The Pedagogical Role of Mindfulness Meditation:
The Effects of Mindfulness on Education, Student Mental State & Learning Potential

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Abstract

Originating from Buddhism, mindfulness meditation is about paying full attention to what you are doing, while you are doing it—without judgment. The current literature in this area concludes that with regular practice, mindfulness meditation has been shown to have beneficial neuroplasticity effects on the brain, which in turn positively effect one’s mood, concentration and overall well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 1991). This research paper examines how Ontario teachers regularly implement mindfulness meditation in order to create an optimal learning environment and mental state for every child. In addition, this paper also examines how mindfulness benefits both students with mental health exceptionalities and those without, as well as mindfulness as a preventative tool for behaviour issues within the classroom. This study follows the theoretical framework of holistic education and is presented in the form of a case study. This study follows a qualitative research approach in the form of semi-structured interviews, with three participants: Lucie, Ella and Andy. The findings of this research are grouped into three central themes: 1) Necessary for Some, Good for All; 2) Consistency is Key; 3) We (Educators) Hold the Power. Sub-themes, such as: Social-Emotional Learning, Self-Regulation and Attention are significantly eminent as well. It is the hope of this research to benefit educators, students and the educational field. Additionally, this research strives to provide educators with a frame of reference, guidelines and tools for implementing mindfulness into their teaching practices.

Key Words: Mindfulness Meditation, Education, Mental Health, Well-being, Pedagogy, Holistic Education
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction to the Research Study

Originating from Buddhism, Mindfulness Meditation is about paying full attention to what you are doing, while you are doing it- without judgment. It is the conscious, uninvolved awareness of the present moment and is about becoming synchronous with one’s mind-body awareness (Gunaratana, 2002). I became interested in doing qualitative research on the pedagogical role of Mindfulness Meditation within the realm of education because I believe, from personal experience, that regular mindfulness practice can deeply enhance the quality of ones life, overall mental health and psychological well being.

One of the benefits of mindfulness meditation is reducing stress and anxiety (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004), which is extremely important to the increased population who may be suffering from anxiety, not just in children but in the adult population as well. Statistics Canada (2013) released results from a health survey that showed around 2.6 % of Canadian who are 15 and older reported symptoms of anxiety disorders. This is a significant amount of people who could reap the benefits of mindfulness meditation. Mental illness among children and youth has become increasingly threatening, and Canada’s child suicide rate has become the third highest in the industrialized world (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2015). This is an extreme issue and therefore researching the topic of mindfulness meditation will add to the
existing knowledge of the benefits it may have, which is greatly needed, especially with the rise of anxiety in children.

With regular practice, mindfulness meditation has been shown to have beneficial effects on improving mood, concentration and overall well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 1991). Many students, at all ages, deal with mental health issues. Some of the most common being: depression, anxiety disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2015). Some of these issues put students on medication as a remedy for the issue, but this choice may not always result in long-term improvement, or stability, for students. Though meditation can be helpful, the approach of solely using medication as an aid does not teach students how to self regulate and cope with their own mental health, which is an essential human skill that can be acquired with the regular practice of mindfulness meditation.

This study focuses on mindfulness meditation and how its pedagogical practice and implementation into education can be beneficial for students, in terms of reaching their full, or maximum, learning potential. Meaning that, including mindfulness meditation into ones pedagogical practice can aid in creating a calm and optimal learning environment for students, which could in turn lead to more successful learning outcomes than previously seen. Student mental health is one of the most important aspects to a student reaching full learning potential, and with the implementation of mindfulness meditation into daily routine students are more likely to use it as a tool for self regulation of their own mental health. The benefits of mindfulness can generally be divided into six categories: reduces physical or emotional suffering, elevates physical or emotional
fulfillment, develops kindness and compassion towards oneself and others, improves cognitive capacity, leads to positive changes in objective behaviour, and reveals deep self knowledge (Seppala, 2013). I believe that if mindfulness meditation were to be incorporated into everyday school and education routines we, as educators, would foster students who are able to learn to their full potential. Following this study, I expect to gain knowledge as to how educators are applying mindfulness to their teaching. I would like to learn how educators can incorporate mindfulness into their teaching and students learning.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study is very important to the education community as a whole because it addresses important issues and concerns that educators and students face every day. Mental health is a basic human element that is needed before any student a can start learning and excelling in school both on an academic and social level. If a student is not in a healthy mental state, they are more likely to experience and display disruptive or destructive behaviours. Disruptive behaviour is one of the most difficult things to deal with in the classroom, especially when trying to address curriculum content. The most common way to deal with misbehaviour in the classroom is by implementing consequence following the misbehaviour, or negative reinforcement, in hopes that the student will learn not to behave this way again. A mindfulness approach would differ from this in that instead of just addressing the unwanted behaviour one would be addressing the whole student (holistically), attempting to reach the deeper issue at hand and nurture the student(s), rather than consequence them. Implementing a mindfulness method into a classroom routine (slowly and steadily) allows students to become in tune
with themselves, and in turn learn how to self regulate behaviour rather than act impulsively. Thus, I believe that by implementing this practice into education we are addressing some of the largest issues that educators deal with on a daily basis, therefore benefiting both students and their teachers.

1.2 Research Question

The main question that will be addressed is: How do Ontario teachers regularly implement mindfulness meditation in order to create an optimal learning environment and mental state for every child? Related to this question are the following three questions: How does mindfulness meditation benefit the average student? How does mindfulness meditation benefit students with identified or unidentified mental health conditions? How can mindfulness meditation be used as a preventative tool for behavior issues within the classroom?

The theoretical framework that this study follows if that of holistic education, and it is presented in the form of a case study. A case study involves the study of a particular case within a real life setting or context (Creswell, 2013). I interviewed three educators with experiences in implementing mindfulness into their classrooms. I collected detailed data in relation to how they have implemented mindfulness into their teaching practices and any changes or differences they have noticed since.

1.3 Background of the Researcher

I became interested in mindfulness meditation on a personal level in late 2010. Various stressors had presented themselves in my life, and I desperately needed a coping
strategy. I began using mindfulness as a coping mechanism for my own mental health. I read many books on the subject and participated in several mindfulness courses offered through university and medical facilities. Here, I was taught the history, theory, practice, and many benefits of regular mindfulness meditative practice. I was dedicated to the practice, and after about one year I began to notice the positive changes that were occurring from my practice, such as lessened anxiety levels. Meditation helped, and still helps me immensely in more areas of my life than I anticipated. I have continued to practice mindfulness meditation in my own life and have since become very interested in how it can be applied to education and behaviour/mental health management of students within a classroom.

