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Being Present: An Exploratory Study on the Use of Mindfulness in Early Childhood

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Abstract

The changing landscape of early childhood care and education led us to wonder what mindfulness practices are used to promote a sense of well-being in young learners. An online pilot study was conducted to explore how some early childhood teachers in one U.S. state use mindfulness practices (e.g., yoga, meditation) with young children. Findings indicated that teachers implemented mindfulness practices for a variety of reasons, such as when they observed student stress, restlessness, or during transitions. Participants also indicated that the use of mindfulness practices produced positive benefits for individual children as well as for the entire class, including positive academic, social, and behavioral outcomes. Implications for practitioners and others are suggested.

“There is so much to get done in classrooms that it is difficult to fit in yoga or meditation.”

-Early Childhood Educator

Within education, considerable interest has grown regarding the concept of being present. Since 2000, there has been an increase in educational resources promoting children’s well-being (Bothmer & Grossman, 2011; Flynn, 2013; Hawn & Holden, 2012; Wenig, 2003). In the last decade, there was a noticeable increase in new books about mindfulness practices specifically aimed at an early childhood population (Baptiste & Fatus, 2004; Buckley, 2006; Flynn, 2013; Gates, 2015; Harper, 2013; Lederer, 2008, Whitfield, 2005). Even popular culture has introduced mindfulness to a younger generation through its “Belly Breathe” with Elmo on *Sesame Street*, and more recently, Raffi, with his song “Take a Breath.”

There are many ways to define mindfulness or contemplative practices with children, although generally this concept is recognized as a way to experience inner peace and focus in the moment. “To be mindful is to be awake to the complexities of each and every situation... Mindfulness is a *practice*, not a package or program to be adopted” (Dachyshyn, 2015, p. 36). When describing mindfulness, organizations devoted to well-being in children emphasize awareness, attention, and focus. For example, “simply paying attention to your life experiences here and now with kindness and curiosity” (Saltzman, 2016, para. 2) is described by the *Still Quiet Place*, a curriculum guide and approach designed to teach children about mindfulness. In this article, we refer to the work of Erwin and Robinson (2015) who characterized early childhood mindfulness practices as tools that promote “a sense of engagement, awareness, and harmony that seem to permeate a child’s experience in the present moment” (p. 3). There are many pathways of practicing and promoting mindfulness in early childhood such as, but not limited to: yoga, purposeful breathing, meditation, guided visualization, aromatherapy, and physical movement (i.e., tai chi, walking meditation). There has been growing interest in mindfulness and education, although there is still a limited research base on mindfulness during the early years [see Erwin and Robinson (2015) for an extensive review of the literature].

The purpose of this study was to begin to explore mindfulness practices, or the notion of “being present,” in early childhood classrooms. In this article, we describe the findings of a pilot study using an online format that investigated mindfulness or contemplative practices used by early childhood teachers, and propose implications and suggestions about how this new knowledge can be used to improve well-being for young learners. For the purposes of this article, the terms *contemplative*, *reflective*, and *mindfulness practices* are used interchangeably. Due to the promising and significant impact mindfulness practices hold for young children’s learning and well-being (e.g., academic outcomes, motor skills, social competence, and self-regulation) (Bubela, & Gaylord, 2014; Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, & Davidson, 2015; Mische Lawson, Cox, & Labrie Blackwell, 2012; Thierry, Bryant, Nobles, & Norris, 2016), multiple professional disciplines are pursuing investigations on mindfulness during the early years. It is our intention that this article will benefit not only teachers and teacher educators, but a diverse and wide range of individuals (i.e., families, therapists, administrators, researchers, and policy makers) committed to quality early childhood care and education.

In light of the growing pressure to focus on academics, standardization, prescribed curricula, and high stakes testing, the landscape in early care and education appears contradictory to young children’s way of knowing, being, and learning (Bloch, 2014; Erwin & Robinson, 2015; O’Loughlin, 2014; Spencer, 2014). Increasing pressures in early childhood education and care set forth unrealistic expectations for adults and children alike. Adair (2014) further explained:

Instead of building on an emergent set of capabilities – such as walking, talking, arguing, drawing, rationalizing, making complicated decisions – young children too often arrive at school to find a much-narrowed, standardized set of choices with strict limits on how to use them. To get children ready to “produce” good scores and good progress...having children listen to the rules, tasks, directions or lessons becomes more important than encouraging children to use initiative, problem solving, leadership skills and other capabilities. (p. 225)

The quote from the early childhood educator at the beginning of this article mirrors the challenge by many who care about young learners and are facing mounting demands in classrooms. In short, the threats to early childhood care and education shaped our initial inquiry about being present.

Method

This exploratory study, which is intended to offer a fresh and timely contribution to the field, was developed to begin to understand what mindfulness practices look like in some early childhood classrooms. We conducted a small online study inviting full-time educators working with young children to participate. We were interested in learning about a wide range of classrooms representing all aspects of diversity. The investigation was conducted in New Jersey, a state in the northeast region of the United States that reflects economic, cultural, and social diversity and a wide representation of geographic areas including urban, rural, coastal, and suburban communities.

Recruitment and Participants

The target audience was New Jersey educators of children through the second grade who currently held the position of lead teacher. During the recruitment process, we identified and created a pool of individuals, organizations, and systems in New Jersey that had access to early childhood teachers. In order to be eligible to participate in the study, individuals had to meet the following criteria: (a) teach in New Jersey; (b) be lead teacher in classrooms 2nd grade and younger; and (c) be employed full time.

Using the pool of contacts and potential participants, we reached out to each contact by phone, e-mail, listserv or face-to-face meetings with an invitation to either take the survey or identify teachers who might be interested in participating in the survey. A comprehensive list that included teacher education students and graduates of our university as well as other universities was compiled to systematically identify and document recruitment efforts. In addition, recruitment activities targeted individual colleagues, programs, and schools in New Jersey serving young children, contacts at conferences, and social media channels.

A total of 49 lead early childhood educators teaching preschool through second grade participated in the investigation. Study participants represented a wide array of experiences and backgrounds, including preschool teachers (n = 24), kindergarten teachers (n = 9), and the rest were equally representative of teaching first and second grades (n = 16). When asked about the highest level of education earned, less than one-third (n = 14) of the teachers had received a bachelor's degree and more than double (n = 35) had earned a master's degree. All study participants self-identified as a lead or co-lead teacher of children up to second grade. Teachers also responded to the question, “During your teaching career how long have you been (or were

you) a full-time, head- or co-head teacher in a school setting for any ages/grades birth through second grade?”

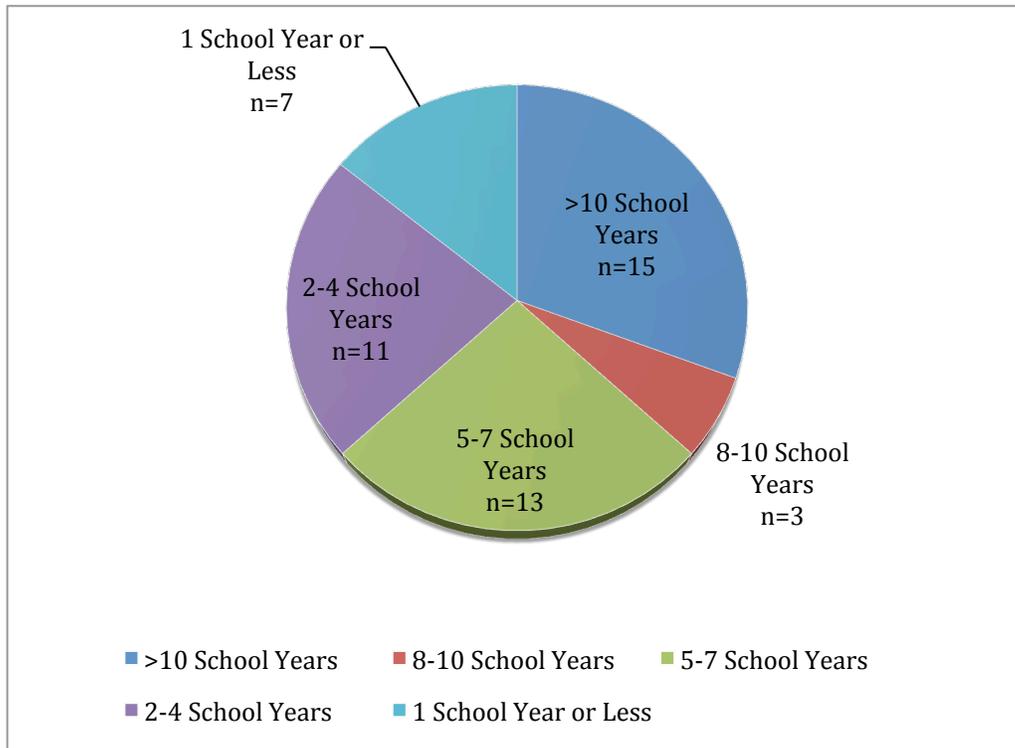


Figure 1. Teaching history (any U.S. state)

Participants' teaching history in early childhood education (Figure 1) indicated educators who had taught for 10 or more years ($n = 15$) and the smallest representation ($n = 3$) had taught between 8 and 10 years. Seven study participants had taught for one year or less. Participants were also asked about young learners in their classrooms who were identified as needing services, such as a 504 Plan, Individualized Education Program (IEP), or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Not every child identified as having a disability requires specialized instruction; therefore, 504 Plans help to assure equal access to public education and services for children with disabilities to enable them to learn in a general education classroom.

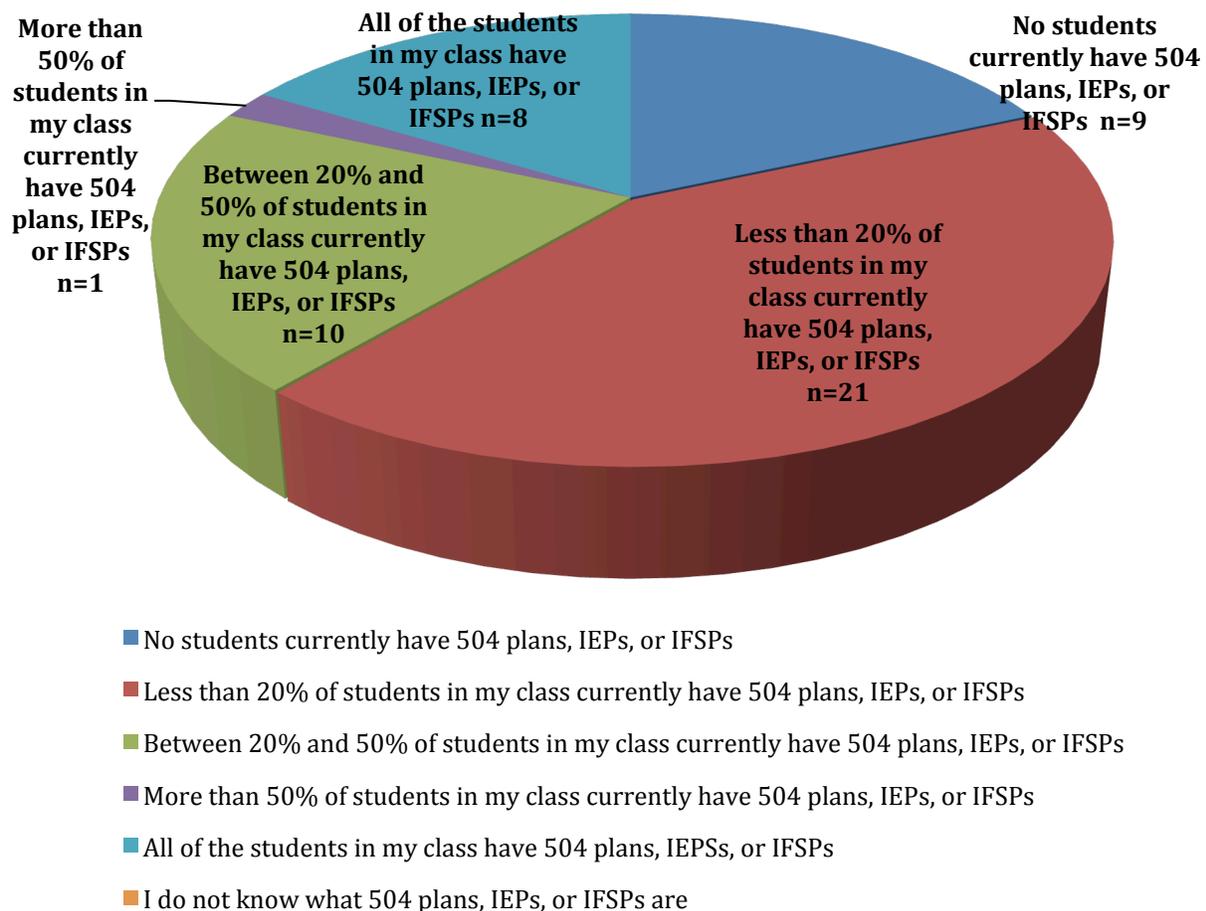


Figure 2. Early learners requiring educational support in early childhood classrooms

The largest group of teachers (n = 21) had fewer than 20% of students with any type of educational plan in their classroom. Nine teachers indicated that between 50 – 100% of students in their classroom had an individualized educational or support plan and nine out of the 49 teachers did not have any children with identified disabilities in their classroom.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study was conducted anonymously and the total number of invitations sent to prospective participants on our behalf is unknown. Please see Appendix A for a list of the survey questions used. Many of the questions were presented within a table format so participants could simply check off their responses. Participants were invited to include responses that might not be listed through questions such as, “If there are other contemplative or reflection practices which are not listed above that you engage in with your class please enter information about them in the box below and indicate how regularly you engage in these practices.”

Survey results were initially reviewed, coded, and organized by the two lead authors. The research team included the first two authors who were joined by the third author during the final stage of data analysis and interpretation. Through the university survey system, multiple-choice data were initially managed and automatically calculated using simple percentages. Data were

then reviewed and analyzed. Quantitative data were organized and presented using pie chart and bar graph formats using a numerical face value for each question. All data downloaded from the university survey system were maintained in password-protected computers and the data collected and analyzed contained no personal identifiers.

Open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively by reviewing all the data several times and then coding and categorizing responses according to themes that emerged throughout the data analysis process. Original themes were grounded in the data about how or when mindfulness practices were used, as well as specific outcomes or benefits. In the final stages of data analysis, themes were condensed, eliminated, and expanded. Researcher triangulation across the research team ensured there was agreement.

