

Schools & Education

Participants Deem Inner Resilience Project a Success

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Students throughout the South Burlington School District have been learning relaxation and 'mindfulness' techniques over the past year, and according to teachers, counselors, administration, and some of the students themselves, the effect has been positive.

Over the past year, forty faculty and staff members have been taking part in a workshop called Inner Resilience. The Inner Resilience Program, developed by Linda Lantieri, is designed to provide tools to develop increased attention and stress management skills both in adults and children.

The project was part of one of the goals of the district to increase 'personal development' in both educators and students. Superintendent John Everitt stated that the work being done by the Inner Resilience project was important and valuable. "It's about helping individuals achieve their potential," he said, adding, "It's incredibly exciting to me to see what teachers and friends have done."

The Inner Resilience Project provides children and educators with relaxation techniques, such as creating a 'peaceful corner' where students can go to calm themselves. One group of second graders named their peaceful corner 'the bunny corner,' because, according to the students, bunnies are nice.

At a recent School Board meeting, during a presentation by some of the staff and faculty who took part in the program, quotes from some of the adults and children who participated in Inner Resilience were shared with the Board.

"There's not a lot of quiet in children's lives," stated Jackie Bailey, a third grade teacher in the district. The program is intended to provide a quiet, self-reflective time for students. Jay Hoffman, a teacher for grades six through eight at F. H. Tuttle Middle School, was emphatic in his endorsement of the program. "It's a must for all of us," he said.

The Board generally approved of the program, but a number of Board members brought up potential challenges in regard to public, and parent perception of the program. "How do you respect families and cultural differences?" asked Board member Agnes Clift. Clift was primarily concerned with prayer, and in respecting students who used the quiet time and spaces provided to pray.

Board chair Richard Cassidy echoed Clift's concerns. "I think what you're doing is really wonderful, but we do have some limits. It's important that we do this with care," he said.

The project is now in its second year in the district and has, up to now, been focused primarily in the elementary schools, but more teachers from the middle and high school are taking part. According to advocates for the project, the goal is to use the model of Inner Resilience tools as a part of the curriculum and behavioral interventions in the District.

For more information about the program, consider attending the following presentation November 12: Linda Lantieri Speaks to the Community. Nationally known author of "Building Emotional Intelligence: Techniques to Cultivate Inner Strength in Children," Linda Lantieri will discuss the highly successful Inner Resilience Program being piloted in the SB School District. Free and open to the public. 7- 8:30 p.m. at the South Burlington High School Auditorium. For more information, please call 660-3189.