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THE IMPACT OF MINDFULNESS IN THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AT THE  
CONCLUSION OF A MINDFULNESS PROGRAM

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## **ABSTRACT**

Through my work as a Professional Development School intern at Gray's Woods Elementary, I had the opportunity to observe a Mindfulness program with three classrooms. Dr. Phillip Montgomery\* conducted 15 twenty-minute sessions in three classrooms, kindergarten, first, and second grade, over the course of eight weeks. After observing these sessions, I found myself wondering, "How is this going to continue?" This then developed into my inquiry investigation during which I embarked on research to determine the impact the mindfulness program had on students after the conclusion of a professionally led program. To evaluate this impact, I used systematic classroom observations, surveys, and interviews collected from both students and classroom teachers to determine what effect mindfulness has had on these three classrooms. After conducting the research, I found that although greatly enjoyed by the students and teachers, the program would need to be altered in order to incorporate mindfulness effectively into the classroom.

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\* All participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction to the Study**

There are multiple variables that impact how well a person functions; some include cognitive abilities, psychomotor abilities and social-emotional abilities. Being in touch with one's own feelings and using that awareness to self-regulate one's behavior can be a powerful factor in enabling individuals to deal with stressful situations. Many programs and seminars have been developed to help both adults and children become more self-aware and more adept at self-regulation. One initiative that is currently gaining a great deal of popularity is the notion of mindfulness. Mindfulness, in its simplest, most-applied form, "means paying attention in a particular way: [intentionally], in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. This kind of attention [therefore] nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4).

When I discovered the presence of a mindfulness program at the elementary school where I am engaged in a full year student teaching internship, I was intrigued and chose to make that the focus for my honors' thesis. This chapter of my thesis provides a description of the elementary school context with which the study was located, provides a rationale for inquiring about mindfulness and explicates the research questions that guided my thesis.

#### **Description of the Teaching Context**

Gray's Woods Elementary is located in Port Matilda, Pennsylvania and is positioned fifteen minutes from downtown State College. With a total of 18 classrooms, 3 within each grade ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade, there are roughly 378 students at Gray's Woods. Gray's Woods Elementary is one of the least diverse schools within the State College Area

School District. At Gray's Woods, 97% of students are Caucasian; of the remaining 3%, 2% are multi-racial and less than 1% are Asian and Native American.

This inquiry focuses on the three classrooms that have participated in Dr. Phillip Montgomery's mindfulness sessions, Mrs. Pinkerton's kindergarten class, Mrs. Lawson's first grade class, and Mrs. Khaler's second grade class.

In Mrs. Pinkerton's kindergarten classroom, there are eleven girls and eight boys adding to a total of nineteen students. Students are taught reading, writing, and math in centers so that students who are working at their same level surround them. These ability groups are determined by a summer screening and observations made by teachers. Students and teachers refer to these groupings by color so as to avoid labeling learning groups based on ability. Academically, there is one student high above the kindergarten reading benchmark, six students above the benchmark, eight students at the average benchmark, and four students below benchmark for reading. Socially, students are familiar with one another from activities outside of school and through the community. There is one boy in the classroom that has the ability to influence others and acts as a classroom leader. Behaviorally, one student is significantly louder than the others and has a tendency to cling to the teacher, which presents a behavioral challenge. Two male students in this classroom also require strong emotional support, and one of these two students presents behavior that can be difficult to control. The other student has a tendency to cry and scream when he does not get his way. There is a group of five girls who tend to stick together and are often rather quiet and another group of three girls who are very loud and can be heard outside the classroom. In general, the class has a variety of personalities that when placed all together create a unique and special learning environment.

In Mrs. Lawson's first grade classroom, there are eleven girls and ten boys, creating a total of twenty-one students. Academically speaking, there are six students who qualify for RtII support and two students who attend learning support. Four students are meeting but not

exceeding the benchmark and the rest of the students are above the benchmark in terms of reading. Socioeconomically speaking, two students are receiving free lunch and breakfast and are facing financial hardships. Culturally, all students are white/Caucasian with the exception of one student. Emotionally, three students in this classroom work with our emotional support teacher in any group or programs the specialist has to offer.

In Mrs. Khaler's second grade classroom there are thirteen boys and eleven girls who together make up twenty-four students. Academically, there are fourteen students above the reading benchmark, four students at the benchmark, and four students below the reading benchmark. The four students who fell below the benchmark attend a jumpstart program for additional support in reading and math. Two students in this classroom are considered gifted or talented, two require emotional support, one has been diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, and one has an identified learning disability. Socially, four students are considered non-conformists, four students are quiet and anxious to conform, eight are easy to get along with, and the remaining eight are social leaders who are able to influence others in the classroom.

### **Rationale for the Study**

As a Professional Development School intern, I began my quest to find a topic of inquiry within the elementary school with which I worked. Due to the fact that my plans for post graduation had, at the time, included earning a masters degree in elementary counseling, I began communication with our school counselor. Through many conversations we discussed recent work in her field. One topic included the use of restorative circles and restorative practice in the classroom setting, however, despite our interest in working with one another, she highly recommended looking into the multiple programs that our school's emotional support teacher had implemented. My initial conversation with the emotional support teacher involved discussing her most recent use of mindfulness with her group of special needs students. During this program,

students are instructed to draw their mind's attention to their bodies and encourage their bodies to become more in touch with their minds. I had the opportunity to see three of my students attend these mindful mornings and saw the effect it had on their behavior, and I became more and more interested in the concept.

After sharing with me that she is piloting this program for the first time with a group of students, she handed me a copy of *Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children* by Thich Nhat Hanh. After further discussion with the emotional support teacher, she informed me that a local child psychologist, Dr. Phillip Montgomery, would soon be piloting a program of mindfulness sessions at Gray's Woods Elementary. This information further intrigued me as I had observed mindfulness in the special education classroom with a specific group of selected students; however, I was curious to see its use in a general education setting with a different population of students.

Dr. Montgomery had emailed all faculty members at Gray's Woods Elementary to identify teachers who would be interested in trying mindfulness; he then selected three classroom teachers. Though my mentor requested to take part in the program, we were not chosen; however, the opportunity to observe and learn about mindfulness had not vanished. I became intrigued about the concept of mindfulness, how it could be used with children and whether it would be effective. After attending Dr. Montgomery's parent information session and after having observed his first few sessions in the chosen kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms, I knew I had determined my topic for further inquiry.

### **Research Questions**

My research questions were quite broad initially but had narrowed while I informally observed these three classrooms and their mindfulness sessions. The focus of this inquiry then became the following question. What is the impact of mindfulness in the general classroom after

the completion of a mindfulness program? Due to the sessions beginning prior to the inquiry project, I did not have an opportunity to observe the initial sessions, and decided that it would be best to focus on the long-term impact of the process. Additionally, I became interested in observing how general education teachers would continue to incorporate mindfulness without a child psychologist present. Additional research questions include: How does the age of the students affect the impact of mindfulness?; How does gender affect the impact of mindfulness?; How do students use mindfulness?; What do students perceive as the purpose of mindfulness?; and, How do teachers believe mindfulness has impacted their teaching style?

### **The Mindfulness Project**

After having observed mindfulness sessions with a group of students with special needs, I immediately became interested in how mindfulness can impact students. When the opportunity arose to observe Dr. Montgomery's sessions I had difficulty passing up the opportunity. Although I saw great success with my own three students who attended the mindful mornings with the emotional support teacher, I was interested in observing mindfulness with an entire classroom of students. Additionally, when discussing volunteering my own classroom for the mindfulness sessions, my mentor described how she had seen a mindfulness program implemented the previous year in a classroom of third graders. After further explanation she described that she did not feel it was successful in that classroom. This then made me wonder how the classroom's personality affects the impact and success of mindfulness.

Furthermore, this was Dr. Montgomery's first time teaching mindfulness with kindergarteners, and I became interested in how this group of students would respond and use mindfulness in their own lives based on the program they experienced. As a part of this same

wondering, I became interested in how the effects of mindfulness would differ among kindergarten, first, and second grade students.

In order to discover the answers to my wonderings, I began taking field notes and systematic observations of all three classrooms during several of Dr. Montgomery's sessions. I then conducted interviews with the teachers of these classrooms immediately after his sessions had ended. The goal of these interviews was to determine whether these teachers planned to continue the mindfulness in any way or abandon the practice as a whole. At the end of the study, I then conducted another interview with these teachers to see whether they had implemented mindfulness as they had envisioned. Additionally, I conducted surveys and interviews with students from each class to better assess their understanding and use of mindfulness. The goal of this study was to better understand how teachers can use mindfulness informally in the general classroom environment and how students understand and use mindfulness in their individual lives. More information regarding the data collection process is given in Chapter 3, Methods.

## **Chapter 1**

### **A Review of the Literature**

The aims of this review are to inform the reader of the current and past work that has been carried out regarding mindfulness and to develop a general understanding of its purpose and use in the realm of education. The following literature review on mindfulness includes: the definition of mindfulness; the components of mindfulness; the populations with which it has been used; and the impact mindfulness has made on society thus far. A wide array of research has been conducted to gather the information held within this review so as to present a thoroughly developed and comprehensive understanding of the scholarship on the topic of mindfulness in education as it currently exists.

#### **What is mindfulness?**

Mindfulness, in its simplest, most-applied form, “means paying attention in a particular way: [intentionally], in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. This kind of attention [therefore] nurtures greater awareness, clarity, and acceptance of present-moment reality” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). The goal of the practice is to bring awareness to our thoughts and actions prior to their execution. Through this awareness and our decision to be present in our lives, we create opportunities to take responsibility for our choices (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

The concept of mindfulness first evolved with Buddhist roots. The Dhammapada recorded the Buddha saying, “All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we create the world”. In essence, our personal characteristics are a direct representation of our thoughts, beliefs, and actions and it is with those characteristics that we compose a perspective of

life. The true meaning of the Pali word *sati*, is “that which is remembered” and it is often synonymous with attention, awareness, consciousness, alertness, recognition, and remembering, among others (Pio, 1988). Though the Buddhist culture is full of language, there is no direct translation of the English words “anxiety” or “worry” (Bodhi, 1993). Thus the difference between our Western culture and Buddhist beliefs is the influx of stress caused by worry and anxiety that is ever-present.

The solution to these overwhelming emotions is the generic translation of *sati*, which is mindfulness. As Kabat-Zinn, the creator of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, has written, “Mindfulness provides a simple but powerful route for getting ourselves unstuck, back into touch with our own wisdom and vitality. It is a way to take charge of the direction and quality of our own lives” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 5). Kabat-Zinn (1994) further discusses the notion that when our lives become cluttered with opinions, prejudices, likes, dislikes, expectations, and possibilities we lose focus of what grounds us and become unaware of our actions and decisions. As the stressors of life continue in a perpetual motion, mindfulness has been linked with the phrase, “You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 32) Though people continue to face work-related, personal, and familial pressures, which are unavoidable, our solutions to these pressures may be altered.

In order to better understand how a person can alter his/her reactions to these pressures, it is crucial to understand the mental process that leads to the development of pressures or anxiety.. According to Christopher Germer (2004), “Mindfulness is the opposite of being on autopilot; the opposite of day-dreaming—it is paying attention to what is salient in the present moment” (p. 25-26). Therefore if a person is truly present in the moment, then each person’s experiences are comprised of “moment-dots”, as Randye Semple and Jennifer Lee (2011) have described them. These moment-dots consist of even more thoughts, emotions, interactions, and perspectives in each and every moment. The issue at hand is that people are quick to pair present moment-dots

with similar moment-dots that have been experienced in the past. The connections made between past and present moment-dots involve unrealistic expectations, fears and desires about the present and future. These dots, therefore, become distorted and when they become connected with one another to fill time and space, a picture or illusion is created and this image feels familiar and satisfying due to the connections that have been made during its creation. (Semple & Lee, 2011).

The issue with the matrix of moment-dots is that they have created a familiar image that is not always connected to the reality of current events and true life. The distortion that occurs when moment-dots are paired in the past and present affects the portrayal of the picture that has been created and often does not accurately mirror reality (Semple and Lee, 2011). People's actions are often made based on falsely created moment-dots, and, thus, inappropriate cognitive interpretations and emotional distress ensue as a result. "From the perspective of Buddhist psychology, it's no wonder that most of us are not considered sane" (Semple and Lee, 2011, p. 15). From a perspective that has no term to represent worry or anxiety, these illusions that Western society creates instill a vast amount of stress and pressure that must be handled.

The solution to creating an accurate image from accumulated moment-dots is mindfulness. As described by Bishop et al., (2004), "Mindfulness is achieved when the person's thoughts and feelings are observed as events in the mind, without over-identifying with them and without reacting to them in an automatic, habitual pattern of reactivity" (p. 232). Thus, when these moment-dots are intertwined with openness and understanding to adapt to our emotions, a sense of peacefulness with the body can be created.

In order to achieve mindfulness and to pay attention in the moment, the concept of mindfulness must be understood. The practice is rooted in both Buddhist and Cognitive psychologies yet when executed, the practice is free from any belief system or ideology. Furthermore, when used with teachers and students in the school setting it has no conflict with any beliefs or traditions (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Cognitive psychology emphasizes information

processing and the resulting behaviors of the cognitive functions; in contrast, Buddhist psychology enumerates the mind's basic functions to be able to comprehend reality (Semple & Lee, 2011). Gerber and Siegel described the differences in societal perspectives as they wrote in *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy* (2005), "Whereas Western science explores phenomena through objective, third-person observation, Buddhist psychology is a highly-disciplined, systematic, first-person approach" (p. 12). The focus on the individual and developing understanding of awareness and relaxation within oneself is what is most largely adapted from Buddhist psychology. This meditative practice brings the mind and body into equilibrium because as Germer and Siegel (2005) assert,

When we have the opportunity to sit over a sustained period of time with closed eyes, in a silent place, and sharpen concentration on one thing (such as the breath), the mind becomes like a microscope and can detect minute mental activity. (p. 8)

The Buddhist psychology encourages the increase in one's motivation to avoid unwholesome actions prior to their occurrence, thus avoiding the potential suffering that could ensue. The difficulty in comparing and contrasting Buddhist and Cognitive psychologies is the inability to find correlation between the two in all facets; for example terms that are used in cognitive psychology are often not considered or experienced in Buddhist psychology. These great differences are due to cultural and geographical differences and must be accounted for when attempting to understand the creation and history of mindfulness.

Though the practice of mindfulness with students is not yet heavily researched, "The science of child development informs us that the brain is built over time and that excessive stress damages the architecture of the developing brain leading to vulnerability to lifelong problems in learning, behavior and overall health" (Meiklejohn et al., 2010, p. 7). Thus the same stressors that are affecting adults and creating a need for mindfulness to acknowledge the actions the body makes are present in the child's developmental process as well.

### **What are the components of mindfulness?**

In order to accurately understand mindfulness, it is crucial to comprehend its components. When mindfulness is practiced, the goal is to direct attention to the inner “anchor” or to bring the mind into focus; it is when the mind goes astray from this anchor that the practitioner of mindfulness must re-focus to create moment-to-moment, clear awareness (Meiklejohn et al., 2010). When this re-direction of thought occurs, the body and mind have the greatest opportunity to reduce reactivity of the body’s physiological stress responses (Meiklejohn et al., 2010, p. 1).

To re-direct the mind, Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, and Freedman (2006) suggest that three components of mindfulness be incorporated into practice. According to *Mechanisms of Mindfulness*, intention, attention, and attitude are required for success. Intentions allow for the person to understand what is possible; they allow for understanding of what can be altered (Shapiro et al., 2006). However, the more experienced a person becomes with mindfulness, the more the intentions will change due to increased practice, insight, and awareness. Through attention, the person is more clearly aware of the actions being made both inside and outside of the body. In order to understand what the mind and body need to fix, a person needs to be conscious and aware of the issue at hand. The third component, attitude, determines the success of the mindfulness; whether the mind is critical or compassionate and understanding affects the outcome of the mindfulness (Shapiro et al., 2006).

When intention, attention, and attitude are involved in the practicing of mindfulness, then the resulting success can be limitless. “One of the effects of mindful awareness is the formation of a non-judgmental attitude and the ability to respond to situations reflectively which may promote feelings of empathy and compassion towards parents, even in the midst of a challenging

interaction” (Bishop et al., 2004, p.234). Thus, understanding what is within reach for alteration through conscious awareness and attention with an optimistic and compassionate attitude can dramatically affect the practitioner.

In the school setting, these components are most often performed and observed as teachers set-aside moments of the day to focus on breathing and relaxation. At Toluca Lake Elementary in Los Angeles, California, a second grade class draws awareness to each child’s own self as well as the surrounding environment through structured time for deep breathing and consciousness (Suttie, 2007). Though limited in developed research, mindfulness is used across the nation to draw attention to the physiological stress that students endure. Within this educational setting, mindfulness has three approaches. When indirectly applied in the classroom, the focus is the teacher’s development of a personal mindfulness practice. This method allows the teacher to embody the attitudes and behaviors throughout the school day. In contrast to indirect mindfulness, direct mindfulness includes programs in which the students are taught mindfulness exercises and skills. The goal of this method is to allow students to become aware of their emotions and adjust reactions to stress. The third approach is a combination of both indirect and direct mindfulness (Meiklejohn et al., 2010). Determining which approach to use is largely dependent on the personality of the teacher and the class profile in order to create the most appropriate method of mindfulness.

Another crucial component of mindfulness, as stressed by Kirk Warren Brown and Richard M. Ryan (2004) at the University of Rochester, is acceptance. It is necessary to understand that acceptance precedes behavior change and that in order to adjust behaviors, the mind must acknowledge and accept the present moment. Germer and Siegel (2005) discussed the notion of acceptance in *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy*, writing, “...acceptance refers to a willingness to let things be just as they are the moment we become aware of them—accepting pleasurable and painful experiences as they arise” (p.7). Therefore, this component works in

tandem with attention and awareness. When the body and mind are able to pay attention to and create awareness for the present-moment, then the mind and body automatically become more accepting of the situation. It is when the body is aware and attentive that the mind develops openness and therefore an acceptance of the present moment. “When an individual does not accept what is occurring at a given moment, a natural reaction is to limit awareness and redirect attention, to seek to avoid or escape from the event or experience (Brown and Ryan (2004) p. 245). Thus through the collaboration between awareness, attention, and acceptance, the body’s reaction to stressors becomes more balanced and homeostatic.

### **With what populations has Mindfulness been used?**

Mindfulness initially became popular through the use of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)—a program created for adult use by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in 1979 (Semple & Lee, 2011). The original intent was to introduce adults to meditative practices to acknowledge daily life stressors.

More recently, mindfulness has been introduced into the educational setting. As Meiklejohn et al., (2010) write, “In an educational era of high stakes testing, tightening budget constraints, and other increased pressures, K-12 educators all too often encounter a cascade of stressors”, teachers must therefore have an outlet for this incurred stress. Stemming from the MBSR program a number of similar programs in education (e.g., Mindfulness-Based Wellness Education [MBWE]; Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education [CARE]; and Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques [SMART]) have all been executed with teachers in elementary classrooms around the nation.

MBWE is a nine-week program consisting of 36 hours during which the program aims to “develop a curriculum of study that would help teacher candidates cultivate competencies for

thriving and coping with the modern demands of being a teacher” (Cohan and Honigsfeld, 2011, p. 220). MBWE targets teachers in training in an effort to reduce burnout rates facing new teachers (Meiklejohn et al., 2010).

CARE is an intervention program that aims to improve teachers’ well being and effectiveness in providing their students with emotional, behavioral, and instructional support. Additionally, CARE works to improve teacher-student relationships and overall classroom climate, as well as, increase prosocial behavior. This program takes place in a multitude of manners; it can be performed during a two-day training session, four one-day sessions, or a five-day intensive retreat (Meiklejohn et al., 2010).

Lastly, SMART in education—sponsored by the IMPACT foundation—takes place over 11 sessions during 8 weeks for 10-30 minutes of daily mindfulness practice each session. This curriculum is deeply rooted in mindfulness beliefs as it works to bring concentration, attention, and awareness to the understanding of a teacher’s emotions.

MBWE, CARE, and SMART in education all work to prepare educators to be emotionally conscious and assist teachers in their relationships with students (Meiklejohn, 2010). Karen McCoy (2012) stressed the success teachers can experience when she wrote, “Teachers can utilize the mindfulness strategies such as breathing to alleviate tension, setting a daily intention, and walking and standing mindfully to counteract the potential stress that [a] new curriculum may elicit” (p. 19).

Karen McCoy’s research focused on potentially negative teacher –parent conferences as a source of stress for teachers. She studied the impact of the CARE program on teacher reactions to parent conference. The goal of the CARE program was to increase teacher awareness and recognition of what it is that triggers an emotion within the individual and the typical response the individual then uses to react. Acknowledging these patterns allows teachers to improve in their own wellbeing and it thus affects their quality of professional development (McCoy, 2012).

McCoy further wrote that the goal of CARE is to increase teachers' emotional resilience through providing opportunities to understand, recognize, and regulate their emotional responses as well as those of others with whom they interact (McCoy, 2012). In fact, in a survey performed by Jennings et al., "87% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that all teachers should receive CARE training" (Jennings et al., 2011, p. 1). Patricia Jennings (2011) has been significantly involved with the evolution of mindfulness in education and wrote,

We ask an awful lot of teachers these days...Beyond just conveying the course material, teachers are supposed to provide a nurturing learning environment, be responsive to students, parents, and colleagues, juggle the demands of standardized testing, coach students through conflicts with peers, be exemplars of emotion regulation, handle disruptive behavior and generally be great role models;...the problem is we rarely give teachers training or resources for any of them. (p. 1)

With the introduction of any of these programs, teachers can become knowledgeable regarding their mind and body's reactions to daily stressors including test scores, changing curriculums, and other educational demands.

Though many programs have been created to work with teachers, much has been done to promote children's mindfulness as well. Susan Kaiser-Greenland is a mindfulness educator who has created mindfulness programs for children at local boys and girls clubs through *InnerKids*, a program she created. Kaiser-Greenland has promoted the use of mindfulness in the elementary setting; as she believes it has the ability to teach students how to be in a state of attention where they can, "perceive thoughts, physical sensations, and emotions without judgment and with curiosity and an open state of mind" (Suttie, 2007, p. 1). The current programs being used with students follow a similar structure as the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programs that Jon Kabat-Zinn developed. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Children (MBCT-C) was

developed to aid in children's awareness of emotions because as Semple and Lee (2011) described, "The simple, immediate, concrete worries of children...can be just as distressing as the complex, long-term abstract worries of an adult" (p. 17). Other programs being implemented include the Impact Foundation in Colorado and the Lineage Project in New York City, among others (Suttie, 2007).

The purpose of these programs is to equip children with the skills needed to focus their attention. The ability for a child to cope with his/her emotions is not necessarily an innate trait, thus it is crucial for educators to teach these foundational skills to improve students' emotional awareness. The benefits of using mindfulness with students in the elementary setting include: "Fostering pro-social behavior via strengthening self-regulation and impulse control; alleviating the effects of stress that obstruct learning; and providing a skill set that promotes brain hygiene, and physical and emotional well-being across the life span" (Meiklejohn, 2010, p. 5).

In essence, if teachers are able to help their students develop these skills, the need for MBSR and other stress-reduction programs for adults will diminish. It is crucial to recognize the importance of mindfulness with children as they are facing similar stressors due to pressure to perform academically and socially just as teachers and adults are facing stressors in their individual lives in different manners. Through the acknowledgement of these issues and struggles, the child can become more prepared and equipped to handle tasks and emotions that are encountered; however, they require the assistance of educators and parent/guardians.

### **What are the Claims about the Impact of Mindfulness Programs?**

On paper, the theory and practice of mindfulness appears encouraging and worthwhile, however, research studies are being conducted to further examine its efficacy.. In 2004, the Garrison Institute in New York, an organization that promotes mindfulness in education,

conducted a survey regarding mindfulness' impact on students in the educational setting. The results showed that schools are adopting mindfulness trainings and techniques as they are seeing their students become “more responsive and less reactive, more focused and less distracted, [and] more calm and less stressed” (Suttie, 2007, p. 2) Additionally, the Garrison Institute has found that mindfulness helps in the creation of a more positive learning environment.

Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, a psychologist at the University of British Columbia, as well as her grad student, Molly Stewart Lawlor, found similar results to the Garrison Institute. At the University of British Columbia they conducted a study including 12 elementary classrooms, 6 of which received mindfulness education (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). The study showed that students in the mindfulness education classrooms reported, “increased optimism and increased teacher-rated behavior and social competence, but not significant differences in self-concept or affect” (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010, p. 7). With regard to the lack of significant differences in self-concept or affect, Cohan and Honigsfeld (2011) wrote, “Mindfulness does not necessarily bring immediate change to challenging circumstances in our lives and classrooms; however, it does provide us with the freedom to choose the way we respond to whatever comes our way, and that is incredibly powerful and liberating—for teachers, for students, for all of us” (p. 226).

Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor's research, nonetheless, has shown an increase in attention and a decrease in aggression and opposition towards the teacher. The students they surveyed who were taking part in mindfulness also reported that they felt more positive emotion and optimism and “seemed more introspective than children who were on a waitlist for the training” (Suttie, 2007, p. 3).

MindUp is another program created for children to teach how the emotional part of the brain has the ability to hi-jack the clearer thinking areas that are meant to keep us calm and focused. Teaching students how their brains work allows them to be in better control of the way they respond to the outside world (Hawn & Holden, 2011, p. xxiv). CASEL, Collaborative for

Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, performed a study of more than 200,000 children in programs like MindUp and found that classroom behavior improved and children were therefore more engaged in learning. MindUp has also been proven to increase students' working memory and ability to adjust to change due to mindful practices' ability to stimulate the part of the brain that is responsible for good judgment and decision-making (Hawn & Holden, 2011, p. xxvii).

In terms of mindfulness for teachers, Mindfulness-Based Wellness Education (MBWE), has shown success in regard to better preparing teachers for the classroom environment. An examination of this 9 week, 36 hour course asserted that teacher candidates felt more prepared to thrive in the classroom and hold better pedagogical perspectives, strategies, and practices for creating a calm and inclusive classroom community due to their mindfulness training (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011, p. 225). In fact, Cohan and Honigsfeld's reports show an improvement in teacher self-efficacy and physical health ratings in addition to improvements in mindfulness. One teacher candidate who took part in the mindfulness training said, "My attitude and mind-set can be picked up by the students and when I present myself as a balanced and mindful teacher, the students will respond in a calmer manner" (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011, p. 224). The ability for a teacher to incorporate mindfulness into his/her daily routine can impact the way in which students react and engage in classroom activities, thus promoting a positive classroom climate. The teacher who took part in the MBWE training also stated, "The basics of this course can be used to approach classroom management from an entirely different perspective" (Cohan & Honigsfeld, p. 224). Steve Reidman, a teacher at Toluca Lake Elementary in Los Angeles, California, has incorporated mindfulness into his school day. When asked about his opinion of the impact mindfulness is having on his class, he said, "I noticed a difference right away...There was less conflict on the playground, less test anxiety—just the way the kids walked into the classroom was different" (Suttie, 2007, p. 2). This new perspective includes the reciprocal relationship between the teacher and the student and the impact that emotional awareness can have on both parties.

Another study that focused on mindfulness with teachers centered on Cultivating Emotional Balance (CEB). This group was led by Paul Ekman in 2000 and created to develop an intervention targeted at reducing emotional experiences that are destructive to oneself or others and to promote beneficial experiences to the self and others (Jennings et al., 2011). This intervention took eight weeks to perform and focused primarily on addressing self-awareness, social awareness, and self-management. The study included 82 female primary and secondary teachers. Reports showed significant improvements “favoring the intervention group on depression, trait anxiety, negative and positive affect, mindfulness, and trait rumination” (Jennings et al., 2011, p. 7). Furthermore, similar to Steve Reidman’s success, CEB teachers generally experienced more positive classroom climates in comparison to the control groups (Jennings et al., 2011).

Jeff Greeson has completed multiple research studies regarding the effects of mindfulness. He wrote in *Complementary Health Practice Review* in 2009, that,

Research suggests that people with higher levels of mindfulness are better able to regulate their sense of well-being by virtue of greater emotional awareness, understanding, acceptance, and the ability to correct or repair unpleasant mood[s]. The ability to skillfully regulate one’s internal emotional experience in the present moment may translate into good mental health [in the] long term. (p. 10)

The important aspect of all research reported within this review is that mindfulness practice does not necessarily correlate with improved test scores, behavior, social skills or any other personal characteristics. Rather, the teaching of mindfulness aims to instill skills for students, teachers, and other adults to become more aware of their emotions and their subsequent reactions. The goal is that this awareness will alter the subsequent actions that a person makes; however, similar to the ability to lead a horse to water, mindfulness cannot force a person to react in a more positive or appropriate manner. The skills provided through mindfulness, however,

have shown great success in altering students' and teachers' perspectives of situations. It has therefore altered the actions those people have made, "...Practicing mindfulness regularly may increase awareness of one's internal experience and promote reflection, attentional skills, self-regulation, caring for others, and resilience in the face of life's challenges", but the choice to use these skills for beneficial purposes rests on the individual (Jennings et al., 2011, p. 5).

## **Conclusion**

This literature review analyzed the current findings regarding mindfulness as it is being used today. More and more teachers are initiating the use of mindfulness in their classrooms as students are entering school with worries, anxieties, and pressures from their home environments. The goal of mindfulness is to bring awareness to the body's actions through understanding the present moment. Through the use of meditative practice rooted in Buddhist psychology as well as cognitive awareness, students are becoming more conscious of their choices and decisions. Though mindfulness is being included into the routine of a traditional school day the aim of mindfulness is to equip students with the skill of being aware in the present moment; however, it is the student's responsibility to alter the decisions made thereafter. As the research has suggested, mindfulness has taken various forms as it is incorporated into programs including: CARE, MBWE, and SMART. In all of these programs, and others across the nation, students and teachers are becoming more conscious decision-makers and are playing greater, more-aware roles in their daily lives.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Methods**

In order to find answers to my main wonderings, I collected data concerning how the teachers and students in each classroom felt about mindfulness both as Dr. Montgomery conducted his sessions and after his sessions were completed. This data included an in-depth look at how each teacher chose to incorporate mindfulness in her classroom after the program ended, if at all.

#### **Intervention Data Collection**

For the purpose of this study, the baseline data that were collected occurred during Dr. Montgomery's sessions. No data were collected prior to the start of Dr. Montgomery's program as the teachers had been selected only days before the start of the program. This created an inability to observe the students' behaviors prior to the start of the mindfulness program. Additionally, the aim of this study was to compare how teachers incorporate mindfulness after a mindfulness program had been professionally led in a classroom; therefore, anecdotal notes taken during the program in comparison to notes after the program had concluded best displayed the use of mindfulness in the classroom. That being said, anecdotal notes were taken throughout Dr. Montgomery's sessions. The sessions led by Dr. Montgomery occurred two times per week and each lesson lasted twenty minutes; the total program consisted of 15 sessions. These notes were taken in all three classrooms with which he worked, as well as, for a majority of the lessons he taught. These notes were intended to capture the structure of the program's sessions, the students' actions and reactions to the program, and the overall atmosphere of the classroom during his

sessions. Additionally, these notes aim to bring forth the differences and similarities between classrooms' programs based on age levels and personalities.

### **Intervention Data Analysis**

In order to best understand the atmosphere of the classroom as Dr. Montgomery led the students through the mindfulness program, it is important to describe its structure. When beginning a session, Dr. Montgomery began with a mindful moment as students entered their mindful bodies on an open carpet area. Dr. Montgomery then rang the Tibetan bowl as students sat mindfully for the duration of the sound. He would then proceed with introducing the lesson for the session. He would commonly model the lesson, gratitude for example, and would describe how he could use it in his life. He would then provide examples as to how the students may already be using gratitude, or any other lesson, in their lives. Next, Dr. Montgomery would ask students if they could share how they may have used gratitude in their lives already. Due to time constraints, Dr. Montgomery would often then provide students with a goal to work towards until the next session. The session would then close with another mindful moment. This pattern continued in the kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms.

In terms of similarities and differences amidst the different age groups, the notes show little to no variation in the structure of the lessons. For example, when working on Body Awareness, there was no variance in lesson plans between kindergarten, first, and second grade. Dr. Montgomery followed the same script for all three classes as he took them through the tree-climbing metaphor, had them rub their hands together quickly to notice any sensations, then had them identify feelings throughout their entire body by saying an emotion and having students display the emotion with their bodies. The noticeable differences between all three classes during this activity were the students' attention levels and ability to express their emotions. Great difference existed between the kindergarteners attention levels and skill in verbalizing the

emotions they were feeling in their bodies in comparison to the second grade class who were able to identify deep feelings they were noticing when in their mindful bodies. Additionally, the ability to remain focused on Dr. Montgomery's directions as to which body part to pay attention to increased as the age of the participant increased. The kindergarteners lost focus and became fidgety far more quickly than most first and second graders.

Another noticeable difference between the age groups was the ability to understand vocabulary. In the second grade classroom, students were engaged in conversation with terms including generosity and gratitude; meanwhile, students in kindergarten and first grade had difficulty understanding the definitions of these terms and deciphering between the two. This was noticeable as students often substituted the words interchangeably without acknowledging their different meanings. For example, the first grade students had difficulty identifying the receiving component of gratitude.

Furthermore, the kindergarten classroom was less attentive during these conversations as the language being used by Dr. Montgomery left many of the students behind in the conversation. This was evident as a student was asked for an example of how she could show gratitude and the student told of a situation in which she was being generous and offering a classmate a toy.

In terms of mindful walking, however, the different age groups showed rather diverse reactions. The first graders focused most intensely on the walking and the movement of their feet as they were absorbed with walking for the duration of the session. The kindergarteners, when observed, remained walking for the whole session, however, their focus was scattered as some students would be staring off in the room as they walked while others would be fidgeting with fingers and did not appear to be focused solely on the movement of their feet. The second graders, on the other hand, displayed facial expressions that communicated that they enjoyed the walking in the beginning but as they continued to walk, many illustrated that they were bored of the task and were focusing their mind on other objects in the room as opposed to their feet.

## **Post-Intervention Data Collection**

### **Teacher Interviews**

In order to understand how the teachers of the three classrooms planned to incorporate mindfulness after the completion of Dr. Montgomery's sessions, I conducted individual interviews. The goal of these interviews was to grasp an understanding of the teachers' perspectives of the program, their goals for implementation, and their suggestions for alterations in order to make mindfulness successful in their own classrooms. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix A: Teacher Interview Questions: Round 1. The interview questions listed in the appendix act as a guide for the conversation with each teacher, thus if the teacher answered one of the questions that was to be asked subsequently as a part of another question, the answered question could then be skipped. Additionally, if a teacher answered any question in a manner that left me wanting to know more information, I would ask the teacher to elaborate; however, that is not noted on the questions listed in the appendix but was rather done on an individual basis. The first round of interviews with the teachers was scheduled as soon as possible after the completion of Dr. Montgomery's program. The largest gap in time between the end of the program and interview date was eight school days due to scheduling conflicts. These first interviews with teachers aimed to assess the teachers' goals for implementation whereas in comparison, the second round of interviews—held several weeks later—attempted to assess the actual implementation, use of mindfulness, and future modifications based on effectiveness. Each interview in both rounds was to last no longer than twenty-five minutes to accommodate each teacher's schedule. The second round of interview questions can be found in Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questions: Round 2. Similar to the first round of questioning, the actual questions asked deviated slightly from this list based on teacher responses. The second round of

interviews was also used to ask teachers clarifying questions based on information attained from Dr. Montgomery to ensure there was no discrepancy regarding factual information about the program. Due to the fact that this round of interviews took place roughly six weeks after the first round, it offered the opportunity to reflect on prior work implementing mindfulness and what alterations the teacher intended to make.

### **Child Psychologist Interview**

After collecting data from the three classroom teachers regarding their opinions and perspectives of the mindfulness based program and their goals to continue mindfulness, an interview with the child psychologist who led the program was in order. The goal of this interview, as well as the teacher and student interviews, was to compare and contrast the various perspectives of the program that was conducted. The aims of the interview with the child psychologist, Dr. Phillip Montgomery, were to better understand how he viewed the success of the program. Additionally, the interview was used to discuss any alterations he would make in the future and how to adapt the program to fit the needs of each individual class with which the program was introduced. I was also interested in determining how he began his work with Gray's Woods Elementary of all other elementary schools in the district and how he came to work specifically with kindergarten, first, and second grade students (See Appendix C: Child Psychologist Interview Questions).

### **Student Surveys**

All students in the three classrooms who returned parental consent forms took part in a student survey shortly after the completion of the teacher interviews. The goal of these surveys was to assist in developing the questions to be asked in later student interviews. These surveys were differentiated for participants based on their reading and writing capabilities. First and

second grade students completed a different survey (See Appendix D: First and Second Grade Survey) than kindergarten students (See Appendix E: Kindergarten Survey). Both surveys targeted similar questions to determine: students' use of mindfulness, their favorite part of the program, their use of mindfulness *without* Dr. Montgomery, and an example of how they've used mindfulness. Based on student responses to these questions, the student interview questions were created. This survey also provided prior information about the student before interviewing to better gauge the student's attitude towards mindfulness to make the most of the interview time. These surveys were also conducted as close to the conclusion of the mindfulness program so that students had limited opportunity to forget what was learned during the program.

### **Student Interviews**

Nine weeks after the conclusion of the program, four students were interviewed from each of the three classrooms. These students were chosen using a random number generator and a list of students who had returned parental consent forms. Students were selected until two males and two females were selected from each class. If, when using the random number generator, more than two participants of the same gender were selected, those participants would be disregarded and participants would continue to be selected until the designated male and female slots were full. The student interviews are intended to last no more than fifteen minutes. This time restraint has been created so that students do not lose too much academic time in the classroom and to take into account students' developmental ability to sit in one place and focus on the discussion at hand. The interview questions were created based on student responses to surveys earlier in the study. The interview questions have been developed to take into consideration students' feedback on mindfulness so as to eliminate unnecessary questions such as, "Do you use mindfulness?". The questions (See Appendix F and Appendix G) listed in this thesis are lists of general questions for both the kindergarten class and first and second grade classes; however, the

questions asked to students during the interview were altered in a way that fit the discussion and the student responses. For example, if it would be more purposeful to have students expand on one question as to answer several other questions, the interview would be altered to fit the situation, thus the true list of questions varied depending on the student being interviewed. Nevertheless, the questions attempted to follow the order of questions outlined in Appendix F and Appendix G.

### **Post-Intervention Data Analysis**

#### **First Round of Teacher Interviews**

The first round of teacher interviews provided an array of perspectives regarding the mindfulness program. When each teacher was asked how they became involved with the program, there were a variety of answers. Margaret Pinkerton, the kindergarten teacher, volunteered her class without much knowledge on the topic and in hopes that her “unique class” could gain something from the program. Tricia Khaler, the second grade teacher, and Jamie Lawson, the first grade teacher, became involved for their students as well as their personal interest. When Tricia was asked about how she became involved with mindfulness and Dr. Montgomery she said,

I do yoga, and so when I read about it, and heard about it, and heard him speak before, there were so many connections, and I always feel so much better when I take those moments. I feel like our entire life is fast paced and sometimes it’s nice to just slow down. I think those are skills that young children don’t have a lot of guidance from home.

(T. Khaler, Interview 1 February 7, 2014)

Therefore, Tricia became involved due to her prior experience with self-regulation and self-awareness and chose to introduce these concepts to her students through the mindfulness program. Similarly, Jamie Lawson responded to the same question, answering,

I suffer from anxiety, I make myself sick worrying about things because I over analyze everything and worry about everything. I found that I needed to take time in the morning and if I didn't do that then I came to school so frazzled...I [then] thought about the kids here, and just piecing together what my kids' lives are like, I thought, you know, we all need a reset.

(J. Lawson Interview 1, January 28, 2014)

As the conversations continued, teachers were asked what they hoped their students would gain from the program all teachers responded very similarly; Margaret Pinkerton said, "I was hoping they would gain awareness of themselves and predominately self-regulation" (M. Pinkerton, Interview 1, 1/27/2014). When then asked about the conclusion of the program and what their students gained, Tricia said, "Honestly I think they now are more aware of the feelings that they have and they can articulate it so someone can say I'm feeling really nervous and I just took three mindful breaths and now I feel better" (T. Khaler, interview 1, 2/7/2014). From this question, teachers then began to elaborate regarding the impact they felt mindfulness had on different students. Margaret Pinkerton found that some of the students she had imagined would gain the most from the program were the most reluctant to participate and those who she thought would not gain much from the program really grasped onto the concept. A response from all three teachers was that there were various levels of understanding. Some students grasped mindfulness fully and were able to identify when they needed it and were using it, some students would use aspects of mindfulness but were not conscious that they were, and some students had difficulty applying mindfulness techniques in any way. In fact, Tricia Khaler, who is both a teacher and a parent of a student who participated in the program, described an example of its application, "My

own daughter said she was laying in bed last night using her mindful eyes and never realized that in the corner of her room the shadow looked like that. So they have that vocabulary now”

(Interview 1, 2/7/2014).

The teachers were next asked how they envisioned their classrooms after the program ended and how they would continue incorporating mindfulness, if at all. Tricia’s envisioned plan included one fifteen to twenty minute session per week to discuss mindfulness, in fact, she plans to intertwine her class meeting time with this mindfulness session. She also added she hopes to continue mindfulness by taking a mindful moment at the start of the day. Margaret Pinkerton planned to continue mindfulness by carrying out the follow-up activities that Dr. Montgomery mentioned giving to her soon after the program’s completion. At the time of the interview, Margaret Pinkerton did not have details of the exact activities that he was planning to share. She also intended to incorporate mindfulness into her morning meetings. Margaret discussed that starting and ending the day is a continuous challenge, and she believes mindfulness could help with these transitions. She and her intern, also intended to continue using the mindfulness vocabulary with their students. Jamie Lawson planned to take mindful moments when the students return from lunch and to continue to send kind thoughts to others and to themselves.

When given the opportunity to share how they would adapt the program to fit their classroom’s needs better, the teachers had a few suggestions. Jamie Lawson would like to see the addition of a parental component to bring continuity to the students’ use of mindfulness as well as a remodeled journal for her students as she felt many of the pages were outdated. Jamie also proposed narrowing the number of different lessons and thus spending more time on a few lessons to better encourage students’ depth of understanding. Margaret Pinkerton also believes she would need to partake in a training program in order to teach this on her own with a new group of students next year, and she therefore, suggested more support from Dr. Montgomery in how to continue the use of mindfulness. All teachers also believed that they could do without the

mindful walking lesson as they struggled to see its pertinence in their classroom and with their students. This information from the teachers slightly contradicts the students' preferred lessons.

The last question that the teachers were asked had to do with their personal use of mindfulness. Margaret Pinkerton found that her communication with the students has changed drastically, saying,

The questioning versus the telling I think has been the biggest shift. Asking the children how they are thinking and how they are feeling in a given moment; not asking, "Why did you do that?" but, "What were you thinking in that moment?" It's changed the way I speak to the kids and it's made me want to know more about what's going on in their lives and in their hearts during these situations that arise.

(M. Pinkerton, Interview 1, 1/27/2014)

Tricia Khaler had a similar response as she said, "I don't know if it has changed [my teaching style] but I think I am more aware of what they need when they roll in the door and they look like they have just been through who knows what" (T. Khaler, Interview 1, 2/7/2014). Thus mindfulness appears to have not only had an impact on the students in the classrooms with which it was introduced but also has resonated with the teachers as well.

### **Child Psychologist Interview**

The goal of the child psychologist's interview was to compare and contrast his opinion of the program's successes and needed improvements with those of the teachers and students. The questions that were asked of the child psychologist and head of the mindfulness program at Gray's Woods Elementary, Dr. Phillip Montgomery, can be found in Appendix C.

