Mindful and Positive Relationships as Foundational to Student Support

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Mindful and Positive Relationships as Foundational to Student Support.

By

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Abstract
Modern public schools are in a crisis on two fronts; society is making more demands of the school system to teach students how to be more capable and marketable in an ever-changing digitalized global community while student enrollment with low social-emotional ability has increased meaning that students are less motivated to engage in their learning at the academic level. Low student motivation leads naturally to high student failure and an increased level of negative relationships with school staff and peers. In turn, these negative relationships limit the whole learning community through teacher burn-out and increased perception of the school as an unsafe area. This perception and teacher burn-out results in less effective teaching and lower academic motivation in peers. However, motivation can be increased through school staff bridging the present ability deficits of the students by fostering positive, efficacious relationships. Positive and effective relationships can be developed through implementation of mindfulness as a pervasive practice and holistic value throughout the whole school in tandem with the creation of community groups acting as the home base for students across grade levels to connect with specific school staff and develop effective self-directed mindfulness practice with a group of individuals that is constant, but not part of their grade cohort.
Chapter One: The Problem
Problem Statement: students and their families lack trust and relationship with schools and teachers resulting in low student success.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) changed the stakes for schools and educators throughout the nation. Almost overnight, educators were made fully accountable for the success of their students regardless of the student’s ability. In a blink of an eye, educator’s suddenly scrambled to maximize their student’s abilities while attempting to increase their skills. Similarly, the national adoption of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) has caused educators to question their role and ability to best match student skill level to expected curriculum tasks and content. The NCLBA created a system of educator blame for failure and later the CCLS provided the litmus for this failure. Neither initiative took into account the holistic nature of learning as a process but centered the discussion on learning as a thing, a benchmark to be surpassed, met or missed. With the whole country watching, educators are, in short, asked to perform a miracle. Increasingly, this miracle seems impossible to perform as many students come to school from life situations that greatly impact their ability to perform at the required level and thus the students, educators, and the nation has lost and continue to lose faith in the public school system. However, as the Sufi teacher and poet, Rumi, states:

“Miracles don’t cause faith, but rather
The scent of kindredness that unites people.

Miracles overwhelm unbelief.

Faith grows from friendship”

(Barks, 2004, p. 149)
Rumi was the son of a religious leader and mystic who grew to have his own followers and disciples. Rumi developed strong relationships with his followers and much of his poetry concerns both the power of mindfulness and that of relationships to improve and enhance our life experiences. Rumi here is noting that miracles can happen where there is a deep relationship; if there is some form of connection between two different people then faith and trust can be generated between them. Thus, if educators wish to regain the trust of the nation, parents, and students then they first need to first develop a bond with their students and students’ families on an individual level. Trust is the foundation of any relationship between individuals, but as educators, we don’t always enjoy the opportunity to develop trust in our relationships with students. While some come to school with an innate sense of trust in the authority of teachers and school systems, there are an increasing amount of students coming to school with a learned and lifelong distrust of schools and the people who work therein. This breach of trust might be exasperated further due to racial, religious, and even cultural identities. It is here that education theory seems to stop looking for answers into how to help students. However, it is here that the ancient wisdom of Rumi provides the answer: “faith grows from friendship” (Barks, 2004, p. 149).

**Significance of the Problem**
The issue here is that education is suffering from the weight of accountability to assessments that do not rightly take into account the limitations that many students face as a matter of course in their lives. For some, this limitation is minimal or can be compensated via additional tutoring services and/or the natural resiliency that the individual student has towards his/her situation. However, there are many students who simply cannot perform at the expected level due to a variety of disabilities and adverse life events that hinder, delay and overall interrupt their learning. Thus, it is that we have students in the upper grades who cannot read nor process mathematical equations beyond that of lower grade expectation, even to the point of barely grasping those skills commonly found at the emergence stage of development. Such students are considered "at risk"
and are often removed to alternate academic settings where overall expectations are lower than in
district, and yet teacher accountability as formulated by CCS and NCLB still applies. This "at risk"
population is increasingly rising as time progresses and schools are subsequently underprepared to
deal with the additional needs of these students. "At risk" students often come from homes with a
history of lower academic success and often a high level of mistrust of the educational system for a
wide variety of reasons.

For this reason, it seems that the wider issue of educator failure due to student failure is conditional
on how both student and teacher perceive the level and quality of relationship with one another.
Many students come to school with the expectation that they will fail and that they will be disliked
by their educators, while educators increasingly perceive the same situation from the opposite
viewpoint that the student is coming to them "intending" to fail and to be disliked by educator and
peers alike. This is especially true in alternative academic settings where the student has mostly
only known frustration and failure with little relationship with educators. However, even here and
especially in mainstream districts, students who succeed often present as having positive and
satisfying relationships with educators. The correlation between teacher-student relationship and
student success appears to be high and serves as the backbone of increasing student motivation,
engagement and, ultimately, their individual success. However, the question remains as to how to
best develop, maintain, and utilize these teacher-student relationships.

Purpose
A program overhaul is required to reset the dynamics of student-teacher relationships from a
myopic focus on academics to a holistic approach to educating modern learners with a focus on the
social-emotional needs of the student while presenting quality instruction. Students who are unable
to relate to others in a meaningful way are incapable of learning at their full potential and so this
basic human need for the connection must be met. Appropriate strategies must also be taught to
the student in order for them to engage and maintain the effective relationships that are necessary
to access the learning presented. Similarly, school staff may lack basic social-emotional skills and, so, are incapable of teaching and modeling such behavior effectively. Thus, any program overhaul not only requires implicit instruction to the students in this area, but also to the staff and faculty. Any program that hopes to successfully establish positive and effective relationships needs to provide students with trusted adults and peers with whom to practice and maintain social-emotional skills on a daily basis.

In the pursuit of a solution to meet these diverse needs presented by the lack of positive teacher-student relationships, highlighted in this project is the development of a holistic school program. Such a diverse program will be broken into three core areas of focus, each with specific supports. These areas of focus are Mindfulness-integrated instruction, community groups, and teacher self-care. Mindfulness-integrated instruction will be illustrated by sample lesson plans. Community groups will be demonstrated as a developmental matrix in form of a recommended weekly routine with supplemental resources. The final core area of teacher self-care will be exhibited through a PowerPoint and materials for educators targeted at establishing positively centered professional learning communities through which personal self-care can be developed and sustained through the support of fellow staff members.

Rationale
It is no longer the simple task of schools to teach students the academic content of a liberal arts curriculum. Schools are now more than ever held accountable for the education of the student’s academic and social-emotional development. In the past, socially-emotionally incapable students were expelled and excluded from this process, but this is no longer the case due to federal initiatives such as NCLBA, the implementation of CCLS and DASA. This has resulted in students who traditionally were excluded being retained within the school system, even if such students are offered an alternative placement outside of the district with agencies such as Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). Students, especially those who are removed from districts, often
have little to no trust in the school system and the adults who represent this system. Students who do not trust the school and its staff are resistant to most attempts to build relationships and so lack motivation, engagement and, eventually, success. Such students also possess lower levels of self-esteem and self-regulation that creates a closed loop of failure and distance from educators. However, by working with both students and staff on developing effective strategies to strengthen self-esteem and trust in each other. In doing so, schools can hope to meet the social-emotional needs of the student and create effective and positive relationships between students and teachers in order to better enable the student to academically succeed.

Definition of Terms

Alternate Education – Educational setting designed to accommodate educational, behavioral, and/or medical needs of students that cannot be adequately addressed within the traditional school environment

Annual Profession Performance Review (APPR) – yearly evaluation of school administration and teaching staff.

At Risk Population – Students who have a higher than average probability of dropping out of education and/or failing academically due to adverse circumstances, such as homelessness, pregnancy, serious health issues, domestic abuse, transiency, disabilities, chronic disciplinary problems.

Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) – An educational organization that provides shared educational programs and services to school districts within New York State.

Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) – Standards of education that are the shared by all states within the nation, creating a set benchmark for curriculums to meet such that learning is concurrent regardless of geographical location within the nation.
Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) 2010 – An act of Congress that was passed making it unlawful to discriminate, intimidate anyone on school grounds due to any real or perceived differences.

Mindfulness – The practice of being aware of and maintaining one’s own emotional state and impact on others’ emotional well-being.

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) 2001 – an act of Congress that was passed in order to ensure equal education for all via requiring all students to sit state assessments and states set stricter educational standards and measurable goals.

Professional Development – Any specialized training designed to improve educational knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness.

Professional Learning Community – groups of school staff who meet together for a specific training activity that relates to education.

School Staff – Any employee of the school.

Self-care (SC) – Any action that a person takes to tend to their own emotional, mental, and/or physical health.

Socioeconomic-status (SES) – The economic and social measurement of income, education and occupation.

Social-emotional Ability (SEA) – the proficiency with which one is able to understand and manage one’s own emotions, develop and display empathy, and create and maintain relationships

Social-emotional Learning (SEL) – the process through which one is able to develop and apply the ability to understand spacing one’s own emotions, develop and display empathy, and create and maintain relationships.
Social-emotional Skill-sets (SES) – the strategies and range of ability with which one is able to understand and manage one’s own emotions, develop and display empathy, and create and maintain relationships

Chapter Two: The Literature

What’s “At Risk”

“At risk” is a term applied to students who, for one reason or another, are more likely to drop out of school. Such “at risk” communities are often the populations where education would be of the most benefit to them in a generalized manner as education could offer them the change in their situations that would likely make the difference from being successful in life and failing, from contributing to society and detracting from it, or being dependent on society for basic life requirements. Connell & Klem (2006) note that “research on youth, and specifically on economically disadvantaged youth, demonstrates the importance of educational outcomes as precursors of important life outcomes, such as economic self-sufficiency, healthy family and social relationships, and good citizenship (p.53). In short, academic success has a positive holistic effect on the lives of students. Thus, the question of what is at risk is the future lives, successes, and happiness of today's youth. Not only this, but society's future well being is also “at risk.” Due to the effect that academic success has on student lives, “school reform presents the most feasible, defensible, and informed opportunity for public policy to improve the life chances of children and youth in disadvantaged communities” (Connell & Klem, 2006, p. 53). When thinking about citizenship and participation in society, paying taxes, lowering cases of alcoholism, and other social ills, school reform is the most effective avenue to affect change, especially with those "at risk" of dropping out and engaging in such negative societal behaviors. This population of “at risk” is growing as time progresses as Jennings & Greenberg (2009) cite Gilliam with denoting the growth
in the number of students entering the academic situation as early as pre-school with serious behavior problems and unprepared (p. 496).

This would be difficult enough to handle on its own without the added distracter that society and its expectations place on students. Hofer & Peetsma (2005) convincingly present a slew of research that shows how societal values and multiple goals affect students’ school motivation. Societies and the cultural expectations change over time, in the Western World there is seen such a shift from purely academic, to “students try[ing] to achieve multiple goals across various contexts (e.g. at home, in school, etc): achievement, social-emotional and personality related goals” (Hofer & Peetsma, 2005, ). This Hofer & Peetsma (2005) note needs to be considered when looking at school achievement as in many cases, where academic expectations have not changed, other expectations have become valued more highly. Value changes are “rooted in a multitude of changes in society” and “[a]s value orientations reflect a youth’s socialization experience, it is unlikely that school motivation stays unaffected by these changes” (Hofer & Peetsma, 2005, p.203). Rather, it is more likely that school motivations are “connected with cultural beliefs dominating in the respective society” (Hofer & Peetsma, 2005, p.203). Thus, it is the cultural experiences of the child, and it seems reasonable to assume that cultural experiences are felt within a child’s lifetime before school experiences, affect their subsequent experiences at school. Given that culture changes “as a consequence of specific political and economic history, religion and traditions” it seems unreasonable that educators should assume that academic expectations remain the same and to the same degree as they have in the past (Hofer & Peetsma, 2005, p.204). Not only has the national culture changed, but there are variances within the national culture as well. Cultural variance comes as a result of demographics, as race and religion can influence culture and expectations. We see a spectrum of value systems where academic success is either at the fore, or simply a second thought in terms of importance. Where survival or leisure are high priorities, academics take a spacing & Peetsma, 2005). Western society is particularly situated in such a culture, that, in general,
the dominant national cultures value both leisure and academics in equal measure. This causes a potential crisis on the part of students as they are “expected to devote a great portion of time to their education on the one hand and on the other hand are encouraged to pursue multiple personal goals in various leisure domains” (Hofer & Peetsma, 2005, p.204). However, increasingly, young people in Western cultures “strive for a multitude of personal goals in social and leisure areas as a result of value changes and culture specific societal value systems” (Hofer & Peetsma, 2005, p.204). This is particularly poignant during the secondary years where school motivation and engagement naturally decreases as “[s]ocial life can be very stressful and time consuming” (Hofer & Peetsma, 2005, p.204). Here, the research seems to indicate that social expectations are at risk in how students, teachers, and schools perform; as public education is disparaged in the public eye academic values are lowered in importance to leisure and personal goals. This is particularly important as Hofer & Peetsma (2005) note that "the strongest tendency gets expressed in action" thus creating a spiraling action of decreased student motivation and decreased societal expectation (p.206). Educators need to break this cycle in re-engaging student motivation and increasing the societal value of academic success. This is especially true in areas of lower Social Economic Status (SES) where a negative role is applied to schools and academic success. This has a huge impact as student "performance in learning situations [is] influenced by their motivation to carry out activities related to different life domains”, such as survival needs, and that such "intrusions compete with task demands for limited working memory capacities [and thus] it seems that a synthesis of both value categories, achievement and well being can hardly be reached on the level of concrete actions" (Hofer & Peetsma, 2005, p.206). This limited capacity for working memory (learning space in the brain) not only impacts the success and values of the student on academics in response, but also creates a situation for individual crisis as the student faces the challenge of choosing which goals to apply this limited focus of brain power towards (Hofer & Peetsma, 2005, p.206).
The risk of losing student engagement is more prevalent now than ever before due to these shifting goals within the wider culture, but also due to the increasing belief that schools are not safe places to be. According to Cote-Lussier & Fitzpatrick (2016), “youth who feel safer at school are also more engaged” (pp. 543). Similarly, "classroom engagement is a key indicator of student motivation, learning potential, and the eventual probability of persisting to high-school completion” (Cote-Lussier & Fitzpatrick, 2016, p. 550). As defined by the study, a student who is engaged is one who “works autonomously, follows directions, completes tasks on time and works cooperatively with classmates” (Cote-Lussier & Fitzpatrick, 2016, p. 546). The study shows that students who are more engaged in their work were the populations that felt the safest, namely girls and those of white ethnicity. Interestingly, those who were less engaged were shown to be more likely to be aggressive and depressed, too (Cote-Lussier & Fitzpatrick, 2016, p. 546). This would seem to have a spiraling effect and, thus, likely to have the possibility to spread throughout the school. However, feeling unsafe at school was also noted to have origins outside of school; “feeling unsafe at school is also associated with living in neighborhoods with unfavorable features {e.g. less greenery, more indicators of social and physical disorder, such as litter, graffiti and loitering} (Cotes-Lussier & Fitzpatrick, 2016, p.548). Thus, the student has general feelings of feeling unsafe that might spiral due to the student’s own misconduct and intensify such that motivation and engagement are hindered.

