Room to Breathe SCREENING TOOLKIT













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FROM THE FILMMAKER

FROM THE FILMMAKER

The American educational system today is obsessively focused on the acquisition and testing of external knowledge for children. Unfortunately, this has come at a great cost: neglect for the social and emotional education of the whole child.

However, since the mid-1990s, a variety of very effective social and emotional learning programs have been implemented in classrooms across the country. Backed up by major studies, these programs are shown to reduce anger and acting-out behavior, improve attention, learning, and grades, and increase happiness and emotional self-regulation in the students involved in them.

I made **Room to Breathe** to highlight one such program, based on a practice called "mindfulness," implemented in several of the lowest-performing classrooms in the San Francisco Unified School District.

By hosting a screening of **Room To Breathe**, you will become familiar with mindfulness training, and have an opportunity to initiate a program to bring a social and emotional learning program into the classroom.

Thank you for hosting a screening of **Room To Breathe**.

Russell Long, Ph.D.



ABOUT THE FILM & TOOLKIT

About the Film

Room to Breathe is a surprising story of transformation as struggling kids in a San Francisco public middle school are introduced to the practice of mindfulness meditation. With students topping the district in disciplinary suspensions, and with overcrowded classrooms creating a nearly impossible learning environment, overwhelmed administrators are left with stark choices. Do they repeat the cycle of forcing tuned-out children to listen, or experiment with a set of age-old inner practices that may provide them with the social, emotional, and attentional skills that they need to succeed?

Run Time: 56 minutes

About the Toolkit

This toolkit is intended to help you plan a screening of **Room to Breathe** and to strategize ways to bring mindfulness (or a similar program) to your local schools. Included are suggestions for:

- organizing your screening
- publicizing your event
- engaging participants in meaningful discussion
- using the film screening to raise funds
- turning ideas into action
- following up with your audience
- connecting with the movement.

After perusing this toolkit, if you still have questions about how best to cultivate mindfulness or other social and emotional learning programs in your community's schools, please send us an email. We're here to help!

In addition to the toolkit, we also offer more tools you may find useful, including a downloadable web banner, press release, blog post, and sign-in sheet. It's available on our website at www.roomtobreathefilm.com.

HOW TO HOST A SCREENING

Hosting a screening of **Room to Breathe** is both easy and fun. Some pre-planning in the weeks leading up to your screening will ensure a successful event with optimal turnout and support from your community.

STEP 1. GETTING STARTED

At least a month before your event, you will want to begin planning the screening. Following are suggestions on how to best prepare, with a menu of options to support a successful screening.

Involve Stakeholders

Involving others in planning the **Room to Breathe** event will make the process more manageable and foster a broader investment in the screening's success. Consider partnering with other stakeholders who have an interest in mindfulness, meditation, social and emotional learning, and better schools. Possible stakeholders include:

- Parents
- Educators
- School administrators
- PTA/PTO members
- Yoga practitioners
- Social and Emotional Learning advocates
- Meditation practitioners
- School counselors / pyschologists
- Restorative Justice activists

Set Goals

Setting goals with those who will be involved in planning the event will ensure that you have a shared vision and purpose. In your ideal scenario, what outcomes do you hope to achieve? What actions would you like your audience to take after "the lights come up"? Some ideas are:

- Facilitate the training of at least one teacher in each of your community's schools.
- Create awareness about the benefits of mindfulness and social and emotional learning to your larger community.
- Convince local decision-makers and school administrators to create and support mindfulness and other social and emotional learning programs in the public schools.
- Fundraise to pay for mindfulness training.

Find Co-Sponsoring Organizations

We strongly encourage the cultivation of other organizations to co-sponsor larger events. Building a coalition of allied groups will help to increase your reach and effectiveness, bring greater attention to the film, and strengthen your fundraising abilities.

Consider partnering with local education or business associations, teachers' unions, PTAs, parenting groups, yoga studios, meditation groups, universities, film societies, and media/film centers.

Ask them how they can use the film to help meet their needs.

For on-campus college screenings, consider inviting academic departments, research centers, and student organizations that have an interest in the topic to be part of your event. This will increase visibility and help spotlight the issues in the film.

The key to approaching co-sponsors is to ask them how the film can be of use in advancing their agenda. Then, you can plan your event to support their work and yours. Be sure to allow enough lead-time: building new relationships takes time.

Secure a Screening Venue

Arrange a venue for your screening that will accommodate the number of attendees you expect and provide a comfortable atmosphere for your group. This could be your living room, a school auditorium, a community center, a yoga studio, a public library, or a local art movie house. See the Venue Checklist for equipment and furniture you may need. Venues that are accustomed to hosting film screenings also will often have their own PR channels you may be able to use. Make sure to secure your venue as early in the planning process as you can!

Venue Checklist				
	A television or projector with a screen that's big enough for everyone to see.			
	Seating that allows everyone a good view of the screen.			
	A DVD player or computer.			
	A powerful audio system (loudspeakers, etc.), especially in larger venues.			
	An information table where you can place sign-in sheets and handouts for individuals who want to get involved.			
previe	To avoid technical glitches, be sure to ew the entire DVD and test your equipment e the event.			

Plan the Agenda

Together with your planning partners, create an agenda and discuss appropriate steps for facilitating conversation and action after the film. There are many possibilities that should be suited to achieve your goals. The following menu provides some ideas that have worked well for other groups.

Menu of Ideas for Your Screening

- Have a Keynote Speaker. Invite an educator, mindfulness trainer, or civic leader to speak about some of the themes the film raises, such as classroom management challenges, learning disorders, bullying prevention, or social and emotional learning programs.
- Provide Mindfulness Instruction.
 Have a local mindfulness instructor conduct a five minute mindfulness training before or after the screening so attendees can experience the impact of mindfulness.
- Hold a Panel Discussion. If you use a larger venue, consider setting up a postscreening panel. Feature local experts on related issues, such as classroom teachers using mindfulness, school psychologists or counselors, students, mindfulness instructors, or local academics researching mindfulness. Speakers can offer a range of perspectives or all speak in support of a specific goal. Reserve significant time for dialogue with the audience.
- Ask for Funding. If your local school officials or teachers are receptive to implementing a program, consider making a funding pitch at the event to support it. The most successful fundraising usually comes from a direct verbal request made by the event coordinator at the end of the presentations. Follow-up contact with those who indicate interest is also critical. See page 8 for more fundraising ideas.

- Form an Action Committee. Invite people to join a working group to move the idea forward in your community. See page 15 for recommended actions.
- Offer Continuing Education Credit.
 See if it is possible to arrange for teachers attending the event to receive continuing education credit. Each state has its own continuing education requirements. Check with your local Department of Education or contact us.
- Host a Reception. At a bigger venue, consider a reception with refreshments before or after the screening to allow opportunities for networking and brainstorming.
- Organize an Exhibit Hall. If you are holding a large event at an exhibit space or theater, you may wish to provide opportunities for sponsors to display information about their organizations and relevant programs or services they provide. Review the Supplemental Resources on our website for national and local organizations that may want to partner with you to exhibit information.
- Invite the Filmmakers. Depending on availability, the filmmakers may be able to join you in person or on Skype to discuss the film. For more information about availability and fees, contact us at: roomtobreathefilm@gmail.com.

"I have been seeing changes in my grades since the mindfulness classes."



Fundraising Tips

Although mindfulness training is not expensive, it does cost money. A screening is a great way to raise the necessary funds to help a teacher or school pay for mindfulness training.

Here are some ways to do that:

- Charge admission. The Community Screening license for Room to Breathe permits you to charge admission to the film screening. If you are working with a local theater, ask the theater to waive the theater rental fee so all the proceeds can go directly to supporting mindfulness training.
- Conduct a raffle at your screening. Starting with extra DVDs included in this kit, consider offering raffle prizes. For example, you can ask local yoga teachers to donate a free class or two, or a local restaurant to donate a free appetizer. If you do receive donations, do not forget to thank donors at the screening and in printed material.
- Make a direct request for donations. Often this is the simplest and most successful way to raise money.

STEP 2. PROMOTING THE EVENT

After you have decided on your goals, venue, and other details of the event, you can begin promoting it to ensure high participation.

Consider Whom to Invite

The goals for your event should inform whom you invite. Inviting community leaders, such as school administrators, teachers and elected officials, could change their perspective on bringing mindfulness into schools. Share with them why you think their participation is of value. Reach out to parents and advocates to ensure they are appropriately represented in the audience.

Target parents, teachers, school administrators, school counselors and psychologists, and school board members. Asking them to attend a screening is often the first step towards building credibility for the program.

Get the Word Out

At least two to four weeks in advance of the screening, reach out to the broader community.

Email. The simplest thing you can do to promote your event is to create an email blast and send it out widely via your personal contacts and partner organizations' email lists. Send out two emails: the first at least two weeks before your event, and then a reminder several days before. Ask people to forward the message.

Facebook. Create a Facebook event and invite your friends. Also ask your friends to invite their friends. One of the best ways to get the word out is through social networks. Let us know if you would like us to promote your event via our Facebook network.

Twitter. Be sure to find the hashtags that are relevant to your topic and tweet to those tags to get the attention you want. Reporters will not necessarily go to your website but they will look up those hashtags to find out what is going on in the field. Don't be afraid to directly tweet people you think might be interested in the event.

Flyers and postcards. Customize one of our flyers to advertise your event. Make copies and post them in high traffic areas, such as grocery stores, libraries, cafes, yoga studios, and university halls. (These are available to download from www.roomtobreathefilm. com.)

Community calendars. Try to get calendar listings in your school's PTA newsletter or city's weekly publications and web calendars. Newspaper websites and event sites usually require two weeks' notice and can help you reach a broader audience. If you have a website of your own, make sure to post information about your event there (you can use the web banner we provide). Ask any co-hosts to do the same.

Twitter Tip!

Useful hashtags include: #mindfulness, #freefilm, #education, #(to city/town the screening is being held), #(the name of the venue where the screening is being held), #breathe, #meditation, #schools, #yoga, and #restorativejustice, #socialandemotionallearning.

USE THE MEDIA

Coverage in local media and social networking sites can dramatically increase attendance at your screening of **Room to Breathe**. It can also help you raise the profile of your work to bring mindfulness and social-emotional learning to the classroom.

See our Supplemental Resources available on our website, for examples of a press release, a blog post template, and other tools. Also keep in mind the following tips for gaining media coverage:

- Highlight mindfulness-in-action in your community. A film screening and discussion may not be enough to attract media attention. But, a compelling example of mindfulness-in-action in your school or community will give media a strong local tie-in and a means for conducting interviews and taking pictures or video.
- Localize the story. Be sure to highlight
 the local people and groups involved in the
 screening, and local news angles around
 mindfulness education. Invite local residents
 or dignitaries willing to speak to the media
 about the topics addressed by the film.
- Include a list of local contacts willing to be interviewed about the benefits of mindfulness, with their contact information. You can include this list with a press release or email that you send to local bloggers. (Visit our website to download a press release template.)
- **Be proactive.** Search for reporters and bloggers in your area who are writing favorably about schools and education, mindfulness, bullying, social and emotional learning, and independent film. Then send them an email or give them a call.

Pulled from the Headlines...

Here are examples of recent headlines to give you a sense of how the media covers the topic and can help you model your pitch accordingly.

"Mindfulness class aims to reduce bullying"

-San Francisco Chronicle

"Believing self-control predicts success, schools teach coping"

-The Washington Post

"Students learn to focus during mindfulness camp"

-Laramie Boomerang

STEP 3. CONDUCTING THE SCREENING

At the screening itself, keep in mind the following suggestions for a successful event:

- Allot enough time for the screening. You should plan for at least two hours to show the film and hold a discussion.
- **Create an email list.** You might ask people to sign in as they arrive.
- Start on time. Aim to begin no later than ten minutes from the posted time. This will give latecomers an opportunity to join the group without delaying the screening.
- Briefly introduce the film and any special guests. Ask everyone to stay for the discussion, and share what time you expect the event to end. You might say, for example, "Please stay after the film is over; we will have a facilitated dialogue and discuss possible next steps we can take to make a difference."
- **Facilitate a dialogue** after viewing the film, with a mindfulness practitioner as one of the discussion facilitators, if possible. Focus on your established goals and desired outcomes for the screening (see page 5). Consider asking a couple of people to be ready to make ice-breaking comments in case the conversation starts out slowly. We've included some frequently asked questions (and answers) on page 13-14 to help you prepare.
- Invite your audience to TAKE ACTION. Ask for a show of hands for those who would be willing to be part of a Committee to implement a program, and set an initial meeting time and location for your new Committee. Distribute the "Action Cheat Sheet" handout on page 19 or create one specific to your community or project.
- Close the program with a few words. Emphasize that a commitment to mindfulness does not end with the screening, but by continuing to stay involved. Thank people for coming and remind them to fill out the event sign-in sheet.

