

MINDFULNESS IN THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM: RESULTS FROM A PILOT STUDY IN MINNESOTA

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#mnMASE

ABOUT CANDACE

Dr. Candace Burckhardt is a Special Education and English Learner Coordinator at Indigo Education. In her role with Indigo Education, Candace supports the special education programs in over 70 charter schools in Minnesota. Candace recently finished a pilot research program on mindfulness-based interventions within special education programs in Minnesota. In 2016, she served as a Research Fellow with the Mind & Life European Summer Research Institute.

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You can learn more about indigo Education at www.indigoed.org.

AGENDA

- Elements of Mindfulness-Based Interventions
- Research on Students with Disabilities
- The Learning to Breathe Pilot Study
- Research Findings
- Recommendations for School Programs
- Q&A

ABOUT MINDFULNESS

MINDFUL EXPERIENCE



WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment.

- John Kabat-Zinn

ELEMENTS OF MINDFULNESS PROGRAMS

Essential	Flexible
Informed by contemplative traditions, science, and the major disciplines of medicine, psychology and education	Curriculum is adapted and tailored to specific contexts and populations
Addresses the causes of human distress and the pathways to relieving it.	Variations in program structure, length and delivery are formatted to fit the population and context
Experience characterized by present moment focus , decentering and an approach orientation.	
Supports the development of greater attentional, emotional and behavioral self-regulation , as well as positive qualities such as compassion, wisdom, equanimity .	
Engages the participant in a sustained intensive training in mindfulness meditation practice, in an experiential inquiry-based learning process and in exercises to develop insight and understanding	

Adapted from Crane et al. (2016)

BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS

Resources on Mindfulness in Education

Discover how mindfulness practices are being applied in schools, learn about some of the early research on benefits, and explore classroom, school-wide, and after-school strategies and programs.

MAY 12, 2016

RELATED TAGS: Mindfulness, Social and Emotional Learning, Student Wellness, Teacher Wellness



Mindful Schools

Calming the teenage mind in the classroom



By Kelly Wallace, CNN

Updated 4:38 PM ET, Tue February 9, 2016



Top stories

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RESEARCH EXPLODING

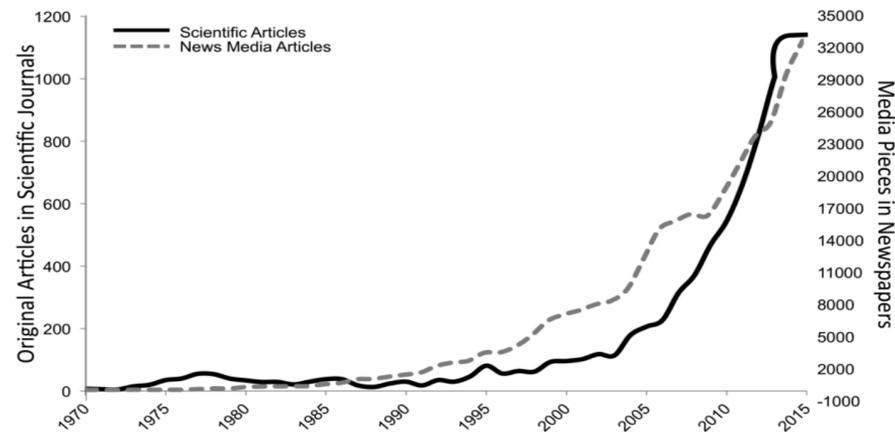


Fig. 1. Scientific and news media articles on mindfulness and/or meditation by year from 1970 to 2015. Empirical scientific articles (black line) with the term *mindfulness* or *meditation* in the abstract, title, or keywords, published between 1970 and 2015 were searched using Scopus. Media pieces (dashed gray line) with the term *mindfulness* or *meditation*, published in newspapers, using a similarity filter to minimize double-counting, published between 1970 and 2015 were searched using LexisNexis.