These shifting cultural values also result in additional responsibilities placed on teachers to include opportunities "...to enhance student’s social-emotional competence, character, health and civic engagement...helping students to interact in socially skilled and respectful ways; practice positive, safe, and healthy behaviors; contribute ethically and responsibly to their peer group, family, school, and community; possess basic competencies, work habits, and values as a foundation for meaningful employment and engaged citizenship." (Cotes-Lussier & Fitzpatrick, 2016, p.491). In delineating this change, Jennings & Greenberg (2009) cite several studies. Due to this change, there
are extra duties and responsibilities placed on the teacher that they may or may not be equipped to effectively model and impart. To this point, Jennings & Greenberg (2009) note that “the current educational system appears to assume that teachers have the requisite [social-emotional competency] to create a warm and nurturing learning environment, be emotionally responsive to students, form supportive and collaborative relationships with sometimes difficult and demanding parents, professionally relate to administrators and colleagues, effectively manage the growing demands imposed by standardized testing, model exemplary emotion regulation, sensitively coach students through conflict situations with peers, and effectively (yet respectfully) [sic] handle the challenging behaviors of disruptive students” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p.493-496). In tandem with this information, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) further note that teachers”... rarely receive specific training to address the importance of social-emotional issues in the classroom or how to develop the [social emotional competency] to successfully handle them” (p.496). What is being expressed here is that teachers are both lacking in these prerequisite competencies and unable to impart these effectively to their students. Thus, not only is there a situation where students are entering schools already at risk, but now, more than ever, teachers are in turn at risk due to the increased responsibilities that often run counter to the curriculum outlined in the CCLS, but also the stressful situation that is unique to teaching that is heightened by the fact that teachers may not leave a stressful situation on account of often being the sole adult in a room of students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

**Teacher Burn-out**

Teachers report “[e]motional stress and poor emotion management consistently rank as the primary reasons teachers become dissatisfied and leave [the profession]” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p.498). Not only this, but those that remain in the profession continue to encounter “...situations that provoke emotions they have difficulty managing, their classroom management efforts lack effectiveness, the classroom is suboptimal and they may experience emotional
exhaustion provoking a 'burnout cascade’” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p.498). Thus, while students are “at risk” of failing to graduate and drop-out of the system, teachers are also “at risk” of dropping out, or worse, burning-out and continuing to function at a subpar level, as well. The inevitable tautology of a burnt-out teacher continuing to teach is that the teacher is less effective, more students become “at risk” due to this ineffective teaching, so, the teacher’s stressors are increased and the effects of burn-out multiply. Burn-out further hurts the teacher as, at its later stages, burn-out provokes “emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and feelings of lack of personal accomplishment” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p.497). Burn-out and its various symptoms open the door for further and more harmful intrapersonal issues.

**Drop out/non-success**

While teachers face burn-out, students also feel the grind of the educational system and those who “…face academic and social challenges that interfere with school engagement and academic success … [result] in high dropout rates in many school systems...” (Wisner & Starzec, 2015. pp 245). As already noted, dropping out of school has far-reaching problems for the individual as well as society as a whole. However, in some cases, the student does not drop-out of school but continues to attend in a kind of educational limbo of non-success until they time out of the system when they are 21. Often times these limbo students end up in alternate educational settings with other like students where expectations and demands are lowered. While no hyphen of school has huge implications on the student and the society, limbo students who limp through education often face similar challenges to those who on top of the challenges of a curriculum that is beyond their abilities, even when they are given the supportive environment of caring educators with whom they have a close relationship. Such “challenges include poverty, exposure to stressful life circumstances, feelings of alienation, and lack of school engagement, and unmet academic needs...teen pregnancy and academic, social-emotional, and behavioral issues, truancy, identification with high-risk peers, and drug and alcohol abuse...[i]n addition, suicidal thoughts and
feelings, and involvement in risky sexual behaviors and violence-related behaviors are all common challenges confronting these students” in addition to the challenges of meeting the academic requirements for high school completion (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p.245).

**Greater effects of drop-out/non-success**

**To student**

Such stressors are fertile ground for many intrapersonal issues (emotional self-regulation), but also interpersonal skills (strained relationships) to develop (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p.246). To these “at risk” students, dropping out of school is almost easier than sticking out their education, as the long-term benefits do not appear to be as appealing than the reduction in immediate stress to the student by not being in school and risking failure day after day. Teachers teaching within this “at risk” community may feel a similar lightening of their burden as these students often come with a range of behavioral and psychological issues that contribute to higher rates of stress and burn out cycling.

**To society**

However, the greater effect of student drop-out/non-success in the immediate community is a “higher unemployment rate than the state as a whole and poverty is a major concern with Per Capita income falling well below levels in other areas of the state” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p.247).

**Lack of Relationship as an Academic Disruptor**

Many students are coming to school without sufficient relational base for social-emotional and academic support. According to Bong (2008), these relational supports have an effect on their perception of not only their academic success but also their academic motivation. Students with high positive relational supports tend to have better perceptions of their relationship to both their parents and school work in the form of intrinsic motivation. This perception of their relationships is
a predictor of not only their success, but behavior as Bong (2008) notes "...help seeking avoidance
and cheating behavior scores showed significant negative correlations with students' mastery
goals, academic self-efficacy, perceptions of a classroom mastery goal structure, and cognitive and
self-regulatory strategy use" (p. 203). Thus, when students feel more supported by their parents
and teacher towards mastery of a specific task, or skill set over achievement at a certain level, then
the students were less likely to cheat and avoid asking for help when required to understand the
work and how to be successful. Similarly, the students were less likely to view the classroom as
valuing achievement as the primary goal over actually learning to master the concepts set out, thus
resulting in a mindset that is growth-oriented over a fixed/static mindset. Not only did the
relationship at home affect the students' perception of their home life, but this study by Bong
(2008) revealed that this home relationship affected their relationship with education and so their
behavior and perception of their own abilities.

However, Bong (2008) also notes that it is not simply that the relationships themselves are
negative, but the students' perception of these relationships which was pivotal; "students’
perceptions of their social and psychological environments transform into their motivation and
academic behavior in school" (p.208). Thus it can be seen that if one were to change the behavior,
then one first needs to change the perception of the student. In this manner, the quality of the
relationships between the student and another needs to be positive towards a positive perception
of the student towards the relationship, the other person as well as themselves and their abilities.
Bong goes on to report that "the critical and multifaceted function of parents and teachers in
guiding the learners to either adaptive or maladaptive motivational and behavioral paths" is at the
heart of the research and the findings (Bong, 2008, p.209). By deepening the student's perception of
a quality and positive relationship with key adults can foster positive motivational tendencies and
behavioral expression in the academic setting. Indeed, not only does the parent need to
communicate that learning is important to them as a value, but also that the student working hard
to achieve mastery is also a core value. The miscommunication that learning and ability are fixed
criteria only limits the motivation that the student has towards learning and can promote negative
behaviors (cheating and help avoidance), whereas communicating a mastery goal, where the
student works until they learn and master a concept, as an essential function of the relationship
promotes positive academic motivation and behavior that naturally lends itself to success
regardless of the students’ academic ability.

Further, students who possessed a mastery goal motivation often perceived that the
classroom environment as one of mastery orientation (Bong, 2008). This was true of students
regardless of parent input and relationship status as well as student individual ability levels. Bong
(2008) explains this as “the extent to which students personally adopt and maintain a mastery
achievement goal throughout the course may depend more heavily on the amount of cognitive and
emotional support teachers provide” (p. 210). This is possibly because teachers become surrogate
parents while the student is at school and the relationship with the actual parents is projected onto
the teacher, or It may be a result of the fact that the teacher is directly present in the classroom and
the parent is not, so the orientation of the teacher trumps that of the parent due to proximity to the
environment. This is particularly important in schools where students are increasingly entering
with low abilities, negative or non-existent relationships with parents and negative self-perceptions
via fixed mindsets. Students are set up to fail before they even attempt academics. Bong’s (2008)
findings confirm that “a stronger mastery goal and academic self-efficacy functioned as positive
motivators” (p.210). Parents and teachers need to foster these perceptions within the students in
their care as “the same verbal comments and feedback from parents and teachers can be
interpreted by different students as either an expression of achievement pressure or genuine
concern and interest in how [the student] is doing in school” (Bong, 2008, p.213). Such that
perceptions can take a positive gesture and interpret this as a negative and a source of conflict
between the adult and the student. Conflict is to be avoided in order to foster trust and relationship
towards the personal and academic success of the student. Conflict is often the hallmark of a negative relationship.

Spilt, Wu, Hughes, & Kwok, (2012), note in their research into the dynamics of student-teacher relationships that “chronic conflict [is] most strongly associated with underachievement. Rising conflict...coincided with underachievement. The probability of school failure increased as a function of the timing and length of time children were exposed to relational adversity” (p. 1185). Accordingly, it is asserted that “learning is a socially mediated process” and as such the basis of theory into student-teacher relationships where “poor [student] relationships with teachers evoke feelings of insecurity and distress, which limit the children’s ability to devote energy to academic and social activities (Pianta, 1992)” (Spilt et al., 2012, p.1180). This research indicates that students have a basic need to feel like they belong and are worthy of teacher warmth before they can even begin to learn. Distance to their teacher creates a distance toward the school on the part of the student. Once again, student perception of the relationship is the backbone to the degree of warmth felt, expressed and received in a tautological manner as distancing on the part of the student results in heightened conflict and distancing on the part of the teacher to match the student’s perception as self-reported by teachers (Spilt et al, 2012, pp. 1180-1181).

In the discussion of their findings, Spilt et al. (2012) note "[a]s predicted,[sic] low year-to-year stability was found for warmth, which substantiates the proposition that teacher-child closeness is a dyadic construct that is related to both teacher and child characteristics"(1181). Thus, the social-emotional competency of both teacher and student contributed to the level of closeness/conflict within the teacher-student relationship. Not surprisingly, this research noted that there were increases in conflict and decreases in closeness when students came from “at risk” populations such as “...children with a low IQ, early behavior problems, African-American membership, or disadvantaged SES” (Spilt et al, 2012, p. 1181). However, it also noted that such
relationships do not have fixed trajectories for conflict as time progressed; thus, relationships can be worked on and improved via changes in the program, teacher and student characteristics and/or a lessening in the outside/non-academic factors that attribute to “at risk” population (Spilt et al, 2012).

Furthermore, Spilt et al. (2012) note that “conflictual [sic] relationships with teachers create a dual risk of academic failure. Teacher-child conflict may cause emotional distress, which constrains a child’s psychological resources and energy to be devoted to learning activities...low conflict relationships...are vital to prevent underachievement” (p.1192).

In agreement with Spilt et al.(2012), Nayereh Shahmohammadi (2014) further notes that “[t]eachers who possess knowledge and skills in recognizing problems and creating positive relation and rapport with students are regarded to be one of the most important sources in structuring students’ personality development” (pp.130-131). This interest is to include interest in self-regulation, obedience to school rules, organization and motivation to be successful academically (Shahmohammadi, 2014). Shahmohammadi’s (2014) research here shows that the level at which a relationship is constructive and positive between student and teacher is reflected in the student’s personal perception of the teacher, subject and school, but also peer relationships and attitudes. Not only this, but Shahmohammadi's (2014) research also shows that student-teacher relationships form a feedback loop between the two individuals such that positive behaviors of the one actually encourages reciprocal positive behaviors in the other and thus the relationship is self-reinforcing in terms of the level of warmth brought towards it by both student and teacher. Towards this end, Shahmohammadi's (2014) research further displays that “showing acceptance and respect towards [students], having a suitable behavioral interaction with their behavior could encourage students to show constructive behaviors which will help them to achieve their educational goals” (p.134). Thus, how a teacher treats a student reinforces the student’s preset
notion of school as negative if there is a marked lack of relationship, empathy, and care perceived to be present in the teacher's behavior. However, the opposite is true if the teacher is mindful of how the student is perceiving the interaction and moderates his/her own behavior in response to the student's needs and perception at the time.

