

OUTCOMES EVALUATION

Pause, Breathe, Smile school-based mindfulness programme: professional development for Waikato teachers and classroom implementation

Report prepared by the Mindfulness Education Group, January 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pause, Breathe, Smile (PBS) is New Zealand's locally developed and researched school-based mindfulness programme. It aligns with the New Zealand Education Curriculum and is contextualised by Te Whare Tapa Whā, an elegant model of hauora (holistic wellbeing) from a Māori perspective, which is universally applicable. *Pause, Breathe, Smile* was designed and developed by the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand (MHF) and is operationally delivered by the Mindfulness Education Group (MEG). MEG was established with the MHF's support to further the roll-out of PBS within New Zealand school communities.

Thanks to the financial support of Trust Waikato this valuable and unique programme is now available to many schools throughout the Waikato region.

This report evaluates the outcomes of the Trust Waikato funding in three areas:

1. The wellbeing benefits for children resulting from PBS being implemented in classrooms by newly trained PBS educators
2. The personal wellbeing benefits for the educators who participated in PBS training
3. How well the intended programme outcomes of PBS were met.

Key findings – wellbeing benefits for children

The evaluation presented within this report reinforces previously published research of PBS.^{1,2,3}

Four common themes emerged across the participating Waikato classrooms:

- I. Increased calm
- II. Enhanced emotion regulation and emotional literacy
- III. Improvements in focus and attention and the related benefits for learning
- IV. Valuing of mindfulness activities

Key findings – wellbeing benefits for educators

Teacher's comments about their own valuing of the PBS activities indicated numerous positive benefits for teacher wellbeing, resulting in three main themes: (1) enjoyment resulting from teaching the programme; (2) increasing sense of calm, and; (3) benefits to professional teaching practice. Participation in the Breathe Online Mindfulness Course resulted in positive personal wellbeing gains for educators as measured by the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS).

Key findings – meeting the intended programme outcomes

Based on post-programme survey data, participants indicated that the intended programme outcomes relating to: (1) the positive effects of mindfulness on one's sense of wellbeing; (2) the relevance of mindfulness for emotion regulation; (3) understanding the applicability of mindfulness inside and outside of school; (4) experiencing the learning benefits of mindfulness, and; (5) seeing the links between the course material and the New Zealand Curriculum were all achieved.

This report discusses the methods and results of these findings and provides important contextual information about the *Pause, Breathe, Smile* programme and the PBS Educator professional development pathway offered to educators.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
Key findings – wellbeing benefits for children.....	1
Key findings – wellbeing benefits for educators.....	1
Key findings – meeting the intended programme outcomes	2
INTRODUCTION.....	4
The Need – boosting wellbeing and reducing mental distress for children and young people	4
<i>Pause, Breathe, Smile</i> research results summarised	4
Evidence shows <i>Pause, Breathe, Smile</i> boosts wellbeing.....	5
Responsiveness to Māori	5
Summary of <i>Pause, Breathe, Smile</i> lessons	7
Ensuring a quality approach to professional development.....	7
Three-part Professional Development Pathway.....	7
The reach of <i>Pause, Breathe, Smile</i> in the Waikato.....	8
Recipients of Trust Waikato scholarships	8
EVALUATION OF <i>PAUSE, BREATHE, SMILE</i> IN THE WAIKATO	9
OUTCOME ONE: The wellbeing benefits for children and young people.....	9
Method	9
Data Analysis.....	10
Themes identified pre-programme implementation.....	10
Results.....	11
The importance of a well-structured programme, robust professional development pathway and good facilitation	15
OUTCOME TWO: Wellbeing Benefits for educators	16
Method One.....	16
Results.....	16
Method Two.....	17
Results.....	17
OUTCOME THREE: Degree to which the intended programme outcomes were met	18
Method	18
Results.....	18
LIMITATIONS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	19
References	21

INTRODUCTION

The Need – boosting wellbeing and reducing mental distress for children and young people

Latest data shows New Zealand ranking near the bottom (34th out of 41) regarding overall childhood wellbeing and our adolescent suicide rate is the highest among developed nations.⁴

Antidepressant medication being prescribed to children under 13 years in New Zealand, has increased 79.4 per cent since 2006. This increase may in part be due to population growth and greater awareness and acceptance of mental health issues, leading to increased willingness to seek help.⁵ However, these figures follow worldwide trends as well as anecdotal feedback we receive from schools who note that prevalence rates of anxiety and behavioural problems they encounter daily have been increasing rapidly over the past decade.