Mental health and mindfulness meditation in my personal life sparked a great interest of wanting to peruse it within my academic life. During my undergraduate education at York University I pursued a B.A. degree in Psychology. I completed an honors thesis on the topic of Mindfulness Meditation and Well Being, with a specific focus on concentration and mood. Previously to this, I also completed an independent study, where I analyzed a great deal of literature on mindfulness meditation and its’ many benefits. Ever since my own practice and research in the area of mindfulness took off, my goal has been to find ways to bring it into the lives of others as early as possible. Thus, leading me to be an avid believer in that the fusion of mindfulness meditation and education could lead to positive outcomes that both students and educators would reap the benefits of.

1.4 Overview

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and purpose of the study, the research
questions, as well as how I came to be involved in this topic and study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature on mindfulness meditation and education. Chapter 3 provides the methodology and procedure used in this study including information about the sample participants and data collection instruments. Chapter 4 identifies the participants in the study and describes the data as it addresses the research question. Chapter 5 includes limitations of the study, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and further reading and study. References and a list of appendices follow at the end.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Mindfulness Meditation: A Background

Mindfulness works by allowing the self to be fully aware and present in each moment, paying full attention to emotions and sensations that come up in the body. Mindfulness allows one to sit with their emotions, whether good or bad, and let them take their course. This is premised on honouring each emotional state by letting it happen, even if it may be uncomfortable, and then letting go. By doing this, one is able to gain the perspective that what they are feeling is okay, and most importantly: transient. This benefit of mindfulness is enhanced by its ease of practice. The fact that mindfulness can be practiced anywhere, at any time (by choosing to make yourself fully aware of your bodily sensations and breath in each moment), and its non-judgmental aspect, makes it different from other forms of meditation (Gunaratana, 2002).

The conscious, uninvolved awareness of the present moment and becoming synchronous with one’s mind-body awareness is the goal of being mindful (Ramel, Goldin, Carmona & McQuaid, 2004). Germer points out, the word ‘mindfulness’ can be used to describe: a theoretical construct (mindfulness), a practice of cultivating mindfulness (such as meditation) or a psychological process or state of consciousness (being mindful) (2005 p. 6). Regular practice can deeply enhance the quality of every individual’s life. For example, being mindful could deeply aid in reasserting control of one’s body, mind and emotions. An additional benefit of mindfulness is its non-judgmental approach (Orsillo & Roemer, 2011), which aims to avoid labeling emotions or thoughts as ‘wrong’ or ‘inappropriate’, thus leading to acceptance of ones thoughts or mental state.
Mindfulness meditation has been used in clinical practice as a promising form of treatment for several physical and psychological conditions, including general anxiety disorders, depression relapse prevention, chronic pain, binge eating, substance abuse (Williams & Penman, 2011). It is largely thought that everyone and anyone can benefit and improve their quality of life from implementing mindfulness meditation into their daily lives- a statement that this study- and others- greatly support (Williams & Penman, 2011). In the psychology realm, mindfulness is implemented to tackle the brooding and dwelling that comes with depression and anxiety, in order to maintain and improve long-term prognoses. Patients have reported having more compassion towards themselves and their emotional and cognitive experiences, while also becoming more compassionate towards other peoples emotional experiences via mindfulness exercises (Williams & Penman, 2011). Mindfulness has proven as an effective practice and tool that has been used widely within the psychology realm (Williams, Teasdale, Segal & Kabat-Zinn, 2007), but has much to offer to the world of education and pedagogy.

2.1 Mindfulness Meditation & Education

Within the last 15 years mindfulness meditation has begun to make its way from clinical work into the realm of education. Research with adults has suggested that meditation practices impart a variety of mental health benefits, from improved attention to reduced stress. Now, these practices are being adapted for use with children and introduced into childhood education in order to foster the development of key self-regulation skills required for academic achievement and emotional well-being. (Shapiro et al. 2014). A Mindfulness study with university and high school students found positive
results in decreasing study-related anxiety and improved concentration when students were given frequent opportunities to practice mindfulness skills (Paul et al., 2007).

It is believed that mindfulness meditation practice would be emotionally, socially and academically beneficial for children if implemented in the school setting (Hooker & Fodor, 2008). When meditation programs have been conducted in schools, the feedback from students has been very positive. Students have noticed self-improvement with respect to concentration and the ability to relax, control negative feelings and experience general feelings of well-being (Rosaen et al., 2006; Wall, 2005). A mindfulness study done by Tim Mapel reported that many students described that practicing mindfulness helped them to focus, center and manage stressful situations better (Maple 19, 2012).

In the study, “Evaluation of a Mindfulness-based Intervention for Adolescents with Learning Disabilities and Co-occurring ADHD and Anxiety”, Haydicky et al. (2012), it is stated that a 20-week mindfulness training program with students resulted in beneficial and positive outcomes. The overall purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of a mindfulness intervention with youth with learning disabilities (LD) and co-occurring attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or anxiety. The subjects for this study were a group of 60 adolescent boys (ages 12-18). A control group and experimental group were conducted, and resulted in the experimental group showing: improvement on social problems and monitoring skills, improved on social problems, and decreased anxiety. Hence, this study shows us that mindfulness intervention for youth and students, especially those with LD’s and/or ADHD shows promise as an alternative and holistic treatment option.

In “Exploring a Mindfulness Meditation Program on the Mental Health of Upper
Primary Children: A Pilot Study” (Joyce et al. 2010), it is discussed that an estimated 12% of children and adolescents have a significant mental health problem, and though mindfulness meditation has been recommended, there are few teachers with the experience and knowledge as to how to implement such programs. This study focuses on training teachers in a 10-week mindfulness program for their students (ages 10-12). The program was presented to students and parents as a self-awareness and relaxation program that was consistent with the health curriculum. “The program was written as ten 45-minute lessons. Pre and post-program evaluations were done in the area of depression. The results of this study reflected improvement in emotional health, especially in children in the “borderline” and “abnormal” categories of behaviour. (Joyce et al. 2010).

