

Students at John Marshall High School Shape the Future of Teen Mental Health Through Mindfulness

BACKGROUND

70% of teens report depression and anxiety are major problems in their life, yet only 35% report knowing how to cope with it. Stress negatively impacts their lives, friendships, school performance, relationships with family members, and their longterm success.

Thanks to a grant from LG Electronics USA, students at John Marshall High School in Los Angeles, California are utilizing daily mindfulness with Inner Explorer as a preventative mental health measure.

Initially introduced by Educator Elena Kelly, students started practicing mindfulness with Inner Explorer at the beginning of each school day. Over time, their daily practice in the classroom inspired a larger mental health initiative among students.

Using mindfulness as the foundation, students created the Wellness Advisory – a student-led organization that uses the LG Electronics Six Sustainable Happiness skills to improve the mental health and well-being of the school community.

"Success in school is linked to greater opportunities in life. One of the most effective practices used to lead children towards their highest potential by bolstering academic performance, creativity, social and emotional aptitude, and well-being is mindfulness," shares Inner Explorer Chief Strategy Officer Lisa Grady.

91% Of students at John Marshall High School selected "yes" when asked if they would like to continue practicing daily mindfulness with Inner Explorer.

Mindfulness is foundational to the other five skills, which include Human Connection, Gratitude, Positive Outlook, Purpose, and Generosity; these are researchbacked skills that can be taught, learned, and practiced to improve happiness and well-being, as defined by the LG Experience Happiness initiative.

“Daily mindfulness has a powerful way of helping teens open up. When you are self-aware, you notice what is on your mind and communicate that with others. In this way, it paves the way for Human Connection, Gratitude, Positive Outlook, Purpose, and Generosity.”
-Elena Kelly, Educator



Mindfulness



Human Connection



Gratitude



Positive Outlook



Purpose



Generosity

"The Wellness Advisory has become part of the fabric of this school; [the student members] change hearts and minds on campus. They say things like 'Hey, you should try a moment of mindfulness,' or 'Are you having a hard day? How is your breathing?' Without them, these types of interactions wouldn't be happening."

-Mark Roeder, English and Math Teacher

DISTRICT-WIDE SUCCESS

The Wellness Advisory initiatives center around creating an open, inviting, and inclusive community. A few of their projects to date include:

- **Dedicated Wellness Room:** A safe space for students to practice mindfulness and hold Advisory meetings, which all begin with an Inner Explorer practice.
- **"Say Hey" Days:** Dedicated school days where students and staff are encouraged to greet people they have never talked to before or eat lunch with them to build community and prevent social isolation.
- **"You Have a Friend" Effort:** Students wrote letters to the elderly who were isolated during the pandemic to connect and cheer them up.

The Wellness Advisory has been so successful that Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) implemented a similar concept in other schools.

WHAT STUDENTS HAVE TO SAY

Students offer their perspective on the Wellness Advisory and how the Six Sustainable Happiness Skills make a positive impact on their mental health and well-being.



Mindfulness

"I have anxiety and ADHD – I feel anxious all the time. By doing mindfulness, I'm able to center myself."



Human Connection

"It has been a beautiful experience to be a founding member of the Wellness Advisory because people from all different interests are coming together to make one big community."



Gratitude

"When I practice the Six Sustainable Happiness Skills, I feel like I am able to appreciate life more."

Additionally, following the success that mindfulness continues to have at John Marshall, the district signed up to provide Inner Explorer in every school. **Inner Explorer now serves all 1,100 schools that are part of LAUSD.**



Positive Outlook

"Seeing the Wellness Advisory members on campus is a boost of happiness."



Purpose

"We want to be role models. When you see other students practicing [mindfulness], you want to learn from them and experience it too."



Generosity

"The Wellness Advisory is a place where we can help ourselves and then learn how we can better help others."



Did You Know?

A portion of the most recent COVID-19 Relief Funding can be used towards Mindfulness-Based Social Emotional Learning programs, such as Inner Explorer. [Learn more here.](#)

MBSEL AND ACADEMICS

In addition to mental health benefits, mindfulness is linked to improved academics. Results from a landmark meta-analysis that looked across 213 studies involving over 270,000 students found that SEL interventions that address the five core competencies increased academic performance by 11 percentile points, compared to students who did not participate.

The five core competencies, as defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), are self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness.



Inner Explorer is a CASEL-approved Mindfulness-Based Social Emotional Learning (MBSEL) program; it cultivates the core competencies by using daily mindfulness as the foundation.

With just 5-10 minutes of daily practice, MBSEL reduces fight or flight reactivity and stress, while improving higher-order thinking and learning. As a result, schools and districts often report improved academics with the use of the Inner Explorer program.

At John Marshall, the number of students who exceeded expectations in English Language Arts and Math both increased significantly between the 2017- 2018 school year when the Wellness Advisory was started and the following 2018-2019 school year.

15%

Increase in the number of students who exceeded expectations in English Language Arts from the 2017-2018 school year to the 2018-2019 school year.

Increase in the number of students who exceeded expectations in Math from the 2017-2018 school year to the 2018-2019 school year.

19%

Learn more about Inner Explorer MBSEL programs by visiting InnerExplorer.org. If your district is interested in implementing our program, contact us at info@innerexplorer.org.

Inner Explorer, Be Strong, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Discovery Education, and the Greater Good Science Center are partners in bringing happiness to 5.5 million teens in the United States as part of the LG Electronics USA Experience Happiness Initiative. We invite you to learn more about our partners by visiting their websites linked below.