General Benefits of Mindfulness in Schools

Decreased stress (Metz et al., 2013)

Increased self-regulation (Metz et al., 2013)

Less impulsivity (Broderick, Pinger, & Worthen, 2012)

Greater awareness of feelings (Broderick & Metz, 2009; Broderick, Pinger, & Worthen, 2012)

Decreased externalizing behaviors and/or aggression (Fung et al., 2016)

Increased executive functioning skills (van de Weijer-Bergsma et al., 2012)

MINDFULNESS & STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

ADHD

Zhang et al. (2016): Chinese adolescents & parents received 8 week MyMind course. Researchers found **larges effect sizes** on the Test of Everyday Attention for Children (TEA-ch) and the computerized Conners' Continuous Performance Test 3rd Edition (CPT3). In focus group and survey data, the intervention was positively accepted by both the adolescents and their parents.

Kiani et al. (2016): The authors used a waitlist-control model with 15 students receiving 90-minute mindfulness sessions for 8 weeks, and 15 students serving in a waitlist-control group. The results of the study showed **large effect sizes** for students in the treatment group **on both executive function and regulation** in comparison to the control group.

van der Oord et al. (2012): Mindfulness training with adolescents with ADHD ($n = 21$) and their parents. Both the adolescents and their parents received parallel mindfulness instruction for 90 minutes a week for a total of eight weeks. **Both treatment groups reported reductions in hyperactivity and inattention** on pretest and posttest surveys.

van de Weijer-Bergsma et al. (2012): Adolescents w/ ADHD received 8-weekly, 90-minute sessions taught by cognitive-behavior therapists. The adolescents experienced "**reductions in problem behavior and improvements in executive functioning** [that] were maintained and became stronger" (van de Weijer-Bergsma et al., 2012, p. 783) although these reductions diminished by the sixteenth week mark.

MINDFULNESS & STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Autism Spectrum Disorder

"Meditation on the Soles of the Feet" Protocol used by Singh et al. (2007), Singh et al. (2011a), Singh et al. (2011b).

Mothers of each student were trained in the "Meditation on the Soles of the Feet" technique and responsible for implementing the intervention with their children.

For students with Asperger's Syndrome, **none of the adolescents were ever observed to have aggressive behavior again** during the four-year, post-intervention period (Singh et al., 2011b).

The students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, who had higher levels of baseline aggressive behaviors than the students with Asperger's Syndrome, averaged about **one aggressive event each year** during the three-year, post-intervention period (Singh et al., 2011a).

MEDITATION ON THE SOLES OF THE FEET PROTOCOL

Table 1

Training steps for *Meditation on the Soles of the Feet* procedure.

1.	If you are standing, stand in a natural rather than an aggressive posture, with the soles of your feet flat on the floor
2.	If you are sitting, sit comfortably with the soles of your feet flat on the floor
3.	Breathe naturally, and do nothing
4.	Cast your mind back to an incident that made you very angry. Stay with the anger
5.	You are feeling angry, and angry thoughts are flowing through your mind. Let them flow naturally, without restriction. Stay with the anger. Your body may show signs of anger (e.g., rapid breathing)
6.	Now, shift all your attention fully to the soles of your feet
7.	Slowly, move your toes, feel your shoes covering your feet, feel the texture of your socks, the curve of your arch, and the heels of your feet against the back of your shoes. If you do not have shoes on, feel the floor or carpet with the soles of your feet
8.	Keep breathing naturally and focus on the soles of your feet until you feel calm
9.	Practice this mindfulness exercise until you can use it wherever you are and whenever an incident occurs that may otherwise lead to you being verbally or physically aggressive
10.	Remember that once you are calm, you can walk away from the incident or situation with a smile on your face because you controlled your anger. Alternatively, if you need to, you can respond to the incident or situation with a calm and clear mind without verbal threats or physical aggression

MINDFULNESS & STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Cognitive Delays

Heifetz & Dyson (2016): Teenage participants ($n = 8$) & their parents received mindfulness training (Calming Thoughts and Calming Minds Program). Parents reported increased feelings of mindfulness for themselves and **improvements related to their teenager's prosocial behavior, feelings of happiness, relaxation, and worry.**

Specific Learning Disabilities

Beauchemin, Hutchins, & Patterson (2008): ($n = 34$). After initial 45-min. session, students were given intervention for 5 to 10 min. at the beginning of class each day for 5 weeks. Using pretest and posttest data, **all outcome measures related to anxiety, social skills, and academic performance showed significant improvement.** Both teachers and students positively reported that they liked the intervention and found it easy to implement.

