

INCORPORATING MINDFULNESS

Incorporating Mindfulness Practices into Marching Band

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Abstract

This study aimed to gain insight into students' perception of the incorporation of mindfulness practices into a central Pennsylvania school district's marching band program. Throughout the 2023 season, members of the marching band, comprising of seventh to twelfth graders, were invited to participate in a variety of mindfulness practices as part of their rehearsals and performances. At the end of the season, students were asked to take a survey about their experience. Questions about their personal experience were asked, as well as their opinions about including mindfulness practices in the future. The idea to incorporate mindfulness into marching band stemmed from the ever-growing mental health needs teachers are trying to help students navigate.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Rationale

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the mental health needs of the world have drastically changed. Educators have seen a shift in student performance, attitude, and involvement since 2020 and are searching for ways to address these new needs. In April of 2023, members of a central Pennsylvania marching band staff attended a session at the Pennsylvania Music Educators Conference titled “*Holistic Music Education- An Undeniable Formula for Success in the Marching Arts.*” They were presented with the idea of incorporating mindfulness into the marching band program and decided to implement it during the 2023 season with the hopes of addressing the holistic needs of our students which could in turn lead to improvements in performance, rehearsal, and social interactions. While performing is an important aspect of a marching band program, educators also teach life skills that set students up for success in other areas of their lives. The goal is that students will benefit from mindfulness practices in both the band room, on the field, and beyond.

Purpose

This empirical study aims to examine the use of mindfulness practices in a central Pennsylvania high school’s marching band program. The program consists of students in grades seven through twelve. Starting at the beginning of band camp in July 2023 and continuing through the 2023 season, students were exposed to mindfulness practices during rehearsals and before performances. At the end of the season, students were surveyed about their experiences with mindfulness practices to evaluate the outcomes of incorporating the practices into the program.

Expected Findings

It is expected that the students will have mixed reviews regarding the incorporation of mindfulness practices into their season. The researcher will uncover if students found the practices useful in marching band as well as in their daily lives. Information gathered from the study will help the directors in planning the seasons for the marching band. They will know which mindfulness practices the students connected with the most as well as if the students had positive or negative experiences with the incorporation of mindfulness practices.

Chapter 2: Background Information

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness. It sounds like one of those new buzzwords but what does it mean? While there are many nuances to mindfulness and its practices, it can be simply defined as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment-by-moment” (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2016, p. 3). Westerners started learning about this Buddhist practice in the 1960s and 1970s in Southeast Asia, although its practice can be separated from the religion. Young (2016) acknowledges it would be difficult, and unnecessary, to relate the word mindfulness to a specific Asian word. Instead, he prefers to refer to it as “any growth process that is capable of bringing a person to a state of happiness independent of conditions based on acquiring and applying three attention skills: concentration power, sensory clarity, and equanimity” (Young, 2016, p. 30). Mindfulness is a worldwide practice. It is estimated that in the United States over 225,000 psychologists, social workers, and mental health professionals use the practice with their clients (McCown, 2013).

Kabat-Zinn (2013) cites the attitudinal foundations of mindfulness practice as Non-Judging, Patience, Beginner’s Mind, Trusting Ourselves, Non-Striving, Accepting, and Letting Be. These tenets can be put into practice in a variety of ways including readings, breathing exercises, mindful awareness practices, meditation, yoga, apps, or programs connected to the environment, visual art, poetry, sound, and movement (Young, 2016; Albrecht, 2016).

Young (2016) categorizes the benefits of mindful awareness into the following five groups: reducing physical or emotional suffering; elevating physical or emotional fulfillment; achieving deep self-knowledge; making positive changes in objective behavior; and developing a

spirit of love and service towards others. Kabat-Zinn designed a mindfulness-based stress reduction program that has been shown to help women who suffered from domestic violence as well as improve vocal technique for singers (Albrecht, 2019). Research has shown that mindfulness involves “relaxation, shifts in cognition, emotion, biology, and behavior that may work synergistically to improve health” (Albrecht, 2019, p. 491). Despite all these benefits of mindfulness, the practice is more so a mental self-awareness method (Richardson, et al., 2022). Dr. Capurso couples the awareness of your own thoughts with ethics since "in the Buddhist tradition...the ethic gives you a better life, because if you have your awareness of your consciousness, you can live in a different way" (Richardson, et al., 2022, p. 395).

Mindfulness and Education

The world of education is ever-changing. Even before the COVID-19 Pandemic Schonert-Reichl and Roeser (2016) said:

As we contemplate the future of education, it is useful, as Alexander Graham Bell reminds us, to be present and aware of the doors of opportunity that are opening before us as children grow up digitally connected to the whole world, and aware of cultures and conditions near and far in a way unprecedented in the history of the world. (p. 3)

On top of the ever-changing scene of 21st-century education, teachers have more students to attend to and challenges to face. Students face challenges to their mental health “including fear of health risks, social isolation, and more” because of the sudden changes they faced in many facets of their lives (Treves, et al., 2023). The pandemic prevented students from important social interactions tied to in-person education that are important to their development (Bucura, 2022a) which resulted in many feeling frustrated and lonely (Treves, et al., 2023). It is not a new fact that aside from teaching content, many educators care about students’ well-being but during

this time of change, Bucura's (2023a) concerns for students' well-being have become more imperative.

Raschdorf, May, and Searcy (2021) referred to the phrase "Maslow before Bloom" which has become more common in the world of education since the COVID-19 pandemic. They say "many educators feel it is essential to prioritize physiological, safety, and relationship needs of our students during these times of uncertainty before expecting them to learn educational content" (Raschdorf, et al., 2022, p. 44). Before educators can expect students to learn educational content, they need to know they are safe and feel socially and emotionally supported (Raschdorf, et al., 2022). In order to achieve this, mindfulness has become a more common facet of schools worldwide. Albrecht says the incorporation of mindfulness-based practices such as yoga postures, relaxation activities, guided meditation, and mindfulness activities have been incorporated into school systems worldwide (2019). The skills of perspective-taking, learning "how to see," empathy, and self-awareness are important skills for cognitive and affective development that aren't linked to specific subject content (Zajonc, 2016).

Albrecht (2019) attributes the increase in incorporating mindfulness as a way to combat the stress seen in school systems. In addition to the stresses caused by the pandemic, educators are navigating the stresses and distractions that new technology brings (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2016). Dr. Capurso noted how algorithms are constantly "engineering distraction by design" to keep attention tuned to technological devices (Richardson, et al., 2022, p. 399). She also mentioned heavy academic loads, testing, small overcrowded classrooms, and lack of time to cover curriculum as stressors in school systems. On top of the stressors at school, students see adults all around them who are constantly trying to multi-task which they then attempt to emulate. Incorporating mindfulness into students' lives can allow them to learn how to train their

attention and focus (Richardson, et al., 2022). Studies are being conducted that show the many benefits of incorporating mindfulness into schools as a way to address concerns arising in the landscape of 21st-century education. A study done in New Zealand showed that even students who initially showed some resistance to mindfulness activities became more engaged with the material as time went on (Albrecht, 2019). Students engaged in mindfulness practices have noted improvements in “academic achievement; expanded range of knowledge in regards to emotions; the ability to regulate emotions; paying attention and focus; self-efficacy, which led to the ability to stand up to bullies; relaxation; empathy; and compassion” (Albrecht, 2019, p. 492-493).

Despite the many educational and social-emotional benefits seen in schools as a result of incorporating mindfulness practices, it is important to remember that this holistic practice is focused on the well-being of children and not a means to produce other outcomes (Albrecht, 2019). Albrecht (2019) conducted a study with eight teachers from the United States and Australia who had incorporated mindfulness practices into their programs. These teachers had a desire, as many educators do, to nourish the well-being of the whole child and prepare them with life skills used for school and beyond. Through mindfulness, the teachers aimed to “encourage children to develop into global citizens with the skills of self-love, compassion for their fellow humans and the planet as a whole” (Albrecht, 2019, p. 499). The eight teachers all approached their mindfulness teachings in a way unique to them and their relationship with personal mindfulness practices. They also acknowledged that mindfulness is one way to nourish a child’s well-being. Albrecht (2019) said the research being done on mindfulness in schools produces evidence that the incorporation of mindfulness with children can enhance their well-being emotionally, spiritually, environmentally, socially, cognitively, creatively, and physically.

Mindfulness and Marching Band

“Music is a human endeavor, exhibited by even the youngest people, that can provide joy, connection, and expression” (Bucura, 2023b, p. 47). Marching band allows students to find that joy, connection, and expression. Marching bands stem from European military traditions. In the 19th century United States college and high school music teachers wanted to give students the chance to learn music as well as perform it. Due to its militaristic background, Bucura (2023b) described the culture of marching band as serious and disciplined with specific instrumentation and militaristic uniforms. Aside from the musical opportunities marching band affords students, there is a large social component as well.

A study of 141 high school students attending a university-based band camp in the southeastern United States revealed that marching band gave them more opportunity to grow social skills and behaviors than participation in concert band does. The responses to the study also concluded that the participants believed concert band offered the opportunity to develop musicianship and technique skills while marching band offered a better sense of self and increased confidence. The social experiences of creating cohesion, developing self-esteem, and working together to problem solve are important skills that influence students’ experiences in marching band (Kelly, 2019).

Bucura (2022b) poses the following questions music educators can ask themselves about their programs.

What is the purpose? What does the endeavor provide to the participants and the greater community? What might the activity provide musically and otherwise for the participants and others? What leadership roles may foster potentially meaningful creation or contributions among participants? (p. 60)

If the answers to these questions lead to the desire to use the marching program to develop well-rounded, self-aware, creative individuals then incorporating mindfulness into the program could be beneficial. The focus of school music classes have a broad scope that can include interdisciplinary learning and social change (Bucura, 2022b).

Coffney discussed on the PMEA Take Note Podcast how different her students have become since the COVID-19 Pandemic (Despotakis, 2022). She said she had seen a shift to indifference, lack of motivation, and hopelessness for an activity they loved and had a lot of passion for. Marching bands perform at an extremely high level and she says that outside factors need to be addressed before you can expect students to achieve this high level of performance. When people are feeling stressed, angry, or frustrated it can be difficult to be creative. One way to address this can be to non-judgmentally accept the current state before trying to think creatively (Richardson, et al., 2022). Coffney incorporates mindful movement before rehearsing with her students as a way to acknowledge emotions and let them out through the body so they can focus more on what they are there to do (Despotakis, 2022). Dr. Capruso referenced the mindfulness tenet of “beginner’s mind” which is a term originating from Shunryu Suzuki as a way to unlock creativity. “Beginner’s mind” is training the mind to see things for the first time, without judgment or opinion. This can open the mind to ideas or possibilities that might not have been seen. Noticing without judging, for students and teachers, allows one to reach a higher level of awareness and acceptance of thoughts and emotions (Richardson, et al., 2022). Being mindful doesn’t make you more creative, but “rather sets the stage for more nuanced and effective creative engagement and thought processes, by increasing awareness and empathy and decreasing judgment and fear” (Richardson, et al., 2022, p. 398).

Music education is more than just educating students in the world of music. It is not

always about being the most superior group of performers but being inclusive and growing (Bucura, 2020). Educators must account for all students' basic human needs including "survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun" (Bucura, 2020, p.10). A marching band rehearsal must of course include rehearsing but Williams (2019) referenced Bennett Reimer and David Elliott's work by noting shared goals of music teaching and learning that encourage a reconsideration of excellence. What if excellence was defined as valuing human thinking and feeling or new skills in creativity, self-growth, and self-knowledge instead of the highest score at a competition or the most complicated drill and music? Burcura (2020) poses the question "For what does a school music education prepare students?" (p. 4). Teaching students how to incorporate mindfulness into their lives could be a skill that is more transferable and sustainable to many than scales or fingerings may be. A meaningful music education includes the chance to make a positive difference in students' lives and encourage positive social change (Bucura, 2020). A mindful approach to marching band could be just what students need to help them grow both in this activity and in life.

Chapter 3: Gathering Student Opinions

Methods and Procedures

The goal of this study was to gain insight into how the students perceived the incorporation of mindfulness practices into marching band. This study began in July 2023 during band camp and concluded at the end of the marching season in November 2023. Throughout the season at rehearsals and performances, a variety of mindfulness practices were incorporated. These practices included breathing exercises, movement exercises, guided meditation, and body awareness. In October, as the end of the season neared, students were asked to participate in a survey about their experience with mindfulness. Students needed to obtain parental permission to participate in the study and then were provided with the link to the survey created via Google Forms.

The survey comprised of the following:

1. I acknowledge that Miss Hurst has received parent permission for me to participate in this survey.
2. Mindfulness practices have helped me with acknowledging my feelings
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
3. Mindfulness practices have helped me be aware of the present moment.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Disagree

- Strongly Disagree

3. Mindfulness practices have helped me be more aware of the world around me.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

4. Mindfulness practices have helped me focus better at marching band practices and performances.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

5. I have used concepts I learned during mindfulness practices outside of marching band practices and rehearsals.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

6. I felt the incorporation of mindfulness practices was a good use of our time.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

7. I think we should continue including mindfulness practices in marching band next season.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. The mindfulness practice I felt most connected with was:

- ☐ Breathing Exercises
- ☐ Body Scans
- ☐ Pre-Performance Mindful Moments
- ☐ Outdoor Walking Practice
- ☐ “I Notice” Practice with Instruments
- ☐ Finding Joy in the Band Room
- ☐ Self Compassion Practice
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other: _____

10. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to Answer

11. Grade

- ☐ 7th
- ☐ 8th
- ☐ 9th

- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

Findings

Twenty-eight marching band students, ranging from grades seven to twelve, chose to participate in the survey. The makeup of the twenty-eight students included seventeen females, ten males, and one student who preferred not to disclose their gender. The following is a breakdown of the grade levels of the students who participated.