Dr. Montgomery chose Gray's Woods as he said, "We go where there is some positive energy for [mindfulness] right now and this particular principal expressed interest when she found out I was available to the district" (Psychologist, Interview, 2/27/2014). When determining

the classrooms that he would conduct the program he said, “We have the Mindful School’s curriculum, which goes k-5, and I am comfortable in any of those age groups in terms of teaching kids...We started where there were positive teacher-volunteers who were ready to go” (Psychologist, Interview, 2/27/2014). Dr. Montgomery also mentioned that the benefit of working with younger aged children is that students would continue into the older grades with this knowledge and the older grade level teachers could then continue to support the learning of mindfulness as those younger students got older.

I then asked Dr. Montgomery what goals he had for the students and teachers of the program in order to be able to identify whether those goals were similar to, or contradicted with the teachers’ goals. His response was,

I hoped to be able to bring greater self-awareness to children; that’s the first step to self-regulation. My ultimate goal is teaching kids how to better self-regulate. These social emotional skills are the prerequisites for any academic learning and life skills for getting along in life.

(Psychologist, Interview, 2/27/2014)

Dr. Montgomery continued to describe mindfulness as the gateway to learning other social emotional skills and emotional intelligence skills. He discussed his hope for teachers that they would be exposed to mindfulness, absorb it, and continue to encourage and reinforce it with students. This conversation continued as he was asked, “What do you intend for the classroom to look like after your program?” His hopes for the classroom include mindful moments throughout the day and for the students and teachers to practice mindfulness throughout each and every day of the school year. Dr. Montgomery made the comparison of mindfulness in the classroom to that of nurturing a plant’s growth when he said, “It is to absolutely plant those seeds to get the soil started, get the sprouts coming out of the ground, but hoping that it continues to get watered by the teachers” (Psychologist, Interview, 2/27/2014). In terms of expectations for teachers, he

discussed the hope of continuing a mentoring and consulting training and support for teachers for them to gain deeper professional and personal training and practice.

Next, Dr. Montgomery was asked what he viewed as the successes of the program. He believes the students' enthusiasm was the greatest aspect and he stated that the teacher's were in large part responsible for that enthusiasm. He also found that students enjoyed the self-calming aspect of mindfulness so much that there was confusion with students regarding the purpose of mindfulness; many students believed its sole purpose was to calm.

As Dr. Montgomery began mentioning some of these successes we transitioned into what could be improved upon for the future. His answer included repeating a few lessons to create more depth and slightly less breadth. He is now also considering altering the journals with which students worked to make them more centered on the students and to create a larger parental component of the program. In fact, Dr. Montgomery has since added a parental piece of the program with the new group of students he is working with at another school due to the teachers' suggestions at Gray's Woods. Lastly, he said he would like to create a more structured way of mentoring the teachers in order to generalize more to the classroom.

The final question asked focused on the differences he found between the different grade levels. Dr. Montgomery explained that he views a difference between kindergarten, first, and second graders compared to fourth, fifth, and sixth graders but does not identify much difference amidst the kindergarten, first, and second graders alone. He said,

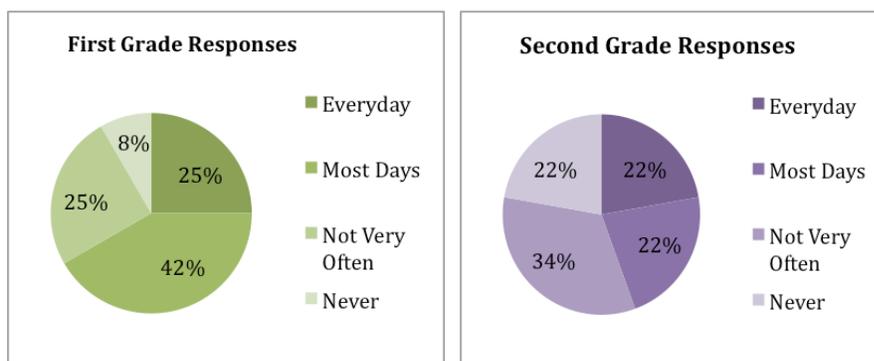
The practice itself, is meant to be a universally simple practice, a simple concept. Some of the younger kids are squirrelier; in reality, they have shorter attention spans...I didn't see...a big difference between kindergarten and first, or first and second grade in terms of biting these bite-sized morsels.

(P. Montgomery, Interview, 2/27/2014)

This answer contradicts the teachers' findings as kindergarten teachers described a difficulty with some of the vocabulary that was used and the first grade teacher said her students had difficulty with the difference between gratitude and generosity. Based on the interviews with the three classroom teachers I believe they viewed a difference between their students in terms of the students' abilities to understand the information being presented. The teachers' interviews display a slight disagreement with Dr. Montgomery in that there is a difference between the age groups with which mindfulness was practiced. Dr. Montgomery explained that as children get older they are able to extend more deeply but that no true changes need to be made between kindergarten, first, and second grade students in terms of the outline of the program. This notion was further discussed with the teachers in the second round of interviews.

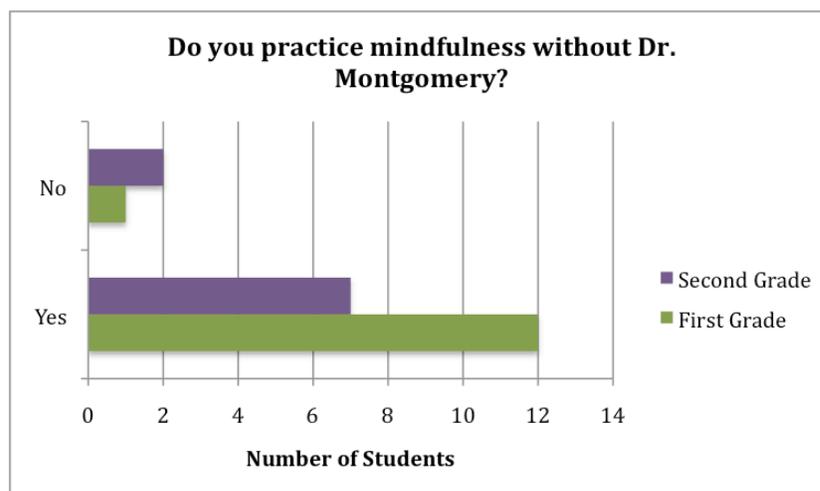
### **Student Surveys**

Appendix D displays the survey that first and second grade students were given. Figure 1 below illustrates the students' responses to the question: How often do you think about using mindfulness? Students were instructed to circle the most appropriate answer for them: everyday, most days, not very often, or never. There were a total of 12 first grade responses and 9 second grade responses. As illustrated, among first graders, 5 of the 12 students surveyed reported that they think of using mindfulness most days, whereas only one student reported never using mindfulness. In comparison, among the second grade students, two students fell into each category except for three students reporting that they think of using mindfulness "not very often". These data show that the first grade students surveyed show more frequent thought regarding the use of mindfulness when compared to the second grade students who were surveyed. It is important to note that only students who returned a parental consent form were able to participate in the survey; therefore, these data represent a portion of each class and not the entire class of students.



**Figure 1**

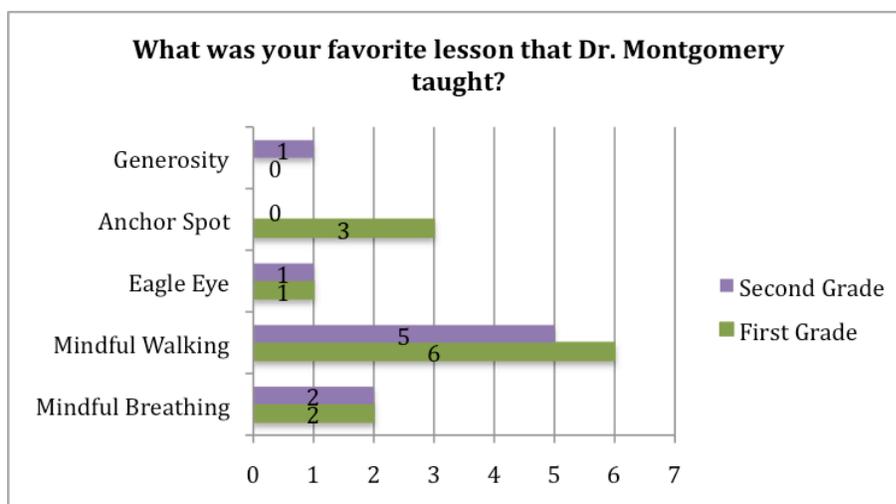
First and second grade students also answered the question: Do you practice mindfulness without Dr. Montgomery? They had the option of circling yes or no and their results are shown below in Figure 2. This figure shows that in both first and second grade, the majority of students practice mindfulness without Dr. Montgomery in the room. This displays a slight discrepancy as a one second grade student who reported never thinking about using mindfulness circled that he/she does practice it without Dr. Montgomery. Again, it is crucial to note that these data represent a portion of both classes as not all students were surveyed from each classroom.



**Figure 2**

The next question that first and second graders answered was: What was your favorite lesson that Dr. Montgomery taught? The students' responses are shown in Figure 3 below.

Students were able to write their favorite lesson, therefore, no choices were given; again, there were 9 second grade responses and 12 first grade responses.

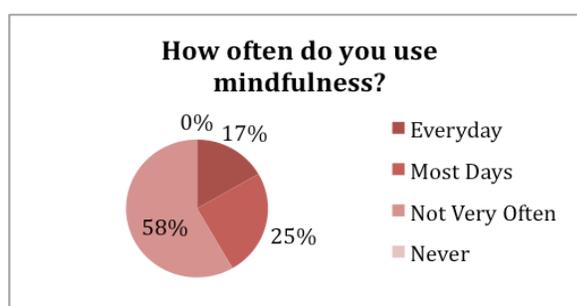


**Figure 3**

The final question was written as optional for the participants. The first and second grade survey instructed students to write one example of how they have used mindfulness. Of the 12 first graders, five chose not to respond. One participant wrote, “At night I stay quiet and take 100 deep breaths”, while another wrote, “[I use mindfulness] on my sister”. Two students wrote that they use it when they are upset or feeling rough and the remaining two students gave examples relating to gymnastics, soccer, and dance. Of the nine second grade students, four chose not to respond and the other five students wrote that they use it to be calm, to relax, to breathe, while walking, and during a math test. This question was created as optional due to the fact that it was placed on to the survey for me to grasp a better understanding of situations in which students are using mindfulness. Therefore, the students’ responses to this question were used to sculpt the interview questions that they would be asked.

