2020

WHAM: Wellness, Happiness, and Mindfulness: A Pilot Class at Open High School for the Translational Application of Well-being Education

Emaan Dawood
Moorin Khan

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/uresposters

© The Author(s)

Downloaded from
https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/uresposters/328

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Research Posters by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.
WHAM: Wellness, Happiness, and Mindfulness: A Pilot Class at Open High School for the Translational Application of Wellbeing Education
Emaan Dawood & Moorin Khan
Virginia Commonwealth University

Introduction
• Research suggests that mindfulness is linked to increased life satisfaction, greater self-awareness, better physical health, and more (Kern, 2014).
• Therefore, WHAM combines ideas of Flourishing, a course for students to explore wellbeing through evidence-based studies, and Wind Down Wednesday, a course extension incorporating mindfulness activities.
• The hands-on elective at Open High School teaches students activities and methods for improving wellbeing based on positive psychology principles.
• The objective for WHAM is to obtain data measuring student’s understanding of the principles, application to daily lives, and overall life satisfaction based on class discussion and evidence-based surveys.

Results/Discussion
• Students mentioned feeling more relaxed from meditation, exploring new ways to find purpose, being able to eat healthier by practicing mindful eating tips, and more, revealing students’ increased awareness of strategies to promote wellbeing.
• These responses do not objectively and scientifically prove that WHAM is increasing students’ wellbeing. Therefore, WHAM will be adapted to include a multi-dimensional way of measuring wellbeing.
• This approach includes developing an extensive wellbeing questionnaire, given pre and post completion of WHAM, including scales that ask students to answer and rate certain questions that address different components of their wellbeing.
• For example, The Healthy Pathways Child Report Scales would measure aspects of health in these students.
• This multidimensional approach was used for a sample of students aged 13-18 and was found to provide useful information for implementing wellbeing education at school (Kern, 2014).

Methods
• Each class began with discussion of a certain wellbeing principle followed by a complementary activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>Created a gratitude jar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing 3 things that went well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>Meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health: Food</td>
<td>Made healthy snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress Management</td>
<td>Created a stress ball out of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning &amp; Engagement</td>
<td>Groups worked together, while timed, to build tallest tower out of clothespins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Future Directions
• Comparison of pre and post questionnaire results would provide more accurate information on the progress of WHAM in providing effective wellbeing education for adolescents.
• WHAM would be adjusted accordingly based on results of the questionnaire to maximize progress.
• The results from such a study are extremely important, as wellbeing and positive education are essential for continual growth throughout life and given the rising numbers of suicide, self-harm, and mental illness (White, 2018).
• Results of the questionnaire would reveal how much students’ wellbeing improved throughout the course, and the results, if positive, can shed light on the importance and need for wellbeing education in more schools.

References

Acknowledgements
We would like to thank Professor Christy Tyndall for helping us in the development of WHAM and providing resources to make the course as successful as possible as well as Professor Mary C. Boyes for helping us begin WHAM at Open High School. We also appreciate Open High School for allowing us the opportunity to teach their students.