

Tackling the Student Stress Dilemma

Independent School Executive
Forum

Managing Your Audio



Use Telephone

The screenshot shows a window titled 'Audio' with a minus sign icon in the top left. Under 'Audio Mode:', the 'Use Telephone' option is selected with a green dot, and 'Use Mic & Speakers' is unselected with a grey dot. Below this, the text reads: 'Dial: +1 800 555 1212', 'Access Code: 141-607-114', '(and additional numbers ..)', and 'You are connected to audio'.

If you select the “use telephone” option, please dial in with the phone number and access code provided.

Use Microphone and Speakers

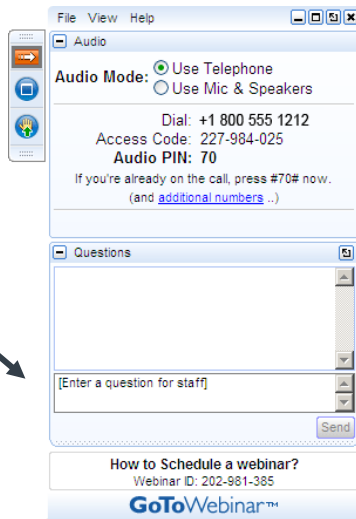
The screenshot shows a window titled 'Audio' with a minus sign icon in the top left. Under 'Audio Mode:', the 'Use Telephone' option is unselected with a grey dot, and 'Use Mic & Speakers' is selected with a green dot. Below this, there is a status bar with a microphone icon and the word 'MUTED' in red on the left, and a speaker icon followed by ten zeros on the right. At the bottom, there is a blue link labeled 'Audio Setup'.

If you select the “mic & speakers” option, please be sure that your speakers/headphones are connected.

Questions:

To ask the presenter a question, please type into the question panel and press send.

Questions panel



The screenshot shows the GoToWebinar interface with the following elements:

- Audio Section:**
 - Buttons: File, View, Help
 - Audio Mode: ☒ Use Telephone, ☐ Use Mic & Speakers
 - Dial: +1 800 555 1212
 - Access Code: 227-984-025
 - Audio PIN: 70
 - Text: If you're already on the call, press #70# now. (and [additional numbers ...](#))
- Questions Section:**
 - A large text input area.
 - A label: [Enter a question for staff]
 - A Send button.
- Footer:**
 - How to Schedule a webinar?
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Evidence of Poor Student Well-being at Every Turn

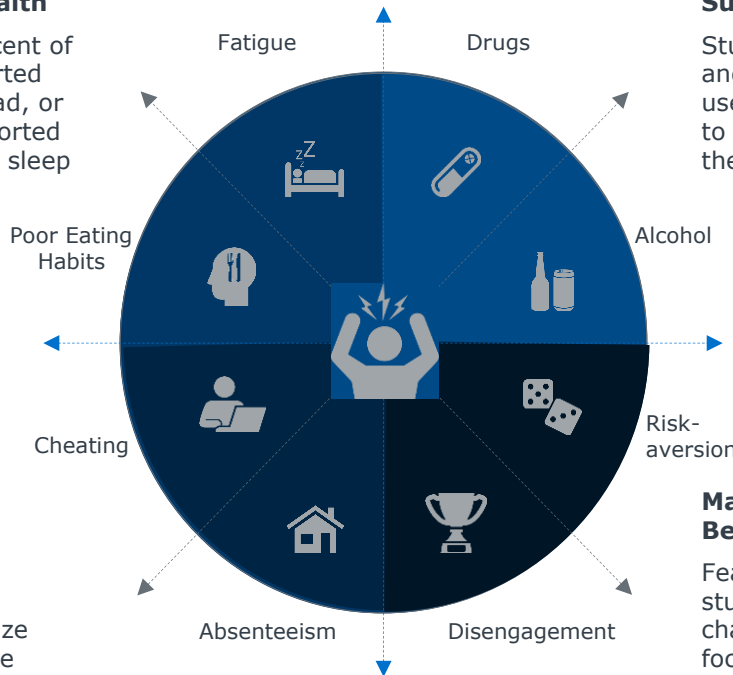
High Levels of Stress Manifest in a Variety of Ways on Campus

