Mindfulness in Schools
What Does Best Practice Look Like?
Mindfulness?
Mindfulness... sounds so simple!

noticing what is happening now, with kindness and curiosity.
Mindfulness = skillset development across time

1. Intentional focus on immediate experience
2. With curiosity, openness, acceptance and love (COAL)
Attention Regulation

Three traditional steps:
1. Knowing where our attention is
2. Knowing where it needs to be
3. Directing it to where it needs to be

“They are learning to not be distracted by what is going on outside the classroom. They are noticing but allow the distractions to go and fade away.”
- Teacher, Waikato
Regulating attention with Kindness/Curiosity

1. Knowing where our attention is
2. Knowing where it needs to be
3. Directing it to where it needs to be
4. Being with the experience with openness and acceptance

“The children are continuing to be more aware of their own emotions and feelings and recognising them early on and are able to diffuse/lessen the emotions from taking over.”
“Although I was sceptical initially, I have been won over by the programme and being able to address mental health in primary schools. All our parents have come on board... PBS is done school-wide every day and I watched a group today do the breathing and the room just calmed – you could feel it.”

- Tim Couling, Principal, Okaihau Primary School, Northland
Importance of well-structured researched programmes

Pre-programme:
“At first mention of practising mindfulness there was a buzz of negativity from the senior students. Two children have moved to our school and had already experienced it at their previous school and did not like it at all.”

Post-programme:
“The children have just taken this totally beyond my expectations. When it is mindfulness time, they are ready and focused and fully engaged. Totally ready to try anything with an open mind. Initially I had some concerns with the senior students and the idea that they came into it with negative ideas that it was silly, uncool, what was the point etc. But they have changed these attitudes and it astounds me that not even one child is disengaged.”
Potential Differences?

- First programme or approach was inadequate?
- Difference in educator training?
- Educator engagement and modelling?
- Other (unknown) reasons?
Often it works, sometimes it doesn’t

Two contrasting examples from High Schools

“Students were keen (if a little wary) in the beginning but eight lessons was too much for secondary aged students to stay engaged so it began to have a negative effect. This class was made up of all girls and wonder if the outcome would be better or worse for boys at this age level.”

- PBS Teacher, Canterbury

“What a positive experience and a joy to teach and guide the students... Many students thanked me and said how it really had changed the way that they think about themselves and how much of a positive experience it was. So many are continuing the mindfulness journey in their own time.”

- PBS Teacher, Canterbury
Potential Differences?

- Educator Engagement?
- Prior experience/personal motivation of educator?
- Vertically stacked class vs. year 10 class?
- Other (unknown) reasons?
Know your Intentions

- Mental Health and Wellbeing?
- Academic Achievement?
- Sports Performance?
- A mix of the above?

Research suggests: Mindfulness in schools boosts cognitive performance and builds resilience

- Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz and Walach, 2014
Ensure that your mindfulness programme is developmentally appropriate.
Research results based on three studies

Pause, Breathe, Smile:
- Increases calmness
- Improves focus & attention
- Enhances self-awareness
- Improves conflict resolution skills
- Develops positive relationships
- Reduces teacher stress
- Statistically significant increases in wellbeing
Overarching Guidelines

- Whole School Approach
- Principal/Leadership team buy-in
- Focus on teachers as well as students
- Engaged Educators is KEY
- Online/App support
- Make a long-term commitment
- Cultural context
- Programme is evidence-based (better yet if researched)
Personal Commitment

- Daily formal mindfulness practice
- Formal training in the programme being taught
- Supervision
- Support/mentoring from a mindfulness teacher
Teacher led vs External Facilitator (the evidence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Led</th>
<th>External Facilitator Led</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Better <strong>mental-health</strong> outcomes (e.g. using the breath to manage anxiety)</td>
<td>• Better <strong>mindfulness</strong> outcomes (e.g. using the breath to maintain present moment awareness without judgement)</td>
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<td>• higher likelihood of statistically significant effects at follow-up</td>
<td>• Little to no evidence of statistically significant effects at follow-up</td>
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“...it is likely that teachers are more involved and familiar with the program they delivered and are thus more likely to continue incorporating elements of the intervention with their students (after program completion)”

Reference: Carsley, Khoury and Heath, 2017
## Teacher led vs External Facilitator

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<td>• Greater focus on mindfulness as a life-skill</td>
<td>• Greater focus on mindfulness as contemplative enquiry</td>
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<td>• Higher likelihood of sustainability if personally trained</td>
<td>• Lower likelihood of sustainability when facilitator leaves</td>
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<td>• More responsive to learner’s needs on a daily basis</td>
<td>• Limited engagement with class</td>
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<td>• Trained educators</td>
<td>• Novelty factor can be a (short-term) bonus</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Often short-term mindfulness experience</td>
<td>• Not always trained educators</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• May have long-term mindfulness experience (but not always)</td>
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Added Benefits of Training Teachers

E.g. Improved teaching practice

“I really enjoyed implementing the PBS programme. It was fabulous for my own personal practice and teaching practice. I have really enjoyed sharing the PBS programme with our little learners and my collaborative teaching buddies.”

- PBS Teacher, Waikato

“I have noticed improvement in my teaching practice by connecting with the children on this level, a peacefulness and being able to refer to techniques we have learnt about to deal with difficult situations.”

- PBS Teacher, Waikato
E.g. Whole-School changes

“After participating in this programme, we enjoyed looking at other research that supported more mindful practices so we could implement them as a school. We’ve started with simple actions like using the language of being mindful as a whole school value, having no bell times, changing our whole school time table from two breaks a day to four shorter breaks to allow the students lots of time for brain breaks and we have introduced the concept of mindfulness in our behaviour management plan as a school. Thank you for giving us the baseline to work from to make these other changes!”

