

Collaborative initiatives for mindful education through the arts in inclusive classroom environments

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Abstract

How do we help children pay attention, be present in the moment, and find the quietness within? Whether we are teaching awareness of breath or ways of acceptance of being in the present moment, youngsters are demonstrating more and more difficulty in finding stillness and concentrated effort. Inclusive classrooms use specific Mindful strategies where all students, no matter of ability, learn to breath in positive affirmations and breathe out calm intentions toward the world around them.

I. Introduction

Incorporating Mindful Schooling with neurodivergent students help support their attention and focus abilities throughout their school day. Mindful routines reinforce the concept of being in the moment which allows students to filter through the busyness of the school day. Mindful based practices guide the integration of intervention responses of instructional practices. Supporting young learners with quality literature, movement activities, deep breathing exercises, and carefully selected pieces of music are critical components of Mindful instruction. Program choreography includes explicit instruction and expectation that students participate within a series of stories, exercises, and reflection processes. The goal is to teach students they have competences to pay close attention to what is going on around them. The inclusive nature of mindful activities means all students, no matter of ability, are able to participate successfully to their level of potential and engagement. Therefore, Mindful instruction attributes to the positive climate and sense of well-being within classroom life.

Many children with exceptionalities are challenged to grow academically, emotionally, and socially in typical school environments. Rather than require students to conform to traditional notions of school, it behooves educational leaders to transform learning environments to the needs of these learners. Educators and educational leaders must therefore consider which Mindful practices are best suited for each learner.

Often, Mindfulness is confused with coloring pictures, listening to famous classical composers, having a brain break, or simply rewarding 'good' behavior. Intentional Mindful programming in classroom settings needs to be infused into the environment so that students are involved in contemplative moments every day.

II. Program Choreography

Program choreography begins with a gathering or bringing together of students and participants. An auditory signal using an instrument such as the tongue drum, earth bell, or finger cymbal signals the children that mindful practice is about to begin. Setting the intention for the lesson is important because it allows children to consider ways they can participate, accept positive affirmations about themselves, and give room to letting go of some of their stressors. Lessons incorporate multi-modality learning experiences and the listening of nature sounds, music, and instruments.

Simple yoga postures often accompanied with music help portray the mood and tempo of Yoga movements. Music that fits with what the children need at the time should be adjusted to build the energy in the classroom; perhaps we need lively music to build the energy in the class; perhaps we need slow and calm music to relieve the stressors in the community. Modeling deep breathing exercises with props such as the Hoberman ball, the guiro, or the rain stick teaches deep versus shallow breathing. Visualizing and affirming possibilities for calm and positive mindsets are shared through photographs, role play and carefully selected children's literature that clarify ideas around Mindfulness.

Mindful sessions include breathing in peace and exhaling gratitude as well as, sharing positive affirmations that all good things surround us and grow up through us. Encouraging reflective responses gives students voice and choice toward accepting personal strategies and tools. Giving a countdown to end a Mindful session is signaled by an auditory cue. Concluding with final recitations sets the intentions for the rest of the school day. Although program choreography follows a structure, the structure is flexible

depending on the needs, interests, and age of the students. The students feel most confident when their connection, ideas, and participation are celebrated and honored.

III. Conclusion

Artistic experiences in music, movement, and visual art can successfully be integrated into the daily routines in mainstream classrooms, as well as highlight how mindful activities result in classroom environments that benefit exceptional learners in inclusive settings. The facets of program choreography enhance student recognition, utilization, and anticipation of preferred use of mindful strategies and tools within the classroom. The incorporation of Mindful strategies and tools are needed in finding stillness, peace, and awareness of who we are in the world.