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

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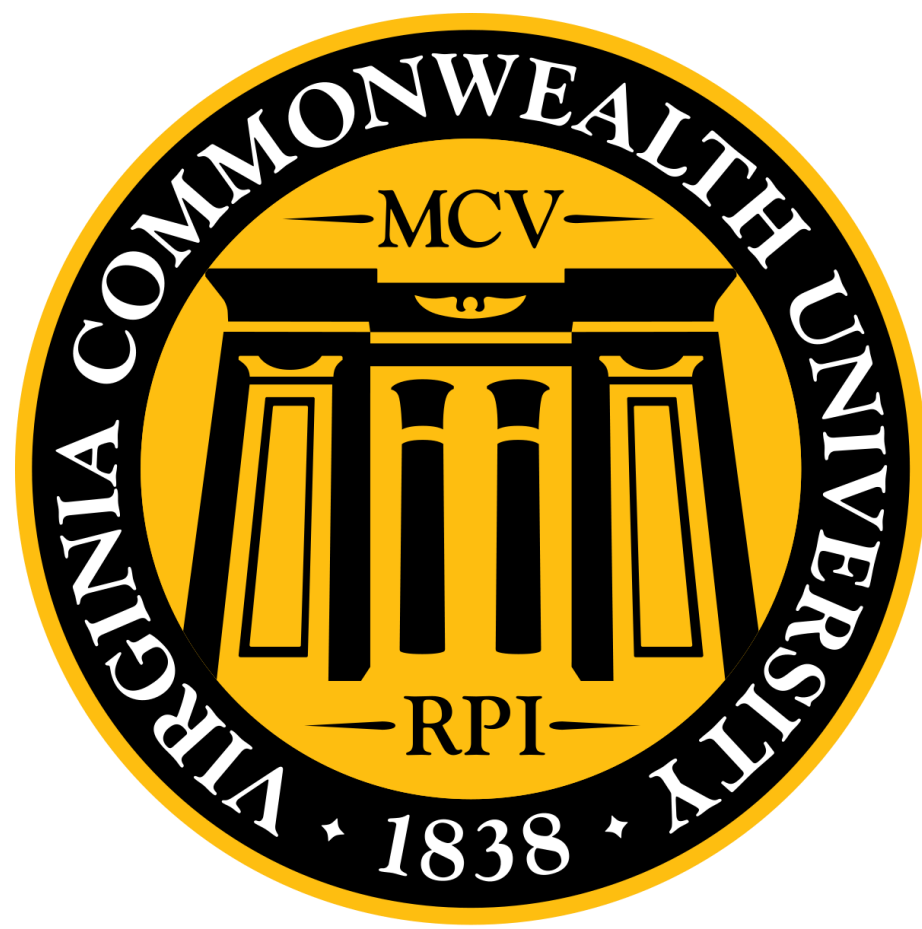
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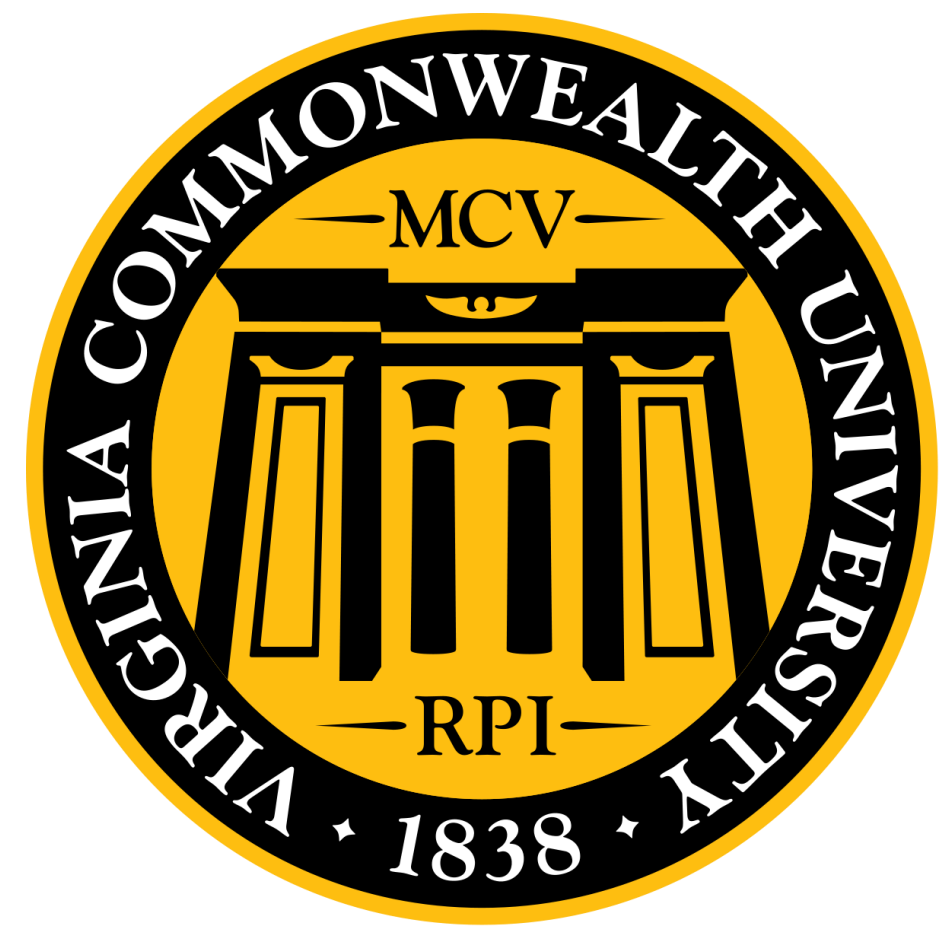
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WHAM: Wellness, Happiness, and Mindfulness: A Pilot Class at Open High School for the Translational Application of Wellbeing Education



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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).

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.

Methods

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

Principle	Activity
Gratitude	Created a gratitude jar Writing 3 things that went well
Mindfulness	Meditation
Physical Health: Food	Made healthy snacks
Stress Management	Created a stress ball out of rice
Meaning & Engagement	Groups worked together, while timed, to build tallest tower out of clothespins



Figure 1. An example of a gratitude jar created.



Figure 3. Stress balls created



Figure 2. Groups work together to build tallest tower to understand flow



Figure 4. Healthy snacks made

References

- Kern, M. L., Waters, L. E., Adler, A., & White, M. A. (2014). A multidimensional approach to measuring well-being in students: Application of the PERMA framework. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 10*(3), 262–271. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2014.936962
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