“Learning to BREATHE: A Pilot Trial of a Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents” (Broderick & Metz 2009), reports results of a mindfulness curriculum for adolescents created for a classroom setting. The primary goal of this program was to support the development of emotion regulation skills through the practice of mindfulness. A treatment group of 120 students (average age 17.4 years), from a private girls’ school, participated as part of their health curriculum. Quantitative feedback reported that participants in the treatment group reported decreased negative affect and increased feelings of calmness, relaxation, and self-acceptance. Improvements in emotion regulation and decreases in tiredness, aches and pains were also significant in the treatment group at the end of the program. Qualitative feedback indicated a high degree of program satisfaction. The results suggest that mindfulness is a potentially promising method for enhancing adolescents’ emotion regulation and well-being. (Broferick & Metz 2009). Emotional and self-regulation generally refers to ones ability to recognize
emotions, thoughts and feelings and manage them adaptively. It is known that emotional dysregulation is an underlying factor of an array of psychological disorders, such as: depression, anxiety, eating disorders, conduct disorders and substance abuse, that many youth and adolescents in the education system deal with. Therefore, teaching emotional regulation skills is a way to positively improve self-regulation and cultivate well-being for students (Segal et al. 2002).

In Robert Fisher’s paper, “Still Thinking: The case for meditation with children” (2006), he argues that there is a valid case for implementing mindfulness meditation with children. According to Fisher, meditation provides a good starting point for learning and creativity for students. Children are often subject to many of the same strains and stresses as adults, such as: anger, frustration, anxiety and negative emotions (Fisher, 148). Fisher discusses these, and many other reasons, as to why we should meditate with children. Meditation is a proven means for stilling the mind and providing optimum conditions for generative thinking and reflection-which often yield a creative thinking process.

Much evidence has supported that meditative practices can be of specific benefit to children, for example, helping children who suffer from attention difficulties (Bray, Peck, Kehle, & Theodore, 2005). Common emotional and psychological problems, such as anxiety and attention deficit disorders, are being addressed with meditation techniques at some schools, and many parents, teachers and children are convinced of their benefits (Conis, 2005). Fisher (2006), points out that there are strong pedagogical reasons for including meditation into the routine of students and children. The optimum psychological state for learning is one of relaxed attention (Claxton, 1997). If relaxation is one benefit of meditation, then attention is a consequential benefit of this as well.
Learning and dialogue of any kind requires attentive listening, and usually the fluent use of words. Meditation is the practice of attention, including attention to thoughts, words and experiences (Fisher 149, 2006), and therefore can be beneficial in helping children who have attention difficulties.

In the article titled, “Mindlessness/mindfulness, classroom practices and quality of early childhood education”, Celine Capel (2012), discusses how mindless and mindful classroom practices affect the quality of learning and overall experiences of children in an early childhood educational setting. “Mindless behaviour is when rules and routines are more likely to govern our behaviour, irrespective of the current circumstances” (Langer, 31). Capel (2012) stresses that mindless learning compromises the quality of ones education, and that these effects can be reversed through mindfulness and child centric practices that recognize the holistic needs of each child. This process is done to enhance the child’s learning experiences, rather than merely fulfilling curriculum obligations. An overly scripted, or mindless, classroom is a space where students are not able to co-create knowledge, resulting in a growth stunt in learning for both teacher and students. Capel (2012) suggests that when mindful approaches are applied to classroom practices the needs of young learners can be better met, thereby improving the experiences of learners, and eventually the curriculum quality (Capel 667, 2012).

2.2 Mindfulness in the Classroom

In the study “Mindfulness in Education: Case Studies of Mindful Teachers and Their Teaching Practices”, Sherretz (2011) discusses that teachers who practice mindfulness in their classrooms typically do so with four major intentions: their teaching
is process orientated rather than a response orientated, they gave students choices in their learning, they require an expansion of thinking from students, and they strive to foster a positive classroom atmosphere (Sherretz 19 2011). Richard Brady (2008) speaks to another approach used to cultivate a mindful classroom environment. He stresses that “true education has as its aim to awaken the student to him- or herself and to the world” (Brady 87, 2008). Brady (2008) focuses on seven factors in order to bring mindfulness into the classroom and school setting: joy, rest, concentration, curiosity, diligence, equanimity and mindfulness.

Some of the most common techniques used to cultivate mindfulness in the classroom are by focusing on: posture, breathing, attention and visualization (Fisher 149, 2006). Posture is important because it sets the body up for a state of relaxed concentration. Breathing is essential to mindfulness meditation to practice conscious breath control. Breath meditation is a great preparation tool for activities like brainstorming and free writing (Fisher 149, 2006). Attention is used to cultivate the practice of controlling and stilling the mind. Visualization acts as the minds ‘inner eye’ and is used in meditation as a generative technique to focus the mind (Fisher 150, 2006).

One common activity that is often used to cultivate the skill of mindfulness with students is to engage in an activity called Mindful Eating. This is a common activity done with people who are being introduced to mindfulness, and it can be done with a simple box of raisins (Williams, Teasdale, Segal & Kabat-Zinn, 2007). There are eight steps that follow this mindfulness-based activity (Appendix C). During this activity, students use all of their senses to captivate the full experience of eating; which is often easy to overlook. We eat because we are hungry- but do not pay attention to the moments that happen
while eating. This activity could help students gain mindfulness by understanding the step by step the experience and process of using all of the senses to be physically and mentally present during a simple activity.

The breath is a key component to practicing mindfulness and is emphasized as being central to the process (Williams, Teasdale, Segal & Kabat-Zinn, 2007, p. 75). In an initial practice of mindfulness meditation with students, one is guided to sit with their eyes closed and feet firmly planted on the ground with a straight back, or any other comfortable position. Then, students are directed to focus solely on their breathing, specifically the rhythm of the breath and the physical bodily sensations that are felt while breathing. This is not an easy task, especially when it is the mind’s nature to wander and jump between thoughts. The idea is for students to keep their conscious-self separate from the thoughts that arise when they are striving to focus on their breath. However, when the mind does wander, students are reminded to acknowledge this and then gently bring their awareness back to their breathing. The key is the act of realizing that the mind has wandered, and then being able to bring it back to the breath without judgment. The idea behind this is that there are no negative, nor positive, emotional associations with the thought. (Williams & Penman, 2011).