Recent analysis has shown that increased smartphone and tablet usage corresponds with increased feelings of loneliness, decreasing levels of sleep and decreased social interactions among young people, leading some experts to comment that we are on the brink of a major mental health crisis among children and young people.⁶

There is increasing worldwide recognition that a focus on the promotion of mental healthiness and wellbeing is important in its own right – a sentiment perhaps best captured in the World Health Organisation’s definition of health as “...a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”⁷

In Aotearoa-New Zealand it is important to highlight and draw upon indigenous concepts of health, which include the central importance of focusing on spiritual wellbeing alongside mental, physical and social dimensions. Failure to do so, risks alienating indigenous world views and may increase rather than reduce inequalities in health.

Pause, Breathe, Smile research results summarised

Meta-analysis of mindfulness in education research shows that when taught in schools, mindfulness boosts cognitive performance and builds resilience.⁸

A commitment to ongoing research and evaluation has been in place since the inception of *Pause, Breathe, Smile*. This commitment has led to the publication of three robust research studies of PBS, two of which have been published in highly regarded international journals (the initial pilot study was published in the local journal *New Zealand Journal of Teacher’s Work*).

A summary of the research across these three studies, conducted in partnership between the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, The University of Auckland and AUT University, shows the following outcomes in classrooms where PBS has been successfully implemented:

- Increased calmness
- Improved focus and attention
- Enhanced self-awareness
- Development of conflict resolution skills and positive relationships
- Reduced stress for teachers
- Statistically significant increases in wellbeing^{9,10,11}

These results indicate reductions in multiple forms of psychological distress. For instance, increased calmness correlates with reduced anxiety, and increased focus and attention correlates with decreased rumination about negative events. In the largest study of the psychosocial causes of depression conducted to date, rumination about negative events was identified as the strongest cause of depression.¹²

Evidence shows *Pause, Breathe, Smile* boosts wellbeing

To date most of research investigating the effects of mindfulness, have focused on the potential for reducing multiple forms of psychological distress.¹³ The studies of PBS are among the few that have focused on investigating boosts to positive states of wellbeing to show that mindfulness has the potential to go beyond mitigating mental distress, thus helping our children to thrive and not just survive.

Evidence shows significant links between high levels of wellbeing and reductions in mortality¹⁴ as well as decreases in a wide range of morbidity factors.¹⁵ Although wellbeing is a relatively broad concept, with regard to psychological health it is generally agreed that wellbeing involves two dimensions described in a straight forward manner as 1) feeling good and 2) functioning well.¹⁶

More specifically, feeling good denotes a state of emotional health and happiness, and functioning well is used to describe the integration of attributes important to psychological health including:

- Autonomy
- Personal growth
- Self-acceptance
- Purpose in life
- Environmental mastery
- Positive relations with others

Summarising this, Huppert and So have described a state of optimal wellbeing, or flourishing, as “the experience of life going well ... a combination of feeling good and functioning effectively”¹⁷

Two studies of *Pause, Breathe, Smile* have shown statistically significant increases in wellbeing – related to statistically significant increases in mindfulness – following participation in the programme, with the most recently published study finding evidence of sustainability of these results 12 weeks after completion of the programme.¹⁸

Hence *Pause, Breathe, Smile* not only addresses many of the key problems faced by our children and young people today, it also provides a coherent pathway to skill development that will support children to flourish now and in the future.

Responsiveness to Māori

“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, Principal, Nawton School
Hamilton

Each lesson of *Pause, Breathe, Smile* is designed to support health and wellbeing within the four domains represented by Te Whare Tapa Whā. In doing so, PBS utilises a model of wellbeing that is both universally relatable and culturally appropriate for indigenous New Zealanders.

Te Whare Tapa Whā translates as ‘The House with Four Walls.’ It is an eloquent model of hauora (holistic health) from a Māori perspective, which is well-integrated in New Zealand healthcare and education settings.



Figure 1. Te Whare Tapa Whā (Durie, 1985).

While the four dimensions represented by Te Whare Tapa Whā cannot be separated, a skilful approach to the healthy development of mindfulness includes a primary focus on one dimension at a time, resulting in an integrated sense of wellbeing over time. As such, the primary focus of the first three lessons of PBS is a focus on establishing awareness of, and a healthy relationship to, the body.

With the foundation of awareness in and of the body developing, the focus of lesson four is the development of core emotion regulation skills, and the focus of lesson five is to understand basic neuroscience and learn the practical skill of discerning, and therefore choosing, between healthy and unhealthy patterns of thinking. Thus, lessons 1-5 relate strongly to *te taha tinana* and *te taha hinengaro*.

Lesson six uses mindfulness to develop kindness and fosters the understanding that our sense of wellbeing is affected by the quality of our relationships with our family, friends and school mates. With this focus the opportunity to understand and develop wellbeing related to *te taha whānau* is strengthened.

Lesson seven focuses on expanding the awareness of relationships to include an understanding that we are connected to the wider life of the planet in which our individual and social lives take place. By exploring the connections between nature, persons and ancestors an inclusive and secular approach to *te taha wairua* is encouraged.