Behavioral Disabilities

Franco et al. (2016): Mindfulness intervention in Spain ($n = 27$) using a meditation program for 15 minutes over 10 weekly sessions instead of the student's typical counseling program. Students in the treatment group demonstrated **statistically significant decreases in both impulsivity and aggressiveness** with effect sizes ranging from 1.16 (important) to 0.995 (important) respectively for each behavior.

LEARNING TO BREATHE

OVERVIEW

Created by Dr. Patricia Broderick, Penn State University

Curriculum can be used by classroom teachers, counselors, psychologists, social workers, health professionals, or related fields

Derived from Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program

Addresses 2 major social-emotional learning standards:

- **Self-awareness** (recognizing your emotions and values as well as your strengths and limitations)
- **Self-management** (managing emotions and behaviors to achieve your goals)

PROGRAM GOALS

To provide universal, developmentally appropriate mindfulness instruction that fosters mental health and wellness



To enhance capacity for emotion regulation



To strengthen attention and support academic performance



To expand the repertoire of skills for stress management



To help students integrate mindfulness into everyday life

PREVIOUS RESEARCH BASE

Broderick and Metz (2009)

Initial Pilot Study. The 120 students in the treatment group had greater awareness of their feelings and significant reductions in somatic complaints such as tiredness and aches and pains. Students also reported greater feelings of calm, relaxation, and self-acceptance

Metz et al. (2013)

The L2B curriculum was used with 216 high school students. The researchers found that “students in the treatment group reported small yet statistically significant reductions in emotional regulation difficulties, psychosomatic complaints, and self-report stress level, while moderately increasing self-regulation efficacy of emotions compared to their counterparts” (p. 267).

Fung et al. (2016)

Piloted the L2B curriculum with 19 Latino and Asian-American middle school students. The results of the study demonstrated that the L2B curriculum was “effective in reducing behavior problems and expressive suppression among ethnic minority youth” (Fung et al., 2016, p. 825). Further, results were maintained at the three-month follow-up assessment.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH BASE

**Bluth et al.
(2016)**

Twenty-seven students were randomly assigned to the L2B program or a substance abuse class for a weekly, 50-minute session for a total of 11 weeks. Students in the L2B program showed **large effect sizes for decreases in depression and small to moderate effect sizes for improvements related to mindfulness, anxiety, and perceived stress.**

**Eva &
Thayer
(2017)**

23 participants between the ages of 17 and 20. at an alternative high school in the Northwest. **Small to moderate effect sizes related to perceived stress and self-esteem were found. However, there were no significant overall differences related to mindful attention.** Participants in the focus group referenced self-regulation benefits most frequently.

LESSONS

18-15 minute sessions or 6-45 minute sessions

Lessons delivered over a six-week period

Each session has 3 components:

- Review/presentation of the lesson theme
- Activities that facilitate understanding of the lesson theme
- In-class mindfulness practice

Curriculum manual to guide activities

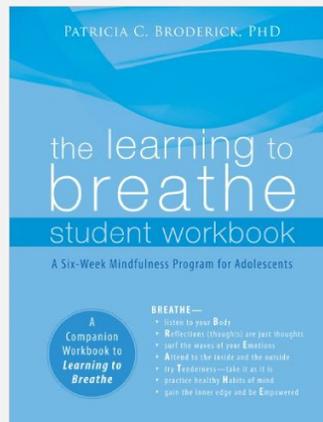
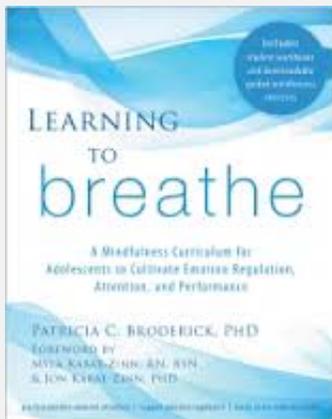
Student workbook

