

# NORTHPORT GAZETTE

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## Officials and candidates debate at Concerned Parents forum



Carrie Dailey answers questions from Facebook Live and those in attendance about the present



At Ronnie Lett declining to attend the forum, District 2 candidate Jamie Lake spoke about his campaign platform and ways he plans to change the current system.



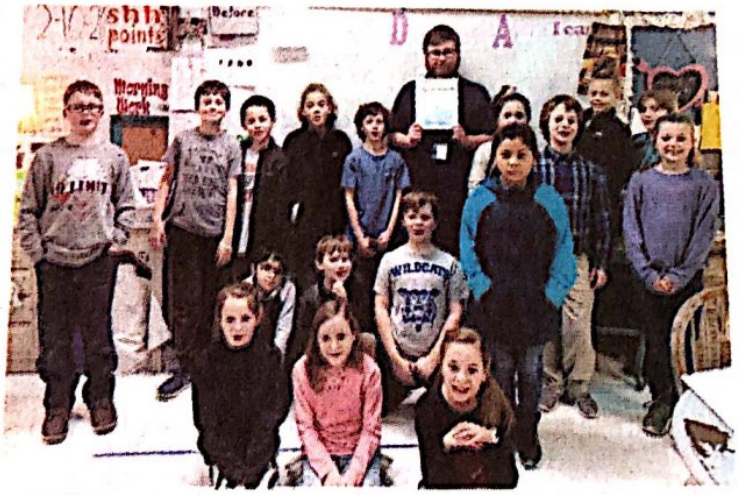
Photos by Aaron Bonner. Panelists Don Presley, Carrie Dailey and Jamie Lake spoke about campaign strategies and hopes for the school system.

## Guest speakers and thoughtful interactions

### Huntington Place Elementary School students learn mindfulness techniques



Photo by Aaron Bonner. Fourth grade teacher Merideth Lett teaches students about the hexaflex, a system designed to help students work through different situations.



Aaron Bonner, reporter for The Northport Gazette, gave a talk to students on education, reporting the news and how to work with personal strengths.

By Aaron Bonner  
Gazette Staff

At Huntington Place Elementary School, fourth grade students are learning from a new lesson plan known as mindfulness infused instruction.

Created by fourth grade teacher Merideth Lett and special education instructor Hollie Nelson, mindfulness infused instruction blends social and

critical thinking skills with a standard lesson plan. Through discussion in the classroom, children are taught how to stay in control of a situation, work through their problems and defuse further confrontations.

"Last year, we discussed the behavior needs of students that we saw and asked ourselves what were some things we could do to be proactive instead of reactive with behavior and

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giving kids the tools to be in control of their emotions, to be in control of their behavior and to reach their potential," Lett said.

After observing the school's AIM behavior analytic curriculum, Lett and Nelson got to work creating a system to adapt their current lesson plans into a new format. In discussions about historical figures, the two began to ask their students "What did this person do to make the world a better place?" using a system known as the Hexaflex to help students work through the question step-by-step.

The Hexaflex is a six-point diagram based on the concept of psychological flexibility. As students learn about a concept, they are then asked how said concept applies to the Hexaflex's six key points: present moment awareness, contact with values, committed action, self as context, cognitive defusion and acceptance.

"We've managed, luckily, to be able to do it with everything, even their math lessons," Nelson said. "A lot of times, we let them apply the Hexaflex to where they are, so their goal or their value is to perform well with this math skill, but what is the committed action for that? For some of them, it may just be classroom participation but for some, it may be coming in early for extra help or maybe doing extra homework."

Since incorporating mindfulness education into the classrooms, Lett said she's not only seen personal growth, but an increase in test scores as students further engage in their education. Earlier this month, Huntington Place was chosen to receive a top character education honor for reinforcing the school's core values of kindness and respect, with Lett and Nelson working to ensure that students aren't just learning about core values, but practicing them.

"We wanted that to go deeper because maybe they were already doing great with it and we don't want it to just be enough that you know what responsibility means," Nelson said. "We want that to go deeper, to go further, and when you really think about being responsible - what are all of the ways that you can be responsible? How are productive adults responsible on an average, daily basis?"

To help aid in this discussion, Lett and Nelson invite weekly guests to enter the classroom as a chance for students to meet with community members and talk their way through the Hexaflex. Authors, ballroom dancers and cake decorators are just some of guests that have come to Huntington Place over the past several months.

During class, students are also encouraged to share more about themselves as "junior experts" on topics such as coin collecting and how they got interested in their topic as a way to spark conversations about personal values and skills. This open discussion, Nelson said, was designed to help expand the minds of students and show them that adults in the community are using the same skills taught in the classroom in their everyday lives.

"I think that our students see the value," Lett said. "The things that their parents tell us and message us and the carry-overs where they're using this stuff, whether it be a dance or the football field or problems that arise with siblings or things like that, it carries over into the home."

Though mindfulness infused instruction is only in its first year at Huntington Place, the two teachers are hopeful for the future and the evolution of their lesson plans. Lett said that over the next year, they hope to expand the program into more classrooms and potentially even other schools.

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