In addition to the focus on Te Whare Tapa Whā, all PBS resources are available in te reo Māori and two additional streams of work are currently being led by the Māori Development Manager at the MHF:

1. Māori Concepts of Mindfulness – A View from the Literature

This project is currently underway, and is being led by a University of Waikato researcher who is also a Kura Kaupapa Kaiako (i.e. teacher in a Māori-medium school).

2. Māori Engagement

As part of the literature review process, which is intended to contribute to the further development of *Pause, Breathe, Smile*, the MHF intends to continue engaging with Māori communities and Key Stakeholders, to educate and promote the benefits of PBS and the Kaupapa Māori Research of mindfulness throughout Māori education and health networks.

Summary of *Pause, Breathe, Smile* lessons

The eight lessons of PBS have been designed to follow a clear trajectory for developing mindfulness over time as outlined in Figure 2.

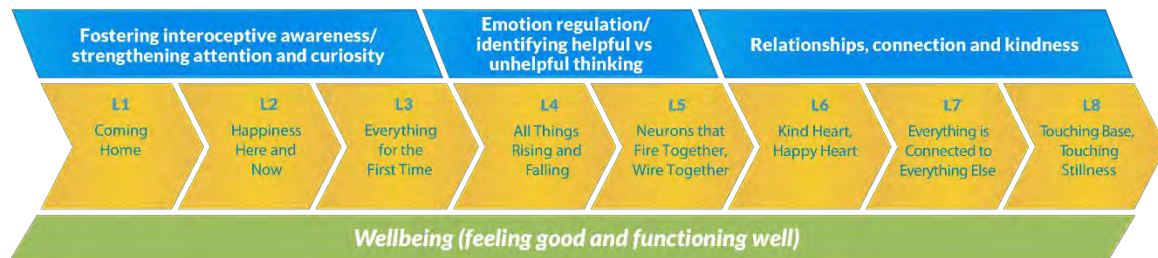


Figure 2. A coherent pathway of skills development that will support children to flourish now and in the future. Fostering awareness in the body establishes the foundation for effective attention regulation and emotion regulation skills. This in turn lays the foundation for understanding how to settle scattered thoughts and discern the difference between helpful and unhelpful thinking. In the final three lessons, the focus shifts from self-development to interpersonal development and understanding how all things are interconnected. Research shows that both wellbeing and mindfulness significantly increases as a result of these eight PBS lessons.

Ensuring a quality approach to professional development

With the increasing popularity of mindfulness-based interventions it is important to ensure that quality, evidence-based approaches are supported. Currently there is no regulatory body charged with quality control of mindfulness-based interventions. This has led to a proliferation of mindfulness related offerings, and without some assurance of quality there is a risk that the benefits mindfulness can offer to health and education and wider society are undermined. Many people currently offering mindfulness-based courses could best be described as passionate champions of mindfulness who are well-intentioned but maybe under-qualified as mindfulness trainers.

The Mindfulness Education Group are leaders in mindfulness programme design, research and professional development in New Zealand – with extensive practical experience and expertise in the field. The Mindfulness Education Group has focused primarily on mainstream education contexts and has a solid track record of training school teachers, education psychologists, counsellors and other education and health professionals to implement the *Pause, Breathe, Smile* programme in their work with children and young people.

Three-part Professional Development Pathway

Pause, Breathe, Smile educator training is currently delivered to Primary and Intermediate school teachers, and RTLBs, as the main body of professionals delivering this school-based programme - along with a lesser number of ECE teachers, school guidance counsellors, social workers, health promoters, psychologists and counsellors working with service providers (e.g. DHBs and community mental health providers).

The Mindfulness Education Group has developed a consistent and highly-regarded professional development pathway for educators which consists of eLearning elements and a one-day workshop, supported by online and print resources.

Details of the professional development pathway at the time of writing this report are as follows:

1. **Breathe: Online Mindfulness Course** – this course supports education and health professionals to develop their own mindfulness practice for personal wellbeing and professional application
2. **PBS Educator workshop** – outlines the science behind PBS, introduces education and health professionals to the PBS Educator handbook, which contains each lesson of PBS and equips them with the skills to lead the core practices of the PBS programme
3. **PBS tutorial videos and guided audio practices** – online resources to support lesson preparation and the delivery of PBS within the classroom

Educators are also provided with a suite of guided mindfulness practices for their personal use, in addition to a range of resources available through MEG’s Online Portal.

The reach of *Pause, Breathe, Smile* in the Waikato

The generosity of Trust Waikato has had both direct and indirect benefits for Waikato schools. Direct benefits include teachers receiving either part or full scholarships as a result of Trust Waikato funding to complete the PBS Educator Training. The allocation of these scholarships allowed the *Pause, Breathe, Smile* programme to gain a foothold in the Waikato region. As a result, neighbouring schools learned of the benefits participation in the programme can provide, which resulted in the further spread of the programme.

