

The Mindfulness Director Initiative



Mindfulness Director Initiative

The Mindfulness Director Initiative (MDI)

Executive Summary

Our Vision

A world where every member of every school community (students, staff, and families) has access to

- Mindfulness teachings
- An experienced mindfulness teacher
- Supportive mindfulness practice groups

The result being more resilient, compassionate, and effective school communities that better prepare future generations to

- Thrive and flourish in the face of the personal, relational, and global challenges
- Create a more just and aware society

Our Mission

To make the transformative power of mindfulness a reality for school communities by facilitating the comprehensive and nuanced integration of mindfulness into schools through the Mindfulness Director Model—thereby enhancing the well-being of students and strengthening our society.

Our Objectives

To partner with schools of all demographics to facilitate and support the integration of mindfulness by

- Matching interested schools with highly-qualified Mindfulness Directors
- Providing implementation support that leads to a thriving culture of mindfulness in each partner school community
- Creating a sustainable and ever-expanding network of school-based mindfulness programs

Mindfulness

Mindfulness can be summed up as “inner education.” The practice of mindfulness helps us to be a scientist of our experience and supports us in:

- Understanding and training our attention.

- Seeing thoughts, emotions, and feelings more clearly and learning to relate to them in a more skillful way.

- Becoming aware of the habits of our own mind and intentionally cultivating qualities that are more aligned with our values.

- Learning how to better connect and attune with others.

- Developing more awareness of our relationship with our environment.

Through mindfulness, we can change the world.

Our children are growing up in a world with challenges we couldn't even have imagined. When we examine the needs within our communities—locally, nationally, and globally—we recognize the importance of developing self-aware, socially aware, present, and empathetic individuals who have the balance and focus to address complex issues and make our society a better place. Mindfulness can equip our children with the skills and habits they—and our complex world—need.

What better time to introduce the transformative power of mindfulness than during childhood? What better place to introduce mindfulness than in school?

Mindfulness makes almost every aspect of relating, learning, and working with others more meaningful and more productive. It strengthens our communities and makes our society wiser and more compassionate.

The Mindfulness Director Initiative (MDI) intends to ensure school communities effectively tap into the significant power of mindfulness by facilitating the comprehensive integration of mindfulness into schools through the Mindfulness Director Model. We will match interested schools with highly-qualified Mindfulness Directors and then provide implementation support that leads to a thriving culture of mindfulness in each school community, with the end goal of creating a sustainable and ever-expanding network of school-based mindfulness programs. Our aim is to partner with schools of all demographics—public and private, urban and rural, financially strong and under-resourced—to make the transformative power of mindfulness a reality for all students.

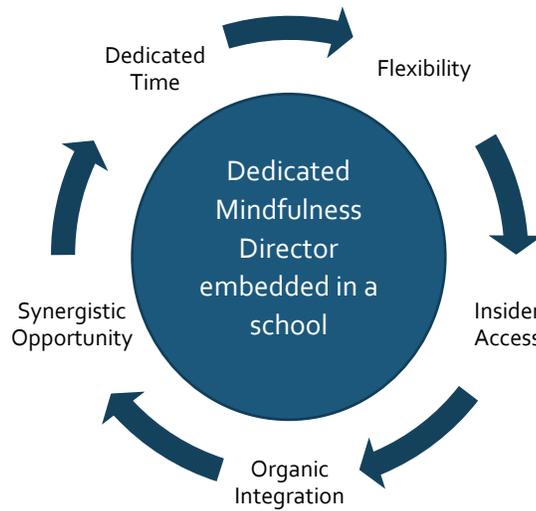
Our belief in the Mindfulness Director Model comes from our exciting work with schools that have piloted this model. For example, at the Middlesex School in Concord, MA, a high school where mindfulness began as a weekly meeting with interested students and has grown through the work of the Mindfulness Director into a fully integrated program, mindfulness touches every aspect of community life. Mindfulness has improved student health and well-being, supported development of students' social and emotional skills, and contributed to students' overall academic experience.

At St. Andrew's School, a K-12 school in Austin, TX, the Mindfulness Director has been able to weave mindfulness into every grade level, offer mindfulness courses to staff and parents, and support other area schools in developing their own mindfulness programs. Mindfulness is a natural part of the school day for students at St. Andrew's, who report feeling calmer, better focused, and more aware of their emotions.

We know school communities are the excellent ecosystems for mindfulness to have a transformative impact. We also know this kind of transformation is effectively supported through an integrated program of mindfulness that is fully woven into school life. When schools commit to hiring a Mindfulness Director who is devoted to supporting mindfulness in ways that work best for a school culture and community, mindfulness can change students' lives.

We will match interested schools with a highly-qualified Mindfulness Director and then provide implementation support that leads to a thriving culture of mindfulness in each school community, with the end goal of creating a sustainable and ever-expanding network of school-based mindfulness programs. Our aim is to partner with schools of all demographics—public and private, urban and rural, financially strong and under-resourced—to make the transformative power of mindfulness a reality for all students.

The Mindfulness Director Model



Although many schools have implemented some form of “add-on” mindfulness program, and these efforts have produced some positive results, they do not allow for the scale of positive effects possible through a more integrated approach. Therefore, our approach—the Mindfulness Director Model—is all-inclusive and designed to be supportive in a range of school environments, both public and private, regardless of location, grade levels, or the demographics of the population served.

MDI recruits individuals with deep expertise with mindfulness and youth and then works directly with partner schools to find a best match to serve as the school’s on-staff Mindfulness Director. With our support, the Mindfulness Director will teach mindfulness to students, staff, and other community members, and will thoughtfully weave mindfulness into the community fabric of the school.

The elements that make the “Mindfulness Director Model” effective are:

Time and opportunity: The Mindfulness Director has flexibility to hold different mindfulness classes for all school community members—staff, students, and parents. Most other programs only touch on one segment of a school community for a short period of time.

Inside-out approach: The Mindfulness Director becomes an internal and integral part of the school community instead of an outside organization coming in. Programming is based on, and tailored to, the needs of a specific school community, rather than an outside organization coming in to apply a one-size-fits-all approach.

Continuity: The Mindfulness Director ensures organic integration of mindfulness into all corners of the community. While specific opportunities to learn and practice mindfulness are key components to a whole-school approach, it is just as important to identify opportunities for synergistic effects that can ripple through a community. For example, mindfulness practices can positively impact athletics, the arts, content-area instruction, or simply the way people regularly interact.

MDI: A New Nonprofit

The first step in achieving our vision and mission is to establish the Mindfulness Director Initiative (MDI) as a new nonprofit organization. MDI will take an already successful model and expand it throughout the country, starting with the goal of creating and supporting a Mindfulness Director position in over 20 schools within our first five years. At the same time, we will be developing a strong network of system change-agents that will support each other and their larger communities. We will screen and match schools and Mindfulness Directors, support implementation of programs, and ensure schools can afford to implement the Mindfulness Director position in the short and long term through grants and fundraising support.

Why Now?

A confluence of factors supports our belief that now is the time to launch this initiative.

Urgent Need: Now, more than ever, our world needs people who have the skills and abilities to address complex problems that mindfulness supports.

Experience: Our success and experience of developing, evolving, and sustaining a fully integrated Mindfulness Director framework at our initial school, the Middlesex School—where Doug Worthen is Founder and Director of Mindfulness Programs—can serve as a model for other schools.

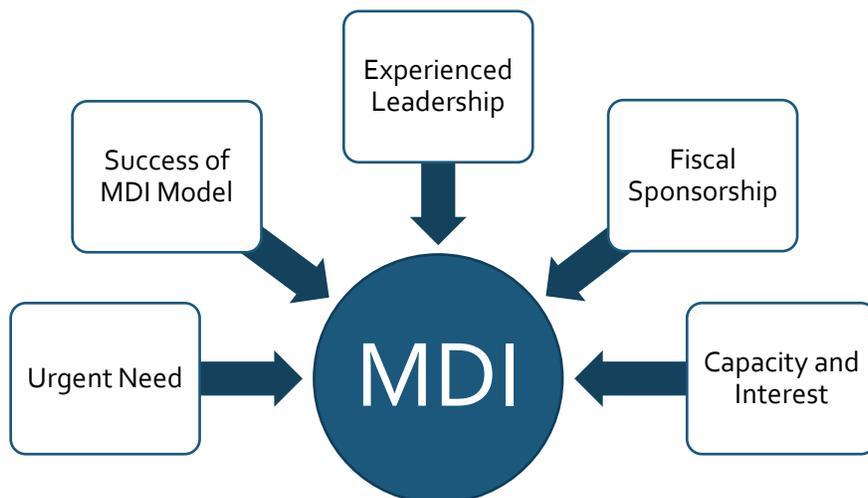
Success: Over the past several years, a successful replication effort has occurred at a second school, St. Andrew's School, leading to a full-time Mindfulness Director being fully funded and integrated in a site-specific way. This, too, can serve as a model.

Know-how: A strong entrepreneurial leader with the right blend of experience in education, nonprofit leadership, and mindfulness in schools—Marc Waxman—has been identified to lead the organizational development effort.

Resources: A stable nonprofit organization with an aligned mission—Inward Bound Mindfulness Education (iBme)—is serving as a fiscal sponsor while the new nonprofit is formed.

Capacity: Our work has already attracted significant attention from schools and mindfulness teachers throughout the country, leading to a pipeline of potential school partners and Mindfulness Directors.

The combination of factors above, along with our growing awareness of the importance of mindfulness in youth development, creates the urgency and opportunity for our initiative to move forward. We welcome dialogue with all school stakeholders interested in partnering with us. In addition, we enthusiastically wish to engage with potential fiscal supporters. We will need significant financial support to achieve our mission and vision.



What's Possible

When a school, regardless of grade level configuration, chooses to integrate mindfulness into its culture and community through the Mindfulness Director Model, deep impact is possible. Students, staff, and parents develop skills that help them to become calmer, more aware, more focused, and less reactive. These skills and the practices that support them begin to permeate the culture of a school community, positively influencing everything from instructional practices to discipline policies to students' academic, artistic, and athletic experiences.

While each school is unique and will implement the Mindfulness Director model to meet its specific needs, a program can and should include a diverse set of offerings, opportunities, and supports. Our model programs include:

Mindfulness curriculum

- Required semester-long "Introduction to Mindfulness" course for all new students
- Multiple advanced mindfulness courses for students
- Introductory and advanced mindfulness courses for all staff
- Introductory and advanced mindfulness courses for parents
- Mindfulness lessons delivered in classrooms (especially for younger students)

Integration of mindfulness into school initiatives

- Intentional integration with social/emotional learning (SEL) activities and programs
- Intentional support in areas of equity and anti-bias education

Mentoring and co-teaching

- Consultation to teachers regarding integration of mindfulness into teaching practices
- Direct instruction in content-areas through co-teaching and/or collaboration with classroom teachers
- Individual mindfulness meetings for students and staff with the Mindfulness Director
- Mindfulness mentoring and support for student-athletes, coaches, and teams

Community mindfulness practice and support

- Regular all-school mindfulness practice
- Regular drop-in practice led by different members of the community
- Opportunities for students to be supported in mindfulness throughout the day (i.e. Mindfulness Lunch)
- Mindfulness Club for interested students
- Mindfulness resources and support for interested alumni

Summer retreats

- Annual summer mindfulness retreat for adult members of the school community
- Annual summer teen mindfulness retreats

Mindfulness Reinforces Social/Emotional Learning



Mindfulness and social/emotional learning (SEL) are mutually reinforcing. While SEL emphasizes self-management, relational skills, and responsible decision making, mindfulness practices help lay the supporting groundwork in students' brains and nervous systems. Specifically, mindfulness practices target the key skills of attentional control, self-awareness, emotional regulation, kindness, and empathy.

In practice, if students know SEL strategies, but they don't have the attentional skills to pause and consider how they will respond to a triggering situation, then it will be difficult for them to change their behavior. The practice of mindfulness can give students the skills and tools they need.

Deep Impact: Students, Staff, and Parents Reflect

The following testimonials show strong support for the impact a Mindfulness Director can have on a school community.