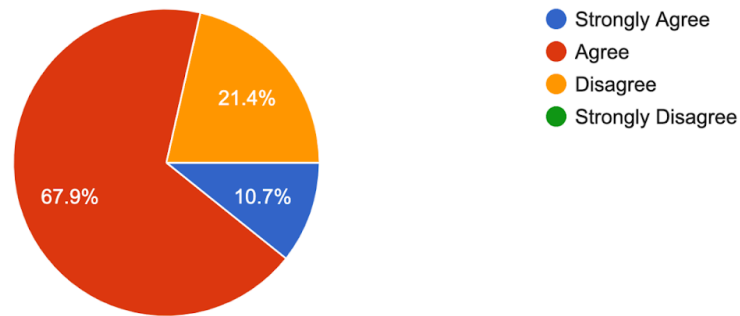
Grade	Number of Students	Percentage of Total Participants
7th	3	10.7%
8th	3	10.7%
9th	5	17.9%
10th	8	28.6%
11th	7	25%
12th	2	7.1%

The first question was asked as a safeguard to make sure students had received parental permission to participate in the study. Questions two through five were asked to ascertain how the mindfulness practices had affected the students' thought processes. The researcher wanted to know if students found themselves being more aware of their feelings, the present moment, and the world around them; as well as improving their focus at rehearsal and performance; and if they had used any of the concepts outside of marching band. The results were as follows:

- Twenty-two (78.6%) of the students agreed or strongly agreed that mindfulness practices helped with acknowledging their feelings while six (21.4%) students disagreed.

Mindfulness practices have helped me with acknowledging my feelings.

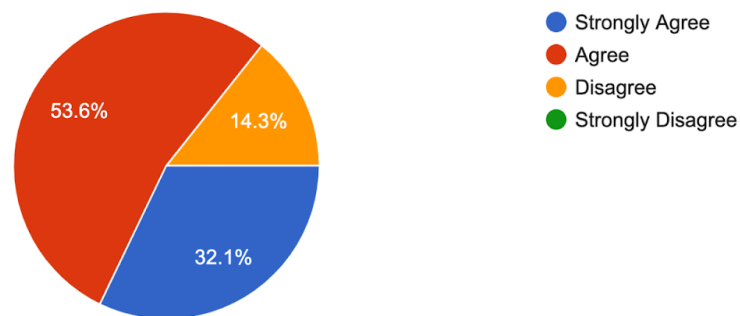
28 responses



- Twenty-four (85.7%) students agreed or strongly agreed that mindfulness practices helped them be aware of the present moment. Nine (14.3%) students disagreed.

Mindfulness practices have helped me be aware of the present moment.

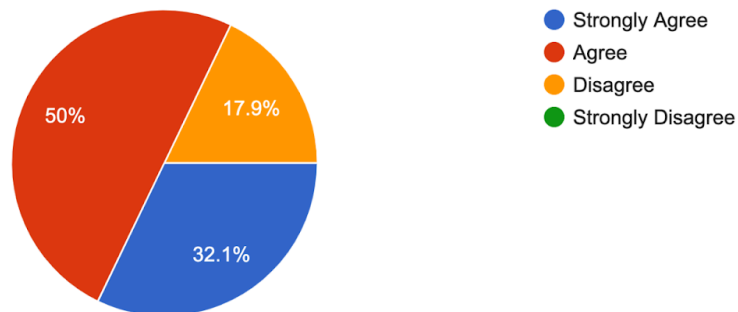
28 responses



- Twenty-three (82.1%) students agreed or strongly agreed that mindfulness practices helped them be more aware of the world around them. Five (17.9%) students disagreed.

Mindfulness practices have helped me be more aware of the world around me.

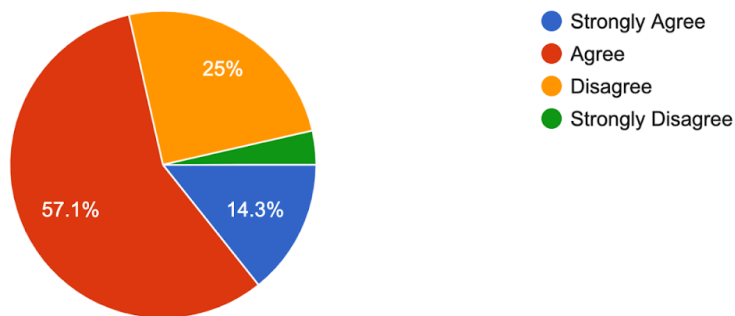
28 responses



- Twenty (71.4 %) students agreed or strongly agreed they felt mindfulness practices helped them focus better during marching band events. Seven (25%) students disagreed and one (3.6 %) strongly disagreed.

