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Implementation of a mindfulness approach to emotional regulation in a public high school.

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Implementation of a Mindfulness Approach to Emotional Regulation in a Public High

School

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beloved Jocelyn, for all the encouragement one could ever hope for.

Whose love, support, and belief in me never wavered. Without your continued reassurance and

encouragement, this achievement would have remained a dream.

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

According to the Gallup and Walton Family Foundation-State of American Youth Survey for 2023, schools in the United States received an average grade of C+ when it comes to supporting their students' mental health, highlighting a potential area for improvement in the school system (Wilcoxon & Marken, 2023). This quality improvement project aimed to teach high school students about emotional regulation using a mindfulness platform and evidence-based techniques designed for the school environment. The sessions focused on improving the students' understanding of emotions and emotional regulation and helping them apply techniques to regulate emotions in a healthy manner.

This project consisted of an 8-week educational session followed by an open-ended qualitative evaluation. Each educational session highlighted a different skill or strategy to promote mindfulness and positive emotional intelligence. Upon completing the program, the DNP Project Lead distributed an Emotion Management Program Overall Evaluation to the participating teachers and administrators to gather qualitative data for analysis. The teachers emphasized three key themes in their feedback: relevance, value, and practicality. They also noted that students showed improvements in emotional awareness and regulation skills. Amidst changes to the initial plan, the program effectively taught students essential strategies for regulating emotions, managing stress, preventing conflict, and practicing positive communication through foundational knowledge and practical exercises.

Keywords: emotion regulation, mindfulness, coping, adolescents

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Background

In 2022, the CDC stated that advocating for positive mental well-being and tackling mental health challenges in children are essential concerns for public health (Bitsko et al., 2022). According to research data, schools and outpatient settings are the primary locations for adolescents to receive mental health care (Duong et al., 2020). This underscores the importance of mental health care within the school environment. According to the Gallup and Walton Family Foundation-State of American Youth Survey for 2023, schools in the United States received an average grade of C+ when it comes to supporting their students' mental health, highlighting a potential area for improvement in the school system (Wilcoxon & Marken, 2023). Elevating the role of emotions in the classroom has emerged as a crucial future objective within the present educational system, which historically has emphasized cognitive development over affective and emotional growth (Trigueros et al., 2019).

A concept that has been around since the 1990s, emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as an "individual's capacity to recognize, manage, and express emotions and the ability to perceive, understand, interpret, and respond to the emotions of others" (McDonald, 2021, para. 2). Introduced by Mayer et al. (2004), emotional intelligence is comprised of four components: "(1) perceiving emotions accurately, (2) using emotions to facilitate decision-making, (3) understanding emotions, and (4) managing emotions to upregulate positive emotions and down-regulate negative emotions" (MacCann et al., 2020, p. 151). Emotional management is foundational in fostering appropriate social interactions and promoting future readiness (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL],

2023). Evidence demonstrates that through the addition of teaching students emotional

recognition and management, adolescents are afforded the basis for "problem-solving,

healthy communication, and good decision-making" (McDonald, 2021, Teaching Emotional

Intelligence section, para. 8). Although the classroom is an ideal environment to introduce

principles of emotion management, most schools do not include emotional intelligence in

the curriculum. However, the demand for social-emotional learning (SEL) instruction in the

classroom has increased with elevated importance placed on emotional development

(Committee for Children, 2019).

Currently, there is no federal standard or educational guideline for SEL for public

education systems (Wallace, 2021). It is up to each state to establish its definition of SEL

and decide its presence in the classroom. Several states have established task forces to tackle

the gap in emotional intelligence education through the creation of emotional and social

benchmarks to address delays in emotional development and enhance overall well-being

(Blad, 2020). As of 2021, Kentucky does not have a K-12 SEL standard (Kentucky

Department of Education, 2023). The lack of SEL standards for all grade levels confirms that

EI and its concepts are not recognized as a priority in the state of Kentucky.

Setting

The project location was a public high school located in the Jefferson County Public

School District (JCPS) in Louisville, Kentucky. Waggener High School serves almost 900

students each year in grades 9-12. The school curriculum features career-focused learning

communities with eight different career pathways to prepare students who are empowered to

use their diverse talents and personalized learning experiences to benefit society (JCPS, 2023).

The focus population for this project was 10th through 12th- grade students in the Health

Science Academy at Waggener High School.

Site Specific Problem

The site specifically noted disregard for appropriate boundaries, insufficient impulse control, poor emotion regulation, and lack of motivation among its students. An additional issue identified included concerns about online learning related to the 2020 coronavirus pandemic taking away from appropriate socialization and emotional development (C.Kirchner, personal communication, 2022). Currently, JCPS provides every student a copy of the Student Support and Behavior Intervention Handbook which presumes that each parent and child is aware of the policies, procedures, and expectations of the school district (Jefferson County Board of Education [JCBOE], 2022). However, the handbook functions more as an expectation and disciplinary manual, rather than an instructional guide for academic and social success.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders in this project included the students, teachers, parents, school counselors, and school administrators. The students gained fundamental knowledge about emotional regulation and mindfulness skills to utilize during times of distress. Teachers and parents were most likely to be the first to notice any potential changes in students' emotion regulation skills. School counselors could incorporate project content into their already established techniques and resources to reinforce concepts. School administrators could benefit from having emotionally intelligent students who are self-aware, motivated, empathetic, able to self-regulate, and appropriately interact with others to create a learning environment that is more conducive to learning.

Literature Review

School Environment

The school environment is an ideal place to start incorporating emotional regulation techniques into the adolescent's life. The school environment serves as the adolescent's "second home" because that is where they "spend half a day and master the methods of emotional survival." (Bahat & Ovesenik, 2020, p. 304). Battistich (2008) stated that the sense of connection and support within the school environment proves especially beneficial for students facing disadvantages, as they may lack sufficient support at home. Researchers declare that introducing schoolwide initiatives that foster a sense of community within classrooms can reduce problematic behaviors and enhance a sense of belonging (Solomon et al., 2000). Furthermore, tackling socioemotional development at the classroom level may be a more achievable objective in a resource-limited environment than attempting to overhaul the entire school system (Erasmus, 2022).

Socialization

The research on the ability to control one's emotions to other factors has been widely studied. One area of emotional intelligence that has been extensively researched is its connection to socialization. Engels et al. (2019) directed their attention to student involvement in school activities and how that impacts motivation to succeed in school. It was determined that students who are actively involved in school clubs and sports place higher importance on educational achievement and its relevance to their future. It was also found that student behavioral engagement and cognitive engagement were negatively correlated with burnout and motivation ($p < .010$).

Izaguirre et al. (2022) and Parikh et al. (2019) examined how the social environment

affects emotional development. A cross-sectional study by Izaguirre et al. (2022) determined that a school environment that cultivates trust and safety in students can encourage coping skills while directly influencing emotion regulation, attention, and clarity, ultimately improving emotional regulation. Parikh et al., (2019) went a step further to compare the role of different social environments (home, school, peers, and neighborhood) in adolescent stress. It was found that these four social environments can cause significant stress in adolescents' daily lives due to the level of emotional intelligence that is expected and required to appropriately interact and communicate with others (Parikh et al., 2019).

Academic Achievement

School is an ideal place to implement emotional regulation content because of its structured environment and peer interaction. Students with well-developed emotional regulation skills excel at navigating social situations and forming relationships with peers, which also improves their academic performance. There is a positive relationship between increased emotion regulation and higher academic performance in high school students (Torrego-Seijo et al., 2021; Mancini et al., 2017). In the 2021 study by Ivcevic & Eggers, emotional regulation ability (ERA) was significantly correlated with GPA ($r = 0.28$), academic honors ($r = 0.28$), understanding others ($r = 0.24$), and leadership protential ($r = 0.25$).

Research indicated that fluency in overall emotional intelligence correlated with high scores in Language Arts and Math (Torrego-Seijo et al., 2021; Mancini et al., 2017). A culmination of cooperative learning, peer collaboration, and peer acceptance was determined to be associated with improved academic performance (Torrego-Seijo et al., 2021; Mancini et al., 2017). The belief is that by engaging in peer interaction and collaborative efforts,

students can gain a deeper understanding of both their classmates' personalities and their own. This, in turn, enhances the probability of acceptance, ultimately contributing to improved academic outcomes. As students interact more with their peers, comfortability is established in the setting, leading to more openness and participation in class discussions and activities (Mancini et al., 2017).

Low academic achievers tended to exhibit greater signs of exhaustion, burnout, cynicism, negative coping skills, and low self-efficacy (Molero Jurado et al., 2021; Trigueros et al., 2019). Students experiencing academic difficulties find it challenging to manage the stress stemming from unmet expectations and face difficulties in cultivating resilience, thereby influencing their overall emotional intelligence (Molero Jurado et al., 2021). Adolescents who failed in a particular subject or had to repeat a school year exhibited increased indifference toward their education and teachers, resulting in disruptive behavior and low attendance (Molero Jurado et al., 2021). Conversely, individuals who excel academically exhibit traits such as motivation, resilience, high self-efficacy, positive emotions, adaptive behaviors, and increased satisfaction with their schooling (Trigueros et al., 2019; Ivcevic & Eggers, 2021). It is suggested that students who are more cognizant of their emotional efficiency and maturity are more inclined to flourish in the academic setting.

Headspace Mindfulness

A popular evidence-based mobile application aimed at boosting emotional and mental health is Headspace. Headspace is not designed to target any specific mental health problem or dysfunction but rather to promote mindfulness and well-being. It features content made specifically for students of all grade levels in its Headspace for Educators "Mindful tools for the classroom" guide (Headspace 2020). Headspace maintains a school-specific mindfulness

program, high information quality backed by research, and low cost compared to other similar

programs (Economides et al., 2018; Nunes et al., 2020; Lau et al., 2020). Headspace

techniques encompass practices such as breathing exercises, body scans, focused attention,

non-judgment of personal experiences, visualization, and sitting meditation. (Huang, 2016). In

an RCT by Economides et al. (2018), the use of the Headspace application led to a significant

reduction in stress overload and irritability, along with a significant increase in overall positive

emotional affect. Another RCT by Howells et al. (2014) reported the results of a repeated

measures ANOVA showed statistically significant increases in positive affect and a significant

reduction in depressive symptoms. According to Headspace's (2023) website, its mindfulness-

based approach employs a variety of techniques aimed at fostering acceptance, self-

compassion, and resilience. This statement is supported by an RCT by Flett et al. (2019) which

concluded Headspace users reported an 11% improvement in resilience after one month of

use. In a 2020 systemic review by Lau et al., it was noted that among the 1,008 applications

examined, Headspace exhibited the highest level of evidence-based research, supported by six

randomized controlled trials (RCTs). A 2021 study that examined mindfulness in high

schoolers found that after using the techniques found on the Headspace application, students

reported a greater understanding of mentality, present awareness, increased self-confidence,

and relaxation amidst challenges (Costalupes et al., 2021). Another study by Johnstone et al.

(2020) found that after 8 weeks of classroom mindfulness sessions, supplemented by the

Headspace application, high school students reported a decrease in anxiety. In a cohort study

by Worthen and Luiselli (2016), 84 high school students participated in a ten-week

mindfulness skill-building program, supplemented by the Headspace application to reinforce

techniques and provide additional practice opportunities. Students rated the program on a 1 to

5 scale (with 5 being strongly agreed), indicating that it was a positive experience (4.5), increased their awareness of thoughts (4.1), applied to everyday life (4.1), and that they would continue practicing mindfulness in the future (4.0) (Worthen & Luiselli, 2016). They also agreed that the mindfulness program should continue (4.6) and that their friends would benefit from a similar program (4.0) (Worthen & Luiselli, 2016). In a review of mindfulness applications for children, Nunes et al. (2020) used the Mobile App Rating Scale (MARS) to provide expert-based evaluation of the Headspace app and its use in children. Of the 57 apps reviewed only two applications, one being Headspace, was deemed evidence-based and was the second highest-rated application with a total score of 4.26 out of 5.0 (Nunes et al., 2020).

Summary

Upon completion of a literature review, it is apparent that the studies have identified the inclusion of an emotional regulation curriculum in the school setting as advantageous. A shared theme among the articles is the ideal placement of emotion management instruction within the classroom environment. Research indicates that facilitating the growth of emotional skills would empower young individuals to effectively handle overwhelming emotions and alleviate disinterest and fatigue in the classroom (Gázquez Linares et al., 2022).

An option to remedy the shortfall of emotional regulation in students involves integrating mindfulness and SEL learning opportunities into the school day. Teaching high-school students the practice of mindfulness and techniques to improve emotional regulation can have a positive impact on their affect and decrease social stress and depression (Battisch, 2008). The use of a mindfulness application to supplement skill development allows students to practice skills and refine techniques outside of the classroom setting.

Purpose and Specific Aims

The original purpose of the project was to teach high school students about emotional regulation using a mindfulness platform and evidence-based techniques designed for the school environment. The specific aims were to improve the students' understanding of emotions and emotional regulation and to help them apply techniques to regulate emotions in a healthy manner.

Conceptual Framework

Ecological Framework for Adolescent Health

The Ecological Framework for Adolescent Health (Blum et al., 2012) was developed to understand adolescent trajectory into adulthood. In the framework, there are five goals for healthy adolescence. The presence of these goals predicts the course for biological and environmental health. It is noted that the five goals for healthy adolescence pertain to areas of EI. The listed goals are academically engaged, emotionally and physically safe, positive sense of self or self-efficacy, life and decision-making skills, and physical and mental health (Blum et al., 2012). This quality improvement project targeted the five goals in each session to increase overall emotional regulation and management in adolescents. Through lessons and activities at school on each respective goal, the hope was that students would carry their EI knowledge into the school environment and positively influence their social interactions.
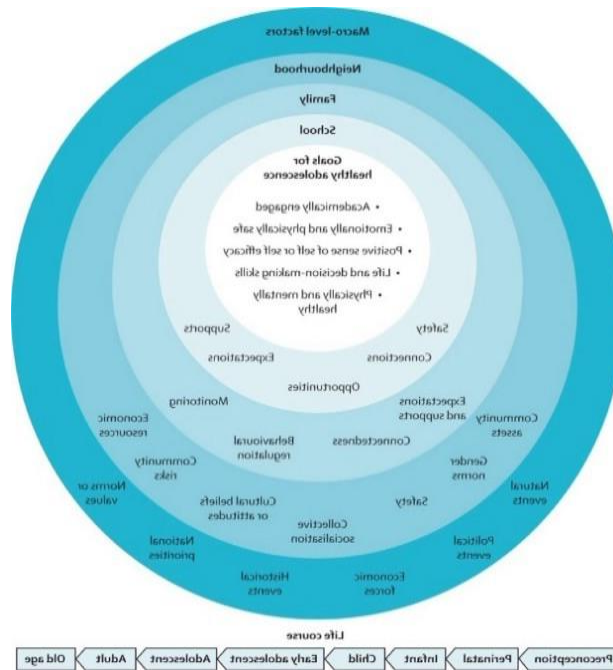
Figure 1: Ecological Framework for Adolescent Health

5 Step Model of Teaching

The secondary model used to teach the curriculum to the students was formatted according to the 5E Instructional Model. The Model consists of five phases: engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate (Bybee, 1987). Its purpose is to incorporate active learning in the classroom to facilitate a better understanding of knowledge (Joswick & Hulings, 2023; Bybee et al., 2006). The DNP project's curriculum was developed according to the Model framework. Each session involved acquiring students' baseline knowledge of the day's content, an instructional module, an interactive group activity, a class discussion, and a reflective exercise. Each component of the educational sessions correlated with a phase of the model (Figure 2).

Engage – Inquire students' baseline knowledge of content

Explore – Headspace Instructional Module (podcast, video, meditation, advice) Explain –

Games/exercises to put curriculum into action

Elaborate – Class Discussion

Evaluate – 3-2-1 Reflection Tool

Figure 2: BSCS 5E Instructional Model

Methods

Procedure

This project, carried out by the DNP Project Lead, consisted of an 8-week education

session followed by an open-ended qualitative evaluation. Each educational session

highlighted a different skill or strategy to enhance emotional regulation and management.

The DNP Project Lead demonstrated techniques, drawing examples from the evidence-based

Headspace for Educators program (Headspace, 2020) to illustrate coping skills and

emotional regulation. The teachers consented to and were present for the allocated 30 minutes

of class time for the weekly learning exercise. After the program, the DNP Project Lead

distributed the Emotion Management Program Overall Evaluation to all participating teachers

and administrators to gather feedback for data analysis.

Phase I

Phase I consisted of an 8-week targeted training session with the student population conducted each Wednesday of February and March 2024. Each training session consisted of an introduction to the concept, games/exercises, class discussions, and reflection questions about the assigned topic. Worksheets and reflection questions were printed out individually on paper for each student and were passed out by the teacher on the day of each lesson. The topics of discussion included emotion recognition, resilience, anger, social awareness/healthy relationships, navigating school, stress, building self-esteem, and self-reflection (Appendix A). After the exercise, the students completed a 3-2-1 Reflection Tool which was handed in to the teacher for review. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the entirety of the program.

Phase II

Phase II consisted of a final assignment, handed out by the teacher, which was a Skills Application Assessment (Appendix E) conducted three weeks after the conclusion of the program. The students completed the assignment and turned it in to their teachers. Afterward, the DNP Project Lead contacted all participating teachers and administrators to administer the Emotional Management Program Overall Evaluation (see Appendix F). Teachers were to consider the student's responsiveness to the exercises as well as their responses to the worksheet and Skills Application Assessment while completing the overall emotional management program. The evaluation consisted of open-ended questions regarding skill utilization and an overall evaluation of the emotional management program.

Measures

3-2-1 Reflection Tool

Weekly, after each lesson, students completed the 3-2-1 Reflection Tool to reflect on the week's educational topic and then write a goal as well as behaviors the students want to achieve after attending the session. Students wrote three things they learned during the lesson, two things they would like to change, and one overall goal they would like to achieve. This tool was created by the DNP Project Lead to help students review the presented information and evaluate learners.

Skills Application Assessment

The Skills Application Assessment was an assignment distributed to the students by the teachers. All students were expected by their teachers to complete the assignment. The Assessment's purpose was to evaluate what and if any skills taught during the program were utilized by the students after completion of the program. Students were expected to identify what skills were used and provide open-ended feedback on individual sessions throughout the eight weeks for the teachers to review. Students also answered statements using a Likert scale to rate the effectiveness and usefulness of the program.

Emotion Management Program Overall Evaluation

The DNP Project Lead developed the Emotional Management Program Overall Evaluation to gain insight into the teacher's perspective of the program's success. Teachers were able to observe student interaction and review materials that were turned in during the exercises making their evaluation a reliable gauge of student learning. Teachers and administrators provided qualitative program feedback including any program recommendations or improvements. The Emotion Management Program Overall Evaluation

consisted of five open-ended questions: Do you feel that the sessions were beneficial to your students? Have you seen any positive improvements/changes in your students' behavior/interactions since the sessions? If so, what kinds of improvements? Would you recommend this experience to your colleagues to use in their classrooms? Was the program appropriate for the students? Could you summarize any student feedback you have received since the conclusion? This tool served as the main source of data collection for analysis.

Sample

Five teachers and administrators in the Health Science Academy at Waggener High School participated in the program and provided feedback. Their student population consisted of 10th, 11th, and 12th-grade students who were expected but not required to participate in the program.

Data Analysis

To assess the project's success, the Emotional Management Program Overall Evaluation data were evaluated for common themes.

Ethical Considerations

Verbal and written approval for the DNP project was granted by the administration at Waggener High School. Due to the Jefferson County Public School's IRB regulations, no data could be collected directly from students. To gather some insights, qualitative feedback was obtained from teachers and administrators. Data was compiled in a Word document on a password-protected computer featuring an encrypted hard drive. All information remained confidential and cannot be linked back to the teacher or the original student. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) was maintained at all times throughout the project.

When discussing mental health, there is a risk that a student will develop strong emotions such as guilt, sadness, or stress. If this were to occur, a plan was made with the teacher for the student to be immediately referred to the school counselor and allowed to access JCPS psychiatric services.

Budget

This 30-minute, 8-week program was practical and cost-effective in a school-based setting since students were already present in the school environment. Comparable mental health sessions could cost upward of $400 in the community setting. This quality improvement project was free to the intervention site. The DNP Project Lead provided all paper materials totaling approximately $80. The DNP Project Lead's time valued at $45/hour was donated to complete this project.

Results

Five teachers assigned their students the Skills Application Assessment related to the emotional regulation modules which were a part of the health science curriculum in the high school magnet program. This follow-up assignment occurred approximately three weeks after the program's conclusion. The teachers reported that feedback highlighted three primary themes: relevance, value, and practicality. All participating teachers unanimously agreed that the program's content was highly applicable to students in the 10th to 12th grades. One teacher emphasized the significance of emotional regulation, stating, "The value of the emotional intelligence topic vs an academic class is equal, if not more valuable. Fighting and conflict seem to be the number one reason for student behavior problems in high school." Teachers collectively noted that the program covered relevant topics, with one remarking, "It's such a relevant topic and cannot be taught enough." Additionally, the

sessions were deemed appropriate, useful, and relatable. Teachers observed immediate changes in students' emotional awareness and the need for regulation. This was evident through conversations where students discussed waiting to respond to conflicts, consulting with a trusted mentor before making decisions, or engaging with classmates they normally wouldn't. One teacher noted, "Some of what [the students] are dealing with could be common ground and help them relate to one another," highlighting the program's practicality and necessity. Statements like "This is something every student NEEDS" underscore its importance.

Discussion

Interpretation

Despite facing unforeseen challenges that necessitated adjustments to the original plan, the core objectives of the project were met. Students had the opportunity to think about and learn how to effectively regulate emotions, an essential skill for managing stress and preventing conflict. The education on emotion regulation provided students with strategies to identify, understand, and manage their emotions in various situations. This foundational knowledge was reinforced through practical exercises, allowing students to apply these techniques in real-time scenarios. Additionally, the focus on positive communication techniques equipped students with the tools to express themselves clearly and constructively. They learned how to engage in active listening, provide and receive feedback respectfully, and resolve conflicts amicably. The combination of theoretical knowledge and practical application ensured that students could internalize and utilize these skills effectively. The adaptability of the program and its emphasis on practical skill-building were key factors in achieving the desired educational outcomes.

Based on teacher feedback, the hands-on and interactive activities were the most enjoyable and useful for the students. Teachers reported that these activities were particularly effective because they actively engaged students, making the learning experience more dynamic and memorable. By participating in practical exercises, students could immediately apply the concepts they were learning, which enhanced their understanding and retention of the material. The interactive nature of these activities also fostered collaboration and communication among students, further reinforcing the skills being taught. One teacher noted that this approach allowed students to "learn the skills while simultaneously practicing them," providing continuous reinforcement and facilitating deeper learning. This method not only made the sessions more engaging but also helped students to internalize the lessons, making the program's impact more profound and long-lasting.

Eye wandering and boredom were visibly evident during listening sessions that lacked video or interactive activities. Students appeared disengaged, indicating that purely auditory sessions were less effective in maintaining their attention. Teachers observed that students were more likely to become distracted and lose focus when the sessions did not incorporate diverse content delivery methods.

A future recommendation to address this issue is to ensure that all sessions include content presented in multiple modalities. This could involve incorporating videos, interactive activities, and multimedia presentations alongside traditional lecture formats. By diversifying the methods of content delivery, sessions can cater to different learning styles and preferences, thereby enhancing student engagement and participation. This multimodal approach can make the learning experience more stimulating and effective, reducing

instances of boredom and distraction. Consequently, incorporating varied content formats can lead to improved attention, greater retention of information, and a more inclusive learning environment.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the success of this project. As a result of changes in IRB regulations affecting projects in public schools, direct data collection from students was prohibited. Consequently, qualitative feedback was gathered exclusively from teachers and administrators. This restriction significantly reduced the intended sample size from 80 to five, thereby limiting the specificity of the findings. Additionally, this limitation placed the responsibility of conveying students' opinions on teachers, potentially leading to misinterpretations since students were not directly included in the feedback process.

The Emotion Management Program Overall Evaluation used to assess feedback was developed specifically for this project by the DNP Project Lead, while it allowed for the development of questions specific to this project and setting, the survey has not been used previously or undergone pilot testing. The evaluation relied on open-ended, self-reported responses, which could have introduced social desirability bias into the results, potentially skewing the data.

Furthermore, student involvement varied daily since it was not mandatory. Throughout the 8 weeks, the DNP Project Lead had no authority over student participation or absences, and no attendance data was collected. The 8-week session duration was relatively brief given the overarching goal of improving emotional regulation. To achieve a more significant impact overall, a longer timeframe with reviews of concepts and evaluations could help commit the information to long-term memory.

Summary

Despite some deviations from the original plan, this project successfully introduced students to the concept of emotional regulation. Students learned skills to help regulate their emotions, a critical ability for managing stress and preventing conflict. Teachers considered the emotional intelligence content to be as valuable as, if not more valuable than, academic classes. The sessions were deemed appropriate, useful, and relatable, with noticeable improvements in students' ability to reflect on their emotions and the need for restraint. Teacher feedback emphasized the program's practicality and necessity, with comments such as, "This is something every student NEEDS." Implementing a standardized emotion management curriculum would greatly benefit school environments and interactions.

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Appendix A

Emotion Regulation Lesson Plan

Date	Topic	Session Time (minutes)
Week 1: Wednesday 02/07/2024	Introduction; Emotion Recognition	25-30
Week 2: Wednesday 02/14/2024	Resilience	25-30
Week 3: Wednesday 02/21/2024	Anger	25-30
Week 4: Wednesday 02/28/2024	Social Awareness/Healthy Relationships	25-30
Week 5: Wednesday 03/06/2024	Navigating School	25-30
Week 6: Wednesday 03/13/2024	Stress	25-30
Week 7: Wednesday 03/20/2024	Building Self-Esteem	25-30
Week 8: Wednesday 03/27/2024	Self-Reflection	25-30
Check-In: Wednesday 04/17/2024	Skills Application Assessment; Emotion Management Program Overall Evaluation	5-10

Appendix B

3-2-1 Reflection Tool

3 things I learned today:

-

-

-

2 things I want to change:

-

-

1 overall goal I want to achieve:

-

Appendix C

Mental Health Glossary

Adversity: unfortunate, difficult, or challenging events that occur in our lives

Anger: an emotion characterized by antagonism toward someone or something you feel has deliberately done you wrong.

Anxiety: an emotion characterized by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune

Burnout: physical, emotional, or mental exhaustion accompanied by decreased motivation, lowered performance, and negative attitudes toward oneself and others

Character: the totality of an individual's attributes and personality traits, particularly their characteristic moral, social, and religious attitudes

Conflict: the occurrence of mutually antagonistic or opposing forces, including events, behaviors, desires, attitudes, and emotions

Coping skill: a strategy to help you deal with difficult situations and lessen unpleasant emotions, thoughts, or behaviors

Doubt: lack of confidence or uncertainty about something or someone, including the self

Emotion: a conscious mental reaction (such as anger or fear) subjectively experienced as strong feelings usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body.

Empathy: the ability to understand another person's view and feelings. It is "to walk in someone else's shoes" and see the world from their perspective rather than our own.

Happiness: an emotion of joy, gladness, satisfaction, and well-being

Meditation: profound and extended contemplation or reflection to achieve focused attention or an otherwise altered state of consciousness and to gain insight into oneself and the world

Mental health: a state of mind characterized by emotional well-being, good behavioral adjustment, relative freedom from anxiety and disabling symptoms, and a capacity to establish constructive relationships and cope with the ordinary demands and stresses of life

Mood: a general feeling, not a reaction to a particular situation.

Neurotransmitters: chemicals that carry messages throughout your brain

Perspective: the capacity of an individual to take into account and potentially understand the perceptions, attitudes, or behaviors of themself and other individuals

Protective factor: something that decreases the chances of developing a condition and/or balances out an existing risk factor

Resentment: a feeling of bitterness, animosity, or hostility elicited by something or someone perceived as insulting or injurious.

Resilience: the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands

Resistance: generally, any action in opposition to, defying, or withstanding something or someone

Risk factor: something that increases the chances of developing a condition

Self-care: an activity you do on purpose and with the intention to take care of your body, mind, and/or spirit. Self-care is anything that makes you feel relaxed, happy, and at peace, and helps you recharge so you can be fully present in your life.

Self-confidence: self-assurance: trust in one's abilities, capacities, and judgment

Self-esteem: an individual's overall evaluation and perception of their worth, value, and competence

Self-stigma: negative attitudes and shame regarding an individual's mental health, resulting from internalizing public stigma

Social awareness: the person's ability to consider the perspectives of other individuals, groups, or communities and apply that understanding in their interactions

Social determinants of health: the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play that impact their health and quality of life

Stigma: negative, judgmental, and/or discriminatory attitudes toward mental health challenges and those who live with them

Stress: a feeling of emotional or physical tension in response to being overwhelmed or unable to cope with mental/emotional pressure. **Stress** is our body's natural response to situations that become a challenge or threat.

Symptom: a physical or mental feature that indicates the potential existence of a concern, condition, or diagnosis

Tension: a feeling of physical and psychological strain accompanied by discomfort, uneasiness, and pressure to seek relief through talk or action

Trauma: an emotional response to a disturbing, scary, or shocking experience that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope

Value: a moral, social, or aesthetic principle accepted by an individual or society as a guide to what is good, desirable, or important

Well-being: a state of happiness and contentment, with low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health and outlook, or good quality of life.

Appendix D

Week 1 Activities

Headspace: Feelings v. Emotions (3 min) The Culture of Emotions (2:08-4:00) Honoring Your Emotions (0:31-2:07)

RAIN (Recognize, Accept/Allow, Investigate, Nurture)
- Name or label the emotion.
- Allow the feeling without trying to avoid it.
- How does this emotion feel in my body? How does my body react to different emotions? How does my head feel? How does my heart feel?
- This emotion is temporary. What do I need to nurture this feeling?

Interactive Activity:
1. Start with the inner circle and identify the general emotion you are feeling

2. Explore the emotions that fall under the general emotion and pick one or more to dig into

3. Specify the context of these emotions by choosing emotions from the outermost circle that fall under the chosen emotions

4. Reflect on the situation at hand and confirm, "I feel [specific emotions chosen] because of [the reasons or particular situation that arose]."

5. What problems might you run into if you used just three emotions (sad, mad, happy) to describe your experiences?

Reflection Questions:

1. What emotions do I tend to feel most often while I'm at school?

2. What strategies have I used to help with difficult emotions?

3. A time when my emotions impacted my actions at school was when…
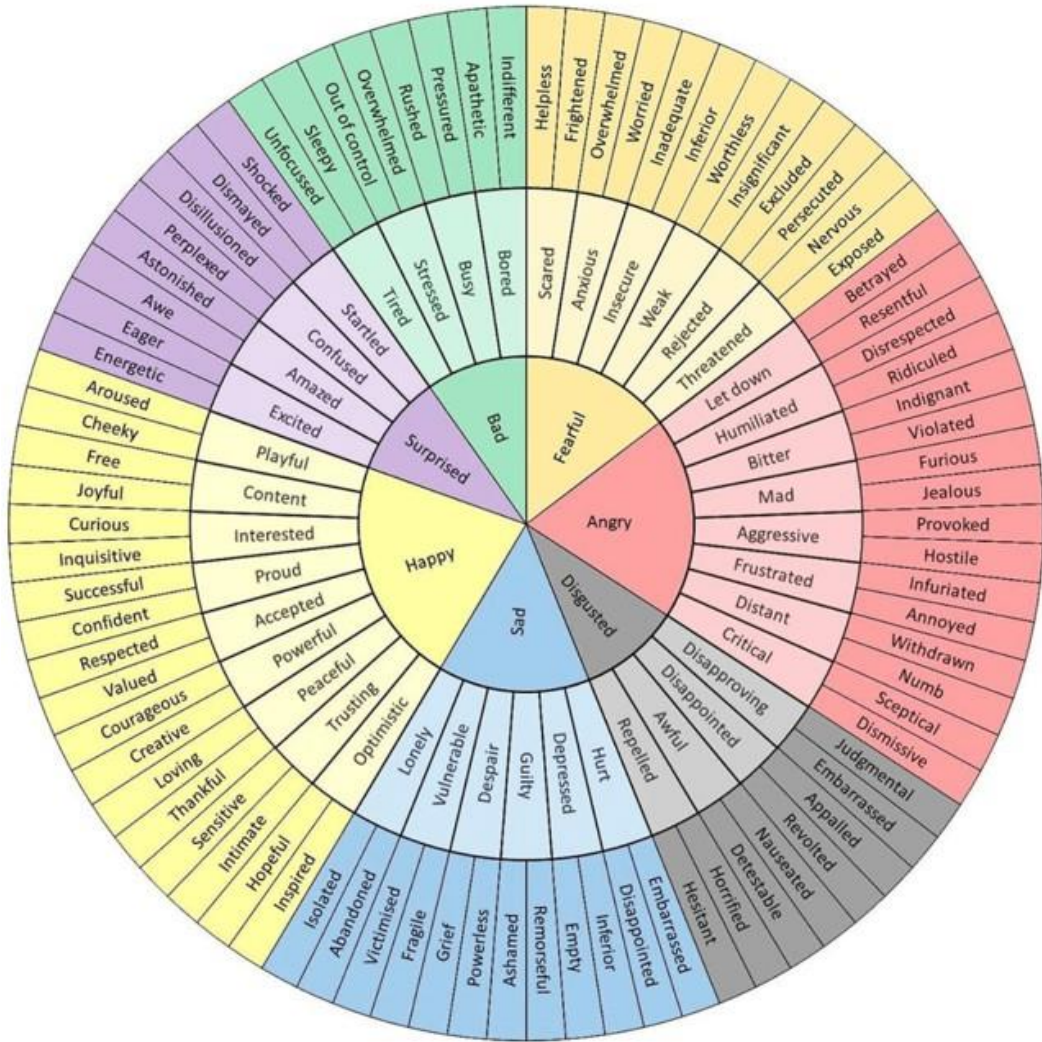
Start with the inner circle and identify the general emotion you are feeling.
Explore the emotions that fall under the general emotion and pick one or more to dig into.
Specify the context of these emotions by choosing emotions from the outermost circle that fall under the chosen emotions.
Reflect on the situation at hand and confirm, "I feel [specific emotions chosen] because of [the reasons or particular situation that arose]."

What problems might you run into if you used just three emotions (sad, mad, happy) to describe your experiences?

Week 2 Activities

Headspace: Navigating Tension (3 min) Resistance (4 min) Notes on Resiliency (5 min)

Interactive Activity: The 4 S's of Resilience

First, identify a recent experience in which demonstrating resilience helped you overcome adversity. Working through the sheet, you'll then learn about the 4 S's of resilience and how they helped you cope at the time:

Supportive people – People who gave you advice, or perhaps helped you develop a new, more helpful perspective

Strategies – Methods and approaches you implemented to deal with difficult thoughts and feelings

Sage Advice – Wisdom and insights that may have been helpful

Solution-seeking behaviors – Planning, for instance, or searching for useful information.

Next, identify a current challenge you'd like to deal with by applying your resilience plan. The exercise will guide you through the steps of crafting a plan. Resilience is like many other skills or abilities; in that you cannot put forth effort once and consider your learning done. To truly build meaningful resilience, it must be a practice rather than a crash course. Use this goal-setting exercise to facilitate your goal striving.

Reflection Questions:
1. What are some goals you have in school?
2. Have you ever felt like giving up on something you wanted to get better at? How did you handle it?
3. What are 2 short-term and long-term goals you have for yourself?

The Resilience Plan (The 4 S's)

Resilience is the ability to cope with whatever life throws at you and bounce back stronger and more steadfast than before. Resilient people work through life challenges using personal resources, including social support, coping strategies, sagacity (which is the wisdom and insight that we hold onto), and solution-seeking. This exercise helps you draw on your resilience resources to build a personal resilience plan, which you can use to help you combat any future challenges.

Part 1: My Past Sources of Resilience

Step 1: Recall a recent example of resilience

Think about a time recently when you overcome a challenge or setback in your life. Perhaps you injured yourself, received some negative feedback at work, or had an argument with a friend or family member. Briefly describe this difficulty below.

Step 2: Identify supportive people

What 'supportive people' in your life kept you standing when it would have been easier to fall down? For instance, did you call an old friend, ask a teacher for advice, or perhaps a parent or grandparent gave you a pep talk? Write down who you called on for support in the top right cell of the table in Appendix 1.

Step 3: Identify strategies

What 'strategies' did you use to help yourself cope with any negative thoughts and feelings that showed up in response to the difficulty? For example, did you meditate, write in a gratitude journal, go for a walk, listen to a particular song or type of music, or have a massage to release tension? Write down the strategies you used in the bottom left cell of the table in Appendix 1.

Step 4: Identify sage advice

What 'sagacity' helped you bounce back from this difficulty? Sagacity is the wisdom and insight that you hold onto. It can come from song lyrics, novels, poetry, spiritual writings, quotes from the famous, the sayings of one's grandparents, or learning from one's own experience. Write down your sagacity in the bottom right cell of the table in Appendix 1.

Step 5: Identify solution-seeking behaviors

What solution-seeking behaviors did you display to help you actively deal with the problem? For example, did you problem-solve, seek out new information, plan ahead, negotiate, speak up and voice your opinion, or ask others for help? Write down the solution-seeking behaviors you displayed in the top left cell of the table in Appendix 1.

Part 2: My Resilience Plan

Step 6: Describe a current difficulty

In the space below, describe a current difficulty or challenge that you are facing.

Step 7: Apply the resilience plan to the current difficulty

Given the social supports, strategies, sagacity, and solution-seeking behaviors that helped you last time, let us look at how you could use the same or similar resources to help you bounce back from this current difficulty you are facing (identified in the previous step). Read through your completed plan (Appendix A) and write down the skills, supports, strategies, and sagacity that could work again for you in the blank resilience plan template in Appendix B. Allow some flexibility here in the sense that the same type of social support/ strategy/ sagacity/solution-seeking behavior could be tweaked according to your current situation, for instance going to your manager rather than a parent for support in the face of a work-related problem.

Step 8: Carry out your resilience plan

The next step is to put your resilience plan into action. To do this, consider the order in which to use your different supports, strategies, sagacity, and solution-seeking behaviors: which resource is most feasible to start with? Often the most feasible resource is the smallest step that you can take, such as calling your partner. On your resilience plan (Appendix 2), place the number 1 next to the first resource you will use. Then, continue to number your different resources in the order in which you would feasibly use them.

Then, go ahead and action your first resource, and continue to work through your resilience plan (in order) until you have overcome this difficulty.

Once you have come through the other side, please move on to the next step.

Part 3: Evaluation

Step 9: Evaluate your resilience plan

Discuss the following:

■ How was it for you to carry out your resilience plan? Did it help you bounce back from

this difficulty?

■ What resources (specific skills/supports/strategies/sagacity) were most helpful to you?

Why?

■ What resources (specific skills/supports/strategies/sagacity) were least helpful to you?

Why?

■ Did you not use any resources, and if so, why?

■ Is there anything you would like to add to your resilience plan?

■ In what other areas of your life could you use your resilience plan? How might things

improve for you?

Appendix 1: My Past Sources of Resilience

Supports that kept you upright	**Strategies** that kept you moving
Sagacity that gave you comfort and hope	**Solution-seeking** behaviors you showed

Appendix 2: My Resilience Plan

Supports	**Strategies**
that keep you upright	that keep you moving
Sagacity	**Solution-seeking**
that gives you comfort and hope	behaviors you can show

Week 3 Activities

Headspace: Anger (6 min) Managing Conflict (3 min) Resentment (6 min)

Interactive Activity: The inspiration for this conflict resolution activity comes from the "If You Give A Mouse a Cookie," book series. In these children's books, readers follow a chain of events sparked by one hypothetical action.
The original book opens:
"If you give a mouse a cookie, he's going to ask for a
glass of milk. When you give him the milk, he'll
probably ask you for a straw.
When he's finished, he'll ask you for a napkin.
Then he'll want to look in a mirror to make sure he doesn't have a milk
mustache…." Following this format, teammates will work together to write a
story based on a school conflict.

Here are some sample starting prompts:

- If you don't turn in your homework

- If you give your classmate a side eye

- If you share a rumor

For the sake of variety, you can give teams different prompts. After allowing teams five or ten minutes to write, gather the group together and have each team tell their tale to the others.
Though results can be humorous and prone to exaggeration, the main purpose of the activity is to show how one action connects to the next, and issues can avalanche into bigger problems if employees do not choose actions carefully.

Reflection Questions:

1. Reflect on a conflict you've had. How could you have de-

   escalated or diffused the conflict?

2. What are some conflicts you have seen happening in the classroom?

   How do you think they could be prevented or resolved?

3. When was a time you stayed true to yourself and your values despite negative
   pressure?

Week 4 Activities

Headspace: Happiness of Others (1 min) Avoid the Comparison (1:40 min)
Knowing When to Rest (1:45-4:25) Talk Less, Do More (1 min)

Interactive Activity:

In this icebreaker, students are prompted to either line up in some particular
order (by birthday, for example) or gather in "blobs" based on something they
have in common (similar shoes, for example). What's great about this game is
that it **helps students quickly discover things they have in common**.
Students don't have to come up with anything clever, and they can respond to
every question without thinking too hard about it. This game keeps students
moving and talking, and it builds a sense of belonging and community in your
classroom.

Here are some sample prompts you can use for this game:

- Line up in alphabetical order by your first names.

- Line up in alphabetical order by your last names.

- Gather with people who have the same favorite video game as you.

- Line up in order of your birthdays, from January 1 through December 31.

- Line up in order of how many languages you speak.

- Gather with people who have the same favorite season as you.

Reflection Questions:

1. Why is it valuable to learn about the perspectives of others?

2. What are some ways to let people in your class know you care about them?

3. What are some qualities that you want in a friend? How would you

   describe a good friend?

Week 5 Activities

Headspace: Impatience (5 min) Showing Up (1 min) Identifying Anxious Thoughts (1 min) Get Good at Failure (1 min) Procrastination (1 min) Bye Burnout (0:50-6:20)

Interactive Activity:

Stress and Burnout Trivia

Students will be divided into teams and asked a series of fact vs. myth questions related to stress, burnout, and procrastination. The team with the most correct answers will win a prize.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is challenging about school?

2. Who in the school, your family, or neighborhood can you go to if you are having a problem in school – like with a friend or a math problem?

3. I will feel connected with others by…

Week 6 Activities

Headspace: Anticipation Anxiety (1:20 min) Breaking the Stress Cycle (2:09-4:15) Learning How to Rest & Relax (3:10 min)

Interactive Activity: Coping with Stress

The goal of this worksheet is to help you identify what life situations make you experience stress and recognize how they impact you. Doing so can help you find new, more adaptive coping mechanisms for these triggers, reducing or eliminating the sources of stress in your life. The worksheet contains two parts.

Part 1 is focused on self-awareness. In this exercise, you'll list the physiological

and emotional symptoms of stress that you experience when faced with specific

events. Rating your stress levels in each circumstance will help you prioritize

those you'd like to deal with in Part 2. Part 2 invites you to think of new and

healthier ways to reduce or eliminate your stress. It asks you to identify the

elements of those stress triggers that you can and cannot control, before

designing ways to cope with them in the moment. Finally, your responses to

Part 2 can be used to brainstorm new ways to cope in the future.

Reflection Questions:

1. When was a time when your stress negatively impacted you or got out of your control?

2. Today, a small joy I can savor is…

3. I will show kindness to myself by…

Coping with Stress

**Part 1: Recognizing
   Stress**

Use the table provided to explore and identify situations and events that trigger physical and emotional symptoms of stress in you.

In the first column, list some situations that you feel, or suspect are eliciting a stress response in you. Write any physical and emotional sensations you experience in the second and third columns respectively. Finally, use the final right-hand column to rate how much stress you experience from that trigger, where 0% is the lowest and 100% is the highest.

Situation When I…	Physical Symptoms I feel…	Emotional Symptoms I feel…	Stress Rating (0-100%)
Am given a lot of homework on a Friday	*tight shoulders*	*overwhelmed and exhausted*	*60%*

Part 2: Coping with Stress

Now, use the triggers you identified in Part 1 to develop some coping mechanisms for when they arise. List the triggers you'd like to work with in the first, left-hand column. In the second column, try to distinguish between what you can and cannot control about the trigger you've listed. The third column is for listing how you currently cope with the stressful situation, and the final column is where you are invited to think of new ways to cope with the situation.

Situation When I…	Control What can I realistically control about this situation? What aspects are beyond my control?	Current Coping Mechanisms Right now, I cope by…	Adaptive Coping Mechanism How might I deal with this situation to decrease or get rid of my stress?
Am given a lot of homework on a Friday	*I cannot control how much work I am assigned.* *I can control when and how I finish these tasks.* *I can control how much I personally accomplish*	*Staying up late Sunday night to finish my homework*	*I can:* *Prioritize my assignments.* *Divide my work into manageable small assignments*

Week 7 Activities

Headspace: Doubt (5 min) Cause & Effect (1 min) Building Self-Confidence

(0-1:13, 6:55- 8:10) Boosting Self-Confidence (3 min) Honor Your Authentic

Self (1) The Need to Be Liked (3 min)

Interactive Activity:

Research shows that if you identify and develop your strengths of character, you will be more productive, happy, and able to overcome adversity.

