

**Helena Education Foundation
Great Ideas Grant Program
2013-14 Application**

APPLICATION SUMMARY PAGE

Please complete responses to all questions.

 Mind Fullness _____
\$ 3,000 _____

Project Title (This name will be used in publicity so be creative!) Funds Requested

Number of Students to be served: 99 Grade Level(s): 2-5

Number of Schools to be served: 1

Type of Grant: _____ Individual (funded up to \$1000)
 X Group (funded up to \$3000)
(ALL applicants must sign signature page.)

Subject(s) affected by this project::

_____ Arts _____ Math _____ Science _____ Speech
_____ Foreign Language _____ Social Studies _____ Library _____ PE/Health
_____ Special Education _____ Business _____ Reading/Language Arts
_____ Career/Technical X Counseling & Guidance
_____ Other: _____

Using ONLY the space below, please provide a summary of the program in 50 words or fewer. We will be using your summary for publicity about the grant recipients, so please try to explain the purpose, proposed impact and how our project meets our creativity and collaboration goals.

For example: "Teachers in the Schoolyard Habitat Project will work with a variety of community resources to create a natural schoolyard habitat, allowing students and staff to explore in a hands-on environment what they are learning inside the classroom." OR

"The Science Seminar allows science students to apply previous coursework to topics normally not covered in the classroom within the natural environment of Glacier and Yellowstone Parks, using state and community experts, special readings and the actual experience of being in the wild."

The Mind Fullness project provides students with a daily opportunity to practice skills that enhance attention and focus and calm the body and the mind. The goal of the project is to enhance students' ability to regulate emotions and behavior resulting in increased academic performance and decreased problem behaviors.

Mind Fullness – building skills to help students in and outside of the classroom

Introduction

Several years ago, a second grade teacher approached the school psychologist who was scheduled to come into her class to teach social skills. “You have to help me with these kids! Every year, their behavior is worse. They don’t listen, they can’t focus on their school work and they can’t control their emotions. They bicker with each other and never seem to settle down. This year’s class is particularly difficult.” The next week, the psychologist brought a ten minute pre-recorded guided relaxation exercise into the class. After explaining the process, the class did the exercise. By the end of the exercise, the class was quiet and the students relaxed. After class, several students came up to the psychologist and asked, “Where did you get that? I’m going to ask my parents to buy me one!”

This grant application is a request for funds to purchase and implement a program that provides students and teachers with a daily opportunity to practice skills that enhance attention and focus and calm the body and the mind. Preliminary research indicates that use of the program increases academic performance and decreases behavior problems within and outside of the classroom. The project will be done in collaboration with *Inner Explorer* (innerexplorer.org), a national non-profit organization whose goal is to promote mindfulness-based social and emotional learning practices in the schools.

Section 1

- A. This project targets one classroom at each grade level from second to fifth grades at an elementary school. This school is, like many schools, experiencing an increase in students with academic struggles and/or behavior problems. Key factors that interfere with learning are problems with what are called the “executive functions.” The executive functions include the ability to do the following:

- control impulses
- shift from one activity to another
- regulate emotions
- begin, stay focused on, and complete a task, and
- plan and organize .

The Helena Public Schools provide the *Second Step* social skills curriculum in the elementary schools. The *Second Step* program teaches students to identify and regulate emotions and to use these skills to solve problems. The *Second Step* program is taught by school district mental health staff (school counselors and school psychologists). These staff are spread thin and often only deliver six to eight social skills lessons per grade level each year due to other demands on their time.

- B. This project uses the *Inner Explorer* program to build on the *Second Step* program and to strengthen executive functioning skills in students. In doing so, it helps to develop a strong foundation for learning and provides students with skills to improve their academic and social functioning.

