

Mindful Suspension
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A Survey of Contemplative Practices across the World's Religions

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Problem Statement

Since working in the School District of Philadelphia, beginning exactly two years ago, at a school in the Hunting Park neighborhood with the moniker “the badlands,” I’ve experienced the daily inundation of student-to-student and student-to-teacher threats as well as guardian-to-student harassment and general violence. Based on the reasons students cite for putting themselves in compromising situations, such as “he looked at me,” or “she disrespected me,” this volatility is the norm of handling emotion and disagreement; so, what are schools to do when these behaviors are omnipresent and disruptive to every process and individual? Public schools are limited in their power to remove students who present such behavior problems and often get the reputation of being run like “prisons” as detentions and out-of-school suspensions are the ultimate, and banal, consequences. Most schools, such as the elementary school where I work, are too under-staffed, under-funded, and over-capacity to utilize an in-school-suspension system. Though the data is inconclusive, I believe that this volatile culture is responsible for the total sum of reported suspensions in all 243 SDP schools last year (2015-2016) which was 16,401 with one school reporting 514 total suspensions. The average amount of these suspensions was 64 and the average of once-recurring suspensions was 41. Further statistics note data regarding twice and three-time recurring suspension. If we learn nothing else from these numbers we are at least made austerely aware that traditional school suspensions are not the most effective methods of preventing student behavioral issues.

Suspensions are ineffective, inefficient, and potentially costly to society. As with most antiquated educational practices we see the same type of “Band-Aid” procedure still happening with detentions and suspensions despite proven unsuccessfulness. The goal of reducing student behavior should be met with an action that has been proven to achieve that goal. Most of all suspensions in Philadelphia’s public schools are caused by students fighting (assault), bullying,

or violence because of an inability to cope with emotions. The students in our low-income neighborhoods and schools are exposed to trauma at an early age and the schools are not equipped to deal with such high levels and volumes. Stress and PTSD for our students are severely under-diagnosed disorders that contribute to their erratic behaviors. According to the Journal of School Violence (April 2012) schools that use out-of-school suspensions as consequences tend to exacerbate problem behaviors that may also lead to academic issues. This problem is worse for minority youth as highlighted by the data from a 2012 report completed by the US Department of Education which states that minority youth are assigned punitive out-of-school suspensions at greater rates than non-minority youth. In low-income, urban areas with large populations of minority and immigrant youth, such as Philadelphia, this data is proven true. These out-of-school suspensions for minority youth in urban areas are ineffective for a multitude of reasons. Students in Philadelphia's public schools receive free breakfast and lunch, so a suspension day might mean a day without two crucial meals. In many cases students who are hostile in school exhibit these behaviors because of a lack of familial support, food and resources, or a combination of the many issues that face low-income, urban families. In the school where I work there are several hostile students who lack a family dynamic (a few who lack a home) and suspending those students results in what they consider a day off from school to get further into trouble. Additionally, out-of-school suspensions usually result in the decline of students' grades and academic acuity. Suspensions reinforce the notion that if one cannot cope with his or her emotions than he or she must find a new space to occupy; this does not align with the core goal of education which is *teaching*. Suspensions do not teach students to manage their behavior or address the issues they're facing.

Is there a low-cost, effective alternative to out-of-school suspensions? In a society where mental health is finally being considered a "real issue," some schools, prisons, and reform centers are turning to mindfulness and meditative practices to solve this timeworn problem. Why have schools landed on these practices as the solutions? Can we diminish the suspension rates in Philadelphia's schools using in-school restorative mindful practices as the mandatory consequence?

Rationale

An article written by Deva Dalporto titled *Restorative Justice: A Different Approach to Discipline* opens with a statement about Bunch High School in a high-crime, low-income community in Oakland, California. Dalporto writes, "Suspensions at Bunche High School...dropped by 51% last year. Disrespect for teachers has declined; the school is safer. Students are more focused on their studies and many have stopped cutting class." (Dalporto, 2013) This statement is the solution to a cyclical and everlasting problem for which teachers in similar communities have been searching for decades. To the educators at Bunche the solution was blaringly simple: restorative justice – respect, responsibility,

relationship-building and relationship-repairing. Bunche achieves this through healing circles with counselors, but can it be done with mindful meditative practices?

