

Take a Breath

Implementing a Mindfulness Initiative Across a School District



Brain Boost Exercise

Physical movement increases blood flow, bringing more oxygen to the brain and leads to improved concentration.



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Fort Bend ISD Demographics

- 74,005 students enrolled
- Majority-minority school district
- Largest employer in Fort Bend County with over 10,000 employees
- 93 total facilities, with 78 schools
- District covers 170 square miles

Identifying the Need

- Community representatives expressed concern about student and staff stress levels in schools
- Superintendent and school board members tasked student and staff wellness departments with creating a mindfulness initiative for the district
- According to the 2015 Health Assessment data, stress was a moderate to high risk factor for over a fourth of employees and directly related to other health conditions

The Problem: Stress with Staff

State of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.

Teachers and staff in a school district are charged with creating a climate that fosters student learning and social-emotional well-being

Affects a teacher's ability to be effective in the classroom

Higher job related stress in teachers is linked to diminished student achievement

Gallup Poll ranks teachers as second on high stress profession poll

Principal and teacher job satisfaction has fallen to a 27 year low

Contributes to professional burnout and turnover

The Problem: Stress with Students

State of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.

Teenagers are now the most stressed out age group in our country

More than a quarter of teenagers state that they experience extreme stress during the school year

More than one-third of teens report fatigue or feeling tired and almost a quarter skip meals due to stress

Almost half of teens don't think they are doing enough to manage their stress or don't know how to manage their stress

The Solution: Mindfulness



Mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.

Benefits of Mindfulness

- Sustained attention and emotion regulation
- More likely to notice positive experiences, resulting in psychological and physiological benefits
- Improves appraisals of stressful situations and ways of coping with stress
- Reductions in anxiety, emotional exhaustion and overall feelings of stress
- Improvement in self-compassion, social competence and classroom behavior (among students)

Project Timeline

Spring 2016



- Received directive from Superintendent
- Assembled mindfulness team
- Developed initial plans

Summer 2016



- Developed training materials for phase one
- Delivered professional development training

Fall 2016



- Implementation of phase one
- Analyzed results of phase one

Spring 2017



- Developed materials for phase two
- Implemented phase two

Summer 2017



- Analyzed results of campaign
- Developed culture audit materials

Fall 2017



- Surveyed locations as part of culture audit

Phase One: A Mindfulness Toolkit

Assembled a mindfulness team that included representatives from the school district, the community, the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), and UHC.

A mindfulness toolkit was drafted that included resources (mindfulness menu, student wellness club toolkit, monthly emails, and posters) for both student and staff populations.

Toolkit presented to key stakeholders (district staff including nurses, secondary counselors and secondary health educators) at summer professional development. The stakeholders were tasked with using and communicating the resources with peers, with students and for themselves.

Phase One: Evaluation

- 134 Mindfulness Menus were completed
- 99 employees signed up for emails and additional resources
- About 40% of those engaged completed a post survey to evaluate the mindfulness toolkit and resources.
 - Resources cited as most used:
 - 10-sec out for themselves
 - 10-sec mind breaks for students
 - Mindfulness breathing for coworkers
 - Most useful resource was [calm.com](https://www.calm.com)
 - Tangible and intentional resources and programs were most helpful
 - Over 48% of the respondents stated the stress level for students at their campus was low-moderate to moderate and 82% stated the stress of staff was moderate



Phase Two: Stress Awareness Campaign

The month long Stress Awareness Campaign launched and included a pre- and post-survey, informational postcards, optional weekly emails and a week-long yoga challenge.

Informational Postcard

- Stress reduction tips and resources
- Guided breathing steps
- Brain Breaks and Boosts

