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A Mindful Education Course for Preservice Teachers

Elizabeth Henderson
ehender6@lesley.edu

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Elizabeth Henderson

August 2019

Advisor: Melissa Jean, MFA, Ph.D.

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Abstract

Currently, there are few opportunities for preservice teacher instruction in mindful education or mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) despite research that has shown the possibility of positive benefits such as increased attention, focus, self-awareness, emotional-regulation, self-efficacy, and compassion, as well as a reduction in the negative aspects of unhealthy stress, tension, and burnout. A course in mindful education specifically designed for inclusion in teacher education programs would address this educational gap and could be a significant benefit to teacher candidates, early-career teachers, and their future students.

This creative thesis is a college course on the theory, research, and practice of mindful education based in learning-centered and contemplative pedagogies. The purpose of this project is to add value and content to preservice teacher education by informing teacher candidates of the possibilities of benefit that can come from both a personal mindfulness practice and introduction of mindful techniques to students.

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A Mindful Education Course for Teacher Candidates

For the conclusion of my examination and research in the Mindfulness Study program, I have undertaken the task of creating a mindful education course specifically for preservice teachers in non-university colleges that offer a baccalaureate in education (BAS-TE, Bachelor of Applied Science in Teacher Education). This course is an exploration of the theory, practice, and instructional techniques of mindful education. In my own study, I have not found a course such as this offered in non-university colleges for preservice teachers and perceive this to be a gap in teacher education programs. Mindful education can be described as “a conscious, purposeful way of tuning into what is happening in and around us. This specific approach to paying attention and honing awareness improves mental focus and academic performance. It also strengthens skills that contribute to emotional balance” (Schoeberlein David, 2009, p. 1). Preservice teachers could significantly benefit from practicing mindfulness techniques throughout their studies and into early-career years in the profession.

Knowledge and practice of mindful education techniques and mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) can be beneficial to administrators, educators, students, and families. Mindful education techniques can establish positive social-emotional practices that may reduce the effects of negative stress, tension, and burnout, thus improving job satisfaction and reducing the potential of teachers exiting the profession. Moreover, informing teacher candidates of the subject clearly during their education process and early careers will enable them to develop a personal practice of their own that could assist them during student teaching and into the early years of their career.

This course offers teacher candidates a survey of the theory and research of mindful educational practices, how it can be delivered through specifically designed programs and curriculum (see Appendix A), as well as an invitation to experience it for themselves. The goal

of this course is to enable, fortify, and strengthen the efficacy and resilience of early-career teachers through an understanding of mindfulness practices, exploration of a personal mindfulness practice, and the necessary information and ability to introduce mindful education into their classrooms. This addition to teacher training programs could be a valuable benefit for teacher candidates and early-career teachers who are often overwhelmed with the stress and challenges that can lead to burnout in the profession (Dorman, 2015; Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013; Gold, Smith, Hopper, Herne, Tansey, & Hulland, 2010; Hwang, Bartlett, Greben, & Hand, 2017; Rupprecht, Paulus, & Walach, 2017). Offering preservice teachers an opportunity to explore mindful education could provide them with the necessary tools to encourage increased student focus, self-awareness, and self-regulation, while supporting improved classroom management skills, self-efficacy, and social-emotional competence that can facilitate teacher wellbeing, instructional performance, and job satisfaction (Jennings, 2015; Olson, 2014; Rechtschaffen, 2014).

A Review of the Literature

As a result of declining numbers of certified teacher candidates emerging from universities available to enter the teaching profession, many states are looking for solutions to bolster a dwindling teacher supply. One popular approach is to establish 4-year degree programs for teacher education within community colleges (Park, Tandberg, Shim, Hu, & Herrington, 2018). However, despite encouraging and plentiful research that has shown that mindfulness-based interventions can enrich the experience and quality of an educator, these degree programs do not include a course in mindful education. This gap in knowledge and training could be bridged with this course in mindful education for teacher candidates seeking a Bachelor of Applied Science in Teacher Education degree (BAS-TE; offered at some Washington State

community colleges, such as Grays Harbor College and Pierce College, and provides a four-year degree in education with a K-8 teaching certification).

What follows is the evidence-based rationale for this course. This rationale will focus on the definition of mindful education and research that has shown a reduction of negative stress, improvement in classroom behavior management, and an increase in social-emotional competency, efficacy, and wellbeing for teachers. Next, the review will shift to the literature concerning how mindfulness practices can be a benefit to preservice teachers during their education, with special attention to community college baccalaureate programs. Finally, I will discuss the methodology and development of the course.

Mindful Education – Definitions & Research

In sharing about facilitating workshops on mindful education, Christopher Willard (psychologist, mindful education author, and consultant) has joked that he often “spends more time teaching adults how to teach kids than I do teaching kids, but perhaps that is where I’m best and most needed right now” (Willard & Saltzman, 2015, p. 14). I believe that teaching teachers about mindful education is the best way toward transmitting that knowledge to their students. A teacher, first and foremost, must know well the subject-matter they are teaching. It is a challenge to teach something not understood or experienced, therefore it is important to train teachers, from preservice to late-career, in MBIs if it is deemed beneficial for academic success, self-regulation, and prosocial behaviors - especially if they are being asked to introduce mindfulness techniques and practices to their students.

In the following review of the extant literature surrounding mindful education, I will start with the definition of mindfulness, examine the research of mindful education, differentiate between mindful teachers and teaching mindfulness, consider the importance of educator wellbeing, and finish with some additional considerations that should not be overlooked.

Mindfulness

In many studies, Jon Kabat-Zinn is referenced for the definition of mindfulness he suggested in developing Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction therapy (MBSR): “Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way – on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4; Albrecht, Albrecht, & Cohen, 2012; Abenavoli, Harris, Katz, Jennings, & Greenberg, 2014; Bernay, 2014; Crain, Schonert-Reichl, & Roeser, 2017; Dorman, 2015). While this concise definition is well-received for research study articles, there are others who have added nuances to expand understanding of the practice and benefit. Goldstein outlined mindfulness as: 1) present-moment awareness, presence of mind, and wakefulness, 2) wholesome recollection that supports and energizes, 3) perspective that balances faith and wisdom, and 4) a practice that fosters awareness of arising sensations thus supporting a more peaceful life (Goldstein, 2016). Further, Buddhist Master Thich Nhat Hanh described mindfulness holistically as, “the ways that human beings, across cultures and across time have found to concentrate, broaden, and deepen conscious awareness as the gateway to cultivating their full potential and to leading more fulfilling lives” (Hanh, & Weare, 2017, p. *xliii*). Mindfulness practice can be a simple, secular practice to reduce stress or it can have deeper, more spiritual meaning.

Being more present in the moment is only part of the definition for Langer, who describes mindfulness from a different perspective. She states that “a mindful approach to any activity has three characteristics: the continuous creation of new categories, openness to new information, and an implicit awareness of more than one perspective” (Langer, 2016, p. 4). This attitude has been called the ‘beginner’s mind,’ and recalls the experience of discovery when everything is new, and categories must be developed to function in society. This type of state of mind is a “freedom from rigid distinctions” (Langer, 2016, p. 80) that opens the mind to new perspectives

and possibilities of creativity. Neuroscientist Dan Siegel incorporates this sense of novelty in his general description of mindfulness as “waking up from a life on automatic and being sensitive to novelty in our everyday experiences. With mindful awareness the flow of energy and information that is our mind enters our conscious attention and we can both appreciate its contents and come to regulate its flow in a new way” (Siegel, 2007, p. 5). Cultivating a mindful awareness not only has the potential for increased richness of experiences, but also the prospect of learning how to respond and interact with those experiences in new ways. Ultimately, mindfulness “involves being aware of aspects of the mind itself. Instead of being on automatic and mindless, mindfulness helps us awaken, and by reflecting on the mind we are enabled to make choices and thus change becomes possible” (2007, p. 5). And that is what is so appealing when considering education: Giving students and educators the opportunity to know their own minds and emotions to enable them to make good choices of where and when to focus their full, present-moment attention.

Mindful Education

Mindful education, therefore, can be described as “a conscious, purposeful way of tuning into what is happening in and around us. This specific approach to paying attention and honing awareness improves mental focus and academic performance. It also strengthens skills that contribute to emotional balance” (Schoeberlein David, 2009, p. 1). The emphasis and benefit for the classroom is to offer a way to train focus, observation skills, and self-awareness that can lead to improved learning, as well as self-regulation. To better capture the many aspects of mindfulness for educators, Nance compiled a list of twenty ways to think about mindfulness (see Appendix A) including “response-ability” (2018, pp. 10-12). This clever turn-of-phrase implies that it is possible, with the practice of mindfulness, to learn to give considered responses rather than emotional reactions. His summation was that mindfulness practice is, “noticing the present

moment on purpose. As little as 5 – 30 minutes a day of meditation or ‘focus time’ will help cultivate mindfulness, creating new pathways and new habits for the mind and body, allowing participants to be more present” (Nance, 2018, p. 10). When teachers and students are more present, they can be more fully engaged in the subject matter being presented.

Mindful education is typically introduced to students through interventions (referred to as mindfulness-based interventions or MBIs): activities, programs, or curricula (see Appendix B) based in scientific research that trains teachers and students how to engage with mindfulness activities. Some of these activities can include mindful moments of silence, breath-focus, or attention to an object or sound (such as a bell). Mindful movement, mindful walking, and mindful eating are also ways of practicing attention and focus. [It is important to note that in this rationale, ‘mindfulness-based interventions,’ or ‘MBIs,’ refer to any mindfulness instructional intervention or program intended for students, teacher candidates, or active teachers; some MBIs are designed for young students and some, as in research discussed later, are intended for preservice or active teachers.] For younger students, storybooks can help them understand the concepts of mindfulness practice (see Appendix C) and often incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) concepts of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2019). The intention and purpose of mindful education is to teach fundamental skills of awareness that will allow the development of an integrated, attentive student.

Research has shown that “giving children mindfulness attention training in combination with opportunities to practice optimism, gratitude, perspective-taking, and kindness to others can not only improve cognitive skills but also lead to significant increases in social and emotional competence and wellbeing in the real-world setting of regular elementary classrooms” (Schonert-

Reichl et al., 2015, p. 1). In a review of mindfulness interventions, researchers concluded that these programs have much potential for benefit and acceptance by administrators, teachers, and students. They listed potential benefits as improved attention and executive function, increased social-emotional resiliencies, and assistance for teachers and students in management of stress (Semple, Drouman, & Reid, 2017).

Rechtschaffen stated that there is “no right way to teach mindfulness and that it functions best when the teacher is experimenting with using his or her own life as a laboratory for exploring and deepening the practice of mindfulness” (2014, p. *xxi*). Every teacher is strongly encouraged to engage with the practice on some level, whether in or out of the classroom, in order to model the activities to students. And while each teacher may engage with the practice in different ways, the mindful qualities cultivated through consistent practice tend to be compassion, understanding, boundaries, attention, intention, and authenticity (2014). Jennings, in her book *Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity* (2015) stated that:

Mindfulness can help us to recognize and appreciate other’s values and perspectives. It helps us suspend our tendency to judge so that we can be more helpful and caring. We can recognize the needs actually being expressed by our students and their families rather than clinging to the institutional needs that seem to take precedence. This helps us build strong relationships with our students and their families because they know that we are listening and that we truly care about and respect their perspective. (p. 120)

Teachers who cultivate mindful qualities, such as listening with an open attitude of respect and understanding, can facilitate stronger relationships with both students and their families by reducing judgmental tendencies.

The benefits of mindful education for students – self-awareness, self-regulation, and increased focus and attention – can be the same for teachers. According to Olson & Cozolino (2014), “humans can ‘borrow’ someone else’s prefrontal cortex to support our own at any stage in life. Teachers (who are in a state of calm alertness, ready to engage) become similar to a lending library of neurobiological connectivity for those students who may have less than optimal circuitry” (Olson, & Cozolino, 2014, p. 24). Teachers can position themselves as available and accessible helpers for students who are struggling academically, emotionally, or behaviorally through maintaining the qualities of a mindful teacher (compassion, understanding, boundaries, attention, intention, and authenticity) developed through an engaged mindfulness practice.

Educators who cultivate prosocial values through mindfulness practices can be a tremendous asset to any school by demonstrating “deep respect for their colleagues, students, and students’ families and ... care about how their own decisions affect the wellbeing of others” (Schonert-Reichl, 2017, p. 143). Ultimately, incorporating mindfulness techniques and practices into education can result in increased learning and engagement, self-regulation and awareness, and prosocial skills for both educators and students.

Mindful Teachers & Teaching Mindfulness

There is a distinction to be made between those educators who exhibit the trait of mindfulness – behaviors and responses developed through a personal mindfulness or meditative practice – and those that incorporate mindfulness concepts and techniques into their instruction and/or teach mindfulness-based interventions directly. Schoeberlein David (2009) stated it this way:

Mindful teaching nurtures a learning community in which students flourish academically, emotionally, and socially – and the teachers thrive professionally and personally.

Teaching mindfulness directly to students augments the effects of the teacher's presence by coaching youth to exercise simple, practical, and universal attention skills themselves. These two approaches are mutually reinforcing and benefit everyone in the classroom. (p. 1)

Teachers that have both a personal mindfulness practice that results in a more mindful approach to their profession and that take opportunities to introduce mindfulness techniques to their students, are most efficacious. Buchmann said that what is needed is an examination of contemplation, "to look at its contributions to the active life in teaching in terms of human flourishing: thinking and living well" (1989, p. 37). Holistic teaching – that which incorporates social-emotional learning, mindful self-awareness techniques, and fosters curiosity and focused attention on subject matter – is about mindful teachers guiding students in ways that can lead to mental and emotional wellbeing.

To facilitate mental and emotional wellbeing, "we have to have teachers who are aware of themselves, aware of their own social and emotional abilities and need, and are able to deliver a safe, caring, and well-managed environment in a truly genuine way" (Greenberg, 2014; as cited in Lawlor, 2016, Loc. No. 3080, "Where Are We Now," para. 1). This is also known as *contemplative education*: A movement where the

approach to education [is] focused on the development of the whole person ... a set of pedagogical practices designed to cultivate the potentials of mindful awareness and volition in an ethical-relational context in which the values of personal growth, learning, moral living, and caring for others are also nurtured. (Roeser & Peck, 2009; as cited by Lawlor, 2016, Loc. No. 2797, "Contemplative Practices," para. 1)

Contemplative education is the intention to be mindfully aware that there is more to learning than simply academics, but also emotional, relational, and ethical aspects. It can be considered a more holistic approach to education.

Moreover, contemplative educational practices can be an important complement to the development of social-emotional competencies (Lawlor, 2016). To facilitate a move toward a contemplative, holistic style of teaching, programs for teachers have been developed to “harness teacher resilience, compassion, and ‘habits of mind’” (Albrecht et al., 2012, p. 7). These desirable ‘habits of mind’ consist of “gathering data through all of the senses, being aware of and reflecting on experience in a nonjudgmental manner; being flexible when problem solving, regulating emotion and being resilient after setbacks as well as attending to others with empathy and compassion” (Albrecht et al, 2012, p. 7). These researchers also conclude that mindfulness practice and techniques have been shown to reduce teacher stress levels, help with classroom behavior management, and even improve teacher self-esteem.

