

# THE MINDUP CURRICULUM

Grades 3–5

Brain-Focused Strategies for Learning—and Living



Focused Classrooms • Mindful Learning • Resilient Students

 SCHOLASTIC

# MINDUP

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# Welcome to **MINDUP**

**Imagine** ... joyful learning, academic success, and a powerful sense of self and community.

**Imagine** ... students who are able to engage in a focused, energetic way with one another, with their teachers, and with their learning.

**Imagine** ... schools that are productive, harmonious centers of successful learning, where all students thrive because they recognize themselves as

- capable, creative learners
- self-aware human beings
- compassionate, responsible citizens

All of this is possible. **MINDUP** can help you achieve it.

## **MindUP Online Training**

At [www.thehawnfoundation.org](http://www.thehawnfoundation.org), you'll find resources to enrich your MindUP instruction, including

- the entire spectrum of MindUP techniques, addressing social and emotional learning
- classroom demonstrations conducted by experienced MindUP consultants and mentors
- instructional insights, grade-specific teaching strategies, and other resources
- the latest in neuroscience about how the brain works and how it affects learning

Register at [www.thehawnfoundation.org](http://www.thehawnfoundation.org) to access this innovative, interactive training and learning resource, developed in partnership with Columbia University's Center for New Media Teaching and Learning.



# Dear Educators,

## From Scholastic

For 90 years, Scholastic has been a presence in your classrooms, supporting teaching and learning. The challenges faced by you and your students today are well known and unprecedented. These include the following expectations:

- providing differentiated instruction to students who come with diverse language and experiential backgrounds
- improving academic performance
- addressing new standards geared to career and college preparedness
- helping your students and their families handle economic and social changes

When we met Goldie Hawn and the Hawn Foundation team, we were impressed by their commitment to helping all students achieve their potential socially and academically. Also, we shared their respect for educators who, like all of you, are entrusted with the preparation of the next generation.

We are pleased to introduce MindUP, a collaboration of the Hawn Foundation and Scholastic. MindUP isn't one more program to implement or subject to teach, but a set of strategies that can be integrated with what you are already doing, so that you and your students will become more focused when doing schoolwork and are able to work and play more successfully with others. The essence of what the MindUP program calls for is embodied in the idea of the Optimistic Classroom—a place where all children have the opportunity to achieve their potential.

Thank you for inviting us into your school.

Optimistically yours,



**Francie Alexander**  
Chief Academic Officer  
Scholastic Inc.



**Patrick Daley**  
Senior Vice President, Publisher  
Scholastic Inc.

## From the Hawn Foundation

Thank you for bringing the MindUP Curriculum into your classrooms.

MindUP has been my focus and my passion for many years. I am so grateful to you, devoted educators who believe in the limitless potential of children and give tirelessly of your time, energy, creativity, and love.

The simple practices at the core of MindUP will help your students to become resilient, focused, and mindful learners. I have seen the MindUP practices at work in classrooms all over the world. I have witnessed its success and have heard from countless teachers in praise of its transformative effect on students' ability to learn.

I know that with your help we can equip our students with the skills they need to live smarter, healthier, and happier lives. Together we will create optimistic classrooms where students successfully cope with the stresses they face in school, at home, and in their communities.

Thank you for accepting the enormous and critically important responsibilities and challenges that accompany your mission as an educator.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you.



**Goldie Hawn**  
Founder, The Hawn Foundation  
and the MindUP Curriculum

# What Is MindUP?

MindUP is a comprehensive, classroom-tested, evidence-based curriculum framed around 15 easily implemented lessons that foster social and emotional awareness, enhance psychological well-being, and promote academic success.

The MindUP classroom is an optimistic classroom that promotes and develops mindful attention to oneself and others, tolerance of differences, and the capacity of each member of the community to grow as a human being and a learner. MindUP's expansive dynamic is built to a large extent on routine practices that are inherent to the MindUP Curriculum. Over the course of the MindUP experience, students learn about the brain and how it functions, in the process gaining insight into their own minds and behaviors as well as those of the people around them.

## How Does MindUP Work?

The essential work of MindUP is accomplished through the lessons themselves, which include the repetition of the Core Practice—deep belly breathing and attentive listening. The Core Practice makes mindful attention the foundation for learning and interacting; ideally, it is repeated for a few moments of each school day throughout the year. (See Lesson 3, page 42, for a complete overview of the Core Practice.)

**“Your brain can be like your BFF.  
It can help you cool down and stop  
getting frustrated. Then you can learn a  
lot more and have more friends.”**

**—Genieva, fifth grade**

MindUP has the capacity to alter the landscape of your classroom by letting students in on the workings of their own agile minds. Each MindUP lesson begins with background information on the brain, introducing a specific area of concentration with an activity in which students can see concrete examples of how their brain functions. As you and your class become accustomed to learning about the ways in which the brain processes information, your students will become habitually more observant of their own learning process.