Poor Physical Health

Seventy-three percent of students who reported feeling unhappy, sad, or depressed also reported not getting enough sleep

Substance Misuse

Students look to drugs and alcohol to relax; use prescription drugs to focus, work late into the night



Academic Misconduct

Overwhelmed students copy homework, plagiarize online sources; take “mental health days” off from school

Maladaptive Behaviors

Fear of failure keeps students from new challenges; singular focus on grades creates disengagement

External Factors Contribute to Student Stress

Outside of Your Control, but Having a Huge Impact



New Parenting Style

Performance-driven parenting creates busy, failure-adverse, overscheduled students; high level of parental intervention leaves students unable to cope on their own

“You’ve heard of the helicopter parent. What about the snowplow parent, who **plows the path ahead to make it as smooth as possible**? This approach isn’t helping kids any more than a helicopter parent does.”

Head of School



College Admissions Stress

Increased selectivity of elite colleges creates academic, extra-curricular pressure among high school students

“Parents say: ‘I got into Yale; you’ll get into Yale too.’ Well, you got into Yale 25 years ago. Maybe your kid will get into Yale, and maybe they won’t. **But the pressure you’re putting on them is just so high.**”

Jennifer Jones, Director of Counseling and Wellness, John Burroughs School



Social Media and Technology

Increased connectedness eliminates time away from social pressure, exacerbates regular aspects of adolescence

“For kids who are anxious, technology amplifies that. When I was in high school, I went home and watched Miami Vice on Friday night, I may have been vaguely aware people were doing cooler things, but **I didn’t have to watch the pictures unfold in real time.**”

Liz Perry, Head of Upper School, St. Luke’s School



New Parenting Style Having Negative Impact

Over-involvement, Pressure Contributes Negatively to Student Wellness

New Parenting Style Leaves Students...



Overscheduled

41% of 9-13 year olds report feeling stressed always or most of the time because they have too much to do



Grade-oriented

90% of high school students report getting good grades is important, but only 6% say they value learning



Unaccustomed to Failure

"10 or 20 years ago kids were allowed to make more mistakes. Sign up for that course that interests you and if you don't get a good grade that's ok! It's 7th grade. It's not like that anymore."

Helping or Hovering?

"Parents need to understand they're not giving their children a chance to develop competency, a feeling of pride and well-being. Children are not developing the skills they need to become fully functioning adults."

*Holly Schiffrin, Associate Professor of Psychology,
The University of Mary Washington*

Source: The Princeton Review. (2015). "Student Life in America: Teens' and Parents' Perspectives on the High School Experience."; Advocate Health Care. (2013). "Dangers of Overscheduling Your Child."; Schiffrin, H. et al. (2014). "Helping or Hovering? The Effects of Helicopter Parenting on College Students' Well-Being." Journal of Child and Family Studies; English, B. (2013). "Snowplow Parents' Overly Involved in College Students' Lives." Boston Globe; EAB interviews and analysis.

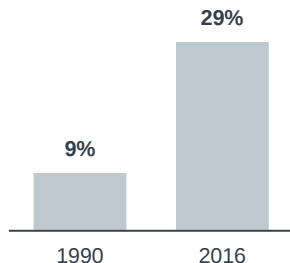


More Applications Increases Competition

More Students Apply to More Schools, Selectivity at Top Schools Increases

Students Expand College Lists to Secure a Spot...

Students applying to 7+ schools



...Making their Targeted Schools Even More Selective

Average admissions rate of top 10 selective colleges



The Catch-22 of College Admissions

"Kids see that the **admit rates are brutal and dropping**, and it looks more like a crapshoot. So, they send more apps, which forces the colleges to lower their admit rates, which spurs the kids next year to send even more apps."

