



LD Connections Newsletter

May 2017



With May come Mother's Day!

The modern holiday of Mother's Day was first celebrated in 1908, when Anna Jarvis held a memorial for her mother at St Andrew's Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia. St Andrew's Methodist Church now holds the International Mother's Day Shrine. Her campaign to make "Mother's Day" a recognized holiday in the United States began in 1905, the year her mother, Ann Reeves Jarvis, died. Ann Jarvis had been a peace activist who cared for wounded soldiers on both

sides of the American Civil War, and created Mother's Day Work Clubs to address public health issues. Anna Jarvis wanted to honor her mother by continuing the work she started and to set aside a day to honor all mothers, because she believed that they were "the person who has done more for you than anyone in the world" From all of us at LDAWC we will you all a Happy Mother's day to be shared with the special women in your life

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Mindfulness for Kids: Learning Emotional Regulation in School

www.todaysparent.com

As morning recess ends at Bracebridge Public School, a kindergarten to grade eight school in Ontario's cottage country, the grade fours and fives of room 128 shuffle upstairs to their class, everyone talking in outdoor voices. Most are slow to settle. Back in their homeroom, a boy in a black-and-white hoodie stops at the aptly named Mindfulness Corner set up beside the coat rack.

The spot, outfitted with a table, gives students a place to go if they need a minute to calm down. A poster encourages kids to "Just be in the moment" and a Post-it reads "Breathe and smile." The boy leans over the table and, with his hands on his tummy, takes three deep breaths before quietly completing a finger maze.

Laura Dursley, the school's new vice-principal, has invited me to sit in on her weekly 11:10 a.m. mindfulness lesson with this class. Alongside learning reading comprehension, mastering decimals and studying the medieval period, these students are getting an education in emotions.

Bracebridge PS is one of dozens in the Trillium Lakelands District School Board that are integrating mindfulness in the curriculum as a tool to decrease student anxiety and stress and to increase concentration, attention span, self-regulation, compassion and self-esteem.

Mindfulness is a centuries-old concept rooted in meditation. It was widely introduced in the late-1970s by Jon Kabat-Zinn, an American doctor who developed mindfulness classes for patients dealing with all sorts of physical and mental ailments, and it has become increasingly popular over the past 20 years. It's all about paying attention to your breathing and focusing on what's happening in the moment in a non-judgmental way—which is easier said than done.

Doctors prescribe it to patients suffering from everything from cancer and migraines to anxiety, depression and adult ADHD, and major corporations have bought in, too (Google offers regular sessions to employees). It's now creeping into elementary school classrooms in the United States and Canada, particularly in BC and Ontario.



Regulating emotions

Nine- and ten-year-olds often have a tough time settling after transitions, which makes Dursley's post-morning-recess mindfulness lesson perfectly timed to focus and calm them for the rest of the day. Dursley instructs the students to take a seat around her, and then she pulls a singing bowl—a standing bell used in meditation, relaxation and music—out of her prop basket and asks the class what they're to do when they hear the chime.

"We close our eyes and when we don't hear it anymore we open them," says one girl. "We think about our breathing," another replies. When Dursley strikes the bowl, the kids close their eyes almost en masse. She instructs the quiet group to feel the air rush in and out through their nose and to notice the rise and fall of their belly with each inhale and exhale.

When the ringing stops everyone's eyes open. "How was that?" she asks. A student shares that his mind had wandered away from his breathing. "Our minds are busy places, and even busier when we get upset or frustrated," Dursley says, nodding reassuringly.

"Do you know the word 'anchor'? Remember that your breath is like an anchor that keeps you in the moment," she says as she pulls out a two-litre pop bottle filled with glitter in pink water. "The sparkles are what your minds look like when there's lots going on in your head or when you're angry," she says, shaking the bottle. "When you focus on your breathing instead of reacting, you'll see that the sparkles sink and the water becomes calmer and clear. This is what our minds look like when we concentrate on our breathing. When we're calm it helps us make clear, wise decisions."

For the next half-hour, the students practise breathing exercises. They end the session with Dursley asking which mindfulness activity they've most enjoyed. Their answers are pretty telling. "I could feel my breath more and calmed down when I looked at the sparkles in the bottle," says one girl. A boy responds: "When I come back from recess I relax when I hear the singing bowl."

Promising mindfulness research

Many educators believe it's about time mindfulness has made its way into the classroom. If the Toronto District School Board's recent survey on student mental health is any indication, it's long overdue.