Results

This exploratory study generated initial findings about how some teachers in the state of New Jersey use the notion of being present or mindfulness strategies with young children who represent a range of diversity. Although we did not ask follow-up questions about children with disabilities, 40 out of the 49 study participants indicated that in their classrooms there were young learners identified as needing services (i.e., a 504 Plan, IEP, or IFSP).

Use of mindfulness practices. We wanted to learn when and under what conditions mindfulness practices occurred in early childhood classrooms. Figure 3 provides an overview of the conditions or reasons reported by teachers who implemented mindfulness practices with their young students. Responses are from multiple-choice questions; percentages do not add up to 100% because participants were asked to identify more than one response, if applicable.

Many teachers used contemplative practices when they thought that their young students seemed restless (67%) or when they felt that children had been sitting for a long period of time (43%). Almost one quarter (24%) of study participants indicated they used mindfulness practices when their young students request it. Participants also used mindfulness practices during transitions, not only between activities, but also when there was an unexpected change in the routine. More than one third of teachers used contemplative or mindfulness practices to support student well-being. More than half of teachers indicated that they used mindfulness practices when their young students exhibited signs of stress, and 37% of teachers used mindfulness practices when they felt stressed. The smallest percentage of teachers (4%) used mindfulness practices during recess.

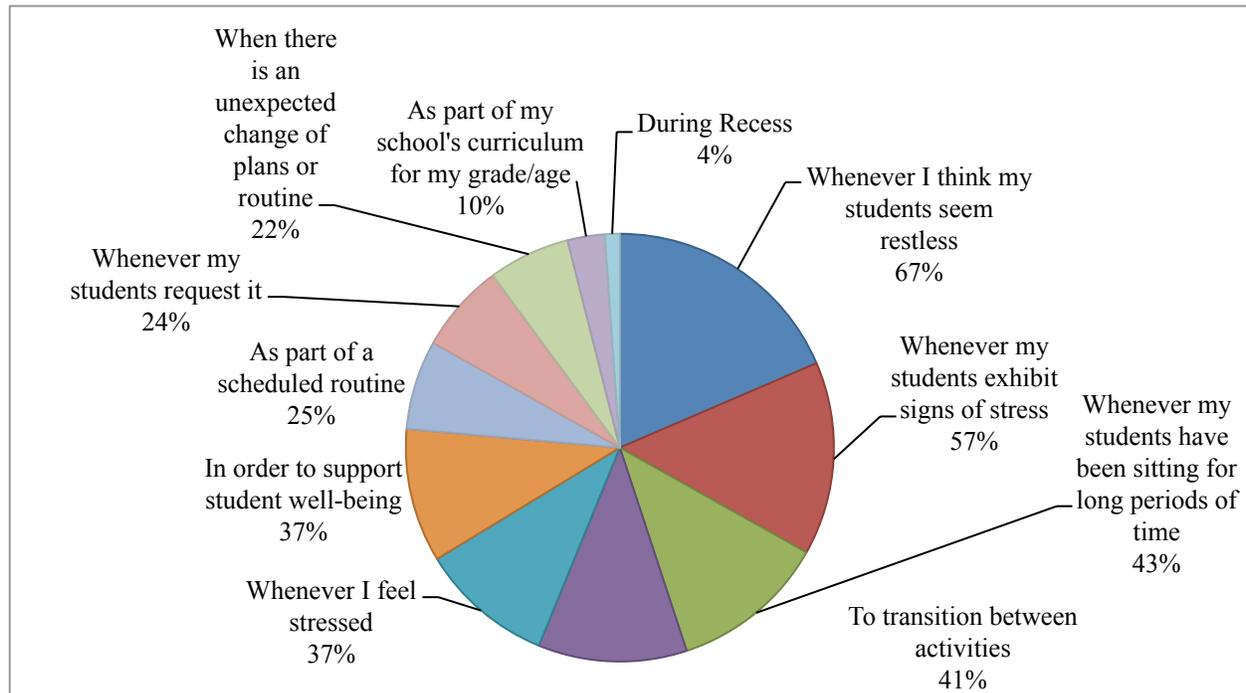


Figure 3. When and how early childhood teachers use mindfulness practices

We were also interested in discovering what kinds of mindfulness practices were implemented by teachers in their personal and professional lives (i.e., in their early childhood classrooms). Figure 4 presents a comparison of the mindfulness practices teachers used both in and out of their early childhood classrooms. Meditation was the most popular mindfulness practice used in respondents' personal lives and yoga was the practice used most often in their early childhood classrooms. For the purpose of this study, a physical mindfulness activity, such as tai chi or a walking meditation, is defined as a specific movement practice with a deliberate focus on mindfulness. Aromatherapy was the mindfulness practice used the least by teachers in both personal and professional lives. We also asked study participants to estimate over the course of a year the level or degree of engagement using specific mindfulness practices both in their personal and professional lives. The degree of engagement was defined as integrated (3 times per week or more), regularly (at least one time per week), sometimes (1-2 times per month), rarely (less than once a month), or never (0 times a year).

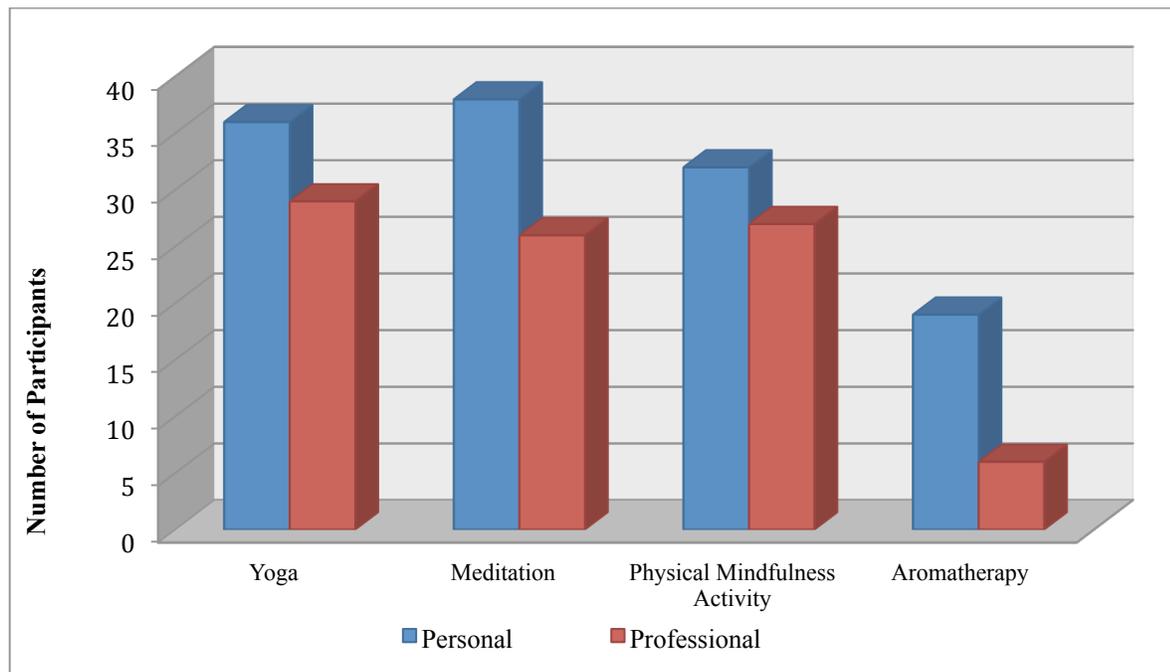


Figure 4. Comparison of mindfulness engagement in teachers' personal and professional lives

In their personal lives, teachers indicated that their level of engagement in yoga was integrated ($n = 5$), regular ($n = 11$), sometimes ($n = 6$), rare ($n = 14$) or never ($n = 11$). Teachers reported that they practiced meditation in their daily lives in an integrated way ($n = 8$), regularly ($n = 4$), sometimes ($n = 11$), rarely ($n = 15$) or never ($n = 6$). Regarding physical mindfulness practices, participants reported their level of engagement was integrated ($n = 6$), regular ($n = 6$), sometimes ($n = 9$), rare ($n = 11$) or never ($n = 11$). Teachers' use of aromatherapy in their personal lives was integrated ($n = 3$), regular ($n = 3$), sometimes ($n = 2$), rare ($n = 11$) or never ($n = 21$). Since some teachers did not respond to every question, totals did not always add up to 49.

We were also curious to learn about the types of mindfulness practices early childhood teachers used in their classrooms and how often they engaged their young learners. Study participants indicated that their engagement with yoga with their young students was integrated ($n = 4$), regular ($n = 3$), sometimes ($n = 16$), rare ($n = 6$), and never ($n = 16$). Meditation practices were integrated ($n = 2$) in the classroom, or used regularly ($n = 4$), sometimes ($n = 14$), rarely ($n = 6$), or never ($n = 16$). Respondents indicated that their engagement with physical mindfulness practices was integrated ($n = 5$), regular ($n = 10$), sometimes ($n = 6$), rare ($n = 6$), or never ($n = 16$). In the classroom, use of aromatherapy was integrated ($n = 1$), regular ($n = 2$), sometimes ($n = 0$), rare ($n = 3$), or never ($n = 36$).

Participants were asked to indicate the frequency of use of contemplative or reflection practices (e.g., self-regulation awareness programs such as Alert Program®, Zones of Regulation®, or The Incredible 5-Point Scale®, during an average year. Teachers reported the use of such programs with their young students as integrated ($n = 6$), regular ($n = 1$), sometimes ($n = 3$), and rarely ($n = 3$). The rest of the respondents indicated they never engaged in this type of mindfulness practice ($n = 19$), or did not know what this was ($n = 8$). Nine respondents did not answer this question. Three teachers indicated they used other programs that were not listed, including Brain Gym ($n = 2$) and Whole Body Listening.