MindUP offers teachers and students insights that respond to the natural thoughtfulness of young people and lead to self-regulation of their behavior. MindUP is dedicated to the belief that the child who learns to monitor his or her senses and feelings becomes more aware and better understands how to respond to the world *reflectively* instead of *reflexively*.



## Who Needs MindUP?

Everyone. Joyful engagement isn't incidental; it's essential. Yet, young people today are no strangers to stress. From an early age, they experience stress from a range of sources. For some, stress goes hand in hand with the pressure to achieve; for others, it is prompted by economic hardship, poor nutrition, or inadequate health care; for still others, it may be linked to emotional deprivation or limited educational resources. Whatever the particular circumstance, any one of these factors could hamper a student's ability to learn without anxiety. In "communities of turmoil" (Tatum, 2009), children often cope with several problems at once, and suffer from chronic stress—with consequences that can be disastrous for their learning and their lives. MindUP addresses these obstacles to productive learning and living by offering students and teachers simple practices and insights that become tools for self-management and self-possession. At the same time, the MindUP program works to make learning joyful and fun by emphasizing learning modes in which students flourish:

- lively instruction that invites problem solving, discussion, and exploration
- teacher modeling and coaching
- student cross-age mentoring and decision making
- conflict resolution
- inquiry and the arts

Joyful engagement is not incidental; it's essential. MindUP shows you how to put joy into your teaching.



# MindUP and the School Day

The MindUP program was developed not only to expand students' social and emotional awareness but also to improve their academic performance. The concepts and vocabulary associated with MindUP will expand the scope of students' thinking in all academic disciplines.

MindUP Core Practice can become a staple routine for the opening and closing of each school day as well as at the moments of transition: settling down after recess, waiting for lunch, moving from one subject to the next. As countless MindUP teachers have discovered, any topic benefits from being approached with focused awareness.

The MindUP lessons themselves can be worked smoothly into a daily routine and require minimal preparation on your part; suggested follow-up activities link each lesson to content-area learning. You'll likely find yourself adopting the MindUP techniques and strategies across subject areas. MindUP may well become a way of life for you and your students!

## The Day Begins

The best teachers we know are mindful about the beginning of each school day. They make a point of standing by the school door and greeting with an open heart and welcoming smile every student who passes through their classroom door.

An ideal way to unify the class as they begin their day is to gather and share a few moments of "checking in," followed by the Core Practice of deep breathing and mindful awareness. Once you have established this simple routine, you will find that the day feels more coherent and the group less scattered as this practice brings the group together organically while setting an easygoing tone for engagement with the rest of your daily learning.

## Transitions

MindUP Core Practice works beautifully during transition times. With your guidance and thoughtful attention, you can accustom your students to respond to a simple reminder at which they habitually turn to the Core Practices to center themselves and prepare to move easily—even eagerly and joyfully—to the next classroom activity. "Our classroom transition times are some of the most important routines of our day....Our days are full, our curriculum is rich, and we have so much to do together! The tighter our transitions, the more time we will have for instruction" (Allyn, 2010).

## The Day Ends

Just as you can help students greet a new day with eagerness and mindful purpose, so can you close the day with a spirit of purpose and celebration—your students will leave the classroom feeling calm yet energized. Eric Jensen, whose "brain-based" teaching has transformed teaching and learning in countless classrooms, explains, "Asking kids to visualize success on an upcoming skill or knowledge set is no 'new Age' strategy. When done well, mental practice is known not only to make physical changes in the brain but also to improve task performance (Pascual-Leone et al., 2005)" (2010). For example, a spirited and energetic clean-up of the room to some upbeat music can be followed by a regrouping for recapping the day's accomplishments, and a brief shared Core Practice before dismissal. The goal is to end the day on a high note.

## Breathing First: The Core Practice

From the earliest grades on up, the recommended approach to MindUP is to first establish the habit of deep belly breathing and focused attention—the so-called Core Practice. Well before you teach Lesson 1, you can lay the groundwork for it in your class by introducing the Core Practice in the first days of the school year. Once students have learned the simple techniques of breathing and listening, you will be able to use the Core Practice to unify your classroom community and provide the stability and receptivity needed for days of rich and fruitful learning. (See Lesson 3, page 42, for a full explanation of the practice.)



### Literacy expert

Pam Allyn has visited and observed hundreds of classrooms around the world. “We have seen many classrooms where there are lots of pieces in place, but one secret, fabulous ingredient is missing. That ingredient is celebration. We see teachers wait to celebrate until the end of the year, until a child does well on a test, until the child actually masters the art of reading. But why wait? Celebration is the ultimate management strategy. . . . It is the core ingredient that infuses the entire life of the classroom with joy, with hope, with faith, and with optimism” (2010, p.107).



# Using MindUP in the Classroom

MindUP comprises 15 lessons arranged into four units:

## **Unit I: Getting Focused (Lessons 1–3)**

Introduce brain physiology and the concept of mindful attention;  
establish daily Core Practice

**Lessons:** 1. How Our Brains Work, 2. Mindful Awareness,  
3. Focused Awareness: The Core Practice

## **Unit II: Sharpening Your Senses (Lessons 4–9)**

Experience the relationship between our senses, our moving bodies,  
and the way we think

**Lessons:** 4. Mindful Listening, 5. Mindful Seeing, 6. Mindful Smelling,  
7. Mindful Tasting, 8. Mindful Movement I, 9. Mindful Movement II

## **Unit III: It's All About Attitude (Lessons 10–12)**

Understand the role of our mind-set in how we learn and progress

**Lessons:** 10. Perspective Taking, 11. Choosing Optimism,  
12. Appreciating Happy Experiences

## **Unit IV: Taking Action Mindfully (Lessons 13–15)**

Apply mindful behaviors to our interactions with our community and the world

**Lessons:** 13. Expressing Gratitude, 14. Performing Acts of Kindness,  
15. Taking Mindful Action in the World

The framework is designed to strengthen students' sense of social and emotional well-being while creating a cohesive, caring classroom environment. Because the concepts build on one another, you'll find it most productive to teach the lessons in sequential order.

## **Lesson Structure**

Each lesson follows the same format:

- **Introduction to the Lesson Topic**... identifies and explains the subject of the lesson, frames why it's important, and includes testimony from a MindUP teacher.
- **Linking to Brain Research**... explains how each lesson relates to the neuroscience. This section provides background for you, some of which may be appropriate to share with students to help them gain a progressively more sophisticated awareness of how their brains work.
- **Clarify for the Class**... includes guidelines for making brain research concepts accessible to students at various grade levels.

- **Getting Ready...** identifies what the lesson entails as well as learning goals for the lesson. Also listed are materials and resources required for leading the lesson.
- **MindUP Warm-Up...** helps the class prepare for the Engage, Explore, Reflect part of the lesson activity by introducing and discussing subject matter in an easygoing, open-ended way that relates content to students' lives.
- **Leading the Lesson...** offers a step-by-step approach that engages students in the inquiry, helps them explore the topic, and encourages them to reflect upon and discuss their insights and experiences. The lesson layout also establishes concrete links to the learning process and classroom issues at the third to fifth grade levels.
- **Connecting to the Curriculum...** offers specific opportunities for students to bend their minds around language arts, math, social studies, science, health, physical education, the arts, and social-emotional learning. These optional across-the-curriculum learning experiences expand the lesson and offer alternative approaches to content.

## Special Features

- **Creating the Optimistic Classroom...** offers classroom management strategies for reaching English language learners, special needs students, and general learners in order to maximize the effectiveness of the lesson.
- **MindUP in the Real World...** connects lesson content to a career or undertaking, expands the discussion beyond the classroom, and grounds ideas in a concrete application.
- **Once a Day...** suggests ways for teachers to apply lesson content to everyday situations involving students or colleagues.
- **Journal Writing...** gives students an opportunity to reflect on motivation, actions, and their consequences, so they can learn to mediate and understand their actions. According to Susan Kaiser Greenland, journaling allows students to use what they've learned to create happier, more successful lives for themselves (2010). We recommend that you provide students with a notebook to create a journal that they can personalize with decorations of their choice, and use this personal record to document responses within Greenland's general framework of
  - What I Noticed
  - What It Means
  - What I Learned
- **Literature Link...** recommends four books that extend the learning.


# Lesson Opener

Each MindUP lesson is focused on one aspect or practice of the curriculum.

The targeted curriculum area is defined and placed in context for the teacher.

Experience of MindUP users attests to the effectiveness of the specific practice or lesson.

Brain research related to lesson exploration is laid out for instructor, along with supporting illustration.



## Mindful Listening

**What Is Mindful Listening?**  
From the buzz of a cell phone to the wail of a siren, sounds are all around us. Mindful listening helps us choose which sounds to focus our attention on and helps us to be thoughtful in the way we hear and respond to the words of others.

**Why Practice Mindful Listening?**  
Research suggests that students become more focused and responsive to their environment by participating in mindful listening activities, such as Mystery Sounds in this lesson. In fact, training our brains to concentrate on specific sounds helps heighten our sensory awareness. As students monitor their own auditory experience—noting what they choose to focus on and/or respond to—they build self-awareness and self-management skills.