By doing this with students on a regular and consistent basis, we are consciously striving to create and achieve neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the process in which the brain's neural pathways are altered as an effect of environmental, behavioral, and neural changes (Doidge, 2007) – such as the introduction of a mindfulness practice. When consistently bringing ones self back to the breath we are simultaneously creating new
neuro-pathways in the brain that, over time, allow us to see the amazing benefits and positive changes of mindfulness in our students, many of which were listed in the exemplary literature above.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Design and Rationale

This research study uses a qualitative research approach while investigating the ways in which Ontario teachers regularly implement mindfulness meditation in order to create an optimal learning environment and mental state for every child. This study also looks at how mindfulness meditation can benefit students with attention deficits or behavioral issues.

Qualitative research allows for a unique view from the research, because as Creswell suggests “…qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” (Creswell, 2013 p. 44). This research will allow educators to share their experiences and contribute to a growth of knowledge within the area of mindfulness meditation and education.

This research study drew on characteristics of narrative, phenomenological, and grounded theory approaches. This study included participants who have had lived experiences of using mindfulness meditation and/or mindfulness techniques in a learning environment. This study also touched on how these participants came to use mindfulness meditation in their teaching practices and education. Drawing from participants’ oral histories will allow for an understanding of causes and effects in this area of research.

3.1 Instruments of Data Collection

I conducted semi-structured interviews with three consenting participants. Each
interviewee participated in a 45-60 minute interview. The interview questions (Appendix B) were designed to learn about strategies that educators have used to implement mindfulness meditation into their teaching practices. These questions aimed to understand the benefits of implementing mindfulness meditation techniques into education. I looked for details, such as: the steps participants took to be able to implement mindfulness meditation into their teaching, how they created their program, what (if any) opposition they were faced with and how this was overcome, and the perceived benefits for students who are involved in their program.

3.2 Participants

This research study focused on exemplary cases of mindfulness meditation integration in education. The participants were selected based on their meeting of one specific criterion. All participants were required to have used mindfulness meditation techniques in their teaching, over a one-month period (at minimum). Each participant had to be able to recall examples that offer evidence of students using mindfulness meditation techniques to enhance and optimize their learning. All participants for this study were recruited via the Discover Mindfulness Teaching Association in Toronto or through recommendations by principals or other education professionals.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted a review of the semi-structured interviews with three teachers. The literature review in the previous chapter synthesizes the works of various authors who have studied mindfulness meditation and how it has been implemented into education thus far. Therefore, I looked for findings that yield any potential similarities or
differences from the ones addressed in Chapter 2.

Interviews were conducted with each participant outside of school time. The face-to-face interviews were used to gather information on the ways the educators were introduced to mindfulness meditation, how they first began to integrate it into education and their teaching practices, and what effects they have seen thus far. I also conducted a content analysis of participants’ teaching artifacts that are used in their teaching and related to this study. I gathered artifacts, such as: lesson plans, assignment guidelines, and assessment tools to learn more about their implementation of mindfulness meditation into their teaching. The gathering of these artifacts was done in a non-invasive and respectful manner, as I did not want to place any undue pressure onto participants. Lastly, as participant confidentiality is of extreme importance, pseudonyms were used to prevent any personal identification of participants and artifacts provided by participants.

3.4 Ethical Review Procedures

This study adheres to the ethical guidelines set forth by the Master of Teaching Program at the University of Toronto. The participants were provided with an informed letter of consent (Appendix A) that states their participation in the study was voluntary, that they had the ability to withdraw at any time during or after the interview process, and that they had the right to pass on any interview questions. This letter ensures that the participants knew the purpose and content of the study, and were provided with my (and my supervisor’s) contact information should they have any concerns or questions about participation. Confidentiality and respect for participants in the research study was of high importance throughout this research process. Finally, the participants were assured
that they would be assigned pseudonyms and that their pseudonyms and any identifying information will remain anonymous.

3.5 Limitations

The nature of qualitative research and the ethical approvals and structures created some limitation for this study. The first limitation in this study was due to time constraints. This study was to be conducted in a short period of time and the interviews were limited to a single one-hour meeting with each participant. Due to the ethics approval limitations, I was not able to go into classrooms and observe the participants implementing mindfulness meditation into their teaching. I was also unable to observe how the students would have responded to this implementation. Additionally, I was not able to speak directly with the students, meaning that the perspectives of participating teachers may hold a bias as to what they feel is a perceived benefit versus what a student may feel is a perceived benefit.

3.6 Strengths of the Research Design

The perspectives and practices of the participating teachers acted as strong models for consideration by educational community at large, including those interested in beginning the integration of mindfulness meditation into teaching practices. The perceived benefits highlighted by the participants also gave some insight into the strengths of implementing mindfulness meditation techniques into ones teaching practices.
Chapter 4: FINDINGS

4.0 Overview of Chapter

In this chapter, the findings from the data collection during the interview process will be presented and discussed. Again, these interviews explored the ways in which teachers use mindfulness meditation and mindfulness themes in the classroom. The participants clearly identified as being in favor of mindfulness within education and saw a multitude of benefits for students. It is clear from the participants’ responses, just as was evident in the literature, that mindfulness meditation in education provides a new tool for educators to enhance student’s learning and help every student attain their potential, to ultimately lead to student success.

The beginning of this chapter includes a brief introduction to the three participants to illustrate their diverse backgrounds and levels of experience with mindfulness. This will allow for readers to identify the lens from which each participant is approaching their responses to the interview questions. Subsequently, this chapter examines the data and presents an analysis of the findings. Reviewing the data allowed for three distinct themes to emerge along with several subthemes. The main themes that will be the foundation for this chapter are:

Theme 1: Necessary for Some, Good for All

Theme 2: Consistency is Key

Theme 3: We (Educators) Hold the Power
4.1 Meeting the Participants

Each of the participants interviewed for this research study are or have been teachers in Ontario from various publicly funded school boards. For the purpose of this study the participants have been assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

Lucie

Lucie is a primary Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) specializing within a Student Support Center (SSC) classroom in a school within the Greater Toronto Area and has been teaching for more than five years. When asked about her background in mindfulness and education Lucie explained that she became introduced to mindfulness on a professional basis as part of an initiative through the administration team at her school. She has learned about and brought mindfulness into her classroom mainly through the Mind Up Curriculum, authored by the Hawn Foundation (2011). Her school administration and herself have seen many benefits of practicing mindfulness with her students on a regular basis, so much so that she was allotted school time to do in class teacher introductions and trainings to the mindfulness program in various classrooms in her school.