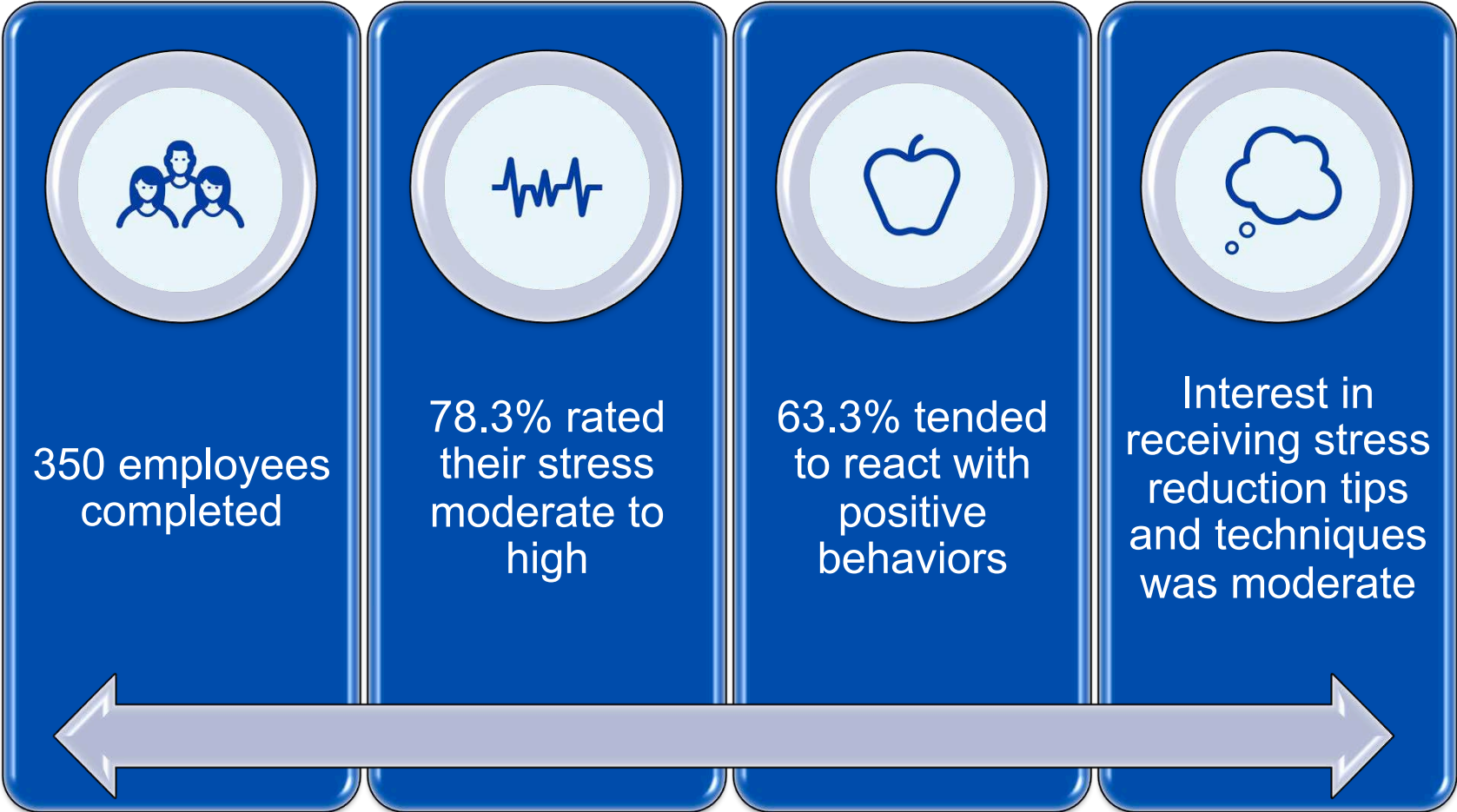
Weekly Emails

- Importance of Sleep
- Relaxation Techniques
- Daily Productivity Tips
- Positive Thinking

Yoga Challenge

- Alternative method for reducing stress
- New pose released daily
- Free yoga class at local yoga studio

Stress Awareness Campaign: Pre-Survey Results



Stress Awareness Campaign: Post-Survey Results



97.1% found the campaign to be beneficial

43.9% participated in some component of the campaign



89% now react with positive techniques

70% found the printed Stress Reduction Tips postcard to be beneficial



40% found the Brain Breaks and Boosts postcard to be beneficial

Of those that did not participate:



56% were not aware

18% felt they were too overwhelmed



13.6% felt their stress was already well managed



Timing

- Greater opportunity to better educate stakeholders on resources
- Give staff and students opportunity to develop skills prior to exams and end of year stress



Communication

- Improve between direct management
- Oversimplify
- More printed communication



Use of the word “Mindfulness”

- Unnecessary concern over preconceived opinions and misperceptions of mindfulness



Support

- Buy-in from all levels of leadership
- Educate staff on need of stress management for students

Community Partnerships

- Developed partnerships that went beyond the campaign

Organic Growth

- Mindfulness trainings throughout the district for both staff and students

Mental Wellbeing

- Personal comments and testimonials



Wellness Culture Audits

Research on how culture affects and promotes well-being and healthy habits

Evaluate culture of select wellness promoting campuses

Determine best practices by level and implement at pilot campuses

A large circular logo with a white center and a blue border. The letters 'Q&A' are written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font in the center. The background is split horizontally into a dark blue top half and a white bottom half.

Q&A

Appendix

References

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