

**Teacher Descriptions of Mindfulness Practices in a PreK through Grade 12 Independent  
School**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to explore how PreK–12 educators described how mindfulness practices shaped their reflective processes and their perceptions of the role these practices play in student achievement. Understanding educator descriptions is essential to determining how mindfulness may support teacher growth and student outcomes. The theoretical foundation of this study was Schön’s reflective practice theory, which emphasizes reflection in and on action to improve professional practice. The research questions guiding this study asked how educators perceived their reflective processes with mindfulness practices and how these practices were perceived to play a role in student achievement. A purposive sampling method was used to achieve a sample of 25 participants from a private PreK–12 school in Northern New Jersey. Data were collected through ten semi-structured interviews and two focus groups. All sessions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using NVivo software. Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis method was used to analyze the data from interviews and focus groups. Participants described improvements in classroom climate, student focus, and resilience, which they perceived to contribute positively to student achievement. The findings provided insight into how educators perceived mindfulness as enhancing reflection, patience, and intentionality in their professional practice. These results suggest that mindfulness practices may serve as a valuable tool to strengthen reflective practice and instructional effectiveness.

**Keywords:** mindfulness, reflective practice, educator descriptions, student achievement

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Mindfulness has emerged as a significant area of interest within educational settings, attracting attention for its potential to enhance student well-being (Bordbar et al., 2024). Mindfulness, which originated in ancient contemplative traditions, involves paying purposeful, nonjudgmental attention to the present moment (Bauer et al., 2022). Within educational contexts, mindfulness practices are integrated into classroom settings to promote cognitive and effective benefits, including improved attention, reduced stress, and enhanced emotional regulation (Kuyken et al., 2022). The integration of mindfulness practices into educational settings aligns with broader initiatives to enhance student well-being and academic performance. Educational stakeholders, including educators, administrators, and policymakers, increasingly recognize the importance of addressing students' holistic development (Maynard et al., 2021). Although mindfulness programs are becoming more prevalent in education, a significant gap in the literature persists regarding educators' descriptions of the influence these practices have on students (Bauer et al., 2022). The focus of this study was on the exploration of educators' descriptions of their mindfulness practices and the perceived role these practices have on students and teaching.

This research is relevant and necessary due to the potential implications of mindfulness practices for educational outcomes. Various cognitive and emotional benefits are associated with mindfulness; however, educators' descriptions regarding the role of mindfulness practices in their classrooms have received limited attention in current literature (Koçali & Asik, 2022). Understanding educators' experiences and descriptions through semi-structured interviews and focus groups is critical, as educators directly facilitate mindfulness activities within classroom settings (Creswell et al., 2020). Through the exploration of these insights, the hope is that these

findings will provide practical guidance for implementing mindfulness effectively to enhance student academic outcomes.

Existing literature has identified benefits of mindfulness practices in educational settings, such as improved attention, reduced anxiety, and enhanced emotional regulation (Bauer et al., 2022). However, research findings remain inconsistent. Although some studies have highlighted significant advantages associated with mindfulness implementation (Essa, 2023; Kuyken et al., 2022), others report inconclusive or mixed results (Maynard et al., 2021). This inconsistency underscores the need for further exploration, particularly regarding educators' descriptions of mindfulness practices and their observations.

Research on mindfulness practices within educational settings has significantly expanded in recent years, highlighting practical benefits for student well-being and academic performance (Maynard et al., 2021). This study is grounded in Kabat-Zinn's (1994) conceptualization of mindfulness as present moment, nonjudgmental awareness, which provides a foundational framework for understanding the intentional cultivation of attention within educational contexts. In addition, Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory informed this inquiry by emphasizing reflection in action and reflection on action as central to professional growth and instructional decision making. Principles from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL; 2020) further support this framework by situating mindfulness within broader social emotional learning constructs, including self-awareness, emotional regulation, and relationship skills.

An exploration of educators' descriptions provides valuable insights regarding the real-world effectiveness of mindfulness interventions, thereby contributing to broader theoretical and practical understandings of mindfulness implementation (Bunjak et al., 2022). Understanding

these descriptions may also identify practical challenges and contextual factors that facilitate successful mindfulness practices within educational settings. Given the critical role educators play in introducing mindfulness into classrooms, their perspectives can inform best practices and support structures, potentially leading to enhanced student outcomes. Thus, examining educator perspectives deepens the current literature and supports future policy and implementation decisions related to mindfulness in education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem addressed in this study is the limited understanding of educators' mindfulness practices, how those practices shape their reflective processes, and how educators perceive the role these practices play in supporting students (Maynard et al., 2021). Although mindfulness practices have been linked to cognitive and emotional benefits for students (Bauer et al., 2022), much of the existing literature has focused primarily on student outcomes rather than on educators lived experiences. A gap exists in understanding how PreK-12 educators interpret and implement mindfulness practices in authentic classroom contexts and how they perceive the relationship between mindfulness and student well-being (Essa, 2023). Without this perspective, the field lack a comprehensive understanding of how mindfulness functioned at the level of instructional practice and professional reflection.

This problem affects educators, school leaders, and students across educational settings. Educators have been encouraged to implement mindfulness practices without sufficient empirical evidence regarding how such practices are integrated with their reflective processes and instructional decision-making. School organizations had invested time and resources into mindfulness initiatives without clear insight into educator perceptions or long-term

sustainability. Students may have experienced inconsistent implementation when mindfulness was introduced without a grounded understanding of how educators conceptualized and enacted these practices.

What was not well known was how educators described their own reflective engagement with mindfulness and how they perceived its influence on student engagement, emotional regulation, and academic performance. If this problem had remained unexamined, schools risked implementing mindfulness as a surface-level initiative rather than as an embedded reflective practice. Such superficial implementation could have limited the effectiveness and sustainability of mindfulness efforts across grade levels. In this study, I explored PreK-12 educators' descriptions of their mindfulness practices and examined how those practices shaped their reflective processes and perceptions of student outcomes, thereby addressing a critical gap in the literature.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to explore PreK–12 educators' descriptions regarding the implementation of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students at a private school in Northern New Jersey. I collected detailed insights from educators through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, specifically focusing on mindfulness strategies utilized in their classrooms. This approach was intended to provide a deeper understanding of the practical applications and potential challenges associated with mindfulness implementation, supporting broader efforts to enhance student well-being and academic performance.

The target population included PreK–12 educators who were actively integrating mindfulness practices in a private school in Northern New Jersey. Participants' confidentiality was protected using pseudonyms. Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, designed to capture educators' descriptions comprehensively. The sample included 25 participants: 10 for interviews and two focus groups, each containing five participants. An additional five participants were placed on a waitlist to account for potential participant attrition. To analyze the data, I transcribed the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, utilizing thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes (Yin, 2018). Findings provided insights into the reflective practices of educators and their perceived effects on students.

Exploring educators' descriptions provided valuable contributions to educational practice while highlighting the potential of mindfulness as a tool for enhancing student well-being through improved cognitive and affective outcomes. These findings can inform policy, educator training, and curriculum development, ensuring that mindfulness practices are effectively integrated into educational settings. Understanding educators' experiences and reflections identified specific areas where mindfulness interventions are most effective, thereby optimizing their implementation. This research may support the broader goal of improving educational outcomes and student well-being by providing a deeper understanding of how mindfulness can be utilized in schools.

### **Introduction to Theoretical Framework**

The framework for this study was reflective practice theory, as articulated by Schön (1983). Central to this theory are the concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action refers to the ability of professionals to think about what they are doing while doing it, enabling on-the-spot problem-solving and adjustments (Schön, 1983). Reflection-on-

action involves looking back at completed actions to understand what happened and consider how future practices might be improved. Schön posited that reflective processes are critical for professional growth, adaptation, and the development of a deeper understanding of one's practice.

Reflective practice theory directly informed the development of the problem statement, purpose statement, and research question for this study. By focusing on teachers' descriptions and experiences with mindfulness practices, the study aligns with this framework's emphasis on reflection as a means for professional learning and improvement (Schön, 1983). The problem statement underscores the need to further explore how educators reflect upon mindfulness practices within educational contexts. This reflective lens is essential for addressing gaps in existing literature concerning educators' descriptions of mindfulness practices in the classroom.

### **Introduction to Research Methodology and Design (Nature of the Study)**

The methodology selected for the study was qualitative with a descriptive case study design. This methodological approach was particularly suited for examining the descriptions of PreK through 12th grade educators regarding how mindfulness practices may contribute to student well-being and other classroom outcomes (Emerson et al., 2020). Descriptive case study design facilitated an in-depth exploration within a specific educational context, employing data collection methods such as interviews and focus groups to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. These methods were crucial for capturing detailed insights necessary to examine the complex dynamics of mindfulness in educational settings (Yin, 2018). This approach provides flexibility and depth, essential for exploring educators' nuanced experiences and reflective descriptions.

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were the primary data collection methods. The combination of these two methods allowed for a versatile exploration of educators' descriptions, enabling me to probe deeply into responses while accommodating the emergence of unexpected themes. Semi-structured interviews provided a framework that ensured coverage of key topics while allowing participants to fully express their thoughts. Focus groups facilitated dynamic discussions that revealed collective insights and diverse viewpoints among participants. A thematic analysis approach guided data analysis, systematically identifying and interpreting patterns within the data to construct a coherent narrative about educators' experiences and viewpoints (Yin, 2018). This analytic approach ensured data are methodically examined to uncover meaningful themes.

The qualitative methodology and descriptive case study design were specifically selected because they aligned directly with the objectives of this study, addressing the identified gap in understanding how mindfulness practices are described by educators and their perceived effect on students. This methodology facilitated exploration of subjective experiences and the intricate relationship between mindfulness practices and educational outcomes, aspects quantitative approaches might not comprehensively capture (Yin, 2018). The use of interviews and focus groups specifically supported an investigation into educators' reflections, aligning clearly with research questions aimed at understanding educators' descriptions of mindfulness practices and their perceived influence on students. This methodological alignment ensured coherence and clearly targeted the study's goals.

This methodology and design choice provided nuanced insights informing educational policy, educator training, and classroom practices, significantly contributing to the field of

education by incorporating feedback from educators practicing mindfulness in education. It elucidates mindfulness practices within schools and explored broader implications for enhancing student academic outcomes. This qualitative approach helped identify specific challenges and opportunities associated with implementing mindfulness practices, offering practical recommendations for educators and administrators. By capturing detailed, context specific insights, I was able to generate findings that are both practically relevant and theoretically robust, contributing to a deeper understanding of mindfulness practices in educational contexts.

### **Research Question**

*RQ1* How do Pre-K to 12th grade educators describe their use of mindfulness strategies in the classroom and their perceived effects on students?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study's significance lied in its potential to contribute to the practical and theoretical understanding of mindfulness in education. Findings from this research can assist educators, administrators, and policymakers in understanding how mindfulness practices are perceived by educators concerning their implementation and perceived effects on students, thereby informing professional development and instructional strategies (Bauer et al., 2022). By examining how educators reflect on mindfulness practices and perceive these practices to effect student achievement, this research advances the understanding of reflective practice theory (Schön, 1983). This approach is beneficial for ensuring the insights gained are both practically relevant and theoretically robust.

Addressing the identified research problem provided several benefits. Effective integration of mindfulness practices in schools has the potential to enhance student well-being

(Kuyken et al., 2022). The study's findings contribute to existing literature on mindfulness in education by offering evidence that supports or challenges current theories and practices. By exploring educators' descriptions, the research highlights the perceived positive effects of mindfulness practices, potentially promoting their broader adoption and adaptation in educational contexts. This examination can lead to a more informed approach to implementing mindfulness in schools.

The research offers practical recommendations for educators and administrators regarding the effective implementation of mindfulness practices based on educators' reflective insights. Understanding educators' perspectives helps identify best practices and potential challenges, leading to more effective professional development programs. The insights gained from this study can inform policy decisions, facilitating the creation of a supportive environment for mindfulness initiatives in schools. These practical recommendations are essential for achieving sustainable improvements in educational settings.

The study could provide a comprehensive examination of the practical applications and theoretical implications of mindfulness in education. By enhancing student well-being through informed, reflective educational practices, the research supports the broader goal of understanding teacher descriptions and potentially improving educational outcomes. This comprehensive examination contributes to both the practice and theory of education, offering valuable insights for future research and application. Furthermore, the study's findings can help develop more effective mindfulness programs tailored to educators' and students' specific needs, ensuring their successful implementation in various educational settings.

## **Definitions of Key Terms**

### ***Mindfulness***

Mindfulness is a practice that involves maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment, characterized by a non-judgmental and accepting attitude (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

### ***Well-being***

Well-being is a holistic concept that encompasses physical, mental, and emotional health, often associated with positive outcomes such as happiness, life satisfaction, and the ability to manage stress (Ryff & Singer, 2006).

## **Summary**

Chapter 1 introduces the proposed study on mindfulness in educational settings, outlining its importance and relevance. The chapter included discussion on how mindfulness practices can enhance student well-being, based on recent research findings (Bauer et al., 2022). The gap in existing research regarding educators' descriptions of mindfulness practices and their perceived effect on students is addressed, emphasizing the necessity of exploring educators' reflective insights to understand how these practices are implemented and perceived in classroom settings (Kuyken et al., 2022). This emphasis is crucial for ensuring the effective adoption and sustainability of mindfulness practices in educational environments. It sets the stage for an in-depth examination of educators' roles in integrating these practices.

The problem statement identifies a gap in literature, focusing on the mixed results regarding mindfulness practices and emphasizing the critical need to explore educators' descriptions. This leads to the study's purpose: to explore the reflective processes of PreK

through 12th grade educators in Northern New Jersey regarding mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students. The proposed study represents an opportunity to gather rich, detailed data through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, providing comprehensive insights into educators' reflective processes. This qualitative approach ensures that the data collected will be thorough, nuanced, and aligned specifically with the study's objectives. These insights are expected to fill existing gaps in current literature.

Presented in the chapter is the theoretical framework guiding the research, primarily based on Reflective Practice Theory (Schön, 1983). This theoretical lens supported the exploration of educators' reflections regarding mindfulness implementation and the perceived effects of these practices on students. The chapter includes discussion on the research methodology and design, indicating a qualitative descriptive case study approach. This methodology aligned directly with the study's objectives, facilitating a detailed exploration of educators' subjective experiences and descriptions. Such an approach was essential for capturing the complex dynamics involved in mindfulness practices.

The study's significance is outlined, highlighting its potential contributions to both practical and theoretical understandings of mindfulness in education. The findings could provide valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers, informing professional development and supporting the effective integration of mindfulness practices in schools (Bauer et al., 2022). Addressing the identified research problem may enhance student well-being through informed, reflective educational practices. This comprehensive examination is expected to contribute significantly to both the practice and theory of education. Presented in the next

chapter is the literature review, offering a detailed examination of existing research related to mindfulness practices in educational settings.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to explore how PreK through 12th-grade educators in a private school in Northern New Jersey perceive mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students through their reflective processes. The problem addressed by this study is the limited understanding of educators' descriptions regarding the relationship between mindfulness practices and student well-being (Maynard et al., 2021). The effective integration of mindfulness practices in educational settings can enhance student well-being (Kuyken et al., 2022). This chapter provides a detailed review of the existing literature on mindfulness in education, emphasizing the potential effects of mindfulness practices on student well-being and educators' reflective practices in implementing these interventions.

The literature review is organized into several key sections. The first section provides an overview of the theoretical framework guiding this study, specifically Donald Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory, and its relevance to understanding educators' descriptions and the role of mindfulness in professional reflection and growth. The second section outlines the historical context of mindfulness practices, tracing their evolution from ancient contemplative traditions to their integration into modern educational settings. The third section presents findings from empirical studies on the cognitive and effective outcomes associated with mindfulness, including attention, stress reduction, emotional regulation, and well-being. This is followed by a section that addresses research on the relationship between mindfulness practices, teaching, and student well-being, noting both supportive and contradictory results in the literature. Additional sections describe commonly used mindfulness methods and approaches in educational contexts, as well as the key components typically included in structured mindfulness programs. Consideration is also given to how these practices intersect with reflective practice theory and how educators

describe their experiences using mindfulness strategies. The chapter concludes with a summary of key insights from the literature, areas of agreement and disagreement, and a rationale for the current study.

To gather relevant literature, multiple academic databases were accessed, including PsycINFO, ERIC, and Google Scholar. These databases were chosen for their comprehensive coverage of educational and psychological research, ensuring a wide range of relevant studies. The literature search covered the years 2020 to 2025 to ensure a comprehensive review of recent, relevant studies. Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and dissertations were included to provide a broad perspective on the topic, encompassing both foundational and contemporary research.

Search parameters included combinations of the following keywords: *mindfulness in education, student well-being, academic achievement, educators' descriptions, reflective practice, Schön, cognitive benefits of mindfulness, and emotional regulation*. These search terms were selected to capture the multifaceted nature of mindfulness in educational settings, reflecting both theoretical and practical dimensions. Detailed search terms and their combinations are provided in an appendix to ensure transparency and replicability of the search process.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework guiding this study was Donald Schön's reflective practice theory (1983), a pivotal concept in professional learning and development. Schön's ideas emerged as a response to the limitations of traditional technical-rational models of professional knowledge, which he argued were insufficient for addressing the complexities and uncertainties inherent in professional practice. Schön emphasized the importance of reflective thinking as a means for professionals to navigate these challenges effectively. This theory has since been

widely adopted and adapted across various fields, including education, healthcare, and social work, where it has proven to be a valuable tool for professional development and learning (Finlay, 2008).

Reflective practice theory centers on two main types of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action is the process by which professionals think about and adjust their actions in real time, enabling immediate problem-solving and adaptation. Reflection-on-action, on the other hand, involves retrospective contemplation of one's actions to understand what happened and to improve future practice (Schön, 1983). These reflective processes are essential for continuous professional growth, adaptability, and deeper understanding of one's practice.

In this study, reflective practice theory was used to explore teachers' descriptions and experiences with mindfulness practices in the classroom. The framework is applied to examine how teachers reflect on integrating mindfulness practices and the outcomes they observe, thereby providing insights into the practical application and effectiveness of these practices in educational settings. By focusing on both immediate and reflective thinking, I aimed to uncover how mindfulness can be more effectively implemented to benefit both teachers and students. This dual approach highlights the relevance of Schön's theory in educational practice, particularly in understanding and improving teaching strategies.

Historically, the concept of reflection has roots in the works of earlier philosophers and educators, such as John Dewey (1933), who highlighted the importance of reflective thinking in education. Schön (1983) built on these ideas, proposing a more structured approach to reflection that professionals could use to improve their practice. Over the years, reflective practice theory has been widely adopted across various fields, including education, healthcare, and social work,

where it has proven to be a valuable tool for professional development and learning (Finlay, 2008). This historical foundation underscores the enduring relevance of reflective practice in fostering continuous improvement and adaptability in professional settings.

Reflective practice theory has been utilized in numerous studies to explore its effect on professional development and practice improvement. For example, Killion and Todnem (1991) examined the use of reflective practice among teachers and found that it significantly enhanced their instructional strategies and classroom management skills. Similarly, Meiklejohn et al. (2012) demonstrated that mindfulness practices, when integrated with reflective practice, led to improved resilience and well-being among educators and students. These studies underscore the practical benefits of reflective practice in educational settings, providing empirical support for its inclusion in this study.

The selected theoretical framework for this study was reflective practice theory (Schön, 1983). This framework was directly relevant because it provided a structured approach for understanding how teachers integrated and reflected on mindfulness practices within their classrooms. Reflective practice theory guided the development of the problem statement by emphasizing the importance of examining teachers' reflective processes and their perceived effect on student achievement. The purpose statement and research questions were also shaped by this framework, as they centered on educators' reflective experiences and their perceptions of the outcomes of mindfulness practices. By applying reflective practice theory to the context of mindfulness implementation in PreK through 12 settings, I extended the theory into an area that had received limited empirical attention. This study contributed to the theoretical literature by illustrating how reflective practice functioned not only in instructional decision making but also in the intentional integration of mindfulness as a pedagogical approach.

Reflective practice theory has been used in existing studies that explore mindfulness in education. For example, Ergas and Hadar (2019) applied reflective practice theory to examine how mindfulness supports instructional decision-making and professional learning among teachers. Similarly, Flook et al. (2013) explored the integration of mindfulness in educational settings and discussed how reflective practices contributed to teacher development and classroom climate. These examples show that reflective practice theory is an appropriate lens through which to examine how educators engage with and make meaning of mindfulness strategies in their work.

Alternative frameworks were considered, such as Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1978) and Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986). However, transformative learning focuses on significant shifts in perspective, which was not the primary focus of this study. Social cognitive theory emphasizes learning through observation and reinforcement, which does not capture the internal, reflective processes that are central to this research. Reflective practice theory was chosen because it most directly supports the study's goal of understanding how educators reflect on mindfulness implementation and describe its perceived influence on their teaching and student outcomes. Reflective practice theory is directly relevant as it provides a structured approach for understanding educators' reflective descriptions of mindfulness implementation and their perceived effects on students.

### ***Historical Context of Mindfulness Practices***

Mindfulness, a practice that has been integral to various ancient contemplative traditions, has evolved over thousands of years (Kabat Zinn, 2003). It has become a significant component of different domains, including education. The origins of mindfulness are deeply rooted in the spiritual practices of ancient India, where it formed a core part of both Hindu and Buddhist

traditions. In Buddhism, mindfulness is referred to as *sati*, one of the seven factors of enlightenment. It plays a central role in meditation practices aimed at achieving enlightenment by fostering deep awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations (Bauer et al., 2022; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Mindfulness in these early contexts was more than a mental exercise; it was a comprehensive approach to understanding the nature of reality, emphasizing the importance of present moment awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

As these practices spread to other parts of Asia, including China, Japan, and Southeast Asia, they were adapted and integrated into various religious and philosophical frameworks. In Zen Buddhism, for instance, mindfulness became synonymous with the practice of *zazen*, or sitting meditation, emphasizing direct experience and the cultivation of a quiet, aware mind. These practices laid the groundwork for mindfulness as a way of life, not merely a set of meditative techniques, deeply influencing the daily lives and ethical practices of those who followed these paths (Bauer et al., 2022).

The adaptation of mindfulness into Western contexts began in the 20th century, significantly affected by the global dissemination of Eastern philosophies and practices (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). This transition marked a significant shift in how mindfulness was perceived and utilized. Jon Kabat-Zinn's work in the late 1970s was pivotal in this regard. Kabat-Zinn, a professor of medicine, developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, initially to assist patients in managing chronic pain and stress through structured mindfulness meditation. This program was innovative because it secularized mindfulness practices, stripping them of their religious overtones and framing them within the context of healthcare and psychological well-being. By focusing on stress reduction

and pain management, Kabat-Zinn demonstrated the practical, therapeutic benefits of mindfulness to a broader, more secular audience (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

The success of the MBSR program in clinical settings quickly garnered attention from other fields, including education, where the potential benefits of mindfulness for students began to be explored. Educators and researchers recognized that the same principles that helped patients manage stress could be applied to help students cope with academic pressures and improve their overall well-being (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2021). As mindfulness gained popularity in educational settings, it was met with both enthusiasm and skepticism. Early proponents focused on its psychological benefits, such as reducing stress and improving emotional regulation (Lawlor & Maloney, 2021). However, concerns about the religious origins of mindfulness and the challenges of adapting these practices to secular educational environments led to initial resistance (Greenberg & Harris, 2020).

To address these concerns, proponents of mindfulness in education emphasized its secular and psychological aspects, aligning it with the goals of modern educational systems that prioritize student well-being and emotional health (Lawlor & Maloney, 2021). This secularization was critical in gaining acceptance among educators and policymakers who were cautious about integrating practices with religious connotations into public education. By focusing on the empirical evidence of mindfulness' benefits, proponents were able to demonstrate its relevance and applicability in diverse educational settings (Greenberg & Harris, 2020).

Despite these initial challenges, the integration of mindfulness into education has grown significantly, particularly as part of the broader movement towards holistic education. Holistic

education emphasizes the development of the whole child, focusing on cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of learning rather than solely on academic achievement (Lawlor & Maloney, 2021). This educational philosophy aligns well with the principles of mindfulness, which promotes self-awareness, emotional regulation, and compassionate understanding of oneself and others (Roeser & Eccles, 2021). As educators increasingly recognize the importance of addressing students' emotional and social needs alongside academic learning, mindfulness has become an essential tool for promoting holistic development and well-being (Waters et al., 2020).

The alignment of mindfulness with social-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks has further facilitated its adoption in schools. SEL programs, which have been widely implemented across various educational settings, aim to equip students with the skills needed for self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Greenberg & Harris, 2020). Mindfulness has been integrated into these programs as a tool to help students develop these competencies, particularly in managing emotions and behaviors. The incorporation of mindfulness into SEL frameworks has provided a structured and evidence-based way to introduce these practices into classrooms, making them more accessible and acceptable to educators and students alike. By linking mindfulness with well-established educational frameworks, advocates have successfully demonstrated its relevance to the educational priorities of fostering emotional and social competencies (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2021).

As mindfulness practices became more established in educational settings, researchers began to explore their broader implications for student development. Initially, the focus was

primarily on the psychological benefits of mindfulness, such as reducing anxiety, stress, and depression (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). However, as interest in the field grew, research expanded to include the cognitive benefits of mindfulness, including its effect on attention, memory, and overall academic performance (Felver et al., 2020). This shift reflects a growing understanding of mindfulness as a comprehensive approach to enhancing not only emotional well-being but also cognitive functioning and learning outcomes (Lawlor & Maloney, 2021). The multifaceted benefits of mindfulness underscore its potential as a key component of educational practices aimed at fostering well-rounded, resilient, and capable individuals (Flook et al., 2020).

The historical context of mindfulness in education also includes its gradual institutionalization through research and policy. Over the past two decades, mindfulness has moved from being a relatively fringe concept to becoming a mainstream practice in many schools, supported by a growing body of empirical research. Organizations such as the Mindful Schools Project and the Center for Mindfulness in Education have played pivotal roles in promoting the practice and providing training for educators (Greenberg & Harris, 2020). These efforts have been bolstered by research funding from governmental and non-governmental organizations, which has enabled large-scale studies on the effectiveness of mindfulness in schools (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2021). This institutional support has been crucial in legitimizing mindfulness as a valuable educational tool and in facilitating its widespread adoption (Greenberg & Harris, 2020).

The historical evolution of mindfulness from its ancient spiritual origins to its contemporary applications in education reflects a broader trend toward holistic approaches in teaching and learning. The integration of mindfulness into educational practices has been shaped

by cultural, philosophical, and empirical effects, resulting in a practice that is both deeply rooted in tradition and dynamically evolving to meet the needs of modern educational environments (Bauer et al., 2022). This context sets the stage for understanding the various dimensions of mindfulness as it is practiced in educational settings today and provides a foundation for exploring its effects on students' cognitive, emotional, and academic development. As mindfulness continues to evolve, it holds the potential to further transform educational practices and contribute to the well-being and success of students and educators alike (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Understanding this historical context is crucial for comprehending educators' perspectives on mindfulness practices and how these descriptions shape their reflections on student outcomes.

### **Cognitive and Effective Benefits of Mindfulness**

The cognitive benefits of mindfulness in educational settings have been extensively documented, with research highlighting significant improvements in attention, executive functioning, and other key cognitive processes (Flook et al., 2020; Lawlor & Maloney, 2021). Attention, a critical cognitive skill that underpins all learning activities, is one of the most well-researched areas in the context of mindfulness (Bauer et al., 2022). One study consistently showed that mindfulness practices enhance students' ability to sustain attention over extended periods, thereby improving their capacity to engage with and absorb academic content (Felver et al., 2020). These improvements in attention are particularly relevant in modern educational environments, where students are often bombarded with distractions from digital devices and social media (Klingbeil et al., 2020). By fostering sustained attention, mindfulness helps students remain focused on their academic tasks, reducing the effect of external distractions (Felver et al., 2020).

Neuroimaging studies have provided further insight into the cognitive benefits of mindfulness by showing that regular mindfulness practice can lead to structural changes in the brain (Simkin & Black, 2020). Specifically, mindfulness has been associated with increased gray matter density in regions of the brain involved in attention, such as the prefrontal cortex (Roeser & Eccles, 2021). These findings suggest that mindfulness not only improves attention in the short term but may also have long-lasting effects on brain development and cognitive functioning (Flook et al., 2020). Such evidence supports the inclusion of mindfulness practices in educational curricula to enhance cognitive skills fundamental to academic success. By promoting neuroplasticity, mindfulness practices can potentially enhance students' cognitive capacities, leading to better learning outcomes (Roeser & Eccles, 2021).

Cognitive flexibility, the ability to adapt one's thinking and behavior in response to changing circumstances, is another area where mindfulness has demonstrated significant benefits (Flook et al., 2020). Cognitive flexibility is essential for problem-solving, creative thinking, and adapting to new information or perspectives (Van de Weijer-Bergsma et al., 2021). Mindfulness practices improve cognitive flexibility by fostering a mindset of openness and non-judgmental awareness, allowing students to approach challenges with a more adaptive and creative mindset (Dariotis et al., 2021). This skill is particularly important in today's rapidly changing world, where students must be able to navigate complex and often ambiguous information landscapes. By promoting cognitive flexibility, mindfulness helps students develop the ability to think critically and adapt to new situations, which are key competencies for success in the 21st century (Van de Weijer-Bergsma et al., 2021).

In addition to attention, mindfulness has been shown to improve working memory, another critical cognitive function. Working memory involves holding and manipulating information in mind, a skill essential for tasks such as problem-solving, reading comprehension, and mathematical reasoning (Flook et al., 2020). Mindfulness practices can enhance working memory capacity by reducing cognitive load and increasing mental clarity (Klingbeil et al., 2020). This enhancement is particularly beneficial for students in rigorous academic environments, where the ability to efficiently process and retain information is crucial (Van de Weijer-Bergsma et al., 2021). By improving working memory, mindfulness enables students to manage complex cognitive tasks more effectively, leading to better academic performance. This is particularly relevant in subjects that require higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills, such as mathematics and science (Flook et al., 2020).

The effective benefits of mindfulness are equally profound, particularly in emotional regulation and stress reduction. Emotional regulation involves the ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences in a way that is appropriate and constructive (Kuyken et al., 2022). Mindfulness practices have been shown to reduce levels of cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone, indicating that these practices can effectively lower stress and improve emotional resilience (Broderick & Jennings, 2021). These findings are significant for students who may experience high levels of stress due to academic pressures, social challenges, or personal issues. Reducing stress through mindfulness can create a more supportive learning environment, helping students to feel more secure and focused on their studies (Thomas & McCraty, 2021).

Mindfulness also promotes emotional regulation by increasing students' awareness of their emotions and providing them with tools to manage these emotions more effectively

(Greenberg & Harris, 2020). For example, mindfulness practices such as focused breathing or body scans help students become more attuned to their physical and emotional states, allowing them to recognize early signs of stress or anxiety and to respond in a calm and measured way (Thomas & McCraty, 2021). This increased awareness and control over emotions can lead to better outcomes in both academic and social contexts, as students are better equipped to handle challenges without becoming overwhelmed (Perry-Parrish et al., 2020). By enhancing emotional regulation, mindfulness contributes to a more positive school experience, reducing the likelihood of behavioral problems and promoting a culture of respect and empathy (Simkin & Black, 2020).

In addition to enhancing emotional regulation, mindfulness has been found to increase empathy and prosocial behavior, both of which are critical for positive social interactions and a supportive classroom environment (Broderick & Jennings, 2021). Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is a key component of social-emotional learning and is essential for building strong, positive relationships (Greenberg & Harris, 2020). Mindfulness practices can enhance empathy by promoting a sense of connectedness and compassion, both towards oneself and others (Waters et al., 2020). This increase in empathy can lead to more prosocial behaviors, such as cooperation, helping, and sharing, which contribute to a positive and inclusive classroom culture (Thomas & McCraty, 2021). Such a culture not only supports individual well-being but also fosters a sense of community and mutual support among students (Greenberg & Harris, 2020).

