



# Mansfield Health & Wellness Newsletter

*The Health And Wellness Advisory Council (HWAC) is comprised of school administrators, nurses, guidance counselors, teachers, parents, community leaders and student delegates. Our mission is to provide and develop educational Health & Wellness resources, and to promote and support the physical and social/emotional health of our school community. The council serves as a common ground for all grade levels to share ideas and look for support in areas of need.*

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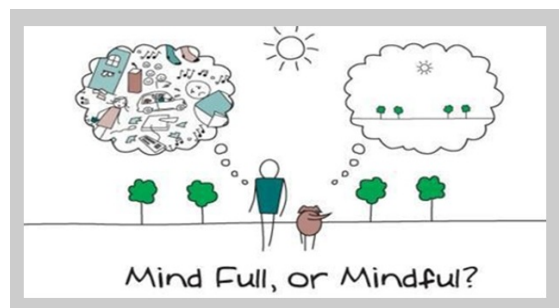


## Mindfulness in the Classroom

Counselors and teachers at Robinson and Jordan/Jackson continue to work on initiatives which bring mindfulness into our classrooms. The mind-body connection is explained in age-appropriate terms while incorporating useable tools students can put into practice. Counselors begin classroom discussions and our teachers continue their progress. The framework is easily woven into existing lesson plans creating a richer and more relevant learning environment.

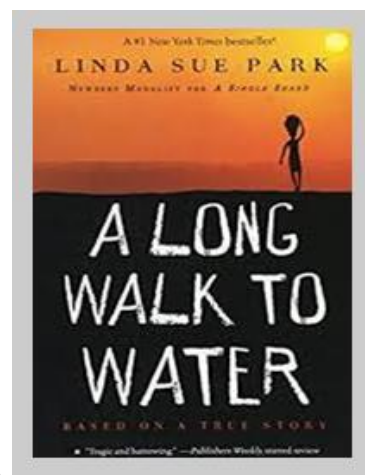
Kindergarten classrooms are encouraged to incorporate the *We Thinkers!* social explorer's package. This series helps children build fundamental social competencies and improve their academic performance by exploring concepts of thinking with your eyes, following the group plan, and whole body listening. Other curriculum being introduced to interested classrooms includes the *MindUp* program. These lessons offer easy strategies for helping students focus their attention, build resilience to stress, and develop a positive mind-set in both school and life.

Student and teachers alike are embracing these techniques.



## One Book One World

With support from MESA, our fifth graders took part in The Global Read Aloud Program. The goal of a global book club is to connect the whole world of readers through a single book. This year's teachers' choice was *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park. A copy of this bestselling book was purchased by MESA for every single child in the fifth grade. Classes connected with other students/educators from around the world to discuss the book through online live book talks, as well as a live-stream discussion with the book's protagonist, Salva Mawien Dut Ariik.



In this book, Newbury Medal winning author Linda Sue Park blends fact and fiction to tell a story of the civil war in Sudan (1983-2005), in which more than 20,000 "Lost Boys", as they were to become known globally, became displaced and/or orphaned. It includes the true story of Salva Dut, a Sudanese

"Lost Boy", and the fictional story of Nya, a young village girl carrying the literal and emotional burden of providing her family with their daily drinking water. The characters in this book face extreme hardship with both hope and perseverance.



Educators know books have the power to shape and develop strong, positive characters in children. *A Long Walk to Water* has been shown to have the power of helping to develop critical and emotional intelligence, while promoting the development of empathy that can lead to human engagement. As the author Linda Sue Park has stated, "Can a book change the world? No. Can the children who read that book change the world? Yes!"

This is clearly evidenced by the mile-long walk-a-thon organized by our students. Students carried a gallon of water around the perimeter of the East Street fields. Over \$12,000 was raised which went directly to [Water for Sudan](#). This organization improves the lives of Southern Sudanese people by helping to finance the drilling of wells, which subsequently enables residents to obtain fresh, safe drinking water and frees children from duties to attend school.

## Game Change: An Anti-Violence Partnership

Mansfield Public Schools is proud to announce its collaboration with Game Change: The Patriots Anti-Violence Partnership. Game Change is an innovative approach to healthy relationships and violence prevention education. The program, launched in 2015 by the New England Patriots Charitable Foundation and the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, provides training in anti-violence strategies to students, faculty, and coaches at public high schools across Massachusetts.



To date, Game Change has trained more than 1,000 students and educators in nearly 100 communities in the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) curriculum which is taught by the Center for Sport in Society at Northeastern University. MVP uses a sports-themed curriculum and employs collegiate athletes and former professional athletes as trainers. Online support tools as well as live trainings are used to effectively educate participants.

The goal of Game Change is to implement long-term anti-violence and healthy relationship education in Massachusetts schools. The focus is on developing peer leaders at the high school level who can provide training to their middle school counterparts about relationship boundaries and bystander intervention.

Game Change also fosters innovative partnerships that will pair schools with local domestic violence and sexual assault service providers to provide ongoing support. The advocacy programs will work with school administrators on policies and services for students and families dealing with violence. Mansfield is partnering with New Hope, a local, non-profit organization that supports victims of domestic violence and whose mission is to create communities free from violence and exploitation.

On October 12, student representatives participated in the Game Change Leadership Summit which was held at Gillette Stadium. Students worked with exemplary Game Change captains from across the state who have implemented creative programming in their schools. Students rotated through workshop sessions with topics that included defining respect, knowing your rights, and gender and the media.



## Parent Forum: Focus on Prevention



A parent forum on the "Dangers and Consequences of Addictive Substances" was held on October 3 at Mansfield High School. This event was organized by the Mansfield Public Schools in collaboration with the Mansfield Police Department.

Superintendent Teresa Murphy welcomed the crowd of parents and students, explained new state regulations requiring substance abuse screenings in our schools, and introduced the panel of speakers including Marilyn Edge, Director of the Tobacco Control Program for Bristol County; Dr. Lester Hartman of Westwood-Mansfield Pediatrics;

Detective Kenny Wright, School Resource Officer; Athletic Director Joe Russo; and Mansfield High School Assistant Principal Tim Tichacek.

Topics included health risks on the developing teen brain, electronic cigarettes, liquid nicotine products, and the new marijuana law. Marilyn Edge discussed current nicotine regulations, and showed the audience smokeless devices and products. Dr. Lester Hartman explained the risks of these activities and described marketing trends directed at youth. Detective Kenny Wright, Joe Russo and Tim Tichacek highlighted the consequences for students in legal terms, explaining both the MIAA regulations, school policy, and Mass General Law and how it relates to public schools, as well as the response process when students violate school policy. With any infraction, the focus is on supporting the student through the consequences.

Emphasis was placed on the proactive approach that Mansfield High School has adopted. Health classes adapt their curriculum with new developments. Our partnership with the Mansfield Police continues to develop as well as ties with other community agencies.

Speakers were available for questions in the lobby after the presentation.

## Substance Use Screening: SBIRT



In March, 2016, the Massachusetts Legislature passed bill House, No. 4056, the Opioid Bill, in response to the growing opioid crisis our state is facing. This law addresses addiction by passing a host of provisions related to education, treatment and prevention of drug addiction. The Act states that each school district must utilize a verbal screening tool to screen pupils for substance abuse disorders at two grade levels: one in the middle school and one in the high school.

Our screenings will occur in Grade 8 and Grade 10, and we will be using SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment), a verbal screening program. This program is endorsed by Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, as well as the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The purpose is to initiate a structured conversation to promote prevention and to identify early risk factors for substance use in middle and high school students.