Teacher wellbeing can be fortified through a school environment of trust. According to Hoy, Gage, & Tarter (2006), “mindfulness is a concept that every school administrator should understand and practice” (p. 251), and that mindfulness and building a school environment of trust go “hand-in-hand” (p. 251). In surveying 2,600 teachers in 75 schools, researchers determined that “faculty trust and school-wide mindfulness seemed necessary conditions for each other” (p. 236) and that principals that mindfully encouraged ideas, novelty, creative risk-taking, and experimentation in a safe and trusting environment had “profound effects on school mindfulness” (p. 236). When mindfulness was encouraged by administrators, such as implementing mindful moments to begin faculty meetings or discussions about how mindful education can be implemented school-wide, a more trusting school environment resulted.

Researchers concluded that a “work environment characterized by competence, reliability, benevolence, honesty, and openness fosters mindful thought and action” (pp. 243-244). Because trust is dependent upon the willingness to be vulnerable and available to colleagues, “faculty trust promotes school mindfulness and mindfulness reinforces trust” (p. 251). When faculty and administrators are benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open with each other it can foster a culture of trust that benefits administrators, teachers, and students.

Student Stress & Behavior Management

Teachers are faced with instructing stressed students who can act out (indiscipline) or ‘check out’ (distraction) and create behavior management challenges for teachers. Prosocial teachers can offer support to these students “to develop a set of effective, appropriate ways to cope with stress in the classroom and on the playground” (Sotardi, 2016, p. 716). According to research, disruptive and hyperactive behaviors are most common forms of student indiscipline. While ‘internalizing’ behaviors due to anxiety was a common problem (teachers reported 12 percent of students worried about errors and 8 percent were affected by general performance worry), ‘externalizing’ behaviors, such as distractibility and hyperactivity caused problematic disruptions during instruction (Harrison, Vannest, Davis, & Reynolds, 2012). The teacher surveys reported “10 percent of children were rated as almost always being generally distracted, 9 percent were almost always distracted from task, and 5 percent were almost always distracted during lectures and lack concentration” (p. 60). This level of both internalized worry and externalized distraction (to themselves and other students) represents significant distraction and interruption of class instruction. These researchers suggested that state-developed standards and curricula need to include instruction in social, emotional, and behavioral skills.

Further, in a study of 48 public school teacher-participant questionnaires, the perceptions of what disrupted class instruction (indiscipline) included aggressiveness, restlessness,

inattentiveness, talking, disrespect (to teachers and/or peers), and lack of interest in the materials presented (Silva, Negreiros, & Albano, 2017). These researchers concluded that it was “very important to develop actions of intervention addressed to teachers with goals to expand their vision on situations that can generate indiscipline” (pp. 7-8) with a focus on improving required student-teacher relationships. Helping educators to understand what motivates indiscipline may be the first step to creating a more cooperative and engaging learning environment.

Researchers have been interested to examine if mindfulness interventions could influence these issues of indiscipline. In a study that investigated the possibility of utilizing mindfulness-based interventions to address student stress, indiscipline, and behavior management, researchers found that

teachers reported significant differences in prosocial behaviors, emotional regulation, and academic performance within-group and across comparison groups. Both students and teachers in the treatment group reported increases in positive classroom behaviors, emotional regulation and academic achievement after receiving mindfulness instruction.

(Harpin, Rossi, Kim, & Swanson, 2016, p. 149)

The intervention used in this study was a 10-week mindfulness program - a combination of *MindUp* (Hawn Foundation, 2011; and MBI designed for students) and *Mindful Schools* (Cowan, 2011; an MBI designed for educators) – integrated into the morning schedule of a 4th grade class (with a control class for comparison). Findings showed that mindfulness practices have potential to address some of the disruptive indiscipline.

Moreover, incorporating mindfulness-based interventions could fortify existing classroom management behavior programs already in place. In a study that investigated the results of introducing mindfulness-based activities to existing classroom management strategies

in a 3rd grade classroom, researchers reported “83 percent of students increased and sustained high rates of on-task behaviors when mindfulness exercises were added” (Kasson, & Wilson, 2017, p. 242). These findings indicate that instruction in mindfulness practices improved student distractedness, thus allowing teachers to keep the class focused on instruction rather than behavior redirection. Researchers suggested that “mindfulness can help strengthen traditional behavior management techniques” (p. 250), and that mindfulness instruction may reinforce and support classroom behavior methods, thus reducing behavior-related stress and improving learning and wellbeing.

Educator Wellbeing – Social-Emotional Competence, Efficacy & Burnout

Research has shown that mindfulness practices benefit students (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; Semple, Drouman, & Reid, 2017). Without empirical data and findings of potential benefit, these MBIs might not have a place in public education; evidence-based instructional programs are preferred, if not required. Likewise, there has been promising research findings that mindfulness practices can benefit educators, but there remains cautious skepticism due to a lack of robust research. The following discussion and research concerning educator wellbeing is foundational to the rationale of this project. Before examining the research, however, certain definitions need to be clarified.

Definitions. In a discussion of mindful education, *self-regulation* can be understood as the “ability to initiate, coordinate, and govern behavior in accordance with personal goals. This ability is regarded as central for health promotion. In the context of teacher training, the term self-regulation refers more generally to the capability of teachers to ‘manage their own resources in a professional setting’ (Rupprecht, Paulus, & Walach, 2017, p. 565). *Emotional regulation* is “the ability to show certain emotions or hide or regulate them; as teaching is emotional work, they need to regulate their emotions frequently; this ability was positively associated with job

satisfaction, positive affect, and principal's support" (p. 566). Finally, efficacy, or *self-efficacy*, is "the belief of [one's] ability to handle difficult classroom events ... this belief affects choices, goals, effort, perseverance ... and is positively linked to student learning motivation and student self-efficacy as well as teacher motivation and teacher health outcomes ... a low sense of self-efficacy in teachers predicted burnout five years later" (p. 566).

Teacher Retention Crisis. Another point of concern is the current crisis of teacher retention. This is partly due to attrition of an aging workforce, but also because of unfavorable or undesirable work conditions that can result in unhealthy stress, tension, and burnout. Early-career teachers (less than 5 years in the classroom) are at higher risk of leaving their positions; unfortunately, nearly 50 percent of them either move laterally from district to district, or exit the profession altogether (Ingersoll, 2003). This leaves districts and administrators scrambling for replacements. Garcia & Weiss (2019) have examined this crisis and stated that "the teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought ... with high-poverty schools suffering the most from the shortage of credentialed teachers" (Garcia & Weiss, 2019, para. 1). Teachers with high-quality credentials are in demand and more likely to seek positions in low-poverty districts with more resources and support. These researchers list the following factors they see as contributing to the crisis: The struggle to find and retain high-qualified teachers due to reduced number of applicants and educator attrition, low teacher pay (especially in high-poverty districts), stressful and demoralizing school environments which can contribute to educator transfers for better working conditions, and a lack of quality educator training, professional development, and support (2019, "Conclusion" section). A stressful work environment, relational challenges, and a lack of administrative or co-worker support can all add up to educator burnout and, for some, leaving the profession. A course in mindful education

could provide preservice and early-career teachers mindfulness tools that may help facilitate awareness and resilience to possibly mitigate the effects of stress and burnout.

MBIs introduced into the classroom have been shown to decrease stress and disruptive student behaviors, thus creating a more positive work environment for teachers (Harpin, Rossi, Kim, & Swanson, 2016; Kasson & Wilson, 2017; Silva, Negreiros, & Albano, 2017; Sotardi, 2016). As the following research will demonstrate, mindfulness practices can encourage personal growth, strengthen the ability to regulate personal resources (energy, skills, and talents), control and balance emotional reactions, and facilitate a belief in the personal ability to complete professional responsibilities with satisfaction. These attributes contribute to greater educator wellbeing.

Research findings. In a study that utilized a convenience sample of 1,430 attendees at a teachers' conference, self-report surveys revealed that teachers with greater classroom management self-efficacy or greater self-efficacy in their instructional strategies had greater job satisfaction (Klassen, & Chiu, 2010, p. 741). Researchers reported that "teachers' self-efficacy is believed to be most malleable in the challenging early state of a teacher's career" (p. 741), and further that the "impact of classroom and workload stress on job satisfaction was mediated by teachers' self-efficacy" (p. 750). Giving preservice teachers an opportunity to learn about mindful education may contribute to increased self-efficacy in the early years of their careers. Further, in a larger-scale review of mindfulness interventions designed for educators, Hwang, Bartlett, Greben, and Hand (2017) examined findings from 652 teacher-participants. All the studies investigated in this review reported positive effects from MBIs and suggested that mindfulness meditation can be effective in addressing threats to teacher wellbeing. According to these researchers, the benefits of mindfulness practices can include reductions in self-perceived

stress and burnout, physiological symptoms of stress measured by cortisol levels, improved sleep quality, reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety, and overall psychological distress, increased self-compassion, and improvements in teacher organization, sense of efficacy, forgiveness, and use of positive affect language (Hwang et al., 2017). These two studies demonstrate that mindfulness practices can encourage wellness by strengthening traits of emotional-regulation and self-efficacy.

In a pilot study, researchers found that a mindfulness intervention adapted for educators boosts aspects of teachers' mindfulness and self-compassion, reduces psychological symptoms and burnout, increases effective teaching behavior, and reduces attentional biases (Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2012). It is further suggested that if early-career teachers do not receive any mindfulness intervention during the school year, they may suffer or be prone to increases in physiological stress, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (p. 10). These researchers noted that there is an important connection between teacher wellbeing and student motivation and achievement (Flook et al., 2012). Teaching mindfulness practices may benefit both educators and students through increasing self-compassion and decreasing the stress that leads to burnout.

With a focus on teacher education courses, researchers have made the argument that mindfulness practice during a program of study can help build social-emotional skills, as well as self-care practices that can reduce stress for preservice and in-service teachers (Dorman, 2015). They stated that "21st century teachers and teacher-leaders need a steady supply of passion, heart, and inner resilience to resist burnout and effectively respond to the curricular, societal, and institutional conditions of teaching" (p. 104). When teachers are required to perform at high levels in an environment of stress, they can build and strengthen the social-emotional aspects of

self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness through moments of silence and centering mindfulness practices (p. 115). Teachers that are knowledgeable about mindful education and have a mindfulness practice of their own, can share their knowledge and experience with students to encourage attentive learning, self-care, and wellbeing.

Emotional-regulation ability (ERA) can be strengthened through mindfulness practices and is an important life skill. In a study featuring British secondary educators, researchers found that “teachers with higher ERA may be more satisfied with their jobs and feel more personally accomplished because they experience more positive emotions and have greater social support from their principals” (Brackett, Palmomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010, p. 413). Teachers who exhibit developed emotional regulation can better handle the stressful challenges presented in the profession, as well as facilitate better working relationships with administration. Thus, these researchers suggested the

findings raise the possibility that teacher-training programs focusing on developing emotional-regulation skills might result in a number of favorable outcomes for teachers including increases in positive affect and greater support from principals. In turn, teachers may experience less burnout and greater job satisfaction, remain in the profession longer, and be more effective in the classroom. (Brackett et al., 2010, p. 415)

This is an important point: early-career teachers (in their first five years) are at higher risk of burnout and leaving the profession (Ingersoll, 2003; Raab, 2018). Therefore, teacher-training programs that focus on developing ERA may counteract the stress that leads to burnout.

Moreover, researchers have suggested that an MBSR (mindfulness-based stress reduction) program for primary teachers experiencing anxiety, depression and stress could potentially be a “cost-effective method to combat teacher stress and burnout” (Gold et al., 2010,

p. 185). Costs related to stress-induced illnesses, both physical and mental, as well as the recruitment and hiring to replace educators that leave the profession can possibly be reduced through mindfulness practices, and thus be an economic benefit to school districts. It has also been shown that MBSR can improve self-regulation skills and classroom performance; improvements in “measures of stress and health, coping abilities, emotional regulation, and self-efficacy” have been found after an 8-week program of MBSR specifically adapted for educators (Rupprecht, 2017, p. 577). It is through the “skills of mindfulness and a self-compassionate mind-set that teachers can more effectively manage stress on the job and, by inference, better attend to the interpersonal and instructional complexities of teaching and learning,” (Roeser et al., 2013, pp. 798-9). This study showed that educators can fortify their wellbeing and resilience with mindfulness practices, which can improve both the quality of their instruction and relationships with students.

Yet another study provided evidence that “several components of mindfulness predict change over the course of the school year in efficacy related to student engagement, classroom management, and instructional practices” (Abenavoli, Harris, Katz, Jennings, & Greenberg, 2014, p. 3). This study of teacher efficacy suggested that ongoing mindfulness practices could be one element of encouraging teacher social-emotional competency that can predict classroom effectiveness (p. 4). And, in a study that examined how MBIs could influence an educator outside the classroom, data (gathered through teacher self-report) showed that teachers experienced less frequent bad moods at work, greater satisfaction at work and home, more and better quality sleep and decreased insomnia following participating in a mindfulness-based intervention at work (Crain, Schonert-Reichl, & Roeser, 2017, p. 138). Mindfulness

interventions hold considerable promise, according to these researchers, for generating such spillover effects from work to home, and could be a vital form of self-care.

But some researchers are more cautious in endorsing mindfulness practices or interventions for educators. In a recent review of 13 studies examining mindfulness-based programs designed for educators to develop positive coping strategies for high levels of stress, Emerson et al. (2017) cautiously suggested supporting educators with training in mindfulness practices. They concluded that more studies (and empirical evidence) are needed and stated that “if the benefits of MBIs can be robustly demonstrated for teachers, the impact on their pupils should then be ascertained” (p. 1147). The study noted that “the current lack of convincing evidence of the positive effects of teacher MBIs on teaching and pupil outcomes may reduce the attraction of MBIs for schools” (p. 1147). Some of the barriers to mindfulness training for teachers included lack of confidence in extant research that showed clear and measurable outcomes of the MBIs, prohibitive cost of certain programs available, and the concern of workplace trust amongst faculty (or between faculty and administration) that may cause teacher stress and burnout (as the researchers noted, “it may be too exposing or uncomfortable for staff ... to talk about workplace stress together, given that some stress originates from work relationships and leadership decisions” (Emerson et al., 2017, p. 1147). Despite the “promise for the proposed intermediary effect of emotional regulation” (p. 1145), and some evidence of a reduction in physical and psychological symptoms of stress, for these researchers measurable evidence of benefit to educator wellbeing, and the direct and indirect benefits to the students as a result, is preferred for inclusion into educational programs.

It is important to mention that while some researchers may be cautious to suggest educator mindfulness due to a perceived lack of robust research and empirical evidence, it was

difficult to find researchers that suggested mindfulness *should not* be taught to educators. Moreover, research on the benefits of mindfulness is often focused on a specific group or demographic, but the potential benefits of mindfulness are universal to all who practice. Teaching mindfulness to students cannot help but have an effect on the teacher because the practice of mindfulness – self-awareness and emotional-regulation – encourages awareness of habitual *mindlessness*. Introducing mindfulness practices to teachers has the potential to change the way they teach, thus influencing their students. Clearly, it is difficult to untangle the intertwined experience of teachers and students.

The preceding research on the potential of mindfulness practices in education, with specific focus on teacher wellbeing, is the central consideration, motivation, and foundation for this project. The Mindful Education Course for Preservice Teachers is three-fold, containing an examination of the theory and research in mindful education, an investigation of available delivery methods, and an opportunity to explore mindfulness practice. These three elements are equally important, in my view, to a well-rounded understanding of mindful education and its potential benefits, especially for preservice and early-career teachers. It is my intent that this training may facilitate the wellbeing of educators, and ultimately influence and impact the academic and emotional wellbeing of their students.

Additional Considerations

In addition to academic and behavioral challenges, considerations such as trauma-sensitivity and/or whether mindfulness is a religious activity can present questions that should be addressed.

Trauma-sensitivity. Rechtschaffen stated that “children who grow up with neglect, domestic violence, and other forms of environmental trauma can particularly benefit from the emotional regulations tools, stress relief, and impulse control techniques offered by mindfulness”

(2014, p. 107). A regular and calming mindfulness practice in the classroom led by a teacher knowledgeable in trauma-sensitive mindfulness practices can be an asset to students who have great need for stability and acceptance (Jennings, 2019; Treleaven, 2018; Olson, & Cozolino, 2014).

Trauma-sensitivity is necessary when considering the intended audience of this project (preservice teachers in non-university settings). It is important to note that “many community college students are from non-traditional backgrounds with limited support systems, incomplete education, complex family lives, and interconnected socio-economic difficulties” (Burrows, 2017, p. 34); in other words, teacher candidates who take this course could be carrying traumatic histories that may affect their learning processes and experiences. Carello & Butler (2014) stated that

given the high rates of trauma histories (66-85 percent), post-traumatic stress disorder (9-12 percent), and other past event-related distress among college students, student risk of re-traumatization and secondary traumatization should be decreased ... we propose that a trauma-informed approach to pedagogy – one that recognizes these risks and prioritizes student emotional safety in learning – is essential. (Carello & Butler, 2014, p. 153)

A mindful education course for this audience (specifically the student population from Grays Harbor County) will not only necessitate mindful consideration of trauma-sensitivity, but also has the potential to inform teacher candidates how to facilitate an emotionally safe, trauma-sensitive classroom environment.

Trauma-sensitive mindfulness in any classroom starts with an understanding of how trauma exposure can affect behavior. Common behaviors associated with trauma exposure include: Attention lapses (difficulty sustaining attention because of the inability to discern

between relevant and irrelevant input), deficits in expressing and receiving language (in the throes of anxiety, students may have difficulty expressing thoughts or feelings), difficulty taking another (person's) perspective (which can include inferring, problem solving, engaging in social dialogue, and decision-making), and experience difficulty organizing sequentially (trauma exposure can inhibit development of this ability, and can manifest as learning challenges in reading, writing, or communicating orally; Jennings, 2019). Receiving instruction and learning how to apply that instruction can be greatly inhibited by these common effects of trauma in students of all ages.

By recognizing these behaviors, mindful educators can learn to identify students that may be vulnerable to trauma triggers (situations or circumstances that are like that of the original trauma; Jennings, 2019). Since “in general, inconsistency, chaos, loudly disruptive behavior, and an overstimulating environment can trigger re-traumatization” (p. 35), teachers can make a priority of encouraging and modeling calm, controlled behavior and minimizing overstimulating circumstances as much as possible. Some of the classroom strategies recommended include: Clear, positive communication about expectations, goals, and behavior; encouragement and incorporation of student strengths and interests; structured activities that are predictable and emotionally safe; multiple ways of learning assessment; and opportunities for students to learn about and practice emotional-regulation, effective social interaction, and effective planning and completion of learning activities (Jennings, 2019). When educators become more aware of their students and “recognize the behaviors associated with trauma and ways to provide support for children and teens exposed to trauma and adversity, we are beginning to build trauma-sensitive school cultures” (p. 36). The trauma-sensitive classroom makes mindful awareness, compassion,

and understanding priority along with positive encouragement toward resiliency and open communication.

One final point concerning trauma-sensitivity: There may be students who, due to past trauma, may not be comfortable with certain mindfulness-based activities. Closing eyes, dimmed lighting, complete silence, or sharing in a mindful dialogue could cause anxiety or aversion in some students. It should be made clear that no mindfulness activity should be forced, coerced, or mandated, but all participation must be voluntary, and all participants must feel emotionally safe. In my own experience working with young students, discussing activities such as closing eyes or sharing in a dialogue circle is a good way to discern if any students may be uncomfortable. Modifications such as an ‘unfocused gaze’ instead of closing eyes, or the ability to ‘pass’ when taking turns sharing in a dialogue circle, may create a more emotionally safe environment. In any group, it is good practice to clarify that no one is required to participate if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe. This type of open, honest communication can build trust between instructor and students, as well as create a safe environment for everyone involved.

The question of religion. There have been some that claim that introducing MBIs in public education is a violation of the separation of ‘church and state.’ A recent example is the conservative watchdog group The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ.org) who started a petition to “stop forced Buddhist meditation in schools” (Hignett, 2018, para. 1). In defense of mindfulness-based interventions and programs, psychologists and creators of mindfulness curricula insist they are intentionally secular, evidence-based, and beneficial – “a set of simple attention practices that promote full awareness of the present moment. These attention practices allow students to develop the capacity to sustain focus” (Hignett, 2018, para. 7). Mindfulness-based interventions intended for public education (as well as clinical applications and healthcare)

are intentionally secular and evidence-based (founded on scientific research findings).

Mindfulness is “nonreligious – mindfulness doesn’t ask anyone to adopt a predetermined belief system or dogma. In practice, mindfulness offers a method for investigating the nature of sentience and sanity” (Brown, & Santorelli, 2016, “Yes – mindfulness is a secular practice that benefits students” section, para. 3). Ultimately, secular mindfulness practices may facilitate less suffering, better relationships, and more learning.

Moreover, the question of whether mindfulness is a religion is a topic of concern that should be addressed with respect. In reflecting on his experience working with school groups introducing MBIs during a Tedx Talk, Willard stated that

one of the most important things we heard from public meetings with parents and the community was to be sure the [mindfulness] training is completely secular with no religiosity at all ... mindfulness-based interventions and teaching should be based on emerging neuroscience and keeping all references to Buddhism, and words commonly used during yoga such as *namaste*, out of the school vernacular is crucial. (2016)

Willard expressed respect toward the concerns parents sometimes have when mindfulness practices are introduced into the classroom; careful attention is required to ensure that all mindfulness-based activities or interventions are secular and evidenced-based. Respectfully, student participation in mindfulness activities are, and should always be, by invitation – never coerced, forced, or mandated. While mindfulness meditation may be utilized in a religious or spiritual way, MBIs intended for public educational settings are intentionally and specifically non-religious and intended to encourage valuable life skills such as self-awareness and self-regulation which has potential to facilitate a calm, productive, and prosocial environment for learning.

Mindful Education for Preservice Teachers

According to Soloway (2016), the training of educators has traditionally focused on three important aspects: knowledge of content, pedagogical skills, and appropriate development of teacher disposition. He noted that the last, the development of disposition, “remains elusive” (Loc. No. 6010, para. 2), defining disposition as “trends or habits of mind that repeatedly affect teachers’ actions and judgments within variable contexts” (Loc. No. 7336, para. 2). In other words, formalized teacher training is not focusing on the development of disposition, or how to best adapt to a constantly changing and “dynamic system of interpersonal exchange” (Loc. No. 7340, para. 2). It seems imperative that mindfulness and mindful education, which can develop that elusive aspect of educator disposition, be introduced to preservice teachers to assist them during the student teaching period, into their early-career years, and beyond.

Community Colleges

Baccalaureate education programs in community or junior colleges may provide more accessibility to those not willing or able to attend a (costly) traditional 4-year university. If enough community colleges begin to offer this type of professional training for educators, it “may be a viable and important option for states facing teacher education labor market shortages” (Park et al., 2018, pp. 1035-6). Community colleges can be more accessible for those who live in commercially or financially depressed towns or cities, rural areas, or for those students on the lower end of the economic class scale. The unique aspects of community college (a diverse student body regarding age, heritage, economic standing) can facilitate an environment of transformation; likewise, mindfulness is a process of self-awareness that often leads to some degree of personal transformation (Martin, 2018). Community colleges can feel different than universities in that many students have chosen, and even struggled, for the opportunity to participate in higher education. For these (often first-generation) college students, the promise of

a new life and career can go together with the transformative power inherent in the investigation of mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness in Preservice Teacher Programs

There are a few studies that have examined MBIs introduced into teacher education courses. One such study looked at the “effects of meditation on enhancing preservice teacher knowledge” (Hao, 2016, p. 155) and found a practice of mindfulness meditation “helped the teachers prepare themselves for learning, conduct cognitive and affective tasks, and improve self-efficacy and inner strength” (p. 155). Most of the participants of this study reported positive results from developing a mindfulness practice amid their studies as well as encouraging improved emotional regulation and awareness of self and surroundings. That is helpful because preservice teaching (student teaching or internship) can be a stressful time for teacher candidates and can foster premature burnout prior to certification. Researchers stated that “a demanding workload, rigorous teaching schedule, financial pressures, and interpersonal struggles can all contribute to the stress” (Kerr et al., 2017, p. 349). They concluded that it is crucial to train preservice teachers in areas of stress and emotional management (p. 356) and that this could be well-accomplished by introducing and incorporating mindfulness training into educator training programs.

In another study, a form of MBSR modified for educators gave teacher candidates the opportunity to explore stress-reduction mindfulness skills. These researchers concluded that as “teacher education is most often based on preparing teacher candidates for the future, mindfulness training as a key new insight for preparing teachers for the present – the place where all the complexities of teaching and living unfold” (Soloway, 2016, Loc. No. 7698, last para.). Providing teacher candidates with the knowledge and skills in mindfulness practice can assist

them when facing stressful student teaching obligations and their first year in the classroom. Researchers who have studied first-year teachers that were introduced to mindfulness during teacher training found that “participants highlighted their greater resilience by using mindfulness ... stress levels were reduced, they could focus their full attention on the lesson planning ... and were more authentic in their teaching” (Bernay, 2014, p. 64). They concluded that this study, and others like it, should be carefully considered when designing teacher training or professional development programs for educators.

Creating a Course for Preservice Teachers

Utilizing mindfulness could be a powerful strategy to build and strengthen resiliency in early-career teachers (Zimmerman, 2018). A course introducing mindfulness theory, science, and practice offers the knowledge and skills most helpful for novice teachers in combatting the effects of stress, and has the possibility of increasing wellbeing. According to researchers Damico, Bennett, & Fulchini (2018),

when teachers are better equipped to negotiate and sense their emotions and bodily sensations, they are more able to mitigate crucial variables in the classroom’s climate. Understanding the role of emotions and the mind-body connection has potential to increase student wellbeing and in turn affect student outcomes in a more authentic manner than any commercial test preparation. (p. 843)

A mindful education course that offers an exploration of mindfulness practices gives preservice teachers an advantage over stress, tension, and burnout while increasing the potential of improved attention, focus, awareness, and compassion toward self and others (Haight, 2010). It bears repeating that educator wellbeing and emotional regulation ability has great influence on classroom management, teacher-student relationships, and student academic resiliency.

Ultimately, “if we make contemplative practice an integral part of education from K[indergarten] through college, we may not have to decry the dissolution and decay of civil behavior in our society and happiness may increase in a population that has moved increasingly toward despair” (p. 38). It may be a lofty ambition to think that mindfulness practices in the classroom, both of preservice teachers and their future students, could impact society’s behavior and happiness. More realistically, teaching preservice teachers mindfulness practices may be a good start to influencing the next generation to take a moment to breathe and live in the present.

Course Design & Methodology

In designing this course, three stages of backward design have been utilized: 1) desired results will be identified (what should students understand and be able to do?); 2) acceptable evidence will be determined (how will learning be assessed throughout the course?); and 3) learning experiences and instruction will be planned (how will students experience and be instructed to receive and apply the knowledge intended?) (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Student learning objectives. At the conclusion of this course, students will have a thorough understanding of mindful education through exposure and engaging with the course texts and research materials outlined below:

Course texts. To facilitate this, course materials of prominent authorities on mindful education have been chosen. The first author I looked to was Daniel Rechtschaffen who founded the Mindful Education Institute and the Omega Mindfulness in Education conference, is a Marriage & Family Therapist, and holds a master’s degree in counseling psychology. He has also developed various curricula for bringing mindfulness into the classroom and is a mindfulness trainer in various schools and communities. This course utilizes his text *The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Wellbeing in Teachers and Students* (2014) because it is clear,

straightforward, and engaging in its content and organization, giving a solid overview of the practical application of mindful education and why it is important.

Next, I chose the book authored by Patricia Jennings, *Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity in the Classroom* (2015), because she is a foremost advocate and authority in the fields of social and emotional learning and mindfulness in education with a specific focus on training teachers. She is a professor, researcher, and teacher trainer who has authored peer-reviewed studies on student engagement, classroom management, and teacher wellbeing. I chose her text for this course because it addressed the various emotional aspects of teaching and classroom management in the context of mindful education. In addition, I believe it is important to include and discuss the issue of trauma-sensitivity both in the practice of mindfulness/meditation and education. Therefore, the course includes the reading and analysis of “Part I: Understanding Trauma in Schools” of Jennings’ book *Trauma Sensitive Classroom: Building Resilience with Compassionate Teaching* (2019).

To round out the academic readings for this course, I chose Kirke Olson’s text *The Invisible Classroom: Relationships, Neuroscience & Mindfulness in School* (2014). Olson is a licensed clinical psychologist, a certified school psychologist, and has worked with teachers and students of all ages for four decades. I chose this book because it addressed the more complex psychological concerns of classroom culture and relationships, the neurobiology of safety, student strengths, and how mindfulness intersects with these issues.

To support the development of student mindfulness practice, I chose two texts to provide reading and inspiration. The first is *Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness: A Guide for Anyone Who Teaches Anything* (2009), by Deborah Schoeberlein David. This book addresses many important aspects of building a personal mindfulness practice and is written for teachers,

focusing on activities both for teachers and their students. Schoeberlein David has 20 years' experience as a teacher (5th – 12th grade), has facilitated professional development and curricula for teachers, and is a recognized leader in the field of contemplative education. The second source of support I chose is *How to Breathe: 25 Simple Practices for Calm, Joy, and Resilience* (2019), by Ashley Neese. Neese is a breathwork teacher (and writer) and has studied yoga, meditation, medical intuition, and somatic therapy. I have utilized the simple breathing activities in this book to augment the meditative practices in the syllabus.

In addition to these two texts, I have chosen to utilize the 'self-reflection' prompts by Laura Weaver & Mark Wilding found in their book *The Dimensions of Engaged Teaching: A Practical Guide for Educators* (2013). Weaver & Wilding are coexecutors of the PassageWorks Institute, "an educational non-profit providing innovative principles and practices that support educators in developing a reflexive and authentic teaching approach" (p. xv). Their theory of engaged teaching includes cultivating an open heart, engaging the self-observer, being present, establishing respectful boundaries, and developing emotional capacity – all of which coincide nicely with the practices of mindful education. These self-reflection prompts are provided as contemplation topics for student journal writing.

Investigation. Throughout this course, students will have an opportunity to investigate different forms of mindfulness-based interventions and programs and their various delivery methods. (See Appendix B for an excerpt of this exploration.) At completion, they will be informed of the methods available and will be able to assess which will work best in future classroom circumstances. Further, students will be knowledgeable in how to facilitate and model mindfulness practices in the classroom, supported by MBIs and their personal practice

experience. Finally, they will be able to discuss the benefits and limitations of mindful education using the evidence examined through course materials and research.

Student learning assessment. This learning will be assessed through unit writing assignments (Writing Responses), the mid-term presentation project, and the final paper project. In addition, opportunities for assessment and further understanding will be provided through group and class discussions and/or forum discussion boards, depending upon the course format (in-class, hybrid, or online).

Student experience and application. It is intended that the student experience of the course will include reading and analyzing course materials and peer-reviewed research, putting that analysis and reflection into writing (assignments), and participation in group and class discussions. As an example, as students work through the weekly material, they are encouraged to ‘pick-a-quote’ from the readings that especially resonated with them or challenged them to share during class discussion (not all students will share their quote in each class period but will be offered the opportunity to share their quote and thoughts during class discussions randomly. This exercise is be adjusted to suit all formats, including hybrid and online). It is my hope that this exercise will not only reveal personal preferences and progress of the students (assessment), but will offer an opportunity to build class atmosphere that is 1) authentic – encouraging an honest assessment of understanding and experience, 2) inclusive - uniting all class members through the personal experience of the struggle to understand and build a mindfulness practice, and 3) instructor-facilitated – creating and ensuring a safe space for vulnerability, connection, and understanding.

The course is designed to explore a mindful practice as well as mindful education theory and science. At the conclusion of the course, students will have had their initial experiences in

developing a mindful/meditative practice that will provide understanding and compassion/empathy for their future students as they apply what they have learned about mindfulness to class environments. Preservice teacher students will also have opportunities to explore (and experience) mindfulness practices and literature designed for elementary students, and reflect upon their thoughts, reactions, and interaction with them.

Pedagogy

The pedagogical model for this course is two-fold: learning-centered and contemplative. Learning-centered pedagogy focuses on “what knowledge or skills students should learn ... and then thinking about the best ways for them to learn that knowledge or those skills” (Lang, 2008, p. 2), rather than simply lecture and assessment of retention. This course was born out of my experience developing an Independent Study of Mindful Education (The Mindful Classroom, Fall 2018) and my own curiosity of mindful education - the theories and research, the benefits and limitations, and the ways of practical delivery of mindful practices to both teachers and elementary students. It is my intention and goal to provide the most useful information and practical application of mindful education to preservice teachers. The best way for teacher candidates to understand the subject matter, in my view, is to have the opportunity to read the authorities in the field, examine the extant and current research, discuss and engage the material with their classmates, and develop/experience a mindfulness practice for themselves.

The second pedagogical method for this course is contemplative pedagogy, which is best defined as

an approach to teaching and learning with the goal of encouraging deep learning through focused attention, reflection, and heightened awareness. Learners are encouraged to engage deeply with the course material through contemplation and introspection

(examining their thoughts and feelings as related to the classroom content and their learning experiences). (Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning, n.d.)

While the course contains readings and assignments, students will be encouraged to contemplatively engage with the content. Contemplative practices such as mindfulness meditation, compassion practices, walking meditation, deep listening, nature observation, and self-inquiry/reflection (journaling) encourage self-knowledge and ethical cultivation where connections and deeper understanding can be gained. This contemplative and learning-centered approach to the material will give students a deeper understanding of mindfulness practices, mindful education, and their personal experience with it.

The aim of this course is to enable, fortify, and strengthen the efficacy and resilience of early-career teachers through an understanding of mindful educational practices, an exploration of a personal mindfulness practice for themselves, and the ability to introduce mindful education into their classrooms. This may not only empower preservice teachers with self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-efficacy, but may also enable them to model these characteristics to their students as they employ mindful education through MBIs and instructional methods. It is my hope that this course will add value to education programs and benefit preservice teachers and their future students, and by extension, their school families, colleagues, administrators, and communities.

Audience

I have had the pleasure over the years to have known many teachers, both casual acquaintances and close friendships. I have also had the privilege of volunteering and providing mindfulness instruction in the classroom. I have been told directly and have observed that teachers are encouraged to investigate (and possibly incorporate) mindfulness techniques for

their classrooms. A 1st grade teacher in the Kent school district has been encouraged to integrate mindfulness techniques into her instruction of “highly-capable” (hi-cap) students, and an 8th grade teacher in the North Mason school district took it upon herself to complete a mindfulness workshop to better facilitate mindfulness with her students. In the North Beach district, teachers have been encouraged to add mindfulness techniques to their class schedules during faculty meetings. I have witnessed teachers using free web-based resources such as *Class DoJo* (<https://www.classdojo.com/>) and *GoNoodle* (<https://www.gonoodle.com/>) to facilitate self-regulation and mindful classroom behaviors and I have been sought out by new teachers seeking more information about mindfulness hoping it will help them with classroom management. It appears that teachers are being encouraged to incorporate mindfulness education practices into their classroom schedules but are left to find information and resources on their own time and funding.

This course is designed to support this need for information about mindful education. The primary audience are the teacher candidates, early-career teachers, and school districts in my region. It can offer valuable information, resources, and an opportunity to explore mindfulness prior to entering the profession, thus giving them the chance to benefit immediately, rather than having to seek it out later, on their own. Early-career teachers would have the ability to build mindfulness practices into their instructional plans and schedules ahead, resulting in the consistency and repetition necessary for success. When teachers have the information and tools they need, there is more potential of improved classroom management, enhanced instruction, and increased wellbeing that may contribute to less stress and burnout – ultimately, more teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction, that might lead to increased teacher retention rates.

Demographics & Positionality. I have designed this course with the intent of offering it within the local college education department. Grays Harbor College (GHC) is the only college in Grays Harbor County; founded in 1930, it has 3 campuses: Aberdeen, Ilwaco, and Raymond (other regional college campuses range from 45 – 50+ miles away making commuting difficult for place-bound students). The GHC website self-reports employing 65 full-time and 57 part-time faculty. The median age of attending students is 24 years old, with 52 percent female students, 32 percent students of color, and 61 percent economically disadvantaged. Total student population is 4,339 for the 2017-2018 school year, 37 percent of which are partially online students (18 percent take only online courses). 46 percent of the students are enrolled in academic (AA or BA degree) programs, 29 percent are vocational (trades) students, 11 percent are identified as pre-college (Running Start), and 14 percent are completing basic skills training toward a GED - General Education Development, an alternative to a high school diploma (Grays Harbor College, 2019).

Grays Harbor College attracts its student body from nearby Aberdeen, Hoquiam, Cosmopolis, Raymond, Westport, Montesano, Elma, and a few smaller towns throughout the county. According to local realtor statistics (Areavibes, 2019), Aberdeen-Hoquiam (located adjacent to one another) has the highest population with approximately 24,800 residents. Of those residents, the median age is 37-42 years, there is one male to every female, 53 percent are married, and 37-48 percent are families with minor children. The population is approximately 90 percent White and less than 2 percent Black or Asian. Aberdeen has 14 percent residents who speak Spanish. The median household income in Aberdeen-Hoquiam is between \$38,000 – \$40,500 annually (which is approximately 27 percent lower than the US national average). The smaller towns, with populations under 4,000 each, vary slightly from these statistics, but not

significantly. In addition, the Quinault Indian Nation headquarters and reservation lands are in Grays Harbor County; the tribe has a membership of approximately 2,500 persons (approximately 5.5 percent of the total population of Grays Harbor County, which is nearly 74,000 per the US Census Bureau, 2018). Regarding political affiliation and voting history, “Grays Harbor County was one of the most consistently Democratic in the nation. Until 2016, the last Republican Presidential candidate to carry the county was Herbert Hoover in 1928 and the last Republican gubernatorial candidate to carry the county was Daniel J. Evans in 1964. However, Donald Trump carried the county in the 2016 Presidential Election” (Wikipedia, 2019).

My positionality within this population is a White, middle-aged, married, female with three grown children, two of which live outside of Grays Harbor County. My daughter is an elementary school teacher, my middle son is a tradesman (diesel mechanic), and my youngest son works locally in the tourist industry. I am the first in my family to earn a bachelor’s degree (first generation) and am part of the minority of highly educated people in Grays Harbor, where 33 percent of the population have earned a bachelor’s degree (I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religion, with minors in Classical Studies and Women’s & Gender Studies from Pacific Lutheran University, Class of 2017), and only 14 percent have earned a master’s degree. Politically, I consider myself a liberal-progressive and identify as a Buddhist-inspired None (meaning no claim of religious affiliation), despite having decades of active religious background, history, and study in Christianity and Judaism. A native of Washington State, I spent a good deal of my youth in Grays Harbor County as a member of a lower-income White family with a disabled father and a mother who was an early childhood educator later in life. With all of that, I may have much in common with many students of Grays Harbor College and

within the education department, with the possible exception of my political or religious views. As always, I seek to understand and connect with people of any identity or affiliation.

Previous Research Projects

Throughout the Mindfulness Studies Program coursework, my focus has been mindful education and its potential. Creation of this course for preservice teachers is a natural capstone to my studies. As a result of this focus, I took opportunities to research mindful education in the following projects:

- In Fall 2017, I researched and wrote a literature review and paper that compared the educational concept of ‘growth mindset’ with mindfulness-based interventions in the classroom (*Graduate Academic Writing*). I concluded that

the existing research examining growth mindset and mindfulness-based practices in education has highlighted the benefits worthwhile to students and teachers; improved academic achievement, better classroom management methods, and reduced stress are all timely and needed ... the benefits of student growth through positive approaches to student difficulties and challenges, attention and focus, and improved social interactions can only improve the richness of the classroom environment. Both growth mindset and mindfulness-based practices are intended to improve education for all involved, both inside and outside the classroom. (Henderson, 2017)
- In Spring 2018, I proposed field work and completed a pilot study with 3rd graders and Insight Dialogue (*Mindful Communication*). From this work I concluded that

young students can participate in a modified form of Insight Dialogue and that it may offer potential to create a sense of agency and space for students to explore present moment awareness, patterns of speech, thoughts, and interpersonal habits in a dialogue

circle, possibly leading to increased mindfulness, awareness of self and others, creative collaborative learning, and prosocial behavior. (Henderson, 2018a)

- In Fall 2018, I designed and completed an independent study of mindful education that included a review of mindfulness-based interventions (*Independent Study: The Mindful Classroom*). The focus of the study was to “examine current text, research, and teacher/administrator resources surrounding MBIs and practices available and used in education with the purpose of understanding practical applications, benefits, and possible limitations” (Henderson, 2018b). This study culminated with a presentation prepared for faculty where I concluded that

learning present-moment awareness is a secular practice of self-healthcare that can result in improved focused attention, calmer demeanor, and self-awareness for both teachers and students. Mindfulness is the study and exploration of the ‘nature of mind’; observation of the working, meandering, and emotional reactivity of the mind-body trains self-regulation and self-acceptance. The result can be an enhanced ability to make skillful life-choices moment-by-moment. (Henderson, 2018c)

- In Fall 2018, I researched and wrote a paper about cultivating social intelligence through empathy and compassion training that incorporated findings from mindful education research (*Mindfulness & the Brain*). I concluded that research provided empirical evidence that training [young students] in empathy and compassion has the potential to build prosocial behaviors and social intelligence that can be cultivated through a student’s school career and into adulthood. These trainings and teachings in kindness, empathy, and compassion can be practiced and reinforced throughout the years

if the school or district chooses to engage with the concepts of mindfulness and training in prosocial behaviors [including social-emotional learning]. (Henderson, 2018d)

- Most recently (Spring 2019), I proposed and completed an internship working in a 3rd grade classroom teaching mindfulness lessons and assisting with daily activities; I have also taken the opportunity to teach mindfulness lessons to a 1st grade class and prepare a resource sheet/guide for elementary educators (*Mindful Internship*). In a final reflection of the time spent in the classroom, I wrote

my goal ... was to bring an attitude of acceptance, care, and encouragement to the classroom in the form of mindfulness lessons and practices. Rechtschaffen stated that “the premise of mindful education is that all human beings are born with the seeds of the most beneficial universal qualities, such as compassion, creativity, integrity, and wisdom: (2014, p. 13), and I sought to plant additional seeds of mindful awareness and self-compassion to that garden. In planting and nurturing all those seeds toward growth, I have grown more self-aware, self-compassionate, and accepting. I have gained knowledge and maybe even some wisdom throughout the process. (Henderson, 2019)

I believe I have acquired a thorough understanding of mindful education and its practical application as a result of these projects, and that has equipped me to create this course for preservice teachers.

Additional Disclosures

This course is designed to meet the criteria for a 100-level college course. This means that it will be assumed and expected that students will be fluent in English, and able to compose definitions, paragraphs, and essays, as well as possess the skills to comprehend college-level written material (University of Holy Cross, n.d.).

This course is not intended to definitively solve any outstanding issues in either the training of teachers or the education system, as there is not just one solution to the myriad of concerns. This course is intended to expose teacher candidates to the possibilities of benefit that can come from both a personal mindfulness practice and introduction of mindful techniques and/or contemplative activities to students.

This course does not encourage, recommend, nor condemn any religious or spiritual tradition. Despite the Buddhist roots of mindfulness practices and meditation, all religious traditions contain some form of contemplative or meditative element. Therefore, it is up to the practitioner of mindfulness practices to determine whether specific activities inform their personal spiritual endeavors. As for this course, the design, materials, and instruction are secular in nature.

Finally, I have not researched every non-university college offering a BAS-TE degree (in the United States), therefore I cannot make the assertion that there is no such course currently being offered elsewhere in the country. However, to my knowledge, there is no such course being offered currently in the state of Washington as part of the BAS-TE or any other education degree program.

This course requires purchase of the five books listed on the syllabus as course texts; however, the pages from *Trauma-Sensitive Classroom* (Jennings, 2019) will be available as a scanned document (with appropriate permission). Research articles will be available as either scanned documents or through a college library database search.

Course Delivery Methods

This 100-level college course is intended as an addition to the BAS-TE degree program in non-university colleges. Designed for preservice and/or early-career teachers, it is a survey of the theory, research, and practice of mindful education. Through readings, written assignments,

class discussions and presentations, a thoughtful final essay, and an invitation to develop, explore, and reflect upon a personal practice, students will have the opportunity to investigate and engage with aspects of mindfulness and how the practice may benefit the education process.

As designed, this is considered an elective course within the education degree program. Therefore, not all preservice teachers would choose, or be required, to complete such a course. The course is flexible and can be offered in the in-class, hybrid, or online format. All class formats will follow the same syllabus and assignment requirements.