Ella

Ella is a Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) teacher in the Greater Toronto Area and has been teaching for two years. When asked about her background in mindfulness and education, Ella explained that she became introduced to mindfulness on a personal level several years ago. Ella began practicing for her own interest and benefit. When she
noticed the benefits that it brought her in the areas of focus, attention and stress level, she decided to independently bring it to her kindergarten students. She does this via regular daily mindfulness practice and including a mindfulness/self regulation area within her classroom.

Andy

Andy is a former Special Education Teacher within the Greater Toronto Area. Currently, Andy resides in the U.S.A. where he has authored books and educational programs that study leadership concepts. Andy’s books and education programs are based around the concept of how students can excel in education, with a hope for student success and student goal achievement. Andy then took those ideas into the classroom to target social/emotional learning and various student attributes that he felt are often lacking in very capable students. When asked about his background in mindfulness, he describes himself as a recent practitioner of meditation on a personal level and has noticed beneficial results for himself, therefore is looking to add a neuroscience and mindfulness meditation brain based component to the next edition of his program.

4.2 Theme 1: Necessary for Some, Good for All

One of the most interesting findings that emerged through participant responses was the belief that practicing mindfulness on a regular basis was a routine that became necessary for some students, but greatly benefited the classroom as a whole. Participants reported that the students who benefited from mindfulness practice the most were students who displayed shorter attention spans and less ability to focus on one activity for a set period of time. Though these students were seen to have the most visible benefit,
participants reported that students who did not typically display short attention spans also benefited from mindfulness practice. Participants observed these students to be calmer in their classrooms, less reactive to emotional situations and an increased ability to focus in on the present moment and learning experience. These interview findings align with the study and literature by Williams and Penman (2011) that suggest, everyone and anyone can benefit and improve their quality of life from implementing mindfulness meditation into their daily lives. Lucie illustrated this idea well when she noted that:

The mindfulness program is something that the special education kids definitely need, [but it is] good for all [the students]. There are a couple kids in my class that I think, hopefully, we have created that space between the event and the reaction. So now, [they are] responding rather than reacting and there is that pause where they get to think and make a good choice in their pre-frontal cortex, and then have that reaction, as opposed to having that amygdala reaction, which is terrible.

4.2.1 Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning is a highly important aspect of a students overall well-being. When students gain expertise in the area of their social and emotional learning they are often more cognizant and understanding towards their peers, perhaps being able to show more empathy as a result. In Lucie’s interview, she illustrated the idea that mindfulness has been the catalyst for her students’ constant social-emotional learning growth. She discusses students in her class where often prone to escalate into “highly volatile situations”, such as throwing furniture or angry outburst. She discussed that, “With ongoing mindfulness practice, I think now [the students] really understand, even in really simplistic terms…that everyone has these parts of the brain…but someone else’s reaction to a stimuli may be different then your own.” One mindfulness activity that
Lucie does with her class to cultivate social emotional learning skills is in the form of a Superhero Comic Strip- she noted that this is out of the *Mind Up Curriculum* (Hawn Foundation 2011):

They created superhero’s to represent the different parts of the brain, I drew a speech bubble just as a cue or association for them to remember what each part of the brain does. And the kids made comic strips, sorting of mindful and unmindful activities, talked about different parts of the brain, how we can show mindfulness in our daily live outside of the classroom. And we also did a really neat activity within the school about how different people are mindful towards us.

The idea of mindfulness being a gateway into social-emotional learning for students is a great discovery that was not fully considered at that start of this paper, but through the interview process it became evident that allowing the mind to be in the present moment makes for students who can make better decisions that will likely effect themselves and/or others in a social or emotional way. In Andy’s interview, it was illustrated that social emotional learning traits and characteristics like “trustworthiness” or “responsibility” in his program are greatly honored as a way to encourage positive decision making skills.

4.2.2 Self-Regulation and Attention

In the literature authored by Shapiro et al. (2014) it is noted that mindfulness practices with children in education foster the development of key self-regulation skills required for academic achievement and emotional well-being (2014). Self-regulation and attention are two traits that compliment each other quite well. Self-regulation is the ability to monitor and control ones own behavior, emotions, or thoughts, altering them in accordance with the demands of the situation (Cook 2009), which is a skill that is often
lacking in students who have trouble focusing their attention. Claxton supports this notion with the idea that if relaxation is one benefit of meditation, then attention is a consequential benefit of this as well (1997). As Lucie’s interview progressed she elaborated on how mindfulness has acted as a gateway into allowing her students to better self-regulate and be in more control of their thinking process, the quotation below is just one example of this.

In [the area] of self-regulation, I can think of a couple of kids who are definitely less impulsive now then what we used to see…[I have even found that] other kids’ reactions with those kids has changed because they have a greater understanding of what is happening to them…[W]e use terms like: ‘their amygdala is taking over their body’ or ‘their amygdala is in hi-jack mode’. I think [these comparisons allow] the other kids to better understand [what is happening to their peers]…Now they’re realizing, that is just their response to what is happening with an external stimuli…[and] the kids are much more calm.

Lucie described an example of how her students have shown the ability to regulate their emotions for themselves, especially before an emotionally stressful situation, like a test or evaluation: “I’ve seen kids using 5-7-8 breathing (Appendix D) before tests, independently- which is amazing. That is always our goal, to have kids self-regulating and able to feel less anxious.” In relation to classroom management, Lucie mentions that incorporating mindfulness into daily classroom activities has allowed for her students to more easily re-focus their attention:

Especially, [during] group work or activities, it is natural for kids to get excited. I used to find that it was more difficult to go from those tasks to an independent task. [Now I take] five minutes to use the chime and core practices, and then continuing on makes a big difference for those students especially.

Ella, who practices mindfulness with kindergarten students elaborated on the fact
that she has mainly noticed a difference mostly in the students with self-regulation issues. She noted that these students will independently request to do mindfulness meditation at times that are stressful for them throughout the day. “I have also noticed a decrease in impulsive behaviors throughout the day as well as a reduction of anxiety… they are able to concentrate on tasks for a longer time and engage themselves for longer.” Ella also spoke specifically to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):

I have practiced mindfulness meditation with students who have exceptionalities including two children with ASD. I notice fewer outbursts, such as screaming, as well as improved concentration and self-regulation. I have also noticed that when an episode occurs, they will do the Mindfulness breathing techniques [independently] and they are able to self-regulate and calm themselves.

