

Mindfulness in AIM-2018 Report

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Bringing mindfulness practice to pre-service teachers continues to be a focus of the AIM program at UW-Stout. Teaching mindfulness to students before they even set foot in a classroom provides them with valuable skills that support their own wellbeing and capacity to connect with others. These students are juggling many demands-school, practicum, family, friends, jobs-that contribute to increased stress. Helping them find ways to bring balance into their lives gives them real tools they can use as the transition from the role of student to classroom teacher. Anticipating being a classroom teachers raises significant anxiety for some students and mindfulness offers them a way to manage that anxiety. From there, they can stay present to all they are learning, both in the college classroom and the practicum classroom, to enhance skills for their work as an early career teacher.

Pre-service teachers in ARTED 208 (Art Education Theory & Practice) and ECE 264 (Child Guidance) participated in a brief curriculum designed to introduce them to mindfulness practices for personal use and use in the classroom. The curriculum teaches a variety of mindfulness practices including mindfulness of the breath, body, sound, emotions, thoughts as well as practices supporting kindness and gratitude. This instruction took place in the pre-service classroom through an initial hour introduction and five bi-weekly 30-minutes lessons during the course of the semester lead by myself, Ann Brand. Course instructors supported the curriculum by leading mindfulness practices during class sessions when I was not present.

In addition to the Part I six-session introduction to mindfulness practice, when possible, I have been offering a four-session Part II curriculum to introduce bringing mindfulness practices in the classroom. This was offered in ARTED 308 (Art Education Methods) in Fall 2018. The curriculum includes mindfulness practice for personal use as well as four mindfulness lessons that can be adapted for classroom use: mindfulness and the brain, mindful eating, mindful seeing, and kindness/gratitude. At this point we do not have any formal assessment of these lessons. Feedback from students and course instructors has been positive. The Part II curriculum will be taught to both ECE and ARTED students in 2019.

Below are some findings from the pretest and posttest administered to students in ECE 264 and ARTED 208 in 2018. Students in these classes participate in the six-session introduction to mindfulness practice. While all students in the class participate in the training, only student who give consent are administered the questionnaires. The categories used to organize the qualitative responses below were created for data-reduction purposes to analyze data from a previous AIM year, presented at the conference on Contemplative Practices for 21st Century in Higher Education in March 2018, Chapel Hill, NC.

2018 Data on Six-Session Mindfulness Introduction

Pre-Test N = 41

ECE = 30
ARTED = 11

Q5. Have you ever heard of mindfulness?

Yes = 19
No = 22

Post-Test N = 34

ECE = 23
ARTED = 11

Q5. What mindfulness practices have you used in your personal life?
(percentage rounded up)

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
Breath	15	21	32	27	6
Body	18	33	30	18	0
Sound	41	41	13	6	0
Kindness	12	15	21	44	9
Gratitude	12	21	24	41	3

Q6. What has been your experience in using mindfulness in your personal life?
(selection of responses)

1. Awareness/Attention/Focus 3
I have noticed it has helped me to become more focused and calm.
It has helped me to refocus and calm my body.
2. Stress 4
I think it has helped me calm down and manage stress.
I have only tried mindfulness breathing to try to calm down from stress.
3. Self-control 0
4. Breathing 7
When I feel nervous, I try to use mindfulness of the breath to calm down.
I try to take the time to focus on my breath when I find my anxiety getting really high. As I'm focusing on my breath, I feel my body relax but once I am done with the mindfulness my mind goes back to anxiety.

5. Sleep 6
I personally think that getting to sleep is better.
I enjoy the body scans. I have a hard time falling asleep and clearing my mind so they help.
6. Calm 12
I have had anxiety since I was a young child, so I have tried different techniques to calm myself when I am feeling anxious.
Helps me calm down when my kids drive me crazy.
7. No Help 4
I very rarely even think about it.
I try to do it when I'm trying to relax so I can fall asleep but it doesn't usually work. I don't really use it any other times.
8. Kindness/gratitude 5
Using kindness in life is how I practice mindfulness the most. I also like to use mindfulness of the breath to calm me down sometimes.
9. Other 5
Now that I have had practice using mindfulness, I use it everyday in some way shape or form.
Helpful to notice how I am feeling to understand why I am feeling that way.

Q9. How often will you use mindfulness practices in your personal life?

- 9% Never
- 3% 1-2 times per semester
- 32% 1-2 times per month
- 32% Once a week
- 15% 2-3 times a week
- 9% Daily

Q10. How often will you use mindfulness practices in the classroom with students?

- 3% Never
- 15% 1-2 times per semester
- 9% 1-2 times per month
- 41% Once a week
- 18% 2-3 times a week
- 15% Daily

Q11. What are your perceptions about mindfulness and how it applies to classroom teaching?

1. Use it in classroom 13
I think that mindfulness can be really beneficial in the classroom.
I feel like it would be a good application into the classroom.

I think this is a great way for students to just calm down. I will use this practice in my classroom and try to incorporate it into my art lessons.

2. Focus/awareness 10

I think that I still was distracted when I did breaths but I still was relaxed. It will help in the classroom w/focusing my mind.

Helpful in keeping focus and attention.

I think it's great and it allows peace and relaxation. Helps kids focus.

3. Helpful 11

It can be very helpful and beneficial.

It seems practical and useful to help with anxiety or stress.

I think it would be helpful as a stressed teacher to use mindfulness. It can help destress and declutter your thoughts.

4. Relax 9

It's very relaxing and calming.

I think it helps when tensions and frustrations are high.

I love the idea of mindfulness. I think we can use it to help children feel calm.

5. Classroom management 4

It can come in handy when the students are getting rowdy and they need to calm down.

I think mindfulness will be an awesome technique to manage student behavior w/in the classroom and to create a positive environment in the classroom.

6. Constant use 0

7. Not helpful 1

Doubtful but willing to try.

8. Other 1

I think it's great, I just don't think that it is my cup of tea.

Q12. Do you have a better understanding of mindfulness than at the beginning of the semester?

100% Yes

Q14. Please share any other comments you have about the practice mindfulness in education.

I think it's interesting but I got stressed doing it in class. I just kept thinking about other homework/studying I could be doing.

When we did it in class, it was hard but helpful.

It helps w/self awareness a lot.

I've enjoyed learning about mindfulness.

I loved it!

I really enjoy doing mindfulness in class because it calms me.

I absolutely loved this experience. I thank you dearly for taking the time to come in and work with us. Mindfulness is truly life changing.

It seems like a good classroom management strategy.

This was a very meaningful learning experience. I learned a lot about how to help myself and my future students!

Much needed-this semester has been nuts...thank you.

From my experience it just puts me to sleep. I have seen teachers use it in the classroom and it works really good for lower elementary.

I think the kindness practice is very important as a future teacher.