Term Length

This course is designed to accommodate quarter-length (8-week) as well as semester-length (15-week) college terms (see Appendix D for course skeleton). The same material is covered in both term lengths; however, the semester-length offers an extra week of investigation for each unit topic. This allows additional discussion group activities and more time for in-class mindfulness practice. Also, Week 7 in the semester-length format contains material not covered in the quarter-length course. Despite those differences, the readings, assignments, extra-credit opportunities, mid-term, and final projects are alike.

Format

The syllabus is designed in a traditional in-class format (but can accommodate other formats, as well). The units are studied across one or two weeks, depending on term length. Assignments are generally due at the end of each unit, and the mid-term presentations will be given during class time. In the in-class format, there will be time allotted for mindfulness practice at the beginning and/or end of the class period. In this format, students would be afforded time to discuss together, as a class, any questions, reflections, or challenges encountered with any of the material, assignments, or in developing a mindfulness practice. Unit Lesson

Plans are designed to provide enough material and discussion topics for two or three in-class periods.

A second format option is hybrid – a blending of in-class and online class format that utilizes the school’s online learning management system (LMS; such as Blackboard or Sakai). There are two ways this can be blended: 1) with more in-class time (as a traditional class, above) and some assignments, discussion posts/responses due online, or 2) the majority of the class as an online discussion board/response format with several scheduled in-person meetings of the class on campus to facilitate presentations, lecture, group discussions and mindfulness practice. All class readings, assignments, and projects remain the same for the hybrid format. Mid-term presentations would be prepared for online presentation (video upload of student presentations or presentation slides and script to a discussion forum for peer review) or scheduled during class meeting times.

Online is a third format option. This format utilizes the school’s online LMS to deliver Unit instruction (Lesson Plans modified for online consumption, either written or video), Student Study Guides, discussion board posts/responses, and submission of assignments. Adjustment to the mid-term presentation project will be made to either require video upload of student presentations or presentation slides and script to a discussion forum for peer review.

Conclusion

I feel strongly that there is much benefit to be received from preservice teacher training in mindful education. Incorporating mindfulness into the profession facilitates understanding, compassion, and respect toward all involved, including students, families, fellow colleagues, and administrators. A focus on interdependence and mutual respect can lead to stronger and more meaningful relationships, which in turn can lead to a better learning environment and experience

for students. I believe teachers and students are better positioned to thrive, personally and academically, in an atmosphere of mindful compassion, understanding, acceptance, and respect that facilitates trust and authenticity.

Encouraging preservice teachers to mindfully become aware of themselves and how they can manage their own emotional reactions in the classroom has much potential for creating a safe and secure learning environment for students that may not have that luxury in other areas of their lives. Moreover, supporting teachers and our education system is a way that I can contribute to a more ethical, safe, and compassionate learning environment (both social and physical) for future generations. At its core, mindfulness is awareness in (and of) the present that facilitates self-awareness, interconnectedness, and compassion for self and others. Those aspects within mindful education have much potential toward equity, social justice, respect for the environment, and positive change in our culture and society.

This course, designed especially for preservice and early-career teachers, offers the material and experience needed to put mindful educational practices into use. The course contains information about mindful education, such as the theory and research, various MBI delivery methods, and an opportunity to develop a mindfulness practice so they can know of what they teach. This course is intended to be included in community college baccalaureate teacher education programs that have been growing in popularity in response to a decline in available educators. It could provide the tools and information necessary to prevent or lessen the effects of early-career stress and burnout that may cause early teachers to leave the profession prematurely. Further, research has shown promising potential toward increased wellbeing if teachers practice mindfulness as well as introduce MBIs to their students. This rationale has discussed scientific evidence that MBIs can facilitate increased awareness, attention, focus, and

emotional- and self-regulation for teachers and students. I believe that this course can be a valuable contribution to any college education degree program. Perhaps in the future, a second level of this course could be developed to further explore contemplative pedagogy, the more complicated neuroscience surrounding mindfulness and meditation, and the social justice and ethical considerations of mindful education within the public school.

Course Syllabus – Mindful Education 100

Course Description

The mission and purpose of this course is to inform preservice teachers about mindful education practices, to offer the opportunity to experience mindfulness practices firsthand, and to provide the knowledge needed to incorporate mindfulness techniques and practices into their future classrooms.

This elective course is designed for teacher candidates in the baccalaureate education degree program. There are no prerequisites for this course beyond college-level English reading and writing skills.

This is a reading, writing, discussion, and participation intensive course intended to give preservice teachers the information, experience, and confidence they need to support themselves and their future students with the tools of mindfulness and mindful education practices.

Course Goals

This course is an exploration of the theory, research, and practice of mindful education. The goals of this course are to give students a firm understanding of the following:

Mindful education **theory**: origins, definitions, and aims, various forms of mindfulness practice, and special considerations

Current **research** surrounding mindful education

Delivery methods of mindful education including direct-to-student, direct-to-teacher, and outside providers

Experience of a personal mindfulness practice

Course Learning Objectives

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

Examine and discuss mindful education texts and materials critically and reflectively

Develop a thorough understanding of theory, practice, instruction/delivery, and the language of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) and mindful education (also known as contemplative education or contemplative pedagogy)

Read and understand implications of current peer-reviewed research and articles in mindful education

Demonstrate learning through thoughtfully written essays that highlight knowledge gained from course materials and self-reflection

Explore and experience a personal mindfulness practice

Required Texts

- Jennings, P. A., & Siegel, D. J. (2015). *Mindfulness for teachers: Simple skills for peace and productivity in the classroom*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Neese, A. (2019). *How to breathe: 25 simple practices for calm, joy, and resilience*. USA: Ten Speed Press.
- Olson, K., & Cozolino, L. (2014). *The invisible classroom: Relationships, neuroscience & mindfulness in school*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Rechtschaffen, D. J. (2014). *The way of mindful education: Cultivating well-being in teachers and students*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Schoeberlein David, D., & Sheth, S. (2009). *Mindful teaching and teaching mindfulness: A guide for anyone who teaches anything*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.

Readings & Assignments

Each week students will be required to read and analyze selected readings. Writing Responses will be due weekly, or as per class schedule. There are required practice-related readings; please make notes, responses, and reflections in practice journal. *Please allow 30 minutes to an hour per week for reflective journaling*. There will be practice-related reflection essays due (3 total) throughout the course. There are extra credit opportunities throughout the course. Credit will only be given for quality, on-time work. No late extra credit will be accepted for credit.

Late work: Points will be deducted for late work – ½ point for each day late up to 4 days. After that 0 points will be given, only acknowledgement of completion. *Please note that all assignments (excluding extra credit) must be completed to pass this course.*

Major Assignments: Descriptions

Writing Response (6 total): A short essay *2-3 pages, New Times Roman, 12 pt., double spaced, APA citation format*. Students will critically analyze and reflectively respond to the class readings assigned. Essays should clearly answer one of the provided study questions/prompts (noted in the class schedule) with cited examples from the text (and research articles, if appropriate), demonstrate clear understanding of the material, make connections to previous material and/or class discussion, and include personal analysis and reflection. Thoughtful engagement with the material(s) and personal reflection will earn full credit (5 points). In-class students will submit a paper or digital Word document as instructed. Hybrid and online students will submit a digital Word document online as instructed.

Personal Mindfulness Journal: – Students are expected to fully explore and engage in a mindfulness practice, both personally and academically, during this course. This means that mindfulness activities 1) will be introduced, assigned and discussed, and 2) mindfulness meditation/activities will be practiced at least 3 times/week (as homework). Students will also complete a **one-day personal retreat**. Students are expected to keep a

journal of their practice for their own use and edification, but it will **not** be turned in. Here are a few prompts that may be helpful:

Describe where you sat, time of day, any feeling or sensations experienced

How did your time sitting feel physically? emotionally?

Did you notice any ‘hindrances’ while sitting (desire or cravings, aversion or resentment, sleepiness, restlessness, or doubt surrounding the practice or your ability to practice)? Spend some time investigating these feelings.

What do you think would make your time sitting ‘better’? Does it need to be ‘better’?

Each week there will be a “Self-Reflection” practice journal prompt to explore. This can be a written response/reflection as part of the practice journal, a contemplation topic during sitting practice, or just something to chew on for a few days.

Personal Practice Reflection Essay (3 total): 2 – 3 pages, New Times Roman, 12 pt., double spaced, APA citation format; see class schedule for due dates. Throughout the term, **personal practice reflection short essays** will be submitted (two from personal daily/weekly practice, and one about the experience of the one-day personal retreat); examples from personal journal entries are strongly encouraged, or one of the Self-Reflection prompts could be incorporated, if it was especially impactful or edifying.

Mid-Term Project: Student **presentations** with 10-slide power-point, presentation outline/script, and references list on a specific mindful education/instruction delivery method with associated research highlighted.

Final Project: 5-7 pages of content/text, New Times Roman, 12 pt., double spaced, APA citation format. Students will prepare a **final essay** that examines and critically analyzes **one** of two articles (below). Essays must reference at least two sources from course readings/materials, as well as the student’s reflective response. Please include a title page and references (not included in page count), but no abstract is required.

Grace, F. (2011). Learning as a path, not a goal: Contemplative pedagogy – its principles and practices. *Teaching Theology and Religion, 14*(2), 99-124.

Ergas, O. (2016). Attention please: Positioning attention at the center of curriculum and pedagogy. *Journal of Curricular Theorizing, 31*(2), 66-81.

There will be no tests or quizzes in this class. However, there will be short in-class mindfulness practices which include periods of silence. Please let me know privately if this will cause personal difficulties, as alternative arrangements can and will be made. All students are expected to engage in mindfulness meditation practice as homework in their preferred form (sitting, walking, or lying/body scan) at least 3 times per week.

Class Participation

Participation in this course involves **reading assigned material prior to class** (or discussion forum posting), taking appropriate **notes**, and spending **time** thinking about connections to other course readings, other subjects, previous learning, and personal experiences. This participation will be evident in student engagement and curiosity during class sessions and discussion (or on discussion forums).

Since one of the goals of this course is to experience the depth and potential of mindfulness practice prior to teaching it, students are expected to actively engage in a **personal mindfulness practice** (for the duration of this course) both during class (if applicable) and as homework (as assigned). This participation will be evident in weekly writing responses and in the personal practice reflection essays.

Because of the personal nature of mindfulness practice, all interactions in this class will be polite, respectful, sensitive to the relevant subject matter, and supportive of an inclusive learning environment for all students. Please do not hesitate to talk to me, the department chair, or an advisor about any concerns you may have about in-class or online participation.

Class participation includes **attendance** (either in-class or to discussion forums), thoughtful **engagement** in class discussions, and timely **submission** of all assignments, to the best of the student's ability.

Pick-a-Quote – students are asked to **select a quote from the unit's readings** that is especially meaningful, impactful, or challenging for them to share with the class. For each class period, please be prepared to share the quote, its location, and a brief explanation of why it was chosen when requested. These will be randomly shared during class time for group discussion, so be ready. (This activity will be factored into the participation grade.)

Course Grading

Grading in this course will be based on the following:

The student's active, curious, respectful, and timely class participation throughout the course

Assignments are thoughtfully completed and submitted on time

The student's willingness to openly evaluate, analyze, and consider texts, materials, and research presented in the course

The student's willingness to explore and experience the process of developing a mindfulness practice

The student's ability to compose college-level essays, to report accurately on the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions, and offer informed analysis and reflexive response

Explanation of Grading System (100 total points possible):

Participation – 15 points

Writing Responses – 30 points

Personal Practice Reflections – 15 points

Mid-Term Presentation – 15 points

Final Paper – 25 points

Point Totals = Course Grade

95 - 100 = A

90 – 94 = A-

86 - 89 = B+

83 – 85 = B

80 – 82 = B-

76 – 79 = C+

73 – 75 = C

70 – 72 = C-

66 – 69 = D+

63 – 65 = D

Please note that all assignments (including discussion forum posts and responses, if applicable) must be submitted in order to pass this course.

Preliminary Class Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Quarter Term

Unit 1, Week 1 – Introduction to Mindful Education

Text(s):

Part I: Why Mindful Education Matters – Rechtschaffen, p. 3 – 38

Research & Articles:

Brown, C. G., & Santorelli, S. (2016, Spring). Does mindfulness belong in public schools? *Tricycle*. Retrieved from <https://tricycle.org/magazine/does-mindfulness-belong-public-schools/>

Abenavoli, R. M., Harris, A. R., Katz, D. A., Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2014). Mindfulness promotes educators' efficacy in the classroom. *Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE)*. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED562792>

Albrecht, N. J., Albrecht, P. M., & Cohen, M. (2012). Mindfully teaching in the classroom: A literature review. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(12), 1-14.

Writing Response Prompts:

How/can mindfulness practice influence our worldview? Our habits? Our relationships?

How were you taught to pay attention? How did it make you feel? How do you 'make yourself' pay attention now? Give some thoughts on how to teach focus and attention to students.

What do you know (or have heard) about social-emotional learning (SEL) and what are your thoughts about introducing SEL to students? How does SEL intersect with mindful education?

What are your initial thoughts about the various delivery methods of mindfulness instruction/interventions? What might a multi-faceted approach look like?

What are some of the health benefits of mindfulness and how can they benefit teachers, students, families, communities, and environment?

Summarize the Brown & Santorelli article, then weigh in with your own thoughts, connections, experiences, or response.

Practice:

Teach as you Learn – Schoeberlein David, Ch. 1

Breath: *The Foundational Tool* – Neese, p. 13-23

Begin developing a mindfulness practice by sitting at least 3x this week, at least 5 minutes; you may sit silently or utilize a meditation app

Practice Journal:

Write about anything of note from your practice: feelings, sensations, emotions, hindrances, or obstacles to your practice.

Self-Reflection: Who were the teachers who inspired you? How did they inspire you? What specific qualities, behaviors, and dispositions did they possess? (Weaver & Wilding, 2013, p. 7)

Assignment(s) due:

Writing Response #1

Unit 2, Week 2 – The Essentials

Text(s):

Part III – The Mindful Classroom – Rechtschaffen, p. 89 - 135

Research:

Bernay, R. (2014). Mindfulness and the beginning teacher. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(7), 58-69.

Brown, R. (2017). The perceived impact of mindfulness instruction on preservice elementary teachers. *Childhood Education*, 93, 136-146.

Crain, T. L., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Roeser, R. W. (2017). Cultivating teacher mindfulness: Effects of a randomized controlled trial on work, home, and sleep outcomes. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(2), 138-152.

Writing Response Prompts:

What are the qualities of a mindful teacher? Why are these qualities important?

What is the connection between boundaries and safety? Give examples.

What is your reaction to the Peace Corner? Are there ways you would implement or modify this concept?

Why is it important to create “a loving, nonjudgmental, safe space” for students? How can that be accomplished? Are there obstacles?

How do you feel about this statement, “Most administrators and teachers are not looking at ways to put those in their care in touch with their anger; they would simply like their students to become easier to deal with” (Rechtschaffen, 2014, p. 108). Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Discuss your experience (and intentions, if you have them) with the age group of your choice considering the information given on pages 121 – 135 (Rechtschaffen, 2014).