According to the board's 2011–12 Student & Parent Census, released in June 2013, almost a third of the grade seven and eight students surveyed said they are concerned about relationship issues such as making friends and fitting in; nearly half worry about family matters all the time or often; the majority have anxiety about schoolwork all the time or often; 59 percent worry about their future; and 11 percent feel unable to overcome difficulties all the time or often.

Introducing mindfulness practice in schools has been the source of some controversy. Some parents and educators have questioned whether it's too close to its Buddhist roots to be appropriate in secular schools, and others question whether it's the best use of classroom time. But the evidence for its emotional and behavioural benefits is mounting.

Early research suggests mindfulness can help alleviate student anxiety and improve learning. A 2009 study published in *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion* found students learning about mindfulness reported being more relaxed and calm following their training.

Another study, out of the University of California, Los Angeles, found that kids in grades two and three who learned mindfulness techniques for an hour a week for eight weeks could better regulate their behaviour and showed improvement in executive functions, such as paying attention, making decisions and focusing without getting distracted.

One of the big players in mindfulness education is MindUP, a program founded by actress Goldie Hawn and developed with a team of neuroscientists, cognitive psychologists and educators. MindUP offers in-school training for educators as well as resource guides for pre-kindergarten to grade eight. University of British Columbia researchers found the program had a positive effect on students' emotional control, academics, empathy, stress regulation and attentiveness.

Seeing real-life benefits

Parents and educators alike are seeing the positive impact of mindfulness lessons.

Sandra Northmore, whose daughter, Morgan, is in grade seven at Bracebridge PS, was introduced to mindfulness 10 years ago while dealing her mother's cancer diagnosis. She didn't know her daughter was learning the practice in school until they were renovating their home in 2012. "It was a very stressful time. Morgan sat my husband and I down and asked us to close our eyes and she walked us through a breathing meditation. It was a huge surprise and created calm for the whole family," she remembers.

After a few years practising mindfulness at school, it's become Morgan's default for healthfully dealing with stress outside school, too. "When she's busy, she centres herself by closing her eyes and taking deep breaths."



What's more, says Northmore, mindfulness education has far-reaching benefits. "This is a life skill that can support their years of education, their home life and their future as an adult. It can create a more thoughtful community at school, reducing unkind behaviours and enhancing a positive learning experience."

For Morgan, who is two years away from the pressures of high school, the lessons have been invaluable. "School can be demanding, and it creates calm and balance to better get through the day," she says.

Educators at Bracebridge PS are seeing positive results, says Dursley. There's less bullying and conflict in class, and when there is, students are not as quick to lash out in mean-spirited ways. Students are more thoughtful and empathetic and can better articulate and regulate their emotions. Overall, there's a happier atmosphere in the hallways and on the playground.

The exercises the school has implemented—lessons, classroom mindfulness corners and a mindful moment during morning announcements that involves standing in mountain pose as chimes ring—is one reason for a greater sense of compassion in the school. "The kids are now better able to remember strategies they can use to keep calm when they are anxious, angry or upset," she says.

Mindfulness from day one At W.T. Townshend Public School in Kitchener, Ont., kindergarten **teacher** Jennifer Evans is also using mindfulness tools in her classroom. "We have found that more and more elementary students are coming to school with some form of anxiety, and this seemed like a way we could help them control that worrying," she says.



As a complement to a school-wide mindful moment each morning, Evans uses a "calm down" beanbag chair, squishy balls, deep breaths and books—such as *Peaceful Piggy Meditation* and *Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda*—with her students. "Some of the children will go to the beanbag chair to calm their bodies and refocus their energies without us even prompting them," she says.

Health and wellness teacher Karen Snider, who spearheaded the practice at W.T. Townshend, tells her students—from kindergarten to grade six—that mindfulness lets us notice how we’re feeling, which can help us calm down when “big emotions” occur. “It’s an exercise for our brain. Like people lift weights to get stronger, we can strengthen our brain by taking time each day to practise mindfulness,” she says.

Snider uses the MindUP curriculum, and lessons from the Inner Kids and Mindful Schools programs. The response from colleagues has been so positive that she’s running lunch-and-learn sessions for teachers to work on their practice. “They say it starts the day on a calmer note and lets the kids give themselves some quiet grounding breaths to ease into class,” she says. “We’ve also had supportive feedback from parents—many have expressed gratitude for offering this kind of social and emotional learning.”