L2B PROGRAM THEMES

Session Themes and Outputs for the Learning to BREATHE Curriculum

Theme	Sessions	Outputs
Body	1-3	Students will begin a body scan practice and begin to understand intention in daily life.
Reflections	4-6	Students will develop a focused attention practice and learn how we all have different perceptions of events.
Emotions	7-9	Students will practice mindfulness with feelings and emotions.
Attention	10-12	Students will use mindful movement to combat chronic and acute stress.
Tenderness	13-15	Students will focus on gratitude and loving-kindness practices to increase their self-compassion.
Habits	16-18	Students will review previous themes and discuss ways to continue their mindfulness practices.

PROGRAM MATERIALS



Optional materials:

- Bell
- Cushions or yoga mats
- Blankets

PILOT STUDY

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1

Do students with mild disabilities who participate in the L2B curriculum report **higher levels of mindfulness** compared to control students?

RQ2

Do students with mild disabilities who participate in the L2B curriculum report **higher levels of self-efficacy** for tasks of self-regulation compared to control students?

RQ3

Do students with mild disabilities who participate in the L2B curriculum report **higher levels of self-regulation** skills compared to control students?

RQ4

How do students view their **participation** in the L2B program?

METHODS: PARTICIPANTS

3 Charter Schools in Minneapolis Area

Desert Hills

Canyon View

Sunset

Treatment	Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 16 students• Majority of students were male ($n = 14$)• Majority of students in 7th or 8th grade ($n = 9$)• Average IQ of 99 ($SD = 10.75$)• Most common disability labels were ASD ($n = 7$) or OHD ($n = 7$)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7 students• More evenly split by gender<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Male ($n = 4$)• Female ($n = 3$)• All students in 7th or 8th grade• Average IQ of 106 ($SD = 15.41$)• Most common disability labels were OHD ($n = 3$) or SLD ($n = 3$)

METHODS: PROCEDURE

Teachers at Desert Hills and Canyon View provided the Learning to Breathe (L2B) (Broderick, 2013) mindfulness-based intervention for 15 to 20 minutes, 3 times per week.

Curriculum Overview

Theme	Sessions	Outputs
Body	1-3	Body Scan Practice
Reflections	4-6	Focused Attention Practice
Emotions	7-9	Practice Recognizing Feelings & Emotions
Attention	10-12	Mindful Movement
Tenderness	13-15	Loving-Kindness Meditation
Habits	16-18	Review of Previous Practices

QUANTITATIVE MEASURES

Self-Efficacy for
Self-Regulated
Learning Scale
(Bandura, 2006)

Adolescent Self-
Regulatory
Inventory
(ASRI)
(Moilanen,
2007)

Child and
Adolescent
Mindfulness
Measure
(CAMM)
(Greco, Baer, &
Smith, 2011)

Student
Attendance

Student
Participation
Rubrics

FOCUS GROUP



TEACHER FIDELITY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Weekly observations
using the Mindfulness-
Based Interventions
Teaching Assessment
Criteria (MBI:TAC)

Lesson plan review

RESEARCH FINDINGS

FINDINGS: PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Program Adherence:

- Each lesson plan was reviewed for **3 components**: a review of the previous lesson, mindfulness activity, and meditation practice.
- Both teachers met **100% program adherence** based on their lesson plans for all 18 sessions.