Section 2

- A. The teacher quoted in the introduction to this proposal wanted help. She later admitted to the school psychologist that she had wanted and expected the school psychologist to come to the class with lessons about respect or accountability. She now understands that such lessons would have been less effective than lessons that help her students learn to calm their bodies and minds and thereby regulate their emotions and behavior. Ross Greene, a professor at Harvard Medical School, points out that “children do as well as they can.” He helps parents, teachers and others who work with children to understand that when children have problems, there are underlying “lagging skills” that make it difficult for them to regulate their behavior. The *Inner Explorer* program assists children as they develop these basic skills and builds a foundation for learning.
- B. One compelling reason to teach social skills is that these skills will serve the child in all settings; home, school and community. One of the most gratifying aspects of teaching social skills is when children independently approach an educator with stories of how they applied a lesson they learned on the playground, in their neighborhood, or with a sibling. Other times, parents share that their child reminded them to “take a belly breath” when they were feeling upset.
- C. This project is a collaborative effort involving one teacher at each grade level from second through fifth grades, the school counselor, the school psychologist, and volunteers and staff from the *Inner Explorer* Foundation. Roles and responsibilities are as follows:
- Classroom teachers: Implement the *Inner Explorer* program daily for ten minutes each day throughout the 2014-2015 school year. Provide data on behavioral incidents (classroom and school-wide) involving students from their class, and data on academic progress.
 - School counselor: Implement the *Second Step* social skills curriculum at each grade level for a minimum of six lessons. Point out the parallels between the *Second Step* program and *Inner Explorer* while delivering curriculum.
 - School psychologist: Coordinate the program for the school, ensuring that each teacher has the materials needed to implement the program. Serve as a link

between the school and the *Inner Explorer* Foundation. Collect and analyze data to assist in determining the effectiveness of the program.

- *Inner Explorer* staff and volunteers: Be available to consult with school staff to work out problems that come up as the program is implemented. Provide technical assistance in analyzing data.

D. A “One Class at a Time” grant has been submitted to introduce this program into one fourth grade classroom. That grant proposal includes matching funds from one staff member’s materials budget for the 2013-2014 school year and private donations.

Section 3

- A. The *Inner Explorer* kit that will be purchased for each class includes the following:
- 18 weeks of programming (90 daily MP3 audio files, MP3 player with docking station and high quality speakers),
 - Teacher training binder, including weekly topics, frequently asked questions, related research and additional resources, and
 - Student mindfulness journals (for each student in each classroom).

This program is designed to be implemented for ten minutes a day during a transition time, such as after a recess or after lunch. Each lesson includes time for the students to interact with the material through a short journal activity.

Personnel involved with this project include four classroom teachers with a combined total of 82 years of experience teaching. The school counselor and school psychologist are licensed as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) respectively. Both have studied mindfulness in education and the negative effects of stress on learning. Those collaborating from *Inner Explorer* include a volunteer with ties to Montana who is a practicing attorney and holds a Ph.D. in Psychology. *Inner Explorer* staff have studied at the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts. The Center for Mindfulness at UMass has been in the forefront of developing programs on mindfulness based stress reduction. This team has chosen to work together for this project because of their shared commitment to developing practical approaches to help children build executive functioning skills.

- B. The cost of the *Inner Explorer* kit for one classroom is \$750. This grant requests funding for four kits, for a total cost of \$3,000. In-kind donations include the time of *Inner Explorer’s* staff and volunteers.

Section 4

- A. This project will be evaluated using data that is currently collected. Every teacher has a classroom discipline process that involves student names being recorded in a book when there is a rule infraction. Major infractions are documented through incident reports. Academic data will include screening of progress in reading and mathematics. By implementing the program in one class at each grade level, the project will allow comparison between the classrooms implementing the program and those that are not. Evaluation will also include qualitative data gathered from those participating in the program. As part of their regular duties, school personnel, including teachers, the school counselor, and the school psychologist, will have access to data regarding individual children participating in the program, to include disciplinary and academic data. No data regarding individual children will be shared beyond those ordinarily informed in the school setting about disciplinary issues and academic performance of individual children. Only aggregate data from the classrooms making use of the *Inner Explorer* Program (e.g., total number of disciplinary referrals of different kinds, changes in academic measures) will be compared to aggregate data from classrooms not using the Program for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of the program.

- B. Before beginning the program, a letter will go home to parents explaining the program to them. Information on the project will be shared within the school through staff meetings. The school counselor and school psychologist will share information on the program through monthly meetings with their colleagues in the district.

- C. The classrooms that obtain the program will be able to continue to offer it every year, with the small expense of purchasing a mindfulness journal for each student each year, which can be covered by the classroom budget. Additional programs for use in other classrooms could become part of a school or the district budget, or could be obtained through grants from the school parent council or other community sources.

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**BUDGET FORM
2013-14 Application**

	Budget Item	Vendor	Unit Cost	Shipping	Qty	Total Cost
1.	Inner Explorer kit	Inner Explorer Foundation	\$750	Cost included	4	\$3,000
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