

École Arbour Vista

Kirk Runciman, Principal

200 McCann St, Guelph, ON H1G 0C5
School Website: www.ugdsb.on.ca/arbournvista

Esther Schletz, Office Co-ordinator

Tel: 519-766-4555
Fax: 519-766-0705

Newsletter for March 2021

From the Principal's Desk

I wish to take this opportunity to express how proud I am of our students for their seamless return to the school in February, following a month of online learning. Upon their return to school, students quickly re-engaged in their classroom expectations as well as the many health and safety protocols at the school. Congratulations and thank you for your dedication to your learning and respecting the health and safety measures, helping to keep everyone safe in the building.

K. Runciman
Principal

Talking About Mental Health - Mindfulness

This month with the Umbrella Project we are focusing on mindfulness. So what is it? Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening in the moment. It is about noticing our own thoughts, feelings, sensations and the environment around us. Too often this information is missed as we rush through our days. When we can find the time, even a few minutes, to practice mindfulness we are able to tune into the present instead of looking back in the past or trying to imagine the future.

When we become more aware of our thoughts and feelings we are much better able to manage them. We have to know they are there to bring our focus to them! Also, practicing mindfulness can boost attention and concentration. Some studies have even shown that starting a mindfulness practice can increase brain activity in the area associated with positive emotions.

Mindfulness can be practiced by children, youth, young adults and adults. There are many different ways that you can bring some mindfulness into your everyday practice with your family.

Mindful Listening: Go into your backyard, onto your balcony or porch or go for a short outdoor walk. Focus on sounds. Listen to everything you hear. If you notice your thoughts wandering, simply bring your mind back to the task of listening. You will be amazed at how many sounds are there that you would otherwise not have noticed! When you

Mindful Eating: Have family members take their first bites of food and really concentrate on the taste, textures, temperature and feeling of the food in your mouth. If your mind wanders, bring yourself back. Then share around the table what you each noticed. This can be playful and funny too! And always remember to be grateful for your ability to even have food as there are many families who do not always have easy access to foods.

Mindful Body Scan: Get comfortable and close your eyes. Notice your body. What do you feel? Travel from toes to tip of your head. Notice how your body feels on the surface it is on. Try to just notice without judgement or explanation. Gently bring yourself back to the scan if you wander. If possible, share what you discovered. Did anything surprise you?

Mindful Silence: This can be really fun but, surprisingly, not always that easy to accomplish! Try and get the whole family to agree to 1, 2, 3, 5 minutes (whatever works for you! Make it realistic). During that time

no one is to speak, communicate, sing or make sounds. Simply go about your day to day without speaking. This can be very powerful and interesting. When you are finished your assigned time, share back what it was like.

Mindful Focus: Ring a bell or use an online sound for a bell, close your eyes and listen only to the sound. Focus on the sound until it is completely gone. You will be surprised how long it can last if we really focus our attention onto it!

Last thoughts:

Sitting in front of screens is the opposite for mindfulness in most cases, but sometimes the right app or use of technology can enhance and support our mindfulness activities.

You can try:

- Listening to calming music and noticing your body
- Anxiety Canada website has great activities and resources
- Stop, Think and Breathe app is a mindfulness app specifically to support kids
- GoZen on YouTube has some fun, free videos
- Headspace.com
- <https://www.connectedbreath.co> (.co not .com)



Thanks to Edge Mutual for sponsoring the Umbrella Project at UGDSB!

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Jenny Marino

Mental Health Lead for Upper Grand District School Board

Virtual Scholastic Book Fair

Scholastic is hosting a Virtual Book Fair from March 1st to March 7th. You can look at all of the items available on the Scholastic website, order what you would like and have it delivered to your house. Shipping is free for any order over \$40. Please see your child's Google Classroom for more information on how to access the Scholastic website and how to order books.

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Vision Health

If you suspect that your child is struggling with vision issues, there are several things that you can do. First, book an eye exam with an optometrist. Basic OHIP coverage for eye exams, is available free of charge, for children from birth to age 19. Speak with your child's teacher regarding your concerns and encourage your child to clearly express to the teacher the difficulties they are having (Are they having trouble seeing things on the board? Are they having trouble copying information? Are they having trouble seeing the information in novels/textbooks/notebooks etc.?) There are a number of accommodations that can be made to quickly address potential problems, including seating closer to the board or larger print on computers or photocopies.

Your Child's Hearing is Important!

Seventy-five percent of a child's day is spent listening; listening to complex language, directions and instructions which need to be comprehended. Being able to hear peers is important for developing social skills and friendships. That is why it is important that any hearing difficulty be discovered as soon as possible because even mild hearing loss can put a child at risk for academic and communication difficulties. **Audiologists** are experts who assess hearing sensitivity and functioning that provides a window into the language/listening parts of the brain. Since listening is a critical learning skill, test results can be helpful in planning a program of intervention. Students who wear hearing aids, cochlear implants, or use personal FM systems should routinely visit an Audiologist to have their equipment checked. If you suspect your child has difficulty with hearing or attention it is recommended that you have your child tested by an **Audiologist**. To find an Audiologist in your

community, visit the website of the College of Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists of Ontario (www.CASLPO.com) and click on “Find an Audiologist” and search for Private Practice. At UGDSB, you can call 519-941-6191 ext. 231 for information.



MONTHLY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES TO HELP CELEBRATE OUR PLANET

March 27th is Earth Hour!

It is vital to teach our children to respect and take care of the environment.

Join the global Movement! Celebrate Earth Hour on March 27th at 8:30pm.

Earth Hour's mission is uniting people to protect the planet by raising awareness of about climate change and encouraging positive action.

“Earth Hour was famously started as a lights-off event in Sydney, Australia in 2007. Since then it has grown to engage more than 172 countries and territories worldwide.”

Earth Hour is more than an event. It is a movement that has achieved massive environmental impact, including legislation changes by harnessing the power of the crowd.”

Ideas for your family to do for Earth Hour!

Earth Hour belongs to you. Celebrate your commitment to the planet with your friends, family, community or at work - in your own way.

A simple event can be just turning off all non-essential lights on March 28th from 8:30-9:30 pm. For one hour, focus on your commitment to our planet. To celebrate, you can:

- *prepare a candle lit dinner,*
- *talk to your neighbours, or invite people over*
- *stargaze, or go camping in your backyard*
- *play board games, or charades*
- *host a concert, or a sing-a-long*
- *create or join your own community event*
- *have an Earth Hour every month*

The possibilities are endless!

Quotes and information taken from: <https://www.earthhour.org/>