

THE MINDUP CURRICULUM

Grades 6–8

Brain-Focused Strategies for Learning—and Living

Focused Classrooms • Mindful Learning • Resilient Students

 SCHOLASTIC

MINDUP

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Welcome to **MINDUP**

Imagine ... joyful learning, academic success, and a powerful sense of self and community.

Imagine ... students who are able to engage in a focused, energetic way with one another, with their teachers, and with their learning.

Imagine ... schools that are productive, harmonious centers of successful learning, where all students thrive because they recognize themselves as

- capable, creative learners
- self-aware human beings
- compassionate, responsible citizens

All of this is possible. **MINDUP** can help you achieve it.

MindUP Online Training

At www.thehawnfoundation.org, you'll find resources to enrich your MindUP instruction, including

- the entire spectrum of MindUP techniques, addressing social and emotional learning
- classroom demonstrations conducted by experienced MindUP consultants and mentors
- instructional insights, grade-specific teaching strategies, and other resources
- the latest in neuroscience about how the brain works and how it affects learning

Register at www.thehawnfoundation.org to access this innovative, interactive training and learning resource, developed in partnership with Columbia University's Center for New Media Teaching and Learning.



Dear Educators,

From Scholastic

For 90 years, Scholastic has been a presence in your classrooms, supporting teaching and learning. The challenges faced by you and your students today are well known and unprecedented. These include the following expectations:

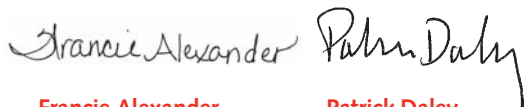
- providing differentiated instruction to students who come with diverse language and experiential backgrounds
- improving academic performance
- addressing new standards geared to career and college preparedness
- helping your students and their families handle economic and social changes

When we met Goldie Hawn and the Hawn Foundation team, we were impressed by their commitment to helping all students achieve their potential socially and academically. Also, we shared their respect for educators who, like all of you, are entrusted with the preparation of the next generation.

We are pleased to introduce MindUP, a collaboration of the Hawn Foundation and Scholastic. MindUP isn't one more program to implement or subject to teach, but a set of strategies that can be integrated with what you are already doing, so that you and your students will become more focused when doing schoolwork and are able to work and play more successfully with others. The essence of what the MindUP program calls for is embodied in the idea of the Optimistic Classroom—a place where all children have the opportunity to achieve their potential.

Thank you for inviting us into your school.

Optimistically yours,



Francie Alexander
Chief Academic Officer
Scholastic Inc.

Patrick Daley
Senior Vice President, Publisher
Scholastic Inc.

From the Hawn Foundation

Thank you for bringing the MindUP Curriculum into your classrooms.

MindUP has been my focus and my passion for many years. I am so grateful to you, devoted educators who believe in the limitless potential of children and give tirelessly of your time, energy, creativity, and love.

The simple practices at the core of MindUP will help your students to become resilient, focused, and mindful learners. I have seen the MindUP practices at work in classrooms all over the world. I have witnessed its success and have heard from countless teachers in praise of its transformative effect on students' ability to learn.

I know that with your help we can equip our students with the skills they need to live smarter, healthier, and happier lives. Together we will create optimistic classrooms where students successfully cope with the stresses they face in school, at home, and in their communities.

Thank you for accepting the enormous and critically important responsibilities and challenges that accompany your mission as an educator.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you.



Goldie Hawn
Founder, The Hawn Foundation
and the MindUP Curriculum

What Is MindUP?

MindUP is a comprehensive, classroom-tested, evidence-based curriculum framed around 15 easily implemented lessons that foster social and emotional awareness, enhance psychological well-being, and promote academic success.

The MindUP classroom is an optimistic classroom that promotes and develops mindful attention to oneself and others, tolerance of differences, and the capacity of each member of the community to grow as a human being and a learner. MindUP's expansive dynamic is built to a large extent on routine practices that are inherent to the MindUP Curriculum. Over the course of the MindUP experience, students learn about the brain and how it functions, in the process gaining insight into their own minds and behaviors as well as those of the people around them.

