

BACKGROUND

- MindUP is a mindfulness-based social-emotional learning (SEL) program that has been shown to promote the well-being of school-aged children
- SEL programs are more important than ever as we remediate the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic
- The implementation of SEL programs has been complicated by school closures and public health guidelines resulting from the pandemic
- Exploring educators' experiences with delivering the MindUP program has implications for the sustainment of the MindUP program and other SEL programs moving forward, including in the case of future school closures necessary for reasons aside from the pandemic

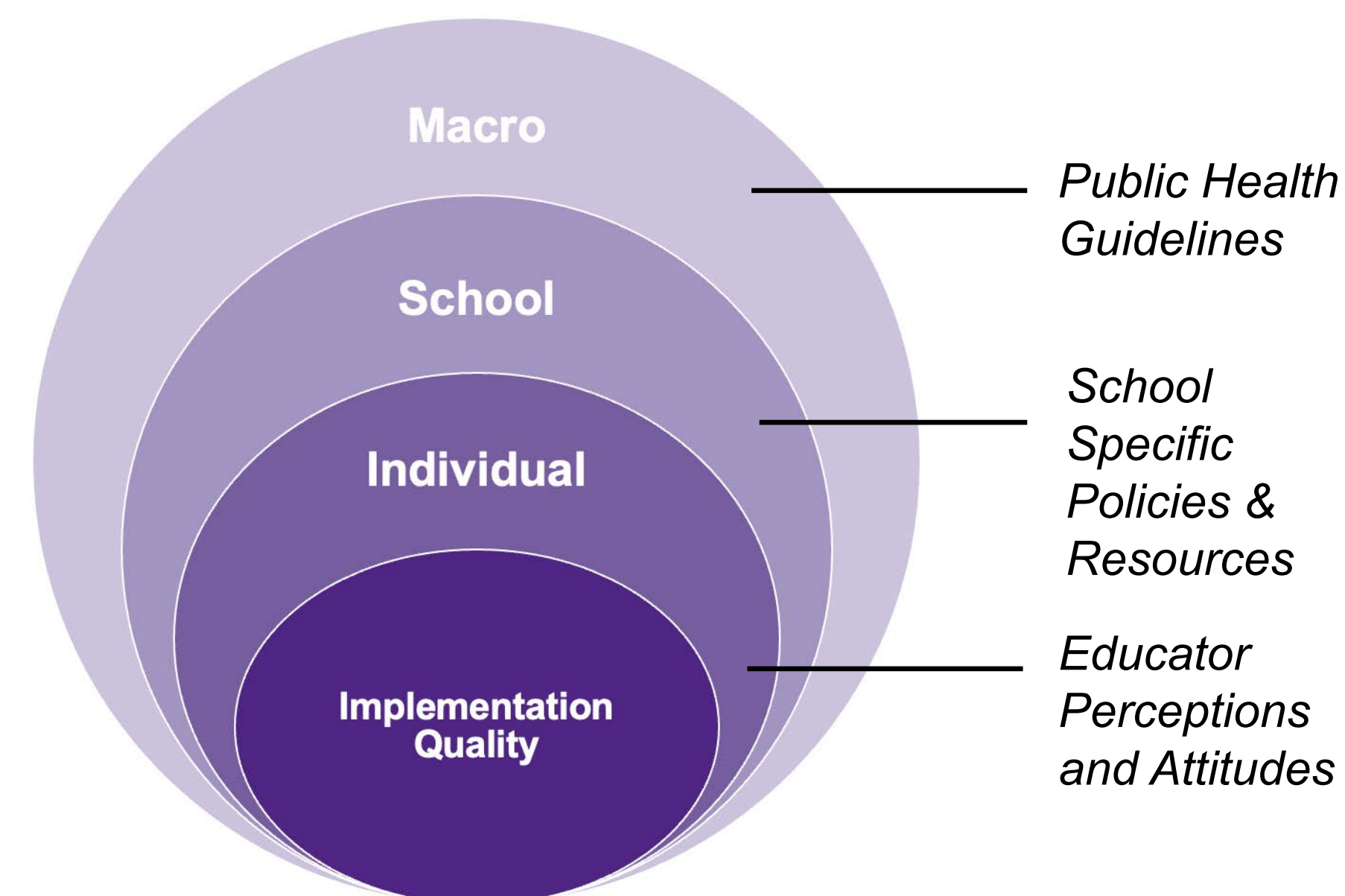


Figure 1. Possible impact of the pandemic across levels of the multi-level implementation framework

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1. Successes** What were the successes associated with implementing MindUP during the pandemic?
- 2. Challenges** What were the challenges associated with implementing MindUP during the pandemic?
- 3. Decision-making process** What factors contributed to decision-making around beginning or discontinuing implementation during the pandemic?

METHODS

We conducted a mixed-methods investigation of educators' implementation experiences:

Survey (N=59)

- Quantitative and qualitative data on satisfaction and program impact
- 21 first-time implementers

Focus Groups (N=20)

- Qualitative data on implementation experience, successes and challenges, program effectiveness
- 2 first-time implementers; 2 entirely virtual implementers

Data Analysis

Quantitative → Descriptive statistics and frequency counts
Qualitative → Thematic Analysis; Data collated and coded using Dedoose

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

THEME 1: External factors served as barriers and facilitators to implementation

Participants discussed the impact of external pressures such as perceptions of support, COVID-19 policies and regulations, and time constraints

I found it easier this year than I think I would have if I was teaching grade two in another year. Just because there was this focus on mental health, we need to be worrying about our kid's mental health and that's the messaging we were receiving from our principal.

I just felt like our focus was supposed to be with literacy, math, and religion, and so my lessons were based on that. That's what was coming from the board, that's what they wanted us to focus on.

I think this was probably the year they got the most from it... I honestly feel like these kids needed to move, they needed time to relax [during] such a high, they feel the stress, they know something's going on... Every year I've done it the kids love it, but I really feel like the kids this year really took a lot away because so much was taken away from them to begin with.

THEME 2: Belief in the MindUP program matters

Educators perceived value and effectiveness about the benefits MindUP program were driving factors in decisions to continue implementation throughout the pandemic

There's a direct correlation between how a student can succeed and their mental state. If a student is really struggling to regulate their emotions, then it will be very difficult to focus on a challenging task. So, I saw it as trying to help out the students but also hopefully having an impact on their academic success as well.

THEME 3: Online implementation had advantages and disadvantages

Although there were challenges associated with online implementation, many educators were able to implement elements of the program virtually and found it to be helpful

One of the things that we found challenging, and I think limited how much we did was, you know, in the classroom you have that ability to create that calm environment, at home, they unmute, and you hear the vacuum going, and the baby crying, and we're really trying to get them to settle or focus, sometimes it's just not a possibility.

They had family participating with them, where they would show them breathing exercises and different things, it was really neat to have the parents involved, to see what we do and to see why we do it as well I don't think they necessarily would have had that if it weren't for online learning.

THEME 4: Educator characteristics contributed to continued implementation

Previous experience, familiarity, and commitment to consistent routines contributed to continued implementation. Educator circumstances mattered and affected decisions to discontinue implementation

So, I just decided to go with it. And I just, I'm not a halfway person, I'm either going to do it or not, so I committed to myself that I was just going to do it...I'm glad I made that decision... I ran the program from start to finish, every lesson, every aspect of what I could pull from it.

I was so overwhelmed with a new classroom, the pandemic, I had to move all my stuff [because] my building was under construction... I didn't implement the program.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Quantitative survey results converged with qualitative data related to successes, challenges, and perceptions of value and effectiveness:

| Challenges | N | Percent (%) |
|--|----|-------------|
| Prioritizing other curriculum expectations | 35 | 60.3 |
| Time | 33 | 56.9 |
| Technology requirements during remote learning | 27 | 46.6 |
| Distraction and external influences | 22 | 37.9 |
| Space requirements during remote learning | 21 | 36.2 |
| Public health regulations | 20 | 34.5 |

| MindUP Experience | N | Percent (%) |
|--|----|-------------|
| Recommend to a colleague during stressful times | 45 | 75 |
| Very beneficial during the pandemic | 31 | 51.7 |
| Delivering MindUP during a pandemic was a very positive experience | 26 | 44.1 |

Note: cumulative percentages exceed 100 due to participants ability to select more than one response

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

| Successes | Challenges | Decision-Making Factors |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits for both students and educators Helpful in the context of the pandemic Facilitated connections between school and home Ability to implement specific MindUP content virtually (e.g., brain breaks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum pressures Time constraints Public health guidelines (e.g., physical distancing) Space requirements while virtual Online distractions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of support from school administrator and board Recognition of the value of SEL Previous experience and self-efficacy Time constraints and curriculum pressures Individual circumstances |

Educators found MindUP to be feasible, helpful, and worthwhile to deliver virtually and during uncertainty.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION

- Provide** clear and consistent messaging from school and board administration about implementation expectations
- Allocate** time for intentional planning and clearly outline alignment with curriculum to reduce completing time and curriculum pressures
- Leverage** educators with previous experience as program champions to share resources and support new implementers
- Support** implementation through professional development, opportunities for collaboration, and administrator involvement and investment

REFERENCES



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada