

SPAN Meeting Minutes
March 9, 2017
Westwood Media Center

Apryl Henry welcomed everyone to our last meeting of the year.

- A reminder of who we are:

Our Mission: to support and advocate for the needs of gifted children, their parents, and their educators.

For More Information: See MCGT's website at www.mcgt.net and our chapter's website at www.mcgt.net/priorlake for more information about MCGT and our chapter.

Board members:

Apryl Henry, President
Julie Mueller, Vice President
Anne Fry, Treasurer & Webmaster
Rachel Jensen, Secretary
Heather Banas, Elementary Representative
Linda Becker, Elementary Representative
Stephanie Benson, Elementary Representative
Becky Smith, Elementary Representative
Joan Shopbell, Middle School Representative

- We are always looking for new board members as those of us who have been on the board for many years have older children. The time commitment is not great and we would love to have additional members. If you are interested, please email span.priorlake@gmail.com for more information about joining us for the 2017-2018 school year. We have a planning meeting coming up in April and would love to have you join us.
- At the first and last meeting of the year, we always report on our finances.

Treasurer's Report for year End 2016/2017 School Year (as of March 9, 2017)

Starting Balance (as of October 2016)	\$1687.78
Income	
Membership dues from MCGT	\$224.00
Family Fun Night	\$54.00
Expenses	
Check order fee	\$21.95
Family Fun Night	\$23.38
Current Balance	\$1920.45

- An additional reminder of the MCGT Mini-Conference on March 18 from 9 am to Noon:

MCGT Annual Mini-Conference ~ Gifted 101 & Beyond—Join MCGT for our annual mini-conference, a half-day of intense learning, along with an opportunity to talk to other parents, educators, professionals and long-time advocates for gifted children. Registration and more information at mcgt.net

Apryl then introduced our featured speakers: Tim Ciavarri (Assistant Principal, Oak Grove Middle School), and Sarah Ciavarri (Daring Way Facilitator), Sandra Mortensen (Licensed School Counselor, Oak Grove Middle School)

Our Topic Tonight: The Science and Impact of Calm in the Classroom: Creating Calm for our Gifted Children

Sandra Mortensen

Our Goals for Tonight:

1. History and rationale for bringing mindfulness and resiliency practices to our work with gifted children
2. Bringing Mindfulness Exercises into our time
 - a. Anchor Breath
 - b. Mindful Movement
 - c. Body Scan
3. Share mindfulness and resiliency resources

Mindfulness is a practice:

- Fully aware of present moment
 - Being fully aware and going inward is the first step of calm
- Intentional of our actions
- Non-judgmental of ourselves and other

Why Mindfulness?

Mainstream mindfulness practices for corporations, schools, etc. roots come from the research of John Kabot-Zinn and his book *Full Catastrophe Living (Revised Edition): Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* and out of UMass Medical School.

In our work with gifted kids, we found they are wired differently and often demonstrate heightened sensitivity and intensity. Parenting them often feels BIG!

There are benefits

These become our artists and inventors and ...
They are intense about what they love (Legos)

But it can be a challenge

- These kids have overwhelming worry
- Big reactions to small problems
- Perfectionism

What we call this is ANXIETY

This doesn't have to be a big thing, but you just need to know what it is

Most gifted kids experience at least a low-grade anxiety

This caused the staff at Oak Grove to ask the question, what can we do to help these kids?

They explored the Yoga Calm curriculum

- This curriculum is open to anyone – you can take it too if you're interested!
- The foundation is simple strength and breathing exercises
 - Learning to breathe (teaching the Anchor Breath)
 - a. Using a Hoberman Sphere to breathe
 - b. Breath is the foundation of the practice
 - c. With three breaths you can go from excited to calm
 - The Science of Calm (Teach kids about their brains and the benefit of stress management)
 - Movement and Calm

Tim Ciavarri - The Science of Calm

Teaching kids about their brains and the many benefits of stress management is key.
Gifted kids often need to know the "why" and the "what"

Stress & Coping – Research from Dr. Van der Kolk

Top 3 Stresses from Student Survey

- Grades, School, Homework
- Family Stresses
- Peer Related Stress

Coping Strategies from Student Survey

- Physical Activity
- Music
- TV & Video Games

** NOTE: none of these are self-reflective process (mindfulness practice)

**As kids practice mindfulness, the brain has a physiological change

A Stress Response:

