Mindfulness into Action Initiative

On May 29th, 2014 Fifteen Lincoln high school students came to TC. This field trip included a visit to Columbia University and lunch at TC. At the lunch, students reflected about the transformation they have experienced with the process - Mindfulness into Action Initiative.

OLA was awarded the Vice President's Grant for Diversity & Community Initiative. Our proposal was the creation of an action research initiative called “Mindfulness into Action” (MIA). One of our participants has contacts at Lincoln high school. We spoke with the principal and we presented Mindfulness into Action to the students. We presented Mindfulness into Action to 76 high school students, and 17 accepted to join us. Students were so excited about this opportunity that they decided to create a “club”. So, we began replicating the MIA meetings in Yonkers, NY. A bi-weekly meeting was held after school for 60 – 90 minutes with 17 ESL (English Second Language) students ranging from Sophomore to Senior in high school. We provided the time and space by meeting and sharing reflections, emotions, behaviors and observations while the group both students, research assistant and teacher grows together creating a safe, confidential space coined “circle of trust” by the students and a judgment free zone for each individual to express themselves openly.

The aim for each student member of the group is to be able to go within and reflect on their current motional, physical and emotional state and to individually transform the dreams and desires into action steps in the present moment and the future vision that they desire to feel.

On May 29, 2014, these fifteen students came to TC with the supervision of their High School English Teacher and shared their reflections during lunch. This was a very meaningful moment where the students expressed what MIA is for them and what it has done for their lives. Below some of their comments:

“This program has changed my life. As you know, people have perceptions about me; with this process now I know who I am and where I am going academically. I no longer let people define who I am.” (Latino student)

“Before I had anger issues, now with this program I can observe when I am upset and reflect about what triggered my anger. Now, I am a happy person because I can observe when I am moody and stop it right there...” (African American student)

“This school year I did more homework because with this program I was able to see when I was wasting my time, and I went back to do my homework.” (Latina student)

Most of the students mentioned having a place of belonging and having a safe space to share their experiences. The students also mentioned feeling a positive space among their peers that are involved in MIA. Finally, one student mentioned that teenagers normally do not share or talk to strangers but that through MIA they feel comfortable to talk to others and even share about themselves having more meaningful conversations.
Through co-creating this community at the high school level, it is our hope to be able to track progress in development in terms of attendance, time management and post secondary education planning and goal achievement. For that reason, we have an approved IRB to begin research to explore to outcomes of this Initiative. This study has two sources of data that will be subject to analysis: 1) pre-, during, and post-assessment interview protocol, and 2) a quasi-qualitative survey. The results of this Independent Research Study will be presented on October 2014, at the “11th International Transformative Learning Conference” at TC, and on November 2014, at the “15th Conference on Social and Community Psychology” at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology.