Research shows that schools with comprehensive mindfulness training see benefits for teachers and students. Beyond teachers and students, schools that weave mindfulness practices into the school day are seeing positive changes in school culture.¹

Rigorous evidence-based research on school sites using mindfulness curriculum programs during this period (September 2018 - April 2020) indicates:

**BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS**

**Improve Cognitive Function:**
Better focus and concentration

**Cultivate Well-Being:**
Improvements in resiliency, emotion regulation, compassionate attitudes and behavior, empathy, perspective-taking, social skills, and healthy habits

**Manage Stress & Anxiety:**
Decreased stress, test anxiety, impulsivity

**BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS**

**Support Teacher Well-Being:**
Reduced burnout, symptoms of mild depression

**Improve Teacher Effectiveness:**
Professional improvement, increased job satisfaction, emotional awareness and resilience, classroom management including trauma-sensitive pedagogy, pre- and early-service teachers

Highlights in Research

What follows are studies on school-based mindfulness programs published from September 2018 to April 2020. We have summarized the highlights of this research to help others advocate for mindfulness training in schools. We are grateful for the American Mindfulness Research Association (AMRA) for its aggregation of mindfulness research.

Students report of improved mental health. In a rigorous review of studies by Sapthiang et al. (2019), students reported that mindful attention helped them observe their thoughts and feelings, enabling them to respond rather than habitually react. They valued practice as a way to reduce stress, foster calm and relaxation, cope with stress and improve their social skills.

Does mindfulness training increase empathy in students? Students who receive mindfulness training increase in their empathy and self-compassion. Cheang et al. (2019) surveyed over 540 studies, narrowing for relevance and quality. They highlight the need for further research concentrating on the specific mechanisms of change and the long-term effects of these interventions among a variety of different age groups and neurodiversity.

Special considerations for students with anxiety. It may not be necessary to organize upper primary students with significant anxiety into targeted groups.

Giving all students social and emotional learning programs can support those who need the most assistance (Etherington, 2018). Evaluating the growth of programs for ages 11-14 presents challenges for analysis and comparison, including teacher training, fidelity of implementation, and a need for larger trials; however, this systematic review noted a significant reduction in negative effects, such as anxiety, in this age group (McKeering, 2019).
In this meta-analysis of 18 studies including a total of 1,001 educators, Zarate et al. (2019) found that mindfulness-based interventions had significant positive effects across all domains of well-being: large effects on feelings of mindfulness, moderate effects for decreases in stress and anxiety, and small effects on feelings of depression and burnout.

**Teachers improve emotional regulation and self-care.** The CARE program received two robust investigations. Professor Tish Jennings, long a leader in the field of mindfulness in education with a particular focus on teachers’ mindfulness skills, noted that teachers maintained significant decreases in psychological distress, reduced their ache-related physical distress, and continued significant increases in emotion regulation and some dimensions of mindfulness (Jennings et al., 2019). Teachers from the program who practiced at home described their emerging awareness of negative emotions, more facility to let go of their stressors, and greater affirmation of the importance of self-care and use of strategies to promote it (Schussler et al., 2019).

**Improvements in mindful teacher evaluation.** A new 28-point evaluation, Teaching Mindfulness in Education Observation Scale (TMEOS), can help teachers increase their embodiment, pedagogy, and other factors important for the effective teaching of mindfulness. This measurement tool may be useful for curriculum coordinators, program evaluation, and campus-wide implementation (Broderick et al., 2019).

**How can mindfulness training help students with special needs?** Many special education teachers wonder how to bring the benefits of mindfulness to their classrooms. Eight studies met the criteria for this review of yoga and mindfulness with youth with autism spectrum disorder. All reported pro-social, emotional, and/or behavioral improvements (Semple, 2018). These early results are promising and sufficient to warrant support for further research.

**Teachers report decrease in stress and anxiety.** Teachers continue to report increased incidence of stress, depression, burnout, and anxiety resulting in overall poor mental health and reduced well-being.
Summary of Recent Research Studies

COGNITIVE FUNCTION
- Focus and Attention (Tarrasch, 2018, Janz, 2019)

WELL-BEING IN SCHOOL
- Emotional Resilience and Improved Sleep (Bartel 2018)
- Student Well-Being (Siripornpanich, 2018, Etherington 2019)
- Reduced Perceived Stress (Campbell 2019, Bauer 2019)
- Increased Empathy and Compassion (Cheang 2019)

TEACHER TRAINING AND RETENTION
- Classroom Cohesion (Meyer, 2020)
- Teacher Well-Being and Effectiveness (Carsley 2018, Hwang, 2019, Rickert 2019, Hirschberg 2020)

DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS
- Tailored Assessment for Underserved Students (Mezo 2019)
- Students w/ ADHD (Leith 2019, Kober 2019, Gabriel 2020)

IMPLEMENTATION OF MINDFULNESS
How to Bring Mindfulness to Your School

Building capacities for **awareness, attention, connection, and compassion** are essential skills for educators and students of the 21st century.

Over the course of their career, just one educator has the power to impact the futures of thousands of students. Mindful Schools’ approach is to support the professional development and well-being of educators as the first step to fostering healthy and sustainable mindful learning environments.

**Educators are at the heart of our approach:**

- **Because education is incredibly challenging work.**
- **Because apps can’t model the power of presence.**
- **Because curriculum alone doesn’t change culture.**
- **Because we’re in this for the long game.**

Join over 50,000 teachers, parents, and school leaders who have trained with Mindful Schools to bring mindfulness to their K-12 classrooms at www.mindfulteachers.org.

Educators and MHPs may earn credits in Mindful Schools professional development courses:

**Mindfulness Fundamentals**
- Mindful educators feel more calm, effective, and creative
- Learn the science of mindfulness and start your practice
- 6-week online course with 2 LIVE webinars

**Self-Compassion for Educators**
- Dive into the research and practice of self-compassion
- Led by author and expert, Dr Kristin Neff
- 6-week online course with 3 LIVE webinars

**Mindful Educator Essentials**
- Learn strategies to integrate mindfulness into your classroom
- Access research-backed K-12 Curriculum and workbooks
- 6-week online course with 2 LIVE webinars

**School Implementation Clinic**
- Learn how to build a mindfulness program at your school
- Self-paced online training of strategies and best-practices
- Access 6 LIVE coaching calls with the Mindful Schools team

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References


Complete List of Research Studies, September 2018 - April 2020

Chronological, in order of appearance in the American Mindfulness Research Association’s Mindfulness Research Monthly.

September 2018

October 2018

November 2018

December 2018

January 2019

February 2019

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March 2019


April 2019


May 2019


June 2019


July 2019


August 2019


September 2019


October 2019


November 2019


December 2019


January 2020


February 2020


March 2020


April 2020

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