The integration of mindfulness into educational settings has also been shown to reduce behavioral problems and improve overall classroom management. When students practice mindfulness regularly, they are less likely to exhibit disruptive behaviors and more likely to

follow classroom rules and expectations (Klingbeil et al., 2020). This is likely due to the combined effects of improved emotional regulation, increased empathy, and enhanced cognitive functioning, all of which contribute to a more harmonious and productive classroom environment (Perry-Parrish et al., 2020). Effective classroom management is essential for creating a conducive learning environment, and mindfulness offers a practical tool for achieving this goal by addressing the underlying emotional and cognitive factors that affect student behavior (Felver et al., 2020).

Overall, the cognitive and effective benefits of mindfulness in educational settings are well-supported by a growing body of research. These benefits not only enhance individual student outcomes but also contribute to the overall effectiveness and inclusivity of the learning environment (Simkin & Black, 2020). By fostering cognitive skills such as attention, working memory, and cognitive flexibility, as well as effective skills such as emotional regulation and empathy, mindfulness practices offer a holistic approach to student development that is aligned with the goals of modern education (Lawlor & Maloney, 2021). The integration of mindfulness into educational practices represents a shift towards a more comprehensive understanding of student well-being and academic success, emphasizing the importance of addressing both cognitive and emotional needs (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2021).

### **Mindfulness and Academic Achievement**

The relationship between mindfulness practices and academic achievement has been a focal point of educational research, yielding both supportive and nuanced findings. Some studies report significant positive effects of mindfulness on academic performance, suggesting that students who regularly engage in mindfulness practices tend to achieve higher grades and

perform better on standardized tests (Ayub et al., 2022; Waters et al., 2020). These studies emphasize the role of mindfulness in enhancing cognitive functions directly related to academic success, such as attention, memory, and executive function (Felver et al., 2020). By improving these cognitive skills, mindfulness helps students process information more effectively and retain knowledge, which is essential for academic achievement (Flook et al., 2020).

Waters (2020) found that combining mindfulness practices with character strengths interventions led to significant improvements in both academic performance and overall well-being among students. This research suggests that mindfulness enhances students' ability to focus on academic tasks, manage stress, and engage more fully in the learning process, all of which contribute to improved academic outcomes. Similarly, Bakosh et al. (2020) demonstrated that mindfulness training for fifth-grade students improved academic performance and reduced bullying incidents, indicating that mindfulness can have a broad impact on the learning environment. These findings highlight the potential of mindfulness to enhance both academic and social-emotional outcomes, supporting students' overall development.

However, not all studies have found a direct link between mindfulness and academic achievement. Maynard et al. (2021) found that while mindfulness-based interventions in schools generally had positive effects on students' emotional and social well-being, their effects on academic performance were less consistent. The review highlighted that the benefits of mindfulness on academic achievement might be ~~effected~~affected by various factors, including the quality of instruction, the duration of the intervention, and the specific characteristics of the student population. These findings suggest that while mindfulness has the potential to support

academic success, its effectiveness may vary depending on how it is implemented and the context in which it is used (Klingbeil et al., 2020).

The variability in these findings suggests that while mindfulness can support academic achievement, its effectiveness may depend on the implementation quality. Educators who are well-trained in mindfulness and who integrate these practices seamlessly into their teaching are more likely to see positive outcomes in their students' academic performance (Jennings et al., 2020). Conversely, if mindfulness is introduced as an isolated or inconsistent practice, its benefits may be limited (Hwang et al., 2021). Effective implementation requires a commitment to regular practice and integration into the broader curriculum (Jennings et al., 2020). The socio-emotional climate of the classroom also plays a significant role. Classrooms that foster a supportive, inclusive, and emotionally safe environment are more conducive to the successful implementation of mindfulness practices (Greenberg & Harris, 2020). In such environments, students are more likely to engage with mindfulness practices and to experience the cognitive and emotional benefits that can translate into academic success (Waters et al., 2020).

Mindfulness may also support academic achievement by enhancing students' motivation and engagement, both of which are critical factors for success in educational settings (Jennings et al., 2020). Intrinsic motivation, which involves engaging in activities for their inherent value rather than for external rewards, is a key determinant of academic success. Mindfulness practices, which promote self-awareness and self-determination, may enhance intrinsic motivation by helping students connect more deeply with their learning experiences (Bakosh et al., 2020). When students are intrinsically motivated, they are more likely to engage fully in academic tasks, persist through challenges, and achieve better academic outcomes (Hwang et al.,

2021). This connection between mindfulness and motivation underscores the broader effect of mindfulness on students' attitudes toward learning (Ayub et al., 2022).

Student engagement, which refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, is another critical factor affected by mindfulness (Klingbeil et al., 2020). Mindfulness practices increase student engagement by fostering a sense of presence and focus, reducing distractions, and helping students maintain attention on academic tasks (Crain et al., 2021). This increased engagement can lead to better academic performance, as students are more likely to absorb and retain new information when they are fully engaged in the learning process (Jennings et al., 2020). By enhancing engagement, mindfulness contributes to a more dynamic and effective learning experience, which is crucial for student success (Bazzano et al., 2023).

Individual differences among students, such as age, personality, and prior experience with mindfulness, may also play a role in determining how they respond to mindfulness interventions and how these interventions affect their academic performance (Alsubaie et al., 2020). For example, younger students may benefit more from playful, interactive mindfulness practices, while older students may benefit more from reflective, introspective practices (Klingbeil et al., 2020). Students with prior experience in mindfulness may be more receptive to these interventions and may experience greater benefits compared to those who are new to the practice (Hwang et al., 2021). Tailoring mindfulness practices to the specific needs and characteristics of students is crucial for maximizing their effectiveness (Alsubaie et al., 2020). By considering individual differences, educators can design mindfulness programs that are more

engaging and effective, thereby enhancing academic achievement and personal development (Klingbeil et al., 2020).

Another important consideration is the duration and consistency of mindfulness practice. The benefits of mindfulness on academic achievement are more pronounced when students engage in mindfulness practices regularly and over an extended period (Felver et al., 2020). Short-term or sporadic practice may not be sufficient to produce significant changes in cognitive or academic outcomes (Perry-Parrish et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important for schools to implement mindfulness programs that are sustained over time and that provide students with regular opportunities to practice mindfulness (Jennings et al., 2020). Such sustained practice allows for the gradual development of mindfulness skills, leading to more stable and enduring improvements in academic performance (Klingbeil et al., 2020).

Overall, the research on mindfulness and academic achievement presents a complex and nuanced picture. While there is evidence to suggest that mindfulness can support academic success, its effectiveness may depend on a range of factors, including the quality of implementation, the socio-emotional climate of the classroom, and the individual characteristics of the students (Klingbeil et al., 2020). These findings underscore the need for further research to identify the specific conditions and mechanisms through which mindfulness can support academic achievement and to develop best practices for implementing mindfulness in educational settings (Waters et al., 2020).

### **Different Approaches to Implementing Mindfulness in the Classroom**

The integration of mindfulness into educational settings has garnered widespread interest, leading to the development of various methods, approaches, designs, and curricula aimed at

enhancing student well-being and academic performance. As awareness of the benefits of mindfulness grows, educators are increasingly seeking ways to incorporate these practices into their teaching. Mindfulness, defined as a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, has been shown to improve attention, reduce stress, and enhance emotional regulation among students (Greenberg & Harris, 2020). The introduction of mindfulness into schools is part of a broader movement towards promoting SEL and holistic education, which emphasizes the development of the whole child, including their emotional and social competencies (Waters et al., 2020).

These strategies provide educators with a range of tools to effectively introduce mindfulness into classrooms, tailored to the unique needs of different educational environments. For example, some schools may prioritize mindfulness to address specific issues such as student anxiety and stress, while others might integrate it into their broader goals of fostering a positive school culture and improving academic outcomes (Hwang et al., 2021). The flexibility of mindfulness practices allows them to be adapted to various contexts, whether it be through standalone programs, integrated lessons, or school-wide initiatives. This adaptability makes mindfulness a valuable component of modern education, providing educators with innovative ways to support student development and well-being (Simkin & Black, 2020).

In this section, I explore the diverse ways mindfulness is implemented, drawing on multiple sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of these practices. I will examine different methods used to teach mindfulness, from structured programs to informal practices, and discuss the various approaches schools take to integrate mindfulness into their communities. Additionally, the design of mindfulness programs, whether as standalone interventions or

integrated within existing curricula, and the development of specific curricula tailored to the needs of individual schools, will be discussed. By examining these different aspects, educators and policymakers can gain insights into how best to implement mindfulness practices that align with their educational goals and meet the needs of their students (Jennings et al., 2020).

Understanding these diverse approaches will help in identifying best practices and overcoming challenges associated with the implementation of mindfulness in schools, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable mindfulness programs.

### ***Mindfulness Methods***

Various methods are utilized to introduce mindfulness into classrooms, each offering distinct advantages depending on the educational context. A commonly adopted method involves structured programs like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT; Kabat-Zinn, 2003), tailored for children and adolescents in school settings (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). These programs are typically delivered over several weeks and include guided meditation, body scans, and mindful movement exercises. Such structured methods provide a consistent framework, making them suitable for both practical application and research by allowing for systematic evaluation of their effectiveness (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Additionally, these programs often include training for educators, enhancing their ability to guide students effectively through mindfulness practices (Jennings et al., 2020). As schools adopt these structured methods, they often incorporate informal mindfulness practices into daily routines, which can be a natural extension of these programs.

Informal mindfulness practices, such as mindful breathing, mindful listening, or mindful walking, offer another method of integrating mindfulness into the classroom's daily routine.

These practices are designed to be brief and easy to implement, requiring minimal disruption to the curriculum, yet they are effective in helping students reduce stress, increase attention, and improve emotional regulation (Greenberg & Harris, 2020). For example, teachers can use short mindfulness exercises at the beginning or end of a lesson, or during transitions, to help students center themselves and focus on the task at hand (Felver et al., 2020). By incorporating these simple practices, educators can create a calming and focused classroom environment, which is crucial for fostering a conducive learning atmosphere. These informal practices empower teachers to adapt mindfulness to various teaching moments, ensuring that students benefit from consistent exposure to mindfulness techniques. The use of both structured and informal methods highlights the flexibility of mindfulness practices, which can be adapted to fit various educational settings and needs.

### *Mindfulness Approaches*

Building on the methods used to introduce mindfulness, different approaches have been developed to implement these practices effectively across various school environments. One such approach is the whole-school strategy, which integrates mindfulness across all levels of the school community, including students, teachers, administrators, and staff (Hwang et al., 2021). This comprehensive strategy aims to create a culture of mindfulness that permeates the entire school environment, promoting a supportive atmosphere where well-being and emotional resilience are prioritized. By involving all members of the school community, the whole-school approach ensures a cohesive and unified implementation of mindfulness practices, enhancing their overall effectiveness (Hwang et al., 2021). This approach not only benefits students but also supports educators in managing stress and maintaining a positive work environment.

Additionally, whole-school approaches can lead to long-term cultural changes that embed mindfulness into the ethos of the school, making it a central component of the educational experience (Jennings et al., 2020).

In contrast, some schools opt for targeted approaches, focusing mindfulness interventions on specific groups of students who may benefit the most, such as those experiencing high levels of stress, anxiety, or behavioral challenges (Perry-Parrish et al., 2020). These targeted interventions are typically more intensive and may involve specialized sessions led by trained professionals, such as school counselors or psychologists. By concentrating resources on those most in need, targeted approaches can provide the necessary support to address specific mental health and behavioral issues, leading to significant improvements in students' well-being and academic performance. For example, students identified as at-risk due to behavioral or emotional difficulties can receive targeted mindfulness support to help them develop coping skills and resilience (Bello et al., 2023). The distinction between whole-school and targeted approaches shows how mindfulness can be adapted to meet the diverse needs of school communities, ensuring that all students can benefit from these practices.

The flexibility of these approaches allows educators to select the model that best fits the unique needs of their school. Schools that prioritize school-wide culture change may favor the whole-school approach, while schools looking to address specific issues such as student anxiety or behavioral challenges may benefit from a targeted approach. By carefully selecting the appropriate strategy, schools can maximize the effectiveness of their mindfulness interventions and ensure that students and educators alike benefit from these practices.

### *Components of Mindfulness Programs*

The design of mindfulness programs further reflects the adaptability of these practices in educational settings, ranging from standalone sessions to integrated models within existing curricula. Standalone programs are designed as independent courses or workshops that focus solely on mindfulness practices, typically delivered over a specific timeframe (Bazzano et al., 2023). These programs often aim to achieve particular outcomes, such as improving attention, reducing stress, or enhancing emotional regulation, and are structured to provide measurable results (Waters et al., 2020). Standalone programs offer a clear focus and framework, making them suitable for schools that wish to evaluate the direct effect of mindfulness on various aspects of student development. These programs can be particularly effective in settings where there is a need to establish a foundational understanding of mindfulness before integrating it into broader educational practices (Bazzano et al., 2023).

In addition to standalone programs, integrated designs weave mindfulness practices into the regular curriculum and everyday classroom activities. These designs are less formal but offer flexibility, allowing mindfulness to be incorporated into subjects such as reading, physical education, and social studies. For example, during reading lessons, teachers might use mindfulness techniques to help students reflect on their emotional responses to the text, thereby deepening their engagement and understanding. Integrated designs make mindfulness a natural and relevant part of students' daily experiences, reinforcing the development of mindfulness skills across different contexts and activities. This approach also allows teachers to model mindfulness practices, demonstrating their application in real-world scenarios and thereby enhancing students' ability to apply these skills outside the classroom (Simkin & Black, 2020).

The combination of standalone and integrated designs illustrates the versatility of mindfulness programs, which can be tailored to fit the specific goals and needs of schools.

Moreover, integrated programs provide opportunities for long-term engagement with mindfulness practices. When mindfulness becomes part of the everyday classroom routine, students are more likely to internalize these practices, leading to long-term benefits in emotional regulation, cognitive performance, and well-being (Jennings et al., 2020). By embedding mindfulness into the broader educational framework, integrated programs ensure that mindfulness is not viewed as an isolated practice but rather as an essential component of the students' overall learning experience.

### ***Mindfulness Curricula***

Mindfulness curricula developed for educational settings provide a structured framework to guide the implementation of these practices in schools. Programs like the Mindful Schools Curriculum and CARE (Maykel & Bray, 2019) for Teachers program offer comprehensive training for educators, including detailed lesson plans, activities, and materials (Jennings et al., 2020). These programs are grounded in evidence-based research and are designed to be accessible to educators, even those with limited experience in mindfulness (Jennings et al., 2020). By offering clear guidelines and resources, these curricula support the consistent and effective implementation of mindfulness practices, focusing on skills such as attention, emotional regulation, stress management, and overall well-being for both students and educators (Felter et al., 2020). The structured nature of these curricula also helps schools meet educational standards and behavioral goals by providing a reliable framework for integrating mindfulness into academic settings (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Jennings et al., 2020).

Structured curricula like the Mindful Schools Curriculum typically include sequential lessons that are implemented in a classroom setting, focusing on age-appropriate mindfulness activities tailored for different developmental stages (Felver et al., 2020). For example, younger students might engage in short activities that focus on breathing exercises or body awareness, while older students participate in more reflective practices such as guided meditation or journaling (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). This progression allows students to build mindfulness skills gradually, supporting their cognitive and emotional development within a structured context. Lesson plans also include instructions, discussion prompts, and reflective questions that help students process their mindfulness experiences and apply them to academic and social interactions (Jennings et al., 2020).

The CARE for Teachers program is another widely recognized curriculum designed to support educators in developing mindfulness practice while simultaneously equipping them with the tools to bring mindfulness into their classrooms (Jennings et al., 2020). The program focuses on enhancing teachers' emotional resilience and stress management, recognizing that educator well-being affects the classroom environment and student outcomes (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Jennings et al., 2020). The CARE program includes training on mindful communication, emotional regulation, and cultivating compassion, which helps teachers foster a calm and supportive classroom environment (Jennings et al., 2020). This dual focus, supporting both teacher and student well-being, enhances the program's effect and demonstrates the importance of teacher emotional regulation for classroom success (Crain et al., 2021).

In addition to established programs like Mindful Schools and CARE, schools increasingly develop customized mindfulness curricula tailored to their specific cultural, social,

and educational needs (Dariotis et al., 2021). Customized programs often draw on principles from existing mindfulness curricula but modify them to align with the unique values, goals, and challenges of a school. For instance, a school focused on social justice may create a mindfulness curriculum that emphasizes empathy, cooperation, and community engagement, using mindfulness techniques to support discussions on equity and inclusivity (Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2021). Tailoring mindfulness curricula in this way ensures that the practices are relevant and meaningful within the school's broader educational goals (Dariotis et al., 2021).

Customization can also extend to the integration of mindfulness with other educational initiatives, such as character education, social-emotional learning (SEL), or academic performance goals. Schools that prioritize SEL often incorporate mindfulness into their existing SEL programs, using mindfulness to enhance skills like self-awareness, emotional regulation, and responsible decision-making (Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2021). In these cases, mindfulness activities are designed to complement SEL competencies, reinforcing essential skills that contribute to both academic success and positive interpersonal relationships (Greenberg & Harris, 2020; Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2021). This integration aligns mindfulness practices with broader educational priorities, ensuring they support cognitive, emotional, and social growth (Lawlor & Maloney, 2021).

The MindUp (The Hawn Foundation, 2011) program, a science-based mindfulness curriculum, offers another example of integrating mindfulness with educational goals. MindUp teaches students about brain functions and how mindfulness can positively effect their emotional regulation and behavior, making neuroscience a key component of the curriculum (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). This curriculum divides lessons into units that teach students how

mindfulness affects brain functions such as attention and emotional regulation (Felver et al., 2020). By understanding how mindfulness affects brain processes, students can apply mindfulness strategies to improve focus, emotional control, and social interactions (Roeser & Eccles, 2021). The program offers a comprehensive approach, linking mindfulness to neuroscience to foster students' understanding of how mindfulness can affect cognitive and emotional functioning (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

One of the advantages of using structured curricula is that it provides a framework for evaluation and assessment. Programs like Mindful Schools and MindUp often include built-in assessment tools that allow educators to monitor student progress over time, tracking improvements in areas such as emotional regulation, attention, and academic performance (Felver et al., 2020). Evaluating these outcomes is essential for determining the effectiveness of mindfulness programs and gaining the support of key stakeholders, such as parents and school administrators, who may seek data on the benefits of mindfulness interventions before endorsing them (Felver et al., 2020; Crain et al., 2021).

While structured curricula offer many benefits, flexibility is also important for ensuring mindfulness practices meet the needs of diverse student populations. Some schools with varying demographics or specific educational missions may find that strict adherence to pre-designed curricula is not sufficient. Therefore, many educators advocate for a blended approach that combines structured programs with customized practices tailored to the unique needs of their students (Jennings et al., 2020). This combination allows schools to retain the rigor and consistency of structured curricula while adapting mindfulness practices to fit their cultural or educational contexts (Dariotis et al., 2021).

In addition to student-focused curricula, there has been a growing emphasis on developing mindfulness programs specifically designed for educators. Programs such as the Mindful Teacher Certification provide educators with in-depth training in mindfulness techniques, self-care practices, and strategies for incorporating mindfulness into their teaching (Crain et al., 2021). Supporting educators in cultivating their own mindfulness practice enhances their ability to introduce these techniques in the classroom and contributes to the overall well-being of the school community (Crain et al., 2021). Teacher-focused curricula not only promote educators' emotional resilience but also establishes a more mindful and reflective school culture that benefits students and staff alike (Jennings et al., 2020).

In summary, mindfulness curricula in education range from structured, research-based programs like Mindful Schools and CARE for Teachers to customized approaches designed to meet the specific needs of individual schools. These curricula provide educators with the tools and resources necessary to implement mindfulness effectively, promoting skills such as attention, emotional regulation, and stress management (Jennings et al., 2020). Whether schools choose to adopt a structured program or develop a customized curriculum, the goal remains the same: to enhance the well-being and academic success of students through the thoughtful and consistent application of mindfulness practices (Felver et al., 2020). By embedding mindfulness within a larger educational framework, schools can foster a reflective and supportive learning environment that promotes positive emotional, cognitive, and social development (Jennings et al., 2020).

## **Educators' Descriptions and Reflective Practice**

Educators play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of mindfulness practices in schools, and their descriptions significantly affect the adoption and effectiveness of these practices (Schön, 1983). Reflective practice, a concept widely recognized in educational theory, involves the continuous process of self-examination and evaluation of one's teaching methods and practices (Schön, 1983). Engaging in reflective practice enables educators to adapt and refine their approaches to mindfulness, ensuring that these practices meet the diverse needs of their students (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). This process involves both reflection-in-action, where teachers make real-time adjustments during instruction, and reflection-on-action, where they assess and learn from past teaching experiences (Schön, 1983).

Research indicates that educators who engage in reflective practice are more likely to effectively implement mindfulness practices in their classrooms (Killion & Todnem, 1991). Crain et al. (2021) found that educators who regularly reflect on their mindfulness practices report greater job satisfaction and lower levels of burnout, which in turn positively affect their classroom management and student engagement. Reflective practice also allows educators to navigate the challenges associated with integrating mindfulness into diverse classroom settings, enabling them to tailor mindfulness activities to suit the specific needs and backgrounds of their students (Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2021). By continuously reflecting on their practices, educators can develop more effective strategies for incorporating mindfulness into their teaching (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2021).

The role of educators in implementing mindfulness is further affected by the training and support they receive. Comprehensive training programs that provide educators with a deep

understanding of mindfulness and practical strategies for its application are essential for successful implementation (Hwang et al., 2021). Meiklejohn et al. (2012) highlight that educators who receive thorough training in mindfulness are more confident in their ability to teach these practices and are more likely to see positive outcomes in their students. However, many educators report feeling underprepared to teach mindfulness due to a lack of training and resources, which can hinder the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions (Jennings et al., 2020). Providing ongoing professional development and support is crucial to equipping educators with the skills and knowledge they need to integrate mindfulness into their teaching (Hwang et al., 2021).

Personal experience with mindfulness also plays a significant role in shaping educators' descriptions of these practices. Educators who regularly practice mindfulness themselves are more likely to appreciate its benefits and to integrate it into their teaching (Crain et al., 2021). This personal practice allows educators to experience the benefits of mindfulness firsthand, which can increase their commitment to teaching mindfulness to their students (Hwang et al., 2021). Encouraging educators to engage in personal mindfulness practice can therefore be a valuable component of professional development programs, enhancing their ability to effectively teach mindfulness and support student well-being (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2021).

Reflective practice is also critical in addressing the challenges associated with implementing mindfulness in schools, such as resistance from students or parents, time constraints, and curriculum integration (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Through reflective practice, educators can critically assess these challenges, experiment with different strategies to overcome them, and learn from their successes and failures (Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2021). This

iterative process enables educators to develop more effective and sustainable approaches to mindfulness, ensuring that these practices are integrated in a way that is meaningful and beneficial for all students (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2021). By fostering a culture of reflection and continuous improvement, schools can support educators in their efforts to integrate mindfulness and enhance student well-being (Jennings et al., 2020).

## **Summary**

Throughout Chapter 2, I examined the existing literature on mindfulness in education, focusing on its perceived effects on student well-being and educators' reflective practices. The historical context of mindfulness was explored, tracing its origins from ancient contemplative traditions to its integration into modern educational practices. This evolution highlights the increasing recognition of mindfulness as a tool for enhancing cognitive and emotional functioning in schools (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Specifically, mindfulness is shown to improve attention, emotional regulation, and stress reduction, all of which contribute to a supportive learning environment (Broderick & Jennings, 2021). Such improvements are crucial for both student well-being and the overall classroom atmosphere. Furthermore, I explored how mindfulness can affect both individual students and the broader school culture. I will highlight the cognitive and effective benefits of mindfulness, such as improvements in attention, emotional regulation, and stress reduction, which are essential for fostering a supportive learning environment in this chapter.

The relationship between mindfulness and academic achievement was found to be complex, with some studies demonstrating positive results and others yielding mixed findings (Bakosh et al., 2020). While researchers have noted significant cognitive benefits, such as improved executive functioning and attention, others have reported more inconsistent outcomes

in terms of academic performance. This variation suggests that the impact of mindfulness on academic success may depend on several contextual factors, including the quality of the intervention and the characteristics of the students practicing mindfulness (Lawlor & Maloney, 2021). For example, younger students may respond differently to mindfulness interventions compared to older students, and students facing higher levels of stress or emotional difficulty may benefit more from these practices. These findings underscore the need for further investigation into how mindfulness can be tailored to maximize academic outcomes. Moreover, understanding the specific conditions under which mindfulness has the greatest effect on learning is critical for future research in this area. The variability in outcomes suggests that the effectiveness of mindfulness may depend on factors such as implementation quality, duration of practice, and student characteristics. These findings indicate a need for further research to clarify how mindfulness can best support academic success.

Different approaches to implementing mindfulness in schools were also explored, demonstrating the flexibility of mindfulness programs in meeting different school needs (Dariotis et al., 2021). Whole-school initiatives aim to promote a school-wide cultural shift towards mindfulness, integrating the practice into everyday activities, policies, and interactions. In contrast, targeted interventions focus on specific student populations, such as those experiencing behavioral challenges or high levels of stress. The chapter emphasized the importance of schools choosing the approach that best aligns with their goals, resources, and student needs (Waters et al., 2020). This adaptability allows mindfulness to be implemented in a way that is sustainable and effective over the long term. Additionally, schools that successfully integrate mindfulness into the broader curriculum often see more significant, lasting benefits for

both students and staff. The discussion of these approaches highlighted the need for thoughtful planning and evaluation to ensure that mindfulness programs achieve their intended outcomes.

Educators' descriptions of mindfulness and the role of reflective practice emerged as critical factors in the successful implementation of mindfulness in schools (Osterman & Kottkamp, 2021). Reflective practice allows educators to continuously assess their teaching methods, adjusting as necessary to ensure that mindfulness practices are being effectively integrated into the classroom (Flook et al., 2013). This process of self-assessment is essential for overcoming the challenges that can arise when incorporating new teaching practices like mindfulness. The chapter also emphasized the importance of providing comprehensive training and ongoing support for educators, as these are necessary for building both confidence and competence in teaching mindfulness (Jennings et al., 2020). Without proper training, educators may struggle to implement mindfulness practices consistently or effectively. Furthermore, the success of mindfulness programs is often linked to the extent to which educators themselves engage in mindfulness, using it not only as a tool for student development but also to enhance their own professional growth. Thus, supporting educators in developing personal mindfulness practice is crucial for successful implementation.

In conclusion, the literature review revealed both areas of agreement and divergence in the research on mindfulness in education. While the cognitive and emotional benefits of mindfulness, such as improvements in attention, emotional regulation, and stress management, are well-supported by the literature (Broderick & Jennings, 2021), the effects on academic achievement remain less clear (Bakosh et al., 2020). The variability in outcomes suggests that further research is needed to explore how different variables, such as the length of the mindfulness practice, student demographics, and implementation quality, effect academic

success. Additionally, understanding the role of contextual factors in shaping the effectiveness of mindfulness is key for developing best practices in schools (Lawlor & Maloney, 2021). The need for ongoing research into these areas is critical to fully realize the potential of mindfulness in educational settings. While there is strong evidence for the cognitive and effective benefits of mindfulness, its effect on academic achievement remains less clear. The need for further research to explore the conditions under which mindfulness is most effective and to develop best practices for its implementation in educational settings was identified as a key area for future investigation.

### **Chapter 3: Research Method**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to explore PreK–12 educators' descriptions regarding the implementation of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students at a private school in Northern New Jersey. The problem addressed in this study is the limited understanding of educators' descriptions of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students (Maynard et al., 2021). The methodology selected for the study was qualitative with a descriptive case study design. This methodological approach was particularly suited to examining the descriptions of PreK through 12th-grade educators regarding how mindfulness practices may contribute to student well-being and other classroom outcomes (Emerson et al., 2020).

Mindfulness practices have been associated with various cognitive and emotional benefits, such as enhanced attention, improved emotional regulation, and reduced stress levels (Bauer et al., 2022; Kuyken et al., 2022). However, existing research has provided inconsistent findings regarding educators' descriptions of the relationship between mindfulness practices and student academic outcomes, creating a gap in understanding how educators implement and perceive these interventions within classroom contexts (Maynard et al., 2021). This chapter outlines the research methodology, design, and procedures proposed to address the study's research questions. This chapter includes descriptions of the population, sampling methods, data collection methods and instruments, and data analysis strategies.

#### **Research Methodology and Design (Nature of the Study)**

I employed a qualitative descriptive case study design to explore PreK–12 educators' descriptions regarding the implementation of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students at a private school in Northern New Jersey. A qualitative approach was appropriate

because it facilitated the exploration of subjective experiences, promoting a deeper understanding of educators' reflections on mindfulness practices in their classrooms (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995). This case study design provides insight into a bounded context, focusing on educators within one private school, allowing for detailed examination of these descriptions and practices in a specific educational setting (Yin, 2018). A quantitative approach was not selected because it would not sufficiently capture the depth, complexity, and subjective nuances inherent in educators' descriptions of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students. Quantitative methods focus primarily on measurable variables and statistical analysis, making them less suitable for exploring educators' detailed reflections and personal experiences within classroom contexts.

Alternative qualitative research designs, including phenomenology and grounded theory, were considered but deemed less appropriate for this study. Phenomenology focuses on capturing the essence of participants' lived experiences, typically emphasizing individual descriptions without explicitly situating these within specific educational practices or institutional contexts (Moustakas, 1994). This approach does not align sufficiently with the focus of describing educators' descriptions specifically related to mindfulness practices implemented within classroom contexts. Grounded theory was not suitable for this study because it is primarily used to develop new theoretical frameworks from emerging data patterns, whereas this study aims to describe existing practices and descriptions rather than generate new theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In contrast, a qualitative descriptive case study design offers a methodologically appropriate approach for examining complex educational practices within a real world, bounded system. This design effectively addresses the research problem, centering on the limited understanding of how mindfulness practices are perceived by educators in relation to

students. It aligns explicitly with the study's purpose and research questions by facilitating a detailed description of existing reflective practices within a single private school setting in Northern New Jersey (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

### **Population and Sample**

The population for this study consisted of PreK through grade 12 educators employed at a private school in Northern New Jersey. The sampling frame included approximately 50 educators who met the criteria for integrating mindfulness practices into classroom instruction. These participants have taught PreK through grade 12 for at least one academic year, were between the ages of 21 and 70, reside in the United States, and hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree. The sample included a range of teaching experiences, from new to veteran educators, and included balanced gender representation. Because these educators have experience applying mindfulness strategies in educational settings, the sample is appropriate for addressing the study's problem, purpose, and research question, which examines educators' descriptions regarding mindfulness practices how mindfulness practices may affect students' well-being.

I used purposeful sampling for the study, which is an appropriate method in qualitative research when the goal is to gather in-depth information from individuals who have specific, relevant experience (Patton, 2015). Participants volunteered to the focus of the study; I ensured that the data collected is rich and meaningful. Purposeful sampling aligns well with the descriptive case study design, as it allowed for the inclusion of voices that can offer detailed insights into mindfulness practices within a defined school environment (Yin, 2018). This approach increases the likelihood that the findings will be both contextually grounded and reflective of the experiences of those directly involved.

From the sampling frame, 25 volunteers who meet the inclusion criteria to participate, were included in the study. Of these, 10 participated in individual semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 60 minutes, and 10 participated in two focus groups consisting of five educators each, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes. Five additional educators were placed on a reserve list to replace any individuals who withdrew. Combining individual interviews and focus groups allowed for methodological triangulation, which supported the development of robust and credible findings through multiple data sources. Saturation will be monitored during data collection and analysis. Data saturation refers to the point at which no new themes or insights emerge from the data (Guest et al., 2006). I documented the emergence of redundancy during coding, which will help ensure the adequacy and completeness of the data.

Recruitment was conducted through an email invitation sent to all eligible educators at the research site. The email included a summary of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and an overview of the time commitment. Interested educators received an informed consent form that outlines the procedures, confidentiality measures, and the option to withdraw at any time. Participants were scheduled for either interviews or focus groups based on their availability and preference. This process was intended to ensure ethical research practices, informed participation, and respect for individual autonomy.

### **Instrumentation**

The data collection instruments for this study included semi-structured interviews and focus groups, both designed to explore educators' reflective practices and the use of mindfulness. An interview protocol (see Appendix A) guided the semi-structured interviews, ensuring consistency while allowing participants the flexibility to elaborate on their experiences. The

interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and focus on exploring insights into educators' reflections on their teaching strategies and perceived effects on students. These interviews were structured to address the research question and promoted open dialogue about participants' mindfulness practices. The goal was to gain deep insights into the integration of mindfulness in teaching, with a focus on its effects on teaching methods and student well-being.

A field test of the interview protocol was conducted (see Table 1) with two educators who met the eligibility criteria but will not participate in the main study. The purpose of the field test was to assess the clarity, relevance, and structure of the interview protocols, ensuring that the questions align with the research objectives. During the field test, participants provided feedback on the flow and wording of the questions, as well as the ease with which they understood and responded to them. Their feedback helped identify ambiguities or issues that were not have been initially apparent, guiding revisions to the protocol as needed. Adjustments made based on this feedback enhanced the reliability and coherence of the data collection instruments, ensuring that the final version is well-suited to gather meaningful insights. The findings from the field test were used to refine the protocol and interview techniques to ensure the data collected during the main study is relevant and comprehensive.

**Table 1***Field Test Output (with Volunteers)*

Field Test Volunteer	Test Setting	Interview Duration	Transcribed Single-Spaced Pages	Initial First Round Open-Codes
Volunteer 1	In-Person	48 Minutes	8	Intentional Calm Dysregulation
Volunteer 2	Zoom	25 minutes	7	Breathe Respect Calm Regroup Breathing

Focus groups, lasting 60-90 minutes, provided participants with opportunities for collaborative discussion, supporting a deeper exploration of mindfulness practices and reflective processes (Bryan & Graham, 2022). Through these discussions, participants engaged with one another, revealing perspectives that might not have emerged during individual interviews. A focus group protocol (see Appendix B) has been developed to guide the focus groups. This protocol helped me ensure that discussions remain aligned with the study's objectives while fostering meaningful exchanges among participants. The participants for the focus groups were different from those in the individual interviews, ensuring a broader range of perspectives. This approach will help capture diverse viewpoints and promote the development of new themes through dynamic group interactions (Patton, 2015). Field notes will complement audio recordings, documenting non-verbal cues and contextual details that may enhance the analysis (Stake, 1995).

Both the interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded using the Zoom platform, with participants' consent, to ensure the accuracy of data collection. Verbatim transcriptions was generated using Zoom's AI Companion with these recordings, and field notes supplement the

transcripts by capturing non-verbal cues and contextual information that provided deeper insights during analysis. Participants in the interviews had 72 hours to review their transcripts and request modifications, ensuring the validity and accuracy of the data collected. However, for confidentiality reasons, focus group transcripts were not sent to participants for review to protect the group's dynamics and the anonymity of responses. This structure helped ensure that the data remains reliable, confidential, and aligned with the goals set forth in the study, providing a thorough understanding of mindfulness and reflective practices within the educational setting.

### **Study Procedures**

The study commenced following approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and receipt of site permission from the head of the school, ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines. Once these approvals were secured, participant recruitment began with email invitations sent to PreK through 12th grade educators within the private school in Northern New Jersey. These emails provided a detailed description of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the time commitment expected. Participants expressing interest received informed consent forms to review and sign prior to data collection, outlining their rights, including the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The data collection began with semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 educators. These interviews lasted around 60 minutes and were arranged at times convenient to the participants, virtually. The interviews followed a carefully designed protocol featuring open-ended questions, which prompted participants to share their reflections on how they use mindfulness practices and how these practices effect their teaching. The protocol was piloted through a field test with two educators outside the study sample to confirm the clarity and

relevance of the questions. Feedback from the field test guided revisions to enhance the protocol's effectiveness.

The focus group phase followed the individual interviews, consisting of two sessions, each with five participants. These sessions lasted about 90 minutes and created a collaborative environment for participants to discuss shared experiences and generate collective insights. The focus groups protocol was used to encourage open dialogue and reflection. Due to confidentiality requirements, transcripts from these group discussions were not shared with participants for review to preserve the integrity of the group dynamic.

### **Data Analysis**

I employed Yin's five-step thematic analysis framework, a structured approach that guides the organization, coding, and interpretation of qualitative data gathered through individual interviews and focus group discussions (Yin, 2011). This framework is particularly suited to case study research, providing a systematic pathway to generate insights that align with the study's objectives and research questions. NVivo software assisted with data organization, coding, and thematic development, enhancing analytical rigor and efficiency (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2011). Each step of Yin's framework is outlined below, demonstrating its application to the study's dataset.

The first step in Yin's framework involves compiling all data gathered from interviews and focus groups, with meticulous attention to accuracy and data integrity (Yin, 2011). All interview and focus group data was compiled, transcribed, and reviewed for accuracy. Field notes were used to document non-verbal cues and any relevant contextual details that might inform the analysis (Stake, 1995). Each interview and focus group session was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim using Zoom's AI companion. The interview transcripts were reviewed for

correctness by the interviewees. To strengthen data validity, participants in individual interviews had 72 hours to review their transcripts and request any modifications, ensuring their responses were captured accurately. Field notes complemented these transcripts by documenting non-verbal cues and contextual observations, thereby enriching the data and supporting a comprehensive analysis (Stake, 1995). NVivo was used to systematically organize these materials, facilitating efficient data management and retrieval.

The second step, data disassembly, involves breaking down the data into manageable segments through a structured coding process. Each transcript was reviewed multiple times to ensure familiarity with the content and to support the identification of meaningful segments related to mindfulness practices and educators' reflective processes (Yin, 2018). An inductive coding approach was used, allowing codes to emerge directly from the data rather than being guided by predetermined categories (Patton, 2015; Thomas, 2006). The process began with open coding, in which initial codes were assigned to discrete units of meaning that reflect participants' language and ideas (Saldaña, 2021). These codes were then grouped to reveal patterns, relationships, and themes that align with the study's descriptive purpose. NVivo software assisted in organizing the codes, facilitating comparison across participants and supporting the construction of a coherent narrative grounded in the data.

In the third step, I reassembled the data by grouping similar codes into broader themes or categories. During this phase, NVivo's clustering tools helped recognize relationships among codes, supporting the formation of themes that align with the study's objectives and research questions (Yin, 2011). Flexibility was maintained throughout this step, allowing themes to evolve as patterns emerge. This reassembly process was essential to building a coherent structure for exploring educators' reflective practices in a meaningful way (Stake, 1995). Similar codes

were grouped into broader themes using NVivo's clustering tools (Yin, 2011). Themes were developed in relation to the study's research questions and theoretical framework.

Once the data was reassembled, the fourth step was interpreting the themes to draw meaning and insights from the patterns that have emerged. This interpretation involved examining associations among themes and contextualizing them within the study's theoretical framework, Reflective practice theory, and relevant literature on mindfulness in education (Schön, 1983). This phase included exploring how themes emerged from the interviews and focus groups. By situating these themes within a broader context, I aimed to construct a nuanced narrative that responds comprehensively to the research questions (Yin, 2011). Themes were analyzed to extract meaning and interpret them in the context of reflective practice theory and the existing literature on mindfulness (Schön, 1983). I specifically linked these themes to the research questions, examining how mindfulness and reflective practices effect teaching and student outcomes.

The fifth and final step involved synthesizing conclusions based on the interpreted data, organizing findings into a cohesive narrative aligned with the study's objectives and research questions (Yin, 2011). NVivo's matrix functions were used to systematically display the themes, facilitating a clear and structured presentation that enhances the comparability of findings across participants' perspectives. This synthesis connected findings to reflective practice theory, highlighting how mindfulness and reflective practices contribute to educators' professional development and teaching efficacy. The structured presentation of data, supported by tables and matrices, enables clearer identification of patterns and insights with implications for future research and educational practice.

Focus groups offer the advantage of uncovering additional insights through group interaction, as participants engage with each other's reflections and expand on shared experiences (Bryan & Graham, 2022). While individual interviews capture personal reflections, focus groups enable participants to collaboratively explore shared themes and discuss their experiences, providing a complementary data source that enriches the findings. This approach allowed for the triangulation of data across both individual and group discussions, enhancing the validity and reliability of the study's findings. By identifying consistent themes across interviews and focus groups, the study aimed to present a well-rounded understanding of educators' mindfulness practices and reflective processes (Yin, 2018).

Throughout the analysis, I maintained reflexivity, addressing any potential biases to ensure interpretations remain grounded in participants' authentic responses (Patton, 2015). Additionally, I monitored data saturation, defined as the point at which no new themes or insights emerge, to confirm that the findings fully represent the depth and complexity of participants' experiences (Yin, 2011). This attention to saturation, combined with reflexive practices, enhanced the study's rigor and reliability.

By employing Yin's structured thematic analysis framework, supported by NVivo and triangulation, I sought to produce a thorough and credible analysis of educators' reflective experiences with mindfulness practices. Grounding the findings in participants' perspectives, this approach offers a comprehensive understanding of how mindfulness and reflective practices effect educators' professional growth and classroom effectiveness. Ultimately, this analysis could contribute to a deeper understanding of reflective practice theory within educational contexts, emphasizing mindfulness's potential effect on teaching and student outcomes (Schön, 1983).

## **Assumptions**

This study was grounded on several key assumptions. The first assumption is that participants will provide honest and thoughtful responses during the interviews and focus groups. Since qualitative research depends heavily on participants' self-reports, it assumed that participants shared their experiences and descriptions openly, without withholding or altering details (Patton, 2015). This assumption was essential for ensuring the credibility of the study, as reliable data is necessary to capture accurate reflections on mindfulness practices and their effect on student outcomes. Without accurate data, the study's findings could have been compromised, limiting the depth of analysis and understanding (Yin, 2018).

Another assumption was that participants would have meaningful experience with mindfulness practices in educational settings. The study assumed that participants, whether through formal training or personal application, have integrated mindfulness into their classrooms and can reflect meaningfully on its effect. This assumption was critical, as educators who are unfamiliar with mindfulness would not provide the data needed to address the study's focus. Although the recruitment process sought to select educators who actively engage in mindfulness, it was still assumed that their understanding aligns with established frameworks, such as the definition proposed by Kabat-Zinn (2003).

It is also assumed that the private school setting in Northern New Jersey supports mindfulness practices, either through formal structures or informal encouragement. This assumption recognizes that the broader school environment affects educators' engagement with mindfulness and reflective practices (Stake, 1995). If school culture does not support mindfulness, the opportunities for educators to apply and reflect on these practices may be

limited, potentially effecting the quality of the data collected. The study presumes that the school's context is conducive to mindfulness implementation, fostering meaningful engagement with reflective processes.

The final assumption was that the chosen thematic analysis method will uncover meaningful patterns relevant to the research questions. This analysis assumes that the participants' reflections will offer valuable insights into the relationship between mindfulness and student outcomes (Yin, 2018). I anticipated that the collected data would yield rich themes and patterns, allowing for a nuanced understanding of educators' reflective processes (Patton, 2015). If the data fails to reveal clear themes, the study may encounter difficulties in drawing conclusions, emphasizing the importance of thorough analysis and coding.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations are inherent in this study. One limitation is the relatively small sample size, which may restrict the applicability of the findings. While qualitative research often employs smaller samples to gather detailed, contextual data, the insights generated will be specific to the educators involved and may not translate to other contexts beyond the private school in Northern New Jersey. As case studies prioritize depth over breadth, generalizing findings beyond the study site can be challenging (Stake, 1995). However, this limitation aligns with the descriptive nature of the research, where the primary goal is to explore rather than generalize.

Another limitation lies in the reliance on self-reported data, which can introduce bias. Participants may provide responses they believe are socially desirable, rather than offering candid reflections on their use of mindfulness and its effect. This bias, often referred to as social

desirability bias, can affect the accuracy of the data (Patton, 2015). Additionally, participants may experience recall bias if they struggle to accurately remember specific events or practices. These forms of bias are common challenges in qualitative research, especially when using interviews as a primary data source.

The single-site focus of the research presents another limitation. Conducting the study within one private school means the results may not be transferable to other educational settings, particularly public schools or those in different geographic areas. Unique characteristics of the school, such as its resources, educational philosophies, or student demographics, may limit the applicability of the findings to other contexts (Yin, 2018). However, the case study approach allows for an in-depth understanding of mindfulness practices within the specific setting, which is valuable despite the limitation in scope.

Finally, the study's focus on educators' reflective processes may not fully capture the multifaceted effect of mindfulness on student achievement. While educators' perspectives offer important insights, they represent only one viewpoint. Including student or administrator perspectives, or conducting classroom observations, could provide a more comprehensive understanding but falls outside the scope of this research. This limitation acknowledges that reflective practices offer a partial, albeit important, view of the role mindfulness plays in educational settings (Stake, 1995).

## **Delimitations**

This study is delimited to the descriptions of PreK through 12th grade educators within a single private school in Northern New Jersey. Focusing on this specific population allows for an in-depth examination of mindfulness and reflective practices within a defined educational

context. This decision aligns with the purpose of the study, which seeks to explore how mindfulness is integrated into classroom settings and interpreted by educators. However, limiting the study to a single institution means that the findings may not apply to educators in different schools, such as public institutions or schools in other regions (Yin, 2018).

Another delimitation is that the research emphasizes the reflective practices of educators rather than including student perspectives or direct measures of student achievement. The study's primary objective is to explore how educators perceive mindfulness and its effect on their teaching practices. Including student viewpoints or measuring academic outcomes would extend beyond the intended scope, introducing additional variables that may complicate the study. By focusing solely on educator reflections, the research maintains a clear and manageable scope (Patton, 2015).

I did not aim to establish causality between mindfulness practices and student achievement. Instead, I sought to generate insights into educators' reflective processes through a descriptive framework. This approach is aligned with qualitative case study research, where the objective is to explore descriptions and experiences rather than quantify outcomes or causal relationships (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Future studies could address the causal relationship between mindfulness and student performance, but this research remains focused on qualitative inquiry.

The use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups is an additional delimitation. These methods were selected to capture in-depth narratives and encourage participants to share their experiences freely. However, relying on these approaches limits the types of data collected. For instance, observational or longitudinal data could provide further insights into how mindfulness practices evolve over time, but such data collection is beyond the scope of this

study. The research focuses on educators' perspectives at a single point in time, consistent with the descriptive nature of qualitative case studies (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018).

### **Ethical Assurances**

I conducted this study in accordance with established ethical standards for research involving human participants, ensuring that appropriate measures are taken to protect participants' rights and well-being. Prior to data collection, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval will be obtained to confirm the alignment of the study with ethical principles, including respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, as outlined in the *Belmont Report* (1979). This process will help identify potential risks and ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place to minimize them.

Participants will provide informed consent, which involves receiving detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their role in the research. I emphasized the voluntary nature of participation and explain that participants can withdraw at any time without consequence (Yin, 2018). Consent forms will outline the study objectives, data collection methods, and confidentiality measures. Participants will sign the forms only after demonstrating a clear understanding of their rights and willingness to participate.