*Bruch Poch, Former Dean of Admissions,
Pomona College*

Too Much of a Good Thing?

Constant Connection has Negative Impact on Kids

In the Past, Students Had Few Options for Staying Connected

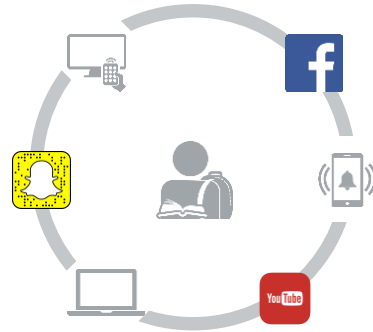


78%

Of high-income teens owned a smartphone in 2014



Today, Students Have Virtually Limitless Options



Increased Technology Use Correlated with Negative Outcomes

25%

Of adolescents report being bullied repeatedly through the internet or cell phone

2.7x

The likelihood of depression among heavy users of social media versus non-heavy users

2.6x

The risk of reporting eating or body image concerns among frequent social media users, compared to less frequent users

But You Are Also Part of the Problem

Internal Processes, Programs Having Equally Negative Impact on Students

Current Practice Contributes to Poor Student Outcomes in Four Areas



Limited Ability to Identify, Reintegrate Students in Crisis

- Current approach fails to connect all students in crisis to necessary support
- Reintegration poses logistical, academic, and social challenges



Schedule Organization Undermining Student Health

- Traditional school schedule keeps students constantly “on-the-go”
- Organization and timing of work often designed with adults, not students, in mind



College Admissions Programming Exacerbating Stress

- High school experience heavily focused on “getting in” to the right college
- Classes and activities geared at college resume-building



Inadequately Preparing Students for Future

- Schools struggle to find sufficient time to develop coping skills, adaptability necessary for future success

Tackling the Student Stress Dilemma

15 Practices for Improving Student Mental Health, Well-being

Opportunities to Better Support Students

Expand the Support Network

1. Faculty-led Crisis Identification
2. Stigma-mitigation Strategies
3. Student-led Peer Support
4. Coordinated Reentry Processes



Deploy Time in Student-centric Way

5. Student-Faculty Homework Load Calibration
6. Homework-free School Days
7. Optimized Final Exam Schedule
8. Mission-aligned School Schedule



Reframe College Admissions

9. Goal-setting for Personal Growth
10. Community-based Career Exploration
11. College-facilitated Application Prep
12. Admissions Officer for a Night



Equip Students with Life Skills

13. Life-long Fitness-oriented P.E. Curriculum
14. Self-regulation through Mindfulness
15. Growth Mindset School Culture



- 1 **Support Students in Crisis**
 - 2 Deploy Time in a Student-centric Way
 - 3 Reframe College Admissions
 - 4 Equip Students with Life Skills
-

Key Lessons for Supporting Students in Distress



Moving from Reactive to Proactive Mental Health Strategy



1

Use entire school community as eyes and ears

Expand the reach of your counseling staff by equipping broader school community (especially faculty, peers) to recognize, describe signs of students in distress, to connect more students with needed care; provide forums for discussing students of concern

2

Normalize mental health issues, help-seeking behaviors

Reduce barriers for students seeking support by increasing awareness and reducing stigma around mental health concerns, empowering students to access support when necessary

3

Create a reintegration blueprint with clear roles, ownership to support all student needs

Design processes, delineate clear roles, ensure accountability to ensure students reintegrating into campus life are supported academically, socially, and psychologically

1

Support Students in Crisis

2

Deploy Time in a Student-centric Way

3

Reframe College Admissions

4

Equip Students with Life Skills

Key Lessons for Optimizing School Time



- 1 Maximize assessment-related time in evidence-based ways**
Ensure timing, amount and structure of assessments creates optimal learning environment for students, where content mastery and deep understanding replace rote memorization
- 2 Make time for academic/non-academic priorities in schedule**
Design a schedule that allows for more meaningful, substantive interactions between faculty and students; consider including time for non-academic activities during school day to alleviate after school time pressures
- 3 Think beyond traditional scheduling confines**
Assess the needs of your students, the goals of your curriculum, and the mission of your school when designing a schedule; do not be limited by previous iterations and priorities