Discuss the findings of the research above; how do you agree that mindfulness practice can impact the life or wellbeing of an educator beyond the classroom? Why?

What do you think about self-report instruments (surveys, reports) used in research studies? How important is personal experience in determining the value of a practice when considering inclusion into educational settings?

Practice:

Mindfulness in the Morning – Schoeberlein David, Ch. 2

How to Create a Practice – Neese, p. 25-39

Sitting at least 3x this week, at least 5 - 10 minutes; you may sit silently or utilize a meditation app

Practice Journal:

Write about anything of note from your practice: feelings, sensations, emotions, hindrances, or obstacles to your practice.

Self-Reflection: When you are teaching (or will be teaching), what behaviors and experiences do you think (will) open your heart? Which (will) tend to close your heart? (Weaver & Wilding, 2013, p. 21)

Assignment(s) due:

Writing Response #2

Personal Practice Reflection #1

Unit 3, Week 3 – The Curricula

Text(s):

Part III: Mindful Education Curriculum – Rechtschaffen, p. 137 – 153

As an introduction to the different aspects of mindfulness lessons, read the brief introductory comments for each remaining section of Part III:

Embodiment, p. 154-155

Language of the Body, p. 156

Playing Mindfulness, p. 164

Mindful Movement, p. 167

Mindful Eating, p. 175

Attention Lessons, p. 180-181

Mindful Listening, p. 190-191

Mindful Seeing, p. 196-197

Stream of Thoughts, p. 201-202

Heartful Lessons, p. 208-209
 Roots of Emotions, p. 217 – 218
 Destructive Emotions, p. 224
 Generating Gratitude, p. 230
 Interconnection Lessons, p. 236 – 237
 Natural World Lesson, p. 245
 Practicing Distraction, p. 250
 Mindful Engagement, p. 256

Research & Articles:

Damico, N., & Whitney, A. E. (2017). Turning off autopilot: Mindful writing for teachers. *Voices from the Middle*, 25(2), 37-40.

Dorman, E. (2015). Building teachers' social-emotional competence through mindfulness practices. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, 17(1 & 2), 103-119.

Flook, L., Goldberg, S. B., Pinger, L., Bonus, K., & Davidson, R. J. (2013). Mindfulness for teachers: A pilot study to assess effects on stress, burnout, and teaching efficacy. *Mind Brain Education*, 7(3), doi: 10:1111/mbe.12026

Writing Response Prompts:

Discuss the elements of mindfulness-based curriculum/interventions. Why is each important?

Discuss the elements of a mindfulness lesson for students. Why is each important? Is there anything you would add? Subtract?

Explore one of the scripted mindfulness lessons in Part III; why do you think this might be beneficial to students (or not)? To anyone? How would you go about creating a mindfulness lesson for students?

Practice:

Body Awareness – Schoeberlein David, Ch. 7

Breathwork Exercise(s) – Neese, p. 25 – 141

Choose *one* exercise from the 25 in the book; practice it 2 – 3 times and be sure to note your experience in your journal

Sitting at least 3x this week, at least 5 - 15 minutes; you may sit silently or utilize a meditation app

Walking meditation – 10 – 20 minutes

Practice Journal:

Write about anything of note from your practice: feelings, sensations, emotions, hindrances, or obstacles to your practice; make special note of your session of walking meditation – did it feel different from sitting meditation? If so, how?

Self-Reflection: What tools do you use in your life to reflect on your teaching practice (or student work), build on your strengths, and learn from your challenges? (Weaver & Wilding, 2013, p. 41)

Assignment(s) due:

Writing Response #3

Extra Credit Opportunity: read *The Power of Positivity* – Jennings, Ch. 4, and write a brief essay of response/reflection and connections/experiences (2 – 3 pages); 2 points possible.

Unit 4, Week 4 – Mid-Term Presentations

Text(s):

Emotional Art of Teaching – Jennings, Ch.2

The Heart of Teaching – Jennings, Ch. 5

Research & Articles:

Garner, P. W., Bender, S. L., & Fedor, M. (2018). Mindfulness-based SEL programming to increase preservice teachers' mindfulness and emotional competence. *Psychology in Schools, 55*(4), 1-14.

Gold, E., Smith, A., Hopper, I., Herne, D., Tansey, G., & Hulland, C. (2010). Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) for primary school teachers. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 19*(2), 184-189.

Harpin, S. B., Rossi, A., Kim, A. K., & Swanson, L. M. (2016). Behavioral impacts of a mindfulness pilot intervention for elementary school students. *Education, 137*(2), 149-156.

Writing Response Prompts:

No writing response this week to allow for preparation of presentations

Practice:

On to School – Schoeberlein David, Ch. 3

Breathwork Exercise(s) – Neese, p. 25 – 141

Choose *one* exercise from the 25 in the book; practice it 2 – 3 times and be sure to note your experience in your journal

Sitting at least 3x this week, at least 10 - 15 minutes; you may sit silently or utilize a meditation app

Body Scan meditation

Practice Journal:

Write about anything of note from your practice: feelings, sensations, emotions, hindrances, or obstacles to your practice; make special note of your experience with the body scan meditation.

Self-Reflection: Which emotions – in others and/or yourself – tend to be challenging or uncomfortable for you? Why? (Weaver & Wilding, 2013, p. 87)

Assignment(s) due:

Mid-Term Presentation***Unit 5, Week 5 – Neuroscience***

Text(s):

Uncovering the Invisible Roots of Learning – Olson, Ch. 1

Being Safe & Feeling Safe: Neurobiology of Safety – Olson, Ch. 2

Attentional Circuits of the Brain – Olson, Ch. 4

Research & Articles:

Hwang, Y-S., Bartlett, B., Greben, M., & Hand, K. (2017). A systematic review of mindfulness interventions for in-service teachers: A tool to enhance teacher wellbeing and performance. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 64*, 26-42.

Kasson, E. M., & Wilson, A. N. (2017). Preliminary evidence on the efficacy of mindfulness combined with traditional classroom management strategies. *Behavior Analysis in Practice, 10*(3), 242-251.

McCallum, F., & Price, D. (2010). Well teachers, well students. *Journal of Student Wellbeing, 4*(1), 19-34.

Writing Response Prompts:

Why does Olson state that “a good starting place for schools and teachers is to dedicate ourselves to learning about the core circuitry of the brain ... “ (Olson, 2014, p. 3)? Do you think he is correct in his view? Why or why not?

Discuss the “school sucks” pattern. Do you or someone you know have experience with this pattern? How could a teacher approach such an attitude? Why is this important to consider?

Explain the ‘circuits of trust and safety’ and why it is important to understand them. Can you think of a time that might illustrate an aspect of this concept for you?

How do early childhood experiences affect present behaviors, decisions, or reactions?
Can or how could a mindfulness practice change the interpretations or perceptions of our experiences?

Discuss an aspect of Attentional Circuits of the Brain that particularly caught your attention. Why? Does this information change how you think about (perceive) experiences? In what ways?

Explain the statement “taking responsibility and developing a sense of agency in one’s own wellbeing is central to productivity, wellness, and a sustained teaching career” (McCallum & Price, 2010).

What do Hwang, Bartlett, Greben & Hand (2017) conclude about “the effects of MBIs on teachers’ wellbeing and performance” (p. 41)? Why?

Practice:

Beads on a String – Schoeberlein David, Ch. 6

Breathwork Exercise(s) – Neese, p. 25 – 141

Choose *one* exercise from the 25 in the book; practice it 2 – 3 times and be sure to note your experience in your journal

Sitting at least 3x this week, at least 10 - 15 minutes; you may sit silently or utilize a meditation app

Eat a Mindful Meal

Practice Journal:

Write about anything of note from your practice: feelings, sensations, emotions, hindrances, or obstacles to your practice; make special note of your experience of a mindful meal. How was it different from other meditative techniques we have explored? How?

Self-Reflection: When you think of your teaching experiences thus far, what metaphors come to mind? (Weaver & Wilding, 2013, p. 107)

Assignment(s) due:

Writing Response #4

Personal Practice Reflection #2

Unit 6, Week 6 – Classroom Culture & Relationships

Text(s):

Classroom relationships – Olson, Ch. 3

Classroom Culture – Olson, Ch 8

Orchestrating classroom dynamics – Jennings, Ch. 6

Research & Articles:

Roeser, R. W., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Jha, A., Cullen, M., Wallace, L., Wilensky, R., Oberle, E., Thomson, K., Taylor, C., & Harrison, J. (2013). Mindfulness training and reductions in teacher stress and burnout: Results from two randomized, waitlist-control field trials. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 105*(3), 787-804.

Rupprecht, S., Paulus, P., & Walach, H. (2017). Mind the teachers! The impact of mindfulness training on self-regulation and classroom performance in a sample of German school teachers. *European Journal of Educational Research, 6*(4), 565-581.

Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2017). Social and emotional learning and teachers. *Future of Children, 27*(1), 137-155.

Writing Response Prompts:

Explain, in your own words and experience, how “students’ earliest experiences make their way into the classroom” (Olson, 2014, p. 52). Are mindfulness practices in the classroom ‘experiences’? How could they influence how students perceive events or challenges?

Discuss the various forms of attachment. Give examples that come to mind from your own experience. Can or how can mindful education address some of the issues surrounding attachment.

Why is understanding various attachment styles important as an educator?

Discuss the intersection of attachment style, emotional control, and the effects of a mindfulness practice.

According to Jennings, what is the “mistaken belief among many teachers”? Why is it important to consider this ‘mistake’ and how can educators avoid falling into this way of thinking? Further, what are your thoughts on controlling classroom behaviors?

Practice:

How You See It – Schoeberlein David, Ch. 4

Breathwork Exercise(s) – Neese, p. 25 – 141

Choose *one* exercise from the 25 in the book; practice it 2 – 3 times and be sure to note your experience in your journal

Sitting at least 3x this week, at least 10 - 15 minutes; you may sit silently or utilize a meditation app

One-Day Personal Retreat

Practice Journal:

Write about anything of note from your practice: feelings, sensations, emotions, hindrances, or obstacles to your practice.

Self-Reflection: What typically keeps you from being present in the classroom (or with your school class/work), in staff meetings, or with your colleagues? What helps you come back to the present moment? (Weaver & Wilding, 2013, p. 57)

Assignments(s) due:

Writing Response #5

Extra Credit Opportunity: Pick two studies we have read through the term and write a brief essay that describes and compares/contrasts them (*1 – 3 pages*); 2 points possible.

Unit 7, Week 7 – Challenges: Behavior, Stress & Trauma

Text(s):

Part I: Understanding Trauma in Schools, Jennings (*Trauma-Sensitive Classroom*), p. 9-47

Understanding Your Negative Emotions – Jennings, (*Mindfulness for Teachers*), Ch. 3

Nurturing Student Strengths – Olson, Ch. 6

Research & Articles:

Is mindfulness safe? Article by Baer & Kuyken (2016)

Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Oberle, E., Lawlor, M. S., Abbott, D., Thomson, K., Oberlander, T. F., & Diamond, A. (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial. *Development Psychology, 51*(1), 52-66.

Semple, R., Droutman, V., & Reid, B. (2016). Mindfulness goes to school: Things learned (so far) from research and real-world experiences. *Psychology in the Schools, 54*(1), 29-52.

Sotardi, V. A. (2016). Understanding student stress and coping in elementary school: A mixed-method, longitudinal study. *Psychology in the Schools, 53*(7), 705-721.

Writing Response Prompts:

Discuss the varying types of trauma and stress (Jennings, p. 9) and how it manifests in children. How were these reflected in the research of Sotardi (2016)?

What are ACEs? Did you take the survey (at the end of the chapter)? What is your response/reaction? Do you think a mindfulness practice can mitigate/lessen/soften some of these reactions? How?

How can educators identify and perhaps mitigate trauma and chronic stress with their students? We cannot solve all problems, but how can this knowledge and understanding help?

What are some common triggers with students with past trauma and chronic stress? How can an educator be aware of these triggers and adjust to possibly avoid them? Do you think that MBIs could help those students? If so, how?

What are the three keys to compassionate teaching? Have you heard these before? If so, has your view changed after reading this material?

Practice:

Mindful Words – Schoeberlein David, Ch. 8

Full Circle – Schoeberlein David, Ch. 9

Breathwork Exercise(s) – Neese, p. 25 – 141

Choose *one* exercise from the 25 in the book; practice it 2 – 3 times and be sure to note your experience in your journal

Sitting at least 3x this week, at least 10 - 20 minutes; you may sit silently or utilize a meditation app

Practice Journal:

Write about anything of note from your practice: feelings, sensations, emotions, hindrances, or obstacles to your practice.

Self-Reflection: When you think of the word *boundaries*, what images and ideas come to your mind? What stories from your life and your school years contribute to your image of boundaries and boundary setting? (Weaver & Wilding, 2013, p. 69)

Assignment(s) due:

Writing Response #6

Personal Practice Reflection #3 – One-Day Retreat

Unit 8, Week 8 – Final

Text(s), Research & Articles:

No readings or responses required this week to allow preparation of final papers

Practice

Optional reading:

Kindness and Connections – Schoeberlein David, Ch. 5

Breathwork Exercise(s) - Neese, p. 25 – 141

Choose *one* exercise from the 25 in the book; practice it 2 – 3 times and be sure to note your experience in your journal

Sitting at least 3x this week, at least 10 - 20 minutes; you may sit silently or utilize a meditation app

Assignment(s) due:

Final Paper

Any assignments not completed/submitted

Lesson Instruction Plans

Methodology

The lesson instruction plans created for each unit will facilitate in-class instruction and discussion, both in groups and class-wide. In the consideration of length, below is an example of a unit lesson instruction plan. Delivery of instruction for in-class format would be lecture-discussion; hybrid and online may be a digital presentation delivered online.

Lesson Instruction Plans Example

Unit 1 – Introduction to Mindful Education

Text(s):

- Part I: Why Mindful Education Matters – Rechtschaffen, p. 3 – 38
 - What have you heard about mindfulness prior to this class?
 - Can you determine where you ‘spend’ most of your thought-life? How do you think this determines your outlook?
 - What do you do currently to feel balanced, relaxed, and happy? How effective or sustainable are these practices?
 - How do children represent their inner emotional state?
 - What are the different ways of incorporating mindfulness into education?

Research & Articles:

- Brown, C. G., & Santorelli, S. (2016, Spring). Does mindfulness belong in public schools? *Tricycle*. Retrieved from <https://tricycle.org/magazine/does-mindfulness-belong-public-schools/>
 - What are their opposing views in the article?
 - **No** – with its roots in religious tradition, teaching mindfulness in public schools violates the separation of church and state
 - **Yes** – mindfulness is a secular practice that benefits students (and teachers)
 - Consider the bias of these two authors – how are they similar or different?
 - **Bias** occurs when a writer displays a partiality for or prejudice against someone, something, or some idea. Sometimes biases are readily identifiable in direct statements. Other times a writer's choice of words, selection of facts or examples, or tone of voice reveals his or her biases. (source: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/recognizing-biases-assumptions-stereotypes-in-written-works.html>)
 - **Positionality** – what is it? Why does it matter?
 - How valid (or invalid) are these views from your experience?

