindfulness strategies school-wide.</p> <p>Mindfulness is understood and articulated in relationship to complementary systems (e.g. PBIS, restorative justice, SEL).</p>
<p>Strategic Planning and Organic Growth</p>	<p>Mindfulness programming is not a part of the school's theory of action or annual school plans.</p> <p>Mindfulness is mandated without buy-in.</p> <p>No resources are available to support mindfulness programming.</p>	<p>Limited funds are available to support mindfulness in the school. Monies may come from a more general pool of PD money or from a one-time grant without a plan for future years.</p> <p>Preliminary goals for early implementation of mindfulness have been identified, but not necessarily aligned with all school initiatives.</p>	<p>Funds are allocated to introduce mindfulness practice to all staff, families, and students.</p> <p>Mindfulness is an integral part of the schools' SEL and academic goals.</p> <p>Mindfulness implementation goals are aligned with all school initiatives.</p>	<p>Significant resources are devoted to the ongoing support and deepening of teacher personal practice, including opportunities for retreat. Dedicated funding for this is protected from year to year so it is reliable and sustainable.</p> <p>An implementation plan is used as a living document to monitor progress towards clearly-defined goals. The plan is integrated into the schools' annual plan and related reporting and measurement systems.</p>