1

Support Students in Crisis

2

Deploy Time in a Student-centric Way

3

Reframe College Admissions

4

Equip Students with Life Skills

Key Lessons for College Admissions Support



1 Focus student energy beyond just “getting in”
Orient college counseling process towards personal growth, fostering talents and interests; this diminished focus on “getting in” will reduce stress of college admissions process

2 Equip students with long-term skills, not just college resume-builders
Create engaging learning experiences to bridge gap between preparing students for college admissions and preparing students for post-admissions success

3 Adjust college admissions timeline to reduce stress, involve insider experts
Provide pre-senior year application support, pulling major tasks into summer; connect students, parents with college representatives in an interactive manner

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Improving High School Experience Not Enough

Ambition Must be to Provide Students Skills to Cope with Life's Stresses

Focus on Reducing Stress at your School Insufficient for Students' Success Beyond High School



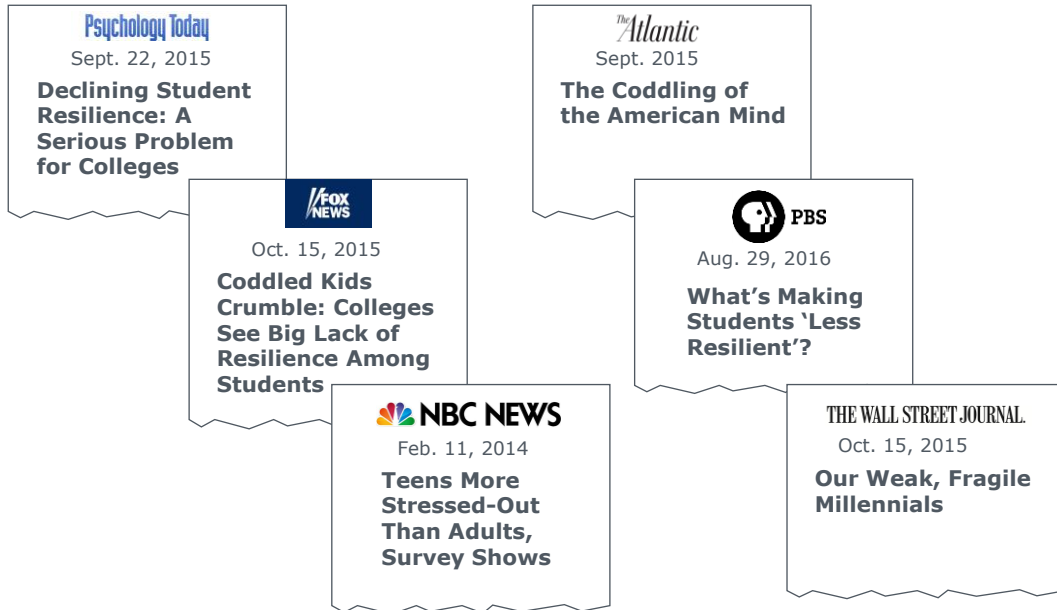
Everyday Life Skills

"I'm more interested in finding ways to equip kids to live their day to day lives in a moral, responsible, and healthy manner. We have to be certain that popular culture and the achievement-oriented nature of our schools **do not diminish our efforts to teach democratic values, to nurture morality, and to enable students to find a sense of balance in their lives.**"

Bryan Garman, Head of School, Sidwell Friends School

Not Delivering on this Ambition

Data, Headlines Suggest Students Are Ill-prepared for Post-High School Life



Source: Gray, P. (2015). "Declining Student Resilience: A Serious Problem for Colleges." Psychology Today; Reilly, D. (2015). "Coddled Kids Crumble: Colleges see big lack of resilience among students." Fox News ; Aleccia, J. (2014). "Teens More Stressed-Out Than Adults, Survey Shows." NBC News; Kukanoff, G. et al. (2015). "The Coddling of the American Mind." The Atlantic.; Haidt, J. (2016). "Our Weak, Fragile Millennials." The Wall Street Journal; Cummins, D. (2016). "What's Making Students 'Less Resilient'?" PBS; EAB interviews and analysis.

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The Protective Effects of Fitness

Physical Fitness Effective in Boosting Mental Health, Mitigating Stress

Population-based Research Shows...

30%

Lower odds of depression among active people, compared to non-active peers

28%

Lower odds of an anxiety disorder with regular physical activity

What type of exercise is best?



Most effective exercise for improving mental health is aerobic: jogging, swimming, cycling, brisk walking



Intensity matters: exercise should be moderate in intensity

150

Number of minutes per week needed to see mental health benefits

The Mind-body Connection

“Regular physical activity can help keep your thinking, learning, and judgment skills sharp as you age. **It can also reduce your risk of depression and may help you sleep better.** Research has shown that doing aerobic or a mix of aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities 3 to 5 times a week for 30 to 60 minutes can give you these mental health benefits.”

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

More Than Just Dodgeball and Lacrosse

Ensworth Redesigns Phys. Ed. Curriculum to Build Lasting Habits



P.E. Curriculum Develops Transferrable Fitness Habits



Integral Part of Upper School Curriculum

Occupies same space in class schedule as academic classes



Building Blocks of Lifetime Fitness

Introduces students to speed, strength, flexibility, and cardio components of fitness



Individualized Training Program

Includes student-specific fitness program and group fitness activities



Culminates with Self-designed Fitness Program

Required each semester of upper school; students design their own fitness program in senior year



Innovating on the Past

"This is much better than the P.E. class I took when I was a kid, and it's much better than being forced to be on the JV field hockey team, or whatever, for students who couldn't care less about playing the sport.

People now are aware of the value of fitness, so they think: 'oh, this is a much better way to approach P.E.'"

*David Braemer, Head of School,
Ensworth School*

Mindfulness and the Brain

Research Supports Effect, Benefit of Mindfulness Meditation on Brain

Academic Research Reflects Wide-ranging Effects



Reduction in Depression, Anxiety Symptoms

- Meta-analysis at Johns Hopkins found that the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation similar to antidepressants for reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety



Reduction in Cortisol

- UC Davis researchers measured mindfulness and cortisol levels of volunteers before and after 3-month mindfulness retreat
- Participants whose mindfulness score increased showed a decrease in cortisol, the stress hormone



Decreased Mind Wandering

- Yale researchers conducted brain scans of experienced meditators
- Scans showed that the main nodes of the default-mode network, associated with mind-wandering, were deactivated during meditation
- Mind-wandering is associated with being less happy and increased worrying



Changes in Gray Matter

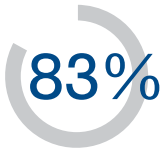
- Participants in Harvard study participated in 8-week mindfulness program
- Magnetic resonance (MR) images showed increased gray matter density in the hippocampus, key for learning, memory
- MR images also showed a reduction of gray matter in the amygdala, responsible for anxiety and stress

Source: Brewer, J. et al. (2011). "Meditation Experience is Associated with Differences in Default Mode Network Activity and Connectivity." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America; Goyal, M. et al. (2014). "Meditating Programs for Psychological Stress and Well-being." JAMA Internal Medicine; Fell, A. (2013). "Mindfulness from Meditation Associated with Lower Stress Hormone." UC Davis. McGreevey, S. (2011). "Eight Weeks to a Better Brain." Harvard Gazette; EAB interviews and analysis.