Mindfulness practices have helped me focus better at marching band practices and performances.

28 responses

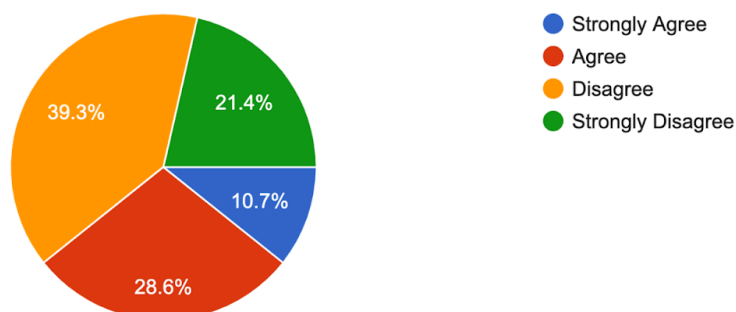


- Eleven (39.3%) students agreed or strongly agreed that they used concepts learned during mindfulness practices outside of marching band. Eleven (39.3%) students disagreed and

three (10.7%) strongly disagreed.

I have used concepts I learned during mindfulness practices outside of marching band practices and rehearsals.

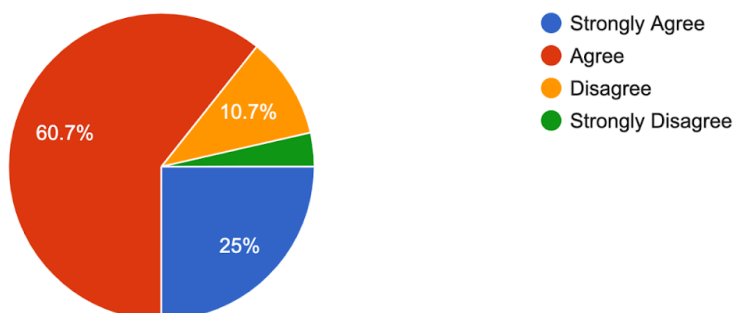
28 responses



After being asked about their personal experiences with mindfulness throughout the season, students were asked two questions that could be used for future planning purposes. Questions six and seven asked if students thought the practices were a good use of the band's time and if they thought the practices should continue being incorporated for the 2024-25 season. Seven students strongly agreed that it was a good use of time, seventeen agreed, three disagreed, and one strongly disagreed. Despite twenty-four students thinking it was a good use of time, only twenty-two agreed or strongly agreed that mindfulness practices should be incorporated in the future. One student still strongly disagreed with its incorporation and five disagreed.

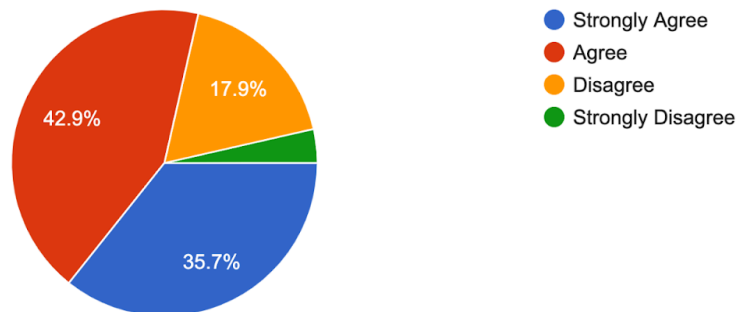
I felt the incorporation of mindfulness practices was a good use of our time.

28 responses



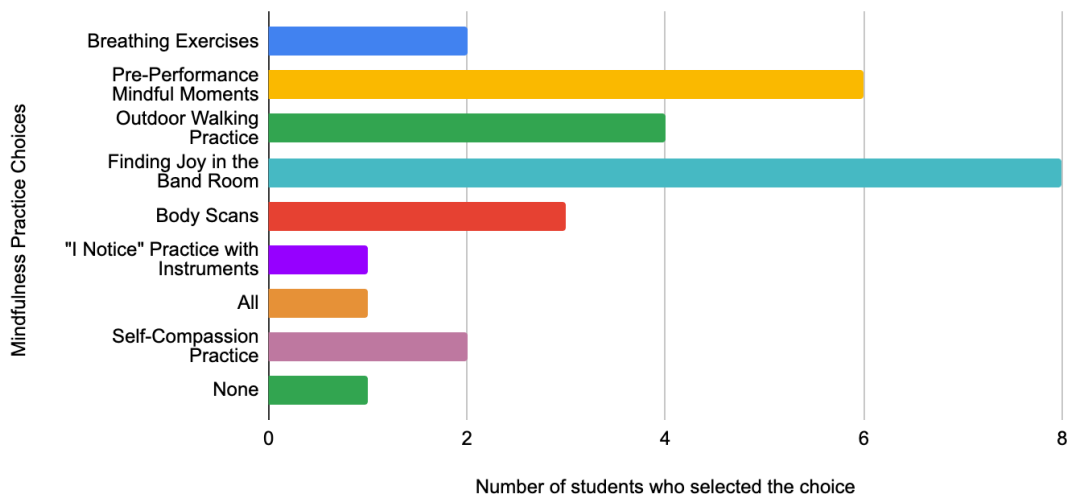
I think we should continue including mindfulness practices in marching band next season.