I implemented strict confidentiality protocols throughout the study. Pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants, and identifying information will be removed from transcripts and reports. All data, including audio recordings and field notes, will be securely stored on password-protected devices, with physical documents kept in a locked cabinet accessible only to me. After the study concludes, all collected data will be destroyed following institutional policies to protect participant privacy (Stake, 1995).

To minimize the risk of discomfort, I ensured that participants retained control over their involvement in the study. Although the discussions will focus on mindfulness practices and reflective processes—topics not expected to cause distress—participants will be reminded that they can skip any questions or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty (Patton, 2015). This approach prioritizes the well-being of participants by respecting their autonomy throughout the process.

I maintained reflexivity throughout the study by documenting personal reflections to mitigate bias during data collection and analysis. Reflexivity allowed me to identify and address any personal assumptions or preconceptions that could affect the interpretation of findings (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). This process will help ensure that the data collected reflects participants' authentic experiences, supporting the reliability and credibility of the research findings.

## **Summary**

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the research methodology for this qualitative descriptive case study. I explored how PreK through 12th grade educators reflect on their use of mindfulness practices and how these reflections effect their teaching strategies and student outcomes. A qualitative case study design, focusing on one private school in Northern New Jersey, was chosen to examine these practices within a specific educational context. This approach offers the flexibility to understand the complexity of educators' reflective processes, aligned with real-world conditions (Yin, 2018).

The study's population consists of PreK through 12th grade educators actively engaged in mindfulness practices. Purposeful sampling will be employed to select participants with relevant

experience, ensuring their insights align with the research objectives (Patton, 2015). The sample includes educators from a variety of grade levels and subjects, offering broad perspectives on mindfulness practices across different classrooms. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups will be used as data collection methods, with each session lasting between 45 to 60 minutes. This combination of individual and collaborative discussions provides an opportunity to generate both in-depth personal reflections and insights through group interaction (Bryan & Graham, 2022).

The data analysis process will involve a structured thematic approach, focusing on identifying patterns and themes emerging from the qualitative data. Coding will help organize the data, followed by the development of themes that reflect participants' descriptions of their reflective practices (Yin, 2018). Throughout the analysis, reflexivity was practiced ensuring my interpretations remained objective and do not introduce personal bias (Patton, 2015). This method allows for a careful exploration of the nuanced experiences shared by participants.

Ethical assurances were addressed throughout the study to protect participants' rights and maintain confidentiality. I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines. Participants will provide informed consent after receiving clear information about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Pseudonyms will be assigned to maintain anonymity, and all data will be securely stored on password-protected devices. These ethical measures are designed to foster trust and safeguard participants' well-being during the research process (Yin, 2018).

I outlined the methodological framework within this chapter, including the research design, population, sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis, and ethical assurances. These components together support my goal of gaining a deeper understanding of how educators reflect on mindfulness practices and perceive their effects on teaching and students. In the next

chapter, the findings from the data analysis will be presented, offering insights into the reflective practices educators use and the effect of mindfulness on their professional growth and classroom outcomes.

## Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to explore PreK–12 educators' descriptions regarding the implementation of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students at a private school in Northern New Jersey. The problem addressed in this study was the limited understanding of educators' descriptions of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students (Maynard et al., 2021). Although existing research highlights cognitive and emotional benefits associated with mindfulness (Bauer et al., 2022; Kuyken et al., 2022), there is insufficient exploration of how educators interpret and reflect upon these practices within their daily teaching. Understanding these descriptions is critical because educators are the primary facilitators of mindfulness in schools, and their reflections shape how such practices are implemented and sustained (Jennings et al., 2019; Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2021).

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit twenty educators from the study site, representing grade levels across PreK–12. Participants included classroom teachers, specialists, and enrichment instructors with varying years of teaching experience who integrate mindfulness practices into their instruction. Ten participants completed individual semi-structured interviews, and ten participants participated in focus groups. These data sources were designed to capture both individual and collective perspectives on mindfulness implementation and reflection.

Data analysis followed Yin's (2011) five-step thematic analysis framework: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. This structured process supported systematic organization and interpretation of the data gathered from interviews and focus groups. NVivo software was used to manage and code the data, ensuring consistency throughout the analytic process. The resulting themes were grounded in participants' narratives, representing the

reflective experiences of educators regarding mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students.

Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory served as the theoretical framework for this study. Schön's concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action emphasize the cyclical nature of professional growth, in which educators continuously examine and refine their practice through awareness and reflection. This framework was appropriate for understanding how mindfulness supports educators' reflective processes, professional learning, and descriptions of student outcomes. Through the lens of reflective practice theory, mindfulness can be understood as a means for fostering intentionality, presence, and adaptive responsiveness within educational contexts.

This chapter contains the findings of the study. The organization of this chapter includes (a) evidence of trustworthiness of the data, (b) presentation of the findings organized by research question and themes, and (c) a summary of findings as they relate to the purpose of the study. Participants are identified by pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality.

### **Trustworthiness of the Data**

Data trustworthiness is the foundation of qualitative research, helping ensure findings are grounded in concrete evidence rather than shaped by my bias or beliefs (Yin, 2018). Establishing trustworthiness is necessary for developing results that are both credible and ethical, as it shapes the overall integrity of a study and validates the findings. In this research, the trustworthiness of the data was established by integrating credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability into data collection and analysis in alignment with the approved qualitative descriptive case study design.

According to Yin (2018), maintaining a clear chain of evidence and applying systematic, replicable procedures throughout data collection and analysis enhances the trustworthiness of a qualitative case study. The trustworthiness of this study was established through the deliberate application of these principles to ensure that findings were grounded in participants' authentic experiences rather than researcher interpretation. Credibility was supported by triangulating data from semi-structured interviews and focus groups to ensure that the results reflected consistent and reliable patterns across sources. Dependability was maintained by following the approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures and documenting each phase of the process through a detailed audit trail, ensuring transparency and consistency. Confirmability was reinforced through reflexive journaling and the systematic use of NVivo software, which provided a traceable link between raw data, coding, and emerging themes. Transferability was achieved through rich, thick description of the study's setting, participants, and findings, allowing readers to determine the applicability of the results to comparable educational contexts. Together, these components supported the rigor and ethical integrity of this qualitative descriptive case study and ensured that the findings accurately represent how educators perceived their reflective processes with mindfulness practices and their perceived effect on student achievement.

### ***Credibility***

Credibility was established using data triangulation and member checking. Triangulation was achieved through the inclusion of two data sources: ten semi-structured interviews and two focus groups. These multiple sources provided convergent evidence to support the development of consistent and reliable themes related to educators' reflective processes and mindfulness practices. According to Yin (2018), using multiple sources of evidence enhances the construct

validity and credibility of a qualitative case study by allowing me to corroborate findings across different forms of data.

All interviews and focus groups were recorded on Zoom and transcribed verbatim using Zoom's AI Companion. Interview transcripts were carefully reviewed for accuracy prior to coding and analysis to minimize transcription errors and preserve the integrity of participants' responses. Member checking was used to further establish credibility for the interview data. Each participant received a copy of their transcript within seventy-two hours of their session to review and verify accuracy. Requested clarifications or minor adjustments were incorporated to maintain the intended meaning and context of participant responses.

Focus group transcripts were generated through Zoom using the AI companion feature. Focus group transcripts were not returned for member checking to protect the confidentiality of participants and the integrity of the shared group dialogue, as outlined in the approved research protocol. Instead, accuracy was verified by comparing the verbatim transcripts against the original recordings to ensure completeness and precision.

By implementing triangulation, maintaining meticulous transcription procedures, and engaging in participant verification through member checking, credibility was enhanced throughout this qualitative descriptive case study. These steps ensured that the findings authentically reflected participants' experiences and descriptions while remaining grounded in the data rather than researcher bias. In addition, maintaining reflexive memos throughout data collection and analysis allowed me to document assumptions, analytic decisions, and contextual observations that could influence interpretation. This process supported transparency, enhanced confirmability, and ensured that the interpretations represented the voices of participants as accurately and objectively as possible.

### *Transferability*

In this qualitative research, transferability was considered to the extent to which the results could be applied to other contexts that share salient characteristics with the study site. Transferability refers to the degree to which qualitative findings can inform practice in other settings through reasoned comparison by the reader. Case study research emphasizes analytic rather than statistical generalization, in which findings contribute to theoretical or practical understanding that may be relevant in comparable contexts (Yin, 2018).

I explored how PreK–12 educators' descriptions regarding the implementation of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students at a private school in Northern New Jersey. Transferability was addressed by providing thick, rich descriptions of the school environment, the professional roles of participants, and the reflective and mindfulness practices incorporated into classroom routines. These detailed contextual descriptions allow readers to determine whether the findings may be meaningful within their own educational environments.

Thick description included information on the ways in which mindfulness was implemented, its placement within lessons, and the observable responses of students. These elements were presented at a level that allowed readers to evaluate potential applicability while preserving participant confidentiality. Although the study was bound to one independent school, the findings may inform similar contexts seeking to enhance reflection, mindfulness, and student engagement through comparable practices.

By providing a clear and richly detailed account of the study's setting, participants, and findings, transferability was strengthened. These measures allowed for thoughtful comparison by educators and researchers in related environments and contributed to broader understanding of mindfulness, reflective practice, and their perceived effects on teaching and learning. Detailed

contextual description enables readers to determine the extent to which the results may apply to similar educational settings. This level of transparency supports the applicability of the findings to broader discussions on reflective teaching and underscores the value of situating mindfulness research within authentic classroom contexts.

### ***Dependability***

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the findings over time and across similar contexts. Dependability demonstrates that the research process was conducted systematically and could be replicated with comparable participants under similar conditions (Yin, 2018). Dependability was achieved in this qualitative descriptive case study through the careful application of standardized procedures during data collection, management, and analysis to ensure that the study's results were accurate, consistent, and traceable. Documentation of the analytic process, including coding decisions, data organization, and the maintenance of an audit trail, further supported dependability by allowing others to follow the progression from raw data to interpreted themes with clarity and precision.

To ensure dependability, several procedural steps were implemented during data collection and handling to create a detailed and auditable process. Institutional Review Board approval and site authorization were obtained prior to participant recruitment. Following approval, ten interviews and two focus groups were conducted, recorded using Zoom, and transcribed verbatim. Each interview transcript was reviewed for accuracy, with identifying details redacted to maintain confidentiality. Member checking was conducted by sending interview transcripts to participants within seventy-two hours for verification of meaning and accuracy. This process ensured the stability of participants' intended meaning over time and minimized transcription errors.

An interview and focus group protocol (Appendix A) guided all data collection and ensured that each participant was asked consistent questions aligned with the study's purpose, literature, and theoretical framework. This structured approach supported reliability while allowing participants the flexibility to elaborate on their experiences with mindfulness and reflective practices. The use of a standardized protocol also enhanced the credibility and dependability of the study by promoting consistency across interviews and focus groups while maintaining sensitivity to participants' individual perspectives and experiences.

Data analysis followed Yin's (2018) five-step analytic approach: compiling all materials, disassembling through inductive open coding that honored participant language, reassembling related codes into categories through constant comparison, interpreting relationships among categories in relation to the research question and reflective practice theory, and concluding with finalized themes supported by matrices and excerpt banks. NVivo software was used to manage and organize the corpus, apply and check codes, generate co-occurrence queries, and create matrix displays for cross-source comparison. Maintaining consistent inclusion and exclusion criteria and monitoring saturation at both the code and category levels supported analytic stability.

Using an established protocol, rigorous documentation, and Yin's (2018) systematic analytic process, dependability was reinforced. These procedures ensured that the study's findings were credible, consistent, and capable of replication in comparable educational contexts examining mindfulness, reflection, and their perceived influence on student achievement. Detailed recordkeeping, including the maintenance of field notes, coding memos, and an audit trail, further enhanced dependability by providing transparency in how data were managed and interpreted throughout the analytic process.

### ***Confirmability***

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study are shaped by the participants and not by researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Yin, 2018). Confirmability was addressed through multiple strategies designed to ensure accuracy, transparency, and neutrality throughout the research process. These procedures included reflexive journaling, participant review of data, ethical safeguards, and the maintenance of an audit trail.

To ensure confirmability and accuracy of the data, all interview transcripts were reviewed by participants as part of the member-checking process. Each participant received a verbatim transcript of their recorded interview within seventy-two hours and was invited to review it for accuracy and clarity. Requested clarifications were incorporated to preserve the original intent of participants' statements. Focus group transcripts were verified by comparing the verbatim transcripts against the recorded sessions to confirm precision while maintaining group confidentiality, as outlined in the research protocol.

Prior to participation, all individuals received a comprehensive informed consent form that outlined the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and measures for maintaining privacy and confidentiality. The informed consent included procedures for de-identifying all personal or identifiable information during both data analysis and reporting. These ethical precautions created a secure and respectful environment in which participants felt comfortable sharing their authentic experiences.

Reflexive journaling was maintained throughout data collection and analysis to bracket personal assumptions and document researcher reflections. This process helped to identify potential biases and ensure that interpretations were grounded in the participants' voices. NVivo software was used to organize data systematically, creating a transparent and traceable chain of

evidence from raw transcripts to coded categories and finalized themes, in accordance with Yin's (2018) recommendations for maintaining methodological transparency. Through participant verification, ethical safeguards, reflexivity, and a structured analytic process, confirmability was achieved. These measures ensured that the findings represent participants' authentic perspectives and minimized the influence of researcher bias, thereby reinforcing the study's overall trustworthiness and integrity.

## **Results**

Permission to conduct this research was granted by National University's Institutional Review Board. Site permission was obtained from the Head of School to recruit participants within a PreK–12 independent school in northern New Jersey. Following approval, participants were recruited through an internal email invitation outlining the study purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Participants provided written consent prior to participation. Data were collected through individual interviews and focus groups. All sessions were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data analysis followed Yin's (2018) five-step process: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. During the compiling phase, interview and focus group transcripts were organized and reviewed for completeness. During disassembly, open coding identified meaningful words, phrases, and ideas related to mindfulness and reflective practice. In the reassembly phase, related codes were grouped into categories that represented patterns across participants. Interpretation involved identifying shared meanings, and the concluding phase confirmed the final themes by comparing them with the original data and

analytic memos. This process demonstrated how themes emerged inductively from participants' descriptions of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students.

The process of moving from codes to themes reflected both the iterative nature of qualitative inquiry and the study's alignment with reflective practice theory. This approach allowed participants' voices to remain central while providing structure to the analytic process.

Table 1 summarizes the initial codes and the themes that developed through Yin's five-step analysis.

**Table 2**

*Demographic Table*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>School Level</b>	<b>Data Collection Method</b>	<b>Gender</b>
P01	Lower School	Interview	Female
P02	Lower School	Interview	Female
P03	Middle School	Interview	Male
P04	Lower School	Interview	Female
P05	Lower/Middle/Upper	Focus Group	Female
P06	Lower School	Focus Group	Female
P07	Upper/Middle/Lower	Focus Group	Female
P08	Lower School	Focus Group	Female
P09	Middle School	Focus Group	Male
P10	Upper School	Interview	Male
P11	Upper School	Focus Group	Female
P12	Middle School	Focus Group	Female
P13	Upper School	Focus Group	Female
P14	Upper/Middle/Lower	Focus Group	Male
P15	Middle School	Focus Group	Female
P16	Middle School	Interview	Female
P17	Lower School	Interview	Female
P18	Middle School	Interview	Male
P19	Middle/Upper	Interview	Male
P20	Middle School	Interview	Male

*Note.* Pseudonyms were used for all participants to maintain confidentiality.

The data analysis for this qualitative descriptive case study followed Yin's (2018) five analytic steps of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. This structured approach provided an organized and transparent method for managing and analyzing the qualitative data obtained through interviews and focus groups. Each phase of Yin's process was applied sequentially to ensure methodological rigor, maintain alignment with the purpose of the study, and establish trustworthiness through a clear audit trail. The analytic process supported the systematic examination of educators' descriptions of mindfulness practices, their reflective processes, and their interpretations of the effects of these practices on students. The following narrative describes how each phase of Yin's analytic process was implemented in the study.