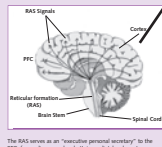
Mindful listening also lays the groundwork for social awareness and effective communication—an important part of the Common Core Standards. Being able to listen in a focused way to state what others say and to home in on details such as tone and inflection give a listener a clearer notion about the meaning of the words and a better idea for how to respond. This work helps prepare students for following directions, resolving conflicts through discussion, building friendships, and listening critically to news, ads, and other media messages.

**What Can You Expect to Observe?**  
“Students are able to relate mindful listening to times when they listened with care and also to times when they didn’t fully pay attention. They’re much more aware now of when their peers are paying attention to them and when they’re not. We can get things done more efficiently and with less resistance and conflict.”  
—Fourth-grade teacher

## Linking to Brain Research

**What Is the RAS?**  
An intricate network of long nerve pathways lies within the core of the brain stem. This reticular formation, also called the reticular activating system (RAS), helps regulate many basic body functions and connects the brain stem to the prefrontal cortex (PFC) and other parts of the brain. The RAS is a mechanism for keeping the brain awake and alert and is the brain’s attention-focusing center. Sensory stimuli (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, taste) continually arrive via the spinal cord and are sorted and screened by the RAS. The sensory input deemed relevant by the RAS is routed on to its appropriate destination in the conscious brain. What’s irrelevant is blocked.

The RAS is critically important because the brain cannot process all the millions of bits of sensory information coming in at once! A student sitting in a classroom likely has competing sensory experiences, such as the voice of her teacher, a chilly blast from the ventilation system, the sight of a bird outside the window, and the aroma of food from the cafeteria. A mindful, focused student is able to redirect her attention to the task at hand, reassuring herself that lunch period will come after math. Athletes, musicians, scholars, and other “focused” people have “trained” their RAS to choose the most pertinent sensory stimuli. With practice focusing on specific details, students can train their RAS to be more effective. Such practice is especially important for students who have trouble focusing their attention on their work, instructions, or social cues. Sensory awareness activities in this lesson and the others in this unit provide your students with repeated RAS-strengthening practice.



**Clarify for the Class**  
Make a model of the RAS using a kitchen strainer, sugar, and gravel. Demonstrate how a strainer works. Much like the RAS, it filters input, allowing only some things to pass through. Explain that the RAS holds back unimportant sensory experiences (the gravel) but lets important sensory information (sugar) pass on to the PFC.


**Discuss:** What information from your senses is your RAS allowing through right now? at lunch? during PE class?

Language and modeling help instructor make the brain research link understandable to students.

# Getting Ready

This two-page spread offers an opportunity for preparing and front-loading the main lesson, so that students are most receptive to the language and ideas that follow.

## Getting Ready



**Listen Up!**  
Students and teachers all on the floor to get started with the listening activity.

**GOALS**

- Students train their attention on specific sounds and try to identify those sounds.
- Students learn how mindful listening skills can help them communicate more successfully.

**MATERIALS**

- Various common objects for creating sounds
- chart paper
- Mystery Sounds/Scents activity sheet (p. 154)

**CREATING THE OPTIMISTIC CLASSROOM**  
**Classroom Management:** “I know listening if I can repeat what you said exactly.” When students need to resolve conflicts, encourage them to use mindful listening to help them stay focused on what their classmates are saying or feeling. Training students to repeat verbatim what the other person is saying before they respond helps them to concentrate on what that person is saying. This practice gives the listener a chance to calm down and to reflect on the situation. It supports all students, especially those who tend to react too quickly.

**Did You Hear That?**  
This activity allows students to often demonstrate volume control with their voices.

**MINDUP Warm-Up**  
**Mindful Listening Practice**  
Build background for this lesson with an auditory exercise students will enjoy and relate to: practicing volume control with their voices. Have volunteers demonstrate how loud or soft their voices are for several different scenarios you give them, such as independent work/library time, group work time, stage performance, or outdoor recess. Emphasize that we can hear subtle differences among the voices for each setting because our ears are sensitive to very soft sounds, such as pins dropping, loud ones, such as jackhammers, and everything in between.

Now play the part of a conductor: close your hands together to indicate the softest sound students can sing and open them progressively wider to indicate that students should get louder, until your arms are fully extended. This should be the loudest they can get indoors. Have students test this range, singing “Ah” as you move your hands farther apart and closer together. If they have trouble modulating their volume, stop and have a few volunteers model successfully. Then try it again with the whole class. This should reinforce students’ sensitivity to sounds and their ability to self-regulate.

**Discuss:** How might learning to self-regulate your voice be a useful strategy for getting along and doing well at school?

Before each core lesson, a simple preparatory activity helps both teacher and student know what to expect from the lesson and think in advance about how it may be useful in a broader context of learning.

Suggestions for classroom management, supporting brain-based learning, and helping all language learners address common obstacles to attentiveness and full engagement with learning.