



Evaluation Report

Ann Arbor Public School Educators' Mindfulness Training Program

In the fall of 2019, 20 Ann Arbor Public School (AAPS) educators initially signed up to participate in a 22-hour mindfulness skills training program sponsored by the MEA and AAEA. The training occurred for two hours after school over eight weeks and for six hours on a weekend day. Enrolled educators represented all building levels (preschool through high school), and included those working in general and special education. Educators new to the district as well as those with a long-term history participated. Three educators dropped out within the first three weeks due to scheduling issues. For the 17 who completed the program, on average no more than one session was missed.

Over the course of the training, educators described the positive value they were experiencing from learning mindfulness, sharing rich anecdotes about changes in their interactions with their students and at home with family members; about their health (sleep, weight, blood pressure); and experience of daily stress. It was not uncommon for educators to also spontaneously express how replenished they felt after each session in comparison to when they arrived.

In order to obtain a more objective evaluation of the training program, we administered pre-and post-self-report surveys that contained five identical questions. Participants were asked to rate on a 9-point scale their level of daily stress; the felt impact of stress on their physical and mental health, including sleep; the perceived interference of stress on their quality of teaching; their overall skill in managing stress and specific skill in managing stress arising in the classroom. Statistical analysis using paired T-tests demonstrated that for each of these five items, mindfulness training significantly improved ($p < .001$) educators' experience of stress and skills in managing stress. Mean changes on these items are depicted in Figure 1 in the Appendix that follows this summary.

Upon program completion, educators also rated their perceived benefits of the training. All educators reported highly benefiting both personally and professionally, with an average rating of 4.5 and 4.4 on a 5-point scale. They also unanimously affirmed that they would recommend this program to colleagues in their own school and other schools.

Participants were asked to write responses to three open-ended questions in the post-evaluation survey. In regard to the first question, "What did you value or appreciate the most about participating in this program?", the most typically repeated comments reflected gratitude for learning new tools to regulate stress, developing self-awareness and relaxation, and having

accountability and a community of practice. When asked specifically about how mindfulness was helping in their lives or in the classroom with their students, educators reported improvements in sleep, emotional reactivity, anxiety, quality of interpersonal interactions, and self-care. They described new skills in working with stressful emotions that arose, and perceived themselves as more mindful in their interactions with students, able to listen more empathetically to others and be more intentional in their interactions. Graham Hannah, a high school teacher, summarized the training experience as, “the most important thing that I could have done to improve my skills coming into the district. Working 15 hour days is stressful. This helped a lot”. Collated verbatim responses of educators to these three open-ended questions are included in the Appendix.

In conclusion, the data demonstrates that intensive mindfulness training had a substantial and positive impact on improving the perceived health, well-being and interpersonal relationships of AAPS educators.