At the time of writing, 112 Waikato-based educators had been trained to deliver PBS in schools. These educators included 83 school teachers – including a small number of principals and deputy principals – from 33 schools. This total number also includes 23 RTLB (Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour) each of whom work across multiple schools, with the remainder being comprised of counsellors, a whānau support worker, and a primary school lecturer from Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.

Although it is hard to estimate how many learners have been exposed to the *Pause, Breathe, Smile* programme, a very conservative estimate using a formula of one educator reaching 30 learners, gives a figure of 3,360 per year in the Waikato region. However, as noted above, RTLB in particular work across multiple schools and many of the trained teachers have been delivering PBS in multiple classrooms, and in many cases, over the course of two or more years. Thus, the number of children and young people who have participated in PBS is likely to be much higher and this figure will increase over time as these educators continue to deliver the programme with new groups of learners each year.

Recipients of Trust Waikato scholarships

Te Totara Primary School	Tirau School
Knighton Normal School	Lichfield School
Leamington Primary School	Putaruru Primary
Ohinewai School	Cargill Open Plan School
Whangamata Area School	Tokoroa Intermediate
Te Wānanga o Aotearoa	Putaruru College
Waitetuna School	Cargill Open Plan School
Hamilton West Primary School	Bishop Edward Gaines School
Fraser High School	Strathmore School
Te Kowhai School	David Henry School

Maeroa Intermediate	Amisfield School
Raglan Area School	Tōku Māpihi Maurea Kura Kaupapa Māori
Hamilton East Primary School	Nawton School
Crawshaw School	Hamilton Junior High School
Korakonui School	Tainui Full Primary
Plus RTLB (Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour) working across multiple schools	

EVALUATION OF *PAUSE, BREATHE, SMILE* IN THE WAIKATO

Due to the relative complexity of the three methodologies used to gather data to assess against three different but overlapping outcomes, not all data was gathered from the same sources. In other words, some educators returned completed observation journals and completed the *Breathe* online mindfulness course, whereas others completed only the post-programme survey pertaining to the intended programme outcomes. Others completed the *Breathe* online mindfulness course but have not returned observation journals or the post-programme survey etc. These challenges aside, enough data has been gathered against each outcome to help form an overall picture and draw conclusions. Exact numbers of participant feedback have been provided for each section related to each of the three outcomes being measured.

OUTCOME ONE: The wellbeing benefits for children and young people

Method

Effectiveness of PBS in the classroom was measured using a teacher observation journal containing five prompts:

1. The children's engagement with the mindfulness activities presented
2. Your own personal engagement with the mindfulness activities presented
3. The children's social interactions
4. Classroom behaviour including attention/focus, participation and engagement in class
5. Anything else that you wish to comment on

The observation journal was completed by the trained PBS Educator, who was not always the classroom teacher. Journal entries were completed fortnightly throughout delivery of the eight-week PBS programme. This method provides rich qualitative data from which common themes can emerge. This observation journal replicates the qualitative methodology employed by Rix and Bernay during the initial PBS pilot programme in 2014.¹⁹

31 educators ($n=31$) provided completed observation journals.

Comments were also made in a short post-programme evaluation form intended primarily to capture data about whether or not the outcomes of *Pause, Breathe, Smile* were achieved. Data pertaining specifically to the achievement of the intended programme outcomes is given later in this report. However, the many written comments made on this additional feedback form provided further support for the themes identified within the observation journals and as such have been included in the thematic analysis here.

Data Analysis

Based on previous research²⁰, a thematic analysis was completed to identify the most common themes to report. Following procedures stipulated by Braun and Clarke 2006, initial patterns were noted followed by a second review to identify broader themes.²¹ The identified themes were then cross-checked and chosen following a discussion among the authors of this report.

Themes identified pre-programme implementation

Some respondents provided an insight of the classroom climate as it existed prior to programme implementation. This was useful as it provided a working baseline to compare against when identifying post-programme implementation themes. Baseline comments about class climate prior to implementation of *Pause, Breathe, Smile* included:

- Lack of engagement with learning
- Low self-regulation
- Challenges with focus and concentration
- A lack of patience with others
- A lack of problem-solving skills
- A tendency to blame others for one's situation
- Aggressive behaviour
- Anger management problems
- Feelings of awkwardness
- Anxiety

This feedback suggests three broad pre-programme themes:

- **Poor executive functioning** e.g. a lack of engagement with learning, inability to properly focus and concentrate, and a lack of problem-solving skills
- **Behavioural problems** e.g. tendencies to blame others, aggression, anger management problems, lack of patience with others
- **Limited emotion regulation** e.g. low self-regulation, aggression, anger, feelings of awkwardness and anxiety.

Two points to note in relation to these themes. First, a lot is made of the ability to regulate emotions and cultivating this ability is a clear purpose of the *Pause, Breathe, Smile* programme. However, we must remember that feelings of anxiety and awkwardness (for example) are common to all of us in certain situations. We must therefore be careful when speaking about anxiety and avoid suggesting that there is a path to ridding ourselves of the inevitable discomforts that are a hallmark of the normal ups and downs of life.