- PBS Teacher, Waikato
Four recommendations:
1. Locally developed and researched programme
2. Utilise bi-cultural principles and models when being developed... consider outcomes for tamariki Māori
3. Professional development for teachers
4. Support development of Kaupapa Māori approaches
1. **Key Competencies**: Mindfulness brings an experiential element to learning which foster the key competencies of the NZC.

2. **Learning Areas**: The Health and Physical Education, Social Sciences and Science learning areas are clearly linked with each lesson of Pause, Breathe, Smile.

3. **Te Whare Tapa Whā**: An eloquent model of hauora (holistic wellbeing) from a Māori perspective is incorporated within Pause, Breathe, Smile.
Māori Engagement

- Print and audio resources are available in Te Reo Māori
- Increasing interest from Kura Kaupapa Māori, with two whole-kura training recently completed
- Kaupapa Māori research planned, led by the Māori Development Team at the Mental Health Foundation

“We’ve seen PBS positively impact children in our junior, middle and senior schools, and in all of our classes, whether they’re taught in English, Māori or a mixture of both.

- Rubina Wheeler, Tumuaki, Nawton School
“...we all in our family tried mindful eating. We switched off all the devices and we ate mindfully... my chicken soup was much yummier!”

“When I’m upset, I let myself feel sad, and then I can feel happy again.”

“Before I hadn’t noticed that she was feeling sad but after I did mindfulness I wanted to help her”

“When my dad was so angry because the garden was very messy then I told him about ‘pause, breathe, smile’ and how you do it... after that he felt calm like I did... and I was so happy at my dad!”
References


Pause, Breathe, Smile

- Eight lessons
- Online daily practices
- Student learning journal
Our research – with AUT & University of Auckland

1. A Study of the Effects of Mindfulness in Five Primary Schools in New Zealand (Rix & Bernay, 2014). New Zealand Journal of Teachers’ Work

2. Pause, breathe, smile: a mixed-methods study of student well-being following participation in an eight-week, locally developed mindfulness program in three New Zealand schools (Bernay, Graham, Devcich, Rix & Rubie-Davies, 2016). Advances in School Mental Health Promotion

Statistically significant increases in mindfulness and wellbeing compared with the control group.
Ensure that your mindfulness programme is developmentally appropriate.

Is it actually a mindfulness programme?

- Early Childhood?
- Primary?
- Intermediate?
- High School?
Intended outcomes

1. Increased focus and attention
2. Increased caring
3. Increased understanding and experience of:
   - Wellbeing (what supports it and what doesn’t)
   - Emotional literacy & resilience
   - Interconnectedness
Te Whare Tapa Whā

- **Taha wairua**
  Spiritual wellbeing

- **Taha hinengaro**
  Mental & emotional wellbeing

- **Taha tinana**
  Physical wellbeing

- **Taha whānau**
  Family & social wellbeing

- **Hauora**
  Wellbeing

- **Whenua**
  Land, roots
“When I’m upset, I let myself feel sad, and then I can feel happy again.” - PBS participant, 7 years old.
“...we all in our family tried mindful eating. We switched off all the devices and we ate mindfully... my chicken soup was much yummier!”

“Before I hadn’t noticed that she was feeling sad but after I did mindfulness I wanted to help her”

“When my dad was so angry because the garden was very messy then I told him about ‘pause, breathe, smile’ and how you do it... after that he felt calm like I did... and I was so happy at my dad!”
Relating mindfully
PLD STEP 1: The MEG Online Mindfulness Course

- Access 24/7, self-paced, view at your convenience
- Alleviate stress, anxiety, reduce burn-out
- Strengthen calm & clarity, & boost wellbeing
- Develop an ability to focus on what’s important & let go of what’s not
- Included with full PBS Educator Certification training package (or purchase stand-alone)

Preliminary results show significant decreases in depression and anxiety
PLD STEP 2: PBS Curriculum Workshop

Comprehensive training for integrating each of the core components of PBS in your classroom:

- Mindful Breathing practices
- Mindful Eating
- Mindful Movements
- Round room feedback building emotional literacy and capacity to listen mindfully and be present for others
- Te Whare Tapa Wha as tool for review
PLD STEP 2: PBS Curriculum Workshop - continued

The Educator’s Handbook – containing all eight lesson plans:

- Background to lesson purpose
- WALTs clearly set out for each lesson
- How lesson aligns to NZC
- Overview of lesson including sample scripts and mindfulness activities
PLD STEP 3: PBS Curriculum Video Tutorials

• Formal training through instructional videos to help with lesson preparation
• Step-by-step overview of how each PBS lesson is delivered in the classroom
• Provide a reminder of the key points of evidence-base behind each topic in the PBS programme
• Can be reviewed any time.
PLD STEP 4: MEG Membership

**Quality Assurance:** school communities and strategic partners know that all our members are trained in this unique mindfulness programme to the same high standard.

**Quality Control:** Pause, Breathe, Smile resources for schools are protected and restricted through members-only access on the MEG website

**Ongoing R&D:** members receive unrestricted access to new mindfulness resources (video, audio and print) developed by MEG

**Ongoing mindfulness PLD:** discounts to mindfulness networking and practice workshops and retreats throughout the year and in online forums
PBS core element: Straight back, soft belly
PBS core element: Round-room feedback
LESSON ONE
COMING HOME

How did you feel when you noticed your breathing?
- Relaxed
- Tense
- Happy
- Energised
- Thoughtful
- Focused
- Worried
- Content
- Bored
- Comfortable
- Peaceful
- Kind
- Grateful
- Restless
- Other

What do you notice when you practise being mindful?

Describe what it is like to eat mindfully.

https://mindfulnesseducation.nz/my-account-2/member-resources/
PBS core component: Mindful eating