While in areas where students with high ability level and skill-sets that are at or above grade level are shown to perform well regardless of positive student-teacher relationship, it is noted that by Liew, Chen & Hughes (2010) that the reverse is true: in areas of high poverty and low ability/skill-sets, positive relationships with staff members are key to student performance. Liew et al. (2010) found that while "self-regulatory capacities such as effortful control may be important for children's academic achievement, a supportive teacher may play a compensatory role for children with self-regulatory difficulties by providing them with an external source of regulation" (p.52). While this is partially the basis of a lot of current theory and practice, it requires a degree of relationship that may not be possible for many students and teachers to achieve due to the gaps in their shared experience. This is of particular interest in impoverished areas as the research shows it is the students who possess lower IQ levels, come from low economic status, are male and of African-American ethnic background who struggle with core academic skill sets (Liew et al., 2010, p.57). However, most staff members who work in education are often female, white, with average or above average IQ and from high economic status. The gap here creates a disruption also seen in the previous literature that discourages relationship between student and staff. This is of particular importance as Liew et al. (2010) found that relationship is the key to closing the achievement gap between those with high and those with low achievement (p.60). The authors further note that future achievement could be improved through the generation of a positive relationship between student and staff by closing the achievement gap sooner. It can be inferred that closing the achievement gap sooner not only improves engagement while the positive student-teacher relationship is in action but also through continued success as the deficit in achievement is bridged.
and the student enjoys greater success and so intrinsic motivation is reinforced; essentially, early intervention limits the amount of failure the student experiences and thus generates a more positive attitude toward education and adults within the school system. The authors posit two possible reasons for this continued success: “perhaps student who experience positive teacher-student relationships...are more committed to complying with teachers’ requests and more motivated and persistent at school work” as well as the idea that “students with positive relationships with teachers may feel comfortable asking their teachers for help when they need it” (Liew et al., 2010, p.61). Further, the findings show that “in the absence of a supportive teacher-student relationship, children with underdeveloped self-regulatory skills will continue to lag behind academically” (Liew et al., 2010, p.61). This holds two important factors for the development of educational theory and school policy: firstly, that students with low self-regulatory skills (mindfulness and social-emotional ability) are low achievers; and secondly, positive relationships can support these students with teachers acting as an external source and model of self-regulatory skill-sets. There is an element here that seems to not be addressed in this study in that the students were not directly taught these skill-sets by the adult and so unable to internalize them, which casts some doubt over the total success of the student once these positive supports are removed when the student graduates/changes teachers. However, the findings here hold a lot of promise to the power of positive relationships between student and teacher, especially if positive social-emotional skill-sets are taught to the student through these positive relationships. Thus, if we strive to improve student academic success, we must first create social-emotional success within the students’ inter and intrapersonal interactions. Thus, it is recommended to not only promote student self-regulatory capacity but also create “teacher professional development that empathize positive rapport and support with students” (Liew et al, 2010, p.62).

At the heart of this phenomenon is the impact of teacher self-regulation and mindfulness paired with an understanding that humans can only focus on a few mental tasks at once, especially
when presented with discipline and/or when the student is identified as "at risk". In general (mainstream) education, the primary focus is on academics as the students are thought to have the requisite socio-emotional skills to self-regulate in times of stress. However, the primary focus in the "at risk" population needs to be on the reinforcement of socio-emotional skills, most importantly, those self-regulatory skills. Thus, a mindful teacher will focus on the relationship between self and student over academic goals at the moment with the idea that academic goals can be worked on after the student has developed some self-regulation skills and is able to place energy spent previously on survival and self-preservation on the learning. This cannot happen in a situation where the child perceives the educator in a negative light as “students’ self-regulation has to a high extent correlation with the teacher’s educational and social behavior” (Shahmohammadi, 2014, p.134). Towards this end, Shahmohammadi (2014) recommends that “teachers as a professional [sic] must know the art of communication, understanding others and ability to learn from the experiences. They should be able to facilitate learning effectively...the quality of any system depends on the standard of its personnel” (p.134). Thus, not only do teachers need to be highly qualified in their content areas, but also adept at socio-emotional skills, including mindfulness of their own impact, responses, and approach towards all students. As relationships require buy-in on the part of both individuals, and each individual reacts in response to the other's behavior, teachers cannot hope to change student attitude towards relationship without having first been and continuously being aware of the cues they are giving the student as well as their own emotional platform within each and every situation. So, if educators wish to increase student academic success, they need to foster socio-emotional success, which can only effectively be done through a positive student-teacher relationship where the teacher models the appropriate behaviors and skills necessary to self-regulate within the moment.

The focus in Connell & Klem's (2006) article is on the First Things First framework of the Institute for Research and Reform in Education, “a reform framework grounded in research about
how young people develop and how schools promote students’ engagement and learning in the process...with the goal of improving critical student outcomes such as attendance, test scores, persistence, and graduation rates” (p. 59). The framework essentially outlines a system for creating positive learning relationships between students, teachers, and students' families through "...personalized learning environment through the creation of small learning communities" and "a partnership between the student, his or her family, and a staff person from the student’s SLC who acts as an advocate..." both the small learning community and the partnership is designed to work together for student success in school (Connell & Klem, 2006, p. 60). Interestingly, in their study of Thai teachers and students, Prasertcharoensuk, Somprach, & Ngang (2015) found that teacher competence and student life skills be promoted in schools as “these two variables have successfully contributed [to] student learning achievement” (p. 570). This study found that high competency in teachers across curriculum and learning management is necessary for student achievement, but also found that time spent on self-development which took the teacher out of the classroom had a negative effect on student learning achievement. This works in conjunction with their findings that student ability to build relationships (a life skill) proved positive in affecting learning achievement, specifically “students’ achievement motive” (Prasertcharoensuk et al., 2015, p. 571). Part of this is due to the fact that teaching has come encompass more than just content mastery, but social ability and life skills to be integrated into the classroom “transition of knowledge” such that “life skills [are] congruent with our current daily life that [currently face] change in economic, social information[al], and news and technology” (Prasertcharoensuk et al., 2015, p. 571). Not only do we need to provide the knowledge and skills to navigate the work world, but also teach the skills required for “people to possess in order to adjust themselves efficiently while dealing with emotional control and interacting with other persons” (Prasertcharoensuk et al., 2015, p. 566). Such a shift requires for teachers to learn new methods of instruction, but the current methods of self-development interfere with relationship building, curriculum and learning management.
The findings of Prasertcharoensuk et al. are possibly vital in the realm of relationship building if the teacher is constantly removed for training, CSE and behavioral meetings, curriculum development etc. which are all a part of teacher responsibilities when placed with the study by (Claessens et al., 2017). Claessens et al. (2017) build on the idea that student-teacher relationships develop between generalized meanings that “originate in perceptions of day-to-day interactions between a teacher and his or her student. Moment-to-moment interactions between teacher and student are thus the building blocks for their relationship” (p. 485). The power here is that “once a hostile relationship has been formed, one will be less inclined to show friendly behavior on a subsequent encounter” this also equates in perceived hostile intentions on the part of the other even when the action is friendly and in this manner “perceptions not only originate in interpersonal encounters, they also influence them, thus influencing further development of the relationship” (Claessens et al., 2017, p. 485). Moreover, Claessens et al. (2017), found that positive relationships encouraged more contact between students and teachers beyond the classroom, such as in the hallways and at school events, whereas negative relationships "mostly took place in class (67%)" and on teacher initiate for disciplinary actions (p. 485). These negative relationships often revolve around conversations centered within the classroom, such as classroom management and student off task or distracting behavior. On the other hand, Claessens et al. (2017), found that positive relationship covered a variety of topics, some of which were mutual interests (p.485). While it is often on the adult (as we can only choose to change our own behavior) to attempt to engage on a positive note, it can feel like there is no way in despite trying different means. This relates to the original point that relationships are created from continuous series of interactions and the perceptions of these interactions, such that while the current behavior is friendly, the perception is based on the past negative interactions. Also, Claessens et al. (2017) note that behavior patterns called attractors are at play, meaning that “the most common behavioral pattern in a particular relationship and most sequences of behavior will eventually return to this state of being”(p. 477).
The research here seems to show that student-teacher relationships that are generated outside of the classroom setting allow for a greater variety of subjects to be the topic of conversation, whereas student-teacher relationships generated inside of the classroom generally center on classroom conduct and management. Thus, relationships that begin inside of the educational setting and focused on behavior have a greater chance of turning negative, but those developed out of this context and structure are more positive.

Connell & Klem (2006) note that schools face a difficult conundrum as relationships are the basis of student success, especially in “at risk” communities as “...serious and deeply rooted challenges make it especially difficult to build these relationship” for a number of reasons with an especial focus on the urban setting (p.55). However, it is in this exact setting where there are historically low levels of relationships that ... strong ties between adults and students can make the greatest difference” (Connell & Klem, 2006, p. 55). It is this relationship that bridges the number of gaps between adult and student I order to provide better access to school to the student and the students’ family. Yet, these relationships are only “forged when the young person experiences the adult providing valuable psychological resources (time, respect, caring); setting high, clear, and fair standards; and encouraging expressions of individuality” (Connell & Klem, 2006, pp. 55-56). The problem here is not that adult is failing to provide these things, but the student’s ability to perceive them; essentially, it is the adult’s problem to meet the student’s receptive communication of this provision. One solution offered by the authors here is that of “... students receive more adult support and guidance during instructional periods and from the same adults over longer periods of time”, especially “... for extended periods during the day and across multiple school years” (Connell & Klem, 2006, p. 56). Here, the crux of the problem is not that schools and teachers do not provide opportunity for relationship to be built, but that the student fails to perceive these advances on the whole due to a lack of authentic relationship being able to be built between the student and the adults due to a lack of direct exposure and a lack of evidence that the teacher is acting in the benefit
of the student and their family. Essentially, the break down here is in the student's perception of the educator, school, and the system. The model proposed calls for block scheduling where the student is offered fewer classes during the day and having the same teachers over multiple years. This allows the students more exposure to one teacher as well as giving more continuous time on one subject to meet the more rigorous standards set by the CCLS. Additionally, such a framework allows the “students [to] feel more secure and be more productive...in small, flexible, groupings that remain focused on their task for as long as they need and remain relatively consistent over multiple years” (Connell & Klem, 2006, p. 57). This is, as Deborah Meier is cited by Connell & Klem (2006) as stating, “more consistent with the natures of people’s work lives beyond the school years” (p. 57). Such a framework thus allows the students more control over their academic progression through the skills that the authors posit should be the backbone of the standards set “…high, clear, and fair standards for academics and conduct, clearly defining what all students will know and be able to do...and assessing their progress at key points along the way (Connell & Klem, 2006, p. 56).

By continuing the exposure to the same adults at the school, everyone has a better idea of who they are working with. It also cuts down on a lot of the initial adjustment period and allows the adults at the school to be better advocates for both the student and their family as the relationship is centered around a collaborative effort to set “academic and behavioral targets, monitoring progress on these targets, and formulating appropriate intervention strategies at home and school” (Connell & Klem, 2006, p. 58). In this manner, parents are more motivated to be an active part of the student’s learning and hold their student to a greater level of accountability. Additionally, “each staff member becomes an advocate for...students and their families, stays with them all [of the] years they are in the school, and does whatever it takes to help these students succeed...contact families regularly, and involved them...” (Connell & Klem, 2006, p. 62) such that ownership of student success is shared by school professional, student and family. This creates a uniting link that forms the basis of a relationship that deepens understanding, acceptance, and perception among all
vested individuals. Finally, Connell & Klem (2006) note that "advocates help students through the academic and social difficulties associated with being in a new school; that may mean helping a student develop study skills to succeed with a more demanding curriculum, securing additional supports if the student’s skills are below grade level, or helping the student navigate the complexities of the new social environment" (Connell & Klem, 2017, p. 63). This, in turn, should remove many of the barriers that students have with academics and transition between grades as they have a guide with whom they have already developed an attachment. In cases of high anxiety and poor social ability, this then might make school less daunting and lessen the stressors that affect the student’s ability to integrate into the larger school community.

This plan for encouraging and fostering student success is based heavily on the adult’s ability to connect with the student and their family as well as the student to actively experience (perceive) the value and care of the professional adult as a support to them and their overall success, which translates as greater success holistically to them as individuals. Secondly, this system has the opportunity for the professional adult to better provide opportunities for the student to experience their care and better personalize that care to the student as an individual.

However, should this program be implemented, there is still the problem of the teacher-student relationship in the initial stages of the student entering into a new learning community. Here, again, Jennings & Greenberg’s (2009) research shows that the lack of relationship can be a stressor to the student, teacher and, indeed, the entire learning community. Individuals, specifically the teacher, who have higher social-emotional competency are better able to adapt, model and present appropriate behaviors and handle this stressful situation more effectively (2009). The warning here is that Social-Emotional competency is "context-dependent" as changes within and between contexts can alter an individual’s emotional intelligence and ability to cope and adapt to situations and students’ needs. Even with program supports, stress levels can build towards a load
that is overwhelming for both students and teacher, for students this can result in higher levels of stressful behavior and/or dropping out of the educational program. For teachers, this stress “can have an adverse effect on job performance and may eventually lead to burn out” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 496). Burn-out for teachers can lead to their leaving the profession, but, worse, it “threatens teacher-student relationships, classroom management, and classroom climate.” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 496). Thus, the relationship is threatened by both the student’s and the teacher’s Social-Emotional Competency, which, while there have been many initiatives for students to develop their Social-Emotional Competency, there has been little training for the adults. However, given that the adult is the key individual in setting the classroom climate, behavior expectations, and model appropriate interactions, it seems that this is the person who requires this training the most. This is especially true in the light that teaching is perhaps the most stressful of all careers due to the fact that the average teacher cannot simply remove themselves from the stressful situation precisely at the most stressful of times and thus is more likely to take actions that actively damage teacher-student relationships further and continue this cycle of stress building. To this end, Spilt et al. (2012) caution that “it is crucially important...to attend to the teacher-child relationship as a key social context in which teaching and learning occurs” (p. 1192).

The Efficacy of Mindfulness

As Hofer & Peetsma (2005) note in their review of literature on the subject of Societal Values and School Motivation: Students’ Goals in Different Life Domains that “current motivational theories in Educational Psychology as largely failing to deal with the phenomenon of values and multiple goals in the school context” (p. 205). As they present current studies into student motivation they build their case that Western students are bombarded with a multitude and variance of expectations and competing goals, some “not directly related to achievement [and] may be connected to learning motivation” (Hofer & Peetsma 2005, p.205). In many cases, Hofer & Peetsma (2005) note that extra-curricular (societal, relational, paid-work) goals/motivations hinder
academic ones, yet, this is not always the case as they cite Eccles & Barber’s 1999 study that found “structured extracurricular activities can have a positive effect on personal development and academic achievement” (p. 205). This, Hofer & Peetsma (2005) offer with the added notation that as “students are members of multiple contexts and strive for multiple goals... [researchers] have to consider the cultural context and specify the values and goals attached to other areas, too” (p. 205).

Here, Hofer & Peetsma (2005) are offering up the idea while the activities might appear to be disparate (academic and leisure), the motivations and content might actually be utilizing the same motivations/content but the context might be the only disparate factor (p. 206).