The interview findings from both Lucie and Ella line up directly with Paul et al. (2007) mindfulness study with high school students, which found positive results in decreasing study-related anxiety and improved concentration when students were given frequent opportunities to practice mindfulness skills. Lucie and Ella’s students are also significantly younger than the students in Paul et al.’s study, which is indicative of the notion that the earlier one starts with mindfulness, the better.

4.3 Theme 2: Consistency is Key

Consistent and regular mindfulness practice is one of the most important aspects of establishing a mindfulness meditation regime, whether it is for yourself or your whole classroom. The value of establishing a regular mindfulness practice was deeply elaborated on by more than one of the participants. This is likely the most difficult part of bringing a mindfulness routine into the classroom, as teachers are constantly inundated
with curriculum material to cover, it can be difficult to find time for anything else. All three of the participants felt strongly about the role that the teacher plays in establishing a regular practice and how crucial it is.

Lucie noted that she strives for daily practice in her class, but that she makes a point to practice with the students at least three to four times a week. “I find that it is so valuable…especially because kids are coming from different classrooms…I like to do a mindfulness activity right when they all come in to set the stage for us to start together as a group.” Lucie also uses a chime, as a prop for sound meditation, to allow the students to focus on something- especially if focusing on their breath is difficult for them. She elaborated greatly on the fact that her students now ask her for time to practice mindfulness, as they have expressed to her that they feel it is helpful to them. Throughout her interview it became evident that, as a class, they have developed a great “culture of respect” around mindfulness and the importance of respecting one another’s practice.

In Ella’s kindergarten class she is proud and diligent about practicing with her students every day. She finds that practicing immediately after lunch has proven an excellent way to re-set her students for a calm remainder of the school day, as she noted that this is the period of time during the day where they struggle the most to stay focused. She likes to focus the students on the carpet with relaxation music while they practice square breathing (Appendix D). She (and the rest of the kindergarten team at her school) dedicate “ten minutes to mindfulness meditation everyday…some days, children will request additional time for mindfulness, during these times we will do mindfulness for about five additional minutes.”
4.4 Theme 3: We (Educators) Hold the Power

All three of the participants agreed to the fact that integration of mindfulness into classroom begins with the teacher. Whether it is his/her philosophy of education, his/her innate characteristics, his/her personality, or his/her educational beliefs, it is ultimately up to the teacher to decide what they will or will not implement into their classroom. Moreover, in the education larger picture, participants also illustrated in their responses that in order for mindfulness to impact the education system on a larger scale the power rests at the top of the education pyramid. 12% of children and adolescents have a significant mental health problem, and though mindfulness meditation has been recommended, there are few teachers with the experience and knowledge as to how to implement such programs (Joyce et al. 2010), thus it is important to establish areas in the curriculum where mental health and well-being is discussed and supported to allow for easier transition and acceptance at the start of establishing a mindfulness practice. Currently Ontario’s 2015 Health and Physical Education document and Ontario’s 2013 Supporting Minds Document are two documents by Ontario’s Ministry of Education that discuss student mental health and overall well being as a focal point.

4.4.1 Establishing a Growth Mindset

When asked about how they see mindfulness being brought into initial teacher education, all three of the participants stated that it has to come from the top of the education pyramid. The top meaning: the administration, the directors and superintendents of school boards, and the Ministry of Education. Teachers and educators cannot expect students to encompass a growth mindset if we, as teachers, are not doing
anything differently. Educators must first attain a growth mindset and open up to alternative classroom methods, such as mindfulness practice, that can better their students overall well being and therefore aid them in succeeding academically. Ella and Lucie suggested that more professional development for teachers in the area of mindfulness would be very beneficial. They believe that teachers may adopt the practice more willingly and openly once they feel confident and comfortable with it themselves. Lucie stated, “If you have people practicing for themselves, they’re much more likely to practice in the classroom.”

One example of an activity that Lucie uses in her class to establish a growth mindset towards mindfulness is explained below:

There’s one activity in the Minds Up curriculum where the kids hold up either a happy face or a scared face as their teacher is presenting them with different scenarios/situations. [W]e talk about how the same situation (like riding a roller coaster) can happen to different people, but I might love and enjoy it and you might feel scared. So, your amygdala might be in hi-jack mode, but my amygdala might be totally fine. I think that’s really neat.

Andy’s program focuses on encouraging students to adopt and understand a growth mindset. He strives to teach them that they can change their academic results by changing their perception of their thinking. He focuses on the neuroscience aspect of the growth mindset and discusses that “Your amygdala can shrink, so you know that when you are getting angry it is a natural response, but over time [we can] train our brain in a way that is going to set us up for success.” This is where establishing a growth mindset and tools for a growth mindset are crucial, so that students understand that they are able to achieve more.
Overall, I am very grateful to all three participants: Lucie, Ella and Andy, for allowing me the opportunity of a glimpse inside their world of mindfulness practice with their students. I have gained immense insight as to how mindfulness and meditation practices can be brought into classrooms on a larger scale. The three themes and subthemes discussed above have proven to line up with much of the literature around mindfulness in education. While supporting the literature, it has become evident through the interview process that there are also areas of gap to be discussed (in Chapter 5), as to what implications are necessary in order establish these missing links between knowing and being aware of the educational benefits of mindfulness, and actually implementing mindfulness into the education system.
Chapter 5. DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction to the Chapter

This research study has provided information in the area of mindfulness meditation integration in education that has reaffirmed prior research. This study has also provided extensions of knowledge, examples of best practices, and tips for teachers wishing to incorporate mindfulness meditation into their classrooms. This final chapter will combine prior research with the findings from this particular research study to provide implications and recommendations for the teaching profession.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings

Initially when undertaking this research study, I was concerned that the research was theoretical and provided much proof for the usefulness of mindfulness meditation integration but did not provide extensive practical information. I thought that it might be difficult to find educators who supported the theoretical research and took this knowledge and made it their practice. What was surprising, after completing the interviews, was how well the participants responses supported the literature to create an accurate picture of the benefits and practicality of mindfulness integration into the classroom. Many of the ideas expressed by the participants closely followed the theories that supported mindfulness integration, although they may not have necessarily spoken directly to a specific theory. For these participants, mindfulness integration into education is part of their education philosophy and it just so happens to be supported by the research.