- Abenavoli, R. M., Harris, A. R., Katz, D. A., Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2014). Mindfulness promotes educators' efficacy in the classroom. *Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE)*. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED562792>
 - Finding: The current study provides evidence that several components of mindfulness predict change over the course of the school year in efficacy related to student engagement, classroom management, and instructional practices
 - Design:
 - 2 middle schools – study on educator health and wellbeing
 - Each school received intervention in subsequent years; the second school was a wait-list control
 - Data collected at 3 points: Fall, Spring, Fall
 - Online self-report survey on educators' attitudes, feelings, behaviors
 - In-person measures of BMI and blood pressure
 - Saliva collection to assess cortisol, etc.
 - Efficacy measured with Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale instrument
 - Mindfulness measured with Mindfulness in Teaching Scale instrument
 - Strengths
 - Examination of change over time rather than concurrent correlations
 - Adds to a growing body of work that highlights the benefits of mindfulness for educators
 - Weakness
 - Quasi-experimental
 - Differences between true experiments and quasi-experiments: In a true experiment, participants are randomly assigned to either the treatment or the control group, whereas they are not assigned randomly in a quasi-experiment
 - Limits strength of conclusions
 - Self-report measures (however, most commonly used in the literature)
 - What was the design of this study?
 - What does quasi-experiment mean?
 - What was a strength of this study? A weakness?
 - What was the finding and conclusion of the researchers?
- Albrecht, N. J., Albrecht, P. M., & Cohen, M. (2012). Mindfully teaching in the classroom: A literature review. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(12), 1-14.
 - What were the researchers' conclusions?
 - Conclusion: Mindfulness practices have been shown to help teachers: reduce stress levels, assist with behavior management strategies, and improve self-esteem
 - What did the researchers mean by 'habits of mind'?
 - Special Definition: *Habits of mind* refers to gathering data through all the senses, being aware of and reflecting on experience in non-judgmental manner, being flexible when problem solving, regulating emotion and being resilient after challenges, and increased empathy and compassion
 - Design

- Literature review
 - What is a literature review?
 - Why would a literature review be important and/or necessary?

Practice:

- Teach as you Learn – Schoeberlein David, Ch. 1
 - Self-Reflection: Who were the teachers who inspired you? How did they inspire you? What specific qualities, behaviors, and dispositions did they possess? (Weaver & Wilding, 2013, p. 7)

Assignment(s) due:

- Writing Response #1

DISCUSSION OUTLINE

Beginning & end of class options:

- Mindful Moment or longer sitting
- Children’s mindful moments
- Open Discussion – what came up for you with these readings?
- Mindful free-writing exercise
- Closing mindful moment

The Way of Mindfulness

- The process of understanding mindfulness begins with firsthand experience (3)
- Take a mindful moment
 - Discuss what sensations, feelings, reaction to sitting silent
- Self-love, inner resilience, non-judgmental awareness (5)
 - Magic: relax our resistance and open to what is true, present, and a new way of being
 - Metta practice
 - How can that impact our worldview? Our habits? Our relationships?
- Kids are already immersed in the present – how can we not “squash” the bright awareness in them? (7)

The Mindful Education Revolution

- Students are told to pay attention a thousand times in school, but are rarely taught (10)
 - How were you taught to pay attention? How did it make you feel?
 - How do you ‘make yourself’ pay attention now?
- The premise of mindful education is that all humans are born with seeds of the most beneficial universal qualities – compassion, creativity, integrity, wisdom (13)
 - What are your thoughts on this?
 - What messages does the culture send about our inherent goodness?

- Stress, competition, and punishment vs. acceptance, care, and encouragement
 - What are the extremes and what could be a healthy middle way?

The History of Mindful Education

- John Bowlby – children should experience warm, intimate, and continuous relationship in which both the child and caregiver find satisfaction and enjoyment (1951)
 - Why do you think this was such a radical idea?
- Maria Montessori and Ralph Steiner – experiential and emotionally responsive teaching
 - Think about your early childhood education
 - What are your most memorable educational experiences? Why?
- Intelligence theories
 - Howard Gardener – multiple intelligences – what are they?
 - Linguistic
 - Logic-mathematical
 - Musical
 - Spatial
 - Bodily
 - Interpersonal
 - Intrapersonal
 - Naturalistic
 - Existential (spiritual)
 - Daniel Goleman – Emotional Intelligence – SEL
 - EI or EQ - According to Daniel Goleman, an American psychologist who helped to popularize emotional intelligence, there are five key elements to it:
 - Self-awareness.
 - Self-regulation.
 - Motivation.
 - Empathy.
 - Social skills.
 - What are the 5 competencies of SEL?
 - Self-management
 - Self-awareness
 - Social awareness
 - Relationship skills
 - Responsible decision-making
 - If not taught in the classroom, where/how are these competencies passed along to children? What happens if they are not?

Mapping the Movement

- Training & self-care for teachers

- Prepared curricula/programs (MBIs)
- Direct service to students (outside providers)
 - What are your initial thoughts about the different methods of delivery of mindfulness instruction?
- Contemplative education/pedagogy
 - When a mindful teacher/instructor encourages mindfulness in learning and reflection

The Science of Mindfulness & The Origins of Mindfulness

- We will be reading quite a lot of research in mindful education throughout this course.
- See ‘Best Practices’ on the Week 1 Study Guide
- REVIEW: Best practices for reading a peer-reviewed published scientific study or article:
 - Read the abstract – this shows what the researchers thought the most important parts of the study were
 - Find the conclusions – what did they find? What did they conclude?
 - Look at where the study ‘fits’ in the current conversation – this is found in the background section or introduction. Researchers will state claims and cite published research where that claim can be found. They are building the foundation for their study; look for what research questions or gaps in the research they are trying to address.
 - Discern the type and design of the study (randomized, controlled, quasi-experimental, pilot). Or is it a literature review or meta-analysis? All these types of published research offer different types of information.
 - Take notes of what you find for later review or use in a paper. I call it a ‘digital notecard’; created as a Word document, I note the following:
 - Full citation (APA format)
 - Author bio
 - Purpose of the study/article
 - Findings
 - Design/Methods of research
 - Important quotes (that I may want to use later), with page numbers
 - Any references cited worth following – I may want to use them later for a project
- From these studies, what are some of the health benefits of mindfulness and how can they benefit teachers, students, families, and communities?
- Discussion about whether mindfulness is a religion
 - This course will not encourage, recommend, nor condemn any religious or spiritual tradition. Despite the Buddhist roots of mindfulness practices and meditation, all religious traditions contain some form of contemplative or meditative element. Therefore, it is up to the practitioner of mindfulness practices to determine whether (or not) specific activities inform their personal spiritual endeavors. As for this course, the design, materials, and instruction are secular in nature.

Student Study Guides

Methodology

Student Study Guides are offered to students to assist in navigating the study materials for each unit. It will contain an introduction to the unit, any key instructional points, questions to consider when reading materials, personal practice journaling prompts, and extra (optional) sources for more information on topics discussed that week. These guides will be delivered either digitally (through email or electronic learning management system, such as Blackboard or Sakai) or paper copies.

These guides encourage both contemplative and critical consideration of materials beyond reading and answering questions. Again, for the sake of length, below is an example of a unit student study guide.

Student Study Guide Example

Welcome to Mindful Education! Every week I will provide a STUDY GUIDE to help you focus on mindfully reading the required texts. As you read, make note of these study questions and your thoughtful answers. In addition, I will give additional (and optional) links, information, and books in case you want to find out more about any subjects explored in this week's materials.

Be sure to check the syllabus for this unit's reading assignments and writing response prompts!

I would like to encourage you to always look something up if you are unsure what it means or if you need more information – when viewed with a critical and discerning eye, the internet is an invaluable resource. And, as always, if you have any questions or need further assistance, don't hesitate to let me know!

Unit 1 – Introduction to Mindful Education

Text(s):

- Part I: Why Mindful Education Matters – Rechtschaffen, p. 3 – 38
 - What have you heard about mindfulness prior to this class?
 - Can you determine where you 'spend' most of your thought-life? How do you think this determines your outlook?
 - What do you do currently to feel balanced, relaxed, and happy? How effective or sustainable are these practices?
 - How do children represent their inner emotional state?

- What are the different ways of incorporating mindfulness into education?

Research & Articles:

- Brown, C. G., & Santorelli, S. (2016, Spring). Does mindfulness belong in public schools? *Tricycle*. Retrieved from <https://tricycle.org/magazine/does-mindfulness-belong-public-schools/>
 - Consider the bias of these two authors – how are they similar or different?
 - **Bias** occurs when a writer displays a partiality for or prejudice against someone, something, or some idea. Sometimes biases are readily identifiable in direct statements. Other times a writer's choice of words, selection of facts or examples, or tone of voice reveals his or her biases. (source: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/recognizing-biases-assumptions-stereotypes-in-written-works.html>)
 - What are their opposing views in the article?
 - How valid (or invalid) are these views from your experience?
- Abenavoli, R. M., Harris, A. R., Katz, D. A., Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2014). Mindfulness promotes educators' efficacy in the classroom. *Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness* (SREE). Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED562792>
 - What was the design of this study?
 - What does quasi-experiment mean?
 - What was a strength of this study? A weakness?
 - What was the finding and conclusion of the researchers?
- Albrecht, N. J., Albrecht, P. M., & Cohen, M. (2012). Mindfully teaching in the classroom: A literature review. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(12), 1-14.
 - What is a literature review?
 - Check this out: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/literature-reviews/>
 - Why would a literature review be important and/or necessary?
 - What did the researchers mean by 'habits of mind'?
 - What were the researchers' conclusions?

Practice:

- Teach as you Learn – Schoeberlein David, Ch. 1
 - How would you describe and/or define mindfulness?
 - What is the difference between mindfully teaching and teaching mindfulness?
 - How or in what circumstance have you practiced mindfulness prior to this course, even if you didn't realize it was mindfulness at the time?
 - What is the different between reaction and response?

Best practices for reading a peer-reviewed published scientific study or article:

- Start a fresh page, either in your journal or a Word document, where you can jot notes while you read through research studies. Make sure you can answer the (following) study questions/prompts for each step.
 - Read the abstract – this shows what the researchers thought were the most important parts of the study
 - What is the thesis (their argument or statement of topic)?
 - Why did they think it was important?
 - What research methods did they use?
 - What were their main findings?
 - What do those findings suggest?
 - What do the researchers suggest for future study?
 - Find the conclusions – what did they find? What did they conclude?
 - Look at where the study ‘fits’ in the current conversation – this is found in the background section or introduction. Researchers will state claims and cite published research where that claim can be found. They are building the foundation for their study; look for what research questions or gaps in the research they are trying to address.
 - Discern the type and design of the study (randomized, controlled, quasi-experimental, pilot). Or is it a literature review or meta-analysis? Are the methods qualitative or quantitative (or both)? All these types of published research offer different types of information.
 - Now, read the entire study article. Pay special attention to headings, topic sentences, and their conclusions. Take mental note of how they structured the article; how does the structure of the article help the reader to understand their findings?
 - You may want to take more formal notes of what you find for later review or use in a paper. I call it a ‘digital notecard’; created as a Word document, I note the following:
 - Full citation (APA format)
 - Author bio
 - Purpose of the study/article and research question
 - Findings
 - Design/Methods of research
 - Important quotes (that I may want to use later), with page numbers
 - Any references cited worth following – I may want to use them later for a project

Thinking about mindfulness & religion

The question of religion. There have been some that claim that introducing MBIs in public education is a violation of the separation of ‘church and state.’ A recent example is the conservative watchdog group The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ.org) who started

a petition to “stop forced Buddhist meditation in schools” (Hignett, 2018). In defense of mindfulness-based interventions and programs, psychologists and creators of mindfulness curricula insist they are intentionally secular, evidence-based, and beneficial – “a set of simple attention practices that promote full awareness of the present moment. These attention practices allow students to develop the capacity to sustain focus” (2018). Mindfulness-based interventions intended for public education (as well as clinical applications and healthcare) are intentionally secular and evidence-based (founded on scientific research findings). Mindfulness is “nonreligious – mindfulness doesn’t ask anyone to adopt a predetermined belief system or dogma. In practice, mindfulness offers a method for investigating the nature of sentience and sanity” (Brown, & Santorelli, 2016). Ultimately, secular mindfulness practices may facilitate less suffering, better relationships, and more learning.

Moreover, the question of whether mindfulness is a religion is a topic of concern that should be addressed with respect. According to Christopher Willard, “one of the most important things we heard from public meetings with parents and the community was to be sure the training is completely secular with no religiosity at all ... mindfulness-based interventions and teaching should be based on emerging neuroscience and keeping all references to Buddhism, and words commonly used during yoga such as *namaste*, out of the school vernacular is crucial” (Willard, 2016). Respectfully, participation in mindfulness activities is, and should always be, by invitation – never coerced, forced, or mandated. While mindfulness meditation may be utilized in a religious or spiritual way, MBIs intended for public educational settings are purposely and specifically non-religious and intended to encourage valuable life skills such as self-awareness and self-regulation which has potential to facilitate a calm, productive, and prosocial environment for learning. (Henderson, 2019, p. 17)

References:

- American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ). (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://aclj.org/our-mission/about-aclj>
- Brown, C. G., & Santorelli, S. (2016, Spring). Does mindfulness belong in public schools? *Tricycle*. Retrieved from <https://tricycle.org/magazine/does-mindfulness-belong-public-schools/>
- Henderson, E. (2019). *A Mindful Education Course for Teacher Candidates: A Review of the Literature*. Unpublished manuscript. Lesley University.

Hignett, K. (2018, December). *Conservative Christians want to stop kids meditating at school*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsweek.com/mindfulness-meditation-schools-aclj-buddhism-1260323>

Tedx Talks. (2016, September 28). *Christopher Willard: Growing up stressed or growing up mindful?* [video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znlsoaM_ALQ

LOOKING FOR MORE:

My favorite **meditation app** is Insight Timer (the free version), but there are others:

<https://www.developgoodhabits.com/best-mindfulness-apps/>

For tips about **reading scientific papers**:

<https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2016/03/how-seriously-read-scientific-paper>

Find out more about **Emotional Intelligence**:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/emotional-intelligence>

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than an IQ*. NY: Bantam Books

Find out more about **SEL**:

<https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>

Read more about **mindfulness**:

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2005). *Coming to our senses: Healing ourselves and the world through mindfulness*. NY: Hachette Books.

And a favorite book about **mindful education**:

Hanh, T. N., & Weare, K. (2017). *Happy teachers change the world: A guide for cultivating mindfulness in education*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Learn more about **Contemplative Pedagogy**:

“Contemplative Pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning with the goal of encouraging deep learning through focused attention, reflection, and heightened awareness. Learners are encouraged to engage deeply with course material through contemplation and introspection (examining their thoughts and feelings as related to the classroom content and their learning experiences).”

