



## **Executive Summary**

### **Developing Mindful Schools: Enhancing Resilience in Early Adolescence**

With a grant from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, MC4ME provided and evaluated the delivery of a comprehensive mindfulness training (MT) program to educators and staff at a middle school in the larger Detroit Area. The MT program consisted of group based sessions for teachers held primarily after school for 2 hours weekly over an 8 week period, followed by MT to students during several of the teacher's classrooms for another 8 weeks. The teacher MT used an adapted evidence based Mindfulness-Based Stress reduction Program (MBSR). The classroom MT used the Learning to Breathe (L2B) curriculum of push-in lessons twice a week for 9 weeks. MT was offered by MC4ME mindfulness instructors.

Participating teachers in the weekly MT included a cross-section of 6th, 7th and 8th grade as well as counseling staff. Students in fifteen 7th and 8th grade English classes subsequently participated in the 9-week classroom-based L2B mindfulness curriculum. Pre-post standardized questionnaires were administered to staff and students, along with open-ended surveys to assess teacher and student perceptions. The study was approved through the Institutional Review Board William Beaumont School of Medicine Oakland University.

Teachers reported that the program greatly benefited them personally and professionally. MT significantly increased teacher's level of mindfulness, self-regulation of mental states, positive affect, and self-compassion as well as decreased their negative mood and perceived level of stress. Prior to MT, teachers on average scored at high risk for clinical depression. Upon post training, these scores worsened despite the overall positive impact of the program they experienced.

Classroom teachers agreed that learning mindfulness prior to seeing it practiced in the classroom setting greatly assisted their understanding of how to engage mindfulness in their students. While the teachers found the push-in L2B lessons somewhat disruptive to their teaching schedule, this was not true for the students. During MT, students were highly attentive: 70% reported that they often or always practiced mindfulness during the formal lessons, and only 13 percent indicated non-adherence.

When students were asked how satisfied they felt with learning mindfulness, 35% reported they were highly satisfied, 25% somewhat satisfied and 40% indicated they were not satisfied with it. Slightly over 40% of students offered concrete examples of how they applied mindfulness at

home or at school a week after the training had been completed. The examples revealed a reliance on and success with using a breathing practice for emotional self-regulation of stress during a variety of contexts, e.g., studying, test-taking, arguments with parents, disappointments, etc.

Post MT, teachers agreed that they observed substantial changes in their classrooms. Statistical analyses on pre-post student measures concur with this observation. MT had a significant positive impact on students' capacity for mindful attention, regulation of distressing moods and abatement of anxiety and stress. The effectiveness of MT on modulating students' emotional regulation and anxiety and increasing mindfulness overall, suggests that students learned and benefited from mindful practices, even though they may have felt some dissatisfaction in learning the practices in the classroom.

These findings suggest that intensive MT has a significant beneficial impact on both middle school teachers' and students' emotional life. Future exploration is needed to assess ways to pragmatically offer MT to all teachers in a school year, and provide opportunities for ongoing coaching and practice in implementing mindfulness activities in the classroom.