The key findings that came out of this study were very much inline with the current research. Firstly, that mindfulness is a tool that promotes holistic teaching and to be used in the classroom towards the development and deepening of students’ social-
emotional learning. Second, self-regulation and attention are both greatly improved upon with the regular practice of mindfulness in the classroom. These two areas are greatly in line with further research I acquired, via Mindful Schools (2016), which is an organization that seeks to train educators in mindfulness with a focus on building student attention, self-regulation and empathy. Thirdly, establishing a regular and consistent practice routine is a key element to the effectiveness of mindfulness – students will likely learn how to establish their own regular practice if it is being modeled within the classroom. Lastly, the establishment of a growth mindset is crucial to the initial venture of implementing mindfulness in the classroom, as well as its continual implementation for both teachers and students.

Findings from the participant responses extend on the theoretical knowledge, while also moving us towards recommendations for practice. The participants suggest that successful mindfulness integration begins with the teacher. The way the teacher approaches the integration of mindfulness into the classroom, using a holistic lens, impacts the way that students perceive mindfulness and how they feel towards approaching it as a practice. Combining what the participants suggested and what is found in research, we can see that teachers need to begin their integration with a growth mindset and willingness to work and grow with their students towards a mindful classroom environment.

See below for a theoretical framework diagram, created for this study, which illustrates the process and outcomes of integrating mindfulness into the classroom.
5.2 Implications

This research provides further support for the integration of mindfulness in the classroom. As a result of the literature and complementary findings through this research study it is recommended that educators look to integrating mindfulness in the classroom when attempting to target the improvement of student attention, better self-regulation and enhance student social emotional learning. As the former are areas where all teachers will likely encounter with needing improvement in their teaching careers, the integration of mindfulness seems like a positive addition to any classroom. These finding is in line with the further research completed after the findings of this study. In the article, “Mind Powers: Meditation Matters for Special Education Students”, Five Acres school in southern California targeted pupils with serious emotional and behavioural issues and found that mindfulness training helped students stay in the classroom while also minimizing the frequency of emotional outbursts (Loudenback, 2016). This is a
significant finding, as finding tools to aid with behavioural issues are few and far between for many teachers. If mindfulness practices can benefit students in special education, it can likely do the same for any student. According to, “The Power of Mindfulness: Reshape Your Brain for Calm and Compassion”, “People who meditate regularly, like Buddhist monks, have different neural structures…they have brain regions that can process much higher levels of compassion and awareness than a [non-meditative] person.” (Cassity, 2011)

5.2.1 Broad: The Educational Research Community

This study confirms current research while also showing where there are gaps between integrating mindfulness into education and the educational field. I hope that this study, and others like it, will act as a lead to further the relationship between education, mindfulness and neuroscience research. Since we know, based on the research, the plasticity of the brain and that it is possible to re-wire the brain for new emotional responses to stress (Begley, 2013), I would argue that mindfulness could play a leading role in the attempt to has the capacity to re-wire the brains of all students, and especially aid students that struggle with the themes discovered in this study.

5.2.2 Narrow: Professional Identity and Practice

Establishing a regular mindfulness routine in any classroom would seem beneficial in improving the overall classroom climate as well as each individual students holistic needs. Integrating mindfulness into the classroom may be viewed by some as a specialized feat, which might make successful integration seem unattainable to those who are inexperienced with mindfulness practices. Though there are avenues that educators
can take to self educate around mindfulness (though this may not be funded or part of professional development), there are many ways to inform oneself about mindfulness, obtain one’s own regular mindfulness practice, and learn about the practical implementation of it in the education system. This study has led to the recommendation that educators, and perhaps schools more generally, look at mindfulness specific training or the use of mindfulness specialists in the classroom to begin the process of mindfulness integration into daily classroom life.

In addition to this, the role of school culture is also very important when beginning to or implementing mindfulness. In Lucie’s interview, she referenced how she would love to see mindfulness practices happening in every classroom within her school, so that the students could have a seamless transition each between classes and years. It is not enough for just one, or a few, teachers within a school to be implementing mindfulness- in order to attain consistency and respect for the practice, it must be valued by the whole community- starting with every teacher and administrator. Some of the common initial reactions from students, which both Ella and Lucie spoke to, are those of either resistance or laughter (not taking the practice seriously), which can lead to warranted frustration on the part of the educator.

For pre-service teachers, the incorporation of mindfulness into one’s teaching practice should become a focused component of their training, as the ability to use its benefits within the classroom is relevant to all teachers. Currently, mindfulness training is given no mandatory time in pre-service teacher education. Based on the findings of this research study, it is clear that students benefit from mindfulness integration and therefore mindfulness courses that focuses on education and practice classroom integration should
be given more time with experienced professors or practitioners – this could possibly be introduced to pre-service teachers as a classroom management tool.

5.3 Limitations

The narrow pool for selection of participants posed the largest limitation to the study. It was quite difficult to find participants that were actively and consistently implementing mindfulness practices into their classrooms. There is also a lack of grade level consistency within this study, as each participant taught different grade levels. Each participant utilized different resources for implementing mindfulness, thus this may have posed a lack of uniformity in terms of what information and knowledge participants and their students had in regards to mindfulness.

5.4 Recommendations and Resources

At the end of each interview participants were asked how they saw mindfulness fitting in with pre-service teacher education, and each of them responded, with outstanding passion, that mindfulness needs to be a part of teacher training. Ella discussed how it would be extremely beneficial for teachers to be trained in the history and origins of mindfulness, as well as thoroughly exposed to the current research around the neuroscience benefits. This would aid tremendously in having teachers feeling prepared to bring mindfulness into their classrooms. Lucie discussed that pre-service teachers should be provided with a basis of lessons and classroom ideas that implement mindfulness- in order to get them started as new teachers. Andy stressed that the implementation of mindfulness really needs to come from pre-service teacher education, but it also needs to be emphasized at the Board and Ministry of Education level as well,
to ensure consistency once teachers are out in the field.