Mindfulness in the Classroom

Early Interventions Support Wider Adoption of Mindfulness Programs

Public School Programs Demonstrate Promising Results



Of educators implementing mindfulness in the classroom observe **improved focus** in students



Of educators implementing mindfulness in the classroom observe **improved emotional regulation** in students



Of educators implementing mindfulness in the classroom observe **improved engagement** in students



Study in Brief: Learning to BREATHE: A Pilot Trial of a Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents

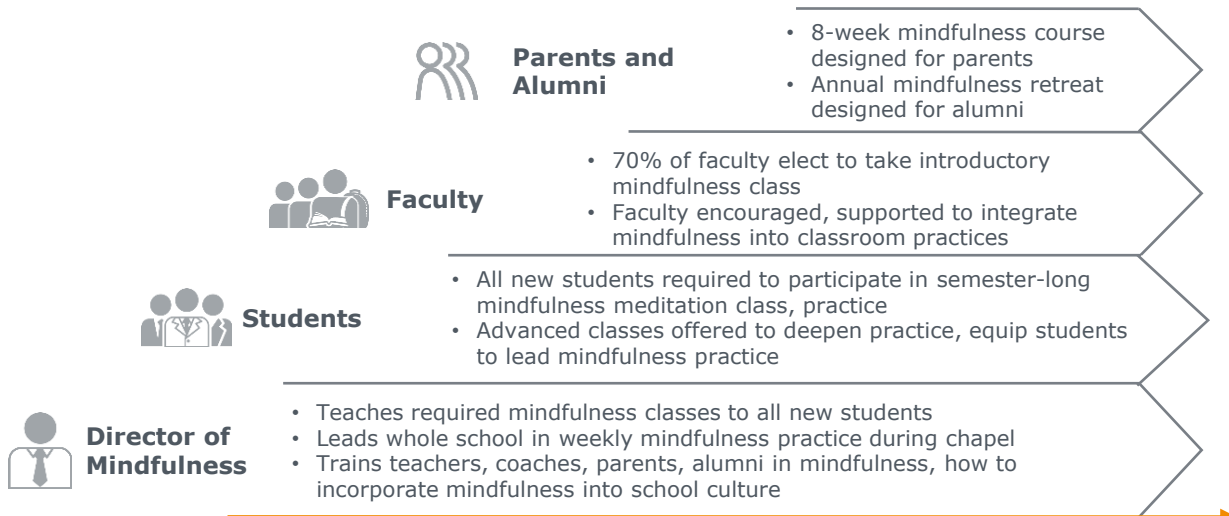
- 120 private high school seniors participated in 7-week mindfulness program tailored to the developmental needs of adolescents
- Compared to control group, students demonstrated a significant reduction in negative affect and tiredness
- Students showed a significant increase in feelings of calmness, relaxation, self-acceptance
- Emotional regulation also increased, as students reported a greater awareness of emotions
- 66% of students continued to practice mindfulness outside of the classroom

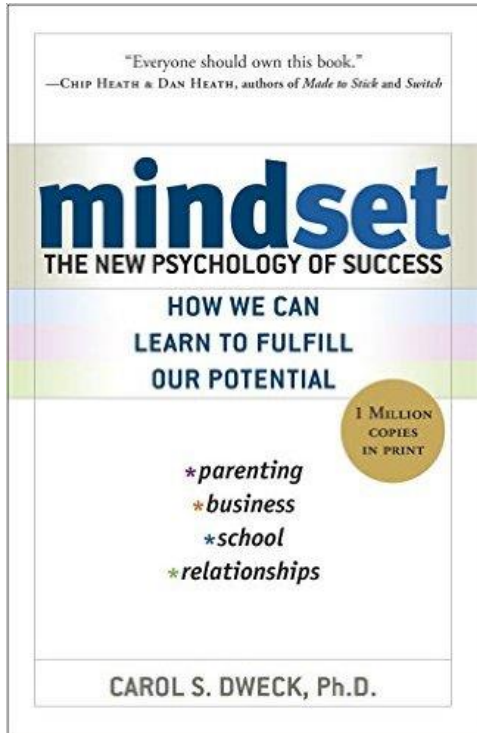
Embed Mindfulness as a Community Norm

Internal Expertise Supports Community-wide Mindfulness Practice



At Middlesex, Entire School Community Taught Mindfulness





Defining Our Terms



Growth Mindset

- The belief that intelligence and other abilities can be shaped through effort and training



