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Mental Health in the School System: Providing Tools and Resources For Teachers

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Mental Health in the School System: Providing Tools and Resources For Teachers

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BACKGROUND

Mental health awareness has become a frequent topic of discussion in today's culture. However, there is often discomfort associated with addressing the mental health concerns of others. We have seen a rise in mental health illness rates over the past 10 to 20 years in the population as a whole, but most significantly in children and adolescents with symptoms arising around the age of 14 years old (Healthy Youth Survey, 2018; US Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 2018). Due to the high ratio of children to school psychologists, mental health is not being adequately addressed in the school system, consequently allowing many children to go without needed services. Staff and teachers do not feel confident in providing mental health strategies to their students (Lynagh, Gilligan, & Handley, 2010; Rothi, et. al, 2008; Walter, Gouze, & Lim, 2006).

PROBLEM

Mental health of students is not being properly addressed in the school systems due the limited confidence of teachers and school staff to address issues (Blackwell & Billics, 2017; Lynagh et al., 2010; Rothi, et. al, 2008; Walter et al., 2006).

PURPOSE

To Develop a Mindfulness Toolkit Product for Teachers to Implement with their Classrooms

Learning and Outcome objectives:
a) Conduct a needs assessment through interviews, observation, and surveying of school faculty/staff on perceptions of mental health symptoms, coping, and mindfulness programs/products already in place
b) Collaborate with school district administrators on program objectives and implementation to ensure long-term carryover of product materials and resources
c) Implement the developed mindfulness product with at least 5 teachers at Skyline Elementary by Week 7
d) Monitor implementation of product practices and carryover in the classroom by observing, interviewing, and surveying teachers/staff
e) Participate in routine communication and training sessions with teacher/staff involved in the project throughout the 6 weeks of implementation, with at least weekly contact with each participating teacher/staff
f) Evaluate results of effectiveness of product implementation by interviewing, observing, surveying, and obtaining written feedback from teachers/staff by Week 16

METHODS

- 5 teachers and 2 'other' school staff recruited from Lake Stevens School District
- Conducted a needs assessment with school personnel
- Participants received a Mindfulness Toolkit including 6 mindfulness themes & activities

PROJECT

Mindfulness Toolkit Components

1) Breathing Exercises
2) Heartbeat Exercise
3) Emotions Wheel
4) Being Present
5) Positive Affirmations
6) Mindful Movements

YouTube Video: This video was created during the implementation phase in order to provide future educators and schools with an explanation of the project and of each mindful activity.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ftcOD3nirw&t=8s

Script: A script was created and added in response to participating teachers' feedback about needing more directions and suggestions per activity

Results:

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the feedback forms were unable to be obtained at the conclusion of the project but brought rise to the below document. However verbal feedback was given throughout the duration of the project which included verbalizing the enjoyment of certain activities such as the breathing exercises and the mindful movements as well as suggestions for the future.
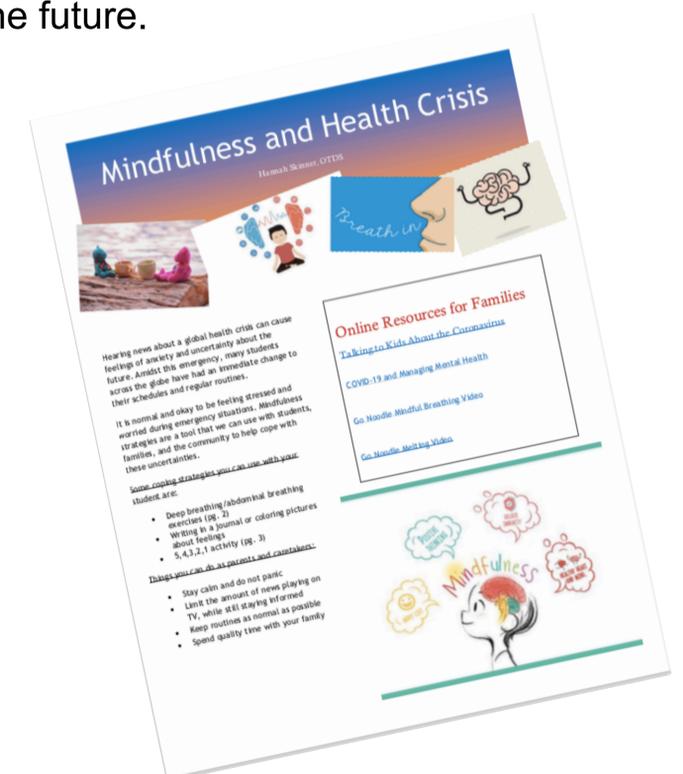
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