



Peace of Mind:

Supports and Challenges to Whole School Mindfulness-Based Program Implementation

2021-2022 School Year

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Executive Summary

Existing research on school-based mindfulness programs (SBMPs) suggest multiple positive outcomes for teachers and students and a rapidly expanding research base (Felver & Jennings, 2016). Yet, there is little research investigating whole school implementation despite research that suggests social-emotional learning (SEL) and public health interventions are more effective at the whole school level (Durlak & Dupre, 2008; Durlak et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2004). There is also a need to move farther on the translational science continuum beyond pilot and feasibility studies where most mindfulness intervention research resides (Dimidjian & Segal, 2015), and investigate models of systemic and sustainable implementation.

Peace of Mind (PoM) is one of a handful of SBMPs explicitly designed for whole school implementation. Its approach to educator buy-in represents a unique bottom-up approach that allows for flexibility and adaptations to program implementation according to the needs of the particular school or district.

The purpose of this investigation was to investigate barriers and facilitators to implementation of PoM in K-8 schools that were at different stages of program implementation. Examining barriers and facilitators for a whole-school SBMP during different stages of implementation helps clarify the factors impacting program uptake and sustainability and can inform other school sites about best practices.

An implementation framework called the PARIHS (Promoting Action on Research in Health Services) framework (Kitson et al., 1998) served as a heuristic for data collection and analysis. The PARIHS framework includes the larger domains of *evidence*, *context*, and *facilitation* which provided the foundation through which the implementation efforts of PoM were viewed in this study. Using a mixed methods, sequential exploratory design, the interdisciplinary team conducted interviews or focus groups with 20 educator stakeholders as well as surveys with 24 educator stakeholders at eight schools in different stages of implementation in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. The analysis focused on *supports* and *challenges* to implementation in categories within the PARIHS domains. Information was also disaggregated by the educator's *role* (i.e., teacher, specialized support, administrator, or PoM program staff) as well as by the *type of school* (i.e., charter, private, public).

Results indicate there are some common challenges and supports across school types and educator roles. Educator buy-in, educator familiarity with the curriculum, educators having their own mindfulness practice, and time were important to facilitating implementation.

Background of Schools

Schools

Schools were purposefully selected within a similar Mid-Atlantic region of the United States to minimize geographic differences. This area had a concentration of schools implementing PoM at different stages from new adopters to schools that had been using PoM for 5 years or more. There was a total of 8 schools: 3 public, 2 public charter, 3 private (see Table 1: PoM Schools).

Type	Schools	Enrollment	Study Participants
Public	Niles	366	1
	Ridgeview	349	2
	Carelton	421	1
Public Charter	Vernon-South	272	6
	Vernon-North	347	8
Private	Trinity	602 (without pre-K)	7
	Easton	14 (without pre-K)	1
	Pendleton	1,181	1

Table 1: PoM Schools

There was not an even distribution of study participants across the eight schools. Two public charter schools and one private school accounted for 21 of the 31 participants. Four schools had only one participant and one school had two.

Please note: All names of schools and individuals are pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity of the sites and study participants.

The racial/ethnic background of the schools ranged from majority white (Niles, Carelton, Trinity, Easton, Pendleton) to majority black (Vernon-South) to non-majority (Ridgeview, Vernon-North) (see Figure 1: School Demographics).