Instead, the work of effectively regulating emotions begins with being able to identify and then accept the feeling that is present. From this foundation of identification and acceptance we can learn to employ strategies to help calm the discomfort we may be feeling. This approach applies equally to all emotions that can occasionally feel overwhelming. Hence, with mindfulness a key skill is to learn to respond with awareness rather than react impulsively to various life events.

Second, although these themes were the most common, they were not universal. Some teachers identified that their learners were generally respectful with each other and excited by the prospect

of learning mindfulness prior to the implementation of *Pause, Breathe, Smile*. It is important to note this to help offer a relatively complete picture of classrooms involved in this evaluation.

Results

Four dominant themes emerged for learners following implementation of *Pause, Breathe, Smile*:

- I. Increased calm
- II. Enhanced emotion regulation and emotional literacy
- III. Improvements in focus and attention and the benefits for learning
- IV. Valuing of mindfulness activities

An important sub-theme (i.e. not as dominant across most of the feedback, but which appeared regularly enough to warrant comment) included improvements in pro-social behaviour, including kindness, empathy and respect.

Each of these themes are expanded upon individually below.

I. Increased calm

Increased calm in the classroom is emerging as a hallmark of the *Pause, Breathe, Smile* programme. This makes imminent sense since the practice of mindfulness has known benefits for decreasing anxiety and increasing feelings of calmness. As with other evaluations, calm was identified as an overarching theme and a supporting factor for many of the other improvements observed. As such, it is difficult to speak about the calming benefits of *Pause, Breathe, Smile* without also drawing links to improvements in other areas as the following selection of quotes makes clear. Along with the links to reduced anxiety, these quotes highlight the links between calm, focus and attention, and readiness for learning.

PBS results in calmer classrooms; readiness for learning

"I feel that our students are calmer, particularly when faced with challenges (academic, social or emotional)."

"Students have reported how mindful breathing has helped them calm down and they are not anxious as much. Teachers are role-modelling to students showing that all can benefit."

"Kids noted that they felt more relaxed, chilled after doing mindfulness – they settled to work more quickly and with more focus."

"The teachers have commented that the class is more settled and ready for learning after undertaking PBS. They continue to practice mindfulness daily."

II. Enhanced emotion regulation and emotional literacy

The following selection of quotes indicate increases in emotional literacy (defined here as the ability to recognise and name one's own emotions as well as recognising those emotions in others) and emotion regulation (i.e. the ability to self-manage one's emotional responses).

PBS strategies help manage aggression and stress; develop self-awareness

"Learners said they could use the PBS programme to be calmer at break times and not get angry or lash out as much when interactions went awry. They took a breath, smiled and walked away."

"(The children are) beginning to notice their own role in negative situations. Students are beginning to use this as a strategy when they start getting annoyed or angry."

"What I noticed and was pleased with/proud of was the individual and personal choices some kids made. Talking to me 1:1 about what they had started to do at home and how it helped them get to sleep or calm down after a stressful event."

PBS emotion-regulation skills contribute to positive classroom behaviour change

"The programme changed my classroom environment and I was able to teach instead of spending all day managing behaviour."

Overall my students were more settled. They learnt techniques/strategies that they could (use to) self-regulate in the classroom, playground and at home.

"The class shared their positive experience at school assembly and were able to talk about how mindful breathing has helped them in the playground and how the language 'drop anchor' has been beneficial for their class."

PBS learners can identify and manage emotions

"We saw a lot of engagement in this concept from our students. The understanding that you can manage your emotions through PBS seemed to make a positive impression on them."

"The children are continuing to be more aware of their own emotions and feelings and recognising them early on and being able to diffuse/lessen the emotions from taking over."

"Students are more aware of the fact that they are in fact in charge of their emotions. They are more confident in dropping anchor"

"It has been helpful in noticing the triggers that may set a student off and they are able to remove themselves and find a quiet space to sit and breathe."

"The children's emotion/feeling vocab has been extended and one teacher witnessed two female students walking away saying they need a breath because they were feeling overwhelmed."

III. Improvements in focus and attention and the benefits for learning

Many examples of improved focus and attention contributing to learning benefits were observed. The following selection of quotes again highlights the connection between calm, self-regulation and attention.

PBS learners regulate attention; improve learning outcomes

“The hour or so after PBS practice is Golden Learning time! We usually call the roll, sing our morning song and say our karakia and then practice mindfulness. The children are loving the routine. I noticed the same ones who are not connecting wholeheartedly to the practice, are the ones not connecting to their learning in other times.”

“Pause, Breathe, Smile made a huge impact on my students overall learning”

“We noticed that the times when we missed our mindful breathing exercise the class took a little longer to settle and focus.”