Teaching empathy, self-awareness, and fostering social and emotional intelligence are not new ideas or new solutions to the behavioral difficulties of students. I'd argue that most, if not all, teachers attempt to help students understand the actions of healthy relationships and their effects on communities, though the perspectives from which they teach these skills are shaped by their own, usually dissimilar, experiences. While their intentions are optimistic, teachers are also people who have emotions and their priority is to keep students safe. In a situation when a student compromises the safety of others it is the habitual reaction to have a student removed from the situation and the school setting until he/she or they have realized the wrongdoing and learned the appropriate way to handle emotions; this is the expectation but not the reality. Individuals will not be able to realize the erraticism of their behavior if they have never been taught, witnessed or practiced self-control of their emotions or regulation of their actions. Rather than detaining or expelling students from their schools and, for some, the only safe environment in which they're familiar, some schools are utilizing the classical spaces of in-school suspension rooms but changing the practices from sitting in silence to mandatory meditation, yoga, or general mindfulness; thus, eliminating the need for an out-of-school suspension procedure. These techniques have been proven to reduce juvenile delinquency, "strengthen impulse control, build resilience and to optimize stress management and self-regulation." (Epstein-Molter, Baltimore Sun, 2016) Children, who experience stress and trauma, as students in low-income, inner-city communities often do, lack impulse control due to inhibited executive functioning; they are more likely to display anxious behaviors, extreme emotions, and opposition to authority.

Mindful meditation is not, in most cases, a religious practice. It does share roots with some of our world's contemplative religions but mindful meditation is an evolved form of focus on thoughts, feelings, and breathing. Mindfulness is the practice of "maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences in the present moment." (Contra Costa Times, 2015) It is also described as, "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment." (KabatZinn, 2003 p145) This has been practiced for thousands of years and studies have proven its effectiveness. Some scientists suggest that mindful meditation can improve focus and academic success, and others suggest that memory and emotional intelligence can be strengthened using these practices. Several schools across the country have adopted mindfulness meditation in creative ways. The West Contra Costa Unified School District in California is a low-income, urban area where 97 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches and 6.6 percent of the 7,000 students were suspended between

2013 and 2014. An elementary teacher in the school district described their students as minority youth who have “experienced a lot of intergenerational violence,” and in need of a “foundation of social and emotional learning instead of relying on the fight, flight, or freeze instinct.” (Contra Costa Times, 2015) This same teacher founded the Mindful Life Project which is an organization that brings meditation, yoga and mindfulness to the classroom and one-to-one practices with at-risk students. The program pulls the highest-risk students for an hour of mindfulness practices which has, according to the project’s founders, dramatically reduced the time teachers spend dealing with behavior issues.

Visitacion Valley Middle School in San Francisco has a whole-school, in-class “Quiet Time” for twelve minutes in the morning and twelve minutes at the end of the day. This school is in a community with high-crime rates and previous suspension rates that rivaled those of high schools in neighboring communities. Since implementing “Quiet Time” practices the school’s principal has boasted his school’s low suspension rates on national media outlets and attributed their success to the adoption of mindful meditation. In a similar way, Robert W. Coleman Elementary in Baltimore, Maryland has adopted a whole-school mindfulness meditation practice at the beginning of the day, and a Mindful Moment Room created by a local nonprofit. In this room kids from pre-k through fifth grade are encouraged to meditate and practice yoga. The school gained national attention for replacing out-of-school suspension with in-school meditation and doing so in a way that is mutually beneficial for the students and the community. In an article by CNN the writer, Deborah Bloom, illustrates a scene in which a student is angrily entering the meditation room. She writes, “Into a room of pillows and lavender, an elementary student walks, enraged.” (CNN, 2016) This small vignette about anger by a young student is familiar to most teachers. Bloom goes on to state, “He’s just been made fun of by another student, an altercation that turned to pushing and name-calling. But rather than detention or the principal’s office, his teacher sent him to [the meditation room].” (2015) The student’s statement in the article describes his breathing and eating a snack before independently deciding to walk to class and apologize to his peers. The article goes on to describe situations, data, statistics, and stories that could be about any low-income, urban environment in the United States; however, this school, like many schools in Baltimore, has decided to focus on preventative and self-reflective means of combating violence and promoting calm, safe spaces and coping mechanisms rather than forcing students to serve detentions and suspensions. The school’s principal reports that she did not write any suspension paperwork for the 2015-2016 school year, the first year of the Mindful Moment Room.