While this offers up the idea that research needs to be more specific and continued in this area of motivation and the effect on academic success, it also points to the need for mindfulness. Mindfulness here could allow for better research, but also the students and adults directly involved in these activities could maximize on this synchronicity in activities in order to streamline the student’s cognitive workload between the various contexts. Such synchronicity could be achieved by focusing on the similarities in the content between contexts and thus maximize student learning throughout their day. In this manner, the connection throughout the students’ day is made clear to the brain and not such a burden to the mind, which otherwise needs to switch gears between contexts. Instead, it can remain focused on the tasks, activities, and skills being developed across contexts and not the contexts themselves. Helping students to be the loci of this cognitive act of synchronizing their activities by goals, skills and abilities replaces the need for external help in the form of teachers, and other adults, who already excel at finding these connections between curricular and extra-curricular activities. Mindfulness here would act in allowing the student to limit the strain of continuously switching their thinking to match their ever-changing day of course-loads, activities, and contexts by focusing on the mindset that is continuous throughout their day. Similarly, teachers can be mindful of the lives their students lead and thus build this synchronicity into their individual courses and so better help their students and build relationships that are
positive by drawing in student interests as a vital, engaging and valid activities. In this manner, mindfulness can be seen to be of great value to both student and teacher in approaching not only their daily tasks but the building of positive and constructive relationships with one another.

Not only is mindfulness important for the relational component of reframing, and self-regulation, but mindfulness has been shown to have significant boosts to working memory capacity, which is of special interest to schools wishing to boost ratings and test scores (Quach, Jastrowski Mano, & Alexander, 2015). Neurological changes in response to meditation practice affect key areas of cognitive functioning, including attention and memory (Quach et al., 2015). Both of these functions are critical in taking the data from short-term memory and storing it in long-term memory for retrieval at a later date. While this seems like a separate issue from that of relationships, it has already been noted that relationships are often more positive when the student performs better as well as the fact that success works as an intrinsic motivator for students to engage more in academic activities. Interestingly, the research of Quach et al. (2015) revealed that the type of mindfulness that students engaged in greatly affected the boosts to their working memory capacities, indicating that, depending on the goals of the teacher/staff and/or the demands of the situation, different practices might be more beneficial than others. Furthermore, and it is noted that the timing and the location may have impacted the study, neither practice focused on within the study revealed a reduction of stress nor anxiety. This may be due to the fact that the study was concurrent with the end of the academic year and the fact that the study took place within a low social economic status (SES) area, where daily stressors were abundant and pervasive for most students. These two factors may have resulted in both a context with higher than normal daily stress and anxiety levels as a matter of basic survival due to low SES, and lower school-based stress and anxiety due to less academic demands and the promise of summer vacation (Quach et al., 2015).
On teacher

As previously stated, Shahmohammadi’s (2014) research clearly calls for training in mindfulness for educators as it is the energy that they bring to student-teacher relationships that impacts the energy and perception of the student in response. This is not an argument for less discipline, but for discipline that is sensitive and empathetic towards the student. Teachers who are mindful of the moment are able to be more effective in all areas, especially discipline: “referring rude and undisciplined students to the school principal, sending them out of class and make them stay in the hallway, carelessness and neglecting the students’ serious problems [has] an undesired effect on student behaviors” (Shahmohammadi, 2014, p. 131). On the other hand, “[l]ack of discipline in classroom or school causes many difficulties for children and youngsters and could be [a] source of their failure” (Shahmohammadi, 2014, p. 131). However, if the teacher is mindful of the students’ serious problems that might be beyond the school’s boundaries to intervene, the teacher can provide correction and discipline in a manner that is perceived as friendly and compassionate. The need for discipline is obvious, but the manner in which we deliver the discipline needs to be couched in such a way that it is not limiting or creating a barrier with the student-teacher relationship. Thus, “when teachers have an adjustable conduct and avoid rigid and inflexible methods, students accept them as a friend and companion” (Shahmohammadi, 2014, p. 131). Shahmohammadi (2014) notes that “teachers can have an influential impact in shaping good manner[s] and behavior[s] in [students] and can be a source of their educational advancement” (p. 131). So, in order to best teach students mindfulness and self-regulatory ability and skills, teachers first need to be adept at this same practice and model this within their interactions with all students.

In continuation of these ideas Yunus, Osman, & Ishak (2011) note that teachers “need to understand that in many schools, students come from different cultures and backgrounds and each student deserves to be respected as an individual and their needs vary from one another” and
“teachers must establish a positive relationship with their students in order to provide the learning opportunity” (p. 239). This is the only relationship that is constant throughout all of education from elementary schools up through doctorate-granting universities (Yunus et al., 2011). Thus, relationship building needs to be a core component of the teacher preparation program and a life skill that teachers are fluent in. According to the study, the teachers surveyed had varying degrees of understanding of the power of relationship to student success, indicating that this is a core component of education that is overlooked in many teacher preparatory programs (Yunus et al., 2011) and that a valuable asset to student and, subsequently, school success, is being overlooked while superficial changes are being made to the curriculum and standards of education. By becoming more mindful of the individual needs and diversity represented by their students, teachers can direct more respect and acceptance toward their students and thus develop more positive relationships that will yield improved results in student success. By teachers being more approachable, attentive, helpful and friendly, students feel less stress and are better able to engage in the work set (Yunus et al., 2011). A critical factor in teachers not presenting these attributes is teacher burn out. Teacher burn-out can be prevented with effective self-care and mindfulness training that is continuous and integral to their daily lives.

**On student**

As already noted above, students benefited from mindfulness in the area of cognition via improved working memory capacity (Quach et al., 2015), which in turn makes them more academically successful. Similarly, Wisner & Starzec’s (2015) study reveals that students self-report better interactions with others in their lives, both at school and at home. Students self-reported that mindfulness "...helped students navigate peer relationships...relationships building with parents often included references to defusing conflict, taking responsibility for actions, problem-solving, and even apologizing..." such that in general, students noted a clear connection between mindfulness practice to improved relationships (p. 253). In terms of the academic setting, students
reported "...being able to facilitate change in their own behavior so that they can maintain positive relationships..." Students noted that even when they felt like they were in the right, they were able to maintain the relationship through their practice in tandem with a greater ability to trust others and be vulnerable in this trust (Wisner & Starzec, 2015, p.254). Students reported “becoming happier...improved coping skills...relaxation and feeling calm were identified as benefits of mindfulness” (Wisner & Starzec, 2015, p.252). Not only this, but students reported improvements in their sleep quantity and quality, which may or may not be a knock on effect of better stress management and perception of stress and stressors (Wisner & Starzec, 2015, p.253). In short, mindfulness opened up the student’s point of view to encompass the other person’s emotions and motivations allowing for a perception shift that deepened their sense of relationship with peers, parents and school staff.

**Mindfulness in ELA**

While not an actual ELA class, Kate Garretson’s (2010) use of mindfulness as a way to link three distinct classes (philosophy, speech, and ESL) shows merit for implementation within the ELA curriculum as the processes for mindfulness are essentially the same processes as those for reading and writing. Garretson (2010) had the students reflect on difficult life experiences as not only a practice for mindfulness to better understand the texts *Siddhartha* and *Catcher in the Rye*, but also as a means of better understanding how avoiding pain can lead directly to more pain, methods for dealing with change and reflecting on the nature of the text itself. In this way, journaling and responding to literature through discussion became an event for meta-cognition within the students and the platform for them to engage their own writing and developing language skills “to reflect on life goals and values and wrote reflectively about their experiences as readers and writers” (Garretson, 2010, p.52). Furthermore, Garretson (2010) had her students “write a process piece about what they were thinking about as they revised and what they imagine the next step
might be for this paper” (p.53). Toward this end, Garretson (2010) writes that she has her students work on freewriting along the same vein as mindfulness meditation takes where the mind is “freed” and the practitioner just "does"(p.55). In this, Freewriting is directionless, yet also directed, as the student decides which memories and thoughts to follow when both meditation and freewriting – whether solving a difficult life problem or writing about their day so far. Mindfulness infused writing classes naturally lead the student to be a better writer as this allows the students to track their gradual change in thinking processes, better understand their thoughts in order to become better observers of their social-emotional well-being and more connected to their bodies and minds. As the students worked on their abilities within one practice (mindfulness) they sharpened their abilities in the other (writing) as the same observational skills are required for both (Garretson, 2010).

Garretson (2010) adds weight and meaning to the connection between mindfulness and writing/reading through the use of the chime to signal the beginning and end of the practice. In this manner, Garretson (2010) also resets the student’s thinking about the processes of reading and writing. Most students, especially those for whom schooling is difficult, tend to hold beliefs that reading and writing are skill sets that they are just not born with; Garretson's (2010) chime makes the processes a ritual and linked to the processes of mindfulness. The practices become sacred and thus experienced in a new way (Garretson, 2010). In a similar way, the chime is an illustration for Garretson (2010) of the process of reading a text with the initial experience of the bell being rung as the initial reading of the text and the reverberations of this sound being the student’s forming an interpretation of the text. In this way, the teacher can dispel the common myths that some people just get texts and how to write without struggle and others cannot do it. This allows the student to see how mindfulness is a large component of both academic processes and thus applicable in other content areas. However, as the twin processes are like mindfulness meditation, the students’ own
attitudes need to be attuned to a focus of working to achieve, being conscious and alert to the new experiences unfolding before them (Garretson, 2010).

Similarly, Caroline Simpson (2015) worked with the Values-Based Education framework of Dr. Neil Hawkes whereby Simpson introduced the idea of values to her students to reflect on and associate with in the hopes that "embracing these values [would] elicit positive dispositions and self-regulation" (p. 61). As students worked with the values that they associated with, Simpson (2015) had the students further reflect on the origins of these values such that the students were mindful that such a value came from their father and another their mother or grandparent. Students further reflected on which of the values were most desired and promoted as favorable by society and how other cultures might hold other values as more favorable (Simpson, 2015). Such a mindful approach to essentially a vocabulary lesson lends itself nicely toward deepening the sense of understanding the diversity within the school and the larger society that the students live in. Students are called to be mindful in the verbal discussion as well as in writing of how the differences of one's culture can affect the values held as important to possess and how such a difference in understanding can cause major and minor misunderstandings as different cultures come in to contact with each other.

Mindfulness does not have to be taught as an explicit function disparate from the core instruction; it can be an implicit function of the work already being taught within the classroom. Of course, it seems obvious that in order to encourage students to engage in mindfulness as a strategy to improve their relationships and own well-being, mindfulness needs to be highlighted whenever it is being utilized within the classroom. However, this could simply be by using the word "mindful" within the directions and not a five minute meditation period to kick-start the period. The important aspect of mindfulness instruction being presented is that it is a core process that links all of the content areas through its impact on critical thinking and problem-solving.
Chapter Three: The Solution

The problem that is seen throughout the literature is a lack of relationship, not just between student and school (student and teacher) (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), but teacher and student (Shahmohammadi, 2014) as well as teacher and school (teacher and teacher, teacher and administration) (Jensen, 2013). Student motivation, engagement, and success all follow each other; motivation, being the foundational element, hinges on positive relationships, especially in areas of high poverty and low socioeconomic status (SES) (Bong, 2008; Liew, 2010; Spilt, 2012). This is less a matter of teaching materials, practice or management, but more a question of trust as the touchstone of the issue.

Students come to schools with a lack of trust in the system, adults, and those who are different from them in any capacity (Cote-Lussier & Fitzpatrick, 2016). The adults in the school need to formulate positive relationships with students so as to provide them with motivation, foster engagement and support them toward success (Claessens et al, 2017; Connell & Klem, 2006; Prasertcharoensuk et al, 2015). Increasingly, students are coming to school with no frame of reference to form and sustain positive relationships with adults (Spilt, 2012). They enter into school with a deficit in the area of social-emotional ability that is crucial to developing trust, and, subsequently, relationships with adults and peers (Bong, 2008; Wisner & Starzec, 2015). This lack of trust is not only an interpersonal issue but an intrapersonal issue whereby negative beliefs and behaviors reinforce separation from others, especially adults at school.

Students are not the only ones who struggle with social-emotional ability deficits as the literature shows. Adults struggling with trust towards students, colleagues and administration spiral towards burn out through a neglect of positive intrapersonal social-emotional skills (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jensen, 2013). Not only are adults working in schools becoming more accountable for factors beyond their control, they are now having to deal with classrooms that are
increasingly overcrowded and students who are less capable of self-regulation (Split, 2012). Such is the magnitude of the problem that even the most well-meaning teachers eventually succumb to burn-out at some point in their career. Burn-out is increasingly becoming a problem for first-year teachers resulting in many talented individuals leaving the profession before they even truly begin their careers.

Contrary to original thought, the problem is not simply a case of teachers modifying their individual behavior to become more respectful and accepting of students from a different background and personality than their own: policies of “best practice” and “data-driven instruction” would indicate that the problem lies in the teacher’s instruction and pedagogy alone (Jensen, 2013; Yunus et al). The problem is one that is holistic in nature and, at its crux, centered on the issue of social-emotional ability deficit (Connell & Klem, 2006; Cotes-Lussier, 2016; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Hofer & Peetsma, 2005). There is no easy fix. However, the literature points to personal and professional practices which promote the development of social-emotional ability and skills in both students and staff (Bong, 2008; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jensen 2013; Shahmohammadi, 2014; Wisner & Starzec, 2015). While the basis of the relationship issue is trust, building trust is dependent upon the perception of both individuals and perception is colored in large by an individual’s ability to be mindful of their own social-emotional state, communication, and self-regulation. As Gandhi said, "be the change you wish to see in the world". If the miracle asked for by the nation is greater overall student success both academically and socially, then more focus needs to be placed on social-emotional ability and skill-sets through increased instruction of mindfulness practice as the literature indicates. Student success is impossible while the basic needs of the student are overlooked. Through mindfulness grounded instruction the promise of self-regulation and positive interpersonal skills provide the necessary bridge to a greater relationship between individuals (student-student, student-teacher, teacher-teacher) resulting in greater trust, and greater overall satisfaction. These factors then result in greater student motivation, engagement
and success on the part of the student, while the adults achieve greater motivation to personalize their instruction, make it more engaging, and student-centered thus reinforcing student engagement.

It is not enough to simply ask teachers to modify their approach to the students in their care as relationships are a two-way street; the teacher brings the positive interaction and the student reciprocates. However, neither is it enough to promote positive behavior lessons for the students, such as the integration of mindfulness in class and yoga practices, community groups and other positive behavior initiatives for students. Rather, there needs to be support for both students and adults alike. Positive relationships start from positive individuals. Similarly, positive school environments start with positive groups of positive individuals. Necessarily then, the solution is not an annual personal development training for staff and periodic mindfulness sessions for students. Rather, the literature naturally leads towards an ongoing effort that has two fronts: student social-emotional development and staff social-emotional development.