"Integrating a mindfulness program into the life of a school involves a lot of experimentation, at the macro and micro levels. It's been crucial for me to have access to the judgment and advice of an experienced mindfulness teacher along the way. Whenever I run into a fork in the road—which, in the initial years, seemed to happen every week—it's been so valuable to be able to call Doug [Worthen] and talk things through."

Adam Ortman, Mindfulness Director,
St. Andrew's School

"The mindfulness program at Middlesex gave me so much. Four years out and in college, I still use the practices I learned at Middlesex to continue to work on myself. Mindfulness allows me to practice skills such as compassion, focus, and gratitude just as I would practice a sport or an instrument. As a result, I am a better student, a better friend, and a better leader."

Former Student, Middlesex School

"I love doing mindfulness because I worry a lot, and I get to calm down when I am doing mindfulness."

4th Grade Student, St. Andrew's School

"In our school community, we see the benefits [of mindfulness] manifested in our students' improved emotional balance, judgment, and relationships—to self, friends, work, performance, and the world. We all talk about investing in the health of our students and in lifelong learning. There is no better skill to teach at a young age than mindfulness to improve our students' experiences and enrich their lives."

Kathleen Carroll Giles, Head of Middlesex School

"It's hard for me to stress out and calm down, so it really helped me to kind of learn how to relax and calm myself down."

9th Grade Student, St. Andrew's School

"The course for parents gave me a range of tools to help me stay present, especially during stressful times. My son and I now have a common language around mindfulness that allows me to better support him in building a solid and committed mindfulness practice."

Parent, Middlesex School

"Students gain skills in emotional regulation and resilience by learning mindfulness meditation techniques. Specifically, they learn to not always believe their thoughts, and to detach—ever so slightly—from the rocky emotional landscape they are living in. Furthermore, with regular practice, students gain empathy and compassion for others because of their ability to be with their own discomfort. Any school committed to character development should have a mindfulness curriculum as a cornerstone to all programming."

Meg McLaughlin MS, FNP,
Director of Health Center, Middlesex School

"Mindfulness has been by far the most valuable class I've ever taken. The practice of mindfulness has made me more equipped to deal with life."

9th Grade Student, Middlesex School

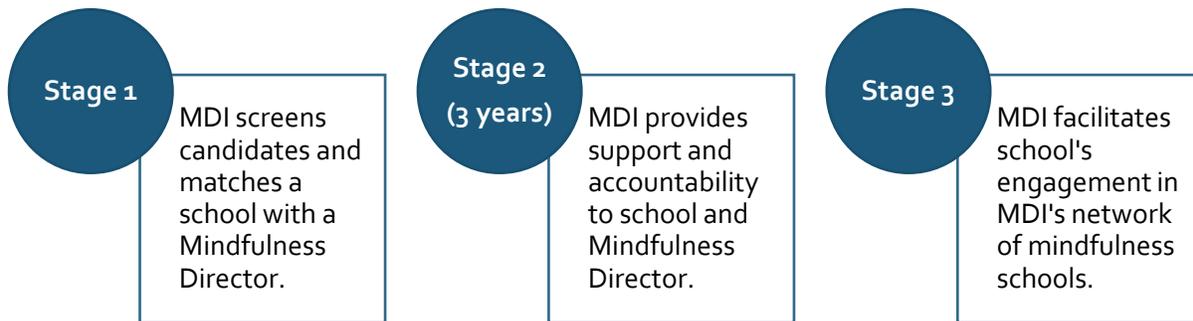
"Mindfulness helps us identify feelings and know how to deal with them as opposed to just avoiding them. It gives you mental education which is not offered in a lot of places and can help us a lot with personal problems in life."

9th Grade Student, St. Andrew's School

"[Mindfulness is] so valuable to me and also to my children. It helps me to be more present for them and most importantly helps me respond—not react—to them. Thank you; [the mindfulness class] was a wonderful experience."

Parent, St. Andrew's School

The MDI Approach



The MDI mission is to make the transformative power of mindfulness a reality for school communities by facilitating the comprehensive integration of mindfulness into schools through the Mindfulness Director Model—thereby enhancing the well-being of students and strengthening our society. We will achieve this for each partner school in three stages.

Stage 1

During Stage 1, MDI identifies schools and Mindfulness Director candidates that have the highest likelihood of successful implementation, and then matches them. A rigorous and competitive application process is used to filter both schools and candidates. The essential process of match-making is thoughtfully conducted after MDI has learned about the specific needs and culture of each school community and the strengths and assets each Mindfulness Director has to offer.

Stage 2

Stage 2 is a formal three-year partnership during which MDI provides support as well as accountability to the school and the Mindfulness Director. Support and accountability take the following forms:

Financial Support: For some schools, it will be a fiscal challenge to add a new position to the school staff. Support from MDI can come in the form of a grant. Our goal is to help each school sustainably fund the Mindfulness Director position through a gradual release of fiscal responsibility and/or support in fundraising efforts.

Implementation Support: MDI will develop a comprehensive support system for schools and Directors that ensures the highest amount of impact at all schools. This

support system includes mentoring as well as access to our network of Mindfulness Directors and their full set of resources. Our goal is to facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices among all partner schools.

Annual Review and Evaluation: MDI will conduct annual reviews of each school and Mindfulness Director in order to ensure integrity during implementation. Our goal is to support successful program development at each partner school.

Research: During Stage 2 we begin conducting research so that the success and challenges experienced at each school serve to enrich understanding in the field of school-based mindfulness. Our goal is to ensure that we provide our network and the larger school-based mindfulness community with guidelines and practices that are backed by research and experience. We are committed to constant growth and learning.

Stage 3

During Stage 3, schools stay engaged in our networked community through which Mindfulness Directors support other each other as they gain expertise and experience by sharing best practices and serving as thought-partners. As Mindfulness Directors continue to refine their practice and program, they will work synergistically to build ever-stronger and richer communities. We imagine a world where every member of every school community has access to mindful teachings, an experienced mindfulness teacher, and supportive mindfulness practice groups, with the result being more resilient, compassionate, and effective school communities that better prepare future generations to thrive and flourish in the face of personal, relational, and global challenges.

Timeline and Goals for Implementation of the MDI Nonprofit Organization

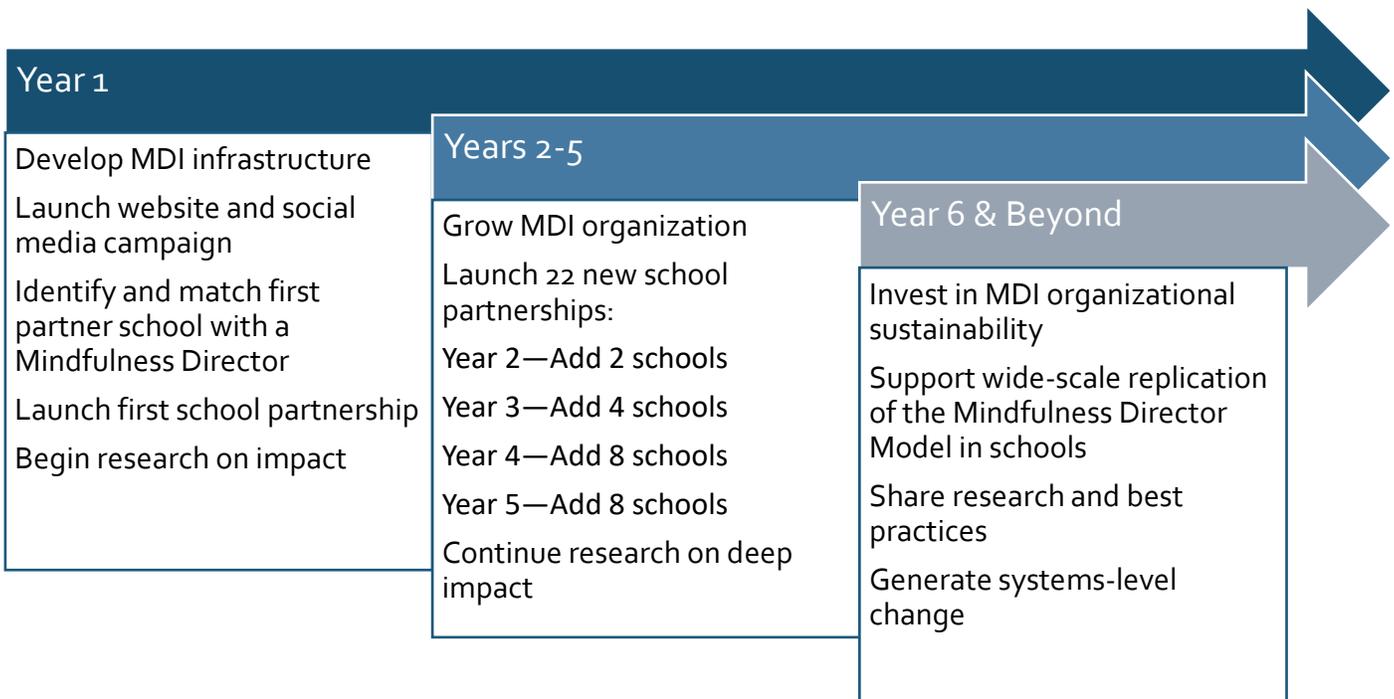
Begin with school partnerships and work towards systems-level change