Refer attendees to www.roomtobreathefilm.com to download free resources; to sign up for the Room to Breathe e-newsletter, Facebook page, and Twitter feed; for information on how to host their own screenings; and to stay informed and involved.

Step 4. FOLLOWING UP AFTER THE SCREENING

From the names gathered on your sign-in sheet, send an email thanking your attendees. For suggestions on how to start a mindfulness program, see page 15 of this guide.

Below are some suggested steps on how to use your email list effectively:

- Announce the Committee members.
- Ask who else they know who might want to be part of the mailing list.
- Remind people to send you suggestions about teachers, school officials, or possible donors who might support the Committee's efforts to implement a mindfulness program.
- Send regular emails to your list to insure that everyone is apprised of the latest developments.

We would love to hear how your event went, and to share it with the rest of the Room to Breathe community. We ask that you:

- Send us photos. They don't have to be masterpieces. Take a photo of your audience, invited panelists, or keynote speakers.
- Write a summary of your event and email it to us so we can post it to our blog. This is a great way for people to learn from your successes and see they are not working alone on this issue.
- Please send us your attendance list for our own database. Scanning, emailing, or snail-mailing are all fine.
- Ask your friends and allies to host a screening of **Room to Breathe**.

"After I take mindfulness, all the good feelings came to me."



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What exactly IS mindfulness?

A: "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally." - Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness is a form of social and emotional learning that can be described as a particular way of paying attention in order to bring awareness to one's experience.

Q: Is it a religious practice?

A: Mindfulness is based on age-old practices from the time of the Buddha, and scholars also believe that similar practices were advocated in older Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim teachings. Today, however, mindfulness is practiced in a secular way using concentrated breath work, body scans, and sensory and motor awareness to become fully present in the moment.

Q: In what ways does it benefit students and school communities?

A: Studies demonstrate that the benefits of mindfulness include better focus and concentration; increased self-awareness; stronger impulse control and feelings of calm; reduced aggression, violent behavior, stress, and loneliness; and increased empathy and understanding of others.

Introducing mindfulness to students has the potential to improve academic achievement, mental health, and inter- and intra-personal relationships.^[1]

Q: Is mindfulness beneficial for high-achieving students as well as underachieving students?

A: Yes. Mindfulness has been proven to be beneficial to all types of students in many different types of classrooms and schools. It has been used successfully in lower achieving public schools and higher achieving private schools. All students face stress triggers that can affect their ability to learn. Mindfulness is a tool that can help students reduce their stress levels and increase their ability to focus in the classroom, among other positive benefits.

Q: Does mindfulness work to stop bullying?

A: While not designed specifically to address bullying, mindfulness is being used by many schools around the country to help curb bullying, and is having great results. This is because mindfulness cultivates empathy and impulse control. In combination, mindfulness techniques allow children to put themselves in another's shoes more easily while being more aware of their thoughts and patterns of response, including their words and actions.

Q: Are you aware of any existing grants to help teachers receive mindfulness training?

A: We are unaware of specific grants for mindfulness training programs. However, schools should explore whether there are professional development grants, local corporation grants, or community foundation grants available to support teachers learning emergent classroom management techniques.

Q: What's the best way to bring mindfulness to the classroom?

A: We believe the most efficient way to bring mindfulness to the classroom is to have teachers trained in mindfulness. (See page 15).

Q: Are there programs where parents and children can take mindfulness classes together?

A: It is ideal for both parents and children to be trained in mindfulness, but we are not aware of any family-oriented programs at this time. However, many organizations offer mindfulness courses that parents can take to build up their own knowledge and practice as their children are learning about mindfulness in school.

Q: How much does mindfulness training cost?

A: Every mindfulness instruction program has its own rates. As one example, online mindfulness courses at Mindful Schools start at \$125 for a 6-week session (with sliding scale and scholarship opportunities for those in need).

Q: Is anyone working at the policy level to promote mindfulness in schools around the nation?

A: Yes, U.S. Congressman Tim Ryan (D-OH) is leading legislative efforts to bring social and emotional learning to the classroom. Along with former U.S. Congresswoman Judy Biggert (R-IL) and retired U.S. Congressman Dale Kildee (D-MI), he introduced the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2011 (HR 2437). The act defines social and emotional learning and amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to allow funding for teacher and principal training and professional development to be used for SEL programming.

In addition, an organization named Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning is dedicated to advancing social and emotional learning policies. For more information visit their website at: http://casel.org/policy-advocacy/.

Q: In general, at what age can children start learning mindfulness?

A: By kindergarten, almost all children are ready and receptive to learning mindfulness, but we have seen children starting as early as 3 years of age.

STARTING A MINDFULNESS PROGRAM After the Screening

Consider the following suggestions for amplifying **Room to Breathe**'s impact toward getting a mindfulness program started in your community schools. Also see the "Action Cheat Sheet" on page 19 for more ideas.

Garner Support

To help implement mindfulness locally, use contacts and partners from the screening to:

- Create a committee that can approach sympathetic administrators and teachers to get a commitment to mindfulness training, and to work together in other ways as needed.
- Raise the funds needed to cover the costs of the trainings. (See "Fundraising Tips" on page 8).
- Plan further screenings to broaden awareness and support for implementing mindfulness, if needed.

Train Teachers or Parents

In our experience, it is essential that one active teacher or parent in the target school community have already been trained in mindfulness (or another SEL program). That person will often become the most powerful advocate for the program.

This can be done in several ways:

- Recruit a local teacher or counselor who is already trained in mindfulness to train other teachers.
- Encourage one or more teachers to be trained in mindfulness through online courses or in-person trainings. This is also a cost-effective way to start.
- Bring a trainer to your school or district site to work with a number of teachers. This is usually more expensive than other options, but more teachers can be trained at once.
- Reach out to the PTA to form a committee to implement a mindfulness program. Often finding one or two dedicated parents is enough to begin implementing a mindfulness program.

There are several different organizations that offer online, in-person or on-site trainings. See page 16 for a summary of each and what they offer. We suggest becoming familiar with these organizations and options before your screening.

Keep up the Momentum!

Keep in mind that you are not alone in working to bring mindfulness and social and emotional learning programs to schools.

- Make sure to keep your group energized and fun!
- Be a positive role model, mentor, and optimistic leader.
- Use creative problem-solving to support mindfulness.

MINDFULNESS RESOURCES

There is a growing network of people and organizations actively working on bringing mindfulness and social and emotional learning to classrooms, a few of which are listed here. To find more resources, download the Supplemental Resources from our website.

Organizations Offering Mindfulness Training

- Mindful Schools (the organization featured in Room to Breathe), a leader in integrating mindfulness into education, is based in Oakland, California and provides online training to help adults effectively use mindfulness with children so they can "succeed at school and in life."
 - http://www.mindfulschools.org/
- Inner Explorer offers a variety of programs to implement mindfulness in schools. Through these programs children "bolster academic performance, creativity, social and emotional aptitude, and well-being."

http://innerexplorer.org/

• Inward Bound Mindfulness Education (iBme) is a Washington, D.C.-based "non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of teens, parents, and professionals. Through mindfulness retreats, iBme helps participants cultivate awareness, compassion, and kindness for themselves, others, and the natural world."

http://ibme.info/

- MindUP Program "The Hawn Foundation is a research-based training program for educators and children...MindUP™ lessons align with all state standards, including Common Core, and support improved academic performance while enhancing perspective taking, empathy and kindness as well as fostering complex problem-solving skills."
 - www.thehawnfoundation.org/mindup
- The Inner Resilience Program The Inner Resilience Program's mission "is to cultivate the inner lives of students, teachers and schools by integrating social and emotional learning with contemplative practice." It offers programs, workshops, and retreats for parents and educators, as well as programs geared toward the K-8 curriculum.

