

“Getting To Know, Me”

Within our school district and our state, the awareness of proactively addressing social emotional skills is highly valued. It is understood that social emotional skills are the building blocks for Boone County Schools strategic plan and goals of having each student, “College, Career, and Life Ready”

According to the Kentucky Department of Education, “Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities. “

Research and the field of Neuroscience is exploding in the area of Interoception, or how our sense of self is attached through the connection of our physical sensations within our bodies. Interoception is now understood to be our 8th Sensory System. Our Interoception system is customly designed to allow us to feel the inside of our bodies. Interoception awareness is the building block that allows our students to reach their individualized goals as well as the initiatives our community stakeholders have deemed important to moving this generation into their highest potential. The ability to have a functioning and vital interoception system, allows our students to fully understand themselves and the world around them as well as to be able to respond not react within it.

Burlington Elementary School and this practitioner is seeking the Innovative Grant within our county. This grant would cover the implementation of the “Getting to Know, Me” program. This grant would allow for education and training of this Occupational Therapist within the district to complete Yoga Educations RCYT (Registered Children’s Yoga Teacher) Certification with a Trauma Informed focus, as well as fund 20 yoga mats for use. Once this 95 hour certification program is achieved, this would allow this facilitator to utilize yoga to develop and design safe and engaging lessons plans that are appropriate and support developmental needs, create yoga classes that meet National Physical Education and Health Standard, comprehend the physiology of trauma and how it manifest in the body and mind, and teach yoga in a trauma informed way to our students and as well as in the future to our staff. Yoga is known and researched as an effective tool to train the Interoception System and improve mental health, behavior, and social participation. Each of the elements tailored to allowing our students to live their lives to the fullest.

The “Getting To Know, Me” project will be offered to all student’s with an interest as an after school program, as well as referral based for students with increasing behavior referrals as positive intervention. This instructor will also pre-record yoga and mindfulness activities while incorporating students as project based learning into brain and mindfulness breaks that will be offered to teachers to utilize with their students throughout the school day. Specific yoga

instruction can also be individualized to meet the needs and goals of our Tier 3 students as a modality to work towards their individualized IEP goals.

Burlington is a Title 1 School, (which indicates higher percentages of children from low-income families.) that serves 825 students of which in the year 2020-2021, 46 were actively receiving RTI services, 132 are serviced by Special Education with an IEP, 21 students receive special accommodations through a 504, there were 7 + cabinet reports were made, 6 Handle with Care notices were received regarding current students, 6 students are receiving specialized interventions for Tier 2 behaviors, and 3 students receive specialized interventions for Tier 3 behaviors. Interoception Awareness difficulties are connected to many conditions including Autism, Depression, Anxiety, ADHD, Eating Disorders, Obesity, Schizophrenia, Trauma Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Panic Disorder, Suicide Attempts, Sensory Processing Disorders, Chronic Pain Syndromes, as well as Drug and Alcohol Addiction. Estimates show that childhood mental health concerns are on the rise, with nearly 15 million children and youth who meet the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders. It is also noted that many more of our children will never be taken to receive proper diagnosis and mental health services that are in our classrooms. The Covid 19 pandemic has also taken our general population of students into a new category of having at least a score of 1 on the ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Assessment for childhood trauma. This assessment is an indicator of future health complications and addictions.

The “Getting to Know, Me” program is highly innovative, as we as a district understand and value SEL skills. Currently each school within the district now implements an SEL program. However, current programs operate in a cognitive or top down approach. These programs assume our children have fully operating and functional Interoception Sensory Systems. However, children with impaired Interception abilities can’t be taught to regulate a system that they do not fully have the ability to sense or understand. The “Getting to Know, Me” program will be the first of it’s kind in our district to allow for instruction from the inside to the out. This instruction will allow our student’s to fully understand and operate the bodies that they are living within. This will allow them to awaken from the numbing out placed upon them from our current society. Awakening from these external forces such as technology, screen time, multi-tasking, busyness, and to be fully present to the here and now, living their lives to the fullest. Our students need more of these moments to fully comprehend and integrate all that we as educators are offering them.

If I were to ask you, as the reader, “How well do you know yourself?” What would your response be? Would you name physical attributes, character traits, habits, preferences? What if I asked you to go deeper, how well do you really know yourself at this present moment. The sensation of your eyes as you read these words, the feelings of your fingers as you brush the keys, or hold this paper? You see, we can’t really say we know ourselves unless we have an understanding and ability to interpret the physical sensations within us. We need to not only be able to access this information quickly but to be able to use this information to navigate throughout life safely and with enjoyment.

Project Start Date: Due to the timeline of this grant offering, the next instructional period for the RCYT certification date has yet to be released but will be in the spring of 2022. (The current start date is October 15th of this fall semester, but is offered again in the spring.) The start date of this project will begin in Spring of 2022, with the date awaiting release.

End Date: This project does not have a projected end date, and has potential to be ongoing through subsequent school years. The certification training portion of this project will be completed 6 months from the start date.

Goals:

By the end of the spring semester 2022,

- This facilitator will participate and work to complete RCYT certification training.
- Each teacher in BES, will have access to pre-recorded yoga and mindfulness brain breaks as completed by this instructor to be utilized throughout the day that will be made available to all students. (this is included as part of the Practicum Experience of the RCYT program)
- Students who are serviced by an IEP at Burlington Elementary with focus on SEL, will have access to live yoga instruction as brain and mindfulness breaks (this is included as part of the Practicum Experience of the RCYT program)
- Students who are serviced by an IEP at Burlington Elementary will have access to project based learning to be included in the pre-recorded yoga and mindfulness brain breaks (as parent permission received).

School Year 2022-2023

Continuation of,

- Each teacher in BES, will have access to pre-recorded yoga and mindfulness brain breaks as completed by this instructor to be utilized throughout the day that will be made available to all students. (this is included as part of the Practicum Experience of the RCYT program)

Addition of

- Yoga to be offered to all students of interest as an after school club throughout the year.
- Yoga club to be referral based to those students who are indicated as high risk for behaviors.

Additional Goals

Continue with above as well as in addition to

- This instructor pursues adult based yoga instructor certification. To offer periodic yoga instruction to staff in promoting Interoception training for overall health and wellness, as well as community engagement.
- To offer community based yoga events to foster greater relationships with students and their parents, within our learning community.
- As this facilitator is a district and internet employee within multiple schools, potential opportunity to develop programs within other schools currently serving.
- Collaborate with other therapists within the district to create online opportunities for live yoga instruction to support IEP goal achievement, and overall positive health in other schools within the district.

Measurement of Effectiveness

1. *By May 2022, Burlington Elementary students who are currently serviced as a student with an IEP, social/emotional skills identified as an area of weakness, and Occupational Therapy as a related service ,will be able to demonstrate increased Interoceptive Awareness as noted by reporting a description of feeling for 15/15 Body Parts assessed. (This is to be indicated at Pre-Post Test Data).*
2. *By May 2023, the number of behavior incidents will decrease 10% from May of 2022 at Burlington Elementary.*