After completing over a year of training, the nursing department and the guidance department will work together to implement this screening. School nurses will conduct the screenings and guidance will be available for support at all times. The program utilizes the CRAFT-II Interview tool which is a behavioral health screening instrument for use with children and is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Substance Abuse. It is a short, effective screening device meant to assess whether a longer conversation about the context of use, frequency, and other risks and consequences of alcohol and drug use is warranted.

The questions will be asked in a private setting where motivational interviewing will be used to reinforce and support safe choices. If a student is found to be making unsafe choices, guidance will be included in the dialogue and parents may be contacted to implement a plan to support the student. Parents may opt out their student by submitting a signed letter to their school nurse. Students may also choose not to answer any or all questions at the time of the screening. Information from the screening is confidential and no information will be recorded in the student records.

For more information, please see related links or call your school nurse.

Related Links:

[CRAFT-II Screening Tool](#)  
[Video: Overview of SBIRT in Schools](#)

## Supporting Students & Staff: SOS Education

Teen years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions which are difficult for teens, their parents, and educators. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression which is the most common of mental illnesses appears to be occurring at a much earlier age, and the past decade has seen teen suicide rates double. This year, our counselors at the middle and high school levels are introducing a new curriculum to students in health classes which proactively addresses any student concerns. *Signs of Suicide (SOS)*, a depression awareness and suicide prevention program, will be implemented in grades 7 and 9, as well as supplemental training for all secondary educators.



Staff-training included an overview of the new curriculum, timeline for implementation and a review of current school protocols in supporting at risk students. The training also included a workshop led by Rose Cheyette, Community Education and Outreach Coordinator for the Samaritans. Tools and resources for educators to respond to a student in crisis were discussed. School staff learned how to recognize risk factors and warning signs in their students, identify basic steps for getting students help, and discussed school protocols to destigmatize suicide and mental health in their school community.

In the classroom, the SOS program will encourage students to: Acknowledge, Care, Tell (ACT). The curriculum teaches students to acknowledge when there are signs of a problem in themselves or a peer, show they care and are concerned about getting help, and tell a trusted adult. Other goals include:

- Helping our students understand that depression is a treatable illness, and helping them assess whether or not they may have symptoms consistent with depression;
- Explaining that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression;
- Providing students training on how to identify serious depression and potential suicidality in a friend, family member, or themselves;
- Educating students that they can learn and use healthy effective strategies to manage stress, anxiety, anger, and other difficult feelings;
- Impressing upon teens that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a responsible adult about their concerns.

The students will take a self-assessment depression inventory which consists of simple non-invasive questions which will be reviewed after completion. If there are signs of depression and/or danger of suicide, the counselors will follow up with students on the same day. Parents will be informed if students are called for additional support and a plan will be initiated.



The SOS program has been used by thousands of schools and is well received by middle and high school students. It has proven successful at increasing help-seeking behavior by students concerned about themselves or a friend and is the only school-based suicide prevention program to show a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts.

[Samaritans Statewide Helpline](#)  
**(877) 870-4673**

"Health is not just about what you are eating. It is also about what you're thinking and saying."

~unknown

Jordan/Jackson Students and Staff sold flowers from their garden on curriculum night to support relief for Hurricane Harvey and Irma. Donations were made to the Red Cross Hurricane Relief Fund.



Our High School Volleyball teams organized an inclusive volleyball clinic open to all students with special needs. The students had an incredible time AND raised over \$2000 for Autsim Speaks!



Our Little Hornets Halloween Parade - Bringing Smiles to Our Staff!





Please visit our new webpage under the Parents link on the Mansfield Public Schools Home Page: [Health and Wellness Advisory Council](#). Page is also available under shortcuts on the home page. There are links to our home newsletter, school policy, and resources.

## Health & Wellness Advisory Council:

Chair	Teresa Murphy	Superintendent
Technical Advisor	Joshua Rapoza	Digital Learning Specialist
Wellness Coordinator	Christine Dooling	Director of Health Services



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