During the compiling phase, all interview and focus group transcripts were gathered, transcribed verbatim, and prepared for review. Each transcript was verified for completeness and accuracy against the original audio recordings. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect participant confidentiality, and all data were securely stored in password-protected digital files. The transcripts and field notes were organized in NVivo software to facilitate data management and retrieval. This phase involved multiple readings of the transcripts to become familiar with the participants' descriptions and to establish a foundational understanding of their experiences with mindfulness and reflection.

The disassembling phase involved breaking the compiled data into smaller, meaningful units to allow for initial coding. Through open coding, significant phrases and statements that represented participants' ideas about mindfulness, reflection, and perceived student outcomes were identified. Each segment of text was labeled with a concise code that captured its core meaning. This phase required careful review and reexamination of each transcript to ensure that

the codes remained grounded in the participants' actual words and experiences. NVivo software supported the organization of these codes, and analytic memos were recorded to document decisions and insights that emerged throughout the coding process.

In the reassembling phase, the coded data were organized into broader categories to identify patterns and relationships among participants' responses. Codes that expressed similar ideas were clustered together to create categories that represented shared meanings across the dataset. These categories were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately reflected the content of the data and were supported by multiple participants. Categories such as teacher calm, student readiness, and reflective adjustment began to represent broader patterns that later informed the development of overarching themes. The systematic comparison of codes and categories facilitated the movement from fragmented data toward coherent thematic patterns that aligned with the study's purpose.

The interpreting phase focused on synthesizing the reassembled categories into comprehensive themes that addressed the central research question. During this phase, connections among categories were examined to construct a meaningful representation of educators' descriptions and experiences. The emerging themes were reviewed in relation to the theoretical framework of reflective practice, which emphasizes reflection in action and reflection on action (Schon, 1983). Interpretive memos were used to link participant statements with broader conceptual ideas related to mindfulness and reflection. The goal of this phase was to develop an integrated understanding of how mindfulness informed educators' instructional presence and classroom practices.

The concluding phase finalized the analytic process by confirming the accuracy, coherence, and alignment of the themes with the data. Each theme was reviewed for consistency within the dataset and for relevance to the research question. Member checks were conducted by sharing summary interpretations with participants to confirm that their perspectives were represented accurately. An audit trail, reflective notes, and NVivo records were maintained to support dependability and confirmability. This phase resulted in the identification of five major themes: mindfulness as reflective awareness and professional presence, emotional regulation and classroom climate, readiness, attention, and engagement, conditions and supports for implementation, and perceived academic outcomes. These themes provided a comprehensive understanding of how educators described their use of mindfulness strategies and their perceived effects on students.

Through the systematic application of Yin's (2018) five analytic steps, the study maintained methodological rigor and coherence between data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Each phase contributed to a detailed, credible account of participants' descriptions, ensuring that the findings were both authentic to the data and aligned with the study's theoretical framework. The progression from compiling to concluding demonstrated a clear, traceable pathway from raw data to meaningful interpretation, supporting the trustworthiness of the study's results.

Table 3

*Initial Codes and Emerging Themes*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Representative Initial Codes</b>	<b>Description</b>
Mindfulness as reflective awareness and professional presence	Reflection in action, reflection on action, intentional instruction, calm tone, teacher awareness, adaptive routine	Mindfulness was described as a reflective process guiding teachers' presence, tone, and instructional decisions.
Emotional regulation and classroom climate	Shared language, self-regulation, empathy, respectful dialogue	Mindfulness supported emotional balance for teachers and students, improving overall classroom climate.
Readiness, attention, and engagement	Transition cues, focus start, sustained attention, on-task behavior	Mindfulness increased readiness and engagement during transitions and lesson beginnings.
Conditions and supports for implementation	Time constraints, leadership support, peer modeling, family communication	Environmental and organizational factors influenced the frequency and form of mindfulness use.
Perceived academic outcomes	Task initiation, persistence, work completion, focus	Academic effects were viewed as indirect and mediated through regulation and engagement.

*Note.* Codes were generated through open coding and refined through constant comparison.

Participants' reflections provided context for how mindfulness influenced their practice and student outcomes. For example, P01 shared, "I take one quiet breath before giving directions; it keeps me patient and them calmer". P19 said, "Writing a quick note after class helps me decide where mindfulness fits best tomorrow". Another participant emphasized the connection between mindfulness and classroom calm: "When I model calm, they respond calmly; the class energy shifts almost immediately" (P06).

### ***Research Question 1***

How do PreK through 12th grade educators describe their use of mindfulness strategies in the classroom and their perceived effects on students?

The purpose of this section is to present the patterns revealed through the data that describe how educators used mindfulness strategies and reflected on their perceived effects on students. Analysis of the interview and focus group transcripts using Yin's (2011, 2018) five-step analytic framework revealed five themes. These themes included mindfulness as reflective awareness and professional presence, emotional regulation and classroom climate, readiness, attention, and engagement, conditions and supports for implementation, and perceived academic outcomes. The presentation of these themes below integrates participants' dialogue to illustrate their experiences while maintaining confidentiality and the descriptive boundaries of the qualitative design.

**Theme 1: Mindfulness as Reflective Awareness and Professional Presence.** Patterns in the data revealed that mindfulness was perceived by educators as a reflective practice that enhanced awareness and professional composure. Participants described using brief, teachable routines to center themselves and the classroom before or during instruction. These routines included short breathing exercises, quiet observation, or brief reflective pauses that helped redirect attention and promote calm. Several educators expressed that mindfulness was not only for students but also for their own ability to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively. Participants emphasized that the process of reflection was embedded in both the planning and execution of mindfulness practices.

P01 shared that she “takes one quiet breath before speaking because it helps maintain patience and sets the tone for the class.” P16 noted that “when the classroom energy feels scattered, a silent pause gives everyone a chance to reset, including me.” Another participant, P19, explained that after each class, he writes “a quick note on what worked and what needs adjusting,” using those reflections to modify routines the next day. These accounts illustrated reflection in action and reflection on action (Schön, 1983) as mechanisms through which mindfulness informed teaching presence and adaptability.

Across interviews and focus groups, this pattern of intentional pause and reflective recalibration emerged consistently across grade levels and roles. P10 described beginning class with “one to two minutes” of breathing exercises so students could “calm ourselves” before engaging with content, noting that students were “more focused for the classroom period” afterward. Similarly, P07 described integrating breath work and visualization into morning routines, observing that although students were initially distracted, over time they became visibly

calmer and more attentive. These accounts reinforced the notion that structured, repeated mindfulness practices cultivated both teacher composure and student regulation.

Participants also emphasized that mindfulness shaped how they responded to challenging classroom situations. P03 described stopping a science lab when students mishandled materials, explaining that rather than reacting with anger, he reset expectations calmly and reflected with students about safety. In another instance, when an experiment failed to produce expected results, he modeled reflective problem solving by guiding students to analyze procedural variables instead of internalizing failure. This intentional composure demonstrated reflection in action, as he adjusted his response in real time to maintain emotional safety and academic focus (Schön, 1983).

Several educators described mindfulness as relational awareness that extended beyond academic instruction. P08 articulated that “if I only focused on the academic side, I would only reach about 75 percent of the class,” emphasizing that knowing the “full student” allowed him to better engage learners. He explained that when students felt heard and understood, they were more willing to participate and persevere through academic challenges. This relational framing positioned mindfulness not as a discrete activity but as a stance of attentiveness that shaped instructional decisions and student engagement.

Focus group participants further reinforced this theme through shared experiences of routine and consistency. P12 explained that mindfulness practices became “part of the routine” in her first-grade classroom, and students eventually “sought it out themselves.” She described a moment when a student independently removed himself from a conflict to sit quietly and breathe, demonstrating internalization of regulation strategies. Likewise, P13 shared that playing

calming music and dimming lights after lunch helped students transition back to focused work, noting that students often requested the practice again. These recurring examples across elementary contexts suggested that mindfulness fostered predictable structures that supported emotional regulation.

In middle school settings, educators described mindfulness as a tool for navigating heightened emotional intensity. P16 reflected that mindfulness required students to “buy in” and that modeling calmness was essential to gaining that trust. P20 emphasized that reflective conversations helped students identify their emotions before reacting, stating that it allowed them to “take accountability” for their behavior. These perspectives illustrated how mindfulness supported social emotional growth during developmental periods marked by rapid change.

Upper school educators similarly described mindfulness as integral to professional presence. P04 explained that mindfulness was “the driving force” behind her teaching, shaping how she structured transitions and prepared students for assessments. She noted that brief pauses before tests helped students approach challenges with greater confidence and reduced anxiety. P06 also described encouraging students to “relax your body, relax your mind” before engaging with academic tasks, observing that this reduced emotional escalation and increased productivity. Across contexts, participants consistently linked mindful preparation with improved academic engagement.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate recurrence across individual interviews and focus groups, suggesting thematic saturation. Educators described mindfulness as embedded within daily routines, relational interactions, instructional adjustments, and self-reflection. Whether through breathing exercises, reflective writing, sensory grounding, structured

transitions, or calm modeling, participants consistently emphasized awareness, intentional pause, and emotional composure. This convergence across roles and grade levels underscores mindfulness as a shared professional disposition rather than an isolated classroom strategy.

Consistent with Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory, educators demonstrated reflection in action when they paused mid lesson to recalibrate tone, address conflict, or reframe setbacks. They demonstrated reflection on action when they reviewed lessons, adjusted routines, and intentionally modified their approaches based on student response. Mindfulness functioned as both a catalyst and structure for these reflective processes. In doing so, it shaped professional presence and reinforced adaptive teaching practices.

Ultimately, Theme 1 revealed that mindfulness was perceived as foundational to teaching identity and classroom climate. Participants consistently described it as an intentional way of being that strengthened emotional awareness, relational trust, and instructional responsiveness. Through reflective integration into daily routines, mindfulness informed not only how educators taught but how they showed up as professionals in their classrooms.

**Theme 2: Emotional Regulation and Classroom Climate.** Findings indicated that mindfulness supported both teacher and student emotional regulation and contributed to a calmer, more positive classroom climate. Participants described that when they modeled mindfulness and practiced calm awareness, students mirrored this behavior and approached challenges more constructively. Participants shared those consistent routines such as quiet starts, breathing exercises, or guided reflection helped establish predictability, reduce anxiety, and create a supportive atmosphere. Educators noted that mindfulness encouraged empathy and mutual respect, particularly when implemented daily and with clear expectations.

P06 described that “when the class begins with a quiet moment, the energy shifts; students greet each other politely and are ready to start.” P13 explained that “students talk to each other more respectfully when we use mindfulness because it reminds them to slow down before they react.” Similarly, P12 commented that “mindfulness gives everyone language to manage emotions—it helps students take a breath before an argument or frustration builds.” Collectively, these excerpts reflected educators’ observations that mindfulness routines promoted emotional balance and cooperative classroom relationships.

Across grade levels, participants consistently emphasized the reciprocal relationship between teacher regulation and classroom tone. P08 explained that “you are the thermometer, not the thermostat... you control what is in the classroom,” underscoring the idea that teacher composure directly shapes student emotional climate. He described how shifting from a reactive stance to a calm, relational approach transformed classroom dynamics and improved student performance. This perspective was echoed by P03, who noted that pausing instruction to build relational trust led to improved student engagement and fewer behavioral disruptions. Together,

these accounts illustrated how teacher self-regulation served as a stabilizing force within emotionally charged classroom environments.

Elementary educators described observing tangible behavioral shifts when mindfulness was embedded consistently. P12 explained that after implementing daily breath work and grounding exercises, students “almost needed” the practice and began to “seek it out themselves.” She described a student who independently removed himself from a playground conflict and sat quietly by a tree to breathe, demonstrating internalized emotional regulation. Similarly, P13 observed that structured calming routines reduced post lunch dysregulation and increased attentiveness during handwriting practice. These examples demonstrated that mindfulness routines not only deescalated immediate emotional intensity but also cultivated transferable coping strategies.

Middle school participants emphasized mindfulness as essential for managing heightened emotional volatility. P19 described beginning class with quiet reflection after recess, noting that although students initially resisted, over time they “come to expect it” and “come to appreciate it.” P20 reflected that mindfulness helps students “take accountability” by allowing them to identify emotions before reacting impulsively. These accounts suggest that mindfulness practices functioned as preventative structures, reducing escalation by interrupting reactive cycles before they intensified.

Participants also linked mindfulness to increased empathy and improved peer interactions. P10 explained that mindfulness practices encouraged students to think about “how would that make other people feel?” particularly during group work. He observed that students became “more thoughtful” and collaborative after implementing breathing pauses and reflective

prompts. Similarly, P02 described facilitating student conversations about behavior, encouraging them to “talk it out with each other” after reflecting on their actions. These findings suggest that mindfulness supported not only individual regulation but also collective relational repair.

In upper school contexts, educators described emotional regulation as foundational to academic risk taking. P04 explained that when students engaged in chime time or brief breath work before challenging tasks, they demonstrated greater confidence and reduced test anxiety. She noted that mindfulness helped students “trust in the process” and approach mistakes with less fear. P06 similarly described encouraging students to relax their bodies and clear their minds before academic work, observing decreased escalation and increased productivity. These perspectives demonstrate how emotional regulation fostered psychological safety, enabling students to engage more fully with academic content.

Focus group participants reinforced the importance of predictability and shared routines in shaping classroom climate. P15 described using structured transitions, such as silent slow motion lining up, to reduce overstimulation and create order. He explained that these brief pauses allowed students to shift from chaotic energy to focused engagement. P11 further emphasized that consistency across classrooms strengthened emotional regulation, suggesting that school wide implementation would amplify impact. The recurrence of these themes across focus groups suggests that emotional regulation was not confined to individual classrooms but was perceived as a cultural norm when practiced collectively.

Participants also acknowledged challenges in implementation, particularly resistance among adolescents. P02 noted that middle school students may perceive mindfulness as “not cool,” requiring teachers to reframe practices in developmentally appropriate ways. P05 reflected

that older students might initially resist explicit mindfulness language but respond positively when practices are embedded organically into instruction. These insights highlight the importance of contextual adaptation while maintaining consistency in underlying principles.

Collectively, the data demonstrate that mindfulness practices contributed to observable shifts in classroom climate. Educators reported fewer reactive conflicts, smoother transitions, increased mutual respect, and stronger student teacher relationships. Across elementary, middle, and upper school settings, mindfulness functioned as both a preventative and responsive tool, supporting emotional balance at individual and collective levels.

The recurrence of descriptions related to calmness, predictability, empathy, respectful communication, and reduced anxiety across interviews and focus groups indicates strong thematic convergence. Participants independently described similar outcomes despite differences in grade level, subject area, and professional role. This convergence underscores mindfulness as a mechanism through which emotional regulation was cultivated and classroom climate was strengthened.

In alignment with reflective practice theory (Schön, 1983), educators demonstrated reflection in action when they adjusted tone, pacing, or routines in response to rising emotional intensity. They demonstrated reflection on action when analyzing behavioral incidents and revising classroom structures to prevent recurrence. Through these reflective processes, mindfulness became embedded within instructional practice, shaping emotional norms and relational expectations within the classroom environment.

Ultimately, Theme 2 reveals that mindfulness extended beyond individual coping strategies to influence the broader social ecology of the classroom. By modeling calm awareness

and embedding consistent routines, educators cultivated emotionally regulated learning spaces characterized by empathy, predictability, and mutual respect. These findings suggest that mindfulness served as both an intrapersonal and interpersonal regulator, reinforcing classroom climates conducive to both academic engagement and social emotional growth.

**Theme 3: Readiness, Attention, and Engagement.** The data was used to indicate that educators used mindfulness to strengthen readiness for learning, attention to instruction, and engagement in classroom activities. Participants described incorporating short, consistent routines at transitional points such as after recess, before assessments, or between subject changes to help students reorient their focus. These routines were associated with improved task behavior, reduced distractions, and smoother lesson starts. Educators reported that students showed greater efficiency and willingness to participate following brief mindfulness prompts. Across grade levels, mindfulness was described as a preparatory strategy that supported cognitive readiness.