In our first five years, MDI will develop a strong organizational infrastructure, begin 23 School/Mindfulness Director partnerships, and work towards systems-level change, not only in the field of school-based mindfulness, but in the entire experience of school.

As students and teachers become more aware, more present, and more attentive to others, the integration of mindfulness will begin to positively influence everything from instructional approaches to discipline policies.

In addition, we believe the shifts in behavior awareness and understanding that students and teachers experience because of mindfulness will lead to shifts in the larger communities in which they live, work, and exist. We know that real change begins with the self. Mindfulness is the gateway to self-awareness and authentic change that has impact within the environments in which we interact—at all levels.

As students and teachers become more aware, more present, and more attentive to others, the integration of mindfulness will begin to positively influence everything from instructional approaches to discipline policies.



MDI to Evolve as a Learning Organization

MDI is committed to evolving as a learning organization—an organization that continuously transforms itself by facilitating the learning of its members. Our culture will include active appreciation for constant education, collection and analysis of data, and the willingness to adjust as we grow and learn.

Implementation of MDI as an organization will occur in three overlapping phases. In Phase 1, we will focus on launching our new nonprofit, including securing 503(c)(3) status, appointing board members, and building a fundraising apparatus and social media presence. In Phase 2, we will start and then grow our school partnerships. In Phase 3, we will strengthen our network by sharing research and best practices, with the goal of creating deep impact throughout the education system. In detail:

Phase 1: Launch

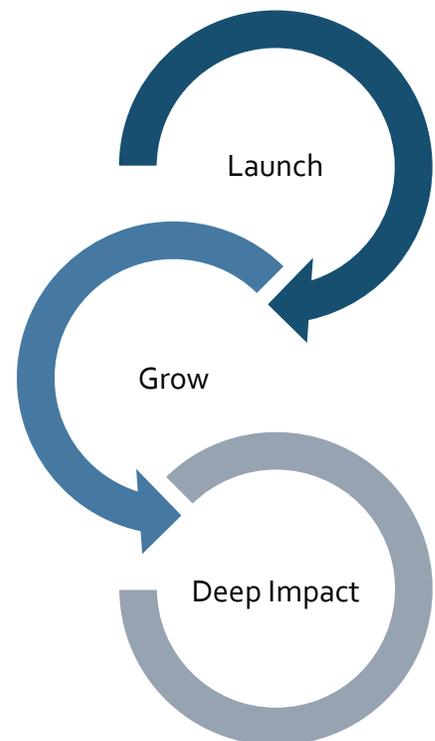
- Submit 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization application
- Recruit Board of Director and Advisory Board members
- Develop and implement strategic fundraising plan
- Launch media campaign through website and social media channels
- Develop infrastructure and processes

Phase 2: Grow

- Identify and match schools and Mindfulness Directors
- Provide support services to partner schools
- Develop network of partner schools and Mindfulness Directors
- Begin research on instructional practices, impact, and best practices

Phase 3: Deep Impact

- Continue research and disseminate results
- Codify and share best practices
- Continue to grow and strengthen the network



Please note: The phases will overlap. For example, thanks to MDI's strong fiscal sponsor relationship with iBme, we will be able to launch our first school partnership before all aspects of our nonprofit have been solidified. Also, we believe Phase 3, the deep impact phase, will begin even as our new school partnerships grow.

How You Can Get Involved

Support MDI

While we work towards securing our official nonprofit status, MDI can receive charitable and tax-deductible contributions through the graciousness of our fiscal sponsor – Inward Bound Mindfulness Education (iBme).

Support MDI by Making a Tax-deductible Contribution

Please consider supporting MDI as we embark on the important journey of working with schools of all types to realize the benefits of intentional integration of mindfulness into their communities. Together, we can positively impact a generation of children and thereby effect real systemic change.

Our first goal is to form at least one new school partnership with a new Mindfulness Director in place by August 2019. After that, we will increase our partnerships over the next five years to add at least 22 additional schools.

The table below illustrates our growth plan and expected financial needs for the first five years.

MDI Expected Financial Need, Years 1-5

	Y1: 2019	Y2: 2020	Y3: 2021	Y4: 2022	Y5: 2023
New Mindfulness Directors each year	1	2	4	8	8
Total number of school partnerships	1	3	7	15	23
Total Expenses	\$100,000	\$400,000	\$500,000	\$700,000	\$850,000

Become an MDI Partner School

We are eager to match schools of all demographics—public and private, urban and rural, financially strong and under-resourced—with a highly qualified Mindfulness Director and to make the transformative power of mindfulness a reality for all students.

We believe any school that is ready, willing, and able to integrate mindfulness into their community should be able to access our support and partnership, regardless of budget constraints. Therefore, we plan to offer need-based grants to schools on a sliding scale over the first three years of partnership. During this time, we will work with schools to support the development of a sustainable funding plan. We seek to work with all schools that are interested in partnering with us.

Serve as a Mindfulness Director

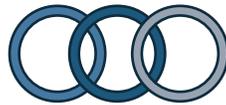
Mindfulness Directors are truly special people that have an opportunity to deeply impact the well-being of students, the experience of school for students and staff, and the nature of a school community. Please contact us if you think you might be a good fit for this role.

Please consider supporting our general operating costs and/or directly supporting a school partnership. A tax-deductible contribution of any amount is greatly appreciated and will go directly to support our mission-driven activities.

The MDI Team

Marc Waxman has 25 years of professional experience in education, including becoming a National Board-Certified Teacher, and over 20 years of experience in non-profit development and management. He has been practicing mindfulness for many years. Marc co-founded and co-led several progressive urban charter schools in New York City and Denver, where, in addition to his teaching and administrative responsibilities, Marc was accountable for board development, fundraising, business plan development, fiscal oversight, program design, and project management. As a school leader, Marc promoted opportunities for teachers to explore the power of mindfulness for themselves and their students. Additionally, Marc is a Certified ChiRunning Instructor and regularly supports runners in enhancing their running experience through mindfulness.

Doug Worthen is the Founder and Director of Mindfulness Programs at the Middlesex School in Concord, Massachusetts. Since 2010 he has been supporting and educating the Middlesex School community (students, staff, parents, and alumni) in mindfulness. Doug began practicing mindfulness meditation in 1999 as a member of the University of Virginia national championship lacrosse team and has been a dedicated practitioner ever since. Living through two bouts of lymphoma, including a bone marrow transplant in 2007, Doug has also experienced how supportive mindfulness can be when living with illness. Doug has attended many week- and month-long mindfulness retreats, led and attended a variety of teacher trainings, and is dedicated to supporting other schools in creating full-time staff positions in mindfulness.



Join us by supporting MDI, becoming a partner school, or serving as a Mindfulness Director. Help to make the transformative power of mindfulness a reality for school communities by facilitating integration of mindfulness into schools through the Mindfulness Director Model.

For more information

To learn more about MDI and how you can help, contact us:

mwaxman@mindfulnessdirector.org

646.789.6925