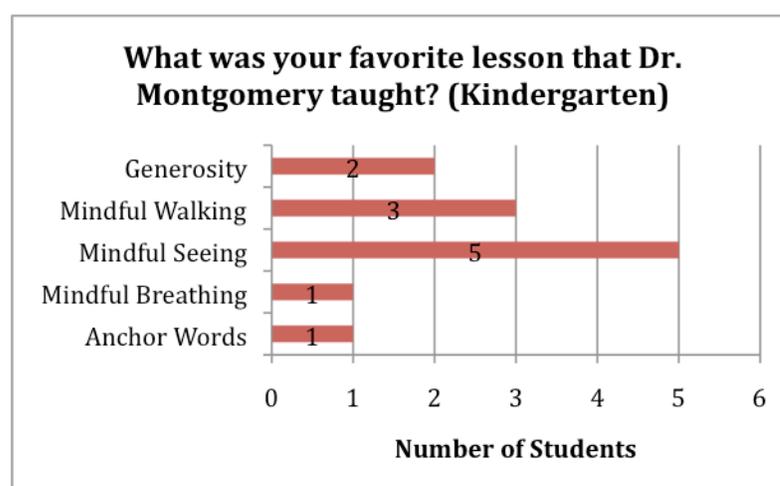
The kindergarten survey differed slightly from the first and second grade surveys due to reading and writing abilities. Kindergarten participants were read the questions exactly as they were written on the survey and I wrote each student’s exact answers on their forms. There were

12 kindergarteners who participated in the survey. The survey questions can be found in Appendix E. The first question on the survey asked: How often do you use mindfulness? Students were read their choices, which were: every day, most days, not very often, and never. Figure 4 displays the results of this question with the majority of students answering that they do not use mindfulness very often.



**Figure 4**

The next question that kindergarteners were asked was: What was your favorite lesson that Dr. Montgomery taught you? All students were then provided with the following choices and were asked to choose only one as their favorite: mindful breathing, mindful walking, mindful bodies, generosity, emotions, gratitude, heartfulness, body scan, anchor words, mindful seeing, and slow motion. There results are displayed in Figure 5.



**Figure 5**

As is shown, mindful seeing was the most popular lesson amidst kindergarteners, whereas mindful bodies, emotions, gratitude, heartfulness, body scan, and slow motion were not at all chosen by the students.

The kindergarten students were then asked whether they practice mindfulness without Dr. Montgomery present; all 12 students answered yes to that question. This insinuates that all students have practiced mindfulness at a time when Dr. Montgomery was not leading a mindful moment or any activity. Lastly, students were asked if they practice mindfulness at home, 11 of the 12 participants answered “yes” and one child answered “no”. Therefore, despite the common answer that they do not use mindfulness very often, nearly all students surveyed, except for one, have practiced mindfulness at some point at home.

In total, the student surveys created great insight for what should be further discussed with students during their interviews. Additionally, the surveys led to the understanding that the vast majority of students across all three grade levels use mindfulness as a result of the program that was placed into effect. This claim will be further discussed and supported in Chapter 4.

### **Student Interviews**

One of the two final steps of data collection for this study was the student interview. The kindergarteners interview questions can be found in Appendix F and the first and second graders interview questions can be located in Appendix G. Due to time restrictions, four students were interviewed from each classroom.

The first students interviewed were the kindergarteners. When they were asked how they felt about Dr. Montgomery coming to their class, they all had similar responses that relayed a sense of happiness and excitement for his teaching. The next question asked each student to describe what mindfulness is, and their responses included, “Being calm”; “Learning how to be careful”; “Breathing deeply whenever you’re mad, but only when you’re mad”; and “It means to

sit criss-cross apple sauce and take a deep breath” (Kindergarten Student Interviews, 3/4/2014). From their responses, mindfulness, to kindergarteners, was understood as a way to calm yourself down and be cautious of what is happening around you.

The students were then asked whether their class still uses mindfulness without Dr. Montgomery’s sessions and they all answered that they use the bell that he gifted them; however, they described the frequency as using it “every once in a while” and “not very often” (Kindergarten Student Interviews, 3/4/2014). I then furthered that question by asking the students whether they enjoyed the amount of mindfulness that they have in their classroom or if they would want more or less moments throughout the day to practice mindfulness. One kindergartener mentioned the desire to practice mindfulness more often and the other three students said that they were happy with the amount of mindfulness they were currently using. The final question each student was asked regarded his or her use of mindfulness at home. All four students said that their favorite place to practice mindfulness at home was in their bedroom. That question concluded the kindergarteners’ interviews.

The first grade interview questions can be found in Appendix G. When discussing how students felt right before Dr. Montgomery’s visits, adjectives included feeling happy and nervous. Each student, during his/her interview, was asked how they would describe mindfulness to someone who knew nothing about it, they’re responses were as follows: “To get relaxed when your angry and take a minute because you’re more relaxed when you’re thinking more”; “Concentration”; “People helping you”; and “Learning how to breathe” (First Grade Student Interviews, 3/5/2014). Thus in comparison to the kindergarten answers, these first grade answers have better understanding as to the purpose of mindfulness as being aware and focused on the present moment. When students were asked at what point in the day would they choose to have a mindful moment, one student selected when they are sad and the three other students chose recess as they described those as chaotic times for them during the school day. I then asked each student

how their class uses mindfulness since Dr. Montgomery stopped visiting and they described using their anchor spots and performing mindful moments when “things in the classroom are wild” (First Grade Interviews, 3/5/2014). Similar to the kindergarteners, when students were asked whether they were happy with the amount of mindfulness they were currently doing, one student requested to use it more often whereas the other students said that they are “OK” with the amount of mindfulness their class was using.

An interesting response from a male first grader during the interviews occurred when I asked whether the student felt better or worse after a mindful moment. This student responded saying, “I feel worse. My heart slows down, I don’t like when it does that, it’s not supposed to do that” (First Grade Interviews, 3/5/2014). This answer reassured the belief that children—and even adults—in our society often feel pressure to always be active and rarely still. This assured me of the value of teaching students about mindfulness and how to use it in their individual lives.

The last question of the interview for each student regarded the use of mindfulness at home. All students mentioned using mindfulness at home and a frequent answer among students was that they use mindfulness when a sibling bothers them. Similar to the kindergarten students, three of the four first grade students interviewed said that they prefer to be in their room when taking a mindful moment or breath.

The second grade students were the last to be interviewed and their answers followed a similar pattern to the first graders and kindergarteners. When asked how they felt prior to Dr. Montgomery’s visits, they described their feelings as: excited to learn what was next, calm, nervous due to unfamiliarity, and curious. I then asked students what they learned and what they viewed as the purpose of mindfulness. One female student responded saying, “I learned how to notice more about my body and noticing things I do everyday but never notice”; this student accurately described Kabat-Zinn’s definition of mindfulness as being aware of the present moment. Another student described learning different styles of breathing and explained mindfulness as a

way to learn how to calm down and plan what you are going to say next. A third student interviewed said that the purpose of mindfulness is to learn how to stay calm (Second Grade Interviews, 3/5/2014). These responses contained more detail and were more thorough than the previous interviews as students were able to better articulate the reasoning behind the use of mindfulness.

The next question asked during the interviews was how did using mindfulness make you feel inside. One female student said, “It made me feel good, if you don’t use it you could say something that could hurt someone’s feelings”, this student described part of mindfulness’s purpose of being aware of those around you (Second Grade Interviews, 3/5/2014). These students were then asked when they would prefer to take a mindful moment during the school day and some answers included: during a difficult task/activity, during recess, and during morning meeting. These students described their class’s current use of mindfulness as rare in that the Tibetan bell is used on certain occasions during a morning meeting but students have not seen it used very often. Similar to the first grade students; however, they were asked whether they would prefer more mindfulness or they were pleased with its current frequency and students described that they are happy with the amount of mindfulness they are currently using. Lastly, students were questioned regarding their use of mindfulness at home and three of the four second grade students interviewed answered that they do use mindfulness at home. Two of the four students further described situations during which they used mindfulness at home, both students’ situations involved frustrations with siblings.

As the interviews came to a close, there appeared to be many similarities and differences among the grade levels. In terms of their anticipation for Dr. Montgomery’s visits, there was a mix of feelings within each grade level. Additionally, most students in each grade described recess as one of the more chaotic times of the day and as a time during which they would like to take a mindful moment. Across all grade levels, students, for the most part, answered that they are

using mindfulness at home with siblings and other family members. Another similarity among the three grade levels was the use of mindfulness in the classroom. Students in all grades described their teachers' incorporation of mindfulness as occasional and when the teacher felt as though the students were too wild; however, students in all classes answered yes to a question regarding whether their teacher would allow them to request a mindful moment and fulfill the student's request.

The largest difference between the three age groups during these interviews was centered on the students' definitions of mindfulness. Among kindergarteners, their definitions focused mainly on being calm and careful when they become angry or upset. In contrast, the second grade students who were interviewed described mindfulness as being more aware of what is happening around them, learning to plan what they will do next, and how to remain calm. The first graders' responses fell in the range of these answers. The main difference across the grade levels was the increased ability to describe the purpose of mindfulness and how it can be resourceful. This is not to say, however, that the first graders are not benefitting from the use of mindfulness but rather that they may not be developmentally ready to make the connection between how they use mindfulness and how mindfulness affects their decisions and actions.

### **Second Round of Teacher Interviews**

The second round of teacher interviews represented the last source of data collection. Due to deadlines, the teachers' second interviews occurred approximately twelve weeks after the conclusion of the program. The goal of these interviews was to analyze how effective the teachers' plans to continue mindfulness have been, as well as, to better understand the teachers' perspectives of how to implement the program in the future. The questions that teachers were asked during these interviews are available in Appendix B.

The first question that was asked of the teachers was: How have your plans to implement mindfulness changed since we last spoke approximately six weeks ago? The first interview was held with Tricia Khaler, the second grade teacher. Initially, she was planning to introduce mindfulness into her class meetings, morning meetings, and whenever needed/requested during the school day. At the time of her second interview, Mrs. Khaler stated that her class has had very few class meetings and she has incorporated a mindful moment into her morning meetings on few occasions. She also then described her current use of mindfulness as presenting it more individually to students who she believes could specifically benefit from its use. Additionally, she is focusing more on character strengths as opposed to solely mindfulness practice (T. Khaler, Interview 2, 3/20/2014).

That same question was asked to Margaret Pinkerton who described her current use of mindfulness at the time to be when the students requested it. Although she expressed that she wished mindfulness were playing a greater role in her room it just hasn't been able to take precedent. At the time of the second interview, however, she was using mindfulness on a few occasions when students' energy levels were too high or when the classroom was, "too rowdy" (M. Pinkerton, Interview 2, 3/20/2014).

Similar to the two other teachers, Jamie Lawson, first grade teacher, expressed a similar level of mindfulness in her classroom. Though she would like to give it a greater role in her classroom, it has been used sparingly since the close of the program. She has, though, continued occasional mindful moments and anchor breathing.

Tricia Khaler was then asked whether her students can practice mindfulness independently; she answered that a few are capable of using mindfulness completely independently. As a follow-up question, she was asked if all could practice it with her support, in which case she answered that all students were capable with her scaffolding. From her answers, all of her students are therefore capable of using mindfulness without Dr. Montgomery present.

Mrs. Pinkerton described her students' use of mindfulness very similarly as she expressed that a few students could use mindfulness independently; yet, all students could use it with minimal prompting (M. Pinkerton, Interview 2, 3/20/2014). Mrs. Lawson also stated that all her students would be capable, however, they would need different levels of scaffolding.

Next, Mrs. Khaler was asked about the greatest aspect of introducing her students to mindfulness. She described that without mindfulness, “[She] learned more about them than [she] would have known before” (T. Khaler, Interview 2, 3/20/2014). Thus, the greatest aspect of having introduced her students to mindfulness has been her ability to better understand her students outside of academics. Mrs. Pinkerton on the other hand, believes the greatest aspect of introducing mindfulness to her children was their learned ability to better express themselves and what they need as well as their general awareness of what is happening around them.