Below is a list of recommendations derived from this research, teacher friendly resources and literature for educators. This list is intended to help educators who are new to, or experienced with, mindfulness in order to further their education and understanding around it and how to bring it into their lives and classrooms:

• Implementation of mindfulness teacher training in pre-service teacher education programs

• Professional development for practicing teachers around how to create a classroom environment that is conducive to mindfulness practices. Lesson ideas, mindful classroom strategies, and appropriate areas in the curriculum where mindfulness can be seamlessly introduced

• Implementation of mindfulness teacher training across school boards. There are many organizations that offer programs for mindfulness teacher training in Toronto, Ontario, such as: Mindfulness Without Borders, Discover Mindfulness, and The Centre for Mindfulness Studies

• For teachers to educate themselves about mindfulness via literature, such as: Teach, Breathe, Learn (Srinivasan, 2014), Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children (Nhat Hanh, 2011), Mind Up Curriculum (Hawn Foundation, 2011). Tap into the skills and resources from colleagues in your school community that may be experienced with mindfulness, while also utilizing mindfulness teacher support groups and organizations, such as Discover Mindfulness
- Emphasis and implementation of mindfulness at the Ministry of Education and Board level

- Mindfulness brought into the Ontario Curriculum, in the mental health area of the Health and Physical Education (2015) curriculum document

- School principals and administrators to set the tone with schools that is conducive towards a culture for mindfulness, thus mindfulness practices are more likely to be accepted school-wide

- Think of mindfulness integration as a way to teach holistically and ensure that students are receiving the tools they need to achieve an optimal mental state for learning

### 5.5 Areas for Further Research

This study complimentarily connected research and practice. The findings suggest further support for mindfulness integration in the classroom. Future research should be longitudinal and focus on the integration of a standardized mindfulness practice, specifically with students who struggle with one or more of the following: attention span, social emotional learning and self-regulation. This would enhance the literature in a way that would speak specifically to students. Future research could also look at specific age ranges, rather than a wide variety of ages, to ensure that findings are relative.

Further, I believe that it is important to look specifically at the teacher approach when integrating mindfulness. Teachers are models for each of their students, thus it is very important to recognize their approach in establishing mindfulness as a part of their classroom environment. Further research should delve more deeply into the perspective,
philosophies, and pedagogies of teachers who successfully integrate mindfulness in the classroom. Future research should also look to include perspectives of individuals with varying degrees of experience or training in mindfulness practices over their lifetime to truly unearth the possibilities and differences within teacher consistency that students may be exposed to.

5.6 Concluding Comments

Mindfulness meditation is an up and coming topic within the psychology and education realm at this time. Adding mindfulness practices to any classroom would be a great benefit, as we know its positive effects on our students’ mental state. Finding a way to make mindfulness appealing to all students is an important step for teachers, but in order to do so teachers must first feel prepared and comfortable implementing this practice into their classrooms. Integrating mindfulness into the classroom is also an incredible tool in attaining a holistic educational practice, as it seeks to target the well being of the whole student. This study concludes with the suggestion that pre-service teachers should be provided with an initial in-depth exposure to mindfulness and how to bring it into the classroom that gives the tools to feel confident and passionate about bringing mindfulness to their students’ lives. Practicing teachers should take the time, or be given the professional development time, to educate themselves on the importance of mindfulness in education and try to become comfortable doing so. Though the concrete and permanent integration of mindfulness into education is likely to be a slow process, I am confident that the benefits it offers to the education community will supersede any initial doubt or uncertainty that those inexperienced with mindfulness may have, as it did with myself.
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doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1754730X.2010.9715677


THE PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF MINDFULNESS


Letter of Informed Consent

Date:

Dear _______________________________,

My Name is Alyssa Sinopoli and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on the implementation of mindfulness meditation into teaching and education. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have had experience and practice in implementing mindfulness meditation and/or mindfulness meditation techniques into their classrooms and teaching practices. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a research conference or publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only
people who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor __________________. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to participation, and I will share with you a copy of the transcript to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Sinopoli

alyssa.sinopoli@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Instructor’s Name: ________________________________

Contact Info: ________________________________
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by __________ and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ______________________________________

Name: (printed) ____________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________
APPENDIX B

Sample Interview Questions

1.) How did you first discover mindfulness meditation (MM)? Was it for professional or personal reasons, or both?

2.) When/why did you decide to implement MM into your classroom/students lives?

3.) What MM activities do you practice with your class? Can you give specific examples of how one might take place during a lesson?

4.) How often do you practice MM with your students?

5.) How much time throughout the day/week do you dedicate to MM practice with your students?

6.) Do other teachers or administrative staff within your workplace practice MM?

7.) Have you noticed any changes with your students since you have implemented the practice of MM into your classroom?

8.) Do you see a change at all in students who typically display behavioral issues?

9.) Do you see a change at all in students who typically display a limited attention span and/or ability to focus?

10.) Do you have any sample lesson plans or lesson plans that you have used for implementing mindfulness into teaching?

11.) What do you see your next steps as with MM in your teaching and/or personal practice?

12.) How do you see MM fitting in to initial teacher education? What implications do you think would be required to do so?
APPENDIX C

Mindful Eating Instruction

• Holding: take time to hold the raisin (yes, just one raisin) in the palm of your hand for a few moments as if it was a new object to you

• Seeing: look at the raisin, observe it and all of its characteristics

• Touch: explore the raisin’s texture, closing the eyes may enhance the sense of touch

• Smell: holding the raisin beneath the nose, inhale the aroma that it exudes, as you do this notice if anything changes in your mouth or stomach

• Placing: slowly bring the raisin to your lips, paying attention to the position of your hand and arms. Without chewing it, feel its texture in your mouth and pay attention to the sensations that come with this

• Taste: when ready, chew the raisin, noticing all the details and changes that are now happening as you chew it

• Swallowing: when ready try to detect the conscious intention to swallow, instead of swallowing out of habit and automatic reaction

• Following: after swallowing, see if you can feel the remainders of the raisin and moving into your stomach, sense how your body is now feeling after completing this exercise.

(Williams, Teasdale, Segal & Kabat-Zinn, 2007, p. 55-56)
APPENDIX D

5-7-8 Breathing

1. Breathe in through your nose for a count of 5.
2. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
3. Release your breath from your mouth with a whooshing sound for a count of 8.
4. Without a break, breathe in again for a count of 5, repeating the entire technique 3-4 times in a row, then resume normal breathing and activity.

(Hawn Foundation, 2011)

Square Breathing