There is sparse conclusive, evidence-based and sponsored research on this practice of replacing out-of-school suspensions with mindfulness or meditativeⁱ practices but the inquiry-based nonprofit and school-based research is plentiful. Mindfulness-based interventions are clinically effectual but innovative studies are necessary to substantiate the field and give value to the practice’s

growth. (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) The results of existing research show that restorative discipline in the form of whole-school mindful meditation combined with focused practice or a private space for at-risk students has long-term, positive effects on behavior management and emotional coping.

Objectives

This unit is anticipated for students in grades K-12. While this curriculum unit was created for teaching in an in-school suspension space it can be used, modified or adapted to suit the needs of the teacher and classroom. The time range of the activities and lessons is at the discretion of the instructor. Students will begin to develop mindfulness practice in a variety of activities. The additional objectives of the unit are as follows:

- Understand the value of mindfulness and awareness
- Understand that awareness can induce positive transformation
- Understand that mindful attention can be brought to any activity
- Understand the 7 key points for the physical posture
- Know how to place attention on the breath
- Practicing eating and sitting, students can understand that they can direct their awareness and focus their attention
- Establish a deep understanding of the origins of feelings
- Identify and analyze situations that cause negative feelings and negative reactions
- Practice restorative thinking and mindfulness through breathing, yoga, and meditation
- Practice mindfulness in stressful situations
- Rehabilitate negative impulses
- (Extension) Study the origins of meditative practices

Background

Mindfulness training is a practice of observing thoughts as abstractions without emotional distress (Baer, 2003; TA Goodman, 2005). The most supported way of achieving this mindful metacognition is through meditation or cognitively-quieting practices. Students who are more in-tune with their emotions and understand their stressors and anxieties are more likely to focus on self-care and self-preservation; however, these restorative practices need to be taught. Students must know that their feelings are valid but that they are the sole proprietors of their reactions to those feelings. Through the teaching of research-based, mindful and restorative practices students are taught that self-control is a caring practice. This care for oneself will grow into care for the community and overall decrease in individual depression and aggression as well as a decrease in the presence of these afflictions in the community at-large.

The research of this topic in schools is limited as youth are a vulnerable population and at-risk youth are even more vulnerable. At-risk youth experience

the typical developmental stressors while confronting issues linked to maladaptive behaviors such as substance abuse and delinquency (Bluth, 2016) and poor psychosocial and socioeconomic outcomes. Teachers of individuals in low-income, high-risk urban areas are familiar with the factors affecting these issues such as cultural and linguistic barriers as well as restrictive parenting and abusive home environments. Research published by the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry states that, “chronic or repeated exposure to stress has enduring effects on the brain, which can negatively impair memory and increase the likelihood of generalized anxiety, panic, and major depressive disorders during adulthood (Keenan et al. 2008; Lupien et al. 2009; Pine et al. 1999). Studies of mindfulness interventions in adults reveal that regular practice can reduce social and psychological issues thus improving overall health which is why researchers believe that early mindfulness interventions could prevent youth from becoming troubled adults.