When given the opportunity to change one aspect about the program that was instituted in the classroom, Mrs. Pinkerton suggested that she would like to see the program be written in a way that is more developmentally appropriate for her kindergarten students (Interview 2, 3/20/2014). She felt as though some concepts were too abstract and the vocabulary was at times too challenging. Additionally, all three teachers described that they would prefer for the program to consist of fewer concepts, yet to develop understanding of those concepts more deeply. The teachers explained that they felt there were too many topics to be covered and that their students did not receive enough time to fully understand each topic.

Another question that was asked of the teachers was how they would institute mindfulness into their classroom next year without the full-length program. Mrs. Khaler described that although the twenty minute sessions proved to be beneficial, having more flexibility, beginning the program at the start of the school year and making it a greater part of the routine would make mindfulness a greater part of the students' lives. She expressed that it was difficult to continue the mindfulness as it was not a prior part of the students' routine and thus

starting from the very beginning of school could be beneficial. On the other hand, Mrs. Pinkerton expressed wanting to be more formally trained in mindfulness prior to attempting to teach it on her own as she would prefer to have a script and resources to best teach mindfulness to her students.

Lastly, teachers were asked what they believed would be their students' response to the question: What is mindfulness? Mrs. Pinkerton said she thought her students would say that mindfulness is about paying attention to their bodies; Mrs. Lawson said her students would describe it as a way to calm down; and Mrs. Khaler would say that her students think mindfulness is being aware of the world around them and making choices based on what they've noticed (Teacher Interviews 2, 3/20/2014 and 3/21/2014). This concept of how students would describe mindfulness is further described in Chapter 4, Claims and Evidence.

## Chapter 3

### Claims and Evidence

**Claim 1: An eight-week mindfulness program led by a child psychologist has left students capable of practicing mindfulness independently from the psychologist.**

My main wondering centered upon the impact of mindfulness on the general classroom setting after the completion of a mindfulness program. As a result of this study and the data collected, I have found that students have attained the ability to practice mindfulness without the presence of a trained mindfulness professional. This has been proven from the student survey question that asked whether students practice mindfulness without Dr. Montgomery. The results showed that of 22 first and second graders who were surveyed, 19 of them answered that they do use mindfulness without Dr. Montgomery. This evidence displays the students' ability to practice what they have been taught during the mindfulness program and apply it to their own lives without explicit directions.

This claim is further supported by the student interviews as 9 of 12 students interviewed responded that they do in fact use mindfulness at home, whereas, 2 students said they use mindfulness at home but only occasionally. Thus, 11 out of 12 students interviewed have used some aspect of mindfulness in the home setting. This data proves mindfulness' resounding impact on the students as its presence is still in existence despite the completion of the program. Additionally, during the student interviews, students were asked whether they could request a mindful moment in their classroom. Of the nine students who were asked that question, nine students said they felt as though they could ask their teacher for a mindful moment signifying their ability to choose when a mindful moment is needed.

An additional form of support for this claim is the teachers' second round of interviews. During this time, all three teachers acknowledged their students' ability to practice mindfulness with very little guidance from the classroom teacher and without the need of the child psychologist. In fact, Mrs. Pinkerton mentioned during her second interview that a handful of her kindergarteners can choose independently for themselves to use mindfulness and all of her students are capable of using mindfulness with some instruction from her (Interview 2, 3/20/2014). Mrs. Khaler further supported this thought in her second interview as she stated that all of her students are able to practice mindfulness after the completion of the program without Dr. Montgomery present; she did, however, she did mention that some students require more prompting from her than others (Interview 2, 3/20/2014). Nevertheless, the presence of the child psychologist who initiated the program is no longer required as students are able to practice mindfulness without his guidance and scaffolding.

**Claim 2: The age of the student practicing mindfulness affects his/her ability to verbalize the purpose and definition of the theory as well as comprehend the material being presented.**

As I selected to work with all three classrooms participating in the program, one additional research question I asked was whether the participants' age would affect the impact of mindfulness. I have found that although all participants use mindfulness across the three grade levels, their conceptual understanding of the purpose and definition of mindfulness varies depending on the age level of the participant. When asked during the student interviews for a description of the purpose of mindfulness, the kindergarten, first, and second grade answers differed greatly. Kindergarten students who were interviewed described mindfulness as, "how to be careful"; "deep breathing whenever you're mad"; "heartfulness"; and "being calm" (Kindergarten Student Interviews, 3/4/2014). In comparison, second grade students explained the

purpose of mindfulness to be: “noticing my body and daily things that I’ve never noticed before”; “learning ways to calm down and plan what you would say next”; “being taught how to be calm when you’re mad at something”; and “being calm” (Second Grade Interviews, 3/5/2014).

Although there is some overlap in students describing mindfulness as being a way to calm them, the overall definitions provided by the second grade students were more thorough and detailed in comparison to the kindergarten responses. Due to their ages, this claim is not unexpected due to the learning levels of these students and a developmental increase in verbalizing thoughts, feelings, and emotions as students increase in age. Nevertheless, it is key to note that four students from each class of roughly 20 students were interviewed at random, therefore, if a different set of students were selected, these data could vary.

Age has also shown its presence during the program’s sessions. Although all sessions were structured very similarly across all three grade levels, the students’ understanding varied. During the teachers’ interviews, the kindergarten and first grade teachers issued a concern that the vocabulary was, at times, too advanced for their students; whereas, vocabulary did not seem to be an issue in the second grade classroom. Tricia Khaler, the second grade teacher, expressed in her second round of interviews that her class is very mature this year and it is difficult to predict whether the understanding of next year’s class of second graders would be as capable of understanding the vocabulary and be able to put it into practice (T. Khaler, Interview 2, 3/20/2014). Furthermore, Mrs. Pinkerton expressed that in the future she would like to see a more developmentally appropriate program as she found some of the concepts and vocabulary to be too advanced for her kindergarten class to comprehend adequately (Interview 2, 3/20/2014). Therefore age has played a role in the ability of students to relay the purpose of mindfulness, as well as in students’ ability to comprehend the information that was presented during the mindfulness sessions.

In contrast to the teachers' opinions, the child psychologist, Dr. Montgomery, believed that there was a greater difference in comprehension level between primary and intermediate aged children as opposed to between kindergarten, first, and second grade students. He did, however, state in his interview that, "The older the kids are, the deeper insights and conversations we can have about it...some of the younger kids are squirrelier; in reality, they have shorter attention spans" (P. Montgomery, 2/27/2014). Thus, he displayed an understanding that there are differences among the age groups despite the varying magnitude of the differences. His point regarding their deeper insights as the students develop was observed during the anecdotal note-taking portion of the study. As a lesson was presented in each of the three classes, the students' ability to remain focused on the lesson wavered more as the age of the students decreased. From these observations and interviews it was clear that age plays a vital role in the student's ability to verbalize and comprehend the practice of mindfulness.

**Claim 3: After the intervention, teachers implemented whole group mindfulness into their classrooms on a scheduled basis less frequently than was initially planned. Instead, teachers used mindfulness with individual students as needed.**

For the duration of the program, students practiced mindfulness for two scheduled 20 minute sessions per week. Since the conclusion of the program, students in the three classrooms who participated in mindfulness, have had no scheduled times for mindfulness practice.

At the conclusion of the mindfulness program, Mrs. Pinkerton issued a desire to attain resources and lessons from Dr. Montgomery to continue using mindfulness in her classroom. After her second interview at the conclusion of the study, she relayed that she has not instituted any of the lessons that she had intended to use with her students. She has, however, inserted small amounts of mindfulness since the conclusion of the program. Many of these instances occur during morning meeting or during a time that feels chaotic. Additionally, these moments occur at

random times when she feels they are needed or at a student's request; they are not, however, scheduled into the school day. Mrs. Pinkerton's students described their class's use of mindfulness as, "Every once in a while"; "Sometimes, but not really"; and "Not that often" (Kindergarten Interviews, 3/5/2014). It's important to note that during these interviews, all students said that they could request to take mindful moments if they so desired. Therefore, Mrs. Pinkerton and her students agree in that the use of mindfulness in their classroom since the close of the program has been limited and happens occasionally.

Similarly, as described in her second interview, Mrs. Lawson stated that she, regrettably, uses mindfulness more reactively as opposed to proactively (Interview 2, 3/21/2014). She expressed her interest in using mindfulness more frequently but has had difficulty finding time during the school day to make its occurrence more regular. Her students, during their interviews, were asked whether their class still uses mindfulness. Their responses included: "Yes, kind of"; "Not that much, maybe every 25 days"; "Yes, sometimes we do anchor breathing"; and "Sort of, when things are wild" (First Grade Student Interviews, 3/5/2014). From these interviews, it is clear that students do not have a structured time during which mindfulness is practiced but rather it is conducted when Mrs. Lawson feels it is most needed. It is important to note that students were asked whether they felt as though they could request a mindful moment and all students responded that they felt they could; however, in the first grade classroom there is no time set aside purely for the purpose of practicing mindfulness.

In the second grade classroom, Mrs. Khaler described taking a mindful moment occasionally during a morning meeting, yet there is no designated time for mindfulness in her classroom. When mindful moments are taken during morning meetings they are sporadic, as students do not know when to expect them. During the student interviews, students stated that their class uses mindfulness: "Every once in a while"; "Sometimes, but not as much as when [Dr. Montgomery] was here"; "Only once or twice"; "We use the bell sometimes for morning

meeting” (Second Grade Interviews, 3/5/2014). These responses indicate the students’ agree with Mrs. Khaler in that there is no scheduled time during the school day that is dedicated to practicing mindfulness.

Though none of the three classrooms that participated in the study and program continued to set aside time purely for the practice or learning of mindfulness, the students were still displaying signs of using mindfulness independently as only 3 of the total 32 participants of the study answered that they never use mindfulness.

In order to encourage a more consistent implementation of mindfulness in the classroom, the kindergarten teacher, Ms. Pinkerton displayed her desire to receive mindfulness training. In order for teachers to feel confident in their ability to lead and teach mindfulness, it is crucial they are provided opportunities including workshops, trainings, and dependable mentors for additional support.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Implications for Future Practice**

#### **Conclusion**

This Mindfulness Project has offered an opportunity to investigate the impact of mindfulness with kindergarten, first, and second grade students through a child psychologist-led program. The project led to the claim that the age of the participant plays a significant role in the delivery of mindfulness practice. The study also displayed the students' ability to continue mindfulness without the presence of a mindfulness professional as a result of the classes continuing the use of mindfulness after the completion of the program. Furthermore, this inquiry has suggested that students are using their understanding of mindfulness learned in school and continuing it in their own homes and lives outside of the school setting. What about teacher use of it?

#### **Future Practice**

Throughout the course of this study I developed an understanding as to one method of implementing mindfulness in an educational setting. Although there are a multitude of ways to teach children how to be mindful, this one approach of introducing a program led by a child psychologist was one that offered classroom teachers an opportunity to observe a program led by a professional in the field. After conducting interviews, studies, and observations, I have noted that in the future, adaptations to the program could prove beneficial to promoting students' understanding. For example, reducing the number of concepts and increasing the duration of time spent on each concept could encourage more qualitative as opposed to quantitative understanding. Additionally, though students reported using mindfulness at home, creating a greater parental

component to the program could motivate parents to become more involved in promoting their child's use of mindfulness. A parental component would also support parents' understanding of mindfulness and sponsor a more continuous use of mindfulness in the students' lives.