Mom Stacey Arnold has seen big changes in her son, Blake, 7, and daughter, Paige, 4, who both attend W.T. Townshend. Paige, who’s in JK, is already well-versed in the techniques. “She often describes things as green (good) or red (bad) choices and discusses how each affects others. For example, she’ll say to her brother, ‘Blake, please stop pushing me. That is a red choice and it hurts me. Make a green choice and say you’re sorry,’” Arnold says. “Before mindfulness, she would just push him back and it would turn into a fight between them.”

Snider’s passion for mindfulness has made it a significant part of the health curriculum at the school. “The idea of teaching kids a practice that can help them know themselves better, be more resilient and learn how to recognize their emotions was something the entire staff wanted to bring into the classroom,” she says. “And what better place to learn it and turn it into habit than in elementary school? We can give a generation of kids the skill set they need to help them deal with all that life throws at them.”

- How has the assignment been introduced?
- What pressure is connected to the public speaking assignment?
- Is there a way as a class to better prepare and support one another during the public speaking so it feels safer to attempt?

These conversations can be done with mindfulness by practicing non-judgment of each person’s sharing, along with listening with kindness and compassion. coupled with the breathing meditation activities, these are some great ways to apply mindfulness to the situation you have described.





Idawc • Learning Disabilities
Association of Wellington County

The right to learn, the power to achieve

**Are you looking to meet other parents and share
your experiences?**



When: May 24th and June 14th @ 7:00pm

Where: RLB Guelph, 197 Hanlon Creek Blvd Unit 103

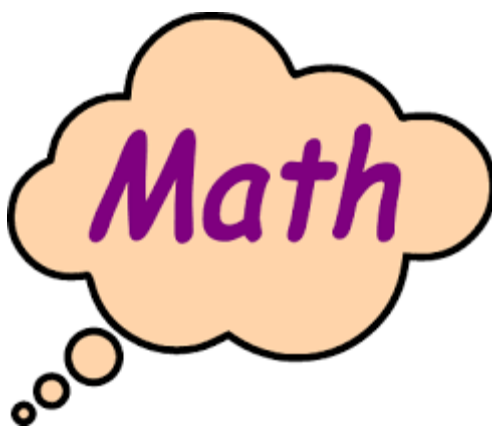
If you're interested, we would like to hear from you!

info@ldawc.ca or 519-837-2050

Math Manipulatives: Tools to Help All Students Become Effective Problem Solvers www.ldatschool.ca

[The video for this transcript can be viewed at www.ldatschool.ca](http://www.ldatschool.ca)

Many students struggle with math. The thought of juggling algebra, geometry and fractions is enough to make them anxious. But for students with learning disabilities – LDs – math may be more challenging. Students with LDs may have trouble learning number facts, doing calculations, understanding visuospatial relationships or solving math problems. These difficulties mean that on paper, math often looks like a bunch of abstract symbols. Jeff Richardson commented When they try to solve a problem, they're trying to pull out of their memory which procedure do I use and they can't so then they go blank. If they have understanding instead and realize that math is based on concepts, then they can try to attack the problem in a variety of different ways and they are much more likely to come up with a solution or at least get themselves started down a certain path. If the numbers hadn't worked out where they were identical on the top, what tool could you use to solve this? Teachers at Sagonaska Demonstration School are using manipulatives – concrete materials like algebra tiles, snap cubes and coloured rods – to help students at all grade levels improve their mathematical reasoning and problem solving. Looking at symbols doesn't really have any meaning for them. So if they look at a series of numbers, that doesn't have any kind of meaning for them. So manipulatives really give the kids conceptual understanding so math isn't this big, magic mystery.



Moving away from paper and pencil learning, manipulatives allow students to demonstrate their thinking. They don't have to hold as much information in their working memory which allows them to focus on the task at hand.