Fixed Mindset

- The belief that intelligence and other personality traits are innate and cannot be changed



Mindset change is not about picking up a few pointers here and there. It's about seeing things in a new way. When people change to a growth mindset, **they change from a judge-and-be-judged framework to a learn-and-help-learn framework.** Their commitment is to growth, and growth takes plenty of time, effort, and mutual support.”

Carol Dweck, Professor, Stanford University

Growth Mindset Promotes Mental Toughness

Research Demonstrates the Impact of Students Adopting a Growth Mindset



Study in Brief: Implicit Theories of Intelligence Predict Achievement Across an Adolescent Transition

- 373 7th grade students assessed for mindsets, grades monitored for 2 years
- Average grade of students with a growth mindset increased by 5 percentage points, whereas those with a fixed mindset decreased by 1
- Analysis shows divergence in grades due to:
 - Students with growth mindset focus more on learning than earning high grades
 - Students with growth mindset believe effort leads to success, do not view current ability as limitation
 - Students with growth mindset adopt new study habits to improve learning in face of setback



Study in Brief: The Role of Expectation and Attributions in the Alleviation of Learned Helplessness

- 750 students assessed for mindsets; 12 selected for having a fixed mindset
- Dweck tracked accuracy of math problems, effects of failure on students' performance
- During pretests, 75% of fixed mindset students chose to repeat successful tasks, rather than tasks they had previously failed; all fixed mindset students showed a deterioration in performance after failure
- All students taught that failure on math problems is due to insufficient effort
- When taught to equate failure with lack of effort, 83% of students improved performance after getting a math problem wrong

How Can We Move Beyond a Fixed Mindset?

Elements of Independent School Culture Reinforce Fixed Mindset



Parents

- Emphasis on results discourages children from trying new things
- Protecting children from failure teaches them to devalue activities at which they do not immediately excel

As a Result:

- Children do not attempt assignments, problems that are difficult for fear of failure
- Children quit activities that are difficult



Teachers

- Reassuring students about their intelligence, talent undermines effort required for success, growth
- Outcome-oriented messages meant to motivate, encourage students reinforce focus on innate ability

As a Result:

- Students equate doing well with intelligence, not effort
- Students believe skills, intelligence cannot evolve, shy away from subjects, activities that do not come naturally



Students

- Communicating with peers, students downplay effort, time spent to complete task
- Students tease others for mistakes in class, not achieving perfect grades

As a result:

- Students fear failure, social ridicule; reduce risk-taking, attempting more difficult work, greater challenges
- Peer comparisons undermine students' self-esteem, creating increased stress around school work

Growth Mindset at Laurel School

Daily Interactions Cultivate, Reinforce Growth Mindset Culture

LAUREL

Small Actions Foster a Growth Mindset Culture



"We" Voice

Faculty encouraged to use "we" voice to foster empathy, emphasize that everyone makes mistakes



Process Related Feedback

Faculty respond to students with feedback that addresses students' problem-solving strategies, approach



Brain Bowl

- Annual trivia event for 5th graders
- Questions focused on brain anatomy and learning development
- Emphasizes the ability to change the brain



Power of Yet

Faculty reinforce "power of 'yet'" with 'Yet' pins on lanyards



Brain as a Muscle

"Brain as a Muscle" posters displayed in classrooms to emphasize intellectual growth



Faculty Workshops

- Workshops use role play to teach growth mindset-oriented feedback; how to incorporate growth mindset into classroom practices

Demonstrate Growth Mindset as a Life-long Skill

Laurel School's Center for Research on Girls

LAUREL



Case in Brief: Laurel's Center for Research on Girls

- Conducts research on girls such as stress and well being in girls' lives, how creativity builds emotional resilience, factors that drive self esteem in middle school girls, etc.
- Translates academic research into usable format for teachers and parents
- Exposes girls to growth mindset through interaction with the academic research process



Faculty Engage in Research

- Faculty have the opportunity to participate, contribute to research on stress, well being, etc.



Research Informs Teaching Practices

- Research is transformed into lessons, content, teaching practices for use in the classroom



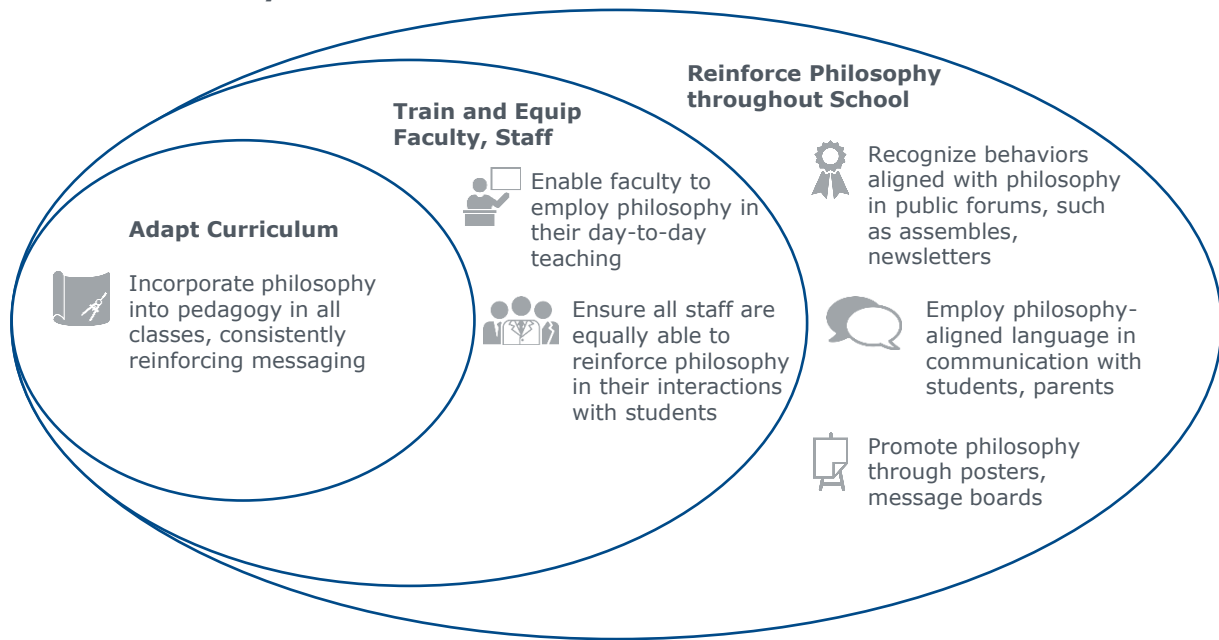
Researchers Demonstrate Growth Mindset

- Through exposure to research, students learn that growth is constant, adults must identify and continuously work to build knowledge

A Million Tiny Contributions

Preparing Students for Success Requires Integrated Approach, Consistency

Develop Philosophy, Integrate It Into Every Aspect of School Community



Key Lessons for Equipping Students to Succeed



1

Select evidence-based strategies to support future success of students

Adopt research-based approach to instilling healthy coping skills to help students thrive in stressful situations, recognizing that some stress can be positive

2

Demonstrate importance, value of strategies by making room in academic curriculum

Weave this type of skill-based learning into your curriculum, approaching this content with the same rigor, intentionality used to teach academic subjects

3

Recognize that culture change is difficult, requires consistency, new norms and behaviors from all

Change your community's culture to reflect, support the selected approach; ensure the behaviors and norms of all community members reflect this culture