Such a program not only needs to address the social-emotional needs of the individual but foster a positive community throughout the whole school. Students need to be grouped together across grade levels in a manner that provides them access to the same adult throughout their whole academic career. By grouping students across grade levels, the school links fresh students with experienced students and the experienced students with a reminder of how far they have come in the entirety of their academic progress. This process of forming reciprocal relationships with peers can occur at the same time as they form a strong and sustained bond with a particular adult/ small group of specific adults.

Similarly, staff members need to be connected to students and families that they do not necessarily teach directly, but foster relationships that span the entirety of students' the academic careers within the school. Staff members need to be connected to their colleagues at other times
than simply within these community groups. These times of connection could be semi-regular mindfulness development events and with a focus on positive reinforcement of personal experiences, student interaction, policy and plan "enforcement", as well as instructional practice. Thus a successful policy for creating positive individuals, positive relationships, and positive school cultures needs to operate on two aspects: individual mindfulness instruction/practice and community fostering for both students and staff. Essentially these initiatives are fundamentally the same for both populations with some minor adjustments as follows:

**Student-focused initiatives:**

- Routine mindfulness practice to develop self-regulatory ability/skills
- Reinforcement of routine mindfulness practice through academic classes as a natural process within the class: journaling/discussion in ELA, yoga in gym, meditation practice at key times during the academic day.
- Community groupings to develop long-term relationships in order to connect both adults and peers across grade levels and throughout the school

**Staff-focused initiatives:**

- Routine mindfulness practice to develop self-regulatory ability/skills and connection to teaching practice and student interaction.
- Self-care reinforcement through semi-regular meetings where the strengths of student programs are focused on and innovative practices are shared among colleagues.
- Community groupings to develop long-term relationships between both adults and students across grade levels and throughout the school.
Mindfulness Grounded Schools

While creating mindfulness-grounded schools calls for a large change in thinking and attitude from traditional education, it can be done with relatively low cost. Essentially, the basic mindfulness-grounded program only requires willing participants and a dedication to effecting change in three major areas:

- Student-centered mindfulness-integrated instruction: mindfulness practice to be utilized as an essential part of content instruction and classroom management.
- Community groups: Formation of community groups comprising of students across grade cohorts and school staff who loop with these students throughout their academic career.
- Teacher self-care: formation of staff support groups that not only sustain staff self-care practice but lend themselves to mindfulness-grounded professional development.

Educators may find that they do not require many outside materials, or funds to create classrooms that function as mindful communities. However, there are several resources available to enhance and support this transition which will be explored in each section that focuses on the three major areas of change.

Student-Centered Mindfulness-Integrated Instruction: “Check-out-check-ins”

Schools that wish to improve student success through positive relationships will find this policy expedited by implementing mindfulness practice throughout the course of the day. Many classes would be benefited by a five-minute "check-out-check-in" session at the start in order to calm and center students prior to beginning the lesson proper. A “check-out-check-in” is a brief period where students can focus on their natural rhythms of their bodies, the feelings and thoughts contained within themselves and bring about a sense of calmness and relaxation. Transition periods between classes and events can be a stressor or even just a time when students lose focus of school expectations as this period of time (anywhere between 3-5 minutes) is unstructured,
unsupervised and a period where students get to fraternize with each other for the better or worse. Transitions between classes are often sensitive periods where students feel most pressured due to time constraints and increased opportunities for in-school bullying. To alleviate these potential stressors, teachers can bring about a sense of calm and peace through the use of mindfulness practice. Thus, allowing the student time for emotional healing to occur via mindful awareness of their feelings, their own reactive behaviors, and the feelings of those impacted by their reactions. This will lessen the probability that the student will engage in a negative interaction with either staff or peers within the duration of the class.

These brief "check-out-check-ins" can also be beneficial to the staff within the classroom as it has already been established that teaching is a highly stressful profession. The class periods can transition quickly from one to another without the teacher doing the necessary self-care that they might require. This is especially true when the teacher works in an "at risk" population where interactions can be highly negative with little downtime between each. Such chronic stress can lead to teacher burn-out and so it is equally important for the teacher to engage in a brief "check-out-check-in" where they can focus their thoughts on their body's natural rhythms and the emotions that they are experiencing, reframe the stressful situations and negative cognitive patterns associated with individual students, their abilities and the school as a whole. In this manner, the teacher can purge him/herself of these negative functions, and be in a more positive frame of mind for the coming class. Not only is this personally beneficial to the teacher, but it also reinforces the students' own practice as the teacher acts as a model for how to approach mindfulness, meditation, and the expectations for interpersonal behavior.

Schools implementing mindfulness practice as an active and integral part of their program should be aware of fairly specific goals and objectives for both students and teachers. These goals and objectives are largely similar in the sense that they focus on the individual self-care of both
teacher and student. However, the unique roles that each population plays within the ecosystem of a school community demand that separate goals be isolated for each population. Figure 1. demonstrates the unique goals, objectives and possible activities to support these goals identified for the student and possible instructional impact.

These brief mindfulness practices can be orchestrated throughout the day so that the students are learning and reinforcing the same skills across content areas. Also, these “check-out-check-in” periods can be used to reinforce the holistic nature of the skills and abilities practiced and strengthened throughout all instruction, such that an ELA class practicing visualization, or following a guided imagery meditation, can enhance a lesson on the use of imagery within a poem, short story or novel. Further, in the ELA classroom, this mindful start can be a bridge into a journaling exercise that deepens the students’ personal connection to the practice and the texts/concepts covered in class. The following lesson plans highlight aspects of an ELA unit that integrates mindfulness into instruction through exploration of the senses to deepen their understanding of the processes involved in the reading strategy of visualization. These lessons provide students with the development of mindfulness techniques that enhance personal understanding, group and teacher connections, as well as a thorough understanding of lesson content. Students will be assessed through their creation of happy place poems wherein they demonstrate their ability to create examples of imagery from their sensory experiences.
## Figure 1. Student goals and objectives for mindfulness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Relation al Goal</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Practices/ Activities</th>
<th>Potential Instructional Enhancements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve relationships</td>
<td>1. Students will self-regulate</td>
<td>1. Students will identify feelings within themselves associated/connected to/with specific actions</td>
<td>• Journaling • Yoga/stretching • Body scan • Seated meditation • Focused breathing</td>
<td>Bio/Health: Physiology of nervous system; Stress response systems</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Students will identify potential triggers for these emotions</td>
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<td>PE: Sportsmanship</td>
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<td>3. Students will identify effective replacement behaviors</td>
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<td>ELA: Characterization, Tone, Voice, Character trails, Imagery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Students will reframe negative cognitive patterns</td>
<td>1. Students will identify negative thoughts/lies they tell themselves</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Students will identify opposite thoughts/truths that defeat these lies (affirmations)</td>
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<td>3. Students will employ affirmations as a mantra during mindfulness practice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Students will reframe negative scenarios/interactions from the others’ perspective</td>
<td>1. Students will identify the trigger in the negative interaction</td>
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<td>ELA: Plot, Conflict</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Students will identify own emotions and connected actions once triggered</td>
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<td>Social Studies French Revolution, American Revolution, social movements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Students will identify own re-active behavior as a potential trigger to the other person</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Students will identify emotions of others in reaction to own behavior/words.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Students will identify a replacement responsive behavior to the original trigger that others would view in a positive way.</td>
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LESSON: mindfulness – happy place – Sensory Mindfulness #1

Lesson Sequence:

This lesson is to follow direct instruction into what mindfulness is, Where/what emotions do I feel in my body? and What are my personal triggers and how can I positively respond? Students will know what mindfulness is, what emotions they generally feel and where they experience these emotions within their bodies and identify how these feelings change in response to triggers and practice some replacement behaviors.

Standards:

RL10:1:

Student Objectives:

1. Students will identify effective replacement behaviors through engagement with happy place guided meditation.
2. Students will demonstrate positive social-emotional skills through class discussion
3. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the ELA concept of imagery through their creations and descriptions of their happy places.
4. Students will demonstrate understanding of imagery as a writing strategy through their analysis of published literature

Materials:

1. Guided meditation-forest walk (warm up)
2. Notes on imagery
3. Practice worksheet with imagery-sensory details
4. Copy of Wordsworth's “I wandered lonely as a cloud”
5. Happy place worksheet

Warm up:

The teacher will indicate that it is time to start mindfulness practice and invite students to sit comfortably and loosen any restrictive clothing and then read the following script:

“Focus on your breathing...breathing with your belly... Let your breath find its own most comfortable rhythm. Pause 10 seconds Imagine breathing in calming energy as you inhale... And imagine releasing tensions as you exhale... Breathe this way for three very slow and deep breaths... Pause 15 seconds Become more and more present in this place... In this moment...with each breath you inhale and exhale. Your thoughts move in and out of your awareness As easily as you breathe in and out... Pause 5 seconds Here, thoughts, feelings and sensations Move through your awareness as easily as The breath you exhale through your nose and mouth...
Imagine for a moment that you are walking through a forest...
A forest dense with trees and undergrowth...
So dense that branches and tree trunks seem sewn together...
Nearly blocking your path...
The sun shines overhead, but you cannot feel its warmth...
The shadows of birds dance around, but you cannot hear their flight.
You hear nothing.
Pause 5 seconds
Suddenly the trees give way to a massive clearing...
In which stands a magnificent enchanted house.
Pause 5 seconds
As you enter the house, your senses spring to life...
A rush of cool air hits your skin as you open the creaking door...
A faint musky odor of a house long closed fills your nose...
The echo of bird flight resounds against the inner walls of the entrance way...
Inside the dim house, you see hundreds of archways...
Opening onto wide, sunlight drenched halls, with no visible end...
Leading into a maze of intriguing rooms...
Pause 5 minutes
You travel from room to room, exploring...
Experiencing all of what each room has to offer...
Allowing each new room to come alive in your mind as you step across each threshold...
You come first to a long stretch of valley landscape...
Deep grassy slopes flow down to a central forest at the bottom with a wide meandering river twisting through it...
Above wide blue skies a red dotted with puffy white clouds...
Next, blue sea with uninterrupted horizons...
Wide expanses of people, places and events...
A carnival with bright lights in dark cold night filled with screams of joy and laughter, the smell of fried dough and cotton candy, the sounds of games and amusement rides...
Allow your mind to roam freely from room to room...
Immersing yourself in whatever people, places or events you discover in your tour of the enchanted house...
Pause for several minutes
Now, through the next archway you see the forest where you were walking...and realizing that all of these images were all just in your mind to begin with...you step back inside the forest.
Its paths are now cleared of undergrowth and wide...
You walk uninterrupted, relaxed, healed...
Your forest has shown you the limitless potential of your mind.
Whatever you can imagine can happen.
The very fact that you can imagine your vision makes it possible...makes it probable...makes it real...
Tell yourself this now.
Pause 5 seconds
When you are ready, open your eyes and bring this power, this relaxation and comfort back to this room.
Knowing that any time you need this power, you can re-imagine this forest walk”

Open up the floor for students to share their individual journeys focusing on the specific sensory details to describe the sights, sounds, tactile input, smell, and taste. Have this conversation lead to their feelings in response to the individual rooms.

**Input:**

Lead the class into a discussion of how the sensory input helps to better picture the scenes inside each room and how in ELA we call this use of the senses “Imagery”.

Hand out the imagery notes worksheet and have the students fill in the blanks as you explore the concept of imagery in ELA, focusing on the types of imagery is to create a mental experience of the words on the page.

Work through the first two items on the practice sheet as a class and then direct the students to complete the remaining items on their own.

Share responses as a whole class

**Output:**

Hand each student a copy of the William Wordsworth’s "I wandered lonely as a cloud" worksheet.
Together work read the entire poem. Then reread the first stanza and note sensory details to the right of the worksheet.

Next direct the students to continue working on locating the sensory details in pairs.

Have the students share their sensory details and associate the imagery with their own feelings in response to this imagery.

**Closure: Exit Ticket:**

Have the students consider where they feel most happy and secure and at peace. Hand the students the happy place worksheet and have them map out this happy place and then list out the feelings that they associate with this space.

**LESSON: mindfulness – happy place – Sensory Mindfulness #2**

**Lesson Sequence:**

This lesson is to follow direct instruction into what mindfulness is, Where/what emotions do I feel in my body?, and What are my personal triggers and how can I positively respond? Students will know what mindfulness is, what emotions they generally feel and where they experience these emotions within their bodies and identify how these feelings change in response to triggers and practice some replacement behaviors.

**Standards:**

RL10:1:

**Student Objectives:**

1. Students will identify effective replacement behaviors through engagement with happy place guided meditation.
2. Students will demonstrate positive social-emotional skills through class discussion
3. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the ELA concept of imagery through their creations and descriptions of their happy places.
4. Students will demonstrate understanding of imagery as a writing strategy through their analysis of published literature

**Materials:**

1. Guided meditation-happy place script (warm up)
2. Copy of Keat's “To Autumn”
3. Sensory items – essential oils, noisy items, variety of taste items
4. Sensory station worksheet
5. Sensory/happy place poem assignment sheet
6. Happy place worksheet

**Warm up:**
Students will take out their happy place worksheets and fill in the types of sensory input and activities that they do in their happy places that make them feel good and enhances well being.

Next, walk the students through a meditation to envision their happy places.

"Focus on your breathing...breathing with your belly...
Let your breath find its own most comfortable rhythm.
Pause 10 seconds
Imagine breathing in calming energy as you inhale...
And imagine releasing tensions as you exhale...
Breathe this way for three very slow and deep breaths...
Pause 15 seconds
Become more and more present in this place...
In this moment...with each breath you inhale and exhale.
Your thoughts move in and out of your awareness
As easily as you breathe in and out...
Pause 5 seconds
Here, thoughts, feelings and sensations
Move through your awareness as easily as
The breath you exhale through your nose and mouth...
Imagine that you are in your happy space...
Seeing the sights and shapes there...
The different colors and visual textures...
The lightness or darkness of this space...
As you get a 360 degree vision of this space start to imagine the sounds that you hear while in this space...
The voices...the furniture or environmental sounds...the animals...
Now fold in the tactile sense as you engage with the objects around you...
The differences in the texture of each item as you feel and move around this space, engaged in the various activities here...
Now, imagine the smells that come from the fabrics around you...the smells infused in the natural and manmade objects around you...perhaps a flower...or the scent of salt on the breeze...the smell of citrus...or motor oil...
Next imagine the foods and drinks you have in this place...what are the various taste sensations that you have here...
Pause several minutes
When you are ready, open your eyes and bring this power, this relaxation and comfort back to this room.
Knowing that any time you need this power, you can re-imagine this happy space."

Allow the students to describe their happy places through the sensory perceptions of these spaces.

Finish up the discussion with a reminder that these happy spaces are available for revisiting anytime that the students so wish through their ability to daydream/use imagery to mentally take a vacation.

Input:

Hand each student a copy of the John Keats’ “To Autumn” worksheet.

Together work read the entire poem. Then reread the first stanza and note sensory details to the right of the worksheet.

Next direct the students to continue working on locating the sensory details in pairs.

Have the students share their sensory details and

Output:

Lead discussion in how happy places don’t have to be physical spaces, but memories associated with sensory details; how Keats’ happy place is Autumn/Fall and the sensory details that that builds this poem and happy place through sensory imagery. Associate the imagery with their own feelings.
in response to this imagery and any memories that they personally link to these sensory details: i.e. smell/taste of apples to baking with grandma, the feel of crisp air of a childhood spent playing in the leaf pile, etc.

Have the students utilize the various scent, taste and sound stations around the room where you have placed a selection of essential oils, foods and “noisy” items to stimulate their memories associated with these sensory inputs.

Students will reflect their responses on the sensory worksheets next to each listed item at each station. Students will then return to their seats and take their responses from the stations and their happy place maps and create a sensory loaded poem/prose description of their happy place (physical or memory) in imitation of the two poets that will have been analyzed over the two days.

**Closure: Exit Ticket:**

Write out which sensory inputs are most calming to the student and list out school appropriate ways in which to have these stimulants close at hand should they need to be utilized when triggered.
Literary Elements: Imagery

____________ is the device that allows the reader to experience what they are reading, most commonly through a mental picture in a visual sense.

“THE BRIGHT RED APPLE SAT PROUDLY ON THE TEACHERS PILED DESK, BEGGING TO BE EATEN AND PROMISING A SATISFYINGLY TART CRUNCH.”

Imagery is then heavily reliant on _________________ to round out the sensory cues for the brain to put a mental experience of what is being related in words.

Imagery is not limited to the sense of sight; authors include all five senses as they write with imagery to give the reader the best available experience of what they are writing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sense</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual - sight</td>
<td>This sense is all of the things that you can see with your eyes; size, shape, color,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory - sound</td>
<td>This sense is all of the things that you can hear; pitch, tempo,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactile - touch</td>
<td>This sense is all of the things that you can physically feel; textures, rough, hard, smooth, cool, wet, dry, crisp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olfactory - smell</td>
<td>This sense is all of the things that you can smell; sweet, sour, rank, musk, earthy, floral, gaseous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gustatory - taste</td>
<td>This sense is all of the things that you can taste; sweet, sour, fishy, spicy, salty, tart, earthy, chicken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3 Practice

Good writers allow their readers to experience their words through their _______________ and by this gather a richer sense of what is written on the page.

For each of the following state what is the sense being activated in the reader:

"Her voice is full of money ... that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbal's song of it...." F. Scott Fitzgerald

________________________________

“The stench of death massaged my skin; it didn't wash off for years.” James Wilde

________________________________

"The arched stone bridge is an eye, with underlid in the water." May Swenson

________________________________

"It must be on charcoal they fatten their fruit. I taste in them sometimes the flavour of soot...." Robert Frost

________________________________

“there was growing joy in Inman's heart. He was nearing home; he could feel it in the touch of thin air on skin....” Charles Fraizer

________________________________
I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

What is the literal story in the poem?

What are the images in the story?

How is this a new way of looking at a familiar thing?
In the space provided, draw/map out your happy place – that space can be real or imagined, but it should depict as much detail as possible and be labeled with the activities that you do in this space.

In the space below list out the feelings and thoughts that you associate with this space. Ex. Happy, Peaceful

My Happy Space Thoughts/Feelings

1.5 Happy Place Map
2.2 To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eyes run;
To bend with apples the moss’d cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bee
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Sparest the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricketts sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

What is the literal story in the poem?

List some sensory images in the story?

Note above how the narrator feels about each sensory item that you’ve listed.

What are the images and feelings that you associate with fall?

John Keats
2.4 Sensory stations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station number</th>
<th>Sense that the object affects</th>
<th>What is the object?</th>
<th>Describe the sensory input of the object</th>
<th>Reflect on the thoughts and feelings created by the object.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Sound, tactile</td>
<td>Dried leaves</td>
<td>Cruchy, crispy sound; rough, dry, boney, thin, brittle feel</td>
<td>Autumn, cool days, sweaters, cold sunshine, growing older, pensive</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2.5 happy place/senses worksheet

Use your happy place map and the sensory station sheet to help kick-start your ideas about a poem focused on the places and senses that make you feel happy and at peace. Your poem could be like Keats which focused on a season that is most happy to the author, or Wordsworth for whom nature was his happy space.

Which sense/s did you connect most with?
______________________________________________________________________________

What images are most pleasing/soothing to you that make use of your preferred sense/s?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What are the specific thoughts/feelings that you associate with each of the images that you listed
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What is a setting in which you generally find these sensory images?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What would life be like if you could live in this setting forever?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Similar lesson formats may be used for almost all academic classes in order to integrate mindfulness regardless of content area: social studies can use this time to imagine being in specific time periods, or during specific cultural events; biology can take the students on a journey through their organs, or link movement to specific anatomy; even math can use this time to enhance the students’ grasp of concepts such as spatial awareness, area, functions, and memorization of formulas.

Thus, mindfulness through breathing-focused activities, either guided or self-guided, can serve several functions: behavior management through self-regulation; instructional by reflecting on the linkage between current learning to background knowledge; and improving their relationships with their peers and staff by allowing all parties to reset emotionally before they begin to actively engage with each other through mental reframing of cognitive patterns and self-regulation. As relationships are built of moment-to-moment interactions, by taking time to calm the self before engaging each other allows the teacher and student to better ensure that the interactions are generally positive and remain positive throughout the class period.

As previously stated, mindfulness-integrated instruction really only requires the willingness of the participants in conjunction with the creativity of the teacher. Teachers can create simple guided meditations combining objectives of their academic lesson with individual objectives of mindfulness. However, there are several exemplary resources for teachers to utilize:

- Andrew Schwartz’s *Guided Imagery for Groups: Fifty Visualizations that promote relaxation, problem-solving, creativity, and well-being*, offers guided imagery meditations that are laid out like many lesson plans with goals, time, and special considerations. Many of these meditations are followed up with group discussion ideas in order to support learning outcomes.
Sam Himelstein is a leader in incorporating mindfulness into therapy, is the director of clinical services at the Mind Body Awareness Project, and specializes in working with “at-risk” adolescents. Himelstein offers mindfulness activities and guided meditation exercises in his 2013 *A Mindfulness-Based Approach to Working with High-Risk Adolescents*. The Mind Body Awareness Project website has multimedia resources and enhancements to curriculum, including a free Stop, Breathe, and Think app that offers guided meditations (http://www.mbaproject.org/).

- [https://www.calm.com/schools](https://www.calm.com/schools) Calm, with their Calm Classroom Initiative, offers educators free access to their paid subscription meditation app for use in the classroom. Students who wish to use this app outside of the classroom, however, must pay.

- [https://www.smilingmind.com.au/](https://www.smilingmind.com.au/) Smiling Mind offers a completely free guided meditation app that uses gameology in order to encourage users to return daily to practice.

**Community Groups/Home base Groups**

While it is recommended to have students practice mindfulness as a part of their regular day in a variety of ways, they should also be given the latitude to practice in a preferred manner. This supports a personal practice that is natural and authentic to the individual. However, this practice is only impactful when it is given within the scope of a larger course in which the student meets with a core group of trusted individuals with whom the student has developed a shared set of positive experiences. To this end, a mindful school will develop home bases for students to come to multiple times throughout each day. These home bases will be safe spaces where the student is greeted before starting the school day, has the ability to touch base midway, and finish out the with the group before departure. In this way, students can download any negative emotions they come
to school with, receive support to continue their day in a positive way, and debrief their experiences before departing.

Through the use of the home base, the student can be placed in groups with staff and peers from a range of grade levels, cultures and experiences. This allows students who are younger to have access to older and more experienced students while giving older students a reference for their own growth. Older students are also granted a role within the school as leaders to their younger peers. To all students, home groups that are not grade-level dependent provide a sense of belonging and community that transcends age and grade level cohorts. Such home base groups become spaces for sense of community to be fostered as it opens the students up to a broad scope of interests, diversity, and heritage backgrounds. All of this can occur while the student is plugged into staff who can offer academic and transitional supports to foster success in the student both academically and post-academically, at school and at home.

Community-based home groups allow students to know exactly with whom they may speak with about educational supports, program changes, and issues with teachers, school work, peers, relationships, home-life, and even future plans. Students build trust and a connection that they can foster throughout their academic life at the school with adults who remain constant. Many students lack trust in adults due to the transitory nature that many adults play in their lives, especially within "at risk" populations. As the students continue their progress through their education, they can be sure that they will know at least one group of people with whom they share positive relationships, experiences, and history.

Students can take a progressive role within the community group. As students move towards graduation they become potential mentors to younger members who join the group. From this point of trust and agency, students and staff can work together on developing their own mindfulness practice within the group in a comfortable and non-judgmental manner that facilitates
engagement and fosters a deeper sense of unity within the community group. As the students and staff deepen their trust, they share more with each other so that relationship and comfort can develop.

The community group would serve many functions throughout the year, one of which would be the fostering of positive self-care in all individuals, both staff and students. While mindfulness integrated instruction offers the school population brief periods in which to practice mindfulness, community groups provide opportunities for substantial amounts of time to be spent on developing mindfulness practice. Community groups would then form the foundation of mindfulness development within the school.

Community groups cannot be solely focused on the development of mindfulness practice but need to take into account the transitioning needs of the student as he/she makes academic progress toward graduation. Also, community groups should be approachable and enjoyable spaces for the students where they can go to give and receive support in meeting their individual needs. All members need to have input into the establishment of a routine for how mindfulness practices will be incorporated successfully into the group culture along with balancing these unique needs of all student members. Such a routine might look like Figure 2:

Figure 2. Community Group Sample Routine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness practice – body scan</td>
<td>Journaling Individual counseling - Transitional work Homework</td>
<td>Group counseling Mindfulness – self-regulatory techniques when triggered</td>
<td>Individual counseling – transitional work</td>
<td>Homework Fun and games or a movie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This style of community group is in line with the current curriculum taught through the Holistic Life Foundation, a nonprofit organization that empowers underserved communities and “at risk” youth through mindfulness, self-care, and activities such as yoga (Holistic Life Foundation,
According to NBC Nightly News (2015), the nonprofit group has received attention for “making a difference” through their programs that work to support inner-peace and emotional regulation [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWSpzA2BwNs]. The foundation took its popular and effective after-school program and modified it for use within schools, “The curriculum consists of two (2) sessions per week each lasting forty-five (45) minutes and taking place during resource periods. Sessions start with a brief centering exercise, then yoga and tai-chi exercises, followed by breathing, then a discussion on a selected topic, and ending with a meditation. Participants are given assignments between sessions to reinforce lessons” (Holistic Life Foundation, 2016). The idea of school community groups follows along with the goal of the curriculum from the Holistic Life Foundation (2016), which “…empowers students with tools and skills for peaceful conflict resolution, improved focus and concentration, greater control and awareness of thoughts and emotions, improved self-regulation, as well as stress reduction and relaxation” (para. 1).

Two days of extended mindfulness sessions is not enough time to establish an effective self-care practice in order to work toward achieving the individual goals set: student self-regulation and reframing of negative cognitive processes. Schools wishing to promote genuine mindfulness among its population will need to require that students continue to practice self-care on and off of school grounds. One resource for tracking this engagement would be the self-care log (Figure 3). Through the use of the self-care log, students would be held accountable to the community group for effective development and maintenance of their self-care and mindfulness practice. Self-care practices are taught explicitly within the community group on two out of the five weekdays during the entire resource time block. From this, the students may receive the full benefit of extended periods of meditation and/or yoga that might range between 20-40 minutes.
**Figure 3. Self Care Log**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day off</td>
<td>Day off</td>
<td>Day off</td>
<td>Day off</td>
<td>Day off</td>
<td>Day off</td>
<td>Day off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**

- **Getting to It:** What strategies (time of day, place, timer, etc.) made it easiest to practice this week?
- **Changing in Daily Life:** Did you notice any benefits to your daily life (guilt, calmer, etc.) from your practice this week?
- **Quality of Practice:** What strategies (type of focus, relaxing technique, etc.) helped you to improve the quality of your practice?
- **Plans for Next Week:** What one thing can you do next week to improve practice and/or maintain benefits?
Such periods of extended mindfulness practice would need to be framed with pre and post-practice discussion to allow the student a fuller understanding of the greater implications of mindfulness as well as the realization that their own experiences are similar to those of the other community group members. Here follows an example of how this extended period of mindfulness practice could be utilized:

**Community Group Extended Mindfulness Practice - #1 Identifying Triggers**

**Practice Sequence:**

This practice begins community groups understanding what triggers are and how they work within the individual’s life. Subsequent practice will build on this knowledge such that multiple mindfulness practices are utilized in developing an understanding of what specific triggers that each member has and the knowledge of how to effectively cope with them.

**Student Objectives:**

1. Students will identify specific triggers that they have within their lives.
2. Students will identify triggers in others through participation in group activity
3. Students will identify effective replacement behaviors through engagement in guided mindfulness meditation.