We see such an amazing benefit to using math manipulatives because it provides the students with that concrete awareness and that hands-on experience of actually touching and feeling manipulatives, instead of just seeing them symbolically. But now they can manipulate them literally and move them around and explore. Many students with LDs have strong visual reasoning, so being able to see math concepts right in front of them helps them build a deeper understanding of the math. I think that anytime that we can access multiple senses – so they can see it, they can feel it, they can speak to it, they can touch it – is really, really important cause we know that students with learning disabilities can have or usually do have deficits in their working memory. And anytime they need to hold onto information and manipulate it in their brain, if they can do that using hands-on skills, then they're able to show their learning and that just maximizes their ability to show their understanding with manipulatives. Combined with manipulatives, students at Sagonaska also use tablets in math class to help convey their understanding of math concepts. Mr. Brown showed me how to do dividing and multiplying with the integers and adding. I found it harder to do that with pen and paper and show my work. I understood it, but I didn't know how to show it. And using the iPad, I can do videos and voiceovers and then he can still look at that and grade me on what I know cause I couldn't show my work properly on pen and paper, and using the iPad and manipulatives, it makes it a lot easier for me to show it. Students are encouraged to try different approaches with the manipulatives and take risks to discover the answers for themselves. The nice thing about manipulatives too is that as they're exploring, they might be slightly going down the wrong path and they're able to just rearrange the manipulatives and that doesn't feel the same as if you're using paper and pencil and having to scratch something out. Manipulatives also allow students to start thinking of themselves as problem solvers which helps them gain confidence in their abilities. I've seen students who come in not liking math, feeling like math is just a bunch of tricks. They need something else. They need to have some other ways of showing their thinking because they're bright students, but they just haven't had the opportunity to do that. And so if everything is given to them symbolically, if they don't have good number sense, they're not gonna recognize patterns and they're not gonna be successful. So they need to have opportunities to show what they know as well. I'm a very hands-on guy, so you gotta it's easier just to touch it and then actually like move them around. Like take it apart and put together. And then actually count and touch and see. At Sagonaska, all students have a digital portfolio where they can document their learning and work, which in turns helps them, their teachers and their parents see how they're improving. Technology has helped me a lot. Like using Book

Creator for work and handing in assignments and stuff like that, it's so much easier than doing it all on paper. Mr. Richardson handed out like a format, and then we just have to fill it all in. So here's like a blank one. And then you have to go in and answer all the questions. And he can put audio in there so we just listen to it. Using manipulatives and tablets or digital tools in math class doesn't only benefit students with LDs. Hands-on exploration means that students don't need to rely on math tricks and memorization. What I find is students have a really fragile understanding of the math then. And as soon as something gets changed, they're not able to change with it, they're not flexible thinkers because of all a sudden the procedure is broken or they've forgotten it. We all know students who freeze on tests. And I think a lot of the reason they freeze is because they've memorized everything and then come test day, they've forgotten it and they can't regenerate the procedure cause they didn't really understand it in the first place.

Sagonaska recently hosted a workshop where students demonstrated how they're using manipulatives and tablet applications like Book Creator, See Saw and Algebra Touch in math class. X is equal to 45. At the workshop, educators learned how to incorporate manipulatives in math class to help students with LDs. You have to add three red in so you have them to take away. Using manipulatives, educators worked in small groups to solve math problems while visually representing their thinking. So add this all together we have 100 plus. By putting themselves in their students' shoes, educators familiarized themselves with manipulatives and deepened their own understanding of how manipulatives could be used to support their students' learning sure where they're going to go with students and that's okay. We have to make sure that we model that. For students with LDs, manipulatives like algebra tiles, snap cubes and coloured rods are effective learning tools that can improve their mathematical reasoning and problem solving.

Digital Mathematics: Bringing Google g(Math) into the Classroom- June 1st 2017

Presented by: Keirsten Pugh, OCT, LEARNstyle Ltd.

Grade level: All grades

Level of knowledge: Intermediate

Intended audience: Educators, Administrators, and Special Education Support Staff with previous knowledge on learning disabilities

For more information please visit <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/1009979877727177474>



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Association of Wellington County

The right to learn, the power to achieve



Join us for Family Math Night!

Come and learn all about math through a variety of activities for your child. This program is designed for children ages 6-12 years old and will provide opportunities for learning with the whole family.

When: Tuesday May 30th 2017 6:30pm-8:30pm

Where: Brant Avenue Public School, 64 Brant Avenue Guelph

Cost: FREE

How: Email us at info@ldawc.ca to register



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Are you the parent of a troubled teen? You're not alone!

Guelph Parenting Young Adults & Teens Conference



Is this you?

I carry my wallet with me everywhere I go.

I check the liquor cabinet regularly to see if anything is missing.

I spend sleepless nights wondering where my child is.

I'm intimidated by my child's anger or rage.

I'm embarrassed by my child's appearance and foul language.

I'm tired of feeding and cleaning up after my child and his friends.

I tell lies to cover up for my child's behaviour.



Is this your child?

Your son stays out all night and sleeps all day.

Your once happy daughter is now sullen and withdrawn.

Your son leaves his room only to meet his dealer.

Your daughter is promiscuous.

Your child's friends hang out at your house and steal from you.

Your son smashes holes in the walls.

I don't seem able to connect to my son or daughter.



Has this happened?

I'm tired of getting calls from the school or the police.

I feel helpless. I fear for my child's future.