Furthermore, if conducted again in the future, more frequent teacher-psychologist communication could aid the teachers' continuation of the program after its completion and also allow for teachers to convey their opinions on their students' understanding and possible areas for minor alterations during the program as opposed to at its completion. Overall, the program had many great attributes as it successfully introduced kindergarten, first, and second graders to the practice of mindfulness, though with few alterations the program could be enhanced to improve students' continued use of the practice.

### **New Wonderings**

At the conclusion of the program and study, many questions have been answered; however, as each answer arose, more questions were created. Despite the success that Dr. Montgomery had with the students in each classroom at Gray's Woods Elementary he cannot realistically implement his program each and every year within the same classroom. Ideally, he would implement the program, the teacher would observe, and the teacher would attempt to recreate the program the following year. This thought led to my next question. How can teachers establish the same climate within their classrooms without Dr. Montgomery—mindfulness coach—yet still encourage student discussion and dialogue as when he was present?

This question came about during a second round interview with the second grade teacher as she was asked how she intends to use mindfulness next year with a new group of students. The beauty of Dr. Montgomery's presence is his calming, relaxed nature that allows students to immediately feel comfortable conveying their thoughts and feelings. The difficulty with a teacher leading these mindfulness sessions is the multiple roles the teacher would then play. Many

students view their classroom teacher as an authoritative figure and to then have that teacher expect students to become comfortable discussing very personal thoughts and ideas can be difficult for students. Thus, the current question now at hand is: How can classroom teachers create the same classroom atmosphere without a mindfulness leader present? In other words, how can teachers establish the environment that is needed to successfully practice mindfulness independently?

Another question for further investigation is that twelve weeks after the conclusion of the program, students were still showing signs of using mindfulness and teachers were still teaching and using mindfulness in their classrooms sporadically. I would be interested to determine the students' use of mindfulness at the end of the school year to determine what amount of knowledge and learning regarding mindfulness has been retained approximately six months after the conclusion of the program.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Teacher Interview Questions: First Round**

1. What were your initial reactions when you first got involved with mindfulness?
2. When your students participated in mindfulness with Dr. Montgomery, what do you think they gained from it (if anything)?
3. Do you believe Dr. Montgomery's sessions were a valuable use of time during the day?
  - a. Why or why not?
4. When Dr. Montgomery's sessions ended, did you plan on continuing some form of mindfulness in your classroom?
5. How did those plans work out? How have you begun to use mindfulness?
6. What do you hope your students gain from your use of mindfulness in the classroom?
7. Do you have any plans to change or adapt your current use of mindfulness in the classroom?
8. Do you feel as though it affects any of your students differently than others?
  - a. How so?
9. Since Dr. Montgomery's sessions, have you found yourself ever using mindfulness in your own life?
10. Do you think it has had any impact on your decisions or reactions to situations?
11. Do you think it has had an impact on your teaching and interactions with your students?
  - a. If yes, can you elaborate?

## **Appendix B**

### **Teacher Interview Questions: Second Round**

1. During our last interview, approximately 6 weeks ago, you mentioned the ways you were incorporating mindfulness in your classroom? Have those plans altered in any way?
2. What do you believe has been the impact of mindfulness in your classroom? How has it affected your classroom environment?
3. Do you believe your students are capable of using mindfulness independently?
4. What was the greatest aspect of introducing your students to mindfulness?
5. If you could change one thing about the way the program was performed what would you do?
6. If next year you did the program the same way, would you change anything about the way you continued to use mindfulness in your classroom?

## **Appendix C**

### **Child Psychologist Interview Questions**

1. Why Gray's Woods? How did you get involved with this school and with these age groups?
2. When beginning the program, what were your goals for students and teachers?
3. What do you intend for the classroom to look like after your program? What do you hope is your lasting impression with these students?
4. As the program came to a close and you've had time to reflect, how do you think the program was successful?
5. If you had the opportunity to change anything about the program, how would you?
6. How do you think the students' age's affects the success of the program? What was the difference between kindergarten and second grade?

**Appendix D****First and Second Grade Survey**

1. How often do you use mindfulness? (Please circle one)

Every day

Most days

Not Very Often

Never

2. What was your favorite lesson that Dr. Montgomery taught?

3. Do you practice mindfulness without Dr. Montgomery? (Please circle one)    Yes    No

4. Please write one example of how you have used mindfulness. (If you do not have an example you may skip this question).

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## Appendix E

### Kindergarten Survey

1. How often do you use mindfulness? (Please circle one)

Every day                      Most days                      Not Very Often                      Never

2. What was your favorite lesson that Dr. Montgomery taught? (Please choose only one)

Mindful Breathing    Mindful Walking                      Mindful Bodies                      Generosity

Emotions                      Gratitude                      Heartfulness                      Body Scan

Anchor Words                      Mindful Seeing                      Slow Motion

3. Do you practice mindfulness without Dr. Montgomery?                      Yes                      No

4. Do you use mindfulness at home?    Yes                      No

## Appendix F

### Kindergarten Student Interview Questions

1. How did you feel when Dr. Montgomery was coming?
2. What do you think you learned from him?
3. Based on your survey, you chose \_\_\_\_\_ as your favorite lesson, why is that?
4. What was your least favorite lesson? Why?
5. What do you think is the point of mindfulness? What do you think its purpose is?
6. How does it make you feel when you use mindfulness?
7. When during the day do you feel is the most out-of-control/chaotic/busy?
8. Are there any times of the day where you'd like a break to breathe deeply and be in silence?
9. Dr. Philip doesn't come anymore, but does your class still use mindfulness? How?
  - a. Is there a certain time of the day that you do mindfulness in your class?
10. When you sit through a mindful moment, what do you think about?
11. How would you describe how you feel during a mindful moment?
12. Do you ever practice mindfulness at home? How? With who?

## **Appendix G**

### **First and Second Grade Student Interview Questions**

1. Can you think of a time when you used mindfulness?
2. How did it make you feel?
3. How did it make the people around you feel?
4. What do you think may have happened if you didn't use mindfulness?
5. What do you think is the point of mindfulness? What do you think its purpose is?
6. Did you enjoy Dr. Montgomery's sessions? Why or why not?
7. What do you think you learned from Dr. Montgomery's sessions?
8. How does it make you feel when you use mindfulness?
9. How do others around you act when you use mindfulness?
10. Are there any times of the day where you'd like a break to breathe deeply and be in silence?
11. When do these times happen most?
12. Does your class still use mindfulness without Dr. Montgomery, if at all?
13. When you sit through a mindful moment, what do you think about?
14. How would you describe how you feel during a mindful moment?
15. How would you compare how you felt before and how you felt after a mindful moment?
16. Do you ever practice mindfulness at home? How?

## ACADEMIC VITA

JENNIFER G. SOUTHMAYD

### Present Address

244 S. Barnard Street, Apt. 3  
State College, PA 16801

### Permanent Address

13 Oak Knoll Drive  
Wallingford, PA 19086

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### OBJECTIVE

- To obtain a full-time teaching position in an elementary (K-4) classroom in a district that values collaboration, differentiated instruction, and teacher leadership.

### EDUCATION

**Schreyer Honors College**, Pennsylvania State University  
*University Park, Pennsylvania*

Graduation: May 2014

- Bachelor of Science in Childhood and Early Adolescent Education PK-4
- Minor: Human Development and Family Services
- Study Abroad: University of Chichester, Bognor Regis, United Kingdom (Fall 2012)
  - Consortium for Intercultural Reflective Teachers (CIRT) orchestrated by Pennsylvania State University's College of Education
- Educational Achievements: Dean's List

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

*Chosen as one of 48 Penn State University Elementary Education majors to participate in a collaborative 185 day, full time elementary student teaching internship in a K-4th grade setting in the State College Area School District (Pennsylvania). This nationally recognized program received the 2011 Spirit of Partnership Award and the 2009 Award for Exemplary Professional Development School Achievement from the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS), the 2004 Holmes Partnership Award for the best partnership between a university and a school district, and the 2002 Distinguished Program in Teacher Education Award from the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE).*

### Professional Development School (PDS) Intern: Grade 2

*Gray's Woods Elementary School*

**August 2013-June 2014**

*Port Matilda, Pennsylvania*

- Instructed 21 academically and behaviorally diverse second grade students with services including: Autistic Support, Behavioral Support, Gifted & Talented, Learning Support, Occupational Therapy, RtII, School Based Mental Health, Speech & Language, and Title 1 Math
- Differentiated lessons through the use of small groups, individualized lessons, and focus groups.
- Utilized Daily Five and CAFÉ strategies with an emphasis on comprehension, accuracy, fluency, and expanding vocabulary through the use of student voice.
- Co-Taught writing with a third grade classroom to better cater to students' individual needs through various mini-lesson focus groups.
- Engaged students in science inquiry investigations through the use of student wonderings and questioning.
- Created data-driven assessments to analyze student learning in all content areas.

- Participated in the following activities: Cross-Grade Team-Teaching Meetings, Division Meetings, Faculty Meetings, Goal-Setting Parent-Teacher Conferences, IEP meetings, In-Service Workshops, IST Meetings, Progress Report Completion, and Unit Planning Meetings
- Immersed students in concepts through the use of technology including: iPads, Macbooks, and document cameras.
- Formed rich professional relationships with mentor teacher, paraprofessionals, supervisors, specialist teachers, support staff, and other members of the faculty.
- Conducted an inquiry research study and honors thesis regarding the impact of mindfulness in the classroom setting of three primary classrooms.

#### **TEACHING RELATED EXPERIENCE**

##### **Intramural Sports Coach**

Fall 2013 – Spring 2014

*State College, PA*

- Coached fourth and fifth grade students to learn fundamental skills in basketball, open gym, volleyball, and track.

##### **Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS)**

Fall 2010 – Spring 2013

*State College, PA*

- Volunteered at Corl Street Elementary Homework Club, Easterly Parkway Elementary School ESL classroom, and Park Forest Elementary School.
- Designed and developed lessons that aligned with student goals in specific disciplines.

##### **Tutor**

Fall 2010 - Present

*Wallingford, PA and State College, PA*

- Mentored students at the elementary and middle school level in mathematics.
- Assisted students to scaffold assignments when creating timelines to complete work.

##### **Nanny**

Fall 2010 – Present

*Wallingford, PA*

- Cared for a family of three children (ages: 9, 11, and 12)
- Responsible for: creating games and activities, food preparation, transportation, and parental-substitute

#### **ACTIVITIES/HONORS**

- Schreyer Honors College Student Council Member
- Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon Rules and Regulations committee member
- Student Pennsylvania State Education Association (SPSEA) Member

#### **WORKSHOPS**

- Math Manipulative Seminar
- Common Core Writing Seminar
- Occupational Therapy Strategy Workshop
- Incorporating iPads into Curriculum (Technology Training)
- District-Wide Grade-Level Writing Meetings
- Copyright Training
- Stewards of Children: Child Sexual Abuse Training Program