In their research, published as “A School-Based Mindfulness Pilot Study for Ethnically Diverse At-Risk Adolescents.”¹ Karen Bluth, Rebecca Campo, Sarah Pruteanu-Malinici, Amanda Reams, Michael Mullarkey and Patricia Broderick ultimately concluded that youth is a critical period for intervention with at-risk youth (which is the identity given to most of Philadelphia’s public school students) to deter risky behavior, prevent the inception of long-term challenges, and support and promote emotional and mental health. The group of researchers recognized the limited evidence of effective mindfulness practices in schools as they state, “Despite preliminary evidence supporting mindfulness interventions with at-risk youth, few studies have illuminated the details of *how* to implement these programs.” To increase the feasibility and acceptability of a mindfulness program the group worked to identify those specific factors. The research conducted by this group is one of the most influential studies on the topic, as the group piloted this program in a school setting and included implementation details for practices with ethnically diverse, high-school aged, at-risk youth. The researchers used the Learning to BREATHE program, a mindfulness curriculum for adolescents, with twenty-seven students for 50 minutes, once per week over a whole semester. Their study included qualitative and quantitative evidence that the mindfulness curriculum was not only effective in enhancing student attitudes about mindfulness but that it decreased anxiety and depression and increased attendance, peer-to-peer relationships and the desire to be mindful.

Standards

This unit covers a multitude of standards required of each grade level. For example, these are some of the 4-8 grade level standards this unit will cover:

¹ Mindfulness practices are not just used in schools where students are identified as at-risk. There are many elite schools that have used mindfulness practices which have provided the supportive research for its success.

(MSLS13) Use argument supported by evidence for how the body is a system of interacting subsystems composed of groups of cells.

(MMSDSELS.68) Students will use language to interact with others and communicate effectively in activities and discussions.

(MMSDSELS.68) Students will evaluate how external influences affect their ability to follow expectations.

(MMSDSELS.68) Students will analyze factors that create stress and apply coping strategies.

(MMSDSELS.68) Students will analyze ways their behavior may affect the feelings of others and adjust accordingly.

(MMSDSELS.68) Students will show respect for other people's perspectives.

(MMSDSELS.68) Students will demonstrate an ability to be a leader as well as a group member in achieving group goals.

(MMSDSELS.68) Students will generate multiple problem solving strategies, a variety of solutions and possible outcomes to a problem.

(MMSDSELS.68) Students will recognize and label a variety of emotions and describe how they physically respond to them.

(MMSDSELS.68) Students will identify how others are feeling based on facial expressions and body language.

(MMSDSELS.68) Students will associate words and gestures with a variety of emotions expressed by others.

(MMSDSELS.68) Students will recognize multiple points of view/perspectives of others.

(Literacy.RI.6.7) Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

(Literacy.WHST.68.4) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

(Literacy.WHST.910.5) Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach,

Strategies

This general unit is intended for use in an in-school suspension space, one that should appropriately be renamed "Reflective Room," which would both require and invite attendance from students. Though that is the intended use of the activities below they may also be used in any classroom for students of any age.

The research study "A School-Based Mindfulness Pilot Study for Ethnically Diverse At-Risk Adolescents" revealed that there are a few factors necessary for an effective mindfulness program including a physical space where students feel safe and accepted, a school personnel designated as a class assistant, informal quality time outside of the classroom for the purpose of establishing trust, inviting students to participate without judgement for

participation, and flexibility and responsiveness to curriculum adaptations to suit students' needs.

The Mindful Teachers (found at <http://www.mindfulteachers.org>) suggest a few additional guidelines for teaching mindfulness. They state that, first, teachers should establish their own personal mindfulness practices prior to teaching meditation or formal mindfulness to children. Secondly, the Mindful Teachers suggest that teachers do not push any individuals beyond their comfort levels; they advise that teachers allow students to “buy in” to the practices on their own. For example, if students do not wish to close their eyes or share personal information teachers should not push them to do so. The Mindful Teachers remind educators that teaching mindfulness and compassion can provoke strong emotions in students and preparedness is the best way to aid in this journey. They also suggest eight principles for teaching mindfulness which they adapted from Sam Himmelstein’s book, “A Mindfulness-Based Approach to Working with High-Risk Adolescents.” The eight principles are clear goals, non-attachment to logistics, effective techniques, time, facilitator’s role, metaphors, process to the experience, and self-disclosure. (Himmelstein, 2013)

When implementing mindfulness activities in the classroom or in an in-school suspension space it is crucial to abide by the principles and research-based suggestions. It is also important to adhere to the essential elements of a mindful space such as a clean and neat room, dim lighting, comfortable floor space, and optional seating for necessary accommodations.

