

Peacekeepers Program

At Jackson, we have a Peacekeepers Program that promotes the understanding that we are all peacekeepers and it is our responsibility to create peace in our school and world. We use the research based curriculum Connected and Respected to teach lessons that promote social-emotional literacy and peaceable conflict resolution. Students are encouraged to use learned skills that promote peace such as active listening and "I" messages. Ms. Seymour and classroom teachers implement lessons that promote community building and social emotional literacy skills every day at home and at school in their daily interactions.

Students are also taught Peaceful Breathing throughout all grades. This is a research-based mindfulness technique that teaches calming of the body-mind. Students sit quietly and focus their attention on the breath as they inhale and exhale. Research shows that practicing mindfulness engages the parasympathetic nervous system, calming the body-mind, and changes the brain in ways that develop attention, concentration, well-being, and positive emotions like compassion. When we ring chimes over the loudspeaker in the morning and the afternoon, students stop everything to take a moment and become mindful by practicing Peaceful Breathing.

Our Student Leaders, are volunteer 5th graders that under the supervision of Dr. Stacey Schwartz and Ms. Milissa Seymour, get involved in planning and creating activities during the year that encourage school spirit and make positive connections in the school community and beyond. For example, they organize a week we call Peace Week around the International Day of Peace which provides us with an opportunity to create acts of peace and to kick off learning peaceable conflict resolution skills. In celebration of National Bullying Prevention month, they organize Bully Awareness Week during which we all make a commitment to having our school be a bully-free zone and encourage positive behavior. Be Kind Spirit Week involves different activities that encourage kindness amongst us. In addition to the spirit weeks, the student leaders also traditionally organize at least one fund raising campaign each year. The past few years they have organized collections for Island Harvest.

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.