

Partnership Update: SPS & Mindfulness Director Initiative

Presented by: Jane Lizotte, Todd Bazydlo, and Maura Egan

Timeline of Programming: January, 2020-June, 2020

Interested students, staff, parents and community members participated in diverse mindfulness opportunities, including weekly mindfulness sessions, book study groups focusing on mindfulness and racial justice, and mindful sports performance enhancement.

Participation in MDI Offerings

January-June, 2020

***Three 8-week *Introduction to Mindfulness* courses for SPS staff were facilitated by Marc Waxman. 30 staff from across the district participated.** Participants learned the basics of mindfulness meditation, with the goal of reducing stress, managing emotions, and gaining greater control over thoughts and actions.

***Three 8-week *Introduction to Mindfulness* courses were attended by 25 parents. Ms. Ruth Whittall, MBSR and MBCT teacher, licensed clinical social worker, and Shrewsbury resident, facilitated the sessions.**

Members of the SHS Girls Track Team met weekly over the course of eight weeks to learn how to integrate mindfulness into athletic, home, and school routines through **Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement.*

Mindfulness Programming Through School Closure:

***A 7-week after school book study group entitled, *Mindfulness and Racial Justice*, was facilitated by Marc Waxman, with the collaboration of Ms. Maura Egan. The group focused on the book, The Inner Work of Racial Justice. This study was an appropriate continuation of the previous book studies offered by Ms. Egan that focused on White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo and How to be an Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi.**

***Three 8-week *Introduction to Mindfulness* courses for SPS staff and parents were attended by 20 participants. The course was so popular with participants that it was **extended by an additional 4 weeks** and will continue through the end of the school year.**

***A 5-week *Introduction to Mindfulness* course will start **TODAY** for 30 participants who expressed interest in continued mindfulness. Marc and Jennifer Maddox will offer this class in two sections to allow for strong community building.**

Mindfulness and Racial Justice - A Natural Connection

In Shrewsbury we are fortunate to have a rich and diverse student population- this work is an ongoing practice to honor, acknowledge, and better understand our students and families

Began with the idea of creating Book Discussion Groups

It can be uncomfortable to talk about race. Mindfulness helps us to be aware of our reactions.

Combined the idea of mindfulness with a lens on racial justice

Support from Amy, Jane and Ann Jones



Take-aways from *Mindfulness and Racial Justice*

“Marc was highly skilled in facilitating and leading our mindfulness practices and discussions.”

“Hand-in-hand, mindfulness practice and discussing the topic of reducing bias are very powerful! ...And adding mindfulness has proven to be crucial!”

“The work of mindfulness can bring healing, peace, and even resilience to our lives...working on our personal inner selves helps to improve the collective inner self. I can't express enough the benefits of mindfulness...Mindfulness is a tool that can make us stronger teachers to support our students.”

“The guided mindfulness...fostered discussions about our own biases and how our experiences form our beliefs and attitudes toward others...and reconfigured our perspectives to show empathy, understanding, and compassion for all.”

Mindful Sport Performance Enhancement (MSPE):



- Members of the **SHS Girls Track Team** met weekly over the course of eight weeks to integrate mindfulness into their sports, home, and school routines. The goal of the sessions aimed to support the athletes by practicing self-awareness, with the goal of finding clarity and self-connection.
- This [testimonial](#) was given by **SHS senior, Colleen McNamara**, who participated in MSPE from January through early March.

Testimonials from Members of the SHS Girls Track Team

"Very rewarding! I use mindfulness not only in track but in school. I use it before all my midterms. It has helped me to stop worrying about things I don't have control over."

"Mindfulness has taught me how to really feel and experience life as it happens."

"Mindfulness taught me ways to destress before my races. My performance has improved. It has taught me to live more in the moment. Taught me to listen to people more."

"I've learned to take time to think about things as I'm doing them, and not rush through... Taking time to be in the moment has helped me to relax and perform better in track. I practice deep breathing when I'm anxious. "

"For me, mindfulness has really let me see a change in my racing. I am more aware of my body. For example, when racing the mile, I started to anchor my mind towards my shoulders. Once I began to start mindfully running, I started to relax my mind and shoulders and pick up the pace even more."

Testimonials from *Introduction to Mindfulness* participants (since school closure):

“I have truly benefited from your Wednesday night class with fellow adults from the Shrewsbury community. With the school closure, and the challenges of teaching from home, while taking care of my two little children (ages 9 and 2), and doing all the other activities that are part of motherhood, your class has been a welcome opportunity to help me balance my life. In that moment, I feel connected, and my stress is greatly minimized. This hour is something that I appreciate deeply, and it provides me with perspective and tools to help me navigate my life...”

“This has been an amazing class and it came at the best possible time. It has given me resources and strategies to cope when things are unsettled now, and will be helpful in the future. The participants have been welcoming. I really appreciate the judgement-free zone!”

Testimonials, continued...

“Thank you, Marc, for your caring and expertise in this guided meditation class. I am so grateful that it has been made available-free tuition, remotely, and at this historically needy time. The Wednesday night course has been helpful for all that I am doing personally and professionally. I am grateful to you and the class!”

“I feel that the group has become cohesive and that Marc engages the group with mindfulness techniques that help us navigate through this stressful time we are enduring. I have enjoyed it tremendously and look forward to the meetings.”

“This is an amazing service you are providing. I hope it continues in some way that works for everyone. Marc is fantastic; he is a very real, genuine, intelligent, thoughtful individual. It's like he is made to teach this stuff, I hope it continues. Thank you.”

“This has been a wonderful beginning to my personal practice and am open to participating in mindfulness again in the fall. Thank you!”

Seeking to Continue the SPS and MDI Partnership for the 2020-21 School Year

- MDI will continue to provide mindfulness opportunities to students, staff, and parents by offering diverse programming, including seminars and other experiences.
- The cost to fund a full-time MDI Director is \$75,000. We request that the district funds \$7500 of this amount through the Colonial Fund, as we seek to provide a variety of well-being opportunities to all stakeholders.