Activities

This unit will be taught using a variety of strategies from reading, writing, exploratory learning and blended learning. Students will engage in physical activities such as meditation, modeling compassion and empathy, and facilitating peer-to-peer problem solving. Students will journal their thoughts, feelings, and actions and use blended-learning methods to achieve their goals. Lessons taught in the classroom can follow the format of the examples below, starting with the question, “Why be mindful?” (Srinivasan, 2014). Lessons taught in a Reflective Room, or in-school suspension space, can be taught in any order depending on the needs of the students involved. The three example lessons below are not specific to students who have behavior issues but lessons that have been adapted from a variety of successful mindfulness lessons across grade-levels and school settings.

Get Your Mindful Body Ready
Objectives: SWBAT understand that time for mindfulness is important and sacred. SWBAT recognize that mindfulness is a practice and requires patience and commitment. SWBAT to sit with quiet and still bodies. SWBAT Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Standards: [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6](#)

Materials: Quiet Bell or Tone Chime

Lesson Plan:

- *Ensure the room is set-up in a way that suits the needs of the students.*
- *Invite students to sit on the floor or carpet in a circle.*
- *“Today we are going to learn about a practice called mindfulness. Raise your hand quietly if you’ve ever heard of mindfulness. Mindful means you are aware of your thoughts and emotions and how they affect your actions. Mindfulness is a way to help us calm down when we are experiencing a negative emotion and even when we experience overwhelmingly positive emotions. Mindfulness helps us have talks with ourselves on how to be better people, athletes, students, siblings, and friends.”*
- *Ask students to stand where their bodies are and then ask them to sit down.*
- *“Who would like to tell us what they were thinking when I asked them to stand up?” Allow a student to respond. “How did that feeling affect your actions?” Allow the student to respond. “When I’ve been in your position and I’ve been asked to stand up, sometimes I don’t feel like doing it so I feel angry. When I feel angry about being asked to stand up I do it in a way that is lazy and sometimes I roll my eyes. When I learned about mindfulness I realized that I don’t want to feel angry when someone asks me to stand up, so when I’m asked to stand up I do it happily and consider it to be exercise for my body. When I think of standing up as exercise I feel better about doing it and I don’t feel angry or frustrated and I’m able to feel happy about something so simple.”*
- *Ask students to walk outside of the classroom and walk back into the classroom and sit in the circle. Ask them to do this using mindful practices.*
- *“One of the most important things we can do to have the best mindfulness practices is to have a still and quiet body. Let’s try right now to be as still as possible.” Allow students time to get still. “This is a mindful body. A quiet body is a mindful body. What else do you think needs to be quiet?” Allow students to respond. “We must have quiet eyes and mouths. Let’s practice this.” Give students time to get quiet.*
- *Wait until the room is a totally silent room. Use non-verbal cues to get students to sit quietly.*
- *“This was an excellent practice of a mindful body and brain. We’re not going to have to do this all the time, but it is something that is important to do sometimes. Let’s practice one more time. When I say, ‘get your mindful body ready’ I want to see you sit quietly with your eyes closed and your mouths quiet as best as you can. Ready? Get your mindful body ready.”*
- *Ring bell when quiet time is over.*
- *“The bell I just rang will always be used to signal that quiet time has ended. This doesn’t mean that you can’t practice quiet time throughout*

- the day, it just means that we've run out of our time together.”
- “Can someone share with us how they felt when they were sitting quietly?”
 - *Allow every student to share if they wish to share.*
 - “I want to thank all of you for sharing today and practicing with me. Anytime you feel like you need a moment, if you're angry or upset, just get your mindful body ready and listen to your brain. What is it telling you? It's important to be your own best friend. Thank you so much.”

Reflecting on Mindfulness

Objectives: SWBAT understand the importance of deep listening. SWBAT show their ability to practice deep listening. SWBAT write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. SWBAT write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences. SWBAT 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. SWBAT produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Standards: [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5](#), [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4](#)

Materials: Quiet Bell or Tone Chimeⁱⁱ², Student Notebookⁱⁱⁱ or Journal, Chalkboard/White Board or SmartBoard^{iv}

Lesson Plan:

- *Ensure the room is set-up in a way that suits the needs of the students.*
- *Invite students to sit on the floor or carpet in a circle.*
- “The last time we met we discussed mindful bodies. We realized that mindful bodies look like still and quiet bodies with closed eyes. Can you all show us what a mindful body looks like? Why is it important to have a mindful body?” *Allow students time to answer.*
- *Using the SmartBoard, chalkboard, or white board write down some of the students' responses under the headline “A mindful body is important because...”*
- “Some of the things that I heard were _____ and _____. I feel like you are really understanding the importance of a mindful body and mind. I'm going to give you/ask you to take out your Mindfulness Journal/Notebook. This is the first time some of us are using our journals so I want to give everyone time to label their journal and write their name inside.” *Give students time to do this.*
- “Okay put your pencils down. I want to share a story with you about when

² A tone chime, or hand chime, is designed for all musical settings and crafted with tempered aluminum alloy for the purpose of providing tonal diversity and vibrant sound.

I used mindfulness this week. [*Use this story or your own example.*]
Yesterday I was in a meeting with a few teachers, and, just so you know, I'm the leader of the meeting; about half-way through the meeting some of the teachers start to disagree with an activity that I wanted to do. I felt myself getting really frustrated and angry. I was about to yell when I thought about our discussion about mindfulness and a mindful body. I thought to myself, 'you know what? Let me just give this a try. This would be a good time to just see if it even works in real life.' So, I did. Before I could yell I just stopped, closed my eyes, and took a deep breath. I thought about how angry I was and then I told myself that if I sit here quietly the anger will pass. You know what? It did. The anger passed and my head was clear of frustration so I could think of a better solution. Instead of yelling, I asked the teachers why they disagreed with me. They gave me their responses and we had a great discussion about a better idea with which we all agreed. When I came in today I was wondering if anyone else had an opportunity like mine to practice mindfulness or a time they wish they would have practiced mindfulness? For example, if you got into an argument in the school yard or during recess, what could you have done instead?"

- *Allow all the students to share. Wait for a few minutes until someone is comfortable sharing an example.*
- "Thank you so much to everyone for sharing their stories. It's not easy to be mindful, in fact it's harder to do the right thing than it is to do the wrong thing. When you practice mindfulness you're not just doing it for everyone else; you're doing it for yourself and for your own peace of mind and happiness."
- "Please take out your pencil again. Today, before we practice using our mindful bodies again, I want to record our reflection. I want you to write at the top of a blank page [*model this on the board*] 'I was mindful when...' or 'I could have been mindful when...' I'm going to give you about twenty minutes to write about a time when you practiced or could have practiced mindfulness or having a mindful body."
- *Ring the bell after 20 minutes.*
- "Would anyone who has not shared a story like to share now?"
- "Now that we've shared our stories I'd like to collect our notebooks. When your notebook is collected, you may join the circle on the floor and get your mindful body ready."
- *Sit in the circle and model a mindful body.*
- "Okay, I'm going to give us about five minutes to sit in our mindful bodies. I want you to try to clear your mind. The way we're going to do this is by counting backward from ten very slowly in our heads. When you get to one, count back up to ten even slower. I'll start us off and then ring the bell when we're done."
- *Model the practice for five minutes. Ring the bell when you're done.*
- "Thank you so much for practicing mindfulness today. I want you to practice it once outside of our group, at any time, and come back to us

with a story about when you used mindfulness this week. Thank you for joining us.”

