

Western
Centre for School
Mental Health



LONDON DISTRICT
Catholic School
BOARD

MINDUP

2017-2018

End of year summary
report for MindUP™
educators and principals
of the London District
Catholic School Board

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MINDUP FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Research Project

The purpose of this ongoing study is to **implement and evaluate a mindfulness- informed, evidence-based, social and emotional learning intervention program** (MindUP™) for young elementary school children (kindergarten and grade 1) in the London District Catholic School Board, within a Trauma-Informed Framework. This school year (2017-2018), was the second year of this implementation research study.

Mindful movement and problem solving in a group



BACKGROUND

Self-regulation and prosocial skills are foundational to all forms of learning and success in schools. It is important for all children to have opportunities to develop social and emotional skills, but it is especially important for children who have experienced trauma. Many children are exposed to chronic stress in their early years, negatively affecting their development in many ways. Exposure to violence and trauma can have negative consequences for children's mental health and well-being, and can curtail their social and emotional development.

MindUP is a mindfulness-based education program that incorporates social-emotional learning into 15, teacher-led lessons. Lesson topics include: How Our Brains Work, Mindful Listening, Perspective Taking, Choosing Optimism, and Expressing Gratitude.

The Trauma-Informed Framework reinforces key concepts for the effects of trauma and chronic stress on children's development and behaviours. The MindUP™ program helps educators learn how to stay attuned and responsive in their relationships with their children.

Mindful seeing in nature



RESEARCH PROJECT UPDATES

The first year of this project (2016-2017) involved an evaluation of the feasibility and fit of implementing the program in the LDCSB and testing evaluation measures. Based on the pilot year data we decided to:

- Swap the child measure Self-Regulation in Schools Index (SRISI) with the age appropriate Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF)
- Streamline the research design by reducing the number of ARTIC collections (2x/year)
- Create consistency in the number of research assistants per classroom (1/class)

THIS YEAR...



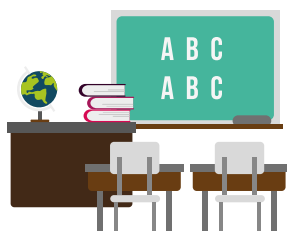
17 schools participated (implementation and comparison).



795 children participated in the research this school year.



328 children in 19 comparison classrooms. Educators also completed the child measures at approximately the same time as the implementation classrooms; however, they did not participate in the trainings or implement MindUP this school year.



467 children were in 35 implementation classrooms. Educators participated in a full day training for the MindUP curriculum and trauma informed practice. The implementation educators implemented MindUP in their classrooms and completed child measures before and after teaching the curriculum.

EDUCATOR RESULTS



All educators (comparison and implementation) were invited to complete personal surveys, the Attitudes Related to Trauma Informed Care (ARTIC) scale combined with select questions from Maslach Burnout Inventory. The surveys asked questions on educators attitudes on responding to problematic behaviours (e.g. I believe... that helping a student feel safe and cared about is the best way to eliminate undesirable behaviours vs. Administering punitive consequences is the best way to eliminate undesirable behaviours), and On the Job Behaviour (I believe... that if students say or do disrespectful things to me, it makes me look like a fool in front of others vs. If students say or do disrespectful things to me, it doesn't reflect badly on me.)



65 educators participated in both the pre-training and post-implementation personal surveys (37 implementation educators and 28 comparison educators).

Information for this report was gathered through 7 focus groups with 30 implementation educators and the ARTIC surveys. We recognize that the voices in this report represent the educators who attended the optional focus groups and are likely the most keen educators about the MindUP curriculum and trauma informed training.



Introducing and learning about the brain

IMPLEMENTATION LESSONS LEARNED



FINDING SUCCESS WITH SCHEDULED MINDUP

Teachers indicated that a strength of their implementation was scheduling MindUP into their day or week.

"I liked how I split up the lessons into manageable little pieces every day. And I like that we were doing it every day because then the kids remembered and they were talking about it. It was so nice to hear from parents saying, 'Wow they're talking about this.'"

- First time implementer

BREATHING BREAKS

All educators in the focus groups indicated that they implemented almost daily brain breaks, often at the transitions but also whenever they felt brain breaks were needed.

In our room we'd do it twice a day. We'd do it in the morning and after lunch for sure and then sometimes we'd do it during activity time. It all depends, if needed. Because sometimes Mrs. [name] needs it and we all need to stop so Mrs. [name] can breathe!

- First time implementer

GREAT IDEAS FOR MINDUP IMPLEMENTATION

Relate the lessons to scenarios based on real world experiences.

Multiple educators mentioned that children are excellent at identifying emotions and deciphering what is going on in the brain when provided with real life relatable examples.

"The students get it. They get experiences." – First time implementer

"Another thing I think is great to do is draw on their own personal experiences when you're discussing." - First time implementer

Hands on activities work best for this age group.

Many educators mentioned their students liked the mindful tasting activities, mindful walks, and sensory activities.

Mindful movement in nature



Creating a calming environment with calming music and turning the lights out.

Educators also identified the benefits of a calming centre or calming corner in their classrooms that students can access on their own to practice self-regulation when needed. Other teachers described that while the mindful moments, quiet snack time, and/or brain breaks are needed and enjoyed by the students, the quiet and calm really need to be enforced otherwise it won't happen.

"And for our quiet snacks, a lot of them want it but it has to be enforced or it won't happen. So they settle themselves at the carpet and we listen to music we pick a happy thought to think about and then I call them when they're looking ready but if they're talking at the table then I'll say OK you need to go back and try again. What's that standard is set then it's respected by all. But if they you know what I mean like there has to be a little bit of classroom management piece to it. This is a quiet zone and you need to respect it." - Second time implementer

Morning check in and morning mindfulness moment.

Two teachers described their morning check ins with the students, which not only encouraged children to become more aware of their emotions and better able to express them, it acknowledged their emotions are valid and normal, and gives the educators perspective on individual children throughout the day.

"We've talked about if you ever just feel crummy and you don't really know why and they've kind of embraced that, it's OK sometimes you wake up and you're just not happy and that's OK. It's not OK to mistreat people or yell at people but you can go to the calming corner. You can take some deep breaths and you can help others who are feeling that way. You don't have to understand why someone is sad or want to make them feel better."
- Second time implementer

Another teacher described her morning mindful moment routine:

"It's become just a way of being in our classroom. So they are asked to take their own mindful moment when they come in in the morning because I find there was a lot of wasted time at that time so they would sit at their desk and I'd have an activity a morning message written on the board, but they say take a mindful moment and then so they were encouraged to either put their head down and close their eyes or take a deep breath or... And I mean does everybody do it? No but I would say at least half of my class is good at taking that minute taking that deep breath before they jump into their work."
- Second time implementer

Feeling wall integrated with Faith Corner and Calm Corner



TIPS FROM SECOND TIME IMPLEMENTERS

A benefit of the focus groups was that they provided a venue for the MindUP educators to share insights and ideas. Many of the second year implementers explained to the first year implementers that they were more successful at integration of MindUP in year two, since they were more familiar with the curriculum this time through.

"I felt this year it was more integrated throughout the day than last year, being my second year. Because the first year you're more with the manual, more to the lessons. And I found a big carryover with the children I had last year to this year. It's more natural. Kids will say we need to be mindful about whatever, or let's calm down. They're using the language, so that's a big thing."

- Second time implementer

"I think this year I'm better at not expecting every student to be perfect when we're doing brain breaks. The first year, I did really want that quiet, that everybody still. This year, I've done better at wrapping my brain around how the best, the most still you can be is different than the most still you can be. Are you still getting from this? Are you still improving? Yes. Are you still finding ways to manage your energy? They are so proud now, we've got so many different ways of breathing and different strategies. A mindful moment doesn't look the same for every person." – Second time implementer



CHANGES IN TEACHING AND EDUCATORS ATTITUDES

In the focus groups, educators often indicated they benefited from their participation in MindUP and Trauma-informed training:

“So I find that my way of teaching is a little different because I’m always talking about behavior choices and types now, whereas I didn’t really do that as often before.”
– Second time implementer

“The group that I have is very very busy, lots of needs, emotional needs, lots of things going on at home. And it’s just all the time I think at home. And then you put that together. So the calm is really, it really helps the whole group, some of them ask for it. I think it kind of gives them permission like I don’t have to talk to my friends right now, I don’t have to be ‘on’. So it’s really good, but it has to be taught.”
– Second year implementer

Educators also felt they benefited from the brain breaks and moments of calm in the classroom and even applied the habits in their personal lives.

Preliminary ARTIC results indicate that implementation educators significantly increased in their “Responses to Problem Behaviour and Symptoms.” This scale reflects attitudes that emphasize relationships, flexibility, kindness, and safety as the agent of change over rules, consequence, and accountability as the agent of change for children who have experienced trauma. Teachers also significantly increased in their positive “On-the-Job Behaviours” responses as compared to the control group educators. The scale also reflects empathy-focused staff behavior over control-focused staff behavior when working with children.

Other educators indicated participating in MindUP for Young Children this school year did not result in any observed changes in themselves. They indicated the reason was of their unable to attend the training sessions or booster session due to lack of supply. Their experiences underscore the importance of ongoing training that is available to all.

OBSERVED CHANGES IN CHILDREN’S BEHAVIOURS

CONNECTION WITH THE CURRICULUM

Many of the educators remarked how the students had great interest and ability in understanding the brain concepts and complex language such as “unmindful behaviour” or “prefrontal cortex”. Multiple educators mentioned the children brought the language home and amazed their parents with knowledge about the parts of the brain. A few educators reported that their students asked for breathing balls or glitter jars for their birthday, Christmas, or vacation souvenir presents.

The glitter jar or bottle is such an awesome visual because like they can link it to their brain like when the glitter’s flying over. Sometimes we’ll come in after lunch recess and I’ll say to the kids, “my head is spinning right now!” And then we shake it. And they pretend to shake it in the air and then we watch it settle and then you can link the clear part to your PFC like it was a really good visual and I heard a lot of my families telling me they were making glitter jars at home and one father told me at the February interview, after I was explaining some of this to him, he said that explains why my daughter at Christmas kept taking the snowglobe and shaking it and breathing.

EMPATHY

One of the most common changes in the classroom that educators noticed was an increase in the children's empathy toward each other.

"I think our class is definitely more mindful of a student who is having an issue that they need to calm them. And then they recognize that that is not a reflection of anything else going on except that that student needs something and we need to figure out what it is and be mindful of what they need and they're able to do their learning while that kid is sorting out their self." – Second year implementer

SELF-AWARENESS

While many educators indicated child "melt downs" are less common, they did notice that the children are building self-awareness of their brains and emotions, which is interrelated with self-regulation.

"I think it's really great in that they can assess their own behaviour in a different way. I think because they know what it means, they know the whole lesson on mindful and unmindful."- First year implementer

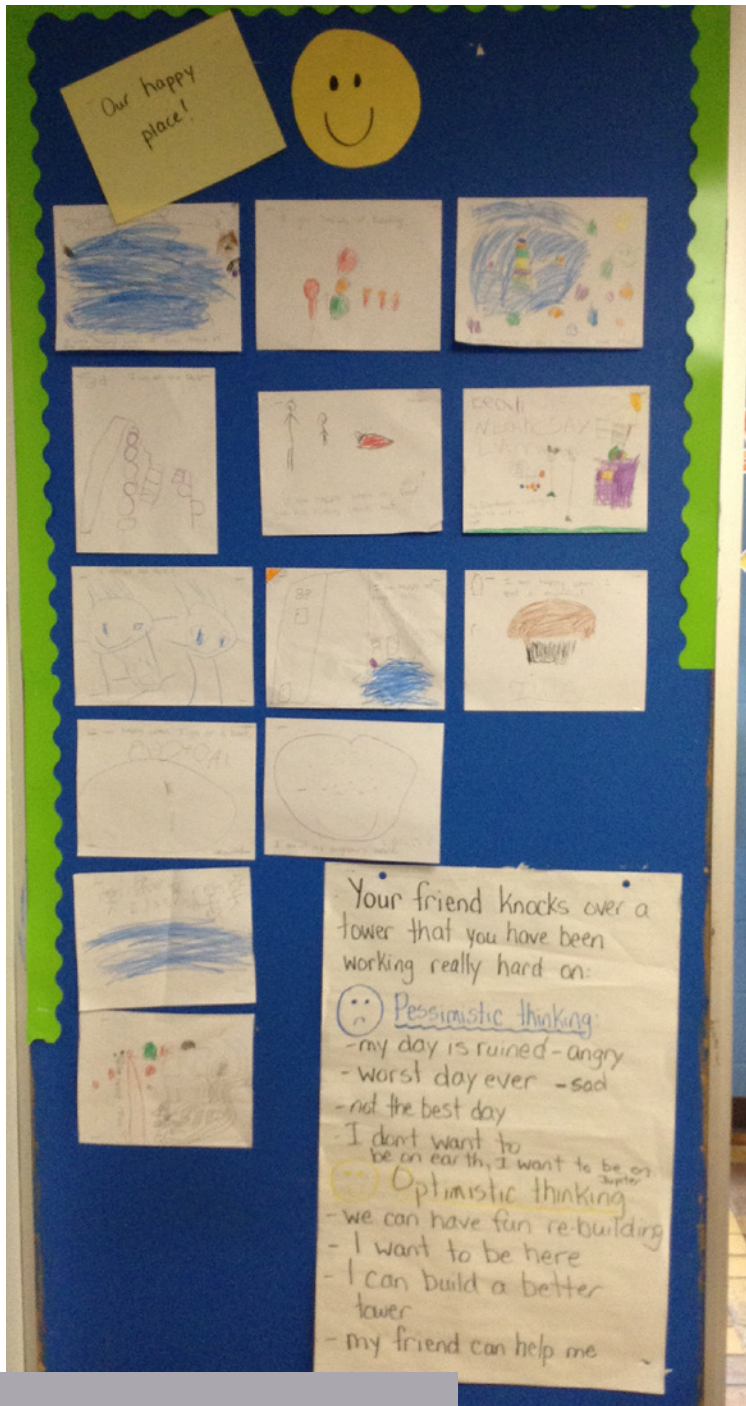
"I think explaining how their brain works, like I to be honest with you, I'm like they're not going to be able to learn this, and then you hear the first kid start using the language, and you're like OK they totally get it! But just to understand why. How their brain is working and why they're reacting that way. I think that's one of the most brilliant parts about it. Because when you understand why you're doing things even if you don't understand why, but you know how it's working. It's pretty cool."
- Second year implementer



