

2018-2019

MindUP Summary Report for Educators and Principals of the London District Catholic School Board



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Western
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MINDUP™
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MINDUP FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Research Project

The purpose of this ongoing study is to implement and evaluate an evidence-based, mindfulness-informed, social and emotional learning program called MindUP. The program is delivered within a trauma-informed framework to young elementary school children in the London District Catholic School Board (LDCSB). This school year (2018-2019) was the third year of implementation, and we focused on students in Grades 1 and 2.

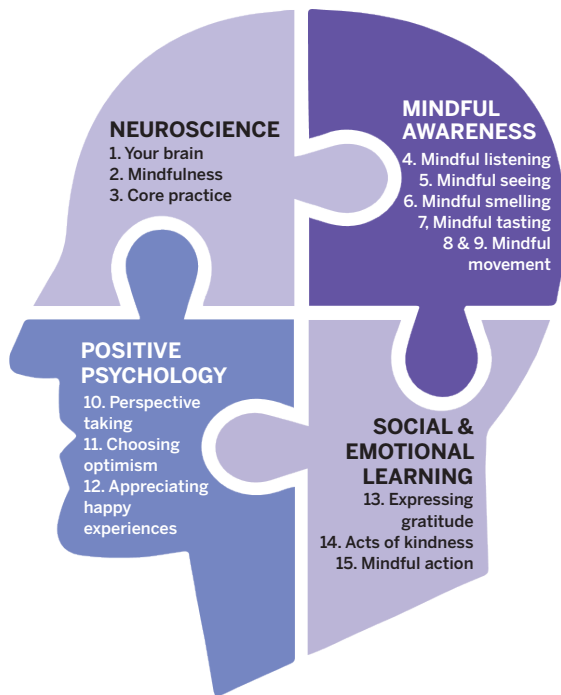
MindUP is a universal program that provides all students with the opportunity to develop social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Studies show that development of these skills is associated with a wide range of positive outcomes, including increases in executive functioning, adaptive behaviour, prosocial skills, and academic performance.

Through 15 teacher-led lessons that integrate neuroscience, mindful awareness, and positive psychology, MindUP targets five core social and emotional learning competencies.



Mindful smelling

MindUP Themes & Lessons



Social & Emotional Learning Competencies





LDCSB MindUP trainers

Trauma-Informed Framework

Many children are exposed to traumatic and/or adverse events in their early years, which can negatively impact their well-being. Within the LDCSB, MindUP was delivered within a trauma-informed framework. Educators who implemented MindUP attended a trauma-informed training where they learned about the impact of trauma on the developing brain and how to respond to stress behaviour in the classroom.

Chronic stress is caused by ongoing trauma/adversity and can reduce social and emotional development, lead to hyper-activation of the stress adaptation system, and show up as behavioural challenges in the classroom (e.g., screaming/yelling, withdrawing, and exhibiting numbness).

Teachers reported that taking a trauma-informed approach helped them better understand students' emotional needs, respond appropriately to behavioural issues, and establish a safe learning environment.

"The brain research was interesting. There's a lot of science, logical reasoning behind what you're doing. Before that, I almost thought of it as a spiritual/traditional, it kind of came from that headspace for me. But then when it came from the science part, it came from a totally different headspace."

"I still remember...from the trauma workshop, 'Why this child, why now?' I just remember that phrase and I say that to myself when I have a child that's misbehaving."

"The trauma-informed approach affected me significantly when they laid it out, just the pure numbers of how many kids are at risk, far more than I anticipated or thought of as trauma. And I think that allows me to approach kids differently when they come into my room because I want to make it a safe place for them to be. Because for some, it's the safest place they have...I'm much more likely to think and wonder what happened this morning. I'm better at noticing."



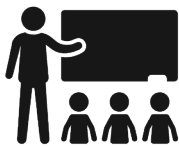
This year...