Finally, the majority of teachers reported that using mindfulness practices resulted in positive outcomes in their early childhood classrooms. For example, mild to significant positive outcomes were observed in behavior (78%), social outcomes (67%), physical outcomes (64%) and academic outcomes (28%). Less than 20% of teachers indicated no changes and there were no reported negative results from using mindfulness practices in the classroom. Teachers identified specific positive outcomes in their young learners such as reduced stress, decreased frustration, enhanced self-esteem, and improved behavior.

Narratives on Mindfulness in the Early Childhood Classroom

In order to provide study participants with an opportunity to share their firsthand experiences in their own voice for this study, they were asked to share a short story about a child and/or situation in their classroom where mindfulness practices made a direct impact. The data indicated that early childhood teachers implemented a range of mindfulness practices and generally for a specific purpose. Sometimes, teachers combined more than one mindfulness strategy to address a specific situation. This teacher used two different strategies to help a child deal with his emotions:

A child was very sad that mom was leaving. I took him aside and first wrote about his feelings and put the note in an envelope. Then we took 3 deep breaths and exhaled. It really seemed to center him and he had a great day.

Many teachers encouraged breathing strategies in their early childhood classrooms for a variety of reasons. In addition to sadness, study participants used breathing as a mindfulness practice with children who exhibited signs of anxiety, stress, or frustration.

Classroom routines or specific times of the day (i.e., transitions) presented other opportunities when teachers used breathing strategies, for example:

Nick has a difficult time transitioning and gets easily frustrated. This leads to him getting very worked up. When I notice this coming on, I whisper to him to tell him to step outside to take a few deep breaths and get a drink of water. That little bit of a break allows Nick to get back on track and realize that everything will be ok.

Mindfulness practices were used in the classroom to promote a sense of agency or foundations of self-determination. This teacher, who used breathing techniques when some of her young students felt overwhelmed, explained how children were learning to calm themselves down on their own:

Now they are able to recognize when they feel that way, go to a safe, quiet area of the classroom and take some deep breaths to calm them self [sic] without a teacher, and return to tasks.

In another example of how mindfulness practices help the whole class to relax, this teacher described what happens after the lunch/recess routine:

We sit in our classroom with the lights off and each child has their section of the room. I lead them into kind of a meditation where they are listening and closing their eyes as they take a “journey.” They all like it and they seem to calm down and relax after the hectic time of lunch and recess.

These young children took matters into their own hands in this class as they began requesting a calming mindfulness practice on their own:

After blowing up balloons as part of a breathing mindfulness exercise she began to request this practice and encourage it on a regular basis. I find this practice calming and centering for the students. They love to have control over how big their balloons get and then releasing them into the air. They often pretend they can see the balloons floating away into the clouds for a fairly significant amount of time.

Teachers shared how they used a variety of mindfulness strategies in their early childhood classrooms. Practicing yoga in the classroom resulted in positive changes, particularly for children with challenging behaviors. Two teachers explained:

Harry is a highly stressed young child. He hits, bites and kicks his peers and teachers. When he is having a particularly bad day, we pull out the mats and do yoga. I am not sure if it’s the extra attention or the downward facing dog that does it but he usually is laughing at one point and it helps release the tension in his body.

When we introduced breathing and yoga poses in the beginning of the school year, he responded very positively, able to replicate poses quickly. Joey now frequently requests the “tree” pose after maintaining it and enjoys patterns that involve yoga poses. His behavior is much less challenging.

A few of the teachers noted how their young students not only enjoyed these practices at school but also brought what they learned back home to share with their families.

Timmy was not a very confident young child and when he learned this new activity called yoga and was trying different poses on a mat with his classmates around him, he realized he was pretty good at it. He was balanced and I could see a light of pride and a boost of self-esteem. He shared this excitement with his family. I found this rewarding.

I use yoga breathing to settle my children after active dancing/movement activities. We learn how to breathe and then the classroom expectation of WHEN to use it is modeled. “Let’s see who knows how to calm their bodies” and the class does yoga breathing. When a child is upset, we see her doing her yoga breathing and know this means “to give her a private minute” and the entire class benefits from this. I tell the children they can teach this to their parents, and many have.

Teachers in this pilot investigation purposely selected and used either a classroom routine, challenge, or child to introduce a mindfulness strategy. Even when a mindfulness strategy was taught to an individual child, it appeared that sometimes the practice was also shared with the

whole class and/or families. In summary, this exploratory study shed light on how teachers in one state used different mindfulness practices in their own personal lives as well as in their early childhood classrooms. There was a wide variety of contexts and reasons that study participants chose to use mindfulness practices, which resulted in positive outcomes for the entire classroom community as well as for individual children.

