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| Name of Activity | Mindfulness Micro Hike |
| What grade level did you do it with? | 6 |
| What materials did you need to provide? | Nothing- just kids dressed for the weather and a large area for them to stand at an appropriate space from one another |
| What materials did your students need to provide? | Nothing |
| What materials did you use from the natural outdoor environment? | This can happen in any space and the students use their senses to experience whatever is around them |
| Describe your activity with as much detail as possible. This is a good place to put in the different steps or progressions that other teachers could use. The more detail and explanation about your activity including sample ideas, the better. | I selected a very short walking route around our school yard that was not where they normally play. This included an alley and breezeway that they had never walked down before. We set out on our walk with the instructions that they were to turn off their voices and use their senses. I explained that we have one mouth and two eyes and two ears. Using our eyes are our ears more that our mouths/voices can bring us peace and calm and can allow us to be present in our environment more fully. As we walked, I asked the students to be aware of their thoughts and to turn their attention to what is around them rather than what is in their minds. At two different locations, I asked the whole group to stop and stand still. I guided them through a 5 senses meditation. First, I asked them to name (to themselves, silently) 5 things that they could see around them. I invited them to really look at each object and describe it (including colour, size, shape). Next, I asked them to name 4 things that they feel. This could be their clothing, their feet on the ground, the air on their skin, the snow on their bare hands for example. The third step was to name 3 things that they could hear. Finding 2 things that they could smell and 1 thing that they could taste wrapped up the meditation. I explained that this is a way of bringing attention to their external world rather than thoughts that can make them anxious or ideas that could make them feel stuck. We continued walking around the short loop that I had chosen ahead of time. I made sure that each place we stopped offered new sights and sounds for them to focus on. |
| Describe how the activity went with the students and how you would adjust it the next time you do it. | The students struggled to stay silent during the micro hike. Because we were walking as a large group, they were next to their peers as we moved from one stopping place to the next. I would call the micro hike a Silent Micro Hike the next time so that the expectation of silence was clear right from the moment we left the school. I would also give direction around taking mindful steps next time. I would invite the students to feel their feet as each step was taken in between stopping points. This practice of being mindful is not an easy one. I think its important for the students to know that it takes time and dedication to be able to complete this task and its not our normal way of being together outdoors. I would encourage them by offering this activity as a challenge and emphasize that it is something they can do anywhere, any time to help calm their nervous systems and bring them into the present moment. |
| Describe the location that you did the activity in including proximity to the school. | We walked out the door of our school and moved into the alley which is approximately 50 steps from our school yard. The route took 20 minutes in total to complete and took us down a residential sidewalk once we had passed through a breezeway. |
| Describe any challenges that you or your students experienced in planning or doing the activity and how they were dealt with. | We had a short wrap up discussion at the end of the activity. Students shared what they noticed about themselves during the micro hike. Some students pointed out that it would be easier to do the awareness activities if they were alone. Some students reported that they felt calmer and that they saw and heard things that they would normally not pay attention to. There were a few students who felt the activity was boring and they were glad the walk was short and that we only made a couple of stops. I will spend time linking this activity to Mind Up curricular materials and to the nervous system of the human body before taking them out to do this mindfulness practice again. |