Doctor of Education   Education

2024

We Need To Understand It Before We Can Teach It: A Cooperative Inquiry Into Mindfulness-Based Social-Emotional Learning With International School Teachers

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Recommended Citation

WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND IT BEFORE WE CAN TEACH IT: A COOPERATIVE INQUIRY INTO MINDFULNESS-BASED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING WITH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL TEACHERS

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Antioch University

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

by

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April 2024

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Antioch University
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND IT BEFORE WE CAN TEACH IT: A COOPERATIVE INQUIRY INTO MINDFULNESS-BASED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING WITH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL TEACHERS

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This dissertation describes the experience of a group of international school teachers engaging in a cooperative inquiry exploring the influence of mindfulness-based social-emotional learning (MBSEL) practices on their personal and professional lives. The current reality for educators is one of systemic stress and burnout, with teachers working under increasing pressure, and communities still reeling from the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. In international school settings, many expatriate educators are living far away from their country of birth and searching for belonging and community. MBSEL practices have been demonstrated to support wellbeing, however adult learning of these skills is often glossed over in schools. Our cooperative inquiry group co-created the research question: "What do we notice when we practice mindfulness-based social-emotional learning?" Group members held bi-weekly meetings to practice mindfulness meditation and reflective practices within the SEL domains of Self-Awareness and Self-regulation. Participants also practiced independently and journaled about their experiences in between meetings. Transcripts from group meetings as well as personal journal entries and introductory interviews were coded and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Our findings indicated that this was a transformative learning experience for members. Five themes highlighted these findings: (a) increased self-awareness in times of emotional overwhelm, (b) increased levels of self-compassion, (c) sharing learning with the

community, (d) community of practice as a supportive structure, and (e) deep desire to do something different. The group took initial action by creating a definition for MBSEL and starting an online MBSEL group for international school teachers with the intention of building community and supporting others in their learning. Though this was a small sample size of self-selected participants, the findings are consistent with the current recommendations for adults to engage in holistic practices for the benefit of all in their school environment. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Keywords: cooperative inquiry, international school, international school teachers, mindfulness, mindfulness-based social-emotional learning (MBSEL), social-emotional learning, transformative learning

Acknowledgements

To Colleen, Julie, Kendall, and Megan - thank you for saying yes to this adventure and continuing to say yes month after month. This story is what it is because of what you all brought to the table. Can't wait to see what's next for us!

To Richard - you always ask the questions I need to deepen my scholarship. You've helped me to look with a more critical eye to make sure that this project is honouring all perspectives. I deeply appreciate your unwavering support.

To Susan - who planted the seed of an idea that I could pursue a doctorate. Your mentorship in mindfulness and pedagogy has helped me to become a more thoughtful educator and researcher.

To Dana - You were the first one to say "yes!" to me as a new consultant and have offered guidance and opportunities ever since. Thank you for your continued generosity and support.

To C4 - What a magnificent group of scholars and friends you are. So grateful to walk through this experience together and be able to lift each other up along the way.

To Butch - Thank you for seeing the possibility in me before I can see it in myself. I love you.

To my family – Thank you for cheering me on and believing in me.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"Umm . . . honey? Maybe it would be good to go for a walk . . ."

This is what was said, very gently, by my partner when he came into our bedroom (or pseudo-classroom) and found me lying on a yoga mat with tears streaming down my face. This was about six weeks after our school shut down for the COVID-19 pandemic. Living and teaching in an international school in Asia, the threat seemed all too real, and all of the uncertainty added to the pressure of keeping a classroom alive in this new world. Teaching kindergarten at the time, we shut down three days before our March break. When it was announced that school would shut down for the rest of the year during that break, a flurry of activity ensued. About 50% of our school population, teachers and families, fled to their home countries. Educators, as they did around the world, pivoted from in-person classrooms to teaching entirely online. At first, we were instructed to create asynchronous assignments to send out on an online platform. We spent our days scrolling through the 2D learning and leaving cheery voice notes to respond to the children, feeling detached and developing carpal tunnel syndrome faster than we imagined. Two weeks in, we pivoted again. Now we were able to meet students online, but our students were literally scattered across the globe. I had a morning meeting and an evening "morning meeting". I scarfed down my dinner to do 8pm reading groups. And in between, I kept scrolling and scrolling. The iterations kept coming. Through it all, the message from administration continued to be "We know you are doing *so* much. Just this one more little thing. Please make sure you are doing yoga and getting me-time!" In the background of all this hoop jumping there were personal ruminations - wondering if I would see my family for our once annual visit (I didn't) and worrying about whether we would get sick and

have to contend with the lack of oxygen and modern health care in the country (we didn't, thank goodness).

Throughout this entire time, there were two things that kept me from spending *every* day crying on the yoga mat rather than just one or two: my strong relationships and my mindfulness-based social-emotional learning (MBSEL) skills. Both of these figure prominently in this research project, which explored the transformative influence of MBSEL practices on international teachers involved in a cooperative inquiry. MBSEL uses mindfulness, a practice of paying attention to the present moment, as a foundation for SEL, a process which supports holistic awareness and interaction as a human within relationships and systems. These skills allowed me to recognize and understand my emotions and stressors, to see the patterns of thought/feeling/action, and to be able to harness that information to help me take care of myself and my family. They did not do away with the grief and the uncertainty, but they helped me to process them, and to carry on resiliently despite them.

Statement of the Problem

For all of its detrimental and traumatic effects left on society, the intensity of the COVID-19 pandemic has helped to normalize the conversation around mental health and wellbeing around the world (Nealon, 2021). Perhaps the shared experience of fear and loneliness that came out of the uncertainty and inability to connect in person is what allowed people around the world to begin to open up about how they were feeling and coping. This conversation appeared to take on a very earnest tenor in the field of education. Even before the pandemic, there was a growing realization that teachers were experiencing high levels of stress and burnout, and the added pressure during the pandemic helped to cultivate a call to action for stressed and overworked educators (Farley & Chamberlain, 2021). Mindfulness and SEL practices are being increasingly

integrated into the curriculum, with research showing that these support not only wellbeing but also academic skills, however there is little time being spent on supporting educators themselves in the understanding and embodiment of these practices.

Experience of International School Teachers

International schools are established worldwide and usually offer English as a language of instruction. These schools may be established to cater to working expatriates, or on a specific ideological basis, or sometimes even to serve the needs of the host-country elites (Hayden & Thompson, 2013). It has been suggested that due to the unmonitored and unregulated nature of these institutions, teaching internationally can be considered a tenuous position (Bunnell, 2016). Many teachers choose to live overseas to experience new cultures and a sense of adventure, yet at the same time the lack of educational regulating bodies and uncertainty within those new cultures may add to teacher stress levels. Indeed, in one particular exploration of wellbeing in Hong Kong international teachers, feelings of social isolation and lack of support from their school environment were two major factors that influenced teacher wellbeing levels (Harrison & Kai Hou, 2023).

International school teachers, while sharing many traits with national educators, constitute a unique population with added factors that impact their sense of wellbeing. In our cooperative inquiry group's foundational conversations, the link between MBSEL practices and wellbeing arose almost immediately, with a curiosity about the connection and also a deeply-held hypothesis that the two concepts were positively connected. Our group of educators held positive opinions about the potential influence of MBSEL practices and suggested from the start that these practices could support teachers in international schools with their own mental health and also teaching pedagogy.

Mindfulness-Based Social-Emotional Learning and Educators

While the benefits of mindfulness and social-emotional learning for educators have been widely accepted, there is a dearth of research on the concept of mindfulness-based SEL specifically, and very little research on these topics that has been found conducted in international schools. For teachers, mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs), studies that examine the effects of particular mindfulness programs and practices, have demonstrated a positive effect on the sense of subjective wellbeing (Dave et al., 2020; Flook et al., 2013; Hwang et al., 2019; Roeser et al., 2022). Teachers who practice mindfulness feel less stress overall and develop strategies to help them deal with factors that normally lead to lessened wellbeing.

Additionally, MBIs have also shown to positively affect the quality of teacher-student relationships (Jennings et al., 2017; Roeser et al., 2022). Lavy and Berkovich-Ohana (2020) have suggested that mindfulness lowers a teacher's level of self-centeredness and raises their levels of care, thus creating a space for positive influence on students' wellbeing and development. In a parallel process, SEL interventions with teachers have also proven to increase wellbeing and have positive effects on students (Brackett et al., 2010; Isbell & Miller, 2023; Katz et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2023; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). If teachers are exposed to these practices, they may experience shifts in their own social-emotional intelligence and provide a model for students, thus sending ripples of change from themselves into the classroom environment.

Mindfulness-based SEL is a relatively new concept that highlights the importance of mindfulness as the foundation for SEL practices. SEL can simply be understood as the process of developing skills for self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2022). While there is often mindfulness content presented within SEL programming, it often rests solely in the domain of self-awareness rather than

serving as a foundation to all competencies. MBSEL as a unique field combining both mindfulness and SEL has been advocated by specialists in the field such as Linda Lantieri and Tish Jennings. In a 2014 presentation, Dr Mark Greenberg offered an amended visual of the CASEL framework, highlighting how mindfulness could connect to each competency. This visual was expanded on by Molly Lawlor in her 2016 chapter encouraging the linking of the two fields.

Of the few studies exploring the impact of MBSEL on educators, there is feedback that a combination of these practices can lead to a heightened awareness of how to regulate emotions for those teachers who participated (Garner et al., 2018; Palacios & Lemberger-Truelove, 2019). In addition to heightened sense of mindfulness, these practices have also been shown to contribute to higher levels of self-kindness and feelings of personal accomplishment (a buffer to one of the causes of burnout) in educators (de Carvalho et al., 2017). The field of mindfulness-based SEL clearly shows promise as a space for researchers to contribute to the understanding of approaches that support healthy teachers and classroom cultures.

International school teachers constitute a very different population than national school teachers who live in their country of origin. By inviting international school educators to experience MBSEL practices and share their stories along the way, our hope was to raise a call to action for the continued expansion of the field into international education.

Personal Relationship to the Topic

I have been living and teaching internationally for my entire teaching career. Eleven years in three different schools (in three different countries) and now unattached to a school as an educational consultant. As already mentioned above, I have a well-developed mindfulness practice and embodied understanding of many SEL concepts. My exploration and

implementation of these practices occurred naturally and followed an informal action research approach. I first discovered mindfulness meditation when I was living in Kyiv, Ukraine. I had read an article about the practice in schools and wanted my students to access the benefits that had been described. The organization, Mindful Schools, where I signed up to take my first course, offered courses completely online, which was a relief for me as someone living in a non-English speaking country where it was of course hard to access professional development. Mindful Schools required educators to have a personal mindfulness practice before being granted entry into the course to teach students. This was my first experience of really understanding how to "put the oxygen mask on yourself first" as the common analogy states. While the regularity of my practice was rocky at best, I kept at it because I noticed the cultivation of an inner calm and patience that I had not experienced before. I began to see and understand my emotions, and to feel more confident expressing my own needs.

After a few years of practicing mindfulness personally and with students, I started bridging into the field of SEL—exploring the concepts of growth mindset, character strengths, and emotion regulation. I found that the foundation of mindfulness, that ability to be present and recognize what was happening in the moment, allowed me to grasp the SEL concepts deeply. By developing a more consistent mindfulness practice and adding SEL elements, I found myself to be more responsive rather than reactive in the classroom and with family. I also noticed that my relationships were healthier. I was noticing my internal judgments and unmet needs and expressing myself more clearly. I had vocabulary and knowledge to be able to address the inner critic and imposter syndrome lodged within me. At the same time, I was bearing witness to how exposure to these practices, and perhaps how my own changing disposition, was also having a positive impact on my students.

As an international teacher, I have found it difficult to create and sustain communities of practice. At the same time, I feel strongly about the potential benefits of MBSEL and have a desire to share the practices with others who may be in similar situations to myself. It is my own lived experience that is the impetus for this study.

Research Question

While I was the initiator of the study, the idea was to offer the opportunity to co-create an inquiry with a volunteer group of international school teachers as co-researchers. This inquiry, with possibilities for transformation, was intended to be completed with teachers and to understand how MBSEL practices may influence us all personally and professionally. At the outset of the investigation, the research questions were left quite broad. I invited the participants into the project with the following question and sub-questions in mind.

- How does a co-created MBSEL intervention influence the lived experience of international school teachers?
    - What are the co-researchers' current experiences with MBSEL?
    - How do these educators currently manage the unique joys and challenges of international teaching?
    - What aspects of our lives and routines might be supported by MBSEL?
    - How might MBSEL support our purpose as educators?

Through discussion and negotiation, the group decided to simplify the exploration even further, resting on one central research question that asks:

- What do we notice when we practice mindfulness-based social-emotional learning?

The desire from the group was to remain broad and open-ended, with a question that offered multiple entry points and thus practices and ways of reflecting could be very personal and individualized.

Purpose Statement

This exploratory study examines the experience of international educators as they implement MBSEL practices into their lives and daily routines. To support agency and community-building, the study was designed as a cooperative inquiry where all participants were co-researchers and co-creators of the parameters and flow of the inquiry. Thus, a second purpose of the study is to understand how, if at all, this methodology contributes to teachers' experiences of the practice. Mindfulness and SEL practices have myriad benefits for teachers who utilize them. With the combination of these related and connected fields into MBSEL, there is potential for teachers to experience the benefits offered from both types of practice, and perhaps even a deeper understanding of how the practices intertwine and support each other. International school teachers may be able to walk away with lifelong practices that can support resilience and increased social-emotional skills in their complex personal and professional situations.

Potential Significance of the Study

The field of MBSEL as a union of mindfulness and SEL is relatively new and even lacking a clear definition. Lantieri and Zakrzewski (2015) suggested that "mindfulness and SEL have the potential to transform our communities and our world with the former cultivating the tendencies for compassion and ethical ways of living and the latter teaching the skills to make that happen" (par. 16). When Dr Mark Greenberg expanded the widely-known SEL framework from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to include mindfulness connections, Lawlor (2016) responded to this call by highlighting specific ways that

the two fields integrate and practices that can be woven together so that mindfulness supports SEL. There is also a newer framework, the Social, Emotional and Ethical (SEE) Learning Framework, which purposely incorporates elements of mindfulness into SEL practices (SEE Learning, 2019). This research contributes to the field by incorporating stories of the experiences of educators who are inquiring into the influence of MBSEL on their own lives. This viewpoint has yet to be explored elsewhere and it may contribute to the growing definition and understanding of MBSEL in the field of education.

Conducting the study in the sphere of international education provided a space for educators to build community and to formally start the conversation surrounding MBSEL in the international education environment. Many international educators are practicing mindfulness, SEL or MBSEL, but their voices are not currently part of the growing research in the field. Centering this study in the international school sector enables the participants to share their direct experiences with school stakeholders and organizations which offer training and professional development to international school educators. This serves as a call to action for the international school community, as well as impetus to continue the exploration of MBSEL for teachers, leaders, assistant teachers and students within the community.

Limitations and Delimitations

This exploratory research focused on how practices of MBSEL influence international school teachers. It is important to understand the limitations and delimitations present within the confines of the study, to be able to better understand all parts of the story that my co-researchers and I will be telling together. This inquiry was conducted with a self-selecting group of international school teachers. Because the scope of the inquiry relies heavily on cooperation, it is impossible to generalize any results or themes that emerged. The stories we are telling can stand

as possible windows (something we can look upon and empathize with) or mirrors (something that reflects our own experience) to understanding for other international educators (and likely educators in general) in the future (Sims Bishop, 1990). These stories have also been influenced by the amount of knowledge on the subject that the participating educators have brought to the inquiry. Teachers came with varying degrees of understanding and experience with MBSEL and this unique makeup influenced the flow and trajectory of the inquiry.

Time also plays a limiting factor when thinking about the scope of this inquiry. As this research project was conducted for the purpose of dissertation research, there was a desire to have the inquiry contained to a period of four to six months. This topic is so robust that there is potential to explore and practice for much longer. However, for the purpose of this study, the time restraint influenced the amount of potential exploration. Therefore, the number of practices we explored were limited and we had to consciously choose to only address two of the SEL competencies from CASEL (self-awareness and self-management). MBSEL is a process and there are countless ways to integrate these practices into life, so what we did together serves as an array of stories that we found meaning in, and are hoping that others may also.

The major delimitations within this study are connected to the selection of participants. Participant numbers were kept low, with an initial goal of gathering four to twelve participants. Our final group began with seven and ended up with five (including myself). The low number of people was partially to encourage a sense of collegiality and connection within the group. This was also done for ease of data analysis, which involved heavy amounts of transcription and written reflection. Within these participants, the pool was selectively limited to international teachers. While this clearly removes teachers in national schools, it also puts aside other demographics of employees within international schools - namely leadership and assistant

teachers. Each of these groups have different identity markers and needs than the full-time teachers themselves, and could constitute entirely different studies, so they were not included in the invitation to participate.

Another research choice to consider is that of the researcher positionality. As a co-participant but also facilitator of this study, I came to the table with ideas about how the inquiry might flow, though I remained open to the co-constructive nature as the project was intended. At the beginning, with me as the initiator and one in the group with the most experience in the subject, I did find myself speaking the most and offering most of the suggestions. This did gradually shift as our group formed, with others bringing their voices into the conversation. While it was a cooperative inquiry, it was slightly modified because I suggested the topic and many of the exploratory practices.

For this project, I actually straddled a line between insider and outsider perspectives. All my teaching career has been as an international school educator, and this is the demographic of educators that was part of this project. I have lived in different countries and am well aware of the unique dynamics that can take place inside international schools. I have been a classroom teacher, never a school leader, and can share an awareness of the joys and stressors that encapsulate the position. At the same time, I am not in that position right now, and have been away from teaching for one year. While I engaged in all the inquiry practices with the others, I did not have the same experience of going back to a classroom as most other participants did. While I have worked internationally, I have never lived in the countries that most of the others in the group are living in now, so it is difficult to fully understand that unique cultural context.

It should also be noted that all of our participants in the group have lived overseas as White people. Our skin colour and native language of English offer us a position of power, both

in our home countries and host countries abroad. Other colleagues who are people of colour from North America, or who hail from home countries outside of the "Western" group of English speakers (namely: US, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand) will likely have had very different experiences than we have, and especially may experience added stress from bias and discrimination both within and outside of their school. The experience of teachers of colour, as well as teachers hailing from the host country of the international school, is unfortunately not captured in these pages.

Researcher Assumptions

In all research, the beauty and chaos of humanity is not avoided, and naturally every study is subject to assumptions. In a study that is so personal and participatory, the chance for those assumptions to cloud understanding and analysis was a constant possibility as the co-researchers were so connected to the topic. Herewith I share my own assumptions as the facilitator of this inquiry. I have had personal experience practicing and exploring MBSEL practices and weaving them into my own life and teaching. I came to this project with the tacit knowledge associated with the positive outcomes I have experienced, and thus carried a clear belief that these practices are helpful and positive. I remained open and understanding to the fact that others may not in fact feel the same way, but it is important to note that this core belief is what brought this inquiry to fruition.

The choice of cooperative inquiry as a methodology is intentional and also reflects personal assumptions. I believe that learning should be voluntary - that agency is paramount. At the same time, I highly value cooperation and the power of clarifying and deepening our thinking with and from others. This cooperative, choice-based approach stands in contrast to what I view

as more traditional, didactic education. The study design and methodology imply the inherent preference for liberatory and progressive methods of learning.

Definitions of Key Terms

Cooperative inquiry: "Co-operative inquiry is a form of participative, person-centred inquiry which does research with people not on them or about them" (Heron, 1996). In this form of inquiry, all of the recruited participants are co-researchers in the inquiry. While the format in this inquiry will have myself as a facilitator and co-researcher, the intention is that I will not be the only one making decisions, but that the practices we explore and how we reflect will be influenced by the will of the group. The iterative cycles of reflection and action can be described as a "living, emergent process" (Reason & Riley, 2015, p. 169).

International school: For this inquiry, I draw upon Hayden and Thompson's 2013 definition of international schools, which specifies three different types of international schools:

- 'Type A' 'traditional' international schools: established principally to cater for globally mobile expatriate families for whom the local education system is not considered appropriate
- 'Type B' 'ideological' international schools: established principally on an ideological basis, bringing together young people from different parts of the world to be educated together with a view to promoting global peace and understanding
- 'Type C' 'non-traditional' international schools: established principally to cater for 'host country nationals' — the socio-economically advantaged elite of the host country who seek for their children a form of education different from, and perceived to be of higher quality than, that available in the national education system. (page 5)

For this inquiry, the participants will all be educators at "Type A" international schools.

International school teachers/educators: There have been attempts to define the identity of international school teachers. Mirroring the 3-part definition of international schools, Bailey and Cooker (2019) suggest that international school teachers either move abroad to support global mobility, connect with an ideological perspective of international-mindedness or global justice, or because they have chosen a particular locale as a new home. Poole (2020) suggests that international school teacher identity arises at the overlapping of personal, professional, and cross-cultural experiences. While these identity markers may prove interesting fodder for conversation in the group, for the sake of simplicity, when this study refers to international school teachers, it is referring to the group of mainly-expatriate teachers who are employed at these aforementioned international schools.

Mindfulness: Mindfulness can be defined as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). This attention focuses on the equal cultivation of wisdom and compassion (Van Buren, 2016). Mindfulness cultivates not only attention but kindness and compassion.

Mindfulness-based SEL: MBSEL is a union of mindfulness and SEL, where mindfulness practices serve as foundational to the development of SEL competencies, providing the initial inner exploration that lays the groundwork for application of these competencies in daily life. This inquiry draws upon the MBSEL framework created by Molly Lawlor (2016).

Social-emotional learning: The most widely accepted definition of SEL comes from the organization CASEL:

> We define social and emotional learning (SEL) as an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions

and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and

maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-

community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature

trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and

instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and

empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe,

healthy, and just communities. (CASEL, 2022)

It is important to note the specific focus on SEL as a *process*, not an outcome. This inquiry will

help teachers integrate strategies and practices that support them in this process. The second

paragraph in this definition is a recent addition which responds to the important conversation of

SEL not only being practices for personal growth, but also to support systemic health of systems

and social justice.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will situate this study within the existing literature that examines adult

social-emotional learning (SEL) and mindfulness in schools, and then move on specifically to

highlight the small but promising body of work that integrates the two concepts into

mindfulness-based SEL (MBSEL). Later, we will dive into the unique context provided by

international schools as the center of this inquiry.

Educator Stress and Burnout

The world's workers are more stressed than ever, with numbers of people who say they

are stressed at work reaching record highs (Gallup, 2023). In fact, because of these high

numbers, a compelling new theory proposes that, for most people, their resting state is not

actually rest but a state of "moderate threat arousal" (Crosswell et al., 2023). This idea supports

these heightened levels of stress in modern society and begs the question – how do we achieve

true rest? Of all professions, teachers currently report the highest levels of burnout (at least in the

United States, where this poll was conducted) (Carstarphen, 2022). Before the global pandemic,

teaching was already a stressful job. This stress is not going away anytime soon, and in many

cases that stress may be leading to burnout syndrome (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Burnout

can have serious effects on teacher mental health, classroom climate, and teacher attrition

(Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Defining Burnout

Burnout syndrome affects professionals working in interpersonal contexts who are

experiencing stress over a long period of time (Maslach et al., 2001). From the time when this

syndrome first came to light in the 1970s, it has been noted and studied in fields that require

intense social care and connection. After 25 years of research, they described three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (cynicism) and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion "reflects the stress dimension of burnout" (p. 403). Emotional exhaustion appears to be the precursor to depersonalization, with the exhausted person distancing themselves from the people they are serving. The researchers noted that reduced feelings of personal efficacy may be caused by one of the other domains of burnout or established separately but what remains is that it is difficult for an individual experiencing burnout to feel accomplished and effective.

As the research on burnout has grown, Maslach and Leiter (2008) also identified workplace conditions that may lead to burnout. These six conditions identified are: an intense workload, feeling a lack of control, insufficient reward, lower quality of overall community, a perceived lack of fairness, and a mismatch in values with those of the workplace. The consistent theme is that there is an imbalance or misalignment between the person and the workplace. In their study, Maslach and Leiter (2008) found that the presence of these working conditions may be constituted as early warning signs for burnout to develop. "It is an issue of *context*, not *character*", Chase Mielke reminds us in a recent ASCD article (2022, par. 6). Workplace burnout arises from systemic issues, and the burnout epidemic in schools is no different.

Impact of Stress and Burnout in Schools

Burnout can take a high physical and emotional toll on teachers. As a phenomenon associated with stress, people with burnout can experience symptoms related to high stress, such as "headaches, gastrointestinal disorders, muscle tension, hypertension, cold/flu episodes and sleep disturbances" (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 499). One indicator of burnout, emotional exhaustion, is highly linked to experiencing a depressed mood (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020).

Another physical and mental toll that develops from burnout is sleep disturbance. As noted by Schonert-Reichl (2017), high levels of stress and burnout can impact the quality and quantity of sleep. Experiencing burnout can impact the health and wellbeing in teachers, which, if left unaddressed, may also influence student wellbeing.

Aside from the obvious physical and mental effects that high levels of stress and burnout can have on teachers, elevated educator stress also impacts students. In a seminal study, Oberle and Schonert-Reichl (2016) demonstrate the presence of stress contagion, whereby teachers with higher levels of burnout had students who displayed higher levels of morning cortisol, a measure of stress. The adverse effect is also true. A recent scoping review and report from the Qatar Foundation interviewed students and teachers from five different countries about their levels of wellbeing and impact on classroom culture. When teachers displayed higher wellbeing, this generally had a positive influence on students' wellbeing, and teachers' with lower wellbeing saw the contagion go the other way, negatively influencing students . Higher levels of stress and burnout in teachers has been shown to relate to lower academic achievement in students (Granziera et al., 2023; Herman et al., 2018; Klusmann et al., 2016), especially students who are English language learners (Klusmann et al., 2016).

Wellbeing

In parallel with the conversation around stress and burnout for educators, the level of teacher wellbeing has been discussed as an important factor. Wellbeing can be broken down into five elements: emotional, physical, social, workplace and societal (Davis, 2019). Balance and functionality within all these areas can contribute to health and happiness. For teachers, there are added elements that can contribute to a definition of teacher wellbeing. The teacher subjective wellbeing questionnaire specifically measures the levels of school connectedness and teacher

efficacy (Renshaw, 2019). This suggests the importance of interpersonal relationships and confidence with teaching to be paramount to teacher health. Harrison & Kai Hou (2023) cite Acton & Glasgow's 2015 definition of teacher wellbeing as "'personal professional fulfilment, satisfaction, purposefulness and happiness,' located in the relational nature of teaching in that it is 'constructed as a collaborative process with colleagues and students' (p. 102)" (p. 40). This also locates teacher wellbeing at the crossroads of relationships and personal efficacy.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness as a practice is something that can help to boost wellbeing and develop awareness for people who engage in the practice. In the past twenty years, the research on mindfulness in education has been steadily increasing. It may offer a path for teachers to become more aware so that they can recognize ways to grow their confidence in the classroom and build relationships with students. It is also important to consider *how* mindfulness is practiced, to ensure that it is serving as a path to liberation and holistic wellbeing.

Definition and History of Mindfulness

Modern-day mindfulness meditation practices find their roots in Eastern wisdom traditions, most notably Buddhist philosophy. The mindfulness family tree has many branches, and what is often practiced today in school settings is a more secular form of meditation and attention training. This format can draw its history to the creation of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program for long-term pain care patients in hospital programs by Jon Kabat-Zinn. In fact, he has authored one of the most widely-recognized definitions of mindfulness, which states that mindfulness is "awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4).

So often in schools, children are told to pay attention, but until mindfulness came on the scene, often they were not taught *how*. Mindfulness practitioners also emphasize the importance of the quality of attention that is being cultivated. This is not paying attention for attention's sake, but with an attitude of kindness and compassion. Shapiro et al. (2016) suggest three interwoven elements of mindfulness: intention (knowing why we are making a certain choice), attention (remaining fully in the present moment), and attitude (staying kind, curious and open). These elements are integrated into a variety of different formal and informal mindfulness practices that support people in their attempts to stay nonjudgmental in the present moment.

Impacts of Mindfulness on Educators

There is a large and growing body of research exploring the impacts of mindfulness on human beings. In the past two decades, there is increasing research specifically in the education field, both with educators and students, on how mindfulness influences health and wellbeing. Some of the major themes of these mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) with educators are examined below.

Relief of Stress and Burnout

In a 2017 review of MBIs for educators conducted by Hwang et al.,10 of the 16 studies examined the effects of mindfulness on teacher stress and burnout, and the researchers concluded that mindfulness meditation is effective in addressing "threats to wellbeing" (p. 35) including stress and burnout, sleep quality, anxiety, and psychological distress. The Maslach Burnout Inventory, last updated in 1996, is the assessment used in most of the studies examined in this review, and it presents questions that relate to all three dimensions of burnout. In these studies, the inventory was taken both pre and post-test. Although the numbers correlated differently throughout the studies, the introduction of mindfulness meditation appears to have a significant

impact on the level of emotional exhaustion that teachers are experiencing. Flook et al. (2013) noted a correlation between increased ability to act with awareness and a decreased feeling of emotional exhaustion. It may be that when people are no longer running on autopilot, that attention to detail and choice helps to increase their sense of autonomy.

Three other studies (Jennings et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2021a; Taylor et al., 2021) also noted significant decreases in the domain of emotional exhaustion at the post-test evaluation. In the findings reported by Ansley et al. (2020) and Roeser et al. (2013), they share that symptoms of burnout were decreased following the MBI but do not comment on specifics regarding the domains of burnout. Kim et al. (2021) report that their participants experienced an increase in feelings of personal accomplishment. Since their MBI was different than the others in that the teachers were being trained to deliver a mindfulness program to students rather than develop a personal mindfulness practice, the instructional practice might support teachers to feel more efficacious rather than the actual mindfulness content. Specific, targeted MBIs can have a positive impact in combating burnout and specifically on the feelings of emotional exhaustion. What is not yet clear is how and whether MBIs specifically support the other two domains of burnout by reducing cynicism and increasing feelings of personal efficacy.

It is also worthwhile to note that Ansley et al. (2020) included the only intervention that utilized an online asynchronous model of delivery. This intervention also combined mindfulness with other modes of self-care, including relaxation, cognitive restructuring and physical exercise. This was the first intervention of this type completed entirely through electronic means and its positive results may pave the way for more studies to use a similar modality. Also, by using asynchronous videos to deliver the mindfulness practice, the researchers can be certain that each participant receives the same experience.

CARE for Teachers Landmark Study. The Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education program created by Patricia Jennings is an MBI designed specifically for educators experiencing stress. The initial cluster randomized trial run by Jennings et al. (2017) to evaluate the efficacy of this program on lowering stress and burnout is significant based on the size and variety in the demographics. All other studies previously mentioned have very small sample sizes and were quite homogenous demographically (mostly White, female participants in middle or upper-class school districts). The Jennings trial had 224 participants from urban neighbourhoods with substantial racial/ethnic diversity in the sample population of teachers.

Extending the Research Beyond WEIRD Societies. The vast majority of MBIs have been conducted in Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic (WEIRD) societies. Although a lot of the practices in mindfulness traditionally arise from Eastern spirituality traditions, there is a dearth of research exploring secular mindfulness practices in this region, and almost nothing in schools. Tsang et al. (2021) studied the effectiveness of an MBI on Chinese teachers in Hong Kong and demonstrated remarkably similar results to studies completed in the US, namely higher life satisfaction and better general health, as well as a decrease in stress and physiological symptoms such as insomnia.

Mindfulness and Compassion

When participating in an MBI, one might rightfully expect to find that educators who participate are found to have higher levels of trait mindfulness upon completion, and this is indeed the case (Ansley et al., 2021; de Carvalho et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2017; Jennings et al., 2017; Klingbeil & Renshaw, 2018; Roeser et al., 2013). Like any new habit, it takes practice to develop mindfulness - you are literally rewiring your brain (McLachlan, 2021). These interventions may have both short and long-term effects. In a recent study, educators who

participated in an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program demonstrated increased levels of mindfulness both eight weeks and six months after the end of the program (Dave et al., 2020).

Mindfulness practices involve looking within and outside of the self, with sustained attention and non-judgment. McCaw (2023) posited that mindfulness may support teachers in developing "radical reflexivity", the ability to deeply self-examine, including the uncovering of biases within identity, with a connection to change and practice development. In his qualitative multi-case study, McCaw shared the stories of pre-service and early career teachers engaging in mindfulness practice, and how they reflected that the practices helped them to put their egos aside and to embrace difficult emotions. These skills paved the way for compassion, both for themselves and for their students.

Mindfulness practice also helps participants to cultivate compassion. Dr. Kristen Neff, co-founder of the Center for Mindful Self-Compassion, defines compassion as: noticing others' suffering, feeling moved by this suffering, and realizing that suffering is a shared part of the human experience (n.d.). Self-compassion refers to the same idea but applied reflexively. For educators, mindfulness practice can be a source of self-care, support reflectiveness in teaching, and also support student learning (Shapiro et al., 2016). For all these outcomes, elements of compassion interact with the elements of attention to soften the awareness and nurture non-judging kindness. Teacher self-compassion can be a source for self-care.

Dave et al. (2020) found that self-compassion continued steadily growing six months after their MBSR intervention. This finding is echoed with multiple other studies demonstrating a growth in self-compassion following participation in an MBI (Flook et al., 2013; Roeser et al., 2022; Schussler et al., 2018). Both self-compassion and mindfulness have been shown to be

protective factors against stress (Hwang et al., 2019) and higher self-compassion in educators also supports teaching styles that are more motivating (Moè & Katz, 2020) and emotionally supportive (Jennings, 2015). It may be that this additional grounding in mindfulness and self-compassion achieved when teachers practice mindfulness also influences social-emotional development.

Social-Emotional Competencies

Growing in mindfulness may help teachers to have stronger relationships with colleagues and students. MBIs have been shown to strengthen both teacher efficacy (Ansley et al., 2021; de Carvalho et al., 2021) and their sense of personal accomplishment (Ansley et al., 2021; Dave et al., 2020), both of which are important precursors for the development of a healthy class climate (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teaching can often be a social occupation that requires constant collaboration. Educators who experienced MBIs demonstrated growing levels of collegiality (Schussler et al., 2018), as well as more ability to forgive both colleagues and students (S. S. Braun et al., 2020), both skills which can contribute to stronger collaboration and connection.

Mindfulness training may contribute to the ability to maintain classroom relationships (de Carvalho et al., 2021), perhaps because teachers who undergo these programs teach in a more person-centered manner that increases student autonomy (Hwang et al., 2019) or because they are better able to take perspective in uncertain situations and more sensitive to discipline with children who offer challenges (Jennings, 2015). An interview study of two highly mindful teachers in China demonstrated that they taught and interacted with students with heightened levels of empathy (Yuan et al., 2023). Colaianne et al. (2019) found that when students perceived teachers to be more mindful, students' own compassion increased, and they reported that they felt their needs were met. Increased awareness and the curiosity that arises with the state of being

present in the moment may aid mindful educators in helping their students or colleagues to feel seen and heard.

Increased mindfulness influences a person's level of emotional awareness. While some studies assert that participation in an MBI led to heightened emotional regulation for participants (de Carvalho et al., 2017; Jennings et al., 2017; Schussler et al., 2018). Schussler et al. (2018) specifically highlights that emotional regulation involves many different skill sets, and while the participants in their research became more skilled with emotional awareness, they did not always know what to do with this new awareness. Similarly, the growth in regulation that de Carvalho et al. (2021) specified is within the cognitive domain: increasing cognitive appraisal, which is evaluating the emotions within a situation, and lowering emotional suppression, which is holding emotions that are being experienced inside. It may be that heightened mindfulness brings better attention to emotions but does not yet provide support in how to act on them.

Social Justice

The greater awareness developed with mindfulness practice may support educators in limiting bias and being more open to social justice practices. Mindfulness has been shown to decrease race and age bias in the general population (Lueke & Gibson, 2015). This finding was strengthened in a recent intervention with undergraduate education students, where the participants received mindfulness and connection training. Those in the intervention group showed significant reduction in their automatic race bias six months after the intervention (Hirshberg et al., 2022).

Experiencing bias can have devastating effects on a child, and mindfulness may be part of a solution that supports educators in a most equitable and just practice. There is a history of mindfulness and meditation practices being called upon as practices of liberation. In the Black

feminist tradition, Alice Walker and bell hooks regularly write on the influence of meditation in their scholarship and activism. Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa also relied on a regular meditation practice to support inner healing and to reconnect to the wisdom beyond Western duality – acknowledging all parts of herself to become more whole (Keating, 2005). In the field of education, Gorski (2015) found that social justice activist/educators who engaged in various elements of mindfulness practice discussed a higher awareness of peace and nonviolence after engaging in practice. This finding is promising but there is a lack of research specifically exploring the possible connection between mindfulness and social justice in education. It is a space worthy of future research.

DASH Report on Youth Mental Health

In December 2023, the Center for Disease Control's Division of Adolescent and School Health released an action guide describing specific strategies that can be used in school to support youth mental health. Of those six strategies, four focused on supports to specifically provide students: mindfulness, social-emotional learning, increasing student mental health literacy and providing psychosocial skills training as well as cognitive behaviour training (Division of Adolescent and School Health, 2023). The two remaining strategies rely heavily on the emotional health of the educator and school system. The first is the suggestion to strengthen relationships between teachers, students and parents. The second is specifically aimed at developing teachers' own wellbeing through mindfulness and access to therapy. This is a major acknowledgement of the benefits of mindfulness for both teachers and youth, and recognition that the process of supporting youth does not mean only teaching them the skills, but having adults who are socially-emotionally competent and mindful to be able to model and think aloud about their own mental health strategies. As suggested by Hulburt et al. (2020), when teachers

are able to be calm, this gives space for the emotional lives of the students to emerge. This calm does not mean emotionally repressed, which is a common misunderstanding when discussing emotional regulation.

Concerns and Risks Associated with Mindfulness

The major limitations associated with the body of research that focuses on mindfulness in education are that in most of the studies, the outcomes are measured by self-report, which are subject to human approximation, and that there is a lack of fidelity within the undertaking of the mindfulness programming (Hwang et al., 2017; Klingbeil & Renshaw, 2018). Beyond the possibility of human error in implementation and understanding of research results, there are conversations taking place in the overall field of mindfulness that will affect its place in education.

Mindfulness and Trauma

It is possible for mindfulness practices to be experienced as harmful and re-traumatizing to individuals who suffer from trauma. For people with past or current trauma, their brain often operates in a state of hyperarousal. If a person in this state is asked to slow their breathing or pay careful attention to it, this can actually lead them to feel more anxious (Wagenhals, 2019). For these people, the heightened arousal is a protective barrier to the trauma they have experienced. Forcing a slowing and inner exploration may bring attention to the trauma and stress rather than to the breath as an unattached object of observation. David Treleaven, a trauma professional, states that "to manage traumatic symptoms, people experiencing posttraumatic stress require more than basic mindfulness instructions to thrive. They need specific modifications to their mindfulness practice and, ideally, connection with a skilled trauma professional" (Treleaven, 2018, p. 41).

Treleaven does not advise completely against mindfulness practice for individuals struggling with trauma but makes it clear that it must be approached with a highly trained professional, and that it may not be appropriate for some people with adverse reactions. It is advisable to be aware of this as an educator undertaking mindfulness practices personally, and especially for any intention to explore them with students. For classroom practices, it is possible at the minimum to undergo training in trauma-sensitive practices alongside the mindfulness instruction (Kim et al., 2021b). In the case of those who have or continue to experience trauma, they are the best authority on what is safe for them. While mindfulness practice may be beneficial, it is important to become knowledgeable on the signs and symptoms of traumatic stress to support yourself, and to be able to recognize if students may be having adverse reactions to this or any other classroom experiences. In this modern age where learning environments are becoming increasingly hybridized, Mischenko (2021) also expresses concern surrounding the growing amount of people engaging in mindfulness practices online and away from the guidance of a trained teacher. Even with an instructor online, there is no way for them to be able to control the environment as they would in in-person sessions. In general, as educators, it is beneficial to be informed about trauma-informed practices to support the health and wellbeing of all members of the community.

Propping up the Status Quo

There is a possibility that, if not married with mindsets that encourage compassion and liberation, mindfulness may serve as a tool to simply keep people calm and accept the status quo rather than work towards disrupting unjust systems. When the focus of mindfulness practice is constantly internal, the onus can be put on individuals to make personal change in order to fit the environment they are in. To mitigate this, Ronald E. Purser notes that "teachers of mindfulness

need to acknowledge that personal stress also has societal causes" (Purser, 2019). Mindfulness has the power to help people become more self-aware and recognize the causes of suffering and stress in their lives, but if the narrative is constantly pointing only inward, there is a missed opportunity to use that newfound awareness to become curious about the inequities in society that may be contributing to this stress.

Duane et al. (2021) reinforce this concept, by stating that mindfulness is not about "checking a box" but a "deep and long-lasting commitment to justice" (p. 7) which should interweave culturally-responsive and trauma-informed practices within the basic mindfulness exercises. Duane et al. go on to urge educators to be especially aware of this risk, as when children are experiencing trauma and injustice, encouraging them to breathe and self-regulate actually ends up weaponizing the tools that are intended to liberate, with participants feeling that the intention is to keep them quiet and calm rather than supported and emotionally literate. David Forbes argues that "rather than seeking critically skilful inner wisdom to enhance human development, they [schools] employ mindfulness instrumentally to promote neutral behavioural and neurological functions such as focusing, calming, and self-regulation" (2019, p. 88). This can also be the case when looking at teacher wellbeing. With stress and burnout levels so high, the conversation about wellbeing can present as if teachers are the only ones responsible for healing this burnout (Jennings, 2021). I once saw a meme that speaks to this issue, stating "self-care, not shelf care"; without liberatory intention, mindfulness can become one of those items on a shelf that we try to apply as a bandaid, rather than looking for the root cause of the distress to take true care.

In addition to practicing mindfulness with culturally-responsive and trauma-informed lenses as previously discussed, it may also be beneficial to incorporate SEL concepts in order to

introduce an ethical, values-informed element to the attention practices offered by modern-day secular mindfulness (Palacios & Lemberger-Truelove, 2019). It should be noted that traditionally, mindfulness does stem from Buddhist roots and was practiced in connection with the associated doctrine, but as mindfulness in the West has become more focused on the secular, scientific elements, this may leave it unmoored and thus more easily adapted to the traditional capitalist lifestyle, where the focus is more on individual rather than collective accomplishment.

<div align="center">**Social Emotional Learning**</div>

Definition and History of SEL

  The emergence of SEL can be traced back to the 1960s when James Comer created his Comer School Development Program which used collaboratively managed teams within schools, acknowledging the emotional needs of children and connection of their psychological needs to academic achievement (Edutopia, 2011). Building on the success of Comer's program, research began to grow and eventually in 1994, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was born (Edutopia, 2011). The most widely used definition of SEL today comes from CASEL, which states that SEL is

> an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. (CASEL, 2022)

This definition, updated in 2020, also adds a whole new paragraph to incorporate an equity stance, which, as will be discussed further below, is an integral part of these practices, and

without this stance there is risk that they may even cause harm to individuals who are exposed to them. The addition to the definition is as follows:

> SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities. (CASEL, 2022)

The CASEL framework encompasses five competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. While there are other frameworks, some of which will be introduced later, this is the most widely recognized symbol and descriptor of SEL.

SEL for Educators

In discussions of SEL, the focus is often on children and youth - how to implement SEL instruction and the potential benefits for our students. However, there is growing recognition that before focusing on children, it would be beneficial to address the SEL skills of the adults in the building (CASEL, 2022; Gimbert et al., 2023; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). Jennings' and Greenberg's landmark systemic review and prosocial classroom model (2009) proposed that teacher's levels of social-emotional competence (SEC) have a great amount of influence on the classroom environment, as well as the teacher's own level of stress and burnout. When teachers have strong SECs, they can also experience higher levels of wellbeing (Hartcher et al., 2022) and have more favourable perceptions of their school culture (Barr, 2011), both which may contribute to more happiness at work. In addition, high levels of emotional

intelligence (which is highly interrelated with SECs) are also correlated with teachers who are better able to regulate their emotions (Brackett et al., 2010), which involves naming and understanding how they are feeling, and then using that knowledge to make choices about how to support their needs in that moment. Even teacher's attitudes about SEL can influence their wellbeing and performance. Educators who have a high level of comfort with SEL, high commitment to the practice, and a supportive school culture have higher levels of job satisfaction and less stress (Collie et al., 2017). Teachers who have more well-developed SECs, and who look favourably upon social-emotional learning in the classroom appear to be able to better address the stressors that come with their position, and to experience higher levels of wellbeing.

Teacher SEL and influence on students

Teacher's SEC appears to influence teacher-student relationships and the climate within the classroom. In their early review championing the influence of teacher SEC on students, Jones et al. (2013) suggest that the level of teacher SEC can influence three specific domains: the quality of teacher-student relationships, the teacher's ability to model SEL skills, and the classroom organization and management. This echoes the call from Jennings and Greenberg—a prosocial classroom supports the emotional development of the adults and children in the space. Schonert-Reichl (2017) suggests that teachers with higher SECs are more aware (self, socially and culturally) and also operate with prosocial values. Teachers model the skills and attributes and help students to be able to develop those same competencies. A study in Greece demonstrated that teachers who were more emotionally intelligent did display more effective classroom management skills (Tsoli, 2023). A similar finding in a New Zealand study demonstrated that teachers who received an emotional skills intervention developed better relating skills with students, and though not all increased in this area, those that did were

perceived as more helpful by students (Harvey et al., 2016). Perhaps when teachers are better able to regulate their own emotions, they can be more even and consistent in the way that they set expectations and respond to students. There is less reaction and more proactive management.

Just as teachers' high stress levels can rub off on students (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016), when an educator is able to engage in cognitive appraisal in difficult situations, students demonstrate lower levels of distress (Braun et al., 2020). In fact, the teacher's emotional regulation and wellbeing can influence students throughout a long period of time. In an empirical longitudinal study, teachers' emotion regulation and life satisfaction were connected with the level of students' social-emotional wellbeing across the entire school year (Braun et al., 2020). The dispositions of a teacher and their ability to recognize and regulate emotions can have an impact on the students in their care.

SEL and Teacher Wellbeing

With the awareness that teacher's SECs can influence their own personal wellbeing as well as the health of the classroom, there is a growing body of research that explores the impact of SEL interventions on teachers. SEL interventions aimed specifically at educators may have a positive influence on their SEC and general wellbeing (Karimzadeh et al., 2012)**.** This finding has very recently been corroborated by the first meta-analysis exploring the impact of SEL interventions on teachers' personal and professional outcomes (Oliveira et al., 2021). This team analyzed 39 different SEL interventions involving in-service teachers and uncovered a statistically significant connection between these interventions and teachers' overall increase SEC and wellbeing and decreased psychological distress. Combined interventions, which were focused mainly on students but had small elements of teacher training, did not produce significant results (Oliveira et al., 2021). These findings suggest that to boost teacher SEC and

wellbeing, there should be a specific focus on teacher SEL development, not necessarily connected with teaching students. Teachers cannot necessarily develop their own skills just by teaching concepts to students; the practices need to be embodied and understood personally.

SEL training aimed at teachers can support a decrease in educator burnout. In a separate meta-analysis exploring only the impact of SEL interventions on burnout symptoms in teachers, Oliveira et al. (2021) have concluded that there is a significant impact of SEL interventions on the domains of personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion. Personal accomplishment refers to the sense of confidence and pride that teachers associate with their work, and emotional exhaustion is a sense of physical and mental depletion. The interventions explored in Oliveira et al.'s review noted a clear increase in personal accomplishment and a decrease in emotional exhaustion. It is important to note that this finding only occurs when the SEL interventions focused specifically on intrapersonal domains of SEL, namely self-awareness and self-management. When the interventions were focused on relating skills, there was no impact on burnout levels (Oliveira et al., 2021). This may illustrate the common metaphor taken from airplane safety demonstrations - that it is important to put on one's own oxygen mask before trying to assist someone else. If teachers are self-aware and know how to support their own emotional health, they will feel more confident and less exhausted. It is *then* that they can turn their attention to their students and classroom climate.

This idea was illustrated in a recent case study which discussed the implementation of SEL in a Tulsa, Oklahoma school and out-of-school-time partner (Christianson et al., 2022). While this particular project began with the intention of focusing on the implementation of SEL for students, school administrators began to notice inconsistent application of the approaches, as well as a low level of ability for teachers to adequately address student trauma. Upon recognizing

this, the project pivoted to focus specifically on adult SEL development. After this shift, administrators reported a marked change in teacher SEC; they were more patient with students and modeled effective regulation strategies (Christianson et al., 2022). Moreover, this intervention took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and teacher levels of burnout actually decreased during this time (Christianson et al., 2022). Lastly, as teachers were developing their own skills, an increase in the instruction of SEL for students was also observed over time (Christianson et al., 2022). This case study provides a window to the possibility associated with educator SEL instruction - not only personal development, but classroom application as well.

Concerns and Risks Associated with SEL

The field of SEL is growing rapidly, and in a very similar fashion to the practice of mindfulness mentioned earlier, the practices have potential to be used in ways that may be detrimental to the population. One of those ways centers around the conversation of SEL being used as a behavioural intervention. David Forbes, a professor who teaches a course on critical mindfulness at the City University of New York, cautions against SEL being used as a tool for the modern, neoliberal agenda. He asserts that many educators and policymakers are using SEL as a means of managing behaviour and academic success, rather than encouraging students to grow and develop themselves for the sake of a more reflective and humane vision. Forbes continues to warn that, when taught in this way, SEL can encourage individualism and ignore the values of connection and collaboration. The concern here is that the individual and collective needs may be ignored to encourage learners to follow the rules.

This idea of SEL being used as a means for control is echoed in Lin et al.'s (2023) exploration of how teachers define SEL, with one participant stating that it should not be used to ask students to "'breathe through their oppression" (p. 6). There is concern that rather than a tool

for liberation, SEL becomes a tool to keep students in line. In their article calling for culturally-responsive SEL, Mahfouz and Anthony-Stevens (2020) shared a vignette of a kindergarten class in an indigenous community where the teachers, though well-intentioned, stressed the importance of SEL to boost academic skills, while approaching the instruction from a White colonialist lens rather than incorporating any sort of culturally-relevant pedagogy or becoming curious about how SECs manifest in different cultural contexts. While it is indeed a benefit of SEL that academics can improve for students, it is when this goal is pursued while ignoring any cultural context and/or history of trauma within the community.

SEL and Cultural Context

A major criticism of the current SEL movement is that it ignores cultural context in favour of one-size-fits-all models of practice. Forbes again states that "SEL does not examine the emotional and relational sources of students' behaviour. It does not analyze how emotional life and action are inextricably related to the complex, rich, and often problematic social nature of the lives of students, teachers, and community members. It ignores the cultural and structural contexts of race and class" (p. 131). The majority of SEL programs in existence arise out of the United States and their implementation supports the dominant culture and ways of thinking (Forbes, 2019; Jacobson, 2021; Jagers et al., 2018; Mahfouz & Anthony-Stevens, 2020). When programming ignores the cultural practices and rich histories, as well as any history of trauma within the community, SEL risks becoming "'white supremacy with a hug'" (Jacobson, 2021).

In the continually polarized climate within many countries today, there are stories of major SEL providers, such as the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, choosing to keep cultural identity content out of their curriculum in an effort to remain apolitical, which in turn serves to support the continued disenfranchisement of marginalized communities (Jacobson,

2021; Simmons, 2019). Unfortunately, unconscious bias can play a large role in the educational beliefs of any teacher, but especially those in the dominant societal group. When SEL is divorced from a cultural context, those members of the community who are already on the outside are at risk of not being heard or supported. The combination of critical pedagogy and culturally-responsive practices with SEL has led to more intentional, place-based practices which listen to the voices of the local communities and these present promise for the industry (Forbes, 2019), but the call to action still remains strong for the majority of this growing field.

When SEL is combined with intentional culturally responsive practices, harm can be mitigated and there may be benefits for practitioners. In an interview study examining the success of early-career teachers, Michalec and Wilson (2022) posited that culturally responsive practices are actually elevated in classrooms where teachers display strong SECs. This may have something to do with an increase in self-awareness, which, when explored reflexively, can lead to heightened knowledge of personal identity and privilege. For example, increased self-awareness developed through an empathy intervention led to decreased levels of implicit bias in White pre-service teachers (Whitford & Emerson, 2019). In another study, also with White preservice teachers, self-awareness practices and knowledge development led to a decrease in deficit beliefs about linguistic diversity in the classroom (Endo, 2015). A recent intervention aimed at increasing the empathic mindset of teachers successfully reduced suspension rates and lessened the racial disparity of suspensions. Interestingly, this effect continued into the new school year where students were with all new teachers, suggesting that the healthy relationship culture that was developed perhaps enabled students to feel more trusting of the school in general. When teachers are invested in their own social-emotional learning with the intention of developing empathy and equity, there is potential to enact systemic change.

Transformative SEL. CASEL has recently adjusted its definition of SEL to include more of a focus on what they call transformative SEL, or SEL that infuses cultural context, with an inquiry project examining how SEL and equity work intersects (Jagers et al., 2021). This updated definition highlights the importance of family-school partnerships, and centers the competencies of identity, agency, belonging, collaborative problem-solving and curiosity, which each link directly to the original SEL competencies (O. A. Johnson et al., 2023). Transformative SEL intentionally looks at bringing in diverse experiences and infusing identity awareness into the learning and celebration, as opposed to using SEL (especially self-management skills) to punitize youth, insisting on developing self-control rather than exploring what identity and agency look like in different contexts.

In the international school context, there is a new SEL framework that incorporates elements of culturally-responsive teaching into the overall framework, highlighting the importance of identity and social/cultural competence as SEL skills in their own right (Stephens, 2023). While this framework is new and not yet being widely used, it provides another example of how cultural competency can be integrated into SEL.

How do we support educator SEL?

There is a consensus that increasing the SECs of educators can benefit both the educators themselves and students, but the concern is that there is little discussion about exactly *how* specifically teachers can build these competencies (Gimbert et al., 2023). The conversation has indeed started. There is talk about how to infuse SEL into the systems, rather than merely applying the practices as a bandaid (Jennings, 2021; Lee et al., 2023). Additionally, many stakeholders are calling for not only SEL, but culturally-responsive practices and trauma-informed practices to be integrated into initial teacher training programs so that teachers are

developing stronger SECs before even entering the classroom (Gimbert et al., 2023; Jones et al., 2013; Katz et al., 2020; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). While most agree that it is beneficial, the approach to educator SEL is currently piecemeal, with few pre-service teaching programs incorporating it and in-service professional development being inconsistent from school to school.

<h3 style="text-align:center">Mindfulness-Based Social-Emotional Learning</h3>

The teachings and practices of mindfulness and SEL often overlap and connect in practice within schools. The small but growing field of mindfulness-based SEL (MBSEL) aims to bring these two fields together with the intention that schools can benefit from the complementary interaction of the practices. Linda Lantieri, one of the original creators of CASEL who also has extensive mindfulness experience, posits that by engaging in both practices together, they ameliorate each other and support systemic integration. In their 2015 article, she and Zakrzewski state that "when taught and learned together, mindfulness and SEL have the potential to transform our communities and our world with the former cultivating the tendencies for compassion and ethical ways of living and the latter teaching the skills to make that happen" (par. 15). In a small study interviewing participants who had engaged in the CARE for Teachers program, Schussler et al. (2018) noticed that the increased awareness from mindfulness practice did not always lead teachers to be able to take action on that awareness. This is where the layering of SEL is needed. The increased present-moment awareness that is cultivated with mindfulness may allow for the space to make the choice to engage in learned SEL skills. Otherwise, if our brains are operating in stress mode, it can be difficult to see the compassionate and wise choices available to us.

Models and Frameworks

　　While the CASEL framework remains the most widely disseminated SEL framework, it does not specifically include mindfulness as a part of the organizing framework. In his presentation at the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education's Heart-Mind Conference, Mark Greenberg (2014) demonstrated how mindfulness and contemplative practices can deepen the learning of SEL. Molly Lawlor builds upon this framework (Figure 1), providing examples of practices that may support the development of the five CASEL competencies, such as reflective writing and focused mindful breathing to build self-awareness (2016).

Figure 1

Molly Lawlor's 2016 MBSEL Conceptual Framework
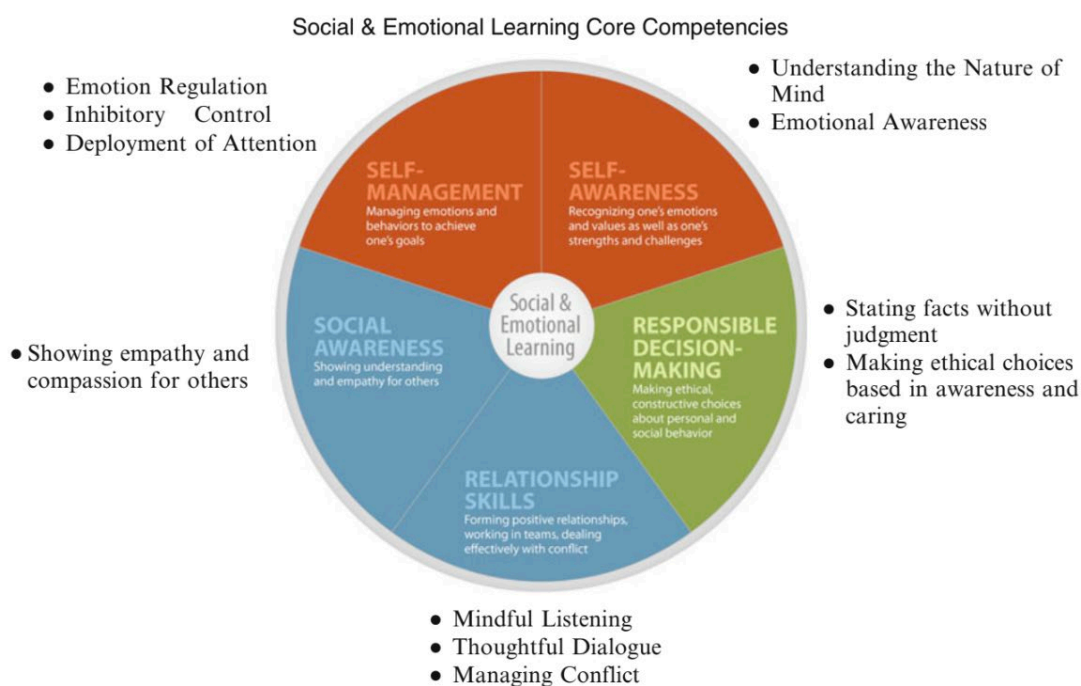
Note: Adapted from the work of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (2013) and Dr. Mark Greenberg (2014). Reprinted with permission.

The Social, Emotional and Ethical (SEE) Learning framework has been created with mindfulness already integrated alongside SEL competencies, as well as elements of systems thinking (SEE Learning, 2019). The creators of SEE Learning, many of whom were actually also involved in developing CASEL, have been intentional about clearly incorporating attention training as a core tenet within the framework, which differs from other frameworks because "attention is a fundamental skill that impacts all aspects of learning (SEE Learning, 2019, p. 10).

Although the field of MBSEL is still growing, the Coalition for Schools Educating Mindfully, a group within the United States that works towards supporting mindful education, has created a short course in MBSEL and shares the following definition on their website: Mindfulness-Based SEL elevates and compliments any SEL practices currently in place within schools. MBSEL is when we take an inside-out approach to self-awareness and self-management through mindfulness and connect it to the explicitly taught social and emotional skills through SEL's outside-in instruction, aligned to CASEL's framework. The foundation to this way of teaching is what we call an "embodied way of teaching". Embodied teaching means that MBSEL is more than something you do or teach, it becomes *WHO* you are as a teacher or leader. This type of teaching and leading takes time, but has the biggest impact on your students, staff, education as a whole, and most importantly, you.

As a result, all members of your learning community have proactive ways to manage stress and anxiety, positive strategies for improving self-regulation, increased focus and attention, deeper compassion and understanding, and more. All of these benefits create the conditions for students to be ready to learn and increase their academic success at school while preparing them for life beyond the school walls (COSEM, n.d.)

Impacts of Mindfulness-Based SEL

Research specifically exploring MBSEL is in its early stages, and there is a lack of consistency in the practices that are being employed in the studies that do exist. However, the results that have arisen from those few studies do suggest a space for further exploration. In their short mixed methods study, Cochran and Peters (2023) instructed a group of pre-service teachers in mindfulness and SEL practices. After the short intervention, teachers demonstrated a significant increase in feelings of self-efficacy, which is the factor that most influences student achievement (Visible Learning, n.d.)**.** Educators in this study reported using MBSEL practices in times of stress and a high eagerness and willingness to integrate practices into their classroom teaching. High levels of efficacy were also reported by Kim et al. (2021)**,** for the teachers in their study who underwent training for implementing the MindUP MBSEL curriculum with students and implemented it for two years. The teachers in this study, who also received training in trauma-sensitive teaching, also reported decreased levels of burnout (Kim et al., 2021). This finding is intriguing since teachers did not actually engage in MBSEL practices themselves in the training. It may be that by practicing with students, they experienced similar benefits to those who were engaged in personal practices outside of school.

MBSEL interventions have been demonstrated to support teachers in developing social-emotional competencies. In an intervention comparing MBSEL (mindful breathing combined with SEL skill instruction) and a control group receiving only mindfulness, the intervention group demonstrated higher levels of emotional competence (Garner et al., 2018). Perhaps the attentional components of mindfulness contributed to the educator's ability to recognize and regulate emotions. Indeed, this is the idea that was shared in the stories told by participants in Palacios and Lemberger-Truelove's phenomenological study of six early childhood educators

who engaged in a MBSEL intervention. These participants spoke widely of how the practices impacted their day to day lives, focusing heavily on noticing patterns in relationships with each other and their students, and how their SEL training and mindfulness helped to support their relationship development (Palacios & Lemberger-Truelove, 2019). Another study found that after an in-depth training in MBSEL skills and integrating the MindUP curriculum into their teaching, educators were more perceptive and also kinder to themselves (de Carvalho et al., 2017). This was one of the only studies found that took place outside of North America, in Portugal, using a program that had already been explored within Canada and the USA.

With children, MBSEL, specifically through the evaluation of the MindUP program, has shown to support stronger social-emotional competencies, and increased academic benefits. In Portugal, students engaging in this program, which combines mindfulness strategies with SEL competencies, were shown to be better able to take perspective on failures and shortcomings (de Carvalho et al., 2017). Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015) compared students engaged in the MindUP program with those who experienced solely a social responsibility program (incorporating skills like conflict resolution, treating others fairly - connecting with social awareness and relationship skills domains of CASEL). In this intervention, MBSEL participants not only scored significantly higher on post-test SEL skills, but also on executive functioning abilities. It was suggested that mindful attention training contributes to greater executive control.

There is some concern about the classification of MBSEL as the field begins to develop. Without a clear agreement on a definition in the field on what constitutes an MBSEL intervention, there can be some confusion about what programs fall into this category. In their review of the research, Feuerborn and Gueldner (2019) suggest that mindfulness programs focus on awareness and attention with SEL programs can be rooted in cognitive behavioural therapy

and social skills. Matthew Brensilver, formerly of Mindful Schools, reiterates that mindfulness and SEL can be woven together, and he differentiates the two fields with the idea that mindfulness is rooted in spirituality (secular or not), and there is not as much of a focus on the teaching of direct skills as there is in SEL. While both suggestions for the comparison of the two seem oversimplified and the two fields are not so easily split, it does echo other scholars in their conversation about the importance of melding the focus of our inner and outer worlds.

With a definition that is not quite clear, researchers can even demonstrate confusion about whether their program is MBSEL or something else. In the original studies on the CARE for teachers program, it is referred to as a mindfulness-based program (Jennings et al., 2017). However, in an exploration of the same program in a European context, the program is referred to as an MBSEL program (Mihić et al., 2020). This program appears to contain mindfulness and reflective practices exclusively, so most likely it can be categorized solely as a mindfulness-based program, however the question of how exactly to define these programs will continue to arise in the future as the field grows.

International Schools and Teachers

To those familiar with the national school systems in their home country, the term "international school" may be confusing and indeed, foreign. While the idea of an international school continues to morph, one characteristic that is generally agreed-upon is that these schools offer a curriculum that is different than that of the host country in which they are located (Hayden & Thompson, 2013). While the language of instruction is usually English, there are also schools that offer other languages or bilingual programs as well. As a reminder, Hayden and Thompson (2013) attempted to organize international schools into three broad categories:

'Type A' 'traditional' international schools, 'Type B' 'ideological' international schools, and 'Type C' 'non-traditional' international schools (p. 5).

The international school industry is growing rapidly to serve the needs of families referred to above - expatriate workers, foreign service workers, wealthy members of the host country. There are currently over 14,000 such schools (of all three types combined) (ISC Research, 2024) and by 2029, it is estimated that this will grow to over 17,000, a vast majority of these expected to be in Asia where parents highly value English as a language of economics (Speck, 2019). With so many schools and more being established every day, it is a wonder that the body of scholarship exploring practices in these schools is almost non-existent. This may be due to a number of factors, including the transient nature of the population or the fact that most schools are independently-run and it is difficult to coordinate research efforts.

Identities of International School Teachers

In a discussion of the practices of international school teachers, it is pertinent to highlight some of the identifying factors that help to designate them as a group different from national school teachers. For this inquiry, when I say international school teachers, I am referring to expatriate teachers who are not from the host country in which the school is located. I recognize from the outset that this definition is problematic as most international schools also employ teachers from the host country. There are also other groups within international schools, namely host country teaching assistants and school administrators. However, their experiences and stressors may be different and so I focus solely on expatriate teachers. While my inquiry group was also open to host country teachers, we arrived at a final group that only consisted of expatriate educators.

Educators relocate abroad for a variety of reasons. The most often-cited is a desire to satiate a need for adventure and travel (Bailey, 2015; Bailey & Cooker, 2019; Thorn, 2009). Teaching abroad provides an opportunity to see the world, be immersed in cultures that are new to you, and make a living at the same time. In their 2017 typology of international teachers, Bailey and Cooker identify two additional types of people who teach internationally. One is a group of people who are driven by social justice and see their jobs as a way to make a difference in the world. Perhaps they identify with the mission and vision of a particular school or the idea of diversity and international-mindedness that they feel are more readily present in schools with such diverse populations. A third type of teacher they highlight is those that are connected to the country they are living in. Perhaps they are drawn to a specific culture or locale. Or for some, they have a spouse from that different country (Thorn, 2009). Once they have moved abroad, teachers can continue to be mobile. They may stay in one school for a long period of time or move to experience other environments.

Difficult to pin down a clear defining identity, international school teachers may feel that they are often in a liminal space. As a parallel to the phrase "third culture kids", which is used to describe globally mobile children, Bailey and Cooker:

> adopt and develop the phrase 'Third Culture Teachers' (Holderness, 2002) to describe those teachers who see their educational role and their professional practices as formed by their international school experience; they do not belong to the educational world of their home country (perhaps because of a lack of qualifications or perhaps because of a different educational vision), but neither do they see themselves as belonging to the teaching profession in their country of residence. (2017, p. 127)

The international school system may serve as an in-between place and each different school or country offers different opportunities and challenges in articulating the identity of the teacher. Poole (2020) describes international school teachers as being at the intersection of personal experiences, cross-cultural experiences, and professional experiences. In this way, the experience is constantly shifting, and the being of an international teacher may be something different to each person who inhabits the role.

Unique Factors Affecting International School Teachers

International school teachers are still teachers in many of the same ways as teachers in national school systems, experiencing many of the same joys and challenges as these other teachers. Connections with students, parent meetings, lesson planning, teacher collaboration meetings, professional development. At the same time, the pure fact that they are teaching in a physical environment that may be oceans away from their home of origin brings some clearly different challenges.

Culture Shock

Anyone who has visited another country or even a distant part of their own country has likely experienced elements of culture shock. This phenomenon has been categorized into four distinct phases: honeymoon, frustration, adjustment and acceptance. Upon arrival, one might be enamoured with the newness that surrounds them, and after a time begin to feel frustration or annoyance when systems are working differently to how they may have in their home country. Afterwards, the traveler, or expatriate, may become more familiar with the foreign customs, language and systems so they feel more well-adjusted. And finally, they are more accepting of the new way of life that they experience in their host country. This process, while full of excitement and adventure, also causes stress and uncertainty for the traveler. For some, there

may even be a sense of "cultural bereavement" (Bhugra et al., 2010, as cited in Halicioglu, 2015, p. 247), the grief associated with leaving behind one's culture and loved ones, whether by force or, in the case of international teachers, by choice. Even though international teachers are making the choice to leave their homelands, a new way of life and separation from family and friends can still pose major stressors for these educators.

In addition to the culture shock associated with moving to a new country, international teachers may also experience a parallel shock when adjusting to the culture of the school they are teaching in. Oftentimes, teachers who move abroad from national schools assume that the job will look the same as it did back home, but are surprised to find that, because of different student populations, curriculum expectations, staff dynamics or organizational structures, they also have to adjust to the work culture (Roskell, 2013). Teachers may feel surprised when the school is not what they assumed or expected, and any subsequent change in practice or learning may leave them feeling "de-skilled" (Bailey, 2015, p. 9). Teachers may enter the international school system feeling confident but then come to a professional identity crisis when they find themselves overwhelmed and having to re-skill in new environments. That being said, in Bailey's interview study of teachers at a Malaysian international school, most teachers who reported feeling de-skilled initially, eventually felt re-skilled and stronger in their practice once they had time to settle in (Bailey, 2015), perhaps moving past that adjustment phase of culture shock in the work environment.

The Precariat

There is a level of uncertainty that accompanies the choice of moving to a foreign country to live and work. As previously discussed, this can contribute to the sense of excitement and adventure that draws many international teachers into the industry. However, this uncertainty

can also contribute to feelings of anxiety for educators who can sometimes be subject to rapidly shifting rules and norms, whether from the host country or school itself. The original term "precariat" arises from the work of Guy Standing, and has been recently introduced as a potential identifier of international school teachers (Poole & Bunnell, 2021). This precarity refers to "'a condition of chronic uncertainty and insecurity' where 'labour is insecure and unstable'" (Standing, 2015, p. 6, as cited in Poole & Bunnell, 2021, p. 289). A teacher jailed in Indonesia on sham charges, hundreds of educators locked out of China, visas revoked in Russia. I can hypothesize that if you were to ask any international educator, they will concur that "restraints have appeared (often without warning and highly politicized) on immigration rights, income protection, plus changes have appeared to working conditions and employment stability" (Bunnell, 2016, p. 553). These are the realities that can lie in wait for international teachers who have chosen to move abroad.

This precarity only intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. In many countries, the pandemic led to a reverse-diaspora, where families who could fled back to their home countries. As reported in a survey of international school teachers from around the world, some international schools lost funding from tuition and teachers experienced major salary cuts or loss of jobs (Kelly, 2021). Some also experienced stress from their job responsibilities changing, and extra time being added to the school day or year to make up for perceived lost learning time (Kelly, 2021). While the changes due to the pandemic are generally winding down worldwide, international schools are slowly moving towards normal operation, with uncertainty still lingering for many educators.

Belonging

More than likely influenced by the aforementioned realities of culture shock and precarity, a sense of belonging arises as an incredibly important value for international school teachers. In their study of what promotes wellbeing in international schools, Wigford and Higgins (2019) were surprised to find that the most salient factor which arose consistently for teachers was the feeling of belonging. They posit that:

> it could be that those who work in international schools have an enhanced understanding and attach greater value to the need for belonging because they have been uprooted multiple times and/or have observed the impact of this on colleagues and students, and therefore are likely to have personally experienced the negative impact of a lack of belonging. Perhaps an additional factor is that experiences of teaching in an international school, where transitions are high, sensitises teachers to the need for supportive relationships. (p. 60)

Indeed, it may be that uncertainty and cultural bereavement may cause international teachers to feel slightly unmoored and hold onto belonging and personal relationships as a grounding factor when living and working abroad. In fact, in a study on how committed teachers were to their international schools, strong interpersonal relationships and support was the number one factor that predicted retention (Yang et al., 2018, p. 43). The support that comes from strong relationships may support the sense of resilience in educators abroad. In the aftermath of COVID-19, the international conversation around the harm caused by loneliness and isolation, and the fundamental need for belonging, has been growing steadily (Office of the US Surgeon General, 2023). This clearly resonates with the community of expatriates living abroad.

Being in the liminal space between the host country schools and their own national system of schools in their home country, international teachers identify separately from both of those places. They more readily identify themselves with a "shared community" (Bailey & Cooker, 2019, p. 135) of other international school teachers around the world. In a sense, that identity marker offers belonging within the international community. For many of the reasons shared, international teachers see themselves as different than teachers in other settings, and this understanding may unify them. Whether teaching in Turkey or Tunisia or Taiwan, you understand the general experiences that each other may be undergoing.

Positionality of Expatriate Teachers

Anglophone expatriate educators in international schools operate from a privileged position. There is a slowly growing acknowledgement within the community that international schools were created, and often still stand on, a pillar of colonialism (Pearson, 2022), where schools "may be seen as institutional structures that reproduce the political/economic hierarchies and patterns of unequal power that already exist in the world" (Savva, 2017, p. 583). Teachers who work within this system, whether they are aware or not, are often holding up these hierarchies and injustices. They are often granted deference and respect, due to nothing other than their whiteness or language ability (Arber, 2014). Expatriate teachers often make more money and receive more benefits than host country teachers in similar positions (Savva, 2017, p. 583). They may also prioritize Western-centric knowledge and learning processes in favour of methodologies or ways of knowing that arise from the host culture (Burke, 2017). International schools and the teachers within them sit on a wide continuum of awareness and acknowledgement when it comes to this complex element of their chosen identity. For educators and schools who value wellbeing and developing self-awareness, there is a definite need for

exploring the identity and positionality of the self and the school system within the historical and present-day context of the host country culture.

Mindfulness and Social-Emotional Learning in International Schools

It is difficult to tell how widespread the work on mindfulness and SEL is within international schools. There is a very small handful of schools that place high value on the integration of these practices into the school system and make that clear in their mission or vision statement. The United World College (UWC) school in Phuket, Thailand, for example, states on their website that "UWC Thailand is considered UWC's pioneer in embedding Social-Emotional Learning and Mindfulness into our curriculum. Under the direction of our Mindfulness Mentor, our staff, students, and parents develop their ability to think and act mindfully using time and strategies inside and outside the classroom" (UWC Thailand International School Phuket, n.d.). Most schools operate independently and there is not yet any data on if and how schools implement mindfulness, SEL or both, and with what level of fidelity.

Professional Development

In the international school setting, teacher professional development (PD) is moving increasingly into an online format (Keeling, 2021) but there is a concern that with the diversity of contexts in these schools, PD is not provided for the school's specific context (Carter & McNulty, 2014). This can be mitigated if a school hires a consultant specifically for their context, but consultants are often expensive and not accessible to all schools. While we cannot be sure of how the learning from such PD is being implemented, there is a wide variety of learning available on the themes of SEL, wellbeing or mindfulness offered from large providers of online PD and large-scale international school conferences (Association for the Advancement of International Education, n.d.; ECIS, n.d.; International Schools Services, n.d.-a; SENIA,

2022). The themes of the presentations have ranged from educator wellbeing/SEL/mindfulness to classroom practices to schoolwide implementation.

Focus on Wellbeing

Currently, I have been unable to find any peer-reviewed research that exists which explores the implementation of mindfulness and SEL in international schools, either with adults or students. There are a handful of studies with populations outside of North America, but not specifically located in an international school. However, there is a promising trend in the rise of conversation surrounding wellbeing, which often encompasses elements of SEL and mindfulness practice. Harrison and Kai Hou, in their exploration of the wellbeing of Hong Kong teachers, called for a greater focus on wellbeing in international schools, citing that "support offered by the school is particularly important, and teachers' wellbeing is perhaps more strongly associated with a feeling of being cared for within their school communities than might be the case in other cultural settings" (Harrison & Kai Hou, 2023, p. 47). This call to action is underscored by the reality that 43% of teachers and teaching assistants surveyed believed that their school did not care about staff wellbeing (Wigford & Higgins, 2019). The need for a strong sense of belonging seems to be connected to the state of wellbeing within schools.

The global pandemic has increased awareness of the importance of wellbeing within international schools (ISC Research, 2021; Watts et al., 2023). It appears that the conversation about how to systemically integrate wellbeing into schools and curricula has begun. There has been a growth in teaching roles that support wellbeing (Keeling, 2021). This points to a realization that for practices that support wellbeing, including mindfulness and SEL, to be integrated systemically, there needs to be people within the school dedicated to this implementation. The Association for the Advancement of International Education has recently

published a set of guiding principles that were created to help navigate the future of growth in international schools. Wellbeing is one of their seven core principles, the overall intention stating that: "We co-create a culture that nourishes the intellectual, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, environmental, and occupational well-being of all community members" (Watts et al., 2023). There is a strong possibility that with the increased emphasis on wellbeing in international schools, mindfulness and SEL will come to the forefront as key practices to support this growth. It is hoped that this inquiry will contribute to the gap in the literature and provide a window into the experience of international school teachers as they explore MBSEL practices for themselves.

Learning with Adults

This research project will center around the learning and development of adult learners, in this case international school educators, and it is important to take into consideration the unique context of adult learning and development. Elena Aguilar (2022), an international educational consultant, coach and author, with her co-author Lori Cohen, synthesized adult learning theory and asserted that there are seven key indicators of successful adult learning:

1. Adults must feel safe to learn.

2. Adults come to learning experiences with histories.

3. Adults need to know why we have to learn something.

4. Adults want agency in learning.

5. Adults need practice to internalize learning.

6. Adults have a problem-centered approach to learning.

7. Adults want to learn. (p. 184)

One can argue that these indicators are also relevant to learning at any age, but regardless, they serve an important part in understanding the needs behind adult learning and can

be supported by prominent adult developmental theory. Developmental psychologist Robert Kegan has created a theory of development that spans from childhood into adulthood, and posits that humans move through developmental stages when they are able to make what they were once subject to into something more objective (Kegan, 1997). In the stage of the socialized mind, people are unaware of (subject to) the influence of interpersonal relationships on their thoughts and actions. Moving on to the self-authoring stage, people become aware of the relational impact and are then subject to and immersed in their own beliefs and ideologies. In the final stage of development, the self-transforming stage, humans are able to hold awareness of multiple ideologies and not live subject to any of them (Kegan, 1997).

Mindfulness practices may be used to aid in the process of intentional adult development. It is possible to "apply the practice of mindfulness meditation toward self- and moral development. Mindfulness can enhance and promote movement toward more encompassing stages of awareness that consider perspectives beyond one's own" (Forbes, 2019, p. 19). In this way, mindfulness may serve as a tool to help adults hold multiple viewpoints objectively rather than being caught up in their own way of thinking. Forbes does caution, however, that mindfulness alone, without cultural and social awareness, risks people ending up as "ending up as an unhealthy collection of individualistic, atomized egos" (p. 92). The message continues to be clear, that an awareness and exploration of social and cultural context is necessary to adult learning. Explored in this way, adult development theory integrates seamlessly into theories of transformative learning.

Transformative Learning

When their beliefs, values, and concepts change because of learning experiences, this learning can be called transformative. Conceptualized initially by Jack Mezirow, asserted that transformative learning involves changes in a person's frame of reference by assessing

assumptions through critical reflection (Dirkx et al., 2006). Mezirow posited that this process of learning is initiated by a "disorienting dilemma," an occurrence that shakes the individual's understanding and leads to critical self-reflection and integration of new perspectives after a period of learning and exploration (Mezirow, 1991, p. 98-99). John Dirkx continued the conversation by asking: "How might we begin to understand what is involved in developing a relationship with the self-in-the-world that begins to see this everyday world as an enchanted place, a place of wonder, mystery, and awe?" (Dirkx et al., 2006). In this way, the way one orients themselves to the world may contribute to personal transformation. Dirkx is extremely interested in the role of emotions and learning, and suggests that:

> taking our inner lives seriously within teaching and learning in higher and adult education
> contributes to and deepens our sense of meaning in our lives. It can lead to deeper
> awareness and understanding of our role in life, but it also can contribute to a deeper
> appreciation of how meaning in our lives is intimately bound up in our relationships with
> others and the greater whole. (p. 129)

This view of transformative learning integrates the rational element of critical self-reflection with the emotional exploration of the consciousness through contemplation and inquiry.

Spirituality, embodied by practices within MBSEL such as meditation and emotional awareness, can be a liberating avenue for transformative education. John Miller (1999), expert in the field of holistic education, asserted that "contemplative knowing is essential to learning from a spiritual perspective. As noted, it involves a direct form of knowing where the barrier between the knower and the known disappears" (p. 98) and that this sort of knowing "is transformative in that it allows us to see the world anew" (p. 100). In this way, Miller suggests that contemplative practices, including mindfulness, may help to change the worldview for practitioners.

To embody spirituality in teaching, it is advised to be inclusive of multiple cultures and realities within the learning process. Sefa Dei (1999) suggested that "transformative teaching must examine how notions of self, personhood, place, history, culture, and belongingness to community are manifested in specific cultural contexts/values" (p. 127-128). Grounded in cultural context, spiritual practices, including elements of MBSEL, may support adult development and transformative learning. These practices that allow learners to examine their inner world and explore that understanding in relationships support learners in critical reflection.

Summary

Educators around the world are suffering from stress and burnout, which threatens their overall sense of wellbeing. Holistic wellbeing encompasses the domains of emotional, physical, social, workplace and societal (Davis, 2019). It is important to note that for international school teachers, a strong feeling of belonging is integral to the feeling of wellbeing (Wigford & Higgins, 2019). In considering the unique context of international school teachers, professionals who are teaching in cultural contexts outside of their own home country, mindfulness-based social-emotional learning may be an area to support them in continued wellbeing, as well as overall growth and development.

This cooperative inquiry is being framed as a potentially transformative experience for the international educators who will sign up as co-researchers. By co-creating a MBSEL experience, the group can ensure to consider "local people's aspirations, concerns, and needs" (Sefa Dei, 1999), that is, to operate from the myriad of cultural contexts present in their intercultural communities and encourage the exploration of both the inner and outer life. This project could have implications for the international school community, as it increasingly explores new ways to bolster wellbeing and belonging for teachers and students alike.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will situate the proposed qualitative research within a theoretical framework and methodology that are intended to support teacher wellbeing by creating strong interpersonal connections and offering opportunities for agency. Firstly, I highlight the unique features of the chosen methodology, cooperative inquiry, and highlight how it integrates into a theoretical framework informed by the fields of mindfulness, social-emotional learning, and transformative learning. I will then situate myself as a co-researcher and facilitator within this project, and describe the intended procedures for recruiting co-participants, engaging in inquiry and co-reflection together. I will conclude this chapter by highlighting the ethical considerations for this project and outlining a proposed timeline.

Cooperative Inquiry

Cooperative inquiry is an experiential, participatory research methodology which values researching *with* people rather than *on* people (Heron, 1996). This approach differs from traditional positivist research, where the researcher often enters as an expert in a hierarchical relationship with the participants. In cooperative inquiry, "each person is co-subject in the experience phases and co-researcher in the reflection phases" (Heron, 1996, p. 1). Thus, as the name suggests, the inquiry is co-constructed and follows iterative cycles of action and reflection. While this is similar to action research, the two paths of experiential inquiry move in different directions as cooperative inquiry is based directly in personal experience, not on exploring how a concept influences someone else (Bray et al., 2000).

History of Cooperative Inquiry

Ideologically, cooperative inquiry stems from both John Dewey's beliefs that experience is central to knowledge and hermeneutic phenomenology that highlights reflection on

experiences as important to making meaning (Bray et al., 2000). The method as it is known today was developed by John Heron, beginning loosely in the 1960s and 1970s based on the belief that "autonomy and co-operation are necessary and mutually enhancing values of human life" (Heron, 1996, p. 3). Reason (who has also collaborated closely with Heron to develop this approach) and Riley have suggested that the dual aims which arise out of this particular method are to produce knowledge and to empower people through the co-construction of that knowledge (Reason & Riley, 2015).

Flow of a Cooperative Inquiry Project

A cooperative inquiry is a "a living, emergent process which cannot be predetermined but changes and develops as those engaged deepen their understanding of the issues to be addressed and develop their capacity as co-inquirers both individually and collectively" (Reason & Riley, 2015, p. 169). A traditional cooperative inquiry follows a four-phase process. In the first phase, the co-researchers come together to discuss an agreed-upon issue from within their context, and then agree on a particular action or series of actions to take (Reason & Heron, n.d.). Phase two is the application of the action in their own context, and it flows into phase three, where participants become deeply engaged in the experience as they grow practical skills (Reason & Heron, n.d.). The fourth phase is the stage for critical reflection, where participants come back together to share personal reflections and also co-construct theories (Reason & Heron, n.d.). These cycles of action and reflection repeat multiple times. Bray et al. (2000) simplify this definition by stating that "collaborative inquiry is a process consisting of repeated episodes of reflection and action through which a group of peers strives to answer a question of importance to them" (p. 6-7). Note here that some researchers use the terms "cooperative inquiry" and

"collaborative inquiry" interchangeably. For this inquiry, I will use the term "cooperative inquiry."

A key intention behind cooperative inquiry is to produce new knowledge for the co-researchers. Specifically, they produce four different types of knowledge: experiential knowing, which arises from empathy due to face-to-face encounters with a person or experience and ends with personal transformation; presentational knowing which uses the arts to express symbols and patterns understood through the inquiry; propositional knowing, which involves ideas and theories and more traditional academic sharing methods; and practical knowing, which is the development of skills (Heron, 1996; Reason & Heron, n.d.). Ideally, all four ways of knowing will be present in the inquiry process in order to achieve a truly deep transformation. Heron offers that the method can be "informative about and transformative of any aspect of the human condition" (1996, p. 36).

Theoretical Framework

The theory guiding this inquiry, mindfulness-based SEL (MBSEL) as a potential transformative learning experience, actually intertwines gracefully with the principles of cooperative inquiry, and thus it is difficult to disentangle theory from methodology for this particular project, but also not something that feels necessary to do. In their work, Bray et al. (2000) make an explicit connection between mindfulness and cooperative inquiry, citing meditation and spirituality as ways of knowing in this sphere (p. 26). Connecting these fields does indeed bridge the gap between introspective reflection and wise action (both personally and collectively). Lantieri and Zakrzewski (2015) also call for the union of the more outward-focused SEL with inward-focused mindfulness, discussing how the practices complement each other. In his conception of the skills needed to develop this extended epistemology through

cooperative inquiry, Heron cites many skills that are found within the field of MBSEL, such as: being present, reframing, emotional competence, non-attachment. Thus, for this inquiry, the methodology and theory weave together, informed by the belief in the transformative power of agency and interconnectedness in group learning.

Rationale for Methodology Choice

Using cooperative inquiry to explore MBSEL with international educators is perhaps not the most obvious and certainly not the most easeful choice of methodology. However, the choice is rooted in deeply personal values, beliefs and experiences. In my own most recent experience as an educator at a large international school, I was subject to a teaching environment which did not offer a high amount of autonomy to its educators, or a safe space to nurture belonging. Upon reflection, the stress and pressure that exemplified this toxic environment led me to also doubt my abilities as an educator. My belief that education is an emancipatory practice, rooted in my own holistic practices of MBSEL, is what kept me grounded and still learning through this process. Research has actually shown that both autonomy and self-efficacy are connected to increased job engagement and satisfaction, and decreased emotional exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). With all of this in mind, my hope is that the intentional choice of a participatory inquiry method honours the educators who participated as co-researchers. By providing autonomy and an opportunity to develop confidence in MBSEL practices, this cooperative inquiry laid the groundwork for a transformative learning experience for the participants.

Using a cooperative inquiry approach offers the opportunity to intentionally design the research for belonging. For international school teachers, a strong sense of belonging in their adopted community influences their sense of wellbeing (Wigford & Higgins, 2019). By framing the research project as a cooperative inquiry, participants were expected to engage in dialogue

and reflection in order to co-create the inquiry. A learning community such as this, where teachers come together with shared values and curiosities, offers a space for belonging and shared growth (Flushman et al., 2021). Even though these teachers may not be in the same physical location, this inquiry provided a space for them to create a community of learning together.

Role of the Researcher

In a cooperative inquiry, the initiating researcher is a co-researcher alongside the other recruited participants. For this inquiry, this means that I was a participant alongside the other participants in MBSEL interventions and engaged in personal and group reflections. It is important to note, however, that of course while I was fully engaged in cooperation with others, my role was slightly different than theirs, as I initiated this project for my dissertation. Therefore, in terms of displaying propositional knowing, I was the only one consolidating the stories of this project for a final written submission. We are in conversation about sharing the findings of our inquiry at an international school conference and in a well-known international community journal, so if those experiences go through then there will be shared ownership of some elements of propositional knowing. Additionally, as the initiator with experience and certifications in the subject matter, I became the one to lead out on most of the teaching of those practices, with shared selection of practices and minimal (but not nonexistent) resource sharing from other members. I engaged mostly in a "propose and consult" (Reason & Riley, 2015, p. 183) method, where I offered suggestions for possible exploration and based on responses, we decided together how to move forward.

As the initiator and doctoral student within a cooperative inquiry, there was the possibility of tensions arising for me and the group members as we navigate the cooperative

process. In this process, many initiators experience role conflict, tightrope-walking a continuum between taking over the process because of my positionality and standing back too much in an attempt to avoid controlling the group (Bray et al., 2000). Indeed, this did happen to me and it was the mindfulness practice of paying attention in the present moment that allowed me to notice this tension arising. I was also intentional about working reflection on how the inquiry was going into our agendas, so that this internal group processing held space alongside the internal personal processing. It is also important to note that I conducted the data analysis on my own. The group was invited into the process but no one elected to join due to their other commitments in life and work. I did relate back to them for feedback and suggestions when creating the final themes from our shared transcripts and journals.

Procedures

For this project, I followed Bray et al.'s definition of cooperative inquiry (which they call collaborative inquiry): "a process consisting of repeated episodes of reflection and action through which a group of peers strives to answer a question of importance to them" (2000, p. 6-7). As the initiator of the cooperative inquiry group with international school teachers, I chose to conduct our inquiry meetings online. While in-person meetings may have provided more opportunity for face-to-face social interaction, they did not allow me to invite participants at international schools in multiple countries, so to truly offer the opportunity to teachers in different international contexts, it was best to meet synchronously online.

Recruitment of Participants

The recruitment process of this project went through many iterations using a snowball sampling process in different forms. It was initially conceptualized as a partnership with International Schools Services (ISS), which is a global nonprofit that works with schools and

teachers in a variety of contexts—from teacher recruitment to offering professional development to managing schools (International Schools Services, n.d.-b). An email requesting participation was sent out to heads of school in this network at the beginning of the school year. Perhaps because of the busy time of year or too many initiatives already underway, I did not receive any response to this email.

The second iteration included the sharing of a flier (see Appendix A) on a Facebook group for international school educators. While I garnered interest from eight possible participants, only one person attended the planned online information session and while she displayed interest, she later did not respond to the follow-up email.

The final (and successful) attempt at coordinating a group involved a two-prong strategy: I re-shared the flier on the same Facebook group, and also sent the flyer directly to international teachers in my network. Between the Facebook invite and my own network, I managed to gather a group of eight co-participants (including myself). It should be noted that for our purposes, only teachers (either expatriate or local host country) at international schools were invited to the study. This excluded leadership and local assistant teachers, who may have different needs and expectations for the project.

In the first iteration of gathering participants using social media, I had led and recorded an orientation session, which shared my initial research questions and explained the methodology of cooperative inquiry. For the second and most current iteration, I shared that recording with those who expressed interest and invited them to fill out a one-question form asking if they would like to participate (answering "yes," "no," or "I need a few days to think"). For those who answered "yes," which in this case was all seven other participants, I followed up with an email invitation to engage in an introductory semi-structured interview, an example of

which can be found in Appendix F. After deciding on a time for the initial interview, I shared the

informed consent form (Appendix B) with all participants in a format that allowed them to sign

online. This form explained the intentions of the inquiry, any possible benefits and risks for

participation, and contact information for myself and my dissertation chair. They were invited

either to sign before the initial interview, or if they had questions, to bring them to the interview

to address them before officially joining.

One member stepped away from the inquiry after the initial interview after deciding that

the time commitment would be too much for her in her current reality. After the initial meeting,

we also had two other people drop out. One felt overwhelmed by her personal and professional

commitments. The second one wanted to remain in the group but could only attend half of the

synchronous meetings. Because part of the nature of the inquiry was establishing the cooperative

group, we made the difficult decision that she would also step away. In the end, we were left

with five final members of the group, including myself.

Collection of Data

Cooperative inquiry "rests on the principle that experiences of individual members

become the content for group reflection and action" (Bray et al., 2000, p. 71). Most of the data

collected was in narrative form. In consultation with the group, I used a multitude of sources to

collect data that demonstrated the participants' experiences: transcriptions of the initial semi-

structured interviews, transcriptions and video recordings of our scheduled online meetings

where we reflect on the inquiry and plan our next actions, journal entries completed by

participants, my own reflective and observational journal entries, and any artifacts that may be

created in the process of the inquiry. All the data was stored on my laptop computer in a shared

Google Drive folder that all co-researchers were able to access. This was also a space for participants to share resources that they come across in the process as well.

All participants were emailed the initial interview possible questions beforehand (see appendix C). These initial interviews took between thirty minutes and one hour per participant, and were intended to be a space for me as the project initiator to get to know each participant, as well as to ascertain their hopes and purpose behind joining the inquiry. I was able to summarize the themes that arose from these interviews in our initial group meeting in October 2023. At this initial meeting, I initiated a discussion with the group to elicit their feedback on these shared themes and to ensure as much as possible that these stories represented their own experience.

I had hoped to begin the cooperative inquiry meetings in late August, right at the beginning of the school year, however due to the difficulty in recruiting a group, this was pushed back and our initial meeting was scheduled for October 1, 2023. Since members were all teachers at different international schools, they were located in four different time zones (Turkey, India, Jakarta, and Manila). We used an online polling software to determine the best time to schedule a regular meeting and also had everyone share any blackout dates where they would not be able to attend. We eventually decided to meet about every two weeks, with a longer five-week break that allotted for the different December holidays at each school. A timeline of our cooperative inquiry is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Timeline for Cooperative Inquiry

Month	Progress
August 2023	Sent out initial email to ISS schools -sent out initial Facebook invite
September 2023	Initial introductory online meeting (no participants) -sent out second Facebook invite and personal network invites -sent out informed consent forms to confirmed participants
October 2023	-introductory interviews with participants -First meeting of MBSEL cooperative inquiry group
October 2-23-February 2024	-Cooperative inquiry group meetings – engaging in cycles of reflection and action -transcribing and coding of group meetings
February 4 2024	-Final celebration and reflection meeting of MBSEL cooperative inquiry
February 2024	-Final coding and thematic analysis of group meeting transcripts and participant journals

Analysis of Data

As a participatory methodology, the use of cooperative inquiry necessitates some level of acceptance of discomfort and uncertainty. The data analysis method I selected is reflexive thematic analysis (TA). In reflexive TA, the subjectivity of the researcher is valued, and there is a clear awareness that the researcher(s) is/are situated in a particular context, and that this context influences their analysis (V. Braun & Clarke, 2022). This emphasis on reflexivity connects deeply with the methodology and frameworks employed in this inquiry, as participant experience and reflection is paramount to developing knowledge and understanding.

TA engages a six-phase process which can be meandering and cyclical (mirroring the reflection and action cycles of cooperative inquiry): familiarization with the data set; coding; generating initial themes; developing and reviewing themes; refining, defining and naming themes; and writing up (V. Braun & Clarke, 2022). I invited the co-researchers into the process of analysis with me, with the awareness that "collaborative coding is used to enhance understanding, interpretation and reflexivity, rather than to reach a consensus about data coding" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 52). However, no one else elected to be a part of the data analysis process, so I instead engaged the group on a consultative process, presenting the themes to them as a part of a final reflection and eliciting feedback.

As the initiating researcher, I engaged in a reflexive journal throughout the process, which enabled me to continuously examine my own subjectivity as a researcher in the process. I used this journal to reflect and "ask, for instance, why might I be having this particular type of response, and how might this matter for my research? This is kind of like a de-socialisation process, where things you take for granted are put in the spotlight and questioned" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 69). This journal was a tool for me to continue to develop awareness of my own positionality and also any preferences or learnings within the process.

Ethical Considerations

Research with human participants can offer benefits and risks to those involved. According to the Belmont Report of 1979, it is imperative that researchers design their inquiries based on the principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice (The CITI Program, 2018). The participants in this MBSEL cooperative inquiry stood to benefit by potentially experiencing transformation in their feelings, thoughts and actions. They learned new skills in

the realm of MBSEL and increased their sense of belonging based on the creation of a new shared community space.

Participants were informed that there was a small chance of psychological harm for those engaging in this inquiry. The practices and topics that were explored in the sphere of MBSEL are of an emotional nature. If participants were experiencing stress or residual trauma, it is possible that practicing mindfulness could exacerbate these difficult circumstances (Treleaven, 2018b). To keep the practices safe for participants, it is essential that the mindfulness teacher be aware of these risks. As the certified mindfulness meditation teacher who will be leading any practices, I had basic training and awareness surrounding the principles of trauma-sensitive mindfulness. However, I am not a licensed therapist, and in order to ensure that participants have the resources they need if they do experience adverse reactions, I provide them with contact information for internationally-trained therapists that are available to meet online should the need arise (see Appendix E). During practice, I engaged in trauma-sensitive mindfulness practices, such as watching for signs of dysregulation, educating participants about how stress and trauma arises in the brain, offering strategies for self-regulation, using arousal scales to track regulation levels and leading participants to shift attention (Treleaven, 2018b). While these practices are designed specifically for mindfulness meditation, they can apply to SEL practices as well, especially self-awareness explorations which encourage participants to look inwards to examine identity and emotions.

Because this inquiry is cooperative and thus social, there was a possibility that conflict could arise in the group. As conflict can be stressful, this potentiality could have caused psychological distress for participants. To mitigate this risk, we established norms of interaction to guide dialogue and interaction from the outset of the inquiry.

Lastly, locating the inquiry online makes it difficult to ensure complete confidentiality for participants. While participants may agree to keep the conversations confidential, it is out of my control as to whether there were other people in the room with participants who may overhear the conversations. It was also possible for participants to record the meetings without others knowing. And of course, while technology offers ease of collaboration, there is always a risk that data stored online could be compromised.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Teaching is an occupation that breeds strong emotion - both joys and sorrows, energy and exhaustion. As someone who experiences this intensity firsthand and has felt the marked difference to my own energy, awareness and relationships since starting regular MBSEL practices, I became curious about how a community-based exploration of practices may support other educators. With the uniqueness of the international school community in which all of the group's co-researchers work, we were aware of the different challenges that may arise from a lived experience in a country far from "home" and a community not your own. While I considered engaging others in these topics through a more didactic workshop model, I ultimately decided that the cooperative inquiry model of participatory research adhered more strongly to the values I aspire to uphold. One stressor that put particular pressure on me as an educator was the lack of overall autonomy and trust I felt in my school situation, and I was determined that this exploration would afford autonomy and the opportunity to build trust for all who were participating. These practices are personal and each participant deserved to have a say in how we would shape the inquiry.

Formation of the Group

Our final inquiry group was comprised of five educators living and working in Asia and Europe. All of us were White North American females, which was not an intended demographic, but also not surprising as the demographic of homeroom and subject educators in international schools skews heavily towards people from societally-deemed "Western" nations, with little representation from "Western" people of colour and arguably even less from host country national individuals. This inequity is slowly being acknowledged within the international school community, but change is slow. Our group consisted of myself, the sole Canadian living in

Indonesia and having taught overseas for my entire teaching career in the early years and lower elementary as a classroom teacher. Colleen is an elementary special education teacher and is in her first teaching position abroad. Both of us describe ourselves as teachers from the start, having a passion for the profession from an early age. Our three other members describe falling into the position and remaining because of the adventure and flexibility afforded overseas as well as developing a love for the profession. Julie is the most experienced teacher among us, having lived overseas for thirty years. She is a high school counselor who is now the Wellbeing Director at her school in India. Megan is an elementary educator in the Philippines and she also has experience as a certified meditation teacher. Kendall joined us from Turkey, where she teaches elementary school and is supporting the development of a forest school program at her school.

After meeting individually with each group member, it became clear that this was a group that already had a proclivity towards wellbeing and systems change. Figure 2 describes the shared purpose that brought us all together for this inquiry, with a clear emphasis on the desire to make a difference in our settings and a belief that wellbeing is at the heart of teaching. We came together looking for community support and personal growth, as identified by the themes created from individual conversations around shared goals (See Figure 3).

Figure 2

The Driving Purpose of the Cooperative Inquiry Group

Figure 3

Factors Influencing Member to Join the Cooperative Inquiry Group

Establishing Group Norms and Purpose

I was nervous about what exactly shared leadership was going to look like in our group, especially with the fact that I had such a vested interest in this project as the subject of my dissertation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the organization of the group did end up moving towards a propose and consult model, with me (most often) making suggestions about a path to follow and the group responding and deciding together. The idealist in me was still hoping for a more organic emergence of true shared leadership, however I also acknowledge the difficulties in this when constrained by time and using an online meeting room, not to mention the consideration of the overflowing busy lives of the teachers who signed up for the inquiry. As the initiating researcher, I was pleased that other participants felt comfortable voicing their needs and wonderings. Indeed, my journal after the first meeting shared:

> Just had our first meeting! Gah I was nervous. Well, mostly curious. And I am still curious and the nerves have abated a bit. Others are curious. And excited about the cooperative element and want to figure out how to get into it together! People brought up some things I hadn't thought about - like how to determine roles, and to agree upon definitions of terms. I'm so grateful that this is really happening and that I have these people to go on the journey with me. Honestly it feels pretty surreal. Here I am—I am working towards a degree and as a part of that I get the chance to help build a new community? (Kailyn reflexive journal, October 2)

Our first two meetings were spent almost entirely establishing our norms of engagement and purpose for the inquiry, which fell within Phase One of the cooperative inquiry process (Heron, 1996). Figure 4 shows the initial brainstorm of topics people were wondering about in terms of organizational structure. And indeed, with these deep conversations, we became very clear with

our focus and mandate. While conversation fluttered around potential lines of inquiry, the group determined the importance of focusing on adult personal practice of MBSEL. While my initial plan had been to purely use reflective storytelling to share our data, there was a strong desire from members of the group to include a measurement of our progress across our time together. In our initial conversations, Colleen first shared that "my brain is going how are we measuring?" (Colleen, Meeting 2). Julie, as a practicing counsellor building data systems to monitor student growth, also echoed a desire to collect baseline data for our inquiry. We agreed to use CASEL's Adult SEL Self-Assessment (Appendix G) before launching our exploration and at the end, with a final journal entry from all participants reflecting on the comparison between the two rubrics.

Figure 4

Participant Questions About the Formation of the Inquiry
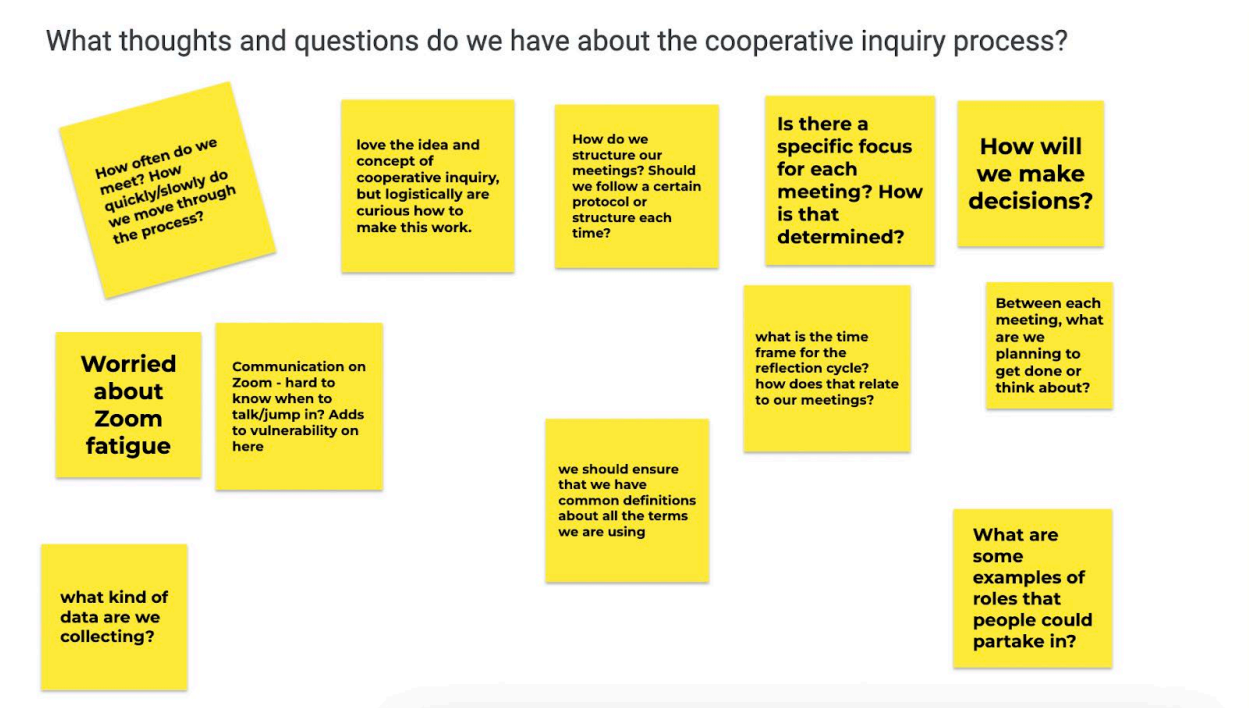
Choosing our Research Question and Direction

Initially, I had presented the group with a series of research questions, which felt quite overwhelming and unattainable. As a group, we decided to simplify the question to "What do we

notice when we practice mindfulness-based social-emotional learning?" as an open-ended but accessible question that clearly denoted attention to practice but also had potential to spread outwards into the world. A final decision we made after choosing this question was to narrow down our SEL practice points to activities that fell inside the domains of Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation. Megan suggested choosing a domain of the CASEL framework and specifically practicing mindfulness in relation to that, and Julie furthered that suggestion by adding that "maybe we could do the both of the two self things with one dedicated practice, because then we know that it's very narrow, and it could be measured, but with those stories as well" (Julie, Meeting 3). The group felt that we did not have enough time to practice all five domains from the CASEL framework and that these two domains would provide a strong foundation for personal reflection. We would follow a similar rhythm each week, moving through cycles of reflection and action. In our live meetings — a guided mindfulness meditation, reflective conversation about our practice during our weeks apart, a guided SEL practice on a specific theme, more reflective conversation about that particular practice, and then group decision about the topic we would explore independently. For the most part, we met bi-weekly, and in the weeks on our own, we would meditate multiple times a week, as well as engage in the chosen topic for SEL practice. Table 2 shows which specific umbrella of practices were engaged in during each inquiry cycle.

Table 2

Schedule of MBSEL practices

Meeting	Independent Mindfulness Practice	Independent SEL Practice
1-Oct1	Mindfulness of Breath	*We agreed for our first cycle to focus on establishing mindfulness practice
2-Oct15	Mindfulness of Body	Self-Compassion
3-Nov 5	Mindfulness of Thoughts	Personal Strengths and Values
4-Nov 19	Mindfulness of Emotions	Emotional Awareness
5-Dec 3	Loving Kindness	Self-Regulation
6-Jan14	Continue exploring all practices	Gratitude
7-Jan 28	Continue exploring all practices	Professional and personal identity
8-Feb 4	*Gratitude meditation during meeting	*gratitude reflection during meeting and future intention-setting

Cooperative Inquiry as Our Vehicle

The cooperative inquiry structure of repeated cycles of action and reflection offered a seamless way for us to structure our own inquiry. Our first two meetings were spent on Phase One, where we created norms and structures for the group, and each subsequent meeting offered a transition through phases two, three and four, where as a group we chose our area of investigation and action, embedded ourselves in it individually, and then came back together to reflect and move forward with our next chosen area of exploration. These cycles, along with our subject matter, naturally offered opportunities for creating an extended epistemology with the four types of knowledge that are associated with cooperative inquiry (Reason & Heron, n.d.). Experiential knowing took place as we engaged in new practices, both together and

independently. Presentational knowing emerged in the stories we told one another, both orally in our meetings and written in our reflective journals. We also engaged artistically to explore emotional expression during one group meeting, which is also an example of presentational knowing. Propositional knowing was also weaved in throughout our meetings, as we explored theories of mindfulness and SEL, and also ways of implementing practices in our schools. Lastly, as will be evident in the exploration of themes below, we all walked away with new skills and abilities, which is the hallmark of transformative, practical knowing.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

I chose Braun and Clarke's (2022) process of reflexive thematic analysis, which situates the researcher within the inquiry in a way that complemented the flow of cooperative inquiry. Using transcripts from our meetings together as well as reflective journal entries shared by all participants, I created multiple codes based on snippets of conversation that responded to our research question. From those codes, I was able to create five overarching themes and sub-themes which will be discussed below.

Theme 1: Increased Self-Awareness in Times of Emotional Overwhelm

Based on the literature and my own experience, it did not come as much of a surprise to me that our group began expressing greater levels of self-awareness. It is also notable that this domain was one of our two core competencies of SEL to explore. A majority of the comments relating to self-awareness surrounded a growing ability to recognize patterns of emotion in difficult times, as well as the recognition of the need for perspective shifts in order to boost wellbeing.

Recognizing Unhealthy Patterns

The early part of our inquiry was focused solely on developing a habit of mindfulness and coupling that with self-awareness practices, and these explorations seemed to unearth people's awareness of their own unhealthy patterns of thought and behaviour. Julie recognized that "now that I'm talking about it a little bit more to people, it actually surfaces a little bit more to be aware when I'm doing that negative cycle" (Meeting 3) and that she's "noticed a change in [her] flexibility, but the greatest benefit has been a deeper understanding of the mind-body connection" (Julie journal). Increased attention to her thought patterns helped to support her in recognizing when she was judging herself, rather than those thoughts going unchecked in the conscious mind. This awareness of her mind extends into the body, and noticing how the two are connected. Kendall also spoke of the prevalence of the judging mind, and how "it's very fast and it's something like - sometimes I wake up and start berating myself about missing something or forgetting something and I didn't realize how often I did that" (Meeting 4). An important part of mindfulness practice is recognizing thoughts as impermanent objects of attention, as opposed to things that are assumed true.

Intentional practice of self-awareness routines also led many of us to become aware of some of our patterns of behaviour. After completing a reflection on personal core values, I recognized that "I am concerned about my ability to balance and how the constant slogging possibly affects my gut health and my energy levels. Even though I love the work I am doing, I am getting into some very unhealthy habits, especially with addictive use of technology from morning until night" (Kailyn journal). Plotting my values on the page and highlighting how close or far I was from living by those values allowed me to see some of the choices that were barring me from fully living my truth. Similarly, Colleen was able to recognize environmental factors

that led to stress being high "because my team is running out of time where we can schedule meetings and every day for the last 4 school days, I have been asked to add more meetings, and each time the there was an element of frustration about having a meeting and not having enough slots to schedule them" (Colleen journal). The intentional reflection on our values and habits allowed us to bring potentially harmful patterns to our conscious mind.

Heightened Wellbeing Requires a Shift in Perspective

Awareness in itself does not always lead to action or change. While there are instances in this inquiry that it indeed has, participants also found it important to note the sustained mental energy needed in order to take action on shifting patterns of awareness. When engaging in a reflective practice which asked us to explore what drains and supports our energy, Megan noted how simple it is to turn to things like junk food or social media as accessible coping mechanisms in times of exhaustion, because more sustainable methods, such as meditation or exercise "require energy and effort. And they require . . . putting in to get back the support". During the same exercise, I was surprised to find, when visually exploring my own supports, that I had more supports in place than I was aware of. I entered the exercise expecting to see a large imbalance but when I actually listed all of the elements of support that were helping to hold me up, I realized that my negativity bias may be in relation to "not all the supports I always want right now, like there's other things I want—to be walking in nature and there's a little bit of a narrative [that I do not have supports when I really do]" (Kailyn, meeting 5). Both of these aha moments forced us into reckoning with our own potentially harmful thought patterns and invited us into shifting our perspective. For Megan, it was about the effort it required to remember the value of those more sustainable practices, and for me it was a shift away from the negativity that can settle in when we have ourselves convinced that life is not exactly as we want. Moving towards

greater wellbeing requires us to be aware of those thought patterns that can hold us back from making those action choices that will support it.

Theme 2: Increased Self-Compassion

As previously mentioned, our first group meetings were spent mostly focused on the logistical formation of the inquiry - what exactly were we exploring? How would we make decisions? How would we measure our progress? While engaging in this deep cooperative work, we decided to spend our first reflective cycle grounding in self-compassion practices alongside our introductory mindful breathing daily practice. This unified wisdom from the group provided a foundation that was strengthened throughout the entire inquiry, with all members reflecting on marked shifts in their own levels of self-compassion, as well as instances when that shift compelled them to take action on their own self-care.

Shifts Toward Self-Compassionate Thought Patterns

An explanation of the self-awareness of unhealthy thought patterns in theme one demonstrated that group members were clearly becoming more aware of their own judgmental thoughts that were not serving their wellbeing. In many cases, self-compassion practices allowed this awareness to shift to action, with judgment softening to self-compassion, as expressed by Kendall in her journal:

> Upon waking up to the rain one morning and realizing right away that because of things I dropped as a teacher we wouldn't be able to go to the forest that day, my normal reaction would be to start criticizing myself, which I did to be honest. But then I feel like I was able to stop and calm myself down, remind myself that I am still a good teacher with a lot on my plate and that I'm doing my best. Which was really nice. It made the morning that much better. (Kendall, journal)

Kendall recognized the typical groove of her thought pattern, and then joyfully embraced the grace she gave herself in the recognition that she is a human who makes mistakes. Rather than letting one of those mistakes shadow her day as she may have in the past, she was able to move forward with a more positive mindset. Colleen had a similar realization when she realized one of her strengths was being underutilized in moments of stress:

> So that was one of those moments of not being the organized - one that I usually count as a strength and it was it was good to have that moment of okay, yep, I'm also human, and . . . even a strength was something that was a little bit tough for me this week. (Meeting 4)

There is no judgment in her words. She honoured her own humanity and imperfection and allowed herself to see that her current stress affected even those traits that usually come second nature to her. Indeed, times of stress and pressure can deeply affect how we show up in the world, and I reflected on one of those moments. Though recovering from food poisoning, I felt compelled to attend a speaking engagement at an overseas conference which had been booked for months. Tired from travel and recovery, I had a moment mid-talk where I completely lost my train of thought. In my journal afterward, I commented that:

> what was really refreshing was that there was NO self-judgment in this moment. I immediately laughed at myself. Especially at the absurdity of my brain fizzling out when I was speaking about the brain. I recognize this as a huge shift from a few years ago, when I would have honed in on that moment and worried about how I came off. (Kailyn journal)

Not only did I give myself the space to make this mistake, but I was able to find humour in the fact that I lost my concentration while speaking about the power of paying attention. In the exact moment that this happened, I was able to feel a softening in my entire demeanour, and also to

recognize just how much of a shift this was from the past, when I may have spent days mortified and replaying the scenario in my head. All of these instances of self-compassion served to free us from endless harmful rumination so that we could move forward with our lives.

It is important to note that, while many instances of self-compassion arose when they were needed in moments of stress, it was much easier to lean into self-compassion during times of balance and relaxation. Colleen notes the difference between being on vacation when she "got on the wrong train going in completely the wrong direction and things like that are so easy to roll off" and "back in a stressful week at work and a very tiny thing to make [her] feel like 'oh, god I'm failing'" (Meeting 3). Megan shared a similar thought process that it is "super dependent on the day, you know, like: how much sleep have I had? And what kinds of things are happening in my life any given moment? Or, you know, am I in the middle of summer break? Or everything's easeful? Or am I in the thick of the school year where the energies are, you know, super stress inducing?" (Meeting 3). In these reflections, we see that while our self-compassion is growing all around, the ease of access can also be context-dependent. More rest, more ease and more balance seem to make calling upon self-compassion a smoother process than those demanding moments in the midst of a busy teaching life.

Self-Compassion Leading to Self-Care

As explored in the previous theme, a shift in thought patterns is a first step to a shift in action, but does not always lead to it. During our inquiry, we celebrated many moments where an increase in self-compassionate thought was able to support a commitment to actionable self-care. The caveat of this shift is expressed by Colleen that "intellectually, I know that short breaks are good for me but I still struggle with feeling like I am doing something wrong" (Colleen, journal). Teaching is an outward-facing occupation and taking care of ourselves before or instead of

others can often feel adverse to what we have been conditioned to feel. Even so, we found the strength to begin to break free of those narratives. Kendall demonstrated her step toward compassionate self-care by "choosing to stay home today to go to the doctor instead of forcing myself to go to school. Could I have waited a few more days to go to the doctor? Probably. But I have waited five weeks and I want to feel better and it's ok to take care of myself. I need these constant little reminders in life, because it is so easy to get swept away with guilt and shame" (Kendall, journal). For five weeks Kendall had been putting her own health aside and this day she made a step toward healing herself. The guilt and shame she and Colleen both allude to is wound so tightly into the fabric of the profession. There exists a deep culture of martyrdom and teachers feel beholden to the needs of others. I also celebrated a small break from this hold during a moment where I recognized my own unconscious urge to help fix problems for others before helping myself:

> My gut instinct was to offer to help. And then I realized: "I am stressed right now because of the mountain of tasks I have to do. This is HIS job." I didn't offer to help. And I felt like I was swallowing a rock but also was proud of myself. There is growth there in not jumping in to save others when they are perfectly capable and also when I have needs of my own. (Kailyn, journal)

This instinct we all have to help is not something that any of us want to lose, but it would be nice to shake the element that leads us to help others at our own expense. Megan shared a moment when this instinct for self-care developed in her:

> Somehow in the midst of being sick and embracing the discomfort of the reality with this close friend, my instinct is to ensure I get enough sleep, plan for healthy nutritious meals, build back my capacity for regular exercise, feel settled at work, and rest. A layer of deep

gratitude rests under it all for my instinct to care for myself and face discomfort instead

of hide. (Megan, journal)

She later goes on to highlight the belief that "by taking care of ourselves, in our own space, and

environment, and relationships and communities, we are influencing everything around us"

(Meeting 3). We are all on our journey, either beginning or well on the way, to become people

who take conscious action to care for ourselves. And we operate under this assumption, informed

by our own research and that of other esteemed colleagues, that taking these actions of self-care,

as much as we may have been trained against them, is actually the best thing we can do for

ourselves, our students, and our schools.

Theme 3: Sharing Learning with the Community

This inquiry was entirely focused on what a small group of international teachers noticed

when they began (or continued to) practice mindfulness-based social-emotional learning. And

while the practice was personal, it is not surprising that a group so passionate about making a

difference in their schools and communities would begin to see their practices emanating

outwards.

Some educators found the practice supporting their teaching, by providing a more

spacious sense of empathy or as a model for how students may respond to stimuli. Megan shared

that she was feeling frustrated with a student experiencing big emotions but that:

upon learning that she just wants to feel better, I invited her to try being with her

emotions instead of thinking of these strategies as ways to stop the unpleasant feelings. It

is clear that my emotions and the care that I have been offering myself gives me the drive

and motivation to offer the same care to my students. (Megan, journal)

Colleen also shared a similar moment of awareness and regulation, where she recognized that she may have been rushing a student along through an anxious time, and she instead "realized what I was doing and acknowledged that I was in the yellow zone and I stopped and asked her about her Zones [referring to the Zones of Regulation—a program the school uses to support student self-regulation development] and how she felt about the situation" (Colleen, journal). Both of these vignettes illustrate the teachers' increasing flexibility with their own ability to regulate emotions and, taking it further, to extend that skill to their students as a model of how to process dysregulation. Kendall's students even demonstrated what an independent transfer of those skills might look like. In a moment where she reflected on something that had been frustrating her, a student advised her that "'you really needed to take some deep breaths there . . . cuz you really needed to wait and cool off and like, calm down before" (Kendall, meeting 4). Kendall has clearly been modeling these skills in the classroom, and her students are beginning to demonstrate awareness that mindful breathing is a tool which can be helpful to regulate strong feelings. We are seeing repeatedly these teachers deepening their own awareness and taking the next step of sharing their learning with students. I shared a moment like this with the group last week as well. I had found myself ruminating anxiously on the way to work and caught myself in the middle and chose to use a mindful breathing technique called anchor breathing to bring my attention back into present moment awareness. And "every class I was teaching that day, I'm like: 'I'm gonna tell you this story. Because here's a time that you can use your anchor breathing in the moment.' And I did it today and the kids were so good" (Kailyn, Meeting 7). As soon as I was able to feel more settled, my mind went immediately to the teachable moment that this could become - an example for my students. Care and compassion for our students is something that unites us all within this group, sometimes to a fault as we put the needs of others before our own,

but we are seeing many glimmers of a future where our MBSEL skills as teachers can ripple out into our classrooms.

For those who teach in classrooms, the influence of this inquiry can often be most immediately witnessed inside those four walls, and for some, they are extending their support wider into the community. As Wellbeing Director at her school, Julie has a unique vantage point. She is involved in training of teachers and students and contributing to the development of a whole-school wellbeing framework. As a result of this inquiry alongside the many other rich opportunities in the field Julie is participating in, she and another colleague are "talking about trying to start a happiness course" (Julie, Meeting 4) for students to be able to take for high school credit. She believes deeply in the work and is trying to embed it in the fabric of the school. Megan, also, "started designing a mindfulness coaching program. I want to help people who work with or raise children to cultivate a mindfulness practice and help them model for children what it looks like to move through life with more awareness and compassion" (Megan, journal). Through her sustained practice, she has noticed transformative personal change, and feels compelled to share that with other educators in her school community, and perhaps beyond in the greater international community.

Theme 4: Community of Practice is a Supportive Structure

MBSEL, and more generally the field of wellbeing in international schools, is growing but still very emergent. In schools with such high annual turnover and potentially precarious climates, a sense of belonging can feel fleeting and unattainable. From the start of this inquiry, our members began to think together about the potential value that would come from engaging in these explorations as a group rather than siloed as an individual. "I think that's an important variable here, whether you're doing these practices as a group or doing them alone" (Julie,

Meeting 2). Julie highlighted from the start that the group structure would offer a different experience than individual practice may have, possibly from "the power of connection and how having a shared practice helps create positive energy in the group" (Julie, journal). In our initial discussion of the cooperative inquiry process, Megan also offered a shift in language toward community, as cooperative inquiry may suggest community but does not necessarily highlight it as "something that has the potential to impact the outcome in a different way than if we were doing it on your own" (Megan, Meeting 2). The group structure was something that drew our members to this inquiry, and something that supported them in continued practice and accountability.

As time passed in our inquiry, the group became a strong community of practice, where members felt motivated by the support that was offered to each other. At the end of the first meeting, when we reflected on how we wanted to move forward with the flow of reflection and action cycles, it became clear that getting to know each other personally and connecting on a deeper level was important to the group to build trust. While we had formal check-ins and shared slides about our family and life, time also opened up to connect in the moment about our lives and teaching. During one meeting, we took time at the beginning to hear about an incident that had happened with a student at Kendall's school, offer empathy and possible suggestions for how to proceed next. There was a moment later in the inquiry when Megan shared a personal story and the group responded with care and concern. We became not just co-researchers but friends and colleagues across the sea.

The structure of the group appeared to offer some extrinsic support to our motivation to continue a regular practice. Megan shared that:

probably because of this group and because of the consistency of practice, I am

remembering to pause throughout my teaching day . . . And yeah, and I just love that.

That little pause that is so hard to come by unless there's something holding me

accountable to it, like this group. (Megan, Meeting 5)

Building new habits is incredibly hard, and in the busy life of educators, it can be easy to let new

things slip by the wayside. However, the structure of the group, with the weekly journals and bi-

weekly reflective meetings, may have encouraged people to remain more steadfast in their

practice than they would have if trying to practice asynchronously on their own. I also noticed a

pattern of becoming more grounded each time we met as I shared in my own journal:

I am so buoyed by this community. I truly feel held up by these women I am in a group

with. Even though I am constantly talking about doing these practices, the time and the

space we offer one another here allows me and forces me to actually DO the practices.

No excuses. And there is camaraderie and support and care from all of the team. My

anxiety around the uncertainty and need to DO falls away as I allow myself to just BE

together. There is grounding in this human connection, and deep learning. This is what I

need in order to grow. (Kailyn, reflexive journal)

This reflection demonstrates the closing of that gap between self-awareness and action expressed

earlier in this chapter. For me, the group allowed me to get out of my own head with putting

what I knew theoretically into an embodied practice. This embodiment of practice is also one of

the intended outcomes of cooperative inquiry, and part of what the community supports for its

members. By practicing together and getting to know each other as both people and educators,

we strengthened our community into a space that supported the growth of all of its members.

Theme 5: Desire to Do Things Differently

No one in this inquiry came into the community needing to be convinced to experiment (or continue to experiment) with MBSEL. This is not always the case in school systems, and though our inquiry focused on personal practice, conversation always seemed to meander into the realm of systems change. Even before engaging in practices ourselves, the hypothesis from the group was that adult practice needed to be the first step in changing schools. In our third meeting, Julie posited that "we need the adult SEL so that people understand it first before they can teach it." Megan shared a similar statement in her journal: "It wasn't until my mindfulness practice became a part of my life that I noticed the social/emotional impact I was having on my students." These skills are ones that must be understood and embodied in order to have the impact described above where they are transferred to students and community members. With this theory in mind, our co-researchers constantly expressed a desire for schools to do things differently - with worry about the current state of affairs and a hope for a future paradigm shift.

Worry About Current MBSEL Implementation in Schools

The consensus among our group is that most schools are giving lip service to wellbeing practices, and in our own experiences (which, admittedly, do not represent a majority of international schools), the approach to implementation is often disorganized and missing components. There seems to be confusion about how to train teachers and who should be the main spearheaders of the movement. In Julie's school, they "want the teachers to do everything. At the same time, they don't have that common training time or planning time . . . and for the SEL lessons it's kind of like 'just teach SEL'" (Meeting 4). As a counselor trained in many of these modalities, she hopes for a more skills-based, documented curriculum that everyone is trained on. In Colleen's school, SEL sometimes feels like a "buzzword thing that we need to fill"

or a "box that needs to be checked" (Meeting 3). She acknowledged that teachers are indeed

offering lessons and counsellors are working individually and in groups with students, but

"they've definitely skipped over the adult part" (Meeting 3). The worry here appears to be that if

mindfulness and SEL are treated as just another subject to put on teacher's plates, rather than the

foundation that all other domains and routines can build upon, they will not actually become part

of the fabric of the school.

While we know that deep learning is rooted in emotions, many school systems have

separated the academic from the social and emotional elements of learning, making the transition

to embedding MBSEL more difficult. In many ways, "education has been devoid of emotions for

so long" even though "the workplace is filled with emotions and we tend to deny that" (Julie,

Meeting 4). While what has caused this rift is beyond the scope of this inquiry, the reality

undergirds it completely. I shared a rather shocking example with the group of a time when I was

"told as a teacher to stay in my lane and not talk about emotions" (Kailyn, Meeting 4). My

interpretation of that event had been that the leadership preferred the emotional domain being led

by the counsellors of the school and not the teachers. It is the mandate of this group, and the

growing body of literature, that this is in fact not the case. That emotions are the domain of

everyone, starting with the adults especially. Even when schools do embrace teaching children

these skills, sometimes the approach can carry misinformation, such as in Megan's school when

a lesson her grade level team was supposed to deliver included using the vocabulary of "no

feelings" (Meeting 4). She felt uncomfortable with perpetuating the idea that some feelings are

not welcome, when her training had taught her the value of allowing emotions to express

themselves in order to move into healthier regulation strategies. Our group recognized that there

is still much work to be done to shift perceptions and bridge the knowledge gap in schools internationally, and we can only assume the same for national schools as well.

We Need a Paradigm Shift

I will end this chapter with the sub-theme that is fueled by optimism and compassionate action. Our group heartily expressed the desire for a systems-wide change to come, which could start from within but with the important recognition that "there has to be buy-in on the leadership level" (Colleen, Meeting 2). As we wrestle with the enormity of what a change like this would mean, Julie asked the questions:

> As somebody who's trying to bring this into the adult world - how do we do it? You know, and it's not just about a framework, it's about institutional change, to some extent that we need a paradigm shift, if we're really expecting our teachers to do this, because they're not giving themselves permission right now to even take a little bit of time and incorporate this in their day. I mean, even we don't all the time, right?! And we're the ones who are dedicated to this. (Meeting 2)

There is a deep recognition that what is happening now is not working. Teachers are not being given the time to understand the practices, and that is what may make all of the difference. Julie articulates that time, something that is always hard to come by in education, may be the resource needed to support this shift in thinking and practice. The hope is that "meditation and mindfulness will become as understood, and necessary as exercise and healthy eating" (Megan, Meeting 3). Currently, we are enduring so many injustices and inequities within the system that it can be difficult "to be patient with how we really want to keep going in the education world" (Julie, Meeting 6) but at the same time we recognize that we are "not just trying to use it to get through your day, but to change the system from the inside out" (Kailyn, Meeting 2). The deep

hope is that these practices transform each person in order to transform the system. It can be incredibly difficult to push through when the pace of change is so slow, however as a group, we are steadfast in the awareness that something (in fact many somethings) has to change in order to build a more just future.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

In this cooperative inquiry, my co-researchers and I explored personal practices of mindfulness-based social-emotional learning, both together and individually. Teaching is a profession that brings joy and fulfillment to many educators, yet it is also closely associated with heightened levels of stress and job burnout. As someone with positive personal experiences with practices of mindfulness and social-emotional learning in relation to my own social and emotional development as well as levels of stress, I was curious about how exploring these practices might be the same or different for other educators. Since I have been working in English-speaking international schools, unique environments where the teaching is in English but the schools are located in non-English speaking countries worldwide, I chose to conduct this research with other teachers in similar positions. My belief was that mindfulness and SEL are inextricably linked, and that the former provides a strong foundation for the latter, and many of my group members agreed with me from the start, which is why we chose to pursue a study of MBSEL, rather than solely focusing on one element.

The structure of a cooperative inquiry was chosen to give voice and choice to all participants. The purpose of this inquiry was to truly uncover each person's unique experience of these practices, by responding to our co-created research question: "What do we notice when we practice mindfulness-based social-emotional learning?" It seemed pertinent that the method of inquiry offered opportunities for agency and participation for all members in this deeply personal investigation. Once participants confirmed their desire to join, I met with each person individually to find out more about their teaching history and purpose for joining the inquiry. We convened as a group for the first time in early October and spent our first two meetings in Phase One of our cooperative inquiry, establishing group norms, protocols for decision-making, and

wrestling with how to articulate the purpose and detailed research question of our study. We chose to build (or continue) our daily mindfulness meditation practice and explore the specific SEL competencies of Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation in conjunction with the foundational mindfulness. The group met a total of eight times, practicing and reflecting together during our two-hour meetings, and then continuing and deepening the practices independently between our gatherings.

The process of reflexive thematic analysis was chosen as a guiding framework for analyzing the data, which came from transcripts of our meetings together as well as written reflective journals from all participants. I examined the data alone as our other members did not express a desire to join in this part of the inquiry. Reflexive TA was chosen because of the clear acknowledgment of the positionality of the research as a subject within the study and not an outsider. This practice honours the researcher as an active creator of the codes and themes, which mirrored the CI process and also placed agency and voice at the forefront. I went through multiple cycles of coding the data before creating five consolidated themes in response to our question:

- Increased self-awareness in times of emotional overwhelm
- Increased self-compassion
- Sharing learning with the community
- Community of practice as a supportive structure
- Deep desire to do something different

While the research question of the group was simplified, these themes actually speak to the original question which started the investigation for me, which was "How does MBSEL influence the lived experiences of international school teachers?" While the group was reticent to

include the terminology "lived experience", these themes did indeed touch on minor shifts within how we all moved about our lives after the group inquiry as compared to beforehand.

The remainder of this chapter will situate these themes within the recent literature in the field, and discuss the implications of these findings — theoretically, practically, and in relation to the pursuit of social justice. I will then highlight the limitations within this study and the field of MBSEL in general, as a guidepost for future recommendations, both in research and in practice within education.

Theoretical Implications

The findings from this cooperative inquiry may provide helpful insight for the growing field of MBSEL, as well as supporting the connection between contemplative practices and transformative learning.

Towards a Comprehensive Definition of MBSEL

MBSEL has potential to grow into an important sub-field of SEL and requires a clear definition for practitioners and researchers to ground themselves in. In both international and national schools, mindfulness is often practiced as part of SEL. Many experts have suggested that the two fields are interlinked and should continue to be interwoven in order to truly encapsulate the inner and outer work that comes with transformation of self and school systems (Feuerborn & Gueldner, 2019; Greenberg, 2014; Lantieri & Zakrzewski, 2015; Lawlor, 2016; SEE Learning, 2019). Because of my own lived experience with a mindfulness practice burgeoning into a practice that incorporated both mindfulness and SEL, I presented the initial inquiry as one that would center MBSEL but knew that because of the cooperative nature of the method that this centering could shift. However, group members felt the same way as I did. Megan wondered whether it was "possible to really embody social emotional learning, and its

deepest intention or any of the frameworks without mindfulness, whether it's realized or not, you know what I mean?" (Meeting 2). Here, Megan is suggesting that, even without making the clear link, mindfulness is indeed present as a foundational skill within SEL. Colleen also noted that in her experience with trauma-informed practices, "you have to have mindfulness before you can guide students through SEL practices, because if you're not in that space, then the students are not going to be able to get there either" (Meeting 2). Julie holds mindfulness as the "practice to reach the [SEL] standards" (Meeting 2). In our group's consciousness, before even engaging in the shared practices, mindfulness was clearly seen as the foundation required to engage in further practice. The certainty that mindfulness and SEL belong together was alive in the group, and at the same time, there was uncertainty surrounding the lack of a clear definition for MBSEL—this field or perhaps sub-field that we strongly all strongly believe in.

Our group worked from Lawlor's (2016) MBSEL framework, inspired originally by Greenberg's (2014) work and connected different mindfulness practices to each of the CASEL competencies. While Lawlor's framework made the visual link between mindfulness and SEL, we still had a hard time finding a clear description of this sub-field. MBSEL non-profit Inner Explorer co-founder Janice Houlihan introduced MBSEL as a cub-category of SEL and highlighted how mindfulness practices can nestle within the SEL competencies (n.d.). The Coalition for Schools Educating Mindfully (COSEM) has created a comprehensive definition of MBSEL, and this nonprofit also focuses specifically on supporting educators in the practice:

> Mindfulness-Based SEL elevates and compliments any SEL practices currently in place within schools. MBSEL is when we take an inside-out approach to self-awareness and self-management through mindfulness and connect it to the explicitly taught social and emotional skills through SEL's outside-in instruction, aligned to CASEL's framework.

The foundation to this way of teaching is what we call an "embodied way of teaching".

Embodied teaching means that MBSEL is more than something you do or teach, it

becomes *WHO* you are as a teacher or leader. This type of teaching and leading takes

time, but has the biggest impact on your students, staff, education as a whole, and most

importantly, you.

As a result, all members of your learning community have proactive ways to

manage stress and anxiety, positive strategies for improving self-regulation, increased

focus and attention, deeper compassion and understanding, and more. All of these

benefits create the conditions for students to be ready to learn and increase their academic

success at school while preparing them for life beyond the school walls. (COSEM, n.d.)

When exploring the various ways to define this concept, our group deeply appreciated many of the

elements that COSEM included in their definition. We did feel that MBSEL is not restricted to the

competencies of self-awareness and self-management. We also wanted to speak to its nature as a

process that can take place from childhood into adulthood which supports transformation of

individuals, groups and systems. As part of our final meeting, we collaborated to share keywords

and important ideas that we felt should be encapsulated in defining the concept of MBSEL. Below

is the co-created definition that our group designed:

MBSEL is a transformative process that informs human social, emotional and spiritual

development, prioritizing the intentional development of mindfulness skills as the

foundation for the practice of SEL competencies (self-awareness, self-management,

social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making). This is a lifelong

process emphasizing skill development and commitment to practice in order to build

healthy emotional patterns. MBSEL begins from an exploration of the personal inner

world with reflection and introspection and builds outwards with empathy and action. It

supports our understanding of our relationship to ourselves, others, and the world.

MBSEL can be integrated directly into the fabric of a school culture by first

ensuring that the adults in the community have ample opportunity to explore personal

practice and understanding of concepts before embedding it into their teaching. To truly

be a liberating process, MBSEL MUST be informed by culturally-responsive and

trauma-informed pedagogies.

We hope that by offering an alternative definition, we may enlist more conversation and

participation in a field that has the potential to change lives for the better.

MBSEL as a Transformative Learning Process

Learning is transformative when it resolves in a change in perspective. This may be

evident through a personal share or even an observed change in behaviour. Although not all

learning is transformative, this inquiry into MBSEL for adult international educators was

organized to pave the way for participants to experience transformation. While emotion is not

necessarily situated prominently in the original theory of transformative learning (Hoggan &

Hoggan-Kloubert, 2022), the theory has branched out and evolve to include approaches which

center the emotional experience, and this is where we based our inquiry. We all hold deep

beliefs, as informed by research and experience, that emotions are central to learning

(Immordino-Yang et al., 2018). We also know that learning and transformation is rooted in

social experience (Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2022). There has been suggestion that

mindfulness is, at its heart, a transformative process (Miller, 1999), perhaps because it allows

practitioners to develop critical awareness of what underlies their thoughts and behaviours

(Morris, 2020). This inquiry, combining the mindful, the social, and the emotional, created space

for transformation to emerge organically for all participants. As the field of MBSEL continues to develop, it would be beneficial to continue to explore interventions and practices from the lens of transformative learning.

At the onset of our working group formation, we were met with what could be considered a disorienting dilemma, which is an event that can be the springboard for transformative learning. Our small group of people who hardly knew each other had to come together to articulate our values and decide how we were going to go about this inquiry together. This structural requirement to come together with a shared mission and vision forced us into discomfort but also into introspection and social navigation. Finally, we ended each meeting sharing what action we were going to take as a result of the meeting. Each member vocalized their intentions for action. The structure of the cooperative inquiry provided a fertile ground for each member to change and develop.

The structures put into place in our group meetings created space for participants to become comfortable learning socially, while also allowing for shared vulnerability. It was suggested during meeting one to include elements of intentional personal connection during each meeting to build trust in each other. Curated welcome questions such as "What is something you learned about yourself this week?", "What is something you are grateful for right now?" or "Share a story of something that you did this week that aligned with your values?" allowed participants to connect. These questions deepened their critical self-reflection in relation to the learning they had been experiencing in the time apart from each other. I noticed in my coding of their responses that group members would often share stories of a similar nature, building off of the initial share of one member. For example, when Kendall shared a story about how she realized she had grown from a difficult experience, Colleen and I both added to reinforce her

idea and share our own perspectives. This idea of the negative times in life as major turning points for growth turned out to be a major reflection point in our conversation. It is unknown as to whether it would have been explored as deeply if it had not been brought up at that time. The cooperative inquiry structure, supported by the deeply reflective learning material of MBSEL, provided a foundation for transformative learning.

Individual Transformation Stories of Group Members

"You don't understand what I'm saying. And that's because you can't until you try it. I can't explain this to you. I can't explain mindfulness-based social emotional learning. It has to be experienced" - Megan, Meeting 3

MBSEL is something that can only be truly understood when embodied, and our participants all had moments in this journey where we noticed these moments of transformation through the practice. While group members may look back and share different takeaways from our experience together, in this section I chose to gather some small snapshots of moments that demonstrated a clear change in perspective for each member during the course of our inquiry.

A Softer View of Self. Throughout the inquiry, Kendall made multiple observations surrounding her increasing levels of self-compassion. She shared that "when we've been doing more of these meditations and things like that, I'm able to stop that guilt more. And so that was a nice realization that this is really actually supporting me a lot when I'm able to stop those thoughts" (Meeting 5) and that "when you do have compassion for yourself, life is just much easier" (Meeting 3). Kendall is celebrating clear moments of insight here, as she is able to recognize the easeful difference of a life lived with more self-compassion, compared to her previous norm which was more self-judging.

The Benefit of the Doubt. Megan had been practicing mindfulness before we met. With this inquiry building on her original foundation, she shared vignettes of her interactions with students, friends and strangers wherein she noticed more compassionate and curious thought patterns. When someone was rude or dysregulated, it was "much more instinctual" for her to think "oh, they might be having a bad day or something might be going on with them that I don't know about" (Meeting 5). These observations felt genuine and supportive of her view of the world and relationships as someone who deeply values the shared humanity of all beings. MBSEL has supported Megan's thought patterns to lean towards compassion and curiosity rather than judgment and annoyance.

A Little Bit More Regulated. Colleen often spoke of the ebb and flow of her thoughts as she began to recognize the patterns that brought her stress and dysregulation. Upon sharing about her winter holiday in the US, she recognized uneasiness arising about future uncertainties, and that she was not "overthinking as much as [she] think[s] [she] did in the past" and that she was "just able to kind of stay calm and steady . . . I'm gonna figure it out. And I'm going to enjoy this time off from work" (Meeting 6). Colleen is becoming more mindful of her patterns and habits, and is taking action to shift the patterns that do not serve her towards those that are more supportive of her wellbeing.

Cultivating Positivity in the Storm. Stress and overwhelm in our jobs and personal lives is not going away. Reflecting on a very stressful experience, Julie recognized that "the practice helps . . . cultivating positive emotions in the midst of some of that challenge. I feel like I was able to handle it a lot better than I think that I would have done in the past" (Meeting 6), recognizing that she is "somebody that used to get very anxious about things and I'm finding that I'm able to just name it and understand that the thought's the thought so I think that's been really

helpful" (Meeting 6). The challenge is real, and so are the strategies that have been developed to help us move through it. For Julie, this means that rather than perseverating on negative outcomes, she is able to clearly name her emotions and find more resilience in challenging times.

Taking Care of Me. In our first meeting back from the new year, we all shared our own one-word intention for the new year, and my word was "boundaries." In my journal, I reflected on an instance where I set a boundary for myself in order to protect and replenish my energy, noting that "there is growth there in not jumping in to save others when they are perfectly capable and also when I have needs of my own." The deep dive into values and self-compassion has provided the reflective space I need to kickstart actions of self-care.

Practical Implications of MBSEL for International School Teachers

The findings of this cooperative inquiry are in accordance with previous research in the field, pointing to the importance of MBSEL as a transformative practice to include in training or professional development for teachers in international schools. MBSEL contributes positively to teacher wellbeing and, if implemented within schools, can support a healthy systemic school culture.

Contributions to Teacher Wellbeing

In our findings, Theme 1 (increased self-awareness in times of emotional overwhelm) and Theme 2 (increased self-compassion) both highlight different kinds of shifting thought patterns in the minds of participants as they become more aware of the negative habitual patterns that they were subjecting themselves to. This burgeoning self-awareness allowed our teachers to become more aware of situations that were debilitating to their wellbeing. Colleen recognized that she "was feeling more burnt out this year" (Colleen journal) while Kendall linked some of

her current frustration to the fact that she "wasn't quite being honest" (Meeting 4) with herself. During our sixth meeting, our SEL focus activities directly explored teacher identity, and through this exercise, many of us recognized that a values mismatch between our purpose and some of the processes within our school systems was a source of stress. This increasing sense of mindful self-awareness, encouraged by intentional practice of mindfulness meditation in combination with SEL practices, is supporting our teachers in identifying stressors. This is also in concordance with the findings of Hwang et al. (2017), who noted that mindfulness addresses threats to personal wellbeing. This awareness is the first step to acting for our own wellbeing.

Increased self-compassion also supports the prevention of stress and burnout (Abdollahi et al., 2021; Hwang et al., 2019). This prevention benefit may be connected to the fact that increased self-compassion can be a predictor of greater levels of self-care (J. Miller et al., 2019). Our participants took compassionate action towards themselves increasing their levels of self-awareness and self-compassion. In our group, we began to make small life changes that boosted our emotional, physical and social wellbeing. These findings concerning increased self-awareness and self-compassion suggest that engaging in MBSEL may support international teachers in identifying factors that are leading to their own stress and as a result, making choices that strengthen their sense of wellbeing.

Schoolwide Transformation

The remaining three themes created from our study (Theme 3: sharing learning with the community, Theme 4: community of practice as a supportive structure and Theme 5: desire to do things differently) all speak to the potential of MBSEL practice for teachers to lead shifts within the school system. These themes suggest group learning supports personal transformation, and that personal transformation supports greater potential for systemic transformation.

In our stories surrounding Theme 3, many of us noticed our attitudes towards and behaviour with our students changing and becoming more compassionate. When Colleen recognized in the moment that her sense of urgency was contributing to her students' anxiety (Colleen journal), she was able to stop and readjust her approach, thereby helping both herself and her student to regulate, and changing the trajectory of the potential emotional contagion. Megan also spoke of how "the emotions and the care that I have been offering myself gives me the drive and motivation to offer the same care to my students" (Megan journal). As posited by Jennings and Greenberg's model of the Prosocial Classroom (2009), the teacher's social-emotional competence is influencing her relationship with her students, and their own developing emotional competences. By engaging in her own practice, the teacher is shaping the landscape of her interactions with students. This potentially changes the dynamic of the classroom, and this change can be boosted with a focus on sustainably building adult MBSEL skills.

Scholars and practitioners have been calling for adult skillbuilding to be a foundational practice in the schoolwide implementation of mindfulness and SEL (CASEL, n.d.; Jones et al., 2013; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). While Julie's school is theoretically following this model as they journey towards schoolwide wellbeing, she "didn't see a lot of transfer" from the work on adult SEL as many people "went through the training but are not practicing" (Meeting 3). Incorporating a structured community, like we did with our cooperative inquiry, may be a way to encourage practicing and embedding the skills into daily life for busy educators. Otherwise, educator training often feels like one more thing on top of already busy professional lives. Accountability to a group would prioritize the MBSEL learning.

Many international schools have been following the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model where teacher teams plan and reflect collaboratively to improve student learning. This model has proven benefits for teacher practice and student learning (Vescio et al., 2008). The type of group formed in our inquiry, however, is slightly different in that the focus is not on examining student learning as a group, but our own developing social-emotional competencies as adults. Reflecting on the positive shifts our own group members have experienced, I can only imagine the effect on the classrooms and schools if the whole school were to adopt this exploratory community model. It should also be noted that the development of intentional communities of practice may support international teachers in developing a stronger sense of belonging in the new communities they have chosen to be a part of.

MBSEL can serve as a catalyst for innovation and continuous improvement in schools. Our particular group of educators was already driven to make a difference in their school systems from the onset of our study together. The positive impact we witnessed from the embodiment of MBSEL principles in our practice seemed to strengthen our resolve to take action in our school communities and the wider international school community. For us, teaching is very much activism. The more we practice, the more adamant we become that we don't want to be "a bandaid, a survival tool in a broken system" but "this thing that has the potential for creating ease and wellbeing for yourself and your students and the people around you" (Megan, meeting 2). At the same time, there can be frustration when we are "constantly feeling like I'm just trying to be patient with how we really want to keep going in the education world" (Julie, meeting 6). We have seen the liberatory potential of practicing MBSEL and are not content with keeping it to ourselves. If international schools can help teachers by offering time to create a

communal structure to study MBSEL, they may notice a growth in levels of belonging and wellbeing across the entire school community.

Limitations of Current MBSEL Practice in Education

MBSEL has the potential to be a burgeoning new field uniting the research and practice of both mindfulness and SEL, which are both already practiced in many schools internationally. However, while the consensus is that these practices are beneficial, there is not yet a unified agreement on how to unite theory and practice towards sustainable schoolwide implementation of practice. We are seeing that adults are often looked over in favour of leaping to practical implication for students, which can leave MBSEL feeling like a burden rather than a boost for wellbeing. Another concern in international schools specifically is the imbalance of professional development delivery, with expatriate teachers receiving more pertinent training than local teaching assistants.

Any sort of data we do have about successful programming and implementation arises from North America. There is minimal representation of the MBSEL field in communities outside the "Western" bubble. Even our cooperative inquiry which connected with teachers in international schools did not address the experience of expatriate teachers of colour, or host country national teachers. The international school community is wrought with inequities from embedded colonial structures, which privilege the White, Western expatriate experience and while I am proud of all that we achieved in this study, I am disappointed that the choices we made in our process did not do anything to disrupt this mindset. While themes of embracing common humanity and working against systemic injustice did emerge, we did not explore them in depth and the majority focus was on individual development. MBSEL is a social justice process, but since SEL is so broad, we can intimate that the specific processes explored can

influence the depth of focus on liberatory practices. We touched on identity, but in the context of our strengths and values rather than the context of unexplored biases and assumptions. We explored self-compassion but did not touch explicitly on compassion for others. In my own previous personal experience, these deeper explorations followed a grounding in personal stress management. A longer and broader exploration of MBSEL might offer more space for the emergence of socially just action beyond ideology. In fact, our plan to expand the group to other educators includes the hope that people will be able to make small working groups within their schools so that they are taking action in their school communities.

One of the mandates that came out of our inquiry is that we must understand these concepts before we can teach them. This mandate echoes the calls of researchers and practitioners in the field. However, we are seeing adults getting glossed over in the education process, which may arise from the harried pace of schools that want to implement quick fixes rather than invest the time and funding needed to make changes in the system. This came up as a key concern for our group, prompting Julie to ask, "what schools might do to really promote giving ourselves permission to take care of ourselves" (Meeting 8). Teachers are not giving themselves the time to fill their proverbial cups, and thus the process of adult education cannot truly flourish. Again, even in our inquiry, it was the accountability of the group and the required structure which almost forced us into taking care of ourselves and exploring practices. Another question in international schools is how to sustain a culture of transformative learning with such vast turnover. At my last school, about one quarter of our staff and student population shifted every year. In the future, it must be about how leadership and schools place value on adult learning and development for the good of the whole school community.

Recommendations for Future Research

This cooperative inquiry examined the experience of a group of expatriate international school teachers practicing MBSEL. The themes and encounters discussed above continue the growing conversation in the field of MBSEL and also offer a glimpse into spaces where more research would help us to gain a deeper understanding of the field and its possible impact on society. Mindfulness-based social-emotional learning as a sub-field of both mindfulness and SEL is emerging and largely undefined. Our group has attempted to contribute to the field by offering a possible definition earlier in this chapter. However, to be truly recognized, it is important that the community comes together to agree upon a definition and that more empirical research is conducted to examine the links between mindfulness and SEL. We would also recommend further research into exactly how MBSEL influences the wellbeing of teachers, both in international schools and national schools around the world. A clear understanding of the mechanisms involved here will help to support changes in policy and practice. In the international education world specifically, we would also benefit from studies that examine the interaction between MBSEL and unique host country cultures and values, as most of the practices we examined together are based primarily in the "Western" tradition. In each unique location, there are myriad cultural nuances and traditions that can inform a healthy and holistic MBSEL experience which should be taken into consideration. The international school community would benefit from stories that describe how these practices are understood and undertaken in different cultural settings. This need for culturally-responsive practices, however, is not unique to an international school setting. So as MBSEL grows, research must hear all voices and also join in conversation about how various competencies are demonstrated similarly and differently across cultures.

We have discussed that one of the limitations of this study was that our participant group consisted solely of White, female expatriates, who do not represent a vast number of diverse identities within international schools. The experience of host country national teachers, host country teaching assistants, host country staff members, expatriate teachers of colour as well as leadership of different nationalities is going to be different than those who are teaching expatriates. To create a whole picture of wellbeing and the influence of MBSEL on the adults working within schools, it is imperative to broaden the conversation to include members of these diverse populations.

As well as expanding the demographics of the study, it would be beneficial to engage in a similar inquiry for a longer period of time. This experience did prove to be personally transformative, but with eight weeks of practice, we only had time to introduce participants to foundational mindfulness practices and engage in a small selection of self-awareness and self-regulation practices. A more comprehensive inquiry would explore these competencies in more depth and also add in the domains of social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

Lastly, most studies that explore wellbeing (including this one) have looked at changes on the individual level (Berger et al., 2022). While we have noticed that changes in individuals can ripple out into their relationships, we also know that there are many systemic factors that affect wellbeing, and it is harmful to suggest that any individual is responsible for shouldering the burden of those systemic injustices. While growing mindfulness and compassion may be protective factors for stress and burnout, this protection does not ensure a thriving population. Educators and policymakers everywhere would benefit from a wider field of research examining

systemic changes within school systems that may lead to greater wellbeing for the humans within those systems.

Recommendations for Practice

Echoed over and over by our participants was the mantra that "we need to understand this before we can teach it." In keeping with recommendations from other researchers in the field, international schools would benefit from sustained effort to increase adult wellbeing in their buildings by implementing MBSEL. Naturally, the adults would be the first point of call in this implementation before beginning the practices with students. The evidence is there, yet most of us are still seeing the adults being glossed over, or not offered the proper supports to practice. The cooperative inquiry model undertaken in this group study, or another community of practice model that offers group accountability, may support this systemic integration of practice. Our group was even able to sustain this feeling of support through synchronous digital connection, and there may be benefits, especially with finding certified trainers and materials, in looking to technology to help sustain learning communities (Mischenko, 2021). Online groups may help educators find resources and also connect with others on similar journeys as themselves. This certainly was a support for our group. However, the need to rely on technology to build community may also feel burdensome to many of us who would prefer to unplug from the overwhelming influence of technology in our lives. Ideally, community groups could be formed in person with school colleagues supporting each other through this work.

In international schools, it must be noted that referring to the sacredness of cultivating adult MBSEL refers to *all* adults—eventually branching out to support staff such as cafeteria workers, bus drivers, etc. but starting at least with core educational staff such as teachers, leaders and teaching assistants. Sadly, there is often inequity in these systems in regard to the offering of

professional development. Many teaching assistants feel left out of growth-oriented and inclusive professional development opportunities (Lehman, 2020; Tarry & Cox, 2014). I have worked in a school where assistants were offered options such as flower arranging or email etiquette while their teaching counterparts were engaging in robust training about curricular implementation. All adults means *all* adults. There should be no divide in the opportunities for learning MBSEL within the school.

While in some systems, change can indeed begin from within, schools are still hierarchical systems and in continuing the conversation about ALL adults engaging in MBSEL, it is pertinent to speak directly to the need for school leaders to explore these practices. Leaders are under immense stress and their wellbeing, much like a teacher to a classroom, has influence on the entire school climate (Floman et al., 2024; Mahfouz & Gordon, 2021). School leaders, just like their educators and staff members, would benefit from exploring MBSEL. This schoolwide implementation of practices with adults is the foundational step to integrating these holistic practices into the fabric of the school.

Social Justice Implications

Education is a human institution, though that often gets lost in all of the focus on policy and test scores. MBSEL is a human process. For a moment in time, this inquiry brought the focus of education back to humans - to the development of hearts, minds and souls. Based on the glimpse we were able to view over this short period of time, the process of integrating MBSEL into our daily lives will not just hold that humanity for a brief moment in time, but create a ripple effect, placing the development of healthy, whole humans at the center of schools and homes around the world. This human process was, for us, also an expression of social justice.

Tricia Hersey, founder of the Nap Ministry, speaks widely about the trauma of "grind culture" (2022, p. 14) and the liberating power of rest. That rest can include giving time and space to self-cultivation. And not the bandaid solutions that we were seeing emerge and become especially prevalent during the pandemic. We are talking about real time for real care. That includes developing social emotional competencies and actionable strategies for self-regulation (Johnson, 2022). This inquiry gave our members the dedicated time and support needed to allow themselves to explore what true, radical self-care looked like for them. Teaching is a job widely known to result for many in burnout or compassion fatigue. Teachers are overworked, underappreciated and often demoralized from working within these broken systems. Our cooperative inquiry now only introduced a counter narrative, but it required that these same teachers be in the driver's seat for their own wellbeing journey.

The structure of the cooperative inquiry is created to be intentionally democratic and participatory. As reflected upon earlier, because of my positionality as the main researcher and expertise with the subject matter, I did end up having more of a leadership role in the group. However, we operated almost completely on a model where I would propose possible resources or topics of study, and the group would discuss and decide. This was not something thrust upon them, but something that they were active participants in. They had a vested interest in the outcome of the inquiry and their values and curiosities shaped it in a way that was different than it would have been if it were purely me making all the decisions independently. This format allowed us all to have both agency and responsibility towards the others in our group. Our process arose as what adrienne maree brown has termed "emergent strategy" — complexity arising from the simple; small changes influencing larger systems (Brown, 2017). We were changing ourselves from the inside out with hopes of this being the first step to change the

system from the inside out. What is even more exciting is that we know now that it will not stop here. There is already the shared energy of "What's next?" as we explore how we may bring our findings into the greater international school community.

Reflection

Almost ten years ago, I begrudgingly took my first course in mindfulness. I signed up for my students and I stayed for me. And then I kept staying for me, for them, and for the extended communities that I was connected to. I have had the privilege of watching myself change from the inside out, and during these past five months of this cooperative inquiry project, I have been able to connect with others at different points on this similar journey. All of us living a life where we thrust ourselves into the unfamiliar in an attempt to make it known to us. All of us seeking belonging and connection in these new lives where sometimes that deep need can seem so far away. All of us loving our students and wanting them to be well. All of us deeply connected to our values and beliefs that school can be a place where wellbeing for all is promoted, including ourselves. All of us wanting to be part of that change.

And we are seeing the small but significant changes arise. In ourselves - thought patterns, feelings, behaviours. In our relationships - the way we connect, the way we understand, the way we communicate. We know that our systems are broken. And at the same time, we are still excited to be a part of that change. Our last meeting together was tinged with longing, and while this part of the journey is over, we are ready to continue in a different direction. We are paying attention to this feeling because we have realized that "what we pay attention to affects [our] thoughts and emotions" (Kendall journal). We are paying attention. We are building a new community for international school teachers to explore MBSEL. A place where we can share our stories and others can join and share theirs. A place where we can practice together and hold

each other up. We do not know exactly what will come of it yet, but we do know that we are awake, and paying attention, and ready to fuel that attention into compassionate action. Watch this space.

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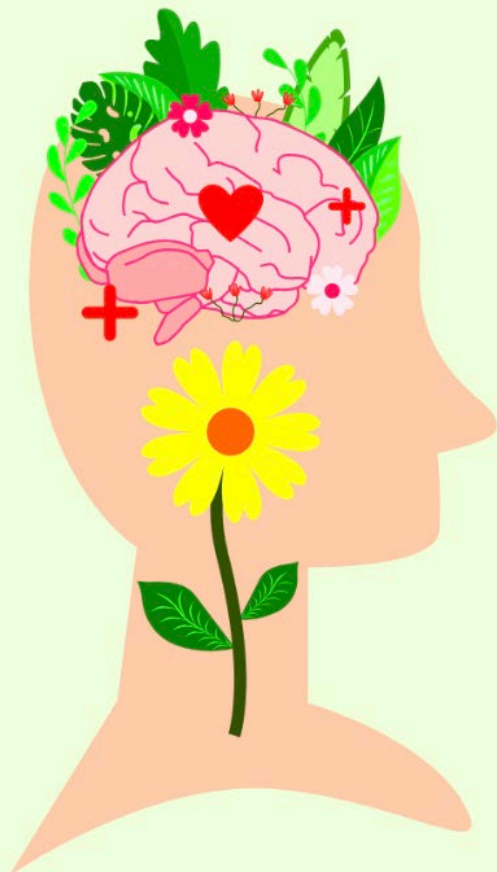
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APPENDIX A: INVITATION FLIER

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

This informed consent form is for international school teachers who we are inviting to participate in a research project titled "Mindfulness-Based Social-Emotional Learning and International School Teachers: A Cooperative Inquiry".

Name of Principal Investigator: Kailyn Fullerton
Name of Organization: Antioch University, EDD in Educational and Professional Practice, SEL Specialisation
Name of Project: Dissertation

You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form

Introduction
Hello - I'm Kailyn, a student in the Educational Doctorate in Educational and Professional Practice. As part of this degree, I am completing a cooperative inquiry project to explore the influence that mindfulness-based social-emotional learning (MBSEL) practices have on teachers in international schools. I am going to give you information about the study and invite you to be part of this research. Please take some time to reflect on whether you want to participate or not. You may ask questions at any time.

Purpose of the research
The purpose of this project is to co-create a potentially transformative inquiry that explores the influence of MBSEL on teachers in international schools. This information will help us to better understand how MBSEL practices may support international school teachers in their personal practice.

Type of Research Intervention
This research will involve your participation in a cooperative inquiry, where you will be a participant and co-creator of the inquiry, engaging in an entry interview and bi-monthly group meetings for about four months. Each of these meetings will be recorded solely for research purposes, but all of the participants' contributions will be de-identified prior to publication or the sharing of the research results. These recordings, and any other information that may connect you to the study, will be kept in a secure location.

Participant Selection
You are being invited to take part in this research because you are a teacher in an international school who may be interested in learning more about MBSEL in a cooperative group environment. You should not consider participation in this research if you are not currently teaching in an international school.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate. You will not be penalized for your decision not to participate or for anything of your contributions during the study.

Risks

No study is completely risk free. However, I do not anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed during this study. You may stop being in the study at any time if you become uncomfortable. MBSEL can involve deep reflection and introspection that can often be emotional. If you do experience discomfort, I can provide you with the contact information for mental health professionals to support your needs.

Benefits

The benefits to you are to be determined. You may leave the project with new skills and relationships. There may be no direct benefit to you, but your participation may help others in the future.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any monetary incentive to take part in this research project.

Confidentiality

All information will be de-identified, so that it cannot be connected back to you. Your real name will be replaced with a pseudonym in the write-up of this project, and only the primary researcher will have access to the list connecting your name to the pseudonym. This list, along with recordings of the discussion sessions, will be kept in a secure, locked location.

Limits of Privacy Confidentiality

Generally speaking, I can assure you that I will keep everything you tell me or do for the study private. Yet there are times where I cannot keep things private (confidential). I cannot keep things private (confidential) when:
- The researcher finds out that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused
- The researcher finds out that that a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide
- The researcher finds out that a person plans to hurt someone else

There are laws that require many professionals to take action if they think a person is at risk for self-harm or are self-harming, harming another or if a child or adult is being abused. In addition, there are guidelines that researchers must follow to make sure all people are treated with respect and kept safe. In most countries, there is a government agency that must be told if someone is being abused or plans to self-harm or harm another person. Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study.

Future Publication

The primary researcher, Kailyn Fullerton, reserves the right to include any results of this study in future scholarly presentations and/or publications. All information will be de-identified prior to publication.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

<u>Who to Contact</u>
If you have any questions, you may ask them now or later. If you have questions later, you may

contact Kailyn Fullerton ▓▓▓▓ @▓▓▓▓▓

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Hays

Moulton (chair of the International Review Board

or Dr. Michael Raffanti (Dean of program) ▓▓▓▓▓▓

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Antioch International Review Board (IRB), which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected. If you wish to find out more about the IRB, contact Dr. Hays Moulton.

DO YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS COOPERATIVE INQUIRY PROJECT?
I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____
        Day/month/year

DO YOU CONSENT TO BEING RECORDED IN THIS STUDY?
I voluntarily agree to let the researcher audiotape me for this study. I agree to allow the use of my recordings as described in this form. Please note that if you are not comfortable with being recorded, you will not be able to participate in this study at this time.

Print Name of Participant_____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____
        Day/month/year

To be filled out by the researcher or the person taking consent:
I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent_____

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____

Date _____
          Day/month/year

APPENDIX C: INTRODUCTORY SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. Tell me your story.

2. What is your experience with international teaching?

3. How would you define international teaching? What are the highs and lows?

4. Why did you become a teacher?

5. Why did you stay a teacher?

6. What is your purpose as an educator?

7. What ongoing tensions and challenges are you facing?

8. What are your hopes and dreams right now?

9. What (if anything) do you know about mindfulness-based SEL?

10. What drew you to say "yes" to this cooperative inquiry project?

11. What, if anything, are you hoping to learn or experience in this project?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share?

13. Mindfulness and SEL practices can be very emotional and can sometimes re-trigger traumatic symptoms. With this in mind, it's important to be fully aware before agreeing to be a part of this. I will be providing you with a list of mental health professionals and I try my best to provide trauma-informed practices, but know that I am not a mental health professional. Is this something that you want more information about or talk about before signing up?

APPENDIX D: REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPT

At least once a week, as you engage in the MBSEL practices chosen by the group, take time to reflect on your experience. If writing is not a welcoming method of reflection for you, you may choose to include a voice note, or a piece of art or poetry.

The reflective prompt questions are guided by Carol Rodgers' reflective cycle. Please keep in mind, however, that while your reflection *may* involve an experience in the classroom, the focus is entirely on your experience as an educator, and may just as likely involve other daily life moments.

1. Please describe the experience. Try to ground yourself in sensory details. What happened? What did you notice?

2. What do you think about this experience? What is your interpretation or analysis?

3. What, if any, action do you feel called to take as a result?

APPENDIX E: INTERNATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

- The Truman Group is a group of seasoned clinicians who live around the globe and provides therapy online for expatriates around the globe. (I have personal positive experience with this group)
Truman Group Contact Info

- Expat Nest is another online option that is recommended by Families in Global Transition
Expat Nest

APPENDIX F: EMAIL SAMPLE

The following is a sample of an email that was sent to each participant individually when they expressed interest in joining the inquiry. The purpose of the email was to invite them to an initial 1-1 interview.

Oh great to hear! Our next step will be to arrange an introductory interview so that we can get to know each other a little bit and also go through the informed consent procedures. I've included links to the informed consent form and the interview questions. No need to prepare anything at all - it's just a casual chat - but some people like to know what to expect. If you could please read over the informed consent in advance, and then just before our session, I will send you a version of the form to sign digitally before we begin if all is acceptable for you.

I'm in Jakarta, so about 1.5 hours ahead of you and would love to set up a time to chat. I'm free Sunday most of the day. I have one other meeting at about 12:30-2:30pm India time. During the week, I would be free after school/evening your time on Tuesday and Wednesday. I also have some daytime availability if that is available for you.

Look forward to connecting!

Cheers, Kailyn

APPENDIX G: CASEL PERSONAL SEL REFLECTION

CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL

Personal SEL Reflection

Purpose: This tool is designed for self-reflection. It should not be used to evaluate performance. Principals, administrators, SEL team members, staff members, and other adults can use it to assess personal strengths, think about how to model those strengths when interacting with others, and plan strategies to promote growth across areas of social competence. If used in a group setting, individuals should first complete the reflection privately, then discuss general themes and examples of strengths and challenges with partners or in small groups. Individuals can return to this reflection throughout the year to revisit personal goals and mark progress.

Here's how to use this tool:

- Read each statement and think of related specific situations, then rate yourself based on how easy or difficult the statement typically is for you (very difficult, difficult, easy, or very easy for you to do).
- When you finish, search for patterns of strengths and challenges. This information is for you, so answer accurately without judging responses as "good" or "not as good."
- Review your responses and take action in light of what you learn. Suggested writing prompts and actions can be found after the reflection statements.

Self-Awareness		Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy
EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS	I can identify and name my emotions in the moment.				
	I use self-reflection to understand the factors that contribute to my emotions and how my emotions impact me.				
	I can recognize when my emotions, thoughts, and biases influence my behavior and my reactions to people and situations, both negatively and positively.				
IDENTITY AND SELF KNOWLEDGE	I can recognize my strengths and limitations.				
	I can recognize and reflect on ways in which my identity is shaped by other people and my race, ethnicity, culture, experiences, and environments.				
	I can recognize and reflect on ways in which my identity shapes my views, biases, and prejudices.				
GROWTH MINDSET AND PURPOSE	I can continue to learn and develop new skills to support myself and others.				
	I can reflect on my sense of purpose – my beliefs and values that guide my actions and efforts.				
	I can see how I have a valuable role in my work, my family, and my community.				

Relationship Skills		Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy
COMMUNICATION	I can stay focused when listening to others and carefully consider their meaning.				
	I can articulate ideas that are important to me in ways that engage others.				
	I can have honest conversations about race and racism with young people, their families, and other community members.				
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND TEAMWORK	I can effectively bridge across cultures to meaningfully connect with young people, their families, colleagues, and community members who are from a different culture than I am (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status).				
	I can get to know the people around me.				
	I can work well with others and generate a collegial atmosphere.				
	I can make sure everyone has an opportunity to share their ideas and be heard.				
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT	When I am upset with someone, I can listen to their perspective and talk to them about how I feel.				
	I can openly admit my mistakes to myself and others and work to make things right.				
	I can work through my discomfort when dealing with conflict, listen to feelings from all parties, help them understand different perspectives, and work toward a co-constructed solution.				

Responsible Decision-Making		Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy
PROBLEM ANALYSIS	I can gather relevant information to explore the root causes of problems identified within our school community.				
	I can recognize the need to continually grow, to examine the status quo, and to encourage new thinking in our school community.				
	I can involve others who are impacted, especially those who are historically underrepresented in decision-making, to **explore a problem collaboratively** before choosing a solution or launching a new project.				
IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS	I can involve others who are impacted, especially those who are historically underrepresented in decision-making, to **generate multiple solutions and predict the outcome** of each solution to key problems.				
	I can find practical and respectful ways to overcome difficulty, even when it comes to making decisions that may not be popular.				
	I can consider how my choices will be viewed through the lens of the young people I serve and the community around them.				
REFLECTION ON IMPACT	I can take time for self-reflection & group reflection on progress toward goals & the process used.				
	I can consider how my personal and professional decisions impact the lives of others.				
	I can help to make my personal and professional community a better place.				

Self-Management		Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy
MANAGING EMOTIONS	I can manage strong emotions in ways that don't negatively impact others.				
	I can get through something even when I feel frustrated.				
	I can calm myself when I feel stressed or nervous.				
MOTIVATION, AGENCY, AND GOAL-SETTING	I can motivate myself to improve and encourage growth in those I lead.				
	I can take action and impact change on issues that are important to me and the larger community.				
	I can set measurable, challenging, and attainable goals and have clear steps in place to reach them.				
PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION	I can modify my plans in the face of new information and realities.				
	When juggling multiple demands, I can use strategies to regain focus and energy.				
	I can balance my work life with personal renewal time.				

Social Awareness		Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy
EMPATHY AND COMPASSION	I can recognize cues or ask questions to understand another person's perspective and feelings.				
	I can pay attention to the feelings of others and recognize how my words and behavior impact them.				
	I can show care for others when I see that they have been harmed in some way.				
PERSPECTIVE TAKING	I can work to learn about the experiences of people of different identities and cultures.				
	I can learn from those who have different opinions than me.				
	I can ask others about their experience & perspective before offering my version of events.				
UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CONTEXT	I can understand the systemic, historical, and organizational forces that create barriers for particular groups of people.				
	I honor and celebrate the cultural differences within my school community/workplace.				
	I can recognize and articulate the strengths of young people and their families and view them as partners.				

Review your responses and take action in light of what you learned.

1. Reflect on your responses and any insight you have gained about your ongoing process of social and emotional development.
   If you consider that statements marked as "easy" or "very easy" could be areas of personal strength:
   - How do these strengths affect your interactions with young people and peers?
   - What SEL competencies do your strengths relate to?
   - Which of your strengths do you believe help you to achieve personal and collective goals?
   - Which strengths are you most proud of?

   If you consider that statements marked as "difficult" or "very difficult" could be current areas of challenge:
   - How might enhancing this area benefit your interactions with young people and peers?
   - What SEL competencies do your challenges relate to?
   - Select one or two areas you believe would help you make progress toward personal and collective goals.
   - What is a strategy you can use to remind yourself to practice this new behavior? Consider bringing it up as something to work on with a mentor or a coach.

   When looking at your responses, were there things that surprised you? Were there things that confirmed what you already know about yourself?

2. **Move from awareness to action.**
   Either individually, with a small group of peers/colleagues, or as a full school community, think about/discuss and list ways that you can activate and model social and emotional competencies throughout the day.
   - For a structured all-staff activity, try these other CASEL tools: Modeling SEL for Students or the Group Reflection Protocol for SEL.

   Consider what you and your peers/colleagues need to grow.
   - Which areas or statements were frequently mentioned as a challenge?
   - What kinds of learning experiences, supports, or changes to structures or environments could help address challenges?
   - In what ways can you (and your small group or school community) stay motivated and accountable to continue growing and reflecting on your social and emotional competencies?

APPENDIX H: PERMISSIONS

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I. Severability. If any provision of this Agreement shall be declared invalid or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction or other legally recognized judicial authority, such provisions shall be enforced to the maximum extent possible so as to affect the intent of the Parties, and the remainder of this Agreement shall continue in full force and effect.

J. Survival. The provisions of Section 4, 5, 7 8 and any other provision that by its nature is intended to survive, shall survive the expiration or termination of this Agreement.

Request for image permission

Greenberg, Mark T ‹████████›
To: Kailyn Fullerton ‹k██████@antioch███›

HI Kailyn

Thanks for your email. This reply gives you permission to use this figure/image in your dissertation.

regards

Mark

Mark T. Greenberg

Emeritus Professor, Human Development and Family Studies
Founding Director, Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center
Penn State Univ.
www.prevention.psu.edu

Chairperson of the Board, CREATE
www.createforeducation.org

From: Kailyn Fullerton ‹k██████████›
Sent: Sunday, December 10, 2023 6:48 PM
To: Greenberg, Mark T ‹████████████›
Subject: Request for image permission

Dear Dr Greenberg,

My name is Kailyn Fullerton. I am a doctoral student at Antioch University and I am currently writing a dissertation based on my ongoing cooperative inquiry project that is exploring mindfulness-based SEL practices with a small group of international school teachers.

I am writing to request permission to republish an image that originally appeared in a talk you gave at the Heart-Mind Conference in 2014 (see the citation below).

-

(Greenberg,
M. (2014). *Cultivating Compassion.*
Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education's Heart-Mind Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.
https://dalailamacenter.org/heart-mind-2014-science-kindness/heart-mind-2014-presentations/mark-greenberg)

The image was later used by Molly Lawlor in her 2016 chapter offering a conceptual framework for mindfulness-based SEL. This is the image that I have copied (I am also reaching out to her publishers).

Once published, the dissertation will be available in 3 places:
  a. Proquest Dissertations and Theses Database and that Proquest is a Print on Demand Publisher http://www.proquest.com/products-services/pqdt.html
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Figure 1:
Dr. Molly Lawlor's MBSEL Conceptual Framework, adapted from the work of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (2013) and Dr. Mark Greenberg (2014)

I've linked below the exact image and attribution from Dr Lawlor's paper based on your initial conceptualization that I would like to include in my own paper.

I look forward to hearing back from you, and am also very appreciative of your trailblazing work in this field. Please note that I have also copied my librarian, Dr. Christine Forte, on this email so that she is kept abreast of all permission requests.

Wishing you a restful and connected holiday season.

Cheers, Kailyn

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Dec 19, 2023

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Expected presentation date	Apr 2024
Portions	Figure 5.1 on page 69
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