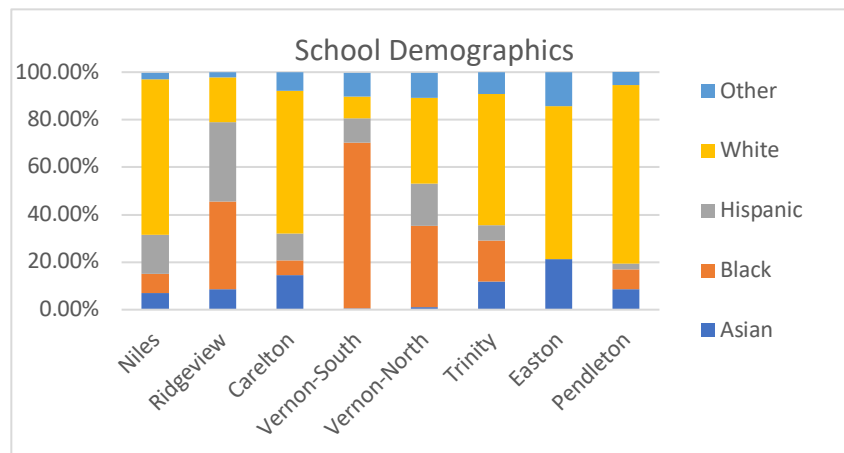


Figure 1: School Demographics

Educators

The PoM Executive Director connected the lead researcher with contacts at a number of schools who were implementing PoM. The lead researcher then contacted the appropriate individuals at the schools to seek voluntary study participation. The research team sought educators who were involved with direct program implementation or decisions about implementation, or educators who were aware of implementation in their school but chose not to participate in PoM. All educators who met study criteria were invited to participate in the study. In some schools, the lead researcher offered an orientation to educators interested in participating in the study; in other schools, somebody at the school communicated with educators to invite participation.

Participants included:

- *Teachers*
- *Specialized support staff* (e.g., counselor, instructional coach, learning specialist, etc.).
- *Administrators* (e.g., principal, head of school, director of teaching and learning)

	Public Charter	Private	Public	PoM Program	TOTAL
Teacher	6	7	1		14
Administrator	4	1	2		7
Support	4	1	1		6
Other				4	4
TOTAL	14	9	4	4	31

Table 2: Participant Roles

The number of participants in each role and serving in different types of schools is shown in Table 2.

Program staff from Peace of Mind were also included in order to understand how the organization assisted with implementation efforts in schools, especially initial implementation and ongoing training.

Implementation

Not all schools implemented PoM in the same manner. Two schools used Peace of Mind as an after school program. The two public charter schools and one of the private schools were attempting to use it as a whole school model with all teachers understanding the language of PoM and classroom teachers leading Peace of Mind lessons during a designated time during the school day.

The participants in the study had different amounts of experience implementing PoM, with most having 2-3 years experience, as seen in Figure 2.

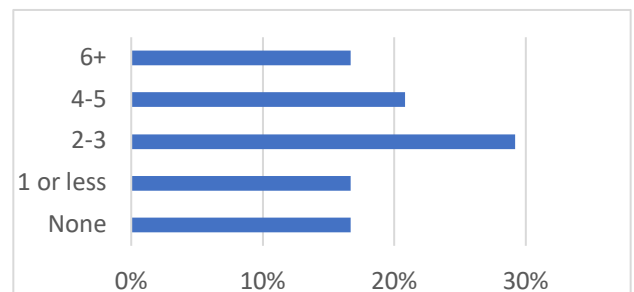


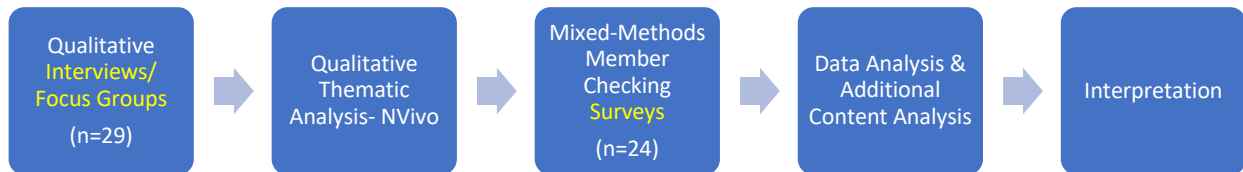
Figure 2: Years of Experience Implementing PoM

Study Methods

Data Collected

Data for this study came from two primary sources during two distinct phases:

- 1) Phase 1: **Interviews** or **focus groups** with **29 educators**.
- 2) Phase 2: Brief follow-up **surveys** with **24 educators** (22 also did interview; 2 only did survey).



Phase 1: Interviews

Due to Covid, interviews/focus group were conducted over Zoom by members of the research team. They lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. Most interviews were conducted individually, given educators' schedules, with one focus group of 2 participants and one focus group of 3 participants.

Questions were developed to solicit information about educators' background and to probe *supports* and *challenges* of implementing PoM in their school, especially related to *evidence*, *context*, and *facilitation*.

Question topics included:

- Educator Experience
- School background (school mission, current program initiatives, professional development)
- Adoption of PoM (training, familiarity, leadership)
- Stakeholders' understanding of PoM curricular aims and processes
- Ongoing implementation efforts (perception of alignment with school mission, level of individual and collective commitment to PoM aims and practices, challenges)
- Perception of PoM's impact on students, faculty, school culture

Phase 2: Survey Questions

Based on preliminary analysis of interview data, the research team developed a “member checking” survey seeking confirmation or clarification of substantive themes identified in interviews. Surveys were completed electronically. Most educators took less than 10 minutes to complete it.

Part 1: Supports and Challenges

Educators were asked to rate the impacts of several variables on ability to implement PoM

Big Challenge – Moderate Challenge – Small Challenge – No Impact – Small Support – Moderate Support – Big Support

- Time
- Access to resources
- Administrative support
- Support from families
- Collegial support
- Personal familiarity with PoM curriculum
- PoM alignment with personal values
- Having personal mindfulness practice
- Availability of PoM professional development

Part 2: Familiarity, Fit, and Commitment

The survey asked a series of questions to understand how PoM aligned with school and personal values. These included:

- Educators rated their own familiarity with PoM, on a scale of 1-10
- Administrators rated the fit of PoM for their school.
- Educators rated their personal commitment to PoM as well as the commitment of other educators.
- Administrators rated the commitment of family members.

Educators were provided an opportunity to explain their responses.

Part 3: Open-Ended Questions-Adaptations, Informal Practices, Teacher Leadership

Educators could respond to open-ended questions about whether and why they made adaptations when implementing PoM, whether and how they may have used informal practices of PoM (e.g., 5 finger breathing) outside of the formal curriculum, and whether and how they may have served in a supportive role to other educators implementing PoM.

Findings

Implementation Factors

The study team used the following codes (categories) to understand how educators within each school setting experienced implementation efforts. The codes included four main categories of *Curriculum*, *Evidence*, *Facilitation*, and *School Context* with *Facilitation* and *School Context* including a number of more specific sub-categories as seen in Table 3 below. Each category and sub-category represents factors of implementation, as modified from the PARIHS framework, that we wanted to investigate in these PoM schools.

Curriculum	PoM written curriculum, pedagogies, goals.
Evidence	Any kind of illustration/ discussion of effectiveness.
Facilitation	General program support for PoM as a whole.
<i>Buy-in</i>	Advocating for, showing commitment to, or expressing affinity for PoM.
<i>Characteristics of Champions</i>	Individual qualities or actions of PoM advocates. Can come from a leader, teacher, counselor, etc.
<i>Communication</i>	Interactions & collaborations btwn different people or constituents in school or district related to PoM. Not official training.
<i>Leadership</i>	Related to PoM adoption, maintenance. Leaders are defined as those in formal role of administrator in the school.
<i>Mission Alignment</i>	Extent that PoM aligns w/ school/district mission
<i>Networking w/ PoM</i>	Interfacing w/ PoM organization; Not related to official training.
School Context	
<i>Educator Efficacy</i>	Confidence, comfort, familiarity with PoM curriculum.
<i>Educator SEC</i>	Social-emotional competencies of teachers, administrators.
<i>Implementation</i>	Use of PoM curriculum at the school including ongoing & initial implementation, adaptations during implementation, use of informal practices, and integration of PoM with other programs.
<i>Resources</i>	Curricular & other materials necessary to implement PoM.
<i>Time</i>	When PoM occurs; how long; how often.
<i>Training</i>	Professional development of PoM. Can be formal or informal training.

Table 3: Implementation Factors

The research team looked across all the data (i.e., interviews and surveys) to understand the implementation supports and challenges of PoM implementation. The data was disaggregated by *educator role* as well as by *school type*. Although a natural inclination is to make comparisons, it is important not to generalize based on this information. This was an exploratory, primarily qualitative study with a small and non-random group of participants.