Listening with Mindful Ears

Objectives: SWBAT understand the importance of deep listening. SWBAT show their ability to practice deep listening. SWBAT write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. SWBAT write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences. SWBAT 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. SWBAT produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Standards: [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5](#), [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2](#), [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3](#), [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4](#)

Materials: Quiet Bell or Tone Chime, Student Notebook or Journal, Chalkboard/White Board or SmartBoard

Lesson Plan:

- *Ensure the room is set-up in a way that suits the needs of the students.*
- *Invite students to sit on the floor or carpet in a circle.*
- *“I’m extremely grateful that we’re almost experts on having a mindful body. I want us to start off today sitting in our circle. Get your mindful body ready. While you’re sitting here I want you to listen to the sounds around you. I know we’re diving in today but there is a reason we’re doing this first.” *Sit quietly and listen to the sounds.**
- *“Today we are going to pay close attention to sound and practice mindful listening. What are some of the sounds that you heard while you were practicing mindful listening a few moments ago?” *Write the students’ responses on the board.* “There were a few of these sounds that I did not hear, but there are a few sounds that I did hear that no one mentioned. This shows us that we all value sounds differently.”*
- *“If you are truly mindful of sound than you’ll be able to tell me the sound you hear every day when we finish our lessons.” *Allow them to share that they hear the bell every day.**
- *“You are all already mindful. I want us to get our mindful bodies ready and add your mindful ears. Now your mindful body is still, quiet, and listening. I’m going to ring the bell. I want you to listen.” *Ring the bell a few times.**
- *“About how many times did you hear me ring the bell?” *Allow some students to respond.* “Let’s try this one more time.” *Ring the bell a few times again.* “How many times did I ring the bell that time?” *Allow the students to respond.**
- *“I want us to practice mindful listening for about ten minutes. We’ve sat with our mindful bodies for five minutes up to this point, but as we grow in*

our skills to be mindful I want us to add five minutes each time. When I start the timer, we're going to sit for ten minutes and listen, mindfully. Okay, get your mindful bodies ready. Let's begin."

- *Give students ten minutes to listen to sounds. Sit quietly and practice with them while monitoring the room. Do not worry about students who are adjusting to the new practice. Give them time to get better at these practices.*
- *Ring the bell after ten minutes.*
- "I'm going to hand out our notebooks and we're going to write down the sounds that we heard."
- *Give students about five minutes to write down the sounds.*
- "Let's share some of the sounds that we heard."
- *Write down the sounds that students heard on the board.*
- "I am very impressed by all of the diverse sounds that you heard. Some of them were very silent, which shows how mindfully you were listening. Some of them were very loud or the vibrations were loud, which shows your mindful bodies were feeling and hearing. These skills are necessary not just for listening to nature, but for listening to each other. When I give you the signal, we are going to quickly share one fact about ourselves with a person next to us. Are you ready? Go ahead." *Let them have two minutes to share a fact.*
- "I'm going to go around the room and you're each going to tell me the fact you learned about your partner."
- "Every single person in this room practiced mindful listening when their partner talked. Despite all the other sounds in the room, you focused on what the other person had to say and stored it in your brain. I want you to remember this exercise and practice doing this with every person with whom you speak."

Resources

Reading List

Bluth, K., Campo, R.A., Pruteanu-Malinici, S. et al. (2016). *Mindfulness* 7(90). doi:10.1007/s12671-014-0376-1

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Appendix-Activity Materials

ⁱ Meditation is a practice that accompanies mindfulness; however, they are not synonymous and meditation is not a required practice. I was hesitant to include meditative practices in this unit as there are many schools which believe that meditation is a religious practice. I advise teachers to explore their options regarding meditation and utilize the resources which I've provided in the "Resources" section if they decide to pursue meditation.

ⁱⁱ Tone chimes can be purchased at any music store or on Amazon.

ⁱⁱⁱ Student journals or notebooks should not share subject matter.

^{iv} Any large, board space will suffice for these activities. It is most important that there is a large visual for which students to refer.