



Peace Class at Lafayette Elementary School Results: Spring 2016

Executive Summary

Results from this study indicate that the vast majority of students and teachers surveyed report the perceived benefits of Peace Class at Lafayette for improving student mindfulness, conflict resolution/social skills, and readiness to learn. Almost universally, teachers and students report Peace Class helps students get along better with and be kinder to others. In addition, approximately three-quarters of students and teachers report Peace Class helps students be more ready to learn in the classroom. Almost all of the students (97%) report Peace Class has been helpful to them. Particularly helpful tools that students report learning and using outside of Peace class are mindfulness skills to help them calm down when upset or stressed, conflict resolution skills to better negotiate conflict and compromise, and “heartfulness” skills to be kinder to others. Using knowledge about how their brain works at school and home, while helpful to the majority of students, was not as resoundingly endorsed as mindfulness or social skills. In sum, the vast majority of students and teachers report numerous perceived benefits of Peace Class for the students and their social-emotional skills.

Overview and Participants

In early April of 2016 two electronic surveys were administered to collect student and teacher perspectives on Peace Class at Lafayette Elementary School. These surveys were developed by Minds Incorporated in collaboration with Linda Ryden and Cheryl Dodwell. The student survey assessed student-perceived benefits and generalization of skill use across the domains of mindfulness, conflict resolution/social skills, readiness to learn, and applied brain science. The teacher survey assessed perceived benefits to students and readiness to learn. Completion of surveys by students and teachers was completely voluntary.

A total of 146 4th and 5th grade students completed the electronic survey:

- 52% were in 4th grade and 48% 5th grade
- 70% or more of students had been at Lafayette since kindergarten, so the vast majority of students have been in Peace Class for multiple years
- Just over half of the students (56%) were female

An email was sent out to the approximately 75 faculty and staff members at Lafayette. Twenty-six teachers and staff filled out surveys. This represents 35% of the total faculty and staff.

- 88% of respondents were 1st-5th grade teachers; 12% were “other staff or teachers”
- 52% reported using mindfulness with their class

Responses were analyzed using Survey Monkey and by staff independently coding themes of open-ended responses. We outline below a summary of results as well as results for each question.

Summary of Student Survey Results

- The majority of students (61%) report that Peace Class has helped them a “good deal” or “a lot.” Very few students (3%) report that Peace Class has not helped them at all. Students reported using the mindful breathing, calming down, conflict resolution skills and tools, and compassion skills the most.
- The vast majority of students feel it is important to have Peace Class at Lafayette and at other schools (84% and 92%, respectively) because it helps people calm down in stressful situations, prevents bullying, creates a better learning environment and helps kids be kinder to others.
- The majority of students (approximately 60-70%) report using mindfulness skills outside of Peace Class. When asked to give an example, students commonly reported using mindfulness outside of Peace Class to help them calm down and focus before taking a test, when arguing with siblings or parents, before a sporting event or during a game, to help them fall asleep, and to make people happier (using kindness skills).
- Students report that the social-emotional skills they use in Peace Class are particularly helpful for getting along better with others, staying calm when angry, and being a better friend.
- The majority of students have used Conflict Escalator and about half the Toolbox. When asked to give an example, students commonly reported using conflict resolution skills outside of Peace Class when getting into fights or conflicts with friends, to help them make collaborative decisions, to help de-escalate arguments with siblings, and facilitate compromising.
- Over 90% of students reported Peace Class helps them be kinder to others. When asked to give an example, students commonly reported using what they learned in Peace Class to help them stay calm, not yell or get angry, apologize to others, be more generous, help make new friends or give compliments.
- Approximately 60% of students reported that knowing about how their brain works helped them at school or at home. When asked to give an example, students commonly reported using information about how their brain works to manage emotions or to impress parents or friends.

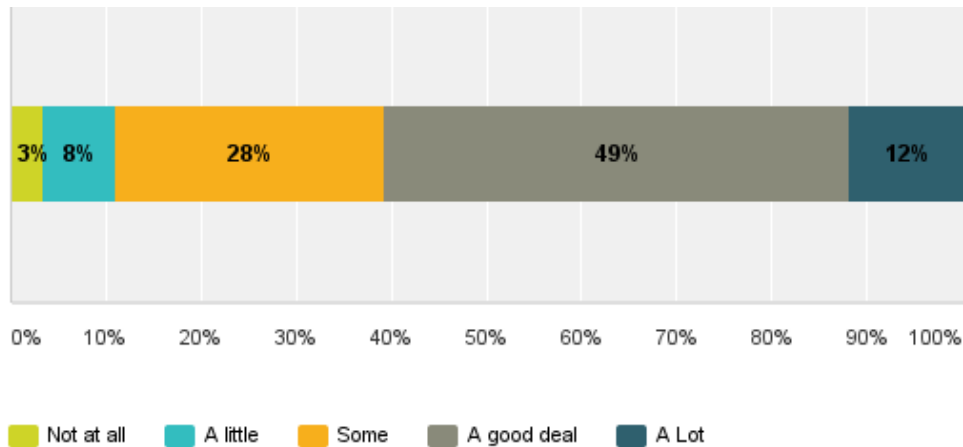
Summary of Teacher Survey Results

- Approximately 50% of teachers reported that Peace Class helps students become modestly more ready to learn, 25% reported it helps students become much more ready to learn, and 25% reported Peace Class did not help students become more ready to learn.
- Approximately 70% of teachers reported that Peace Class helps students get along modestly better with other students in class, 25% reported it helps students get along much better, and 5% reported Peace Class did not help students get along better.
- Some teachers report seeing their students use what they learn in Peace Class, for example, doing nice things for their kindness pals, less bullying, calling for or leading mindful moments during class, or taking a moment to breath before a test or other event. Other teachers were unsure that students enact what they learn, especially if they are not prompted by an adult.

Student Survey Results

Perceived Benefits of Peace Class

Overall, I feel Peace Class has helped me
(N=145)



What do you use the most from Peace Class?
Open-ended response (N=130)

Common themes included:

- Mindful breathing
 - In sports
 - Before tests
- Staying calm or calming down
 - Before tests
- Conflict resolution tools
 - Conflict escalator
 - Conflict cat
- Take 5 breathing/5 finger breathing
- Heartfulness

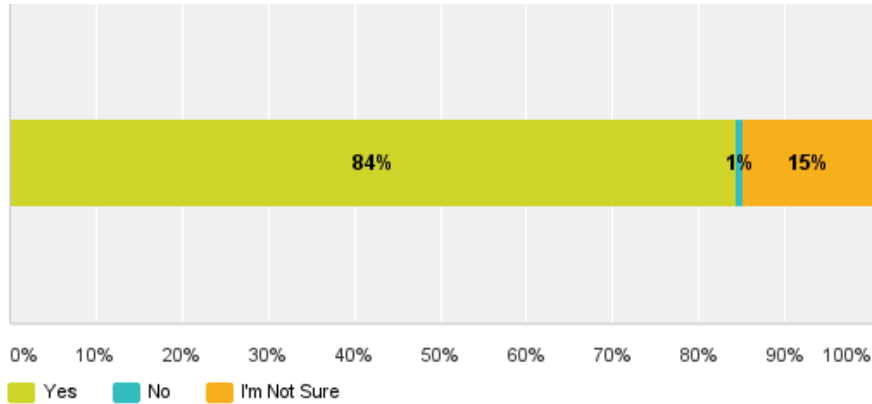
Sample Quotes:

“Peace class is a great opportunity for me. It helps me open up to a more mindful environment. I think the part I most use in my daily life is when I realize the good things in life not the bad. I believe it helps me enjoy my life and have a happy life and not always miserable. One more thing peace class helps me with is the conflict escalator whenever I am fighting with my friends we always say stop you’re going up the conflict escalator. And most of all I enjoy peace class the most!”

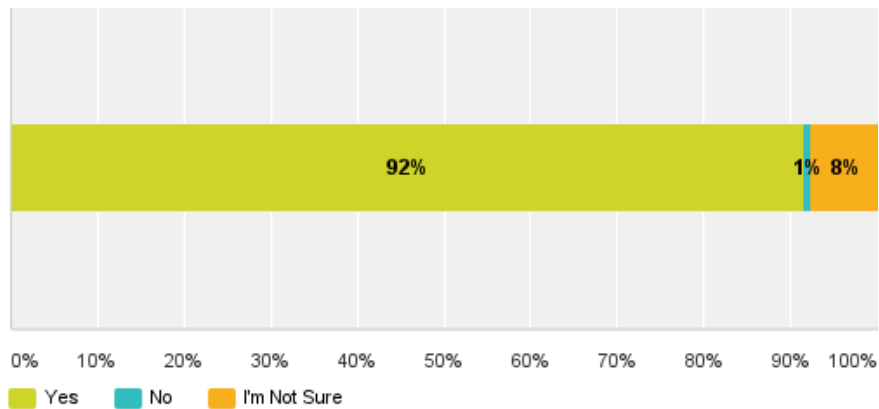
“I use mindful breathing to help me stay calm. I use it when I am feeling mad and when I am feeling am in an argument. It helps me when I am angry at someone.”

Perceived Importance

**Do you think it is important to have Peace Class at Lafayette?
(N=128)**



**Do you think kids at other schools should have Peace Class?
(N=130)**



Why or Why Not? (N=117)

Common themes included:

- It can prevent bullying
- Helps people calm down in stressful situations
- Creates a better learning environment
- Helps people be good friends (Heartfulness)

Sample Quotes:

"I think Peace Class dramatically decreases bullying so without it or school wouldn't be as good of a learning environment!"

"I think peace class is important at Lafayette because it gives you tools to help you remain calm, be a better friend and avoid conflicts."

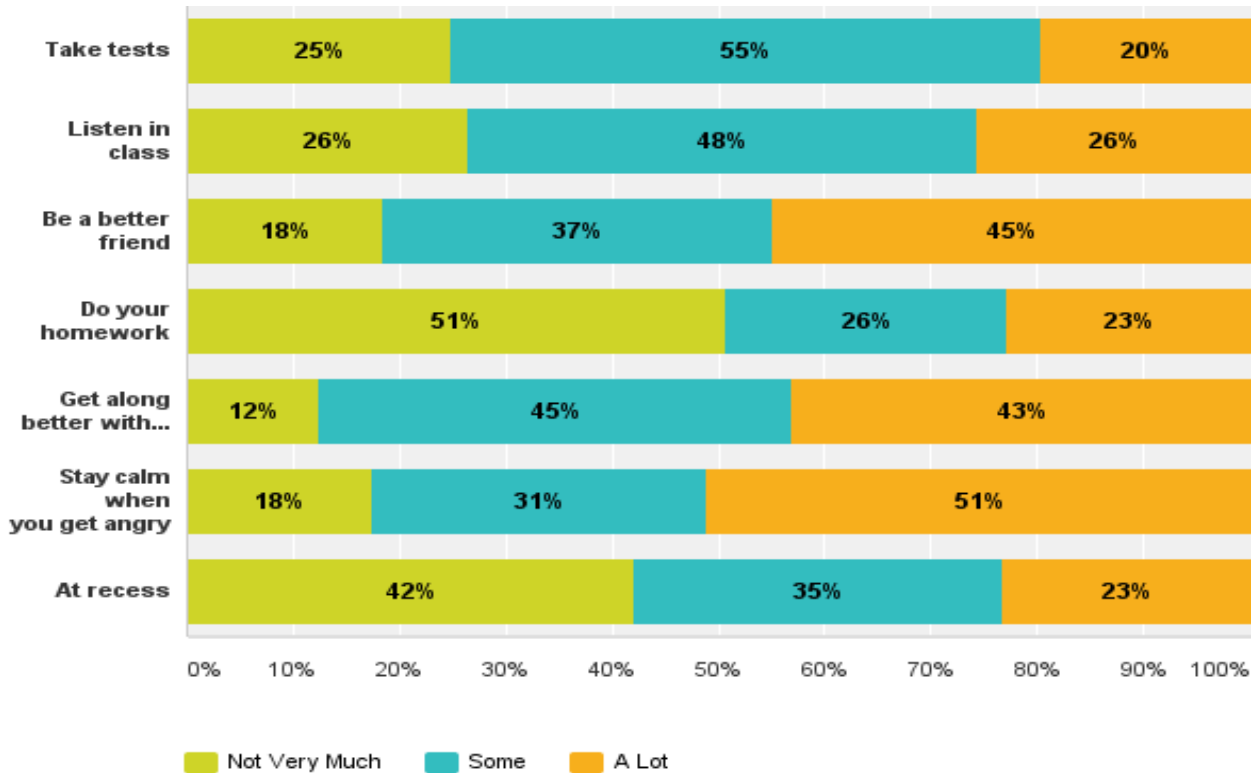
"I think it is important to have peace class because it can help you solve problems better and not getting angry and also making the problems worse. Also if you are frustrated peace class can help you be more calm."

"Many people even adults do not now mindfulness very well so it is important to teach others to spread it around the world so we can eventually stop wars and make our only earth a better place."

"It helps me think better over life's problems."

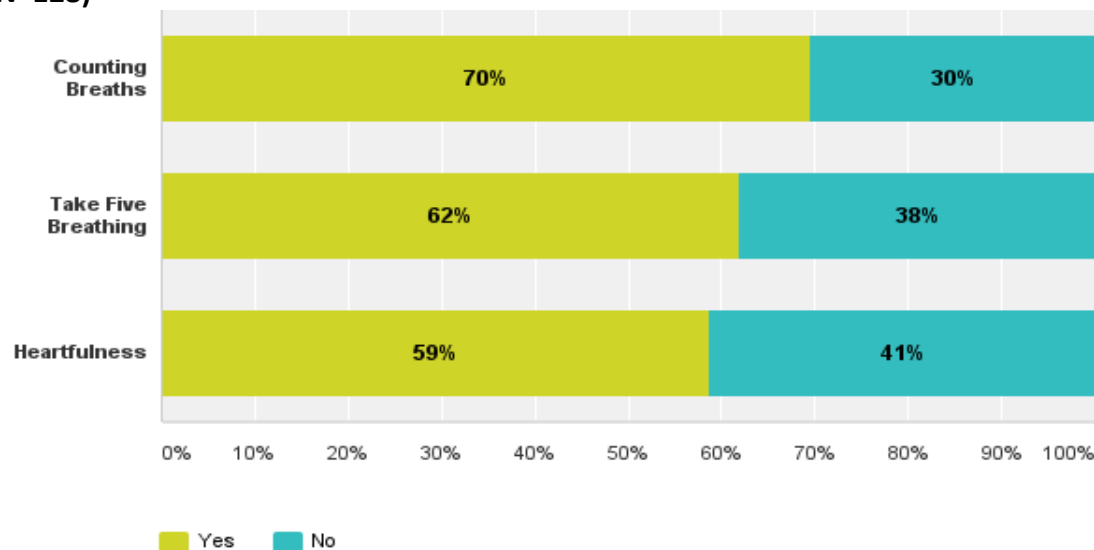
"I think it is important to have Peace Class at Lafayette because there is much less bullying at our school then some others. I also feel like Lafayette is a very comfortable and friendly learning environment and we have Ms. Ryden, our peace teacher, to thank for that. "

**How much do the skills you learn in Peace Class help you...
(N=138)**



Mindfulness Skills

Have you tried the following Mindfulness Skills outside of Peace Class?
(N=128)



Can you give an example of a time you used Mindfulness outside of Peace Class?
Open-ended response (N=107)

Common themes included:

- Before a sporting event, during a game
- Before a test
- When arguing with siblings/parents
- To help fall asleep
- Accompanying emotions:
 - Anger, worry, frustration, nervousness, anxiety, scared
- When stressed
- To make people happier (Heartfulness)

Sample Quotes:

"I used mindfulness when I am frustrated, nervous, and angry. When I am about to give a presentation I get nervous but mindfulness helps me calm down. When I am angry with my sister mindfulness helps me think of a better way to solve the problem."

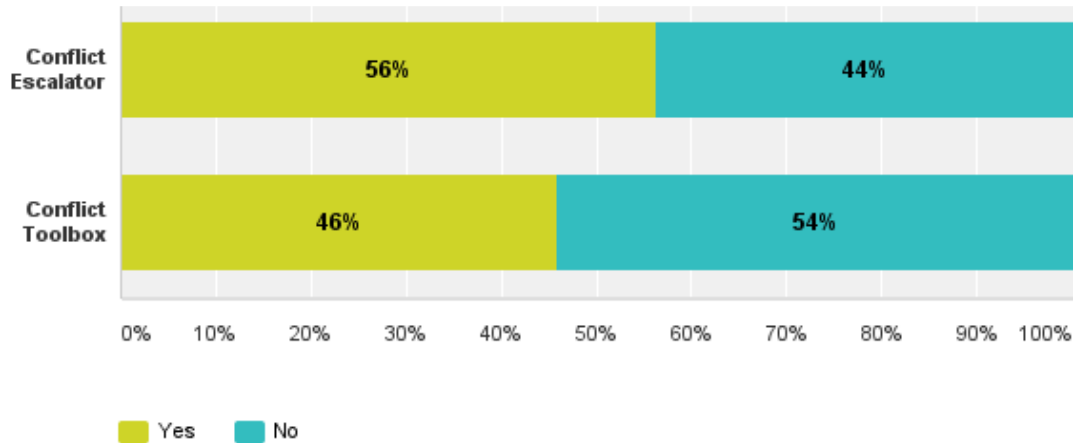
"One time I was playing in a basketball game and I missed an important shot. I got really mad but then did mindfulness, I kept playing and my team ended up winning the game."

"Yes, when I was struggling on a test I stopped for a minute and took some deep breaths, and it really helped me get back on track."

"I used mindfulness when I got really mad at my sister and we had an argument. But when I did mindful breathing, our conflict worked out successfully."

Conflict Resolution Skills

Have you ever used any of your Conflict Resolution Skills outside of Peace Class?
(N=115)



Can you give an example of a time you used these conflict resolution skills outside of Peace Class?
Open-ended response (N=81)

Common Responses Included:

- Getting in fights with friends
- Making decisions, deciding on activities
- Arguments with siblings – conflict escalator
- Using compromises
 - Splitting time spent on two activities, sharing

Sample Quotes:

"I use conflict CAT every time I'm in a fight, conflict escalator when other people are in a fight, and conflict toolbox to work out a conflict."

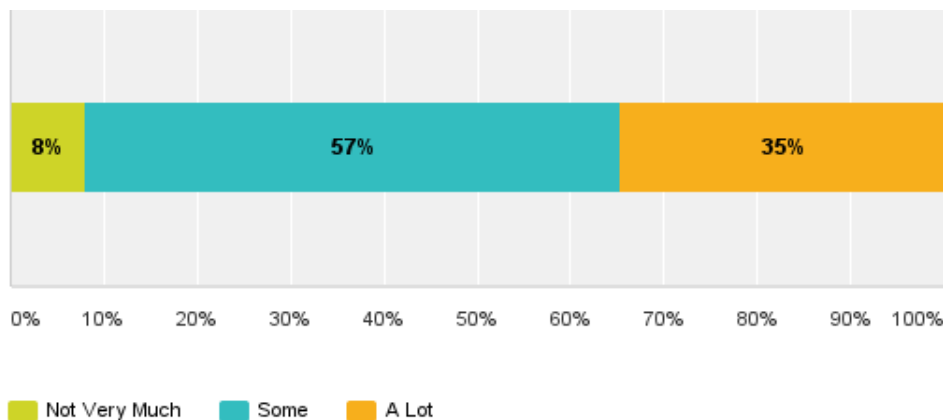
"When I got in to a conflict with my friend, I told her we were going up the conflict escalator. It definitely helped us and we took deep breaths."

"Whenever my friends and I get into a fight, I use the conflict toolbox or remind them that "we are going up the conflict escalator." It helps a lot, and my friends and I haven't fought in a year!"

"Me and my friend were in an argument over playing basketball or knockout. We used our conflict toolbox to decide to play basketball for 15 minutes and play knockout for 15 minutes."

Compassion Skills

How much has Peace Class helped you Be Kinder to others?
(N=124)



Can you give an example of a time when something you learned in Peace Class helped you be kinder to others?

Open-ended response (N=81)

Common themes included:

- Taking a deep breath to not get angry
- Apologizing to be more kind
- Being selfless (ex. letting another person go down the slide first)
- Heartfulness
 - o Helps make new friends
 - o Giving compliments
- Not yelling/not getting angry

Sample Quotes:

"Peace Class really opened my mind to how harmful words make others feel, versus how kind words make people feel. It made me want to be kind to others, because I thought it was cool."

"We pretty much learn to be kinder to others every day. Some days we're learning how to fix things with others and make it better. And other days we learn how little things are the ones that make a difference."

"We were supposed to ask people to tell you at least three good things and that inspired me to do that and ask my family at the end of every day how their day was."

"With my sister when I am angry with her instead of being mean to her I use mindfulness to calm down, solve the problem and be more nice to her."

"It helped me to be kinder to others when I stood up to a person I didn't even know."

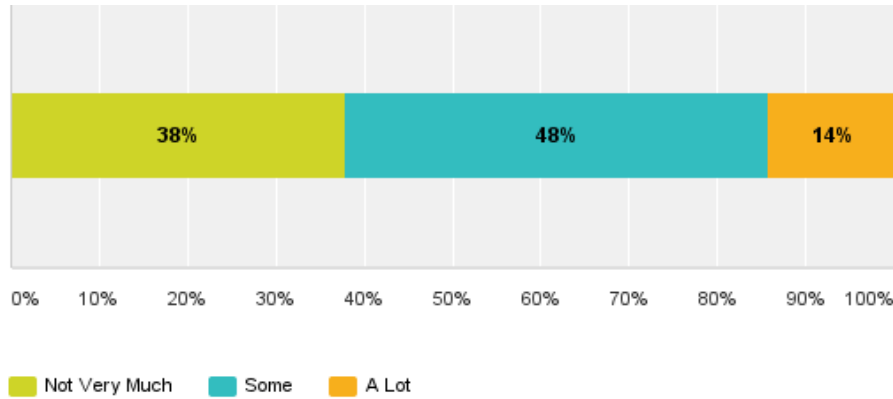
"I would get mad at not getting my way and now i can use my breathing to calm down and that helped so I did not have to argue."

"Well one thing I have learned is that people have different points of view than I do."

Applied Brain Science

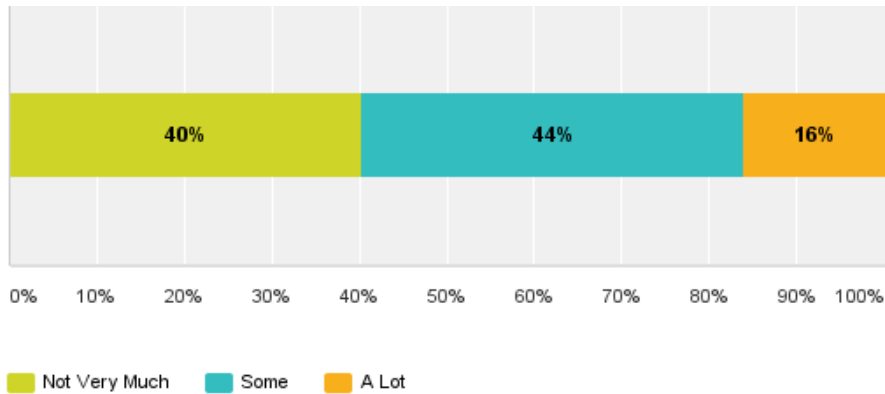
Has knowing about Your Brain helped you at school?

(N=119)



Has knowing about Your Brain helped you at home?

(N=119)



Can you give an example of a time knowing about Your Brain has helped you in school or at home?
Open-ended response (N=76)

Common responses included:

- To impress parents/friends
- During arguments, to calm down
- To manage emotions
 - Sadness, anger, frustration
- Controlling amygdala, returning to PFC control

Sample Quotes:

"Just in small arguments it helps to know about my amygdala so I knew what part of my brain was in charge."

"At home I wanted to remember something and put it in long term memory so I thought about it for ten seconds."

“When I get frustrated with piano I know my amygdala is trying to take over so I focus on bringing my PFC back in control.”

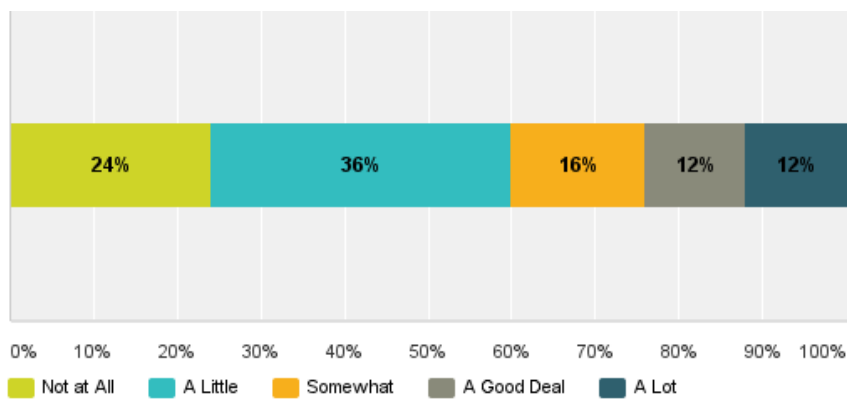
“Whenever I get mad, I can think to myself, “Hey amygdala! Cut it out!”

“Knowing about my brain helps me clam down because I know what goes on inside of me and don't feel like I'm losing it.”

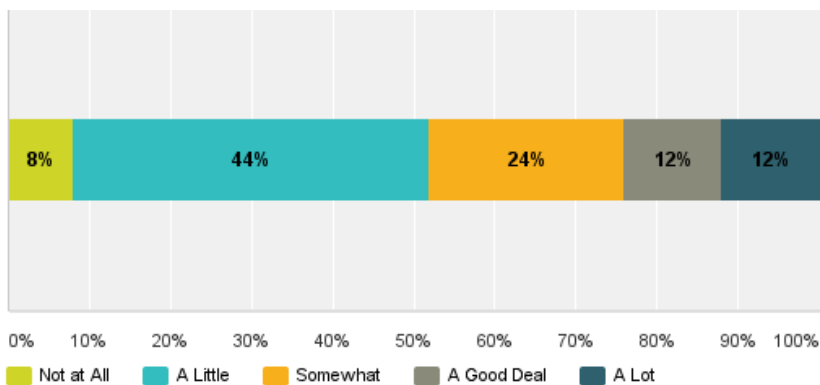
“When I feel sad, it helps to remember that my negativity bias is working. So I think about the good things that happened.”

Teacher Survey

**To what extent does Peace Class help your students become more ready to learn?
(N=25)**



**To what extent does Peace Class help your students get along better with other students in the class?
(N=25)**



**How do you see your students using what they learn in Peace Class?
(Open-ended N=19)**

- Doing nice things for their kindness pals
- Unsure they are learning much, do not see them using it (or do not see them using it without adult prompting)
- Less bullying overall
- Students call for/lead mindful moments in class
- Students take a moment to breath before a test or other event

Sample Quotes:

"In the way they interact with each other on a daily basis... There is a much more supportive and mindful environment in recent years. I see less bullying kinds of behavior and meanness to each other and more helpfulness and kindness to each other."

"On two occasions I have had a student say, "We need to turn off the lights and have a mindful breathing." On a few occasions, kids have witnessed nastiness on the playground and are reporting to me, He was not acting mindfully."

"I don't see them doing it - even with reminders from me. I still see kids in my room and other classes laughing at children who get a wrong answer or mocking children who are corrected by the teacher. It still happens almost every day"

"They have kindness buddies that they try to remember to do random acts of kindness for - assigned in Peace Class. I occasionally see/hear children getting each other's backpack, pencil, etc."