How Does MindUP Work?

The essential work of MindUP is accomplished through the lessons themselves, which include the repetition of the Core Practice—deep belly breathing and attentive listening. The Core Practice makes mindful attention the foundation for learning and interacting; ideally, it is repeated for a few moments of each school day throughout the year. (See Lesson 3, page 42, for a complete overview of the Core Practice.)

**“I love MindUP! It is a way to focus your mind,
calm down and reflect on a situation when you
need to make a choice.”**

—Avery, seventh grade

MindUP has the capacity to alter the landscape of your classroom by letting students in on the workings of their own agile minds. Each MindUP lesson begins with background information on the brain, introducing a specific area of concentration with an activity in which students can see concrete examples of how their brain functions. As you and your students become accustomed to learning about the ways in which the brain processes information, your students will become habitually more observant of their own learning process.

MindUP offers teachers and students insights that respond to the natural thoughtfulness of young people and lead to self-regulation of their behavior. MindUP is dedicated to the belief that the child who learns to monitor his or her senses and feelings becomes more aware and better understands how to respond to the world *reflectively* instead of *reflexively*.

Who Needs MindUP?

Everyone. Joyful engagement isn't incidental; it's essential. Yet, young people today are no strangers to stress. From an early age, they experience stress from a range of sources. For some, stress goes hand in hand with the pressure to achieve; for others, it is prompted by economic hardship, poor nutrition, or inadequate health care; for still others, it may be linked to emotional deprivation or limited educational resources. Whatever the particular circumstance, any one of these factors could hamper a student's ability to learn without anxiety. In "communities of turmoil" (Tatum, 2009), children often cope with several problems at once, and suffer from chronic stress—with consequences that can be disastrous for their learning and their lives. MindUP addresses these obstacles to productive learning and living by offering students and teachers simple practices and insights that become tools for self-management and self-possession. At the same time, the MindUP program works to make learning joyful and fun by emphasizing learning modes in which students flourish:

- lively instruction that invites problem solving, discussion, and exploration
- teacher modeling and coaching
- student cross-age mentoring and decision making
- conflict resolution
- inquiry and the arts

Joyful engagement is not incidental; it's essential. MindUP shows you how to put joy into your teaching.



MindUP and the School Day

The MindUP program was developed not only to expand students' social and emotional awareness but also to improve their academic performance. The concepts and vocabulary associated with MindUP will expand the scope of students' thinking in all academic disciplines.

MindUP Core Practice can become a staple routine for the opening and closing of each school day as well as at the moments of transition: settling down after recess, waiting for lunch, moving from one subject to the next. As countless MindUP teachers have discovered, any topic benefits from being approached with focused awareness.

The MindUP lessons themselves can be worked smoothly into a daily routine and require minimal preparation on your part; suggested follow-up activities link each lesson to content-area learning. You'll likely find yourself adopting the MindUP techniques and strategies across subject areas. MindUP may well become a way of life for you and your students!

The Day Begins

The best teachers we know are mindful about the beginning of each school day. They make a point of standing by the school door and greeting with an open heart and welcoming smile every student who passes through their classroom door.

An ideal way to unify the class as they begin their day is to gather and share a few moments of "checking in," followed by the Core Practice of deep breathing and mindful awareness. Once you have established this simple routine, you will find that the day feels more coherent and the group less scattered as this practice brings the group together organically while setting an easygoing tone for engagement with the rest of your daily learning.

Transitions

MindUP Core Practice works beautifully during transition times. With your guidance and thoughtful attention, you can accustom your students to respond to a simple reminder at which they automatically turn to the Core Practices to center themselves and prepare to move easily—even eagerly and joyfully—to the next classroom activity. "Our classroom transition times are some of the most important routines of our day....Our days are full, our curriculum is rich, and we have so much to do together! The tighter our transitions, the more time we will have for instruction" (Allyn, 2010).