“Those children that participated in the PBS programme increased in focus, participation and engagement.”

“The teachers from the year 5/6 class both think the days they miss doing the mindfulness practices are a little more chaotic and both find the groups are a lot more relaxed to teach after they’ve come out of their PBS class.”

“When the teachers engage in regular practice with the students, they report seeing the benefits on student’s learning through increased focus and engagement in lessons.”

“Much better than at the beginning... More engaged. Fewer with the “school is boring” attitude.”

The development of selective attention skills – where a person can effectively filter out distracting stimuli in order to focus solely on the task at hand – was also observed: *“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.”*

In one instance, these gains in focus and attention were also observed in students with high learning needs: *“Our autistic children are participating in the activities willingly and happily, with even the most extreme cases having a go for 3-4 minutes which is an enormous achievement.”*

IV. Valuing of mindfulness activities

Numerous examples were provided highlighting how young learners were practising mindfulness at home and sharing the PBS activities with their whānau. We believe that these observations are evidence, in several cases at least, of children valuing the mindfulness activities they were learning.

PBS skills are valued and used outside the classroom

"Parents have fed back to us that many of our little people have shared these practices at home with their families. I have had some lovely emails and comments about the practices that we have used at school transferring to home."

"Children are identifying as having practiced at home, at school and in other situations where they needed some calm and clarity. Their understanding of gratitude in and around their daily lives has (also) improved."

"Students have been practising mindfulness as much at home as they have been at school, mainly the skills of PBS when in challenging situations."

"Some students (use mindfulness outside of school) predominantly to help them go to sleep."

"One year five child told her parents to just breathe slowly when you get angry!"

"Parents have commented to teachers how students are practising PBS at home. They particularly liked the gratitude practice."

"One of our students who has a temper and attention seeking issues is using his breathing to calm himself down now and is using it at home."

"We've noticed also that more kids are more focused when prompted, some of those who struggle to stop and be still are now taking mindful breaths and are using it at home also."

Additional findings

Examples of evidence that kindness, empathy and respect were increasing as students practice mindfulness were not as numerous as previous evaluations. However, they did still feature and are worth highlighting briefly.

PBS helps develop kindness, empathy and respect

"I have seen some very caring/kind gestures toward our special needs children... Social interactions in the classroom amongst a group of rather challenging boys has been calmer and more positive overall."

"The students are great at giving others the space to self-regulate and also jumping in to help 'drop anchor' before it's too late."

"Overall the tamariki learnt how to share and express their feelings to others. Learning that it was alright, and they were in a safe environment to express themselves."

Additional feedback included; the benefits of PBS to teaching practice and teacher's personal wellbeing; limitations of PBS when it is delivered by an external facilitator or is delivered in classrooms where the teacher is not personally invested in mindfulness practice, and; limitations when working with older students.

The importance of a well-structured programme, robust professional development pathway and good facilitation

To conclude this section of the report, the following observations were made by the same teacher before and after she introduced the PBS programme to her class. It is a great example of the changes that can be achieved when a well-structured programme is facilitated well:

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."

It is worth noting that we do not know if the 'mindfulness' experienced negatively by the two children who had moved schools was an experience gained through the PBS programme or not. However, given the extent of the change pre and post-programme we hazard to guess that it was unlikely to be the *Pause, Breathe, Smile* programme that these children had previously experienced. As mindfulness grows in popularity in education, numerous approaches including alternative

overseas programmes, use of YouTube clips, Applications and the like are mushrooming. The risk is that not all offerings may be suitable and in the case of YouTube clips or Apps, learning may not be properly contextualised by a well-crafted, researched programme.

Robust professional development and the educator's personal mindfulness practice is also a factor that impacts on the success of mindfulness initiatives in the classroom and the importance of this is evidenced in the next section of this report.



Figure 3: A sample of young learner's observations from the *Pause, Breathe, Smile* programme

OUTCOME TWO: Wellbeing Benefits for educators

The *Pause, Breathe, Smile* professional development pathway and programme implementation is intended to benefit classroom teachers as well as their students. Two methods were used to gather data to determine positive shifts in teacher wellbeing.

Method One

The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) is a tool for monitoring mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies that aim to improve mental wellbeing.²²

MEG has integrated the WEMWBS into its website to capture pre- and post- mental wellbeing data from all participants in the Breathe Online Mindfulness Course (part one of the PBS educator training pathway, outlined above). To date we have collected data showing that many teachers who complete the course experience a meaningful increase in wellbeing.

25 educators who received scholarships from Trust Waikato participated in this aspect of the evaluation. Of these participants, 17 had completed the Breathe Online Mindfulness Course with a further seven progressing through the course at the time of writing. One participant is yet to start.