Role

To investigate importance of each factor as a challenge or support to PoM implementation, we investigated whether educators based on the type of role (i.e., teacher, specialized support, administrator, or PoM Program staff) described the factor as a support or challenge (see Table 4 below). The darker shades represented the factor most prevalent for that column (role type). Each column of supports and each column of challenges totals to 100% to demonstrate prevalence of data within each role type, across the 14 factors.

		Teacher (n=14)	Specialized Support (n=6)	Admin (n=7)	Program (n=4)
Curriculum	Supports	14.29%	14.29%	16.67%	23.53%
	Challenges	14.29%	14.81%	5.88%	0%
Evidence	Supports	6.35%	9.52%	5.56%	5.88%
	Challenges	4.29%	0%	0%	0%
Buy-in	Supports	11.11%	23.81%	16.67%	11.76%
	Challenges	21.43%	18.52%	23.53%	39.39%
Characteristics of Champions	Supports	3.17%	14.29%	0%	0%
	Challenges	2.86%	0%	0%	3.03%
Communication	Supports	14.29%	4.76%	0%	0%
	Challenges	1.43%	0%	5.88%	9.09%
Leadership	Supports	3.17%	0%	5.56%	11.76%
	Challenges	0%	0%	0%	6.06%
Mission Alignment	Supports	3.17%	0%	0%	0%
	Challenges	0%	7.41%	0%	0%
Networking w PoM	Supports	1.59%	0%	0%	0%
	Challenges	0%	0%	0%	3.03%
Educator Efficacy	Supports	3.17%	0%	0%	0%
	Challenges	4.29%	3.70%	5.88%	9.09%
Educator SEC	Supports	0%	0%	16.67%	0%
	Challenges	0%	0%	5.88%	6.06%
Implementation Process	Supports	19.05%	19.05%	16.67%	29.41%
	Challenges	27.14%	18.52%	47.06%	9.09%
Resources	Supports	6.35%	4.76%	11.11%	0%
	Challenges	5.71%	7.41%	0%	6.06%
Time	Supports	1.59%	4.76%	5.56%	11.76%
	Challenges	14.29%	25.93%	5.88%	3.03%
Training	Supports	12.70%	4.76%	5.56%	5.88%
	Challenges	4.29%	3.70%	0%	6.06%

Table 4: Supports & Challenges by Role

School Type

To investigate importance of each factor as a challenge or support to PoM implementation, we investigated whether educators based on the school type (i.e., charter, private, public) described the factor as a support or challenge (see Table 5 below). The darker shades represented the factor most prevalent for that column (school type). Each column of supports and each column of challenges totals to 100% to demonstrate prevalence of data within each school type, across the 14 factors.

		Charter (n=14)*	Private (n=6)*	Public (n=7)*
Curriculum	Supports	16%	14.71%	11.11%
	Challenges	18.87%	10.26%	4.55%
Evidence	Supports	4%	8.82%	0%
	Challenges	0%	2.56%	9.09%
Buy-in	Supports	8%	14.71%	33.33%
	Challenges	16.98%	28.21%	18.18%
Characteristics of Champions	Supports	8%	4.41%	0%
	Challenges	0%	5.13%	0%
Communication	Supports	16%	8.82%	0%
	Challenges	1.89%	2.56%	0%
Leadership	Supports	0%	2.94%	11.11%
	Challenges	0%	0%	0%
Mission Alignment	Supports	0%	2.94%	0%
	Challenges	0%	0%	9.09%
Networking w PoM	Supports	0%	1.47%	0%
	Challenges	0%	0%	0%
Educator Efficacy	Supports	0%	2.94%	0%
	Challenges	3.77%	5.13%	4.55%
Educator SEC	Supports	0%	4.41%	0%
	Challenges	0%	0%	4.55%
Implementation Process	Supports	16%	19.12%	22.22%
	Challenges	24.53%	33.33%	27.27%
Resources	Supports	12%	5.88%	0%
	Challenges	7.55%	5.13%	0%
Time	Supports	4%	1.47%	11.11%
	Challenges	22.64%	7.69%	13.64%
Training	Supports	16%	7.35%	11.11%
	Challenges	3.77%	0%	9.09%

*n indicates educators, not schools

Table 5: Supports & Challenges by School Type

Supports

The following are quotes representing what educators across roles and school types noted in interviews about their experiences implementing PoM. They illustrate not just the nature of any one supportive implementation factor, but how various factors are interrelated.

Curriculum, Evidence

“It’s very age appropriate, which is really hard to find with kids who are so young. So that’s why we feel so lucky because we’re using it and it’s working.”

(Deidre, specialized support, private)

Implementation Process, Time, Buy-in (educators, students)

“It was very easy, and everybody liked it and went for it. And we did this with the lower grades. And they were really into it because they had the time. We had the space, and our kids were open to the idea.”

(Katrina, specialized support, public)

Implementation Process

“It was a common language for us at that point because everybody was teaching it. And I think when you take something on as a whole school you develop a common language, so the kids coming into my class from kindergarten, they knew about the hippocampus, you know? They knew about mindfulness, they knew about breathing, so we’re just kind of building on top of that.

(Sanya, teacher, private)

Leadership, Buy-In

“I was not into social emotional [learning] before. The school did help me about like, you know, ‘We’re here for you, we’re a community,’ and taking mindful moments like those things. So it is helping a lot like having the support system yourself. It helps being that for your students too.”

(Taylor, teacher, charter)

Educator SEC, Buy-in

“I think going at it with the adults in mind first was incredibly helpful in terms of just the overall buy in and acceptance.”

(Kyle, administrator, private)

Challenges

The following are quotes representing what educators across roles and school types noted in interviews about their experiences implementing PoM. They illustrate not just the nature of any one challenging implementation factor, but how various factors are interrelated.

Time, Implementation Process, Educator Efficacy

“That has been my kind of challenge to implement it into the daily routine of our days. Also at our school, it’s a bilingual school, so two days are in English and two days are in a target language. I’m

the English teacher, and so I only get two days and so it's like having to plan that into what we normally do, what we have to normally do, and also only get two days with my students. It kind of makes it a little more complex.”

(Carter, teacher, charter)

Time

“Teachers are like, ‘We can't have another add on. We can't do another thing on top of all the other things you ask of us.’”

(Kyle, administration, private)

Implementation Process

“There are other things that are urgencies...But there are other things that I believe that are complementary to the SEL that need to happen definitely....I probably should be a little more intentional, I guess. Find a way.”

(Wynona, specialized support, charter)

Implementation Process

“I don't think every teacher is doing it consistently. So,...if it's something like Peace of Mind per se or even Second Step, each year, builds on the previous year. If you don't do the first year consistently then they're going to come in the second year, and have no idea what's going on.”

(Hanna, teacher, public)

Buy-in

“I'd say the first honestly was buy-in. Getting everybody on board with it. Because when mindfulness just came out, I mean it was kind of shoved at us, I would say.... And we had to lean into the discomfort of it. But, once you got over that hump and you started doing it yourself and you saw the benefits, I mean even for myself, that I use it in my day to day life and how wonderful it was, it was very quick buy-in.”

(Kristin, teacher, private)

Often the challenges are mitigated by particular supports. For example, leadership was necessary to provide the time during the school day to implement the formal curriculum, or to help get everyone in a building intentional about adopting a common language or having a common mission. In some cases, aspects of context meant additional adaptations were necessary. For example in a bilingual school, educators needed both specific resources (i.e., having the curriculum in the dual language) and the time for accomplishing all the required content.

Not surprisingly, the educators emphasized the importance of buy-in from a variety of constituents, not just those implementing PoM. Buy-in was perceived as important from the school leaders, other teachers and staff members, families, and the students themselves. Quite a few educators noted that it was easier for the teachers to buy-in when they nurtured their own social-emotional competencies and embodied mindfulness practices themselves.