The Day Ends

Just as you can help students greet a new day with eagerness and mindful purpose, so can you close the day with a similar spirit of purpose and celebration—your students will leave the classroom feeling calm yet energized. Eric Jensen, whose "brain-based" teaching has transformed teaching and learning in countless classrooms, explains, "Asking kids to visualize success on an upcoming skill or knowledge set is no 'new Age' strategy. When done well, mental practice is known not only to make physical changes in the brain but also to improve task performance (Pascual-Leone et al., 2005)" (2010). For example, a spirited and energetic clean-up of the room to some upbeat music can be followed by a regrouping for recapping the day's accomplishments, and a brief shared Core Practice before dismissal. The goal is to end the day on a high note.

MindUP at the Middle Grades

In grades 6–8, students typically travel from class to class, from room to room, and from teacher to teacher. This makes daily Core Practice a challenge, but perhaps also more valuable to the student as he or she juggles the demands of a variety of situations. Ideally, middle-school faculty collaborate to decide which three times to set aside each day for Core Practice. In turn, each middle-school classroom teacher can help students take on more autonomy and more responsibility for their learning by reminding them that during potentially distracting or disruptive transitions, they can take a moment to engage in deep breathing independently to help themselves regain focus. As a content area teacher, in an advisory group, or as study hall monitor, you can incorporate Core Practice into meetings to both calm down and unify the group to focus attention on the subject at hand. Core Practice is an invaluable test preparation tool and an effective brain-readiness habit for approaching any new area of study. MindUP lessons at the middle grades are best taught as the collaborative effort of several instructors and can be coordinated through cross-curricular planning, preferably with the blessing of the school administration.



Literacy expert Pam Allyn has visited and observed hundreds of classrooms around the world.

"We have seen many classrooms where there are lots of pieces in place, but one secret, fabulous ingredient is missing. That ingredient is celebration. We see teachers wait to celebrate until the end of the year, until a child does well on a test, until the child actually masters the art of reading. But why wait? Celebration is the ultimate management strategy. . . . It is the core ingredient that infuses the entire life of the classroom with joy, with hope, with faith, and with optimism" (2010, p.107).

Using MindUP in the Classroom

MindUP comprises 15 lessons arranged into four units:

Unit I: Getting Focused (Lessons 1–3)

Introduce brain physiology and the concept of mindful attention;
establish daily Core Practice

Lessons: 1. How Our Brains Work, 2. Mindful Awareness,
3. Focused Awareness: The Core Practice

Unit II: Sharpening Your Senses (Lessons 4–9)

Experience the relationship between our senses, our moving bodies, and the
way we think

Lessons: 4. Mindful Listening, 5. Mindful Seeing, 6. Mindful Smelling,
7. Mindful Tasting, 8. Mindful Movement I, 9. Mindful Movement II

Unit III: It's All About Attitude (Lessons 10–12)

Understand the role of our mind-set in how we learn and progress

Lessons: 10. Perspective Taking, 11. Choosing Optimism,
12. Appreciating Happy Experiences

Unit IV: Taking Action Mindfully (Lessons 13–15)

Apply mindful behaviors to our interactions with our community and the world

Lessons: 13. Expressing Gratitude, 14. Performing Acts of Kindness,
15. Taking Mindful Action in the World

The framework is designed to strengthen students' sense of social and emotional well-being while creating a cohesive, caring classroom environment. Because the concepts build on one another, you'll find it most productive to teach the lessons in sequential order.

Lesson Structure

You'll notice that each lesson follows the same format:

- **Introduction to the Lesson Topic**...identifies and explains the subject of the lesson, frames why it's important, and includes teacher testimony from a MindUP user.
- **Linking to Brain Research**... explains how each lesson relates to the neuroscience. This section provides background for you, which you may want to share with students to help them gain a progressively more sophisticated awareness of how their brains work.
- **Clarify for the Class**... includes guidelines for making brain research concepts accessible to students at various grade levels.