Introducing and learning about the brain

SELF-REGULATION MOMENTS

Educators gave great examples of children making efforts to self-regulate. Educators also gave examples of children who can't yet self-regulate, but are able to calm down better with the help of reminders and co-regulation from adults.



Our Happy Place

"I have some children in the class that were in it last year and they are in it with me again this year who have had a very difficult time settling themselves down. If they got upset, someone would take something they wanted to use or they would break their structure they were building or whatever, and they would just not be able to be calmed down. So the techniques that we used, the deep breathing, thinking of a happy memory - I use that one a lot, you know thinking of someone at home that you're grateful for. I try to change their mind off of what has happened to them in the classroom. And a lot of them are able to do that now- not as independently as I'd like, some of them can yes, but those kids I'm talking about, I just remind them about it, whereas before you know nothing seemed to work, it took forever for them to calm down. And then the deep breathing helps a lot too. So that's been very helpful."

- Second year implementer

"I'm excited to see where the JK's go next year with it too like those ones that were struggling that did make baby steps, I think we'll get them by then end of next year, because they may not have made leaps but there's still always a little bit of progress."

- Second year implementation

MOVING FORWARD

Educators had some requests for resources, expressed gratitude, and voiced a need for consistency with MindUP.

RESOURCE REQUESTS

- Make the portal more user friendly with easier access to videos and activities
- Parent Newsletter Handouts
- Hands on and age appropriate activities
- Continued training and booster sessions

Many of the educators indicated they appreciated the supplementary resources: storybooks, cards, and breathing balls; and enjoyed using them as part of their MindUP implementation.

CONSISTENCY

Moving forward, a very common request and important point was consistency and follow through of MindUP implementation as the children progress into higher grades. Educators also indicated a whole school approach would be beneficial for consistency of language and trauma informed approach.

RESEARCH PLANS

Next school year (2018-2019)

- The supported implementation of MindUP will continue in the Kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms of the implementation schools
- Supported implementation will expand into Grade 2 in implementation schools
- Grade 1 and 2 classroom teachers will be contracted to complete the child measures as a component of the supported MindUP implementation
- Kindergarten teachers of the implementation schools will no longer be required to complete the research components
- Kindergarten teachers of the comparison schools will receive all MindUP training and resources to implement MindUP in their classrooms
- Grade 1 teachers in comparison schools will be contracted to complete the measures as comparison classrooms, and will receive the training and resources the following school year

SUMMARY

We have found a continued interest and appreciation for the MindUP program, with many educators expressing gratitude for the support and resources. There was variability in the implementation of MindUP between classes. The educators who participated in focus group identified benefits for the students and themselves.



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