Supports and Challenges in Follow-up Survey

Based on salient implementation factors identified in Phase 1 of the study, the follow-up survey included questions specifically asking educators to identify whether specific factors served as a support or a challenge in their effort to implement PoM at their school, and to what extent it was a support or challenge. The results in Figure 3 indicate the educators perceive more supports than challenges with alignment to personal beliefs, familiarity with the curriculum, and having their own mindfulness practice perceived as offering the most support. Time, resources, and collegial support represented the biggest challenges to PoM implementation, suggesting that both individual as well as environmental considerations must be taken into account for successful implementation.

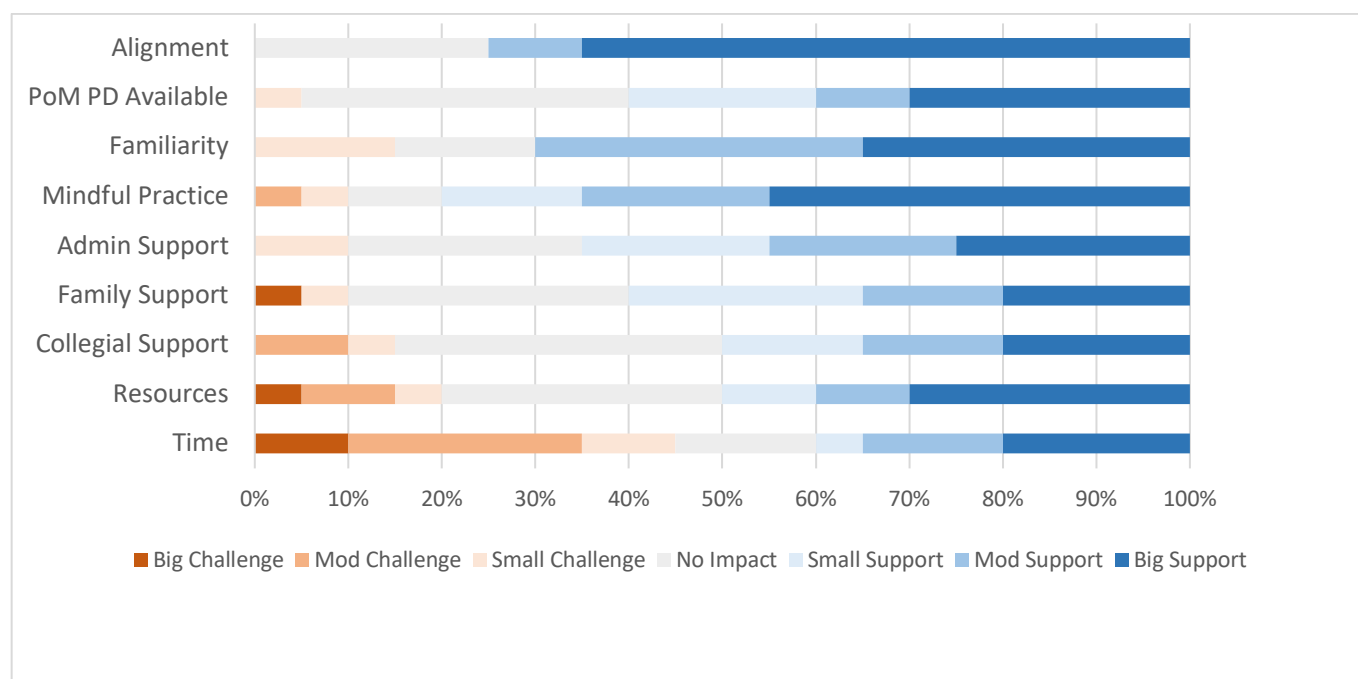


Figure 3: Survey Supports & Challenges

Familiarity, Fit, and Commitment

Given the importance of teacher familiarity, it is helpful that, on a scale of 1-10, teachers on average rated their familiarity with PoM as just below a 7. Even more encouraging, administrators rated the fit of PoM for their school as very high, 8.29. As seen in the following table, educators rated their own commitment to PoM as higher than others at their school. This was especially true for teachers.

Commitment	Teacher (n=13)	Support (n=6)	Administrator (n=7)
Personal Commitment	8.62	7.40	8.14
Educator Commitment	6.45	6.75	6.79
Family Commitment			6.71

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