(source: <https://ctl.columbia.edu/resources-and-technology/resources/contemplative-pedagogy/>)

Learn more about “**self-love, inner resilience, and non-judgmental awareness**” (Rechtschaffen, 2014, p. 5)

Salzberg, S. (2002). *Loving-kindness: The revolutionary art of happiness*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, Inc.

Think more about **mindful journaling**:

<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-25949/how-to-become-more-mindful-using-nothing-but-a-journal.html>

One-Day Retreat

Methodology

Students are required to participate in a self-conducted one-day retreat. I included this in the course because I feel it is an effective method of introducing students to a longer period of mindfulness practice (ideally) without interruption. It also requires self-discipline and personal determination to self-monitor a silent retreat, even a short one. I also believe it can reveal personal mind-habits in a private space that can be informative and motivating. A short reflexive paper will be required after the one-day retreat giving students the opportunity to reflect and comment on their experience and feelings.

One-Day Retreat Instructions & Schedule

Use this schedule for your personal one-day retreat, or you can utilize this one by Chris Baily (2017), <https://alifeofproductivity.com/free-template-at-home-meditation-retreat/>, or this one from Matt Valentine (n.d.), <https://buddhaimonia.com/blog/mindful-meditation-retreat>. In my view, retreats consist of the commitment to a predetermined time of silence, meditation, and contemplation; anything else is extra.

Designate a time and place for quiet, uninterrupted practice to fully engage in your one-day retreat. Here are some suggestions for a centering, balancing experience:

- Prepare meals or snacks ahead of time, so they are available without fuss during your retreat.
- Put your tech on 'airplane mode' to avoid distractions, if possible. Use the timer on your phone, if that is not a temptation or distraction.
- Let your tribe (and work, if necessary) know that you will be unavailable during your retreat hours. Assure them you will check for messages just as soon as your retreat is completed.

- Gather what you will need for your retreat:
- Cushions and blankets if that will make you comfortable during meditation; sitting in a chair is also an option.
- Your practice journal for reflections about your experience
- Your favorite inspirational book
- A predetermined meditation app and headphones/earbuds, if preferred
- Dress in comfy clothes and take some care to set up your meditation ‘spot’ in a way you will be most comfortable.
- Don’t be hard on yourself and refrain from judging your time meditating as a ‘success’ or ‘failure’ – just do the best you can and relax. This is a time for you – consider it self-care. Enjoy the peace and tranquility of not being needed anywhere else during your retreat. Embrace the stillness of being present.
- Make sure to savor your meals or snacks mindfully and silently.
- No need to rush – take your time transitioning from one activity to the next.
- Remember: simply pay attention to your breath and when you are aware your mind has wandered, gently return your attention to your breath. This will happen many times, and that is normal. Realizing when your mind has wandered is the beginning of mindful awareness.

SCHEDULE (*times are only examples, adjust as needed*):

7:00 am - Rise and prepare for the day mindfully.

8:00 am - Commence walking meditation, preferably outside in nature if possible; 30 minutes of silence.

8:30 am - Mindfully eat a snack or meal; 30 minutes of silence.

- 9:00 am - Body scan meditation; use a guided meditation (from a meditation app) if preferred, or just mindfully (mentally) scan through your body from your feet to your head while sitting or lying down, noting sensations and feelings; 30 minutes.
- 9:30 am - Mindful journal writing; 30 minutes of silence
- 10:00 am - Sitting meditation, guided if preferred; 30 minutes
- 10:30 am – Mindfully prepare and enjoy cup of tea or coffee – 15 minutes of silence
- 10:45 am - Walking meditation, again preferably out in nature; 30 minutes of silence
- 11:15 am - Sitting meditation, guided if preferred; 30 minutes
- 11:45 am - Gentle moving meditation (such as yoga or slow, gentle stretches); 30 minutes of silence
- 12:15 pm – Eat lunch mindfully, slowly, and silently
- 1:00 pm – Sitting meditation, guided if preferred; 30 minutes
- 1:30 pm – Settle into a comfortable reading spot and mindfully read from an inspirational book of your choice; 1 hour of silence.
- 2:30 pm - Mindful journal writing to reflect on your reading – 20-30 minutes of silence
- 3:00 pm - *End of retreat* – take a deep breath, enjoy a beverage or light snack, mindfully check messages, then perhaps go for a walk outside

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Appendix A

Twenty Principles of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness is the practice of noticing the present moment on purpose. As little as 5 – 30 minutes a day of meditation or ‘focus time’ will help cultivate mindfulness, creating new neural pathways and new habits for the mind and body, allowing participants to be more present.
2. Mindfulness is being curious about what we are experiencing now, so that with kind awareness we can choose what we do next.
3. Mindfulness is noticing our mind’s habit of wandering, so that we can strengthen the ability to keep it in the present moment.
4. Mindfulness is using the breath to focus the mind and body so that we can make good choices.
5. Mindfulness is noticing that there can be a pause between a stimulus and our action so that we can then wisely respond rather than blindly react.
6. Mindfulness is sensing where our emotions start in our bodies so that can name them then tame them.
7. Mindfulness is ‘breath-taking’: it is the awareness that we can take conscious slow breaths throughout the day, to help regulate our emotions and thoughts by oxygenating our bodies and brains.
8. Mindfulness is remembering that we can be mindful of anything; listening, speaking, seeing, hearing, eating, walking, etc. With awareness, mindfulness can be present at any pace, fast or slow.
9. Mindfulness is cultivating compassion for ourselves and others. We are not free when we can merely avoid pain and suffering; we are free when we can be with it or know when to distance ourselves from it.
10. Mindfulness is the understanding that the mind and the brain are different things; the mind is our consciousness, and the brain is the organ designed to look for future challenges at past concerns.
11. Mindfulness meditation trains our minds to notice the brain and body’s reactive nature so that we can learn to respond with skillful compassion for ourselves and others.

12. Mindfulness meditation is the practicing of sitting still so that we can learn to notice what we are experiencing without reactivity.
13. Mindfulness is the practice of monitoring the mind, heart, and body because they are doorways to action.
14. Mindfulness is the awareness that there is good and bad in the world; noticing the good is often harder than seeing the bad. Cultivate seeing the good, the bad will be there.
15. Mindfulness is the cultivation of awareness, gratitude, loving-kindness, and generosity.
16. Mindfulness is dialing up our curiosity to explore our present so that our next moment will be more meaningful and skillful.
17. Mindfulness is remembering to S.T.O.P.: Stop my body / Try and breath / Observe my feelings / Peacefully proceed.
18. Mindfulness is noticing that with intention, and at any time, we can be more aware of our inner and outer worlds.
19. Mindfulness reminds us that our breath is like a reset button for our bodies *and* minds.
20. Mindfulness is our ‘response-ability.’

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Appendix B

Examples of mindfulness curricula and programs

Lesson Format

The foundation for mindfulness curriculum includes embodiment (encouraging comfort and calm in the body), focused attention (to the breath or a sound), heartfulness (identifying and feeling emotions in the body), and interconnection (compassion toward self, family, friends, community, and world). Within this framework, lessons in mindfulness can start with an opening mindful moment to calm and settle into the lesson and circle, a verbal check-in, new mindfulness material introduction, a short mindfulness practice, and then sharing and dialogue about the experience during the practice. This can be followed up with journaling activities (coloring, drawing, and/or writing), suggestions of how to include mindfulness skills into daily life (both inside and outside the classroom), and a closing mindful moment or short practice. The foundation and lessons can be applied to students of all ages, including adults. Mindfulness-based interventions (MBI), curricula, or instruction can be delivered in various ways: training for teachers, mindfulness curricula for classrooms, and by outside providers (mindfulness educators).

Classroom Curricula

Kindness Curriculum

The Kindness Curriculum (Pre-K – 2nd grade) was developed at the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2008. Since then it is shared at no-cost to educators through a free download. It was created as a research project to assess the impact of mindfulness training on preschoolers. It is designed to be offered as it is or can be incorporated into other practices (such as social-emotional learning lessons). The curriculum does not train teachers specifically, but strongly encourages teachers to develop their own mindfulness practice

to augment their introduction and teaching of the lessons (and provides a list of resources). The 25 lessons follow the basic mindfulness curriculum outline – embodiment, focused attention, heartfulness, and interconnectedness and the lesson-plans highlight attention to the breath, growing friendships, emotional awareness, mindful communication, caring and sharing, forgiveness and problem-solving, mindful eating, gratitude, interconnectedness of everyone and the world. The program outlines breath-focus and attention practice provide craft activities to reinforce lessons and recommends read-aloud books. The goal of this mindfulness curriculum is to cultivate mindful attention and emotional regulation through a theme of kindness practices (empathy, gratitude, and sharing) – growing relationships with self, others, community, and the world.

MindUp

The Hawn Foundation developed a curriculum to teach mindfulness called *MindUp* in 2003. It is a 15-lesson curriculum based on the “latest information about the brain to dramatically improve behavior and learning” for students from pre-kindergarten through 8th grade” (Scholastic website). The curriculum consists of 3 levels (pre-kindergarten – 2nd grade, grades 3rd – 5th, and grades 6th – 8th); each book contains introductory material to mindfulness, a message from Goldie Hawn (founder of the Hawn Foundation) and four units. Each book is set up the same with similar unit and lesson titles. The progression of the curriculum is in the unit titles: *Getting Focused, Sharpening Your Senses, All About Attitude, and Taking Action Mindfully*. Each lesson contains introductory material, a warm-up activity, instructions on how to lead the lesson, research and career notes, and activity suggestions (journaling activities, as well as investigations of other related areas like science, math, physical education, language arts, and social-emotional learning). Books are available for purchase new from Scholastic.com for \$25 each or can be bought used (for less) through other online booksellers.

Inner Explorer

With the motto “let’s outsmart stress and learn to lead healthier lives together,” co-founders Laura Bakosh and Janice Houlihan created Inner Explorer (Pre-K – 12th). Teachers can ‘just press play and practice’ the daily 5 – 10-minute audio-guided mindfulness sessions. The program features 90 age-appropriate sessions that feature breathing and relaxation exercises, awareness of senses, self-regulation, compassion and interconnectedness, and social-emotional learning. The website boasts proven results of 28 percent higher grades, 43 percent reduction in teacher stress, 60 percent decrease in behavioral issues, and 15 percent increase in average G.P.A. The program is licensed at different levels: an individual license (\$50/year - \$100/year), a school license (\$450/year), or a community license (\$1,000).

Mindful Teachers & Teaching Mindfulness*Mindful Schools*

This hybrid program (online and residency attendance) is a “300-hour intensive year-long program” to encourage educators and educational leaders to bring mindfulness education to their school. Currently this certification program costs just under \$6,000 and “provides practical training and transformational experiences that make it possible for educators to skillfully embody, adapt, and share mindfulness practices across a variety of educational settings” (*Mindful Schools* website). The program provides three levels of training. The first level teaches basic information about mindfulness and development of a personal practice, working skillfully with thoughts and emotions, and cultivation of positive mind states. The second level covers facilitation of the *Mindful School* curriculum, the role of mindfulness in communication, and how to encourage acceptance and allowance of mindfulness education by administration and agencies. The third level is 10-months of training delivered through online classes, webinars,

coaching sessions, and peer-meetings, as well as attendance of two week-long residential retreats.

CARE for Teachers

This program claims to be a “unique professional development program that helps teachers handle their stress and rediscover the joys of teaching” (*CARE for Teachers* website). *CARE* – cultivating awareness and resilience in education – was developed by Patricia Jennings, Christa Turksma, and Richard Brown. *CARE* is a “mindfulness -based professional development program designed to promote teachers’ social and emotional competence and improve the quality of classroom interactions” (Jennings et al., 2017). It is currently offered at the Garrison Institute (NY) in four day-long sessions spread through 4-5 weeks, or a five-day annual summer retreat. Training involves “a blend of didactic instruction and experiential activities, including time for reflection and discussion” (Garrison Institute website). Teachers report the program is “relaxing, enjoyable, and inspiring” (Garrison Institute website). The cost for this summer’s retreat (at the Garrison Institute) ranges from \$875 to \$1,200, and features Patricia Jennings as the keynote speaker and teacher.

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Appendix C

Mindfulness Resources – Children’s Books

Examples of stories written for elementary students that feature mindfulness and social-emotional learning concepts:

A World of Pausabilities: An Exercise in Mindfulness, by Frank. J. Sileo (2017)

Anh’s Anger, by Gail Silver (2009)

King Calm: Mindful Gorilla in the City, by Susan D. Sweet & Brenda S. Miles (2016)

Listening to My Body, by Gabi Garcia (2016)

Listening to My Heart, by Gabi Garcia (2017)

The Magical Mindful Day, by Deborah Salazar Shapiro (2018)

Moody Cow Meditates, by Kerry Lee MacLean (2009)

Now, by Antoinette Portis (2017)

Puppy Mind, by Andrew Jordan Nance (2016)

Rosie’s Brain, by Linda Ryden (2016)

Visiting Feelings, by Lauren Rubenstein (2014)

What Does It Mean to Be Present? By Rana DiOrio (2010)

Appendix D

Course Skeleton

Quarter

Unit 1, Week 1 – *Welcome & Intro*

WRITING RESPONSE #1

Unit 2, Week 2 – *Essentials*

WRITING RESPONSE #2

PERSONAL PRACTICE REFLECTION #1

Unit 3, Week 3 – *Curricula*

WRITING RESPONSE #3

Exploration of books

Extra Credit Opportunity – Positivity

Unit 4, Week 4 – **Mid-Term Presentations**

Unit 5, Week 5 – *Neuroscience*

WRITING RESPONSE #4

PERSONAL PRACTICE REFLECTION #2

Unit 6, Week 6 – *Culture & Relationships*

WRITING RESPONSE #5

Extra Credit Opportunity – research studies

Discussion groups

One-day retreat

Unit 7, Week 7 – *Challenges*

WRITING RESPONSE #6

PERSONAL PRACTICE REFLECTION #3

Week 8 – **Final**

Semester

Unit 1, Week 1 – *Welcome & Intro*

Week 2 – *Intro II*

WRITING RESPONSE #1

Unit 2, Week 3 – *Essentials*

Discussion groups

Week 4 – *Essentials II*

WRITING RESPONSE #2

Unit 3, Week 5 – *Curricula*

Exploration of books

PERSONAL PRACTICE REFLECTION #1

Week 6 – *Curricula II*

WRITING RESPONSE #3

Extra Credit Opportunity – Positivity

Unit 4, Week 7 – *Begin with Yourself*

Week 8 – **Mid-Term Presentations**

Unit 5, Week 9 – *Neuroscience*

Discussion groups

PERSONAL PRACTICE REFLECTION #2

Week 10 – *Neuroscience II*

WRITING RESPONSE #4

Unit 6, Week 11 – *Culture & Relationships*

Discussion groups

One-day retreat

Week 12 – *Culture & Relationships II*

PERSONAL PRACTICE REFLECTION #3

WRITING RESPONSE #5

Unit 7, Week 13 – *Challenges*

Discussion groups

Extra Credit Opportunity – research studies

Week 14 – *Challenges II*

WRITING RESPONSE #6

Week 15 – **Final**