http://www.innerresilience-tidescenter.org/

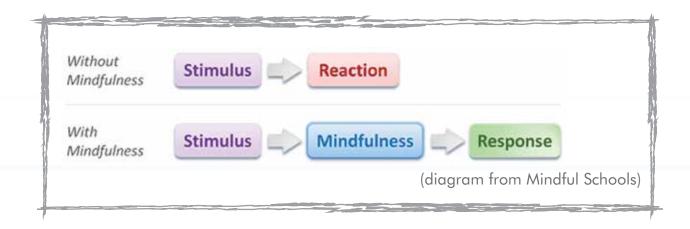


Research Organizations

- Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society "founded in 1995 by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., the Center is an outgrowth of the acclaimed Stress Reduction Clinic - the oldest and largest academic medical center-based stress reduction program in the world." www.umassmed.edu/cfm/index.aspx
- Garrison Institute researches and develops contemplative-based tools and approaches "to help teachers, caregivers and environmentalists sustain and deepen their challenging work." www.garrisoninstitute.org/
- UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC) is dedicated to research and education of neuroscience and human behavior. Its mission is "to foster mindful awareness across the lifespan through education and research to promote well-being and a more compassionate society." http://marc.ucla.edu/
- University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for Child and Family Well-Being "promotes the development and well-being of individuals and families across the lifespan by advancing multidisciplinary family research and evidence-based programming and policy making."
- http://www.sohe.wisc.edu/familycenter/

Advocacy and Policy Organizations

Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning is a Chicago-based research, policy, and advocacy organization that is working to further social and emotional learning. http://casel.org/about-us/mission-vision/



CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING A SCREENING

TAS	K	TIMING PRIOR TO SCREENING		
	Find collaborators	One month prior		
	Secure a venue	One month prior (the earlier the better)		
	Create an agenda	Three weeks prior		
PUB	LICITY			
	Do an email blast	Two weeks; one week; one day prior		
	Send an email invitation to your school or organization's community	ASAP		
	Create a list of other schools and organizations in your community	ASAP		
	Send an email invitation to these groups	ASAP		
	Place in calendar listings	Check with publishers for deadlines		
	Distribute flyers and postcards	One to two weeks prior		
	Make phone calls and write emails to reporters and bloggers (if media coverage is desired)	After the agenda is set (3 weeks prior)		
	Twitter	At least once or twice a week leading up to event		
	Facebook	Two weeks prior, create an "event" and regular wall postings		
CONDUCTING THE SCREENING				
	Agenda			
	Q&A			
	Action items			
	Remind people to sign in			
FOLLOWING UP AFTER THE SCREENING				
Send an email and reconfirm a Committee meeting to implement a mindfulness program				
	Share photos and a summary with us to post	on our blog		
	Copy and mail us the sign-in sheet			
	Ask your friends and allies to host a screening			

ACTION CHEAT SHEET: WHAT YOU CAN DO

After viewing **Room to Breathe**, many people are interested in implementing mindfulness in their schools. Here is a quick guide to action steps you can take – as an individual or part of a committee – to make this happen.

- Find teachers who might already have a meditation practice: they can be invaluable in bringing mindfulness to the classroom.
- Reach out to school administrators, teachers, parents, school psychologists, and school board members.
- Request that schools provide mindfulness training for their teachers.
- Ask that **Room to Breathe** be shown at a school or youth-serving organization. (If that happens, we can help! See below for how to contact us.) Or, host your own screening!
- Adopt a teacher. One of the most direct actions you can take is to help pay for a teacher to take a mindfulness training, which they can then integrate into their classroom.
- Adopt a school. Why stop at one teacher? Help a school to pay for all of its teachers to become certified in mindfulness.
- Contact local media about stories in your community that highlight the use of mindfulness in schools.
- Write letters to the editors of local newspapers expressing your support for mindfulness in schools and the community. Use ideas from the film for talking points.
- Call in to talk radio shows when the topic of discussion relates to mindfulness, violence prevention, bullying, or student graduation rates.
- Be persistent! Know that not every story you submit will get covered. Use the community pages, calendars, and letters to the editor to get the word out about local events and initiatives.

Acknowledgments & Credits

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The Video Project is the distributor of Room to Breathe and assisted with creating this **PROJECT** guide. The Video Project distributes the best in educational media and documentary programming on critical global and social issues to schools, college, libraries and community groups. For more films on education innovations and other issues, visit: www.videoproject.com