- **Getting Ready...** identifies what the lesson entails as well as learning goals for the lesson. Also listed are materials and resources required for leading the lesson.
- **MindUP Warm-Up...** helps the class prepare for the lesson itself by introducing and discussing subject matter in an easygoing, open-ended way that relates content to students' lives.
- **Leading the Lesson...** offers a step-by-step approach that engages students in the inquiry, helps them explore the topic, and encourages them to reflect upon and discuss their insights and experiences. The lesson layout also establishes concrete links to the learning process and classroom issues at the middle grade level.
- **Connecting to the Curriculum...** offers specific opportunities for students to bend their minds around language arts, math, social studies, science, health, physical education, the arts, and social-emotional learning. These optional across-the-curriculum learning experiences expand the lesson and offer alternative approaches to content.

Special Features

- **Creating the Optimistic Classroom...** offers classroom management strategies for reaching English language learners, special needs students, and general learners in order to maximize the effectiveness of the lesson.
- **MindUP in the Real World...** connects lesson content to a career or undertaking, expands the discussion beyond the classroom setting, and grounds the ideas in a concrete application.
- **Once a Day...** suggests ways for teachers to apply lesson content to everyday situations involving students or colleagues.
- **Journal Writing...** gives students an opportunity to reflect on motivation, actions, and their consequences, so they can learn to mediate and understand their actions. According to Susan Kaiser Greenland, journaling allows students to use what they've learned to create happier, more successful lives for themselves (2010). We recommend that you provide students with a notebook to create a journal that they can personalize with decorations of their choice, using this personal record to document responses within Greenland's general framework of
 - What I Noticed
 - What It Means
 - What I Learned
- **Literature Link...** recommends four books that extend the learning.

Lesson Opener

Each MindUP lesson is focused on one aspect or practice of the curriculum.

The targeted curriculum area is defined and placed in context for the teacher.

Experience of MindUP users attests to the effectiveness of the specific practice or lesson.

Mindful Listening

What Is Mindful Listening?
From the buzz of a cell phone to the wall of a siren, sounds are all around us. Mindful listening helps us choose which sounds to focus our attention on and helps us to be thoughtful in the way we hear and respond to the words of others.

Why Practice Mindful Listening?
Research suggests that students become more focused and responsive to their environment by participating in mindful listening activities, such as Audio Alert in this lesson. In fact, training our brains to concentrate on specific sounds helps heighten our sensory awareness. As students monitor their own auditory experience—noting what they choose to focus on and/or respond to—they build self-awareness and self-management skills. Mindful listening also lays the groundwork for social awareness and effective communication—an important part of the Common Core Standards.

Being able to listen in a focused way to what others say and to home in on details such as tone and inflection gives a listener a clearer notion about the meaning of the words and a better idea for how to respond. This work helps prepare students for following directions, resolving conflicts through discussion, building friendships, and listening critically to news, ads, and other media messages.

What Can You Expect to Observe?
"Students really make an effort to tune in to details of the sounds they hear and point out the nuances of sounds that make them distinct. They'll apply mindful listening to observing the way people speak to one another—in particular, identifying the tone of someone's voice and monitoring their own."
—Eighth-grade teacher

Linking to Brain Research

What Is the RAS?
An intricate network of long nerve pathways lies within the core of the brain stem. The reticular formation, also called the reticular activating system (RAS), helps regulate many basic body functions and connects the brain stem to the prefrontal cortex (PFC) and other parts of the brain. The RAS helps keep the brain awake and alert and is the brain's attention-focusing center. Sensory stimuli (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, taste) continually arrive via the spinal cord and are sorted and screened by the RAS. The sensory input deemed relevant by the RAS is routed on to its appropriate destination in the conscious brain. What's irrelevant is blocked.