Results

13 out of 17 participants had a meaningful increase in wellbeing. An increase of three or more points between the pre- and post- score is regarded as a 'meaningful' increase in individual wellbeing

according to the WEMWBS user guide.²³ No change was observed for two participants, while the remaining two participants experienced a slight drop in their overall wellbeing.

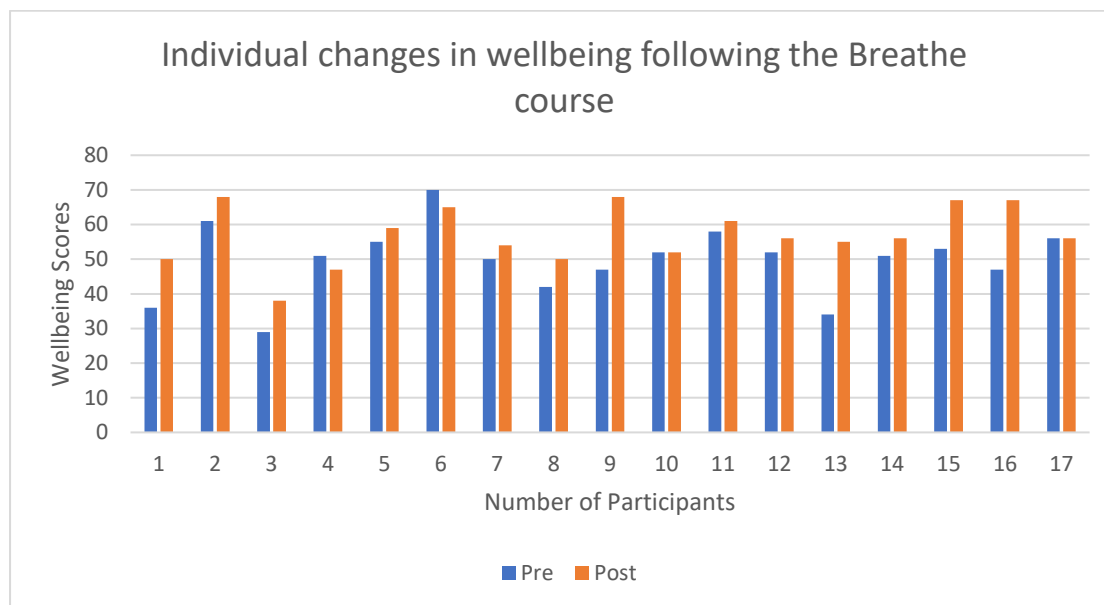


Figure 4. Individual changes in wellbeing as measured by the WEMWBS. Scores indicate a meaningful increase in overall wellbeing for 13 of 17 participants, representing a 76% increase in wellbeing across the cohort of participants.

Method Two

Themes from the teacher’s observation journals (31 completed observation journals were returned as outlined in the previous section) were analysed to evaluate the teacher’s experiences, both personally and professionally. One prompt in the observation journal asked about “your own personal engagement with the mindfulness activities presented.” Responses to this prompt form the main analysis for this section of the report. In addition, relevant teacher’s comments made throughout the journals, across the entire intervention period, were also included in this analysis.

Results

Teacher’s comments about their own valuing of the PBS activities indicated numerous positive benefits for teacher wellbeing, which resulted in the emergence of three main themes:

- (1) enjoyment resulting from teaching the programme;
- (2) increasing sense of calm;
- (3) benefits to professional teaching practice.

The following quotes highlight these common themes identified:

“I truly appreciate the opportunity to be part of something that is so important and relevant to our children today.”

“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.”

“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.”

OUTCOME THREE: Degree to which the intended programme outcomes were met

The intended programme outcomes include students and teachers;

- (1) teachers understanding the links between PBS programme content and the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)
- (2) teachers experiencing the benefits mindfulness practices can contribute to learning;
- (3) understanding that mindfulness practises are applicable inside and outside of school;
- (4) understanding the relevance of mindfulness for emotion regulation and;
- (5) experiencing positive benefits of mindfulness on their sense of wellbeing;

Method

After implementing PBS, educators completed a survey to rate how well they thought the five intended outcomes of PBS had been met. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) “intended outcome not met at all” to (5) “intended outcome very well met” was used.

The top-two box method of scoring combines the top-two boxes of a Likert scale into one score to show the overall percentage of respondents who were in general agreement with the statement asked. Likewise, the bottom-two boxes are combined to show the overall percentage of respondents who were in general disagreement with the statement. Scores on the middle box “intended outcome met sufficiently” made up the middle category, giving a total of three categories: Intended outcome 1) achieved; 2) sufficiently achieved; 3) not achieved.

Results

25 respondents ($n=25$) completed the survey. Using the top-two box method of scoring to summarise the data, figure 5 shows that the intended outcomes were well achieved across the sample of respondents.

