



# Levittown LEADER

## Building Social-Emotional Awareness Together

As part of a districtwide initiative, mindfulness practices and mental health awareness are playing a larger role in each of the school buildings. This begins in kindergarten and continues through high school to provide students the proper skills needed to better understand themselves and others.

Stress and anxiety happens to everyone. It is how we manage it that matters. Some teachers, including those who have taken mindfulness courses themselves, incorporate coping techniques into their daily classroom routine to not only help reduce stress or anxiety in their students, but also to refocus their attention. From taking a “brain break” after a lesson to starting the day with meditation videos, students are focusing on their mental well-being and being mindful of those around them.

Some of the elementary schools, such as East Broadway, Gardiners Avenue and Lee Road, also provide a sanctuary for students to quietly focus on themselves and their emotions. These Mindfulness Rooms are relaxing spaces which feature sensory tools, comfortable furniture, soothing music and more. Some students visit the room with their classes for lessons, while others use the space for individual or small group sessions to collect themselves and recharge.

Students can also find these rooms at the secondary level. The Dragons Den at Division Avenue High School and the Generals Quarters at MacArthur High School are two inviting spaces for students to visit during the school day when they need to destress. The rooms contain similar features to the elementary mindfulness rooms, and staff are always

present to sit with a student who needs to talk.

In the classroom, both high schools also offer a health and personal wellness course which tackles topics such as stress management and different coping strategies. Students obtain the skills they need to understand their emotions and what to do with them in a healthy manner.

“I think our young people have a lot more stressors and challenges in their lives,” said Jonas E. Salk Middle School and MacArthur High School social worker Maria Miceli. “They have more academic and social pressures and are not always aware of the skills needed to help them balance all that they are trying to accomplish.”

Mindfulness practices are continuing to grow at the middle school level as well. Sixth graders participate in a Middle

School 101 program led by school counselors and social workers and features a mindfulness component. School social workers also push into seventh and eighth grade classes to teach social-emotional lessons. Throughout the school year, teachers are supported by the social workers, who teach them strategies to incorporate into their own classrooms.

Educating students and staff on the importance of social-emotional awareness and mindfulness practices is a team effort that will continue to expand. Mindfulness, meditation and yoga clubs are growing in the district, taking these important skills outside the classroom. The district applauds the school psychologists, counselors and social workers for taking active roles in this initiative to help support the success of every Levittown student.



Lee Road third grader Carolina O'Connor (right) in Melanie Anderson's class led her peers in a mindful breathing practice.

# How Can **YOU** Be Mindful?

**"Mindfulness is your awareness of the things around you and your environment. If someone has something to say or has an idea, I can be present and listen to them."**

-Aidan Messina, sophomore, Division Avenue High School



Kindergarten students from Summit Lane Elementary School practiced meditation to start their morning off right.

**"You can take deep breaths and also tell yourself to stop and think before making a decision."**

-Emily Angerhauser, fourth grade, Abbey Lane Elementary School

**"You can take a moment every now and then and focus on the good things not the bad things. The good things are going to cheer you up."**

-Meghan Gorey, sixth grade, Jonas E. Salk Middle School

**"In class we always take brain breaks so that we don't get too stressed out."**

-Kailey McKinney, fifth grade, Summit Lane Elementary School



Division Avenue High School seniors Daisy Pendergrass (right) and Gabriella Donovan visited the Dragons Den.



Sixth graders from Wisdom Lane Middle School learned about different stress management techniques and how to be mindful during Middle School 101.

**"If I'm sad, I can talk to someone. I can also practice a breathing activity where I pretend to squeeze lemons and take deep breathes."**

-Logan Echeverry, third grade, Gardiners Avenue Elementary School



Social worker Kara Grace Flannery (right) showed Gardiners Avenue third grade student Kyle Kersten and his class how to create a mindfulness bottle.



MacArthur High School senior Sabina Sobhy took a "Chill Skill" from the school's mindfulness bulletin board.

