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PLN 11B Final Project

“Pulling it all together”

Looking back at this course, it's hard to remember when we began. It seems so long ago. However, there's no doubt that this course is one I will remember forever. It definitely changed me. While I can't say I turned into the most mindful person yet and there are still times when I certainly react instead of respond, I can say I feel equipped with an arsenal of strategies to help myself and others. That is invaluable.

Personally, my biggest take away from this course was the interception practice. More often than before, I find myself pausing, taking those much needed breaths, and checking in with my body. It's amazing how something so quick and simple can be so powerful. This has been a strategy I have found to be the most successful at school. At home, I have come to love my quiet mindfulness time before bed. It has positively affected my sleeping, and I look forward to that time every evening as a way to decompress after a long day. I have noticed a change in my overall way of coping with stress. In addition, I often hearing jenny's voice saying “you have be forgiving for yourself.” I actually just gave that same advice to my mom who was feeling frustrated about something. Its advice will continue to spread because it's something everyone needs to hear and remember.

In my classroom, my mindfulness mini-lessons have allowed me to connect more with my students. Since I have shared about my mistakes and short comings throughout the different mini0lessons, my students are more inclined to admit when they're unfocused and then in turn

refocus. They are comfortable enough to be honest with me and that makes my teaching so much easier. This past week, I had students share if and when they used “the power of breath”(as well call it in our classroom). Almost every one of my 4th graders had at least one example to share. Now, I questioned if some might have been fabricated just so they could participate, however, I thought at least they are giving me an accurate example of how they could use it. We discussed how this breathing technique is a work in progress. I shared with them how I will falter everyday with this, but it’s a strategy that we can always carry in our back pocket to help is in any situation. Just breathe!

My biggest insight I’ve realized after taking this course is we need to support each other during these changing times. Everyone in education is under pressure- the administration, the faculty, the support staff, the parents, and even students. Everyone! However, what we do to help? Maybe a luncheon here and treat in the faculty room there. Whiles these things are nice and make our day, they don’t solve the problem. Mindfulness can be a critical part of a solution to this problem, particularly with students.

As teachers we are seeing a wider variety of students entering our classrooms every year. Mental health is a continuing concern across the grade levels. If we begin to teach students mindfulness as a young age, these strategies can turn into lifelong habits. Students need to know how to pay attention to their thoughts and emotions, and they need help regulating those thoughts and emotions. We can’t assume they know how to do this. That’s what I loved about the text we read- it gave a number of ideas and easy implement strategies on how to create a classroom based on trust and engagement. I have already created a

complete document on how to begin my year (stage 1) with team building activities and developing community in my class. As I planned, I tried to incorporate what I already do in the beginning of the year with new ideas I read from the book. I feel like if I set a game plan now that will help me actually implement it in the fall.

Sometimes, I get great ideas but never implement them because the start of the school year is crazy. However, by putting in the time now, I'll be set in August to get started. I also have ideas for October when I will hopefully be entering stage 2 of strengthening our sense of community. To be honest, the past few years, due to curriculum constraints, I've gotten worse about revisiting expectations set, adjusting what needs to be adjusted and going from there. My goal is to not fizzle out the 1st marking period and stay consistent throughout the entire year.

While I have many implications for continuing this mindfulness practice both at home and in my own classroom, my struggle is how I can take this bigger to entire school. I get defeated thinking of my current students who are learning all these mindfulness strategies. Will they forget them all next year when they won't be reviewed? While I have complete confidence in my 5th graders' teachers, I can't help but think how hard I worked to teach them these strategies that they might not continue to use because they won't be revisited ever.

I'm a firm believer in consistency. So, then my thought was to take this school wide and discuss it as a building. While I would love to speak with my principal about presenting to the entire staff about this practice, I just don't feel I am enough of an expert on it to be presenting. I'm wondering if there is a guide book that I could offer to

teachers to read. From there, my thought is to offer to lead a group of interested teachers and help them develop their own mindfulness practice. Often times in our building, things are presented to us and then nothing comes of it because people are busy, don't have the time, and it fizzles out. However, we have a mandatory action research project that we each have to complete every year if we are not being formally observed. This year a group of us read a book and met periodically outside of schools hours to discuss the implications in our classroom.

I'm planning to do something similar for next year. This will not only help me stay accountable with my own mindfulness practices, but hopefully be able to encourage others. If this small group realizes the numerous benefits we can continue to grow it larger and larger to our entire building. I just feel as if stress is not going to subside, especially in our profession. So, the best solution is to work together to form a solution.

Ideally, I believe this is a course everyone should take and wish it could go on forever. However, I know it's not reality, so we will do what we can! Thank you for introducing this practice to me that I hope I continue to use. You truly are inspiring.