The RAS is critically important because the brain cannot process the millions of bits of sensory information coming in at once! A student sitting in a classroom likely has competing sensory experiences—the voice of her teacher, the vibration of a cell phone, the sight of a friend walking by the classroom, the aroma of food from the cafeteria. It's easy to imagine how these stimuli might cause her to shift her attention from the classroom to what she hopes to eat for lunch. A mindful, focused student is able to measure herself that lunch period will come after math and to redirect her attention to the task at hand.

Athletes, musicians, scholars, and other "focused" people have "trained" their RAS to choose the most pertinent sensory stimuli. With practice focusing on specific details, students can train their RAS to be more effective. Such practice is especially important for students who have trouble focusing their attention on their work, instructions, or social cues. Sensory awareness activities in this lesson and the others in this unit provide your students with repeated RAS-strengthening practice.

The RAS serves as an "executive personal secretary" to the PFC, forwarding on only what's immediately relevant.

Clarify for the Class
Make a model of the RAS using a kitchen strainer, fine sand, and gravel. Demonstrate how a strainer allows only some things to pass through. Similarly, the RAS holds back unimportant sensory input, but lets relevant information pass on to the PFC.

Discuss: What kinds of sensory input do you think are filtered out by the RAS? (Background noise, feeling clothes on body, smell of your own home, etc.) Give examples of situations where you noticed these things. What did you think was happening in your brain at those times?

Brain research related to lesson exploration is laid out for instructor, along with supporting illustration.

Language and modeling help instructor make the brain research link understandable to students.

This two-page spread offers an opportunity for preparing and front-loading the main lesson, so that students are most receptive to the language and ideas that follow.

Getting Ready

The core lesson ties in with wider self-management and awareness skills. Materials used are basic and usually already available in the classroom or as reproducible pages.

Getting Ready

Listen Up!
Students listen to a variety of sounds and identify the source of the sound. They hear during the Audio Alert lesson.

GOALS

- Students train their attention on specific sounds and try to identify those sounds.
- Students learn how mindful listening skills can help them communicate more successfully.

MATERIALS

- Common objects for creating sounds or a set of sound effects downloaded from the Internet (search for "free sound effects").
- Audio Alert/Present Scent activity sheet (p. 154)

CREATING THE OPTIMISTIC CLASSROOM
Classroom Management Told students, "The tone of your voice can say as much as the words you speak." Ask students if they can detect the mood of a friend, family member, or teacher by carefully listening to the tone of that person's voice. Help them understand that the tone we use gives our words an emotional charge that can strengthen or hurt our relationships. Encourage students to be mindful of the way they communicate their feelings through speech. Pair up students and have them practice modulating their tone in three different ways using the phrase "I can't talk right now" and then discuss the feelings each tone conveyed.

MINDUP Warm-Up

Mindful Listening Practice
Build background for this lesson with an auditory-kinesthetic rhythm exercise. Give students a rhythmic clapping and snapping pattern to follow (e.g., clap, snap, snap, clap, snap, snap). Call on students to create their own easy rhythms (three to five beats), then ask them to try increasingly challenging patterns (six to eight beats).

When students are able to come up with unique patterns and repeat the patterns of their peers, organize the class in groups of six to ten and have them play a rhythmic listening game, seated in a circle. Give each group a basic pattern or have the group come up with its own. One at a time, students present a variation on the basic pattern and repeat their new version, using the group to repeat their pattern the third time.

Suggestions:

- Limit the variations to six or eight beats to avoid too much complexity.
- Model how to make the variation rhythmically interesting by dividing or omitting beats, for example.
- In between turns, encourage the group to return to the original pattern, so it remains fresh in students' minds.

Discuss: What did you have to do in order to keep track of the pattern? How is this kind of listening similar to or different from the kind of listening you do in class? In conversations with friends?

Before each core lesson, a simple preparatory activity helps both teacher and student know what to expect from the lesson and think in advance about how it may be useful in a broader context of learning.

Suggestions for managing classroom, supporting brain-based learning, and helping second language learners address common obstacles to attentiveness and full engagement with learning.