

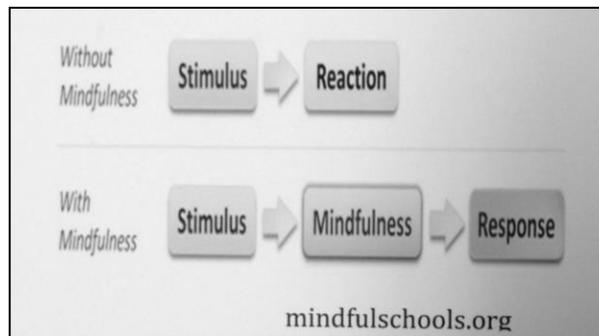
October 1, 2014

Dear Parents,

I am excited to share with you a new initiative beginning October 17 in K-6 classrooms. We are bringing the practice of mindfulness to Pinecrest School!

Mindfulness helps children, teens and adults learn to change impulsive reactions to thoughtful responses. It does this by teaching a particular way of paying attention and of purposefully bringing awareness to what is happening in this moment. Mindfulness can be applied to the five senses, thoughts and emotions by learning the skill of focused attention.

A graphic representation is here:



Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, Emeritus Professor of Medicine, developed the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center over thirty years ago. Since its development, the MBSR program and the practice of mindfulness have become a successful mainstream influence in medicine, psychology, corporate environments, and most recently in education.

Thirty years of research, combined with brain science, offer evidence to support the use of mindfulness in education. The skills learned through mindfulness by both students and educators have the potential to improve focus and concentration, reduce stress and anxiety, increase mental wellness and awareness of self and others, and improve relationship skills.

Our mindfulness sessions will be facilitated by Mrs. Mary Beth Quick of Heart and Soul Yoga. Pinecrest has been connected to Mrs. Quick for several years as she has taught after-school preschool yoga since Fall 2011. She is trained in the Mindful Schools curriculum, which currently has the most research related to children and teens, and teaches yoga and mindfulness to children ages pre-K through teens through after-school and in-school programs. She also leads a mindfulness group for adults, offers private yoga and meditation classes, and Reiki healing sessions for children, teens and adults. Mrs. Quick taught preschool for 10+ years in private preschools, worked with Head Start and as a Child Find Evaluator, and has practiced yoga since 1994.

Our K-6 students and teachers will have eight weekly sessions facilitated by Mrs. Quick on Tuesday afternoons or Friday mornings beginning October 17 and ending December 9. Each weekly session is twenty minutes in length. Kindergarten and first grade will join together in the kindergarten classroom, second and third grade will join together in the second grade classroom, and fourth, fifth

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and sixth graders will join together in the fourth/fifth grade classroom for the sessions. Teachers will be active participants, and we hope, if schedules allow, for enrichment teachers to participate too. I will be participating weekly with one of the groups.

One of our intentions for bringing this program to Pinecrest is to not only teach these skills to the students and faculty, but also to support the integration of mindfulness into the daily school culture and community as a whole. After eight weeks, we hope to have integrated some of the mindfulness practices and techniques into our classrooms and community as a whole.

To that end, we are also pleased to offer four parent sessions throughout the eight weeks of student sessions. Our hope is that by offering parent sessions, the idea of mindfulness will not just become part of our school culture, but will also become part of your family life as well. The parent sessions will be facilitated by Ms. Francine Ronis (parent of Laurel Gilbert, grade 6). Ms. Ronis is a licensed child/family therapist who has been working in the Metro DC area for over 15 years. She has been a student of mindfulness and meditation for over twenty years. Ms. Ronis teaches meditation to children and adults and has developed a Mindful Parenting Class to help parents understand the connection between mindfulness and effective parenting. Before becoming a therapist, Ms. Ronis was a preschool director and teacher, and she worked for Fairfax County Head Start as a health administrator. Ms. Ronis holds degrees in early childhood education (MA) and counseling and development (MEd).

The parent sessions will take place from 9:15 – 10 a.m., in the multipurpose room, on the following Friday mornings: **October 17, October 24, November 14, and December 5.**

In my graduate class last spring, I was tasked with researching a topic that could lead to school improvement. The teachers and I began discussing bringing mindfulness to Pinecrest around that same time last year, so I chose this for my topic. I have included the reference list from that assignment attached for those who desire more information. I am also including below links to two articles which paint a better picture of the mindfulness practice for students and families and are easy to read. Both are from Washington Parent magazine, one recent (this month) and one is an older piece.

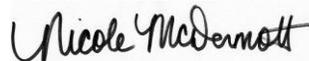
www.washingtonparent.com/articles/1410/1410-meditation-at-school.php

www.washingtonparent.com/articles/1104/mindfulness.php

We feel bringing the practice of mindfulness to our school community aligns with our mission to provide a positive social and emotional environment for student development, and the teachers and I are invested in this initiative and very much looking forward to introducing mindfulness to our students. We are pleased also to partner with two professionals to make this happen and know that this collaboration will strengthen the mindfulness experience at Pinecrest School.

Thank you for openness and continued trust. As always, please contact me if there are any questions.

Onward!



Nicole McDermott
Head of School

CC: Faculty and Staff; Board of Trustees; Mrs. Quick; Ms. Ronis

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