28 responses



Since there were a variety of mindfulness activities presented to the students, the researcher wanted to know which of the mindfulness practices the students resonated with the most. Overall, the practice the students connected the most with was “Finding Joy in the Band Room” with eight students selecting this response. Six students selected “Pre-Performance Mindful Moments,” four selected “Outdoor Walking Practice,” three selected “Body Scans,” two selected “Breathing Exercises,” two selected “Self-Compassion Practice,” and one selected “I Notice Practice with Instruments.” One student did not connect with any of them, while one connected with all of them.

The mindfulness practice I felt most connected with was:



Chapter 4: Conclusions

Results

The purpose of this study was to collect opinions from marching band students on the incorporation of mindfulness practices into their rehearsals and performances. The results of the survey seen in Chapter 3 showed that the majority of students agreed the practices helped them be more aware of their feelings, the present moment, and the world around them. The practice of being mindful includes “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment-by-moment” (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2016, p. 3). It could be concluded that students successfully practiced mindfulness during marching band.

As stated in Chapter 1, it was expected that students would have mixed reviews regarding the incorporation of mindfulness practices. The results of the survey did show mixed reviews but the majority of the responses indicated positive reception towards the inclusion of mindfulness practices. A comparison of questions six and seven showed interesting results. When asked if they thought the incorporation of mindfulness was a good use of the band’s time, seven students strongly agreed and seventeen agreed. However, when asked if they thought mindfulness practices should continue in the future, ten students strongly agreed and twelve agreed. It is interesting that three students didn’t strongly agree it was a good use of time, but strongly agreed that it should continue in the future.

When analyzing which activities students connected to the most, data collected from question eight showed the students most connected with “Finding Joy in the Band Room.” During this practice, students were invited to spend some time noticing things in the band room, a room in which they are frequently, but that is filled with things they look past every day.

Students were then invited to share things they noticed and a great discussion was had including silly and meaningful things they often forget to appreciate. This was a new practice for the band that the researcher is glad was well received. The next practice the students connected with the most were “Pre-Performance Mindful Moments”. This practice was not new to the band. Before every performance, the band director leads them through a brief guided meditation and encourages them to be in the moment and enjoy their time sharing their hard work and talents with others. Neither of these activities needs to take a long time and since the students had positive feedback on both of them it is recommended they be incorporated in the future.

Part of the rationale for this study, as stated in Chapter 1, was to teach a life skill that students could use in other parts of their lives. Unfortunately, the data for question five showed that the majority of students, 60.7%, indicated they did not use the concepts learned during mindfulness practices outside of band while only 39.3% of students said they did. It would be interesting to see if over time, with more exposure and reinforcement, the students would indicate more use outside of marching band. Although the students have not yet learned how to apply these concepts in other areas of their lives, their exposure during this season could have planted seeds of mindfulness practice that will blossom with time.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study. The entire band did not take the survey so these results only represent a portion of the opinions of all students. It is also possible that the students were giving responses they thought the researcher wanted to see and they are not truly representative of their true opinions. The researcher had no prior experience with implementing mindfulness practices with students.

Conclusions

Overall, this was a good first step in incorporating mindfulness into the marching band program. Very few students had only negative feedback to give. Even if only a few students gained something of value from the experience, the researcher thinks it would have been worth it for them to gain the tools and insights that they did. This particular study did not collect data on the improvement of performances and effectiveness of rehearsals but as stated in Chapter 2, it is important to remember that mindfulness is meant to support the holistic needs of children and any other outcomes should not be the sole reason for its incorporation. This study supports the idea that mindfulness practices can help address the holistic needs of students.

Moving forward, the researcher would recommend continuing to take a mindful approach to marching band. It would be interesting to see how students' perspectives would change with continued mindfulness practices. The researcher would like to incorporate mindfulness practices in their elementary classroom as well. It is important for the researcher to remember that educators have the opportunity to meet the holistic needs of students in our classrooms as well as teaching them music.

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APPENDIX A: Student Survey

Marching Band Mindfulness Survey

The purpose of this survey is to collect data on the implementation of mindfulness practices during the 2023 Marching Wildcats Season. The data from this survey will contribute to a better understanding of how mindfulness is perceived through the eyes of a teenager and will guide our future planning and design of rehearsals. Please be honest in your responses.

All responses to the survey will be confidential, and will strictly be used to complete an analysis of data collected via the survey. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. There is no reward for participating or consequence for not participating.

khurst@uarts.edu [Switch account](#)



Not shared

* Indicates required question

I acknowledge that Miss Hurst has received parent permission for me to complete this survey. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Mindfulness practices have helped me with acknowledging my feelings. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Mindfulness practices have helped me be aware of the present moment. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Mindfulness practices have helped me be more aware of the world around me. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Mindfulness practices have helped me focus better at marching band practices and performances. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I have used concepts I learned during mindfulness practices outside of marching band practices and rehearsals. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I felt the incorporation of mindfulness practices was a good use of our time. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I think we should continue including mindfulness practices in marching band next season. *

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

The mindfulness practice I felt most connected with was: *

- ☐ Breathing Exercises
- ☐ Body Scans
- ☐ Pre-Performance Mindful Moments
- ☐ Outdoor Walking Practice
- ☐ "I Notice" Practice with Instruments
- ☐ Finding Joy in the Band Room
- ☐ Self-Compassion Practice
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other: _____

Gender *

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer Not to Answer

Grade *

- ☐ 7th
- ☐ 8th
- ☐ 9th
- ☐ 10th
- ☐ 11th
- ☐ 12th

APPENDIX B: Body Scan Activity Guide



The screenshot shows the Greater Good in Education website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: Log In, About Us, and a search icon. Below the header is a navigation bar with categories: ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION, SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS, ADULT WELL-BEING, STUDENT WELL-BEING, ALL COURSES, and ALL PRACTICES. The main content area features a large image of hands holding a small house model. To the right of the image is the title "The Guest House" Poem and Body Scan for Teens, followed by a description: "Share a poem that focuses on mindful self-acceptance, and lead students to pay attention to their bodies, noticing the physical sensations and feelings they experience." Below the description are details: Level: Middle School, High School, College; Duration: ≤ 15 minutes; Topics: Mindfulness for Students, SEL for Students: Self-Awareness and Self-Management, Prosocial Language Arts, School Challenge: Addressing Students' Stress & Anxiety; and My Notes: Add/Edit Notes.

Getting Started

This poem by a poet named Rumi can be used as an example of how to treat our emotions as they come and go.

Read the following poem aloud to students. You may also consider asking one or two students to read the poem aloud after you. [It can be helpful to hear a poem read more than once—and with different voices and emphases used.]

Before you begin reading, ask students to mentally note any words, images, or phrases that stand out for them as they think about how they experience their emotions.

The Poem

“The Guest House”

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,

some momentary awareness comes

*as an unexpected visitor.
 Welcome and entertain them all!
 Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
 who violently sweep your house
 empty of its furniture,
 still, treat each guest honorably.
 He may be clearing you out
 for some new delight.
 The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
 Meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.
 Be grateful for whatever comes.
 Because each has been sent
 as a guide from beyond.*

— Rumi

Tell students:

Any time you experience an emotion, you can notice what “guest” or emotion has come into your mind and where it goes in your body.

Ask:

How do emotions show up (or manifest) in your body?

Invite them to share responses, if they are comfortable. If not, let them know where and how you experience emotions in your own body. (Perhaps you feel tightness in your chest when you experience anxiety or worry—or maybe you feel tension in your throat when you are frustrated or butterflies in your stomach when you are scared.)

Tell students:

Let’s spend a few minutes trying a “body scan” practice where we will observe the physical sensations we feel in our bodies.

The Practice

[Ring bell or chime; take three deep, mindful breaths together.]

[Read the following script slowly, pausing, as appropriate.]

Let your eyes close [or remain open], and your body be still and quiet. Get comfortable in your chair. Now bring your attention to the top of your head. See if you can feel any little feelings or

sensations. Maybe you feel prickly or vibrating sensations, or maybe your head feels tingly or soft. No need to talk about what you feel right now—just notice it; pay attention.

Now we are going to try scanning our whole body for sensations. A sensation is anything you can feel in your body. You may feel very strong sensations, or you may feel weak ones. Don't worry; anything you feel is fine. Also, you may not feel anything at all. Just be curious, no matter what you feel.

So from the top of your head, move to your face; pay attention to your forehead.

Pay attention to your eyes; relax your eyes.

Pay attention to your cheeks.

Your nose.

Your mouth—relax your jaw.

Pay attention to your chin.

The back of your head.

Notice your neck and throat.

Then, bring your attention to your left shoulder, resting your attention there.

Notice your upper left arm, your elbow, and now your lower arm and hand.

Then all five fingers.

Then move your attention to your right shoulder; feel your right upper arm, right elbow, lower arm, hand, and fingers.

Come back to your back, and feel your upper back for any sensations.

You may not feel anything, or maybe you feel some discomfort or some pressure or tingles or itches.

Scan your attention across your back and down your spine and to your lower back.

Now come up to your chest, and feel the sensations in your chest.

Feel your belly.

Take your time; we don't have to rush.

Notice where your body is touching the chair.

Now feel your left leg from the hip to the knee.

Feel the knee and the calf. Feel the ankle. Feel the foot and all five toes.

Place our attention on your right hip, and feel the right thigh, your knee, your calf, and feel your foot and all five toes.

Now notice your entire body, all at once. Keep your attention on your entire body, letting your attention notice everything at once.

Silently consider the following questions:

Could you feel anything in your face?

What part of your face could you feel? Eyes, eyelids, nose, chin, lips, jaw?

What did it feel like? Soft, tense, cool, warm?

Could you relax your jaw or eyes? What did it feel like?

What part of your body was the easiest to feel?

What part was the hardest to feel?

How do you feel now?

Closure (for journaling and/or discussion)

Is being able to focus your attention like this important? Why?


When you are in the present moment, not the past or the future, how do you feel?


What is the most difficult emotion for you to feel? How do you normally handle it? How could mindfulness help you when you experience that emotion?

Source



Adapted from **Mindful Schools'** High School Curriculum (Class #11)



APPENDIX C: Self-Compassion Practice Activity Guide


Greater Good in Education
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

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A Moment for Me: A Self-Compassion Break for Teens

A quick self-compassion practice that can be applied throughout the day whenever difficult emotions arise.

Level: Middle School, High School

Duration: ≤ 15 minutes

Topics: SEL for Students: Self-Awareness and Self-Management, Mindfulness for Students, Self-Compassion for Students, Kindness and Compassion for Students, Positive Peer Relationships, Positive Teacher-Student Relationships, School Challenge: Addressing Students' Stress & Anxiety, Trauma and Trauma-Informed Schools for Students

My Notes: [Add/Edit Notes](#)

Getting Started

Before beginning this activity, take a few deep breaths.

Remind students that they are encouraged but not required to participate. (They are welcome to sit quietly if they choose not to participate.)

Tell students:

We will purposely generate a little tension or stress in our minds and bodies by thinking of a challenging situation, so we can then learn how to use self-compassion.

Play the audio recording for your students, or lead them through the practice with the transcript below.

The Practice

Think of a situation in your life that is difficult or causing you stress. Please choose a situation that is not the worst or most difficult in your life, but that something that is causing you some discomfort.

When you think of this situation, can you feel the experience in your body, perhaps discomfort such as tightness in the chest, gripping in the stomach?

Now, say to yourself: "In this moment, a part of me is struggling."

This is mindfulness.

You might choose to say, "Whoa, this feels awful," or "this sucks," or maybe, "this is stress."

Now say to yourself: "This kind of struggle is a part of life."

This is common humanity. Lots of other people struggle in this same way.

You might choose to say, "Other kids feel this way too," or "I'm not alone with this feeling," or "This is a part of being a teen and so many others kids struggle just like me." Or "All teens feel this at some time or another ...!"

Now, offer yourself a kind and soothing, supportive touch – maybe a hand on your heart, or another gesture that feels right for you. Feel the warmth of your hand coming through to your body.

Now, saying to yourself: "May I be kind to myself." Remembering that as teens, you're going through so many transitions – your brains are changing, your bodies are changing, you may be in a new school or thinking about college, so many pressures and so many changes. So be gentle with yourself.

For more personal language, ask "what do I need to hear right now?" Or if you have trouble finding what words to say, ask yourself "What would I say to a good friend who was going through this? Can I say those words to myself?"

May I give myself the compassion that I need.

May I accept myself as I am.

May I learn to accept myself as I am.

May I forgive myself.

May I be strong.

May I be safe.

May I be peaceful.

May I know that I deserve love.

And if the "May I" feels strange to you or like you are asking permission, you can always leave that out and just say "I wish to accept myself just as I am," or "Strong," or "Accept myself"

Simply notice what you're feeling.

Closure

Ask students one or more of the following questions:

What does it feel like to comfort yourself in this way? What is it like to think that you can actually begin to notice when you're struggling and begin to offer yourself kind words?

Did anything change when you put your hand on your heart?

*What is it like to know that you can actually treat yourself with more kindness?
Can you think of a situation where this would be useful to you?
Consider the three components of self-compassion—which were most meaningful
to you and important to acknowledge?*

Mindfulness (“This is a moment of suffering.”)

Common humanity (“I am not alone in my suffering.”)

*Self-Kindness (physical touch or soothing voice; “May I be kind to
myself.”)*