I sometimes feel like a failure as a parent.

I tell lies to cover up for my child's behaviour.

My child frequently disrupts our family's routines.

I argue with my spouse over how to deal with our child.

I did everything the experts told me to do and it didn't work!

Speakers | Workshops | Presentations
Stress - Anxiety - Sexuality - Addiction
Social Media - Suicide Awareness

Saturday May 27, 2017 | 9 to 4
Bishop Macdonell High School
Tickets \$25 | Two or More \$20

How do I succeed as a parent
of teenagers and young adults?

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Keynote Speaker

Dr. Karyn Gordon
Building Resilience



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Our Upcoming Workshops- Spring 2017



May 31st 2017- Transitions to Secondary and the IEP process

Navigating the IEP process sometimes raises questions, come and learn how this process may look different as your child enters secondary school. Sue Shaw is a field professional and parent that has in-depth knowledge and experience working with and navigating the IEP document as well as the process around its facilitation. She will be leading this session on this popular topic.

Where: Community Living Guelph 8 Royal Road- 7:00pm-9:00pm

June 14th 2017- Supporting Summer Learning through Tutoring

Schools almost out but children still need some support over those summer months. Come and learn how to support your child and keep them engaged during those summer months. Laurie Few is our presenter for this session and brings with her an in-depth knowledge around learning and the process of effective tutoring. She has worked with the Wellington County Learning Centre for many years and has great strategies and resources for families interested in tutoring.

Where: Fergus Sportsplex 550 Belyde Avenue East- 10:00am- 12:00pm

Pre-Registration is required for all of our workshops, in the event that registration is low we will cancel sessions.

*****Fees for our workshops are \$10 for members of LDAO and \$15 for non-members, to register as a member please refer to page 11 for our application form*****



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Useful Links

Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance

<http://www.caddra.ca/>

People for Education

<http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/profile/child-advocacy-project-cap/>

LDA Ontario

<http://www.ldao.ca>

Special Needs Ontario Window (SNOW)

www.snow.idrc.ocad.ca

Totally ADD

<http://totallyadd.com/>

The We All Learn Differently Organization

www.thewald.org

Learning Potentials

www.learningpotentials.com

Family Anatomy

www.familyanatomy.com

Alexandre G. Tavares, MD, FRCPC

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

Medical Centre

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Don't forget to like us on facebook for the chance to learn about information and events happening in your communities!

www.facebook.com/LDAWellingtonCounty



You can also find us on Twitter!

@lda_wellington



Events

Conscious Care and Support Workshop

Presented by: KidsAbility

May 6 @ 9:00am-12:00pm

Cost: Free

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/conscious-care-support-workshop-with-peter-marks-tickets-32594743756>

Parent Tool Kit Workshop: "Organizing the Disorganized Learner"

Presented by: LDA Oakville

May 17 @ 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Cost: Free

<http://www.ldao.ca/event/parent-tool-kit-workshop-organizing-the-disorganized-learner-oakville/>

Workshop: "Investigating ADHD"

LDA Hamilton

June 14 @ 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Free

<http://www.ldao.ca/event/workshop-investigating-adhd-hamilton/>



LDAWC 3rd Annual Family Conference

We will be hosting our 3rd annual Family Conference on Saturday October 21st

Where: Guelph, location TBA

Cost: FREE

How: Registration information to be circulated shortly

LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM



Mr. Mrs. Miss Dr.

New Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____

Chapter Affiliation: _____

Please check this box if you agreed to receive your copies of Communiqué by email in the future

E-mail address: _____

Type of Yearly Membership (please check one)

Family/Individual \$50.00 Professional \$75.00
Institutional \$125.00 Student \$20.00 (ID # Required)

Type of Payment

Cash (only if paying in person) Cheque (payable to LDAO) Money Order Visa Master Card
Card # _____ Expiry Date: _____

Name as it appears on the Credit Card: _____ Signature: _____

Benefits of Membership for all Members:

- Discount to LDA Programs and services
- Communiqué (Provincial) newsletter – 2 times per year (5 copies each printing of Communiqué for Professional and 10 each for Institutional members)
- National newsletter – 1 time per year (5 copies each printing of National for Professional and 10 each for Institutional members)
- Chapter newsletters (frequency varies from Chapter to Chapter)

Please make all payments payable to LDAO and forward to:

LDAO Membership Coordinator

365 Bloor Street East, Box 39 Ste. 1004, Toronto, ON M4W 3L4

Phone: 416-929-4311, ext 21 Fax 416-929-3905

Website: www.LDAO.ca



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