Instructional Quality:

- Teachers gradually **improved instruction** over the intervention
- **Quality** of instruction **varied** by instructor
 - Canyon View: + relationships with students; - physical space
 - Desert Hills: + physical space; - relationships with students
 - Both: Needed better procedures for teaching meditation

MINDFULNESS FINDINGS



Posttest results on the CAMM (Greco et al., 2016) did not demonstrate any statistical significant changes or differences between the intervention and control group or testing periods on mindfulness.



During focus groups, many students identified having greater attention and focus as well as nonjudgmental, self-compassion as a result of the intervention

SELF-EFFICACY FINDINGS



The hypothesis that students in the L2B intervention group would have higher levels of self-efficacy than students in the control group should be rejected because **no statistically significant differences were found.**



Focus group conversations and classroom observations revealed no mentions related to self-efficacy



Interventions with greater opportunities for practice that are longer and more intensive in scope may be needed

SELF-REGULATION FINDINGS



The average student score in both the treatment and control groups decreased on the posttest.



Given the link between self-efficacy and self-regulation, this result may be affected by the lower self-efficacy scores.



The L2B program is shorter (270 minutes) than the average ($M = 388$ minutes) mindfulness program for students with disabilities



Students reported many self-regulation benefits from the program in the focus groups

HOW DO STUDENTS VIEW THEIR PARTICIPATION IN MINDFULNESS PROGRAMS?

Views of Mindfulness

- All students agreed that their understanding of mindfulness changed over time.

Benefits

- All students could describe a benefit from receiving the intervention.
- All students said that they will continue to use mindfulness after the program

Curriculum Components

- Students greatly preferred hands-on activities where they were able to move around over the static meditations.

Expanding the Program

- All students believed program should be expanded, but differed in audience for program.
 - Students at Canyon View believed entire school should receive intervention
 - Students at Desert Hills wanted it to be offered to their families or select students in need

HOW DO STUDENTS VIEW THEIR PARTICIPATION IN MINDFULNESS PROGRAMS?



Student attendance was impacted by IEP service minutes.



Student participation may be impacted by their disability category and relationship with instructor.



Students benefit from clear and consistent procedures and trust between the instructor and participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
SCHOOL PROGRAMS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Students with disabilities may require significant differences in treatment when using mindfulness interventions

- Strengthen self-efficacy first given its role as a building block (Bandura, 1991)
- Longer mindfulness programming for treatment effects

First study to focus on cross-categorical nature of special education

Schools & researchers need better mindfulness program measurement tools

- How should program impact be assessed?
- How should program delivery be assessed?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Routines

- Use clear and consistent procedures for each lesson

Trust

- Establish trust between the participants and the instructor

Space

- Create a welcoming and private space

IEPs

- Mindfulness curriculum should be evidence-based & reflect student IEP needs

Tiered Structure

- Considered a multi-tiered structure for mindfulness intervention dose & frequency

CONCLUSION

Overall, students reported positive benefits from the L2B program and expressed a desire for it to be expanded

Participants reported **improvements** in self-compassion; acceptance of their feelings; decreases in depression, anger, anxiety; increases in attention; help dealing with stress; and improved athletic performance.

All students reported that they will **continue to use mindfulness** techniques

Recommended program be offered to entire **school, families**, or students in need

This study was also the first to measure all 4 fidelity of implementation concepts in mindfulness: attendance, participant responsiveness, program adherence, and quality (Feagans Gould et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

The results of the study showed that mindfulness interventions:

Can be effectively implemented within special education settings

Show high levels of acceptance by both teachers and students

Need additional research to generalize findings and to understand potential moderators (ex: trauma exposure, disability category, gender)

Q&A TIME

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- **Dr. Candace Burckhardt, Mindfulness Researcher & Program Consultant:** candaceburckhardt@gmail.com / www.candaceburckhardt.com
- Curriculum Resources:
 - Learning to Breathe: <http://learning2breathe.org/>
 - Mindfulness in Schools: <http://www.mindfulschools.org/>
 - MindUp PK-8 curriculum: <https://mindup.org/>
- Indigo Education: www.indigoed.org

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