

Mindfulness Program:

At Jackson, we incorporate Mindfulness into the curriculum. It represents a way of being and thinking that includes paying attention, on purpose, and without judgment to what is happening at the moment. Mindfulness is a way of focusing on our experiences and it helps us live our lives in a healthier way. It is a way of deliberately slowing down to take notice of what is going on both inside of us (our thoughts and feelings) and outside of us (in our environment.) Being mindful means to turn off our auto-pilot and actually pause and be aware of what is happening in the moment. We often instruct our children to "pay attention" but we also need to teach them *how* to do that. There has been a great deal of research done to show that a well-rounded education needs to include social-emotional learning, including mindfulness. Learning self-regulation skills has been shown to improve social and emotional skills as well as academic performance. For many years here at Jackson, we have been practicing a mindfulness exercise twice daily when we all stop what we are doing for peaceful breathing.

Dr. Schwartz visits our Kindergarten classes with bimonthly push-in lessons to teach the MindUp curriculum. These lessons offer strategies for helping students focus their attention, improve their self-regulation skills, build resilience to stress, and develop a positive mind-set in both school and life. The goals of the lessons include teaching a basic link between the brain and body and emotions, increasing focus on our senses, calming our mind, slowing down and paying attention. Some of the ideas the students learn about include mindful versus unmindful behavior, being mindful of others and taking different perspectives, the concept of gratitude, and how to choose optimism. In 2nd grade, Ms. Seymour teaches how the brain is affected by a mindfulness practice and how students can make choices that help them self-regulate. She teaches mindfulness lessons in the upper grades to include gratitude and social emotional literacy skills like active listening.