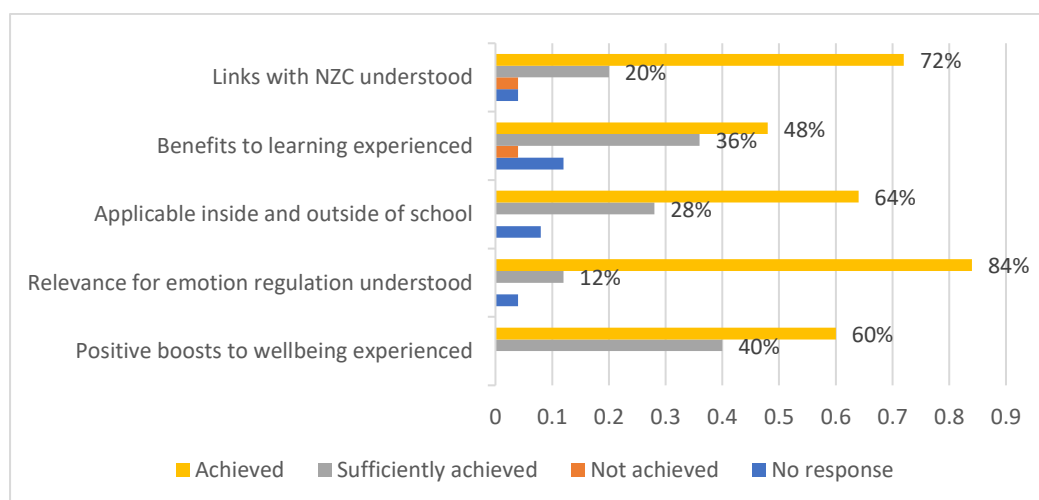


Figure 5. Extent to which the intended programme outcomes were achieved. Note the yellow and grey bars, indicating the extent to which each outcome was either achieved (yellow) or sufficiently achieved (grey).

LIMITATIONS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Three main limitations need to be taken into consideration when reviewing this report. First, the authors of the report have a vested interest in the success of *Pause, Breathe, Smile*, and while every effort has been taken to report the results of this evaluation accurately and with integrity, future evaluations would benefit from having independent authors analyse and report results.

Second, the observation journals were mainly filled in by school teachers who were also the trained PBS Educator. Social desirability – where a respondent provides responses that will help present them in the best possible light – cannot therefore be fully discounted. However, we feel based on the multiple comments provided by each educator across the eight weeks of PBS implementation, that social desirability was not a strong factor in this evaluation.

Finally, the data gathered using the WEMWBS to assess the degree of change in wellbeing as a result of participation in the Breathe Online Mindfulness Course was not gathered within a strictly controlled environment. In other words, the nature of the self-paced Breathe course, means that it was impossible to control for other factors (such as environmental, lifestyle or seasonal factors) that may have played a role in increasing, or in two cases, decreasing a participant's wellbeing scores. Future evaluations could consider isolating and controlling for unrelated variables that may confound the data.

Despite the above limitations, the results of this evaluation are supported by similar findings in previous evaluations and published research of *Pause, Breathe, Smile*. For instance, the identified themes of increased calm, enhanced emotion regulation and improved focus and attention correlate well with previous findings. Adding to these already established benefits of *Pause, Breathe, Smile* for children was a clear theme that young learners were valuing the mindfulness activities being taught as evidenced by their transfer from the school environment to the home environment. This theme indicates a degree of intrinsic motivation to use the various PBS strategies learnt in a variety of ways and situations as each child felt appropriate. We are very happy with this finding as an overarching intention of teaching children mindfulness is to empower them with tools that they can use in a wide variety of life's situations.

Using a combination of WEMWBS data and teacher's comments about their own valuing of the PBS activities indicated numerous positive benefits for teacher wellbeing, including enjoyment resulting from teaching the programme, increasing sense of calm and benefits to professional teaching practice. Again, these results align with previously published studies and evaluation reports.

It was pleasing to see that teacher's felt that the overall programme intentions were at least sufficiently achieved, with most respondent's indicating that these were well achieved.

Pause, Breathe, Smile now has a strong presence in the Waikato region as evidenced in this report. This presence has been established thanks to the funding and commitment of Trust Waikato. Although too recently trained to gather data for inclusion in this report, the number of schools participating in *Pause, Breathe, Smile* continues to grow throughout the Waikato region with recent training events being held in southern and south-western parts of the Waikato. Many of these schools could only participate thanks to Trust Waikato funding.

The nature of the results reported here, along with the rapid growth in demand for PBS training suggests that *Pause, Breathe, Smile* is a highly valued programme that leads to many positive benefits in the classroom when facilitated well. These benefits extend to both teachers and students, for personal mental and emotional wellbeing, for classroom behaviour, and for improved readiness to learn.

To conclude, this quote offers an excellent example of how the *Pause, Breathe, Smile* programme becomes a foundation from which further integration of wellbeing initiatives can happen:

“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!”

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