**"Yoga makes me feel really relaxed and calm. When I'm feeling stressed out, I practice the yoga moves that Ms. Moran teaches me."**

-Olivia Martin, third grade, Northside Elementary School



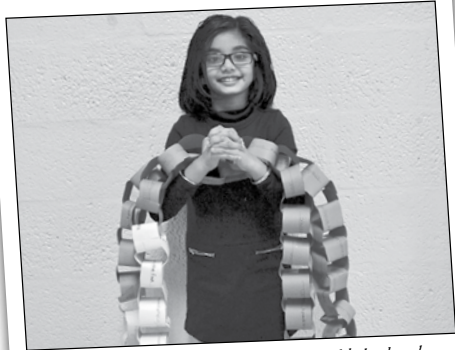
East Broadway Elementary School students completed a lesson in the school's Mindfulness Room.

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## Residential Customer



Abbey Lane kindergarten student D'usha Lal helped make a paper gratitude chain with her class after learning about being mindful of their feelings.

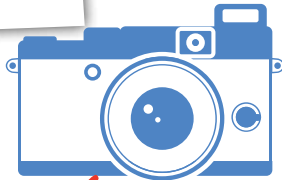


Regent Roger Tilles (left) visited a Northside Elementary School classroom during a Yoga Foster session.



Students at Jonas E. Salk Middle School participated in a book chat with guidance counselors Meghann Hodge (middle left) and Michelle Steward (middle right), and librarian Kirsten Anderson.

# School Snapshots



### Abbey Lane Elementary School

- Kindergarten students in Sue Graham's class learned how to be mindful of others while maintaining a positive and grateful attitude. The class created a paper gratitude chain where they wrote what they were grateful for. They will continue to add to the project throughout the school year.

### Division Avenue High School

- During health class, students learned coping strategies to manage stress. This included participating in adult coloring, puzzles and playing with kinetic sand.

### East Broadway Elementary School

- Students and staff participate in Mindful Mondays each week. The school community is encouraged to wear inspirational T-shirts while social worker Danielle Bantileskas shares a mindful message or exercise during the morning announcements.

### Gardiners Avenue Elementary School

- Social worker Kara Grace Flannery pushes into classrooms throughout the school year to conduct lessons, including those on mindfulness. Ms. Flannery visited third grade students in Christina Liontonia's class to teach them how to create a mindfulness bottle, a calming tool that can be used in stressful situations.

### Lee Road Elementary School

- In Melanie Anderson's third grade class, mindfulness has been deepened and expanded through restorative practices. Restorative practices are short activities that teach students how to develop interpersonal relationship skills to solve conflicts in the classroom and their lives.

### General Douglas MacArthur High School

- During Levittown Educators Against Destructive Decisions Week, MacArthur High School students in the broadcasting department created informational videos to spotlight mindfulness topics as part of the school's Mental Health Awareness Campaign.

### Northside Elementary School

- Each week, a number of students participate in a yoga club facilitated by teaching assistant Becky Moran. Ms. Moran teaches the students different breathing exercises and yoga poses to relax and calm their mind and bodies. She also runs a Yoga Foster program where she pushes into classrooms throughout the school year.

### Jonas E. Salk Middle School

- Approximately 26 students participated in a two-day book chat to discuss the book "Guts" by Raina Telgemeier. With the help of social workers, guidance counselors, the school librarian and a teacher, the group discussed the character interactions and the strategies employed by the main character to manage the symptoms of anxiety.

On the second day, students created posters with strategies they could use to manage anxiety at school and at home. Students recommended glitter jars, yoga, meditation, journaling, breathing and reading. They also tried some stress management tools in the library makerspace which included coloring, building and assembling puzzles.

### Summit Lane Elementary School

- Third grade students in Christine Pase's class practice mindfulness each day with different exercises. This includes guided imagery techniques for stress reduction and better focus. Following their mindfulness activity, the students participate in Drop Everything and Read time.

### Wisdom Lane Middle School

- Sixth grade students in the Middle School 101 program learned mindfulness exercises such as breathing techniques, meditation, tension-relaxation and guided imagery to recognize how their own thoughts and emotions can influence their behavior and their mindset.

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