

## Research Snapshot

# Improving Teacher Attitudes and Preventing Teacher Burnout through Trauma-Informed Training and MindUP™



### What is this research about?

This study investigated the benefits of a combination of trauma-informed training, MindUP™ training, and MindUP™ program delivery on educators' trauma-sensitive attitudes and feelings of burnout. [MindUP™ is a social-emotional learning program].

Many children experience childhood trauma and adversity. Addressing these children's needs is a common stressor for educators. Trauma-informed training can help educators better understand and respond to traumatized and adversity-affected students. Also, social-emotional learning programs, like MindUP™, can help educators develop classroom management strategies that further support these students.

### What did the researchers do?

Researchers surveyed educators on their attitudes and burnout levels at the beginning and the end of the school year. They also held focus groups with educators who implemented MindUP™.

Between 2016 and 2019, a total of 112 educators in Southwestern Ontario participated in the study. Among study participants, 45 educators took part in trauma-informed training and taught MindUP™ in their classrooms for one year, and 26 educators took part in trauma-informed training and taught MindUP™ in their classrooms for two years. The remaining 41 educators taught the standard curriculum without trauma-informed or MindUP™ training.

### Highlights

- MindUP™ is a social-emotional learning program for children in pre-kindergarten to grade 8.
- Earlier research focused on the program's impact on student well-being; in this study, researchers examined how MindUP™ benefits educators who teach the program.
- Educators who took trauma-informed training and taught MindUP™ in their classes experienced less burnout and embraced trauma-sensitive attitudes.
- Compared to their peers without similar training and experience, educators who taught MindUP™ reported increased levels of personal accomplishment, self-efficacy, and self-care .

### Main Findings

Overall, educators who attended trauma-informed training and MindUP™ training, and then implemented MindUP™ in their classrooms, reported lower levels of burnout and higher levels of trauma-informed attitudes. More specifically, these educators showed greater improvements in sense of personal accomplishment, self-efficacy, self-care, and reduction in emotional exhaustion compared to educators who did not attend trauma-informed training or teach MindUP™. Educators who had two years of training and experience with MindUP™ showed the greatest improvements in sense of personal accomplishment and self-efficacy.

## Focus Group Findings

A total of 59 educators participated in focus groups. Many shared how they changed their views on interpreting and approaching student behaviours in the classroom. One educator recommended reflecting on the root cause of student behaviours:

*"I still remember, from the trauma workshop, 'Why this child? Why now?' ... I say that to myself when I have a child that's misbehaving or [being] attention-seeking."*

Another educator emphasized the importance of promoting relationship-building when working with children who have experienced trauma or adversity:

*"When they come into my room, ... 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 wonder what happened this morning. ... I started doing the morning check-ins with the kids."*

Several educators mentioned that they had incorporated MindUP™ skills into their daily lives. One educator reflected,

*"Taking a pause ... and taking deep breaths. That's something that I never did. ... [MindUP] has caused me to go, ... 'It's okay to wait a few minutes instead of jumping into something.'"*

Many educators felt more competent in calming their students using MindUP™ classroom management strategies. One educator noted,

*"The [MindUP] techniques that we used, the deep breathing [and] thinking of a happy memory, ... a lot of [the students] are able to do that now. ... Whereas before, nothing seemed to work. It took forever for them to calm down."*

## How can you use this research?

The promising results from this study suggest educators as well as students can benefit from combining trauma-informed training with social-emotional learning programs in schools. By prioritizing trauma-informed classrooms, schools can help reduce teacher burnout.

## Original Research Article

For a complete description of the research and findings, please see the full research article:

Kim, S., Crooks, C. V., Bax, K., & Shokoohi, M. (2021). Impact of trauma-informed training and mindfulness-based social-emotional learning program on teacher attitudes and burnout: A mixed-methods study. *School Mental Health, 13*, 55-68. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-020-09406-6>

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**About this Summary:** This summary was written by Sue Kim, MA Candidate at Western University.

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