Instructions: Below is a list of personal strengths. Read through the list. When you find a strength that describes you, circle it. Next, condense the circled list to the 10 strengths that most describe you. Then reflect on these 10 strengths and 1) find new and creative ways to use them more in various areas of your daily life (e.g., family, friends, school) and 2) think of how you can use them to successfully solve problems and navigate difficult situations.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is something you have done this year that you are proud of?

2. What assets do you see in yourself?

3. How do you contribute to your school community? What qualities do you bring?

FLEXIBLE THINKING I see that my thoughts are not always true beliefs. I can unhook from my thoughts when they are unhelpful.	RESPECT I am able to look up to others who have knowledge, wisdom or advice.	TEAMWORK I am good at working with a group.
PROBLEM SOLVING CONFIDENCE I see my problems in my life as challenges, instead of as threats. I am willing to put effort into solving my problems.	APPRECIATING BEAUTY I appreciate art, music, painting, dance, or other expressions of beauty.	BEING GRATEFUL I express gratitude and I'm thankful.
FLEXIBLE SELF-VIEW I see that I am more than my thoughts and feelings.	CAPACITY FOR LOVE I can express and receive love.	HOPE I believe I can achieve my goals.
GROWING SELF I see myself as capable of changing and improving.	SELF-KINDNESS When I don't live up to my expectations, I'm able to forgive myself and recommit to my goals.	INNER BALANCE Difficult thoughts and feelings don't push me around. I can have self-doubt and fear and still work towards success.
ENTHUSIASM I love what I do and can't wait to get started on projects.	CAPACITY FOR FRIENDSHIP I can be a good friend to others.	HONESTY I tell people what I care about, keep promises, and don't lie.
SOCIAL CONFIDENCE I assume I can be liked and valued by others. If I put time and energy into relationships, I assume I will build friendships.	CURIOSITY I find the world a very interesting place and like to be involved in new things.	WORKABILITY FOCUS I focus on doing what works – acting in a way that makes my life better.

NOTICER PAUSE When something makes me feel strong emotions or urges, I practice mindfully pausing before reacting.	FORGIVING I don't try to get even. I accept that my friends and loved ones will be imperfect.	LEADERSHIP I'm able to take charge and help a group work well together.
KINDNESS I help friends, go out of my way to cheer others up, and love to make others happy.	WILLINGNESS I choose to do what I care about even when I have difficult feelings, such as sadness, anger, insecurity, or low motivation.	HUMOR I use humor to brighten other's days. I try to add humor to whatever I do.
SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE I can fit into different situations, and I'm good at sensing what others are feeling.	LOVE OF LEARNING I love to learn and grow.	HUMILITY I don't act as if I'm special, don't brag, and am humble about good things that have happened to me.
PERSISTENCE I keep doing what I think is important even when things get difficult, or I fail.	SELF-CONTROL I'm highly disciplined and able to stick to my goals despite temptations to abandon them.	WISDOM I don't lose sight of what's really important in life.
SPIRITUALITY I believe in a universal power or God, and I keep my faith even during hard times.	COURAGE I'm able to do what I think is important, even when I feel fear, uncertainty, or intimidation.	DISCOVERY I love to try new things and explore possibilities.
PERSPECTIVE TAKING I see things from different viewpoints, and I can take other peoples' perspective.	NOTICING OUTSIDE I notice what's going on outside me and the consequences of my actions on others.	NOTICING INSIDE I'm usually aware of what I'm feeling and thinking.
BEING FAIR I admit when I'm wrong and try to treat all people equally	CREATIVITY I like to come up with new ideas and new ways of doing things	CAREFULNESS I avoid unnecessary risks and think before I speak.
CAREFUL JUDGEMNT I think things through and make decisions after I have all the facts		

What did you identify as your top 10 strengths?

-              •
-              •
-              •
-              •
-              •

How can you purposely use each of these strengths more in your daily life?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

How can you use each of these strengths to solve problems and overcome adversity?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Week 8 Activities

Headspace: Fear of Failure (3 min) Appreciate Yourself (3:40 min) Hole in the

Road (1) What's Going Well (0:20-1:30)

Interactive Activity:
Participants are asked to change where they are sitting so, they can experience the emotions and feelings often associated with change. After the class gets situated and comfortable, the facilitator should ask participants to change seats.

Discussion Questions
- How did it feel to be asked to change seats?

- Did you view changing seats as an opportunity to sit with someone new or as an uncomfortable or undesirable change?

- What are some things that make people resistant to change?

If participants move back to their old seating arrangements after the exercise is over, ask the following questions:

- Why is it difficult to maintain changes once they are made?

- What kind of support is necessary to maintain change?

Facilitator Notes
Encourage participants to consider and share their emotions related to making changes. This is what makes the exercise powerful. Another twist to this game might be asking participants to change seats frequently, which also can help them enhance their ability to deal with change.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is your definition of well-being? What does it look like for you?

2. How do you notice and collect information about yourself in relation

   to others and the world around you?

3. What kinds of things do you think about when you are making a decision?

Appendix E

Skills Application Assessment

Circle the skills that you have used in the past 3 weeks.

Skill	
Exercise	Reflect
Meditation/mindfulness	Box breathing/breathing exercise
Ask for help/support	Speak positively to myself
Create boundaries	5-4-3-2-1 grounding
Not yell or raise my voice	Check-in with my feelings
Spend time in nature/outside	Talk to someone about my feelings
Journal	Get enough sleep (8hr/night)
Use positive affirmations	Go on a walk

The session(s) and/or activity I liked the most were:

The session(s) and/or activity I liked the least were:

Some recommendations I have for improvement are:

Please rate the following statements according to the scale.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The mindfulness program helped me become more aware of my thoughts and feelings.					
I think my friends would benefit from learning mindfulness skills.					
I will continue to practice mindfulness in the future.					
The mindfulness program has helped me become more aware of my emotions.					
The mindfulness program has helped me cope with stress and negative thinking.					
The mindfulness program has helped me become more aware of my bodily sensations.					
The mindfulness program has been as valuable as most academic classes at our school.					

Appendix F

Emotion Management Program Overall Evaluation

1.	Do you feel that the sessions were beneficial to your students?	
2.	Have you seen any positive improvements and/or changes in your students' behavior or interactions since the sessions? If so, what kinds of improvements?	
3.	Would you recommend this experience to your colleagues to use in their classrooms?	
4.	Was the program appropriate for the student population?	
5.	Could you summarize any student feedback you have received since the conclusion of the program?	
6.	Suggestions for improvement:	
7.	Additional comments:	