**Materials:**

1. Triggers game
2. Guided meditation-triggers

**Warm up:** community group leader will present the idea of triggers to the rest of the group by beginning a discussion on false alarms, asking students for their understanding and experience with this word. Once group input slows down, the leader will explain the therapeutic term:

*false alarms can occur within us when we experience through our various senses incidents that remind us of negative past events. These reminders are called “triggers.”*

The leader will open up for discussion on triggers and what this term might mean to the students.

Before explaining that to different people, there are different reminders.

*If someone was yelled at a lot, then hearing people yell might activate a trigger for them, while someone who did not receive enough attention might be triggered when they feel alone.*

The leader will open up the discussion to the group in order to explore what triggers them individually.
The leader will then direct the discussion to how triggers can affect our behaviors.

**Input:**

The leader will read out a scenario from the recognizing triggers game. Groups will earn points towards a community group reward for accurately guessing the trigger at work within the scenario.

After each scenario is read out, group members will raise their hand to offer up a suggested trigger.

The leader will guide the group in a discussion of how the suggestion works or does not work in terms of the scenario. In case of an incorrect guess, the leader will continue to receive members’ guesses until a correct response is made.

**Output:**

The community group leader will then initiate a guided meditation that will assist the members in mindfully exploring their own personal triggers, the emotions associated with the particular trigger and their reactive behaviors in response to this trigger.

Identifying Triggers Guided Meditation

“Take a moment to arrive here, in this room, coming into your body.
Focus on your breathing...breathing with your belly...
Let your breath find its own most comfortable rhythm.
Imagine breathing in calming energy as you inhale...
And imagine releasing tensions as you exhale...

Allow your mind to identify a time, maybe within this past week month, this week, or this day where you have experienced feelings of being triggered.

Observe how the scene played out. What was the situation? Who was there? What was around you?

In this space, notice what it was that triggered you.

Explore how it was that your body felt.

What thoughts were running through your mind...

What feelings accompanied this sensation of being triggered...

How did you respond? What was your behavior?

Take a few more moments to explore this space, your sensations, and your reactions...

Move into the time following this incident. How did you cope with this situation?

How did you cope with the feelings you were experiencing?

Was there another way to handle this situation? What would your ideal response look like? Feel like?

Imagine yourself back in this situation, responding in the most ideal way possible. Notice the sensations...

Now return to your breath, breathing deep into the belly...

Noticing the space between the end of one breath, and the beginning of another...

Bringing the awareness that you have the space between situations and your reaction to them, just as there is space between the breaths...

When you are ready, gently open your eyes and bring the insights, the awareness you have gained back to this room.”

**Closure: Exit Ticket:**

Members will share their individual experience of this guided meditation
Materials

1.1 recognizing triggers game

(Blaustein, 2010, p. 279)
Community groups will meet three times a day: arrival, lunch/resource, and bus departure. Students are able to check in with the staff assigned to their group at the beginning of their academic day. Later on, the students can share how the day is progressing as well as get help with prioritizing workloads, organization and developing their personal self-care. It is at this time that the bulk of the mindfulness training would happen as the lunch/resource time is opportune space for an extended mindfulness period in the middle of the day. At the end of the academic day, students and staff can debrief on the entire day, the positives and areas in need of work. Figure 4. shows a sample student schedule within a mindful school.

Figure 4. Sample Student Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Class Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Arrival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Group (CG)</td>
<td>Alegbra I (Al)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>CG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>CG</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Community group staff can use these check in and debrief times in order to gather important information for the academic staff, such as student affect and motivation day by day. Staff can also track how student mood is maintained or fluctuates throughout the day. Community group
staff can then forewarn teachers of any changes in student attitude toward school as well as highlight anything that might foster a relationship between academic staff and student.

Similarly, community groups also work to help the staff better understand the students and their families. In turn, this knowledge can be shared with other staff members who interact with the students in order for the whole academic team to better understand the triggers and interests of the students. In this way, staff can be better informed when responding to individual students and more mindful of their words and actions with and around students. Not only does the staff within the community group get to work with the students, but foster a relationship between the school and the families to better understand the resources and needs of the individual families. Student trust is in part based on the level of trust that their family members have toward each other as well as individuals outside of the immediate family and other external organizations, such as schools. A secondary goal of the community group is to increase contact and communication with student families. Mindfulness practice can be passed on to the family as a support for the whole family and not just the student. Not only might the entire family benefit from the practice, but also mindfulness becomes a component of the students' entire day and valued by the family at home. It is also hoped that through the educating of the family that the familial relationships can become healthier and boost student social-emotional ability, which in turn will boost student relationship with school and so boost motivation and engagement, which results in student success.

Community groups offer several benefits to fostering positive relationships between student and staff. First, it allows students to engage with staff outside of the classroom in a mostly relaxed space where communication is not dependent on grades and assignments. Secondly, community groups provide touchstones for staff to read student affect and communicate any possible triggers and/or any information that might allow staff to show interest in the concerns and interests of the student in an attempt to soothe relations between student and staff. Thirdly, a safe
space in which to develop and practice mindfulness within a group of similarly minded individuals. Community groups foster relationship and through mindfulness practice enhance the students' attachment and support with key peers and school staff members. By fostering relationships with key staff and peers, the school can support the student to engage in mindfulness, a practice that can be difficult and even scary for some individuals, despite its benefits. By fostering key relationships the school can foster better engagement in mindfulness and so improve relationships with all staff and peers.

**Teacher-Centered Mindfulness**

Mindfulness instruction in schools does not stop with the students. In order to improve relationships, the school needs to address the fact that relationships are two-way streets. Teachers are just as accountable for the quality of their relationships with students as the students are. Part of the problem with the state of relationships in schools is the student perception of the relationship with staff. This is not a fixed value, but changeable through mindfulness. The student can reframe the scenarios and self-regulate so that they can adjust their reading of the teacher and the interactions. Also, teachers can engage in mindfulness to read their own emotional reactions to students and stress so as to self-regulate their own behavior and emotions within the classroom.

Not only can teachers practice on the spot self-regulation, but they can also engage in active self-care to decompress and reframe negative interactions in order to not repeat these situations. As perceptions are formed from the moment to moment accumulation of emotionally charged interactions, teachers need to be aware of their roles within each negative interaction and how to avoid these in the future. Similar to the students, teachers need to cultivate and practice their own self-care and mindfulness practice.

Teachers and other school staff need work on similar goals and objectives as the students, such as self-regulation of emotions and reframing of incidents. However, a different goal for staff
from the students might be to view student behavior as a communication of a need. Figure 5 details how these core goals for staff mindfulness might be further broken down into objectives that are easily attainable both within stressful situations and during personal self-care practice.

**Figure 5. Staff Mindfulness Goals and Objectives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Relation al Goal</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Practices/Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Improve relationships with self in order to deepen connection and trust in staff and peers | 1. Teachers will self-regulate | 1. Teachers will identify feelings within themselves associated/connected to/with specific actions | - Journaling  
- Yoga/stretching  
- Body scan  
- Seated meditation  
- Focused breathing  
- Affirmation writing  
- Mantra creation  
- Guided meditation  
- Yoga  
- Walking |
| | 2. Teachers will identify potential triggers for these emotions | 2. Teacher will develop possible replacement behaviors to positively meet need and how to teach them |
| | 3. Teachers will identify effective replacement behaviors | 3. Teacher will develop an awareness of how they could meet the needs being communicated.  
4. Teacher will identify proactive measures that the teacher can take to meet needs communicated |
| | 2. Teachers will identify maladaptive coping strategies in students | 1. Teachers will identify the possible function of behavior in the student as a means to communicate a need/possible trauma (ACEs)  
2. Teacher will develop possible replacement behaviors to positively meet need and how to teach them  
3. Teacher will develop an awareness of how they could meet the needs being communicated.  
4. Teacher will identify proactive measures that the teacher can take to meet needs communicated |
| | 3. Teachers will reframe negative scenarios/interactions from the others’ perspective. *sequentially builds on goal #1 | 1. Teacher will identify the trigger in the negative interaction  
2. Teacher will identify own emotions and connected actions once triggered  
3. Teacher will identify own re-active behavior as a potential trigger to the other person  
3. Students will identify emotions of others in reaction to own behavior/words.  
4. Students will identify a replacement responsive behavior to the original trigger that would be viewed in a positive way by the other person. |
| | 4. Teachers will identify student present levels of ability/strengths. | 1. Teacher will identify strengths of the student  
2. Teacher will identify how strengths can support the student when at their weakest |
One core way that teachers can cultivate healthy mindfulness habits is by forming professional learning communities focused on promoting mindfulness and positivity within the professional school community. Within these positivity centered professional learning communities (PCPLCs) teachers can develop and support each other in the formulation of positive attitudes and effective self-care practices. PCPLCs should follow a fairly specific structure such that they focus on the wins, or positives, that the individuals experience and move toward a shared self-care experience. Figure 6. shows an example of how PCPLCs might effectively structure their shared time together. In order to develop and support the unique goals and objectives for teacher mindfulness through a positive group activity.

In this manner, teacher collaborative groups need to have a professional development (PD) element to them whereby training in trauma-sensitive practice and mindfulness strategies is received in a manner that is consistent throughout the school but also focused around an activity that is positive and promotes well-being. This highlights the importance of mindfulness and self-care to educational practice in easily received and engaging formats, such as Tedtalks, Youtube videos and other interactive multimedia sources linked to specific organizations focused on promoting mindfulness and self-care.
The larger part of these PCPLCs would be the group self-care activity of shared interest among the individual members. Such an activity could be anything from walking or another exercise, to watching sports or movies, to yoga and meditation practice, or simply just getting together for drinks. The idea is to promote an activity that is calming and stress relieving in conjunction with the idea of how to promote mindfulness in the students. The PowerPoint and materials that follow are an example of how a school might use its professional development time to help teachers form and run such PCPLCs.
Self Positive: Professional reflective Journalling

- Write down three successes or positive moments from your day.
- For each item, state what role you played in the creation of this success/positive moment.

Be prepared to share your three successes and your role in each with the rest of the group.

These positive moments need not be big or important; even the smallest win can be enough to turn the day around.

Session 1: Importance of self-care

Objectives
- Understand how relationships affect the own success.
- Understand how relationships affect others’ success.
- Understand how own mood/thoughts affect relationship.
- Understand how others’ mood/thoughts affect relationship.
- Understand the importance of mindfulness on own mood/thought processes.
The Benefits of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

- Students who have positive and supportive relationships with teachers attain higher achievement
- Positive student-teacher relationships support a student’s adjustment to school, social skills, academic performance, and foster resilience in academic performance
- Positive student-teacher relationships produce greater motivation when learner-centered

Program/Student Positive Thinking

- write down one thing that is working for students/one positive behavior from a high behavioral student

Sometimes school specific changes happen and it can be a difficult period for everyone involved.

At such times it is easy to see what is negative about the new direction. Every good thing will have difficulties and problems that can be resolved.

However, it is equally important to notice the pluses of the program
How to Develop Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

- Know your students
- Give students meaningful feedback
- Create a positive classroom climate
- Be trauma-sensitive
- Self-care
- Integrate Mindfulness

Mindfulness in the Classroom

- Video: Children Talk About Handling Difficult Emotions with Mindfulness
- Youth who practice mindfulness experience:
  - Improved cognitive outcomes
    - Improved attention and focus
  - Improved social-emotional skills
    - Improved emotion regulation, behavior in school, empathy and perspective taking, social skills
  - Overall well-being
    - Stress and depression

Greenberg & Crowley (2019)
Jon Kabat-Zinn & Mindfulness in Education

“Rather than yelling at the kids to pay attention, it’s very useful for teachers to know how to actually teach kids how to pay attention”
-Jon Kabat-Zinn

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qm-qnkclUyE

Mindfulness in the Classroom

* Video: Mindful Schools - Megan Cowan
Mindfulness for Educators

- When educators practice mindfulness:
  - They experience reduced stress and burnout
  - Report greater efficacy in their job
  - Have more emotionally supportive classrooms
  - Better classroom organization

The Calm Classroom Initiative

- All K-12 educators have free access to the app “Calm” via Android, IOS, and the web
- Offers mindfulness exercises
- Video: Calm Classroom Initiative
Session 1 Discussion

Discussion points
- Consider how impactful your relationships with your individual students are to their success.
- Consider how impactful your relationships with your individual students is to your own success.
- Consider how impactful your relationships with your colleagues is on your success.
- Consider how your own mood/well-being impacts your relationships with others

Mindfulness & Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

- Students who trust & respect us are better behaved
- Giving full mindful attention to students allows them to feel heard & seen
Teacher Resources for Mindfulness

* Mindfulness is a superpower  
  http://tinyurl.com/mindfulness-superpower
* Mindfulness and the brain  
  http://tinyurl.com/mindthebump
* Mindfulteachers.org
* Mindfulness in Education Teacher Training Workshop  
  – Omega Institute

PCPLC Groups

complete the handout entitled Self-Care Assessment,  
rating each item from 0-3 on how well/frequently you  
complete the self-care activity described.

THEN, read the article Case for self-care and then  
complete the daily Self Care section at the end

THEN, based on your current practices and/or practices  
to try, propose self-care activities around which a  
PCPLC could form.
Recommended Mindfulness Books for Educators

- Everybody Present: Mindfulness in Education by Nikolaj and Didde Flor Rotne
- Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness by Deborah Schoeberlein

Looking for more?
Mindfulness Books for Working with Students

- A Mindfulness-Based Approach to Working with High-Risk Adolescents by Sam Himelstein
- The Mindful Teen by Dzung Vo
- Planting Seeds: Practicing Mindfulness with Children by Thich Nhat Hanh
- Child’s Mind: Mindfulness Practices to Help Our Children Be More Focused, Calm, and Relaxed by Christopher Willard
References


Self-Care Assessment


The following worksheet for assessing self-care is not exhaustive, merely suggestive. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are relevant for you and rate yourself on how often and how well you are taking care of yourself these days.

When you are finished, look for patterns in your responses. Are you more active in some areas of self-care but ignore others? Are there items on the list that make you think, “I would never do that”? Listen to your inner responses, your internal dialogue about self-care and making yourself a priority. Take particular note of anything you would like to include more in your life.

Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:

3 = I do this well (e.g., frequently)
2 = I do this OK (e.g., occasionally)
1 = I barely or rarely do this
0 = I never do this
7 = This never occurred to me

Physical Self-Care

___ Eat regularly (e.g., breakfast, lunch, and dinner)
___ Eat healthily
___ Exercise
___ Get regular medical care for prevention
___ Get medical care when needed
___ Take time off when sick
___ Get massages
___ Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other fun physical activity
___ Take time to be sexual - with myself, with a partner
___ Get enough sleep
___ Wear clothes I like
___ Take vacations
___ Other:

Psychological Self-Care

___ Take day trips or mini-vacations
___ Make time away from telephones, email, and the Internet
___ Make time for self-reflection
___ Notice my inner experience - listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings
___ Have my own personal psychotherapy
___ Write in a journal
___ Read literature that is unrelated to work
___ Do something at which I am not expert or in charge
___ Attend to minimizing stress in my life
___ Engage my intelligence in a new area, e.g., go to an art show, sports event, theatre
___ Be curious
### Emotional Self-Care
- Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- Other:
- Spend time with others whose company I enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in my life
- Give myself affirmations, praise myself
- Love myself
- Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out
- Allow myself to cry
- Find things that make me laugh
- Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests
- Other:

### Spiritual Self-Care
- Make time for reflection
- Spend time in nature
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish my optimism and hope
- Be aware of non-material aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Be open to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life
- Meditate
- Pray
- Sing
- Have experiences of awe
- Contribute to causes in which I believe
- Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks, music
- Other:

### Relationship Self-Care
- Schedule regular dates with my partner or spouse
- Schedule regular activities with my children
- Make time to see friends
- Call, check on, or see my relatives
- Spend time with my companion animals
- Stay in contact with faraway friends
- Make time to reply to personal emails and letters; send holiday cards
- Allow others to do things for me
- Enlarge my social circle
- Ask for help when I need it
- Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust
- Other:
Workplace or Professional Self-Care

___ Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch)
___ Take time to chat with co-workers
___ Make quiet time to complete tasks
___ Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding
___ Set limits with clients and colleagues
___ Balance my caseload so that no one day or part of a day is "too much"
___ Arrange work space so it is comfortable and comforting
___ Get regular supervision or consultation
___ Negotiate for my needs (benefits, pay raise)
___ Have a peer support group
___ (If relevant) Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest

Overall Balance

___ Strive for balance within my work-life and work day
___ Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play, and rest

Other Areas of Self-Care that are Relevant to You

___
___


(Saakvitne, Pearlman & Staff at TSI/CAAP, 1996)
The Case for Self-Care

Life is busy. There are always tasks to do at home, work is busy and can be stressful, your children need your time and energy, and your calendar is jammed. In an effort to keep your schedule under control, sometimes you skip meals, miss your class at the gym, or cancel plans with friends.

When life gets busy, self-care is the first thing we sacrifice. People often think that taking time for themselves in the middle of busy times seems indulgent, but looking after your well-being will help you be productive and care for others.

Self-care is not selfish.

Self-care helps to prevent burnout. Excessive or prolonged stress can lead to a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion, often referred to as burnout. Burnout reduces productivity, zaps your energy, and can lead to physical or mental concerns. By incorporating self-care activities into your regular routine, like going for a walk or socializing with friends, you give your body and mind time to rest, rese, and rejuvenate, so you can avoid or reduce the symptoms of burnout.

Self-care helps relationships. Self-care helps you to maintain a healthy relationship with yourself and others. Doing things that make you feel physically and mentally good boosts your confidence and self-esteem. When you feel good, you are happier and better able to maintain positive relationships with family, friends, and co-workers. By practicing self-care, you also demonstrate to the people around you that you know how to set healthy, functional boundaries, which sets a great example and also helps to align their expectations of you.

Self-care makes you more effective. When you take time for yourself, and give your body the food, rest, and activity it needs, you will actually have more energy to meet the demands of daily life. Much like refueling the engine of your car, self-care activities refuel your body and mind. Bringing more balance to your daily routine will help you be more productive and more resilient to stressors.

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Building a Self-Care Plan

When it comes to self-care plans, there is no one-size-fits-all option. We all have different needs, strengths, and limitations. The following four-step process will help you to build a plan that’s just right for you.

Step 1: Evaluate Your Coping Skills

Examining your own habits is an important first step in developing a self-care plan. How do you typically deal with life’s demands? Can you identify when you need to take a break?

When faced with challenges, we can use either positive coping strategies or negative coping strategies. Below are a few examples of each. Which strategies do you use?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Deep breathing</td>
<td>- Yelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stretching</td>
<td>- Acting aggressively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Meditation</td>
<td>- Overeating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Listening to music</td>
<td>- Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Exercising</td>
<td>- Smoking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reading</td>
<td>- Pacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Going for a walk</td>
<td>- Biting your fingernails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Taking a bath</td>
<td>- Taking drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Socializing with friends</td>
<td>- Skipping meals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sitting outside and relaxing</td>
<td>- Withdrawing from family and friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Engaging in a hobby</td>
<td>- Dangerous driving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Be honest when evaluating your current behaviours. If you find yourself lashing out or reaching for a cigarette instead of taking a deep breath and refocusing during periods of frustration, it may be time to re-evaluate your go-to coping skills.

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Step 2: Identify Your Self-Care Needs

We are all faced with unique challenges and no two people have the same self-care needs.

Take a moment to consider what you value and need in your everyday life (daily self-care needs) versus what you value and need in the event of a crisis (emergency self-care needs). Remember that self-care extends far beyond your basic physical needs: consider your psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, financial, and workplace well-being.

Daily Self-Care

What are you doing to support your overall well-being on a day-to-day basis? Do you engage in self-care practices now? Are you more active in some areas of self-care than others? You can use the table below to help you determine which areas may need more support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Self-Care</th>
<th>Current Practices</th>
<th>Practices to Try</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. eat regular and healthy meals, good sleep habits, regular exercise, medical check-ups, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. engage in positive activities, acknowledge my own accomplishments, express emotions in a healthy way, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. read inspirational literature, self-reflection, spend time in nature, meditate, explore spiritual connections, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. pursue meaningful work, maintain work-life balance, positive relationships with co-workers, time-management skills, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. healthy relationships, make time for family/friends, schedule dates with partner/spouse, ask for support from family and friends, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. understand how finances impact your quality of life, create a budget or financial plan, pay off debt, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. take time for yourself, disconnect from electronic devices, journal, pursue new interests, learn new skills, access psychotherapy, life coaching, or counselling support through your EFAP if needed, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brainstorm: Self-Care Activities

Need help identifying self-care activities to incorporate into your practice? Consider these ideas:

- Write in a journal
- Volunteer for a cause meaningful to you
- Make a gratitude list
- Take a fresh air break
- Meditate or listen to guided visualization
- Cuddle with pets
- Treat yourself to a nice meal
- Take a nap
- Listen to music
- Practice yoga
- Lay in the grass
- Go for a nature walk
- Photography
- Read a good book
- Write a blog
- Try a new hobby
- Have an adventure day
- Get a massage
- Buy yourself flowers
- Turn off electronic devices
- Have a movie marathon
- Play a game
- Dance
- Wear something that makes you feel confident
- Browse your local music store or bookstore
- Join a support group
- Have a game night with friends
- Work in the garden
- Get creative: draw, paint, write a song, or cook a new meal

(homewoodhealth.com)
Jensen tells us that there is no such thing as a negative school, only negative staff members who make negative decisions (2013). The antidote to negativity is positivity, and so in order to improve school morale and relationships within the school, teachers need to take Gandhi’s advice to heart; “be the change that you want to see in the world.” By getting together in small groups, staff can support and foster positivity within each other, voice positivity about abilities in each other and celebrate each other’s successes in regular PCPLCs.

By getting together with other positive individuals, staff can raise and maintain their own positivity. There are many things that positive staff can do by themselves in order to maintain their positive outlook, such as journaling three successes and their actions associated with these successes. This simple act can key an individual into their power to affect positive change, but this positivity is located in the self alone. However, by sharing these experiences with other positive staff members, staff can spread the positivity located within themselves to a handful of others who can then spread this to another handful and another handful and so affect the entire school community with their positivity. Similarly, by getting together and focusing the conversation on the positive aspects of the job, the students and other staff members this group can foster a positive outlook on these aspects that normally are looked at through a negative lens. Simply by the group valuing the positives over the negatives allows the staff to restructure their thinking towards the school and the community.

Part of the problem with schools is teacher burn out and/or isolation as a result of lack of relationships throughout the building. These positivity professional learning communities also serve to support and encourage each other in their practices. This can be to simply share what each other is doing, or to join and practice together in a certain way: do yoga together, follow a guided meditation, play games, watch movies, or walk together. It is not necessary that any specific practice is followed, but that the group agrees on what activity they would like to engage in, where
and when. Not only do these groups work together to decompress in a fun and engaging way, but they also serve to bolster relationships between professionals. Such relationships develop increased collaboration and provide the possibility for the transference of relationship with students: students who see that their preferred staff members have positive and close relationships with other staff members are more likely to develop a relationship with these non-preferred members of staff. Similarly, staff members are more likely to help and aid these each other due to their relationships.

**Chapter Four: In Summary**

Modern public schools are in a crisis on two fronts. First, society is making increased demands on the school system to teach students how to be more capable and marketable in an ever-changing digitalized global community. This demands that modern and traditional literacy skills be mastered along with problem-solving and critical thinking ability. Second, enrollment of students with low social-emotional ability has increased meaning that students are less motivated to engage in their learning at the academic level. Low student motivation naturally leads to high student failure and an increased level of negative relationships with school staff and peers. These negative relationships limit the whole learning community through teacher burn-out and the increased perception of the school as being unsafe. This perception coupled with teacher burn-out results in less effective teaching and lower motivation of everyone in the learning community. In schools that experience highly negative relationships, there is a self-perpetuating feedback loop that increases the number and severity of negative relationships.

Motivation can be increased through school staff fostering positive, efficacious relationships. In this, school staff is faced with the difficulty of working against established negative perceptions that students have built over time toward schooling, adults, and authority. Perceptions are built incrementally and may have been established early on in students’ lives through repeated
circumstances of tension with adults, school staff, and academic failure. These perceptions are carried by the student even when they leave the original setting and situation where the negative perception developed and then is applied to new situations independent of the origins. In order to reverse these negative perceptions, staff needs to invest large amounts of time through which positive interactions can outnumber the negative experiences, and trust can be formed with school staff. This requires that staff be open and honest with students as well as respectful of the students’ experiences, interests, and heritage. This does not mean that staff should not correct students in fear of this creating a negatively charged interaction, but be aware that this can be done in a neutral, but compassionate manner while also being direct.

Schools can foster positive relationships through the implementation of mindfulness as a pervasive practice and holistic value throughout the entire school day. Mindfulness practices have been shown to increase engagement in positive interactions with others, as well as developing well-being in the individual. Students and staff can increase their social-emotional ability in order to better self-regulate their own emotions, reframe maladaptive cognitive behaviors, and adopt a point-of-view that is inclusive of another’s perspective. Such social-emotional skills are necessary to form and maintain relationships in school, but also in other spheres of influence: work, leisure, and home. School staff members wishing to implement mindfulness practice as an initiative to counter the caustic effects of negative relationships need to develop a program that provides support to staff as well as students in a manner that also fosters community.

The solution presented is to develop a school program in which students and staff are the receivers of instruction in mindfulness practices. This program has three prongs: mindfulness instruction integrated into all classrooms throughout the day, the formation of community groups that link student and staff in a manner that generates a relationship beyond the instructional space,
and professional development of staff where they can share the positive experiences with colleagues during a preferred activity.

Integrated mindfulness instruction can easily be achieved in any instructional space and greatly enhance the student interaction with even difficult concepts. The teacher can use these brief periods to illustrate concepts while developing social-emotional ability in the student. Such brief periods of mindfulness practice also create spaces where students can slow down and adjust to the stressors of their day, thus limiting the potential of negativity to occur with staff. Schools reinforce the idea that mindfulness and self-care are important concepts to master by repeatedly providing opportunities for the students to practice throughout the academic day and not simply as a unit focused on once during the year or at a particular time and in a particular space.

Similarly, staff members need to craft their own self-care practices as a functional and positive part of their own daily lives. Staff members that participate in self-care not only create a practice that promotes their own mental and physical health but positions the staff as healthy role models for their students and enables the staff to better teach and coach their students. Staff is encouraged to journal the positives of their day and those of the students, paying attention to the staff member’s personal role in each positive. Schools can further encourage self-care in the staff members by developing learning communities centered on bolstering and supporting self-care practices and positive thinking of staff. While these would be in the style of professional learning communities and provide opportunities for professional development to occur in a natural and effective manner, such groups work best to promote self-care and community when focused on an enjoyable activity that the members share. These groups would be small and probably link staff members in a manner that goes beyond groupings normally based on content areas and/or physical location within the school building/district.
The final prong of this program is the formation of community groups within the school which link staff members and students beyond instruction and provide an extended time for a fuller exploration of mindfulness and self-care. Community groups form a core aspect of the program where mindfulness practice and personal self-care are provided in a manner that allows the student and staff members to both practice for longer amounts of time and discuss their responses in safe spaces. Community groups allow the students and their families to have school staff act as a point of contact with the larger learning community. The staff members and students would loop throughout the individual student’s academic career providing more exposure and chance for positive experiences to be developed. Both staff and students deepen their understanding and trust of each other causing positive relationships to be forged that are enhanced by shared mindfulness practice.

Research is lacking in the specific impact that the proposed solution might have on the development of mindfulness and positive relationships. Currently, the research into the impacts of mindfulness instruction in schools only focuses on students or staff separately. While the field is still in its infancy, the overwhelming research shows that mindfulness practice has significant benefits to the areas of relationship building, motivation, and engagement. More study is required to map out the fuller implications to student success, self-awareness, and learning as well as on teacher burn-out, stress management, and instructional gains. Furthermore, mindfulness is recommended for individuals to improve their self-care and well-being, yet the literature indicates that there are some “at-risk” students who appear to be resistant and/or have adverse responses to mindfulness practice. Further study is required in understanding the use of positive relationships with this resistant population as a possible bridge for the student toward a practice that, when unresisted, has positive holistic gains. Such further investigation could also explore alternatives and/or modifications to mindfulness practice implementation that could better assist such students.
In developing the social-emotional skill-sets and abilities required for inclusion as members of the school, society, and the global community.
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