- Your brain on stress goes into Fight or Flight and the amygdala is engaged.
- What we want for our kids is to move through that response to a rational response
- But kids get stuck in the amygdala because they cannot access their prefrontal cortex – get to their executive functioning skills

Executive Functioning skills come when we are in the Prefrontal cortex

The Goal: Clear Thinking

- So, the prefrontal cortex is the key to clear, creative, and higher level thinking
- We want to move our kids to Prefrontal Cortex Thinking, but we cannot do that we are in an amygdala hijack.
- At Oak Grove, one teacher has seen a very real correlation between better test results and the mindfulness exercises in her classroom. Days with mindfulness exercises equate to higher overall average test scores.

MRI Imaging Shows:

- The research shows after an 8 week mindfulness practice with MRI imaging, the amygdala shrunk and prefrontal cortex thickens
- Prefrontal cortex growth/thickening happens when we make mindfulness a practice. Brains can change!

“Resiliency is the ability to project into the future a positive reality beyond the stress or trauma” by Dr. Van der Kolk

Dr. Daniel Siegel – *The Mindful Brain*

Curiosity

Openness

Acceptance

Love (love for ourselves, love for others)

Mindful Moment (Yoga Calm)

Sarah Ciavarri – The Daring Way and the links between mindfulness and resiliency

Who has heard of Dr. Bréne Brown’s Research on Shame Resiliency?

An introduction to Dr. Bréne Brown’s Research

For those interested please see <http://brenebrown.com>

Or her Ted Talks https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability
https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame

Thinking back to our first slide about perfectionism connected to anxiety:

Dr. Bréne Brown’s Quote on Perfectionism: “When perfectionism is driving, shame is riding shotgun and fear is that annoying backseat driver.”

Perfectionism may stop us from using our whole potential; “self permission-giving” increases resiliency and self compassion

Permission slip exercise: I give myself permission to...

Question: Can you give us an example of how you can do this for our kids?

Rachel: I wrote my daughter a permission slip (second grade) to not always be the nice one, she had the permission to take care of her self/her own needs on this one day when she had a classmate who was always taking from her.

Defining shame (lives in judgment, isolation, secrecy) v. Guilt (does not define me)
Shame (negative outcomes) correlated to depression, suicide, eating disorders, aggression, bullying

Guilt inversely correlated to all of these things (not a mandate on who I am)

Shame responses mirror flight, fight or freeze

- Move Away – secret keep, become silent, physically present but not engaged
- Move Toward – people pleaser – allowing ourselves to be created in the image another many value more, passive
- Move Against – attack, fight, shame with shame, blame, aggressive

Steps of Shame Resiliency

1. Know your triggers; develop critical awareness through curiosity (gives power)
2. Reach out and tell your story to someone who has earned the right to hear it
3. Name your shame and emotions
4. Ask for what your need

Resiliency Example – how do you practice this when mom cancels the YMCA membership?

Question: How do you teach this to children?

You start living it!

You have to practice it when you don't need it so when you do need it you can access it.

Your kids hear you use the terms and it normalizes it for them.

If you cannot get them to do it, then you model it and verbalize it so they see you doing it and can learn from you and see it working for you.

Model the practice by saying "I love you, you love me and we need to come back in 10 minutes." You practice this when you get to this spot of your amygdala hijack, you can live this out. So you can live out the core of the mindfulness practice – self compassion for yourself so you can give compassion to others.

Question: How does shyness play into this?

There is a biological component to being shy. Being self-aware and have self-compassion for that piece of yourself and/or your child. Then move to skill building by using that compassion.

Question: When do you start modeling and when are you able to be proficient?

Model from day 1 “as best we can.” And then really we do this for our whole lives. It is an awareness and we manage it as an adult with our own sensitivities and intensities because these don’t necessarily go away.

Question: Do you have Mindfulness books appropriate for a middle school reading level?

Recommend Googling it and take a look at the resources on the table and look at what would be best for your particular child.

Resources we do have:

The Mindful Parent Blog: themindfulparent.org
Free Apps: Calm, Headspace, Smiling MMG

Additional Books:

A Handful of Quiet by Thich Nhat Hanh
Mindful Parenting by Kristen Race
The Mindful Child by Susan Kaiser Greenland
The Mindful Games by Susan Kaiser Greenland