16 schools



465 students



181 Grade 1s &
124 Grade 2s in
32 Implementation
classrooms
*Educators in the implementation
group taught MindUP in their
classrooms*



160 Grade 1s in
19 Comparison
classrooms
*Educators in the comparison group
did not teach MindUP in their
classrooms*

September 14, 2018 **Principals' Engagement Breakfast Meeting**

The objectives of the meeting were to: engage principals at participating schools all at once instead of meeting with each principal individually, share previous years' results, explain this year's research plan, and encourage principals to have a discussion with their educators about expectations and support.

September 28, 2018 **Fall Training**

The training was designed for new educators who are implementing MindUP for the first time and comparison educators from the previous year. The training provided knowledge and skills required to successfully begin teaching MindUP in their classrooms. This year's comparison educators did not receive this training.

April 15-16, 2019 **Spring Booster Session**

April 15: The training was designed to engage previously trained educators and encourage their continued implementation of MindUP within their classrooms.

April 16: The training was designed for educators who are currently implementing MindUP, to integrate deeper exploration of MindUP implementation, share successes, and address challenges.

May-June 2019 **All implementation and comparison educators completed spring surveys**

August 21-22, 2019
Train-the-Trainer
Nine LDCSB educators and professional support staff were trained to become certified MindUP Trainers within the LDCSB. The goal of this training was to promote sustainability of MindUP within the LDCSB. Moving forward, these individuals will facilitate trainings for future implementers within the school board.

August 14-16, 2018 **Summer Writing Team**

A working group comprised of five LDCSB educators, created MindUP resources and activities to guide future implementers (e.g., Integrating MindUP into your Daily Classroom Routine, Teacher Lesson Extensions, and Parent Handouts). These resources were distributed to new implementers at Fall MindUP Training and posted on the MindUP Sharepoint site.

September 27, 2018 **Fall Booster session**

The training was designed to engage previously trained educators through an informal discussion of successes and challenges.

October-November 2018 **All implementation and comparison educators completed fall surveys**

May 3, 2019
Trauma-Informed Training
The training was designed for educators who are currently implementing MindUP. The training informed participants on the impact of adversities on child development, neurobiology of toxic stress, and stress behaviour in the classroom. Comparison educators did not receive this training.

June 2019 **Focus Groups**

Seven focus groups with 23 implementation educators were conducted to gain feedback on the MindUP program. Majority of the quotes included in this report were gathered from the focus groups.

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Educator Check-In Survey Results



An educator check-in survey was distributed in February 2019 to past and current MindUP implementers. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into educators' experiences with implementing MindUP.

We identified four key themes from answers provided by 38 educators who shared their MindUP experience highlights: 1) Breathing exercises, 2) Learning about the brain, 3) Calming jar, 4) Chime.



Breathing Exercises

"They love all the calming activities, especially any that have to do with breathing. We do some every day now!"



Learning about The Brain

"Kids love learning about their brain and how it works. I even got some feedback from a parent that said their child has been discussing his amygdala with them."



Calming Jar

"We are seeing the benefits of this program and the students are enjoying it as well. They particularly like making the calming jar, and use it daily."



Chime

"My students love the chime and it is like magic to calm them after lunch recess."

Implementation Quality

Out of the 20 implementation educators who've completed session tracking sheets, 80% of them reported completing all 15 lessons. The educators also indicated that they've spent on average 40 minutes per lesson. In addition to high implementation rate, educators showed high program adherence through completion of multiple curricular components for each lesson (e.g., linking to brain research, applying to the real world, and using journal writing prompts and literature links).



Implementation Successes

Scheduled MindUP

Several educators mentioned the benefits of scheduling MindUP into their daily or weekly schedules.

"I tried to set a time like Monday afternoon for MindUP. I would book it in, that way we got to it and then the week after, we would do the follow-up activities, those task cards, and read a story."

Daily Brain Breaks

All educators indicated that a strength of their implementation was incorporating daily brain breaks to ease transitions.

"It's made transitions between activities easier. And even coming in from recess...I'll use the breathing ball just to calm down. It only takes a couple minutes and then they're ready to go."

Integrating MindUP into Regular Curriculum

Educators also identified the benefits of integrating MindUP with other subjects.

"I think it fits in well with our family life program and our religion program ...Integrating those two things was a nice way to deliver both at the same time."

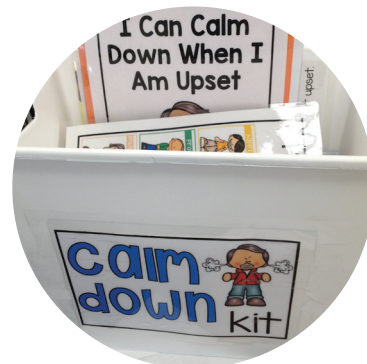
"The mindful tasting, the mindful seeing, those I tied into science so that it was more hands on and applicable for the students."

Linking MindUP with Issues/Events

Many educators used MindUP lessons to address issues that arose in their classrooms and to add an educational component to holiday celebrations.

"Pick and choose what works for the moment...You might want to do optimism when your class feels so discouraged...There might be an opportunity for the kids to do the grateful lesson...for Mother's Day or Father's Day."

"My class has a lot of negativity towards each other, we just did perspective taking today to talk about that."



Mindful senses integrated with music



Gratitude Tree
Leaves = blessings
Flowers = acts of kindness

Ideas for Implementation



Meditation Buddies

Several educators used props (e.g., stuffed animals, paper balls, etc.) during Brain Breaks to help students stay focused.

"We use a little paper ball...and I [say], '...Watch your breathing. Try to control it so that you can keep the ball on your belly'...It makes them focus on that, and then I can actually get them into the next lesson because they're quiet and they're focused more on just themselves, and not what had been happening all day. [They are] being present in the moment."



Morning Routine

Some educators felt that their morning routines (e.g., check-ins, mindful activity, etc.) helped students become more self-aware and helped educators strengthen their connection with each student.

"They have to check in every morning how they're feeling [and] tell me why."

"In the morning, I always have a goal that I put on my chart paper that we read through. A lot of time, it's like 'Spread kindness like confetti,' 'Be more mindful,' so I think that kind of directs the kids from the morning what my expectations from them are...The kids are really liking it."



Movement-Based Activities

Many educators expressed that hands-on activities work best for the age group.

"I have focused way more on mindful movement. Once we hit mindful movement, I'll find Go Noodle mindful videos and I'll put those into our day, and they look forward to it, they like it. They like to think about how we're acting in our bodies and where we are."



Calming Corner

Calming Centre

Educators also identified benefits of creating a calming centre, where students can practice breathing on their own.

"I have a calming corner in my class...It really does work. It's amazing, it's the best investment I think I've ever made, and it's very much aligned with the MindUP philosophy. It minimizes outbursts because when kids are emotionally distressed, they don't necessarily want an audience, and they can express their emotions or regain their composure in a private setting which is fantastic...I have a timer that they flip...five times which equals five minutes, and then after five minutes they come out. Every single time they come out composed, and they're ready to go back to work."

Implementation Challenges



Disengaged Students

Several educators found it difficult to lead brain breaks while managing disruptive behaviour during the activity.

An educator who's implemented MindUP for several years shared how she views students who seem to be displaying resistance:

"That was a big shift that I made in my perspective this year. It is a spectrum...I think if you're looking for the same result for everyone, then it doesn't work for everyone, because you're not going to get everybody to the same result. But, I talk to my students about how being still doesn't look the same for everybody. Because for some people, being still is really difficult, and for some people, being still is really easy. So someone might be still, but they're still rocking. But, they're not running around the room, they're not poking the person beside them...So that was a limitation that I think I've overcome."



Repetition

Another commonly stated limitation was that students who've received MindUP for several years were disengaged due to repetition (e.g., same lessons from the Pre-K-Gr.2 MindUP manual, same storybooks, etc.). To resolve this issue, next year's teachers will receive the Gr.3-5 MindUP manual along with new storybooks. Furthermore, teachers will be encouraged to supplement MindUP lessons with external resources (e.g., Sharepoint site and GoNoodle).

An educator offered advice on how to handle repetitive content:

"I often started with, 'Remember? What do you remember about when we did this before,' and then let them tell me what they remember. And then kind of go at it from, 'Okay well let's go over it again and see what we've missed, see what we've forgotten, see what we need to remind ourselves about.' And I found myself digging more deeply into the portal and the added resources to kind of take them to the next step beyond the starting point. GoNoodle, I find some of their stuff links really nicely with this."



Time Constraints

Many educators reported having difficulties finding time to deliver MindUP lessons, among other curriculum demands. Several educators mentioned that they need more time to explore the program, to integrate into their teaching practice, and to coordinate lessons with teaching partners.

An educator offered her opinion on the importance of delivering MindUP despite time constraints:

"If you don't do it, you're risking spending more time managing behaviours. It gives you tools that you can use that will help prevent the behaviours from happening. So in that way, for sure you save time . . . A lot of people do have this closed mindset where it's like, 'Oh I don't have time,' and for sure, I was one of those people...I still struggle a little bit to find the time...But you have to make the time. Just seeing the difference in the kids, them understanding more why they are having a certain reaction...And just seeing some kids in my class not having any coping skills or resiliency skills, that reinforced how important it is to impart those skills."

Perceived Changes in Teaching Styles and Attitudes

Many educators reported that their teaching style and attitudes have changed as a result of implementing MindUP. Educators shared that they're more calm, mindful, and compassionate. Educators also felt that their personal well-being has increased through modelling mindfulness practices for students.

Calm

"I find that if they come in and they have too much energy...I just stop, I don't say anything...I sit and look down sometimes, and I feel [that] just by doing that, they then follow suit. Whereas before, I'd be like 'Everybody sit down, be quiet,' I'd always be repeating myself, and now I just stop."

"I'm more relaxed...I just need to breathe and keep calm...It's definitely helped reduce my stress. Even just the pace of how I teach, I slow down. I remember even last year I would speak fast and I'd try to get through everything, and now, it's more slowed down, and it's the quality instead of the quickness."

Mindful

"I find that I'm able to use [MindUP] terminology more consistently, so the kids do. And we'll say, 'Oh, I think you're a dog. He's on guard. What can we do'...[It made] me more conscious, more aware of what I needed to do, and I can tell certain times during the day, 'Okay, let's just go sit on the carpet and just breathe.'"

Compassionate

"It helps me be a little more compassionate. It does really make you step back, and really think about the child and why they're doing what they're doing, what's going on or what might be causing that behaviour."

Personal Wellness

"I benefit just as much from taking that deep breath, taking that brain break... I remember that it's not just them that needs the brain break, it's me. That has really changed for me as a teacher, for getting a handle on my own frustrations that are inevitable in teaching."

LDCSB MindUP trainers practicing a mindful moment



Observed Changes in Children's Behaviour

Educators noticed positive changes in the classroom after implementing MindUP. Many noticed improvements in their students' five social and emotional learning skills:



Calming down with
a glitter jar



Learning about the
brain with peers



Green choices vs.
Red choices

Moving Forward

Tips for Future Implementers



Start early

"Start as early as you can. I think the beginning of the year is all about routines, and if you could have MindUP as part of your routine, it will start to fit in naturally."

Read ahead

"Read ahead...Know what you are doing ahead of time. You can start plugging in those 'Oh, so you were doing mindful seeing' when you notice that...Name what they're doing even before you introduce the lessons so they can make associations."

Be flexible

"At the beginning, I would get very hung up on like, 'Oh, I had MindUP scheduled for this time, and I didn't end up getting through it, and now I'm behind.' But you can incorporate it in different parts of the day. Even just doing the core practice and having them be mindful at certain times of the day, that in and of itself is a huge help to the kids. I think it took me a while to get over the fact that I don't need to schedule it, and if I miss a block...It's okay. It is helpful no matter when you get to it or how long you have time to spend on it. It's helpful to them in any capacity."

Invest time

"I think you have to look at it as an investment...It benefits you in the long run. And you have to be willing to look for those long-term benefits because you might not feel them right away. But it's worth it."

Improving Future Applications

School-wide Implementation

Many educators voiced a need for school-wide implementation of MindUP. By taking a whole-school approach, all educators and administrators will learn MindUP concepts and have consistency in language.

"It would be awesome if it was a mandatory thing. So admin has to do MindUP, and EAs, and everyone, so everyone is on the same page. We could all use the same strategy and same terminology. Then the students would be able to use that everywhere they are, instead of all different kinds of things. There's just so many ways and then they're just confused and not in control...One management technique might be something that they really like."

Resource Requests

Educators at French Immersion Schools requested French resources to connect the MindUP program to their dual language program requirements. For 2019/20 school year, we will be providing French versions of the storybooks to St. Anthony French Immersion and Holy Family Catholic French Immersion.

Continue Parent Engagement

"I like now that they've included those at-home packages for some parents to buy into it a little bit. It would be interesting to see for the research, if they do it at home, would that help the transition between Sunday and Monday."



Research Plans, 2019-20



Grade 1 comparison teachers from 2018/19 school year will receive training and resources to implement MindUP in their classrooms.

We will be conducting an intensive study with Grade 3 students. We will recruit ~150 Grade 3 students from our pilot schools (who will continue to receive MindUP), ~150 Grade 3 students from new schools (who will receive MindUP for the first time), ~150 Grade 3 students from our current comparison schools (who will not receive MindUP).

Grade 3 teachers with children participating in the research will be contracted to complete child measures at pre- and post- time points (i.e., October 2019 and May 2020, respectively). Teachers will continue to complete the Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF-2) for each participating child in their class to assess students' executive functioning. Instead of the Behaviour Assessment System for Children (BASC-3), teachers will complete the Social Skills Improvement System – Social-Emotional Learning Edition (SSIS SEL) to assess students' social, emotional, and academic skills.

Grade 3 students will complete two in-class, self-report measures at pre- and post- time points (i.e., November 2019 and May 2020, respectively). The Feelings, Attitudes, and Behaviours Scale for Children (FAB-C) will assess students' perception of self-concept, and My Class Inventory – Short Form (MCI-SF) will assess students' perception of classroom climate.

A 6-month follow-up will be added to our research design. The Grade 3 participants from the 2019/20 school year will be followed until November 2020. Their new teachers during the 2020/21 school year will complete the BRIEF-2 and SSIS SEL measures.

Summary

The data collected from the past three years have shown the relevance and utility of implementing MindUP and trauma-informed approach in school settings. Educators have shown continued enthusiasm, and the longitudinal data have shown significant benefits for young children. The strong university-school board partnership has been critical for the successful execution of the research study.



Western
Centre for School
Mental Health



Claire Crooks
*Director, Centre for
School Mental Health*
ccrooks@uwo.ca
519-661-2111 x 89245

Andrea Lapp & Sue Kim
Project Coordinator, MindUP
alapp4@uwo.ca;
hkim725@uwo.ca
519-661-2111 x 82255

Sandra Savage
*Mental Health Lead,
LDCSB*
ssavage@ldcsb.ca
519-663-2088 x 42105

Terry Spencer
*Research and Evaluation
Officer, LDCSB*
tspencer@ldcsb.ca
519-663-2088 x 40006

1137 Western Road, Room 1154
Faculty of Education Building, Western University
London, Ontario, Canada, N6G 1G7



csmh@uwo.ca



www.csmh.uwo.ca