

Bringing mindfulness into the learning space

Giving students tools and opportunities to practice intentional mindfulness every day.

Team-based practices are approaches that leverage multiple adults in order to create deeper and personalized learning opportunities for students.

Strategy: Educators lead student-selected mindfulness time options for students in order to build self-regulation skills.

Frequency and duration:

- 10 minutes per week to elect a mindfulness activity for the week
- 20 minutes per day to engage in student-selected mindfulness time

Adapted from: SPARK School at Kyrene de las Manitas

- Core educator team: One teacher executive designer, three certified teachers, one teacher candidate and one instructional assistant
- Learners: 100–120 learners in Grades 4–6
- Elements of the Next Education Workforce: Distributed expertise, learner-centered instruction, learning paths, intrapersonal skills, shared rosters, flexible space and scheduling

SPARK school is a space where learning is authentic, hands-on and student-centered. SPARK educators design learning experiences and opportunities to mirror skills that learners will need throughout their lives. One of these skills is the ability to self-regulate. Student-selected mindfulness time, practiced daily, allows students to dabble in many mindfulness practices to find the one that is right for them.

▶ No. 1: Determine the options

In determining what mindfulness practices to offer during student-selected mindfulness time (e.g., mindful breathing, meditation, yoga), consider the strengths and passions of the individuals on the core educator team, and the needs and interests of students. If students have needs and interests that fall outside the team's areas of expertise, reach out to educational leaders, extended team members and community educators to grow your offerings.

▶ No. 2: Determine the optimal time

While the ultimate goal is for students to use mindfulness practices throughout the day whenever necessary, they will first need regular, dedicated time to explore and build their mindfulness practices. Consider times of day when the majority of students might most benefit from mindfulness and build it into the schedule. SPARK teachers utilized the 20-minute block after lunch and recess to lead student-selected mindfulness time, as this was often a time when students came in overheated or upset and in need of regulation.

▶ No. 3: Create a system for students to select their mindfulness practice choice

Ensure students are able to explore a variety of different mindfulness practices and are able to exercise choice in which practices they explore. SPARK School found that inviting students to commit to a given practice for a period of one week allowed students choice while still giving them enough time to engage in repetitive practice. Each Monday morning, they carve out a few minutes to allow students to preview the mindfulness options for the week and select which option they will commit to for that week. They gather students' choices through a Google Form ([click here](#) to create your own copy of the form SPARK School uses). Once students have entered their selections, educators export the data to a Google Sheet and sort by activity so educators know which students will be with them for that period of time.

Why educators love this practice

When first implementing student-selected mindfulness time, educators found that students typically chose a new practice each week. After about two months of engaging in this activity, most students seemed to find the mindfulness practice that was most effective for them. It was at this point that educators also noticed students using self-regulation strategies throughout the day as a healthy response to feeling overwhelmed or frustrated.

Considerations for implementing this practice

Agree upon expectations as a team: It's important for all educators to have the same expectations during student-selected mindfulness time. Prior to launching, come together to create norms around noise level, transition times, etc. in order to ensure success.

Think outside the box with scheduling: Don't let scheduling challenges stop you from offering learning experiences students want and need. Instead, consider how you might stagger offerings, leverage pre-recorded sessions or bring experts into the learning space virtually.