Discussion

This pilot study shed some initial light on how and when early childhood teachers use mindfulness practices. A wide variety of reasons were identified as to when teachers chose to use mindfulness practices with their young learners, such as reducing stress observed in children, as well as their own stress, during times of transition, and if children had been sitting for long periods of time. Promoting child well-being, as part of a scheduled routine or curriculum, to deal with an unexpected change of plans or routine, and during recess, were also identified as reasons for using mindfulness practices in the classroom. Teachers also reported positive effects using mindfulness practices such as social, physical, and behavioral outcomes, and nearly one third of teachers indicated positive academic results. There were no reported negative outcomes associated with the use of mindfulness practices in these early childhood classrooms.

The most reported mindfulness practice used by early childhood teachers in their personal lives was meditation; in the classroom, yoga was the practice used most often. Aromatherapy was the mindfulness practice used the least by teachers in both personal and professional lives of the teachers who engaged in mindfulness activities in their personal lives, many engaged in these practices on a consistent basis. For example, more than half of teachers who indicated they used yoga at least 1-2 times per month in their personal lives, actually engaged in the practice at least once per week. The same pattern emerged for meditation, physical mindfulness, and aromatherapy; of those teachers that engaged in each mindfulness practice at least one time each month in their personal lives, more than half of them used the practice regularly. Therefore, of all the early childhood teachers in this study who indicated they engaged in mindfulness activities at least some of the time, more than half of them practiced yoga, meditation, and physical mindfulness at least once a week.

This high level of engagement reflected these teachers' commitment to consistently engage in contemplative practices in their personal lives. Interestingly, yoga, meditation, and physical mindfulness activities were practiced by more study participants than those who never engaged in them in their personal lives. In their early childhood classrooms, mindfulness practices were used by teachers more often than not with the exception of aromatherapy. Teachers' consistent level of engagement of mindfulness practices in their own lives might have influenced their decision to use mindfulness practices with their young students. More than half of study participants engaged in some mindfulness practice (i.e., yoga, meditation, physical mindfulness) at least some of the time in their classroom.

This small investigation on early childhood and mindfulness practices in the state of New Jersey had some limitations. For example, this exploratory survey was conducted with complete anonymity to protect respondents' identity, which had both advantages and disadvantages. The survey was specifically designed to be entirely anonymous (i.e., we did not assign identifiers in order to complete the survey). As a result, we were not able to observe firsthand *how* mindfulness practices were implemented. Choosing to maintain anonymity for study participants did not allow us to follow up with any of them for clarification on their responses; however, we hoped that providing anonymity encouraged participants to feel secure in answering questions

honestly without concern of being identified. Due to their anonymity as well as study participants residing in only one state, the present sample may not be representative of the larger population, and generalizability of these results should not be inferred.

Implications for Practice

This pilot study suggested that this small group of early childhood teachers used mindfulness practices (i.e., yoga, meditation, and physical mindfulness) in their own lives and in their classrooms for a variety of reasons. Although most teachers had never used aromatherapy in their personal or professional lives, a Google search of “aromatherapy and children” conducted in August 2017 yielded 18,500,000 results, an indication of apparent curiosity and interest in essential oils and aromatherapy specifically for children. This societal trend may provide an opportunity in early childhood education and care for natural, holistic solutions such as essential oils to foster well-being and learning.

This small investigation focused on early childhood teachers’ perspectives; however, these findings could potentially inform everyday practices beyond the classroom (i.e., home, community), across an array of people responsible for young children’s well-being (i.e., families, yoga teachers, therapists, higher education faculty, policy makers) and across a range of disciplines. Here are some ideas to consider about the use of mindfulness practices to promote well-being for young children and those who care about them.

The Culture of Being Present

Given the changing landscape of early care and education toward increased academics, standardized assessments, and compliance, educators are challenged to maintain focus on protecting and fostering well-being in children’s lives. Although there may be many school- or district-wide policies that teachers must adhere to, there remains the opportunity to create a particular culture or atmosphere in classrooms. A holistic approach to well-being is one way to reclaim the notion of being present into the culture of a classroom or school environment. One way to achieve this is to deliberately and systematically focus on desired values inside and outside the classroom (e.g., playground, hallways) such as kindness, gratitude, and patience (as opposed to distraction or speed). Being present can naturally be embedded into the culture of any environment by consistently fostering these and other preferred values in each moment.

There is an inherent risk in using mindfulness practices exclusively as a means to an end or only when a real or perceived challenge arises. The idea of mindfulness is simply a way of being. Mindfulness is not a prescribed intervention to “fix” a problem. Using mindfulness practices to respond to a specific dilemma or challenge, as opposed to creating an overall sense of well-being, can undermine the very experience intended for children. “If mindfulness practices are viewed simply as interventions, we miss the opportunity to recognize the countless ways children inherently focus, wonder, engage, and connect with their natural environment” (Erwin & Robinson, 2015, p. 15-16). Instead of introducing mindfulness practices one time a week or having one specific daily activity in which being present is encouraged, teachers and others who care about young children can deliberately *embed* a culture of mindfulness or being present into ordinary, everyday routines, materials, and environments. Being present is a practice, not an outcome.

This is not to suggest that children should not be taught to use certain tools that can help them feel better. If a child feels upset or overwhelmed, she can be taught mindfulness strategies

to help her in that moment. As described earlier, some teachers in this pilot investigation used yoga, belly breathing, or a visualization to assist children. Teachers are faced with numerous opportunities throughout each day to help young children recognize and understand their feelings and states of being, and to express them in positive ways. This concept, also known as self-regulation, is not new to early childhood. Teachers of young children, however, do not seem to possess the theory or practical applications related to self-regulation (Willis, Dinehart, & Bliss, 2014) even though there are promising everyday practices (Florez, 2011) and mindfulness curriculum (Flook et al., 2015) to promote self-regulation in the early years. By teaching children how to care about themselves at an early age, children learn to be more self-aware, safe, and engaged in the present moment. Naturally, a climate of being present in the moment can potentially benefit everyone. Given that more than one third of early childhood teachers in this pilot study indicated they used mindfulness strategies when they felt stressed in the classroom, there is great promise that infusing mindfulness into the classroom atmosphere can provide benefits for children and adults alike.

The Focus on Children's Well-Being Right Now

One of the primary ironies of modern education is that we ask students to “pay attention” dozens of times a day, yet we never teach them *how* (Saltzman, 2016). Do we teach children how to pay careful attention in each moment or do we typically encourage them to move quickly to the next activity or project? The messages inherent in today's society seem to favor *action* over *stillness*, and *doing* instead of *being*. In most early childhood settings it is common practice for outdoor playtime to be scheduled each day. Do the same opportunities exist for young children to experience a daily contemplative time? Do we use stillness as a teaching opportunity to deepen self-awareness, reflection, or concentration in young learners?

Further, many teachers may feel pressure to concentrate on preparing young children for the next environment. It is almost as if children are encouraged to *get ready* for the future where the benefits of autonomy can be actualized. Evans (2015) cautioned that “conventional understandings of ‘readiness’ rely on a mechanistically linear logic, constructing it as a normative and standardized goal” (p. 25). The well-being of young children, particularly when being present in the moment is encouraged, should not have to be a structured or straight pathway to a future goal or outcome. There is an opportunity to resist the dominant assumption that the early years serve only to build the groundwork for future outcomes. What if children were consistently encouraged to practice mindfulness with no projected outcome in mind? What might early childhood classrooms look like if simply being in the present moment was valued as much, if not more, than the future? What if being was valued as much as doing?

In short, this pilot investigation shed light on mindfulness activities that early childhood teachers in one state practiced in their classrooms and personal lives. The changing climate in early care and education underscores the need for more attention in this area and summons an urgent need to resist policies and practices that compromise the well-being of young children. There is a timely opportunity to challenge existing tensions in early childhood that focus on learning for the future, prescribed curricula, and assessment-driven teaching, among other current discourses. This exploratory study may bring us one small step closer to re-minding teachers to invest in well-being now by simply taking the time to be fully present *for* and *with* young children.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

- Please indicate below which of the following age/grade(s) you currently teach in New Jersey as a full-time head- or co-head teacher in a public or private school classroom. If you teach more than one age/grade level or the grades/ages you teach overlap, please select the age/grade that comprises the majority of your students and provide additional information in the comment field below.
- Please indicate below the highest level of education you have completed.
- Teaching History (any U.S. state): During your teaching career how long have you been (or were you) a full-time, head- or co-head teacher in a school setting for any ages/grades birth through second grade?
- What types of students are in your classroom? Please mark one:
 - [No students currently have 504 plans, IEPs, or IFSPs]
 - [Less than 20% of students in my class currently have 504 plans, IEPs, or IFSPs]
 - [Less than 50% of students in my class currently have 504 plans, IEPs, or IFSPs]
 - [More than 20% of students in my class currently have 504 plans, IEPs, or IFSPs]
 - [More than 50% of students in my class currently have 504 plans, IEPs, or IFSPs]
 - [All of the students in my class have 504 plans, IEPs, or IFSPs]
 - [I do not know what 504 plans, IEPs, or IFSPs are]
- Please estimate how often you have engaged in the following contemplative or reflection practices in your personal life in the past year. [Yoga] [Meditation] [Physical Mindfulness Activity] [Aromatherapy]
- Please indicate how often you engage the children in your classroom using the following contemplative or reflection practices during an average year. [Yoga] [Meditation] [Physical Mindfulness Activity] [Aromatherapy] [A Self-Regulation Awareness program (e.g., Alert Program®, Zones of Regulation®, The Incredible 5-Point Scale©, other)]
- When do you include classroom contemplative or reflection practices in your classroom?
- What if any outcomes have contemplative or mindfulness practices had on your overall classroom community? [Social] [Academic] [Behavioral] [Physical]
- Please share a short story about a child and/or situation in your classroom where yoga and/or some other mindfulness practice has had an impact. To maintain confidentiality please change the child's name. Feel free to include the child's age, culture, and any other information that will help to illustrate the child and classroom environment.

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