P04 observed that “three quiet breaths after recess make a big difference students listen to the first direction instead of needing it repeated.” P10 explained that “a one-minute focus routine before assessments lowers restlessness they start calmly instead of rushing.” Similarly, P09 stated that “students began asking for a quiet start before reading they said it helps them think clearly.” Participants interpreted these responses as indicators that mindfulness routines were linked to improved task initiation and sustained attention, consistent with literature identifying mindfulness as associated with enhanced attentional regulation and classroom engagement (Kuyken et al., 2022; Maynard et al., 2021).

Participants in interviews emphasized the importance of transitional regulation in shaping attentional control. P12 described using chimes and breathing exercises before instructional blocks and reported that students appeared more prepared and less distracted during subsequent tasks. P13 shared that playing calming music after lunch was associated with improved focus during handwriting practice and fewer off task conversations. These recurring descriptions across

elementary contexts suggested that predictability and brief structured pauses contributed to improved attentional engagement. The consistency of these reports across participants indicated convergence in how mindfulness supported transitions.

Middle school educators similarly described readiness as foundational to engagement. P03 reported pausing instruction during a science lab to reset expectations when students became overstimulated. He explained that once students were re centered, they completed the task with greater attention to safety and procedural detail. P15 described structured transitions such as silent slow motion lining up, which he associated with reduced overstimulation and improved focus entering the next activity. These accounts suggested that mindfulness was used both proactively and responsively to maintain cognitive readiness.

Upper school participants connected mindfulness practices to academic stamina. P08 explained that integrating reflective check ins and structured routines was associated with sustained attention during independent reading and writing tasks. He noted that when students appeared emotionally regulated, they were more likely to persist through challenging assignments. P06 similarly described how calming strategies before study skills sessions were linked to reduced distraction and increased productivity. These findings indicated that mindfulness routines were associated with both immediate attentional shifts and longer-term engagement patterns.

Participants also reported that mindfulness reduced the frequency of repeated directions and behavioral redirection. P04 stated that after practicing breathing routines, students responded more consistently to initial instructions. P10 observed that students who engaged in focus routines before assessments required fewer reminders and displayed fewer off task behaviors.

These observations reflected changes in executive functioning behaviors such as task initiation and sustained attention. Such participant reports aligned with research indicating that mindfulness practices are associated with attentional control and reduced impulsivity (Kuyken et al., 2022; Maynard et al., 2021).

In focus group discussions, educators described how readiness routines became normalized over time. P19 explained that students initially questioned quiet starts but later anticipated them, resulting in smoother transitions. P11 reported that when mindfulness was implemented consistently across classrooms, students settled more quickly and demonstrated improved peer cooperation. These reflections suggested that collective implementation reinforced attentional norms within instructional environments. Recurrence of these observations across participants strengthened the credibility of the theme.

Educators further emphasized that readiness routines supported ~~self-directed~~self-directed learning. P09 reported that students independently requested quiet reading starts, indicating internalization of regulation strategies beyond teacher prompts. P12 described students who independently used breathing techniques before challenging tasks. These examples suggested that mindfulness practices were linked to increasing autonomy in managing attention rather than reliance on teacher intervention. Participants interpreted these behaviors as indicators of developing executive functioning skills.

Overall, findings indicated that mindfulness routines were associated with improved readiness, smoother transitions, and sustained engagement across instructional settings. Participants across elementary, middle, and upper school contexts consistently described fewer behavioral interruptions and increased participation following brief regulatory practices. The

recurrence of these descriptions across interviews and focus groups suggested thematic convergence. These interpretations were consistent with existing literature linking mindfulness practices to enhanced sustained attention and classroom engagement (Kuyken et al., 2022; Maynard et al., 2021).

The findings for theme 3 are used to suggest that mindfulness functioned as a preparatory mechanism linking emotional regulation to academic engagement. By embedding brief, intentional routines at transitional moments, educators described supporting readiness that facilitated deeper participation in instructional activities. Participants consistently reported observable improvements in attentional focus and task persistence. Through consistent implementation, mindfulness practices became integrated into daily routines that supported learning readiness across grade levels.

**Theme 4: Conditions and Supports for Implementation.** Participants indicated that conditions surrounding instruction and available supports influenced how mindfulness was implemented. They identified time constraints, classroom environment, and student developmental levels as factors shaping the form and frequency of mindfulness routines. Short practices lasting one to two minutes were described as the most practical and sustainable within a typical school day. Professional learning, administrative modeling, and peer collaboration were also identified as supports that strengthened teacher confidence and maintained consistency. Across interviews and focus groups, educators emphasized that implementation depended not only on intention but also on structural conditions within the school setting.

P18 described the need for brevity and consistency, stating that “every class, 30 seconds, three minutes, whatever it is” made implementation manageable within daily routines. P12

similarly noted, “I think a challenge is just finding the time to make it important,” highlighting how instructional demands competed with reflective practices. P07 explained that “the Mind Up Program was started in the school, which kind of really supported what I had already started doing,” indicating that school wide initiatives reinforced classroom level efforts. These responses suggested that practical constraints such as time and scheduling shaped how mindfulness was embedded into instruction. Participants consistently described short, predictable routines as more feasible than extended activities.

Classroom environment and developmental level were also identified as implementation factors. P06 described creating physical space and reducing overstimulation, explaining that “having more space is definitely a thing... not feeling so confined.” She also acknowledged that in middle school settings mindfulness was “not always cool,” suggesting that age and peer perception influenced student receptivity. In focus group discussions, participants emphasized that what worked for younger students did not always translate directly to older grade levels. These descriptions indicated that educators adjusted mindfulness practices according to classroom climate and student developmental needs.

Professional learning and peer modeling were frequently cited as critical supports. P07 shared that “I also took a yoga workshop... which gave a whole overview of incorporating yoga into the classroom,” noting that training increased her confidence in trying new approaches. P16 reflected that having opportunities such as “faculty meetings” with access to different mindfulness activities would help sustain practice, stating that exposure to new strategies expanded her understanding of what was possible. P20 suggested that “having easier access... like a Google Doc with a list of strategies” would support teachers on days when recall was

limited. These accounts indicated that collaboration and shared resources contributed to sustained implementation.

Administrative support was described as central to long term consistency. P20 stated that “it comes from the top down. If it’s something that our administrators value... then it’s something that we’re much more likely to implement.” Participants expressed that explicit affirmation from leadership regarding the value of dedicating time to mindfulness would increase collective commitment. Without that endorsement, some educators reported feeling isolated in their efforts. These reflections suggested that institutional alignment influenced how confidently and consistently mindfulness practices were maintained.

Communication with families was also described as a supportive condition. P03 explained that “teachers, the student and the family is like a team,” emphasizing that collaboration strengthened student outcomes. He further noted, “I’ve also talked to parents about... what’s worked well for them as their parent,” indicating that consistency between home and school supported regulation strategies. Participants suggested that when families understood the purpose of mindfulness practices, students were more receptive and continuity was reinforced. These accounts underscored the role of home school communication in sustaining implementation efforts.

Collectively, participants described implementation as dependent upon structural feasibility, professional learning, leadership modeling, and family communication. Short routines were viewed as sustainable within time limited schedules, while extended practices were described as more difficult to maintain consistently. Educators emphasized that peer collaboration and shared language strengthened confidence and coherence across classrooms.

Administrative endorsement and communication with families were also identified as reinforcing factors. Together, these findings suggested that successful implementation required alignment between classroom practice and broader school supports.

**Theme 5: Perceived Academic Outcomes.** Patterns emerged indicating that educators perceived academic outcomes of mindfulness as indirect and mediated through emotional and behavioral regulation. Participants described that students who engaged consistently in mindfulness displayed increased persistence, improved task completion, and better focus during independent work. Although direct academic measures were not collected, educators reported that the calmer and more focused classroom environment created conditions conducive to learning. Participants emphasized that mindfulness influenced attitudes toward learning rather than measurable achievement outcomes.

Multiple educators linked perceived academic change to improved engagement and readiness rather than immediate shifts in grades. P08 reflected that he “was able to make better relationships with the kids and the parents, which then led to better results in academics.” P04 similarly stated that mindfulness “helps the students open up and trust in, like, the academic portion,” and she associated this with students showing “more of a growth mindset” during challenging content. P10 described the purpose of brief breathing routines as helping students be “focused and ready right when we go,” particularly when lessons required sustained listening and observation.

Focus group participants also described perceived academic benefits as dependent on students’ ability to regulate before engaging with instruction. P12 stated that when educators “focus on the mindfulness piece,” students could “retain the information a lot clearer,” and she

emphasized that students were more ready to learn when they were “mindful and focused and centered and ready for your lesson.” P15 connected mindfulness to academic productivity through comfort and balance, describing “kids being able to do their best work when they're feeling most comfortable.” P13 similarly described a brief quiet routine after lunch as beneficial because “it centered them and got them back to calm down and focus to get to work.”

Participants frequently described perceived academic outcomes through the lens of persistence and response to evaluation. P03 discussed supporting students who felt discouraged after assessments and reframing performance by noting that a student “might have been getting C's, and now you're at a B plus.” He added that “it's not an A, but it's still incredible progress,” emphasizing growth and continued effort rather than a single outcome. P03 also referenced anxiety related to “tests” and described using brief preparation and encouragement so students did not shut down after disappointment. These descriptions suggested that educators associated mindfulness with academic perseverance and willingness to reengage after setbacks.

Overall, educators framed perceived academic outcomes as indirect and mediated through improved regulation, readiness, and engagement behaviors. Participants consistently described students as more likely to initiate tasks, sustain attention, and persist through challenging work after brief mindfulness routines. Because academic outcomes were not measured directly in this study, these statements reflected educator observations and interpretations rather than causal conclusions. These perceptions were consistent with scholarship indicating that mindfulness interventions have been associated with academic engagement through attention and self-regulation pathways (Kuyken et al., 2022; Maynard et al., 2021).

## Evaluation of the Findings

The findings of this qualitative descriptive case study were used to enhance the understanding of how PreK through 12th grade educators in a small private school in Northern New Jersey perceived their use of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students. Educators described using mindfulness to promote focus, calm, and awareness among students while simultaneously supporting their own professional reflection. Research has shown that mindfulness can contribute to improvements in attention, emotional regulation, and classroom climate (Bauer et al., 2022; Kuyken et al., 2022). However, the success of such practices depends on consistent application and reflective adaptation to classroom contexts (Maynard et al., 2021). Previous research has indicated that although mindfulness-based programs are increasingly used in education, educators often report uncertainty about implementation and limited training in how to integrate mindfulness effectively (Albrecht et al., 2012; Emerson et al., 2017). The current findings contributed to this growing body of research by revealing patterns of practice and reflection that described how mindfulness was adapted to fit diverse classroom settings, grade levels, and student needs.

Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory served as the theoretical framework for this study. Reflective practice theory distinguishes between reflection-in-action, which occurs as educators make real-time decisions during teaching, and reflection-on-action, which involves reviewing one's practice after an event to inform future instruction. When applied to the five themes that emerged from the data, the framework clarifies how mindfulness supported teachers' capacity to observe, interpret, and adapt within the classroom. The five themes included mindfulness as reflective awareness and professional presence, emotional regulation and classroom climate, readiness, attention, and engagement, conditions and supports for

implementation, and perceived academic outcomes. The themes collectively illustrated how reflection and mindfulness interacted to promote instructional responsiveness, classroom balance, and student engagement.

The purpose of this research was to explore how educators described their use of mindfulness practices and their descriptions of the effects of these practices on students. The study sought to understand how mindfulness functioned as both a reflective tool and a pedagogical approach in an independent PreK through 12 setting. Through interviews and focus groups, it was revealed that educators perceived mindfulness as an accessible method for improving student focus, managing transitions, and fostering calm learning environments. The findings extend existing literature by showing how mindfulness was sustained through reflective adaptation rather than formal programs, demonstrating that personal reflection and contextual awareness were critical to its success (Jennings et al., 2019; Roeser et al., 2013).

The first theme, mindfulness as reflective awareness and professional presence, revealed that educators used mindfulness as a means to remain present, patient, and responsive during instruction. Participants described short personal or collective pauses that enabled them to observe classroom dynamics and adjust accordingly. These reflections represented Schön's (1983) concept of reflection-in-action, where professional judgment is shaped through continuous awareness and adaptation. The theme was consistent with research emphasizing mindfulness as a mechanism that supports teacher well-being and professional composure (Roeser & Eccles, 2021).

The second theme, emotional regulation and classroom climate, reflected participants' descriptions of mindfulness as a strategy for fostering emotional safety and mutual respect.

Educators emphasized that modeling calm behavior influenced student responses and that shared mindfulness routines reduced stress and interpersonal tension. This theme aligned with studies that have shown mindfulness contributes to social-emotional development and positive classroom relationships (Broderick & Jennings, 2021; Greenberg & Harris, 2020). Participants' accounts demonstrated that consistent mindfulness practices helped both educators and students develop emotional regulation skills that improved the overall classroom atmosphere.

The third theme, readiness, attention, and engagement, revealed that mindfulness was used to prepare students cognitively and emotionally for learning. Teachers described short, predictable routines that improved focus, sustained attention, and engagement during instruction. These findings supported previous literature indicating that mindfulness practices can enhance executive functioning and attentional control (Klingbeil et al., 2020; Kuyken et al., 2022). Educators reported that students transitioned more smoothly between activities and engaged more readily when mindfulness routines were implemented consistently. This theme also demonstrated reflection-in-action, as educators adjusted timing, tone, and methods to maintain engagement based on student responses.

The fourth theme, conditions and supports for implementation, identified environmental and institutional factors that influenced the sustainability of mindfulness practices. Time constraints, physical space, and developmental appropriateness shaped how mindfulness was adapted across grade levels. Participants highlighted that brief professional learning opportunities, collegial collaboration, and leadership modeling increased confidence and consistency. These findings reflected existing literature emphasizing that educator training and administrative support are essential for successful mindfulness integration in schools (Jennings et

al., 2020; Meiklejohn et al., 2012). The theme also demonstrated the interdependence between reflective culture and institutional structures that encourage experimentation and shared practice.

The fifth theme, perceived academic outcomes, revealed that educators viewed mindfulness as indirectly influencing student learning by improving focus, persistence, and task completion. Participants observed that mindfulness enhanced the emotional and cognitive conditions necessary for effective learning but did not claim direct improvements in academic performance. These findings were consistent with research that identifies mindfulness as a supportive factor for engagement and motivation rather than a direct predictor of academic achievement (Waters et al., 2020). Educators described observable improvements in readiness to learn, smoother task initiation, and higher levels of sustained effort following mindfulness activities.

Evaluating the five themes through Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory emphasized the reciprocal relationship between mindfulness and reflection in educational settings. Mindfulness created conditions for reflective awareness, while reflection enabled teachers to adapt mindfulness practices to their classrooms. Educators' willingness to modify routines, observe outcomes, and refine strategies over time demonstrated reflective professionalism that was consistent with Schön's framework. Where reflection was strong, mindfulness was integrated seamlessly into instruction and supported both teacher and student regulation. Where reflection was limited by time or training, mindfulness practices were less consistent or less aligned with lesson objectives.

The evaluation of findings also highlighted the importance of professional learning and institutional culture in sustaining mindfulness practices. Participants reported that administrative

modeling and collaborative discussions normalized mindfulness and encouraged experimentation. When these supports were absent, implementation varied and depended on individual initiative. These observations were consistent with literature emphasizing the role of reflective communities of practice in maintaining educator growth and well-being (Jennings et al., 2020; Meiklejohn et al., 2012).

The findings of this study contribute to the body of research by situating mindfulness within the broader framework of reflective practice. Educators described mindfulness as an integrated, dynamic process rather than a stand-alone intervention. Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action served as mechanisms for adapting mindfulness to classroom needs and contexts, fostering both educator growth and student engagement. The alignment between this study's findings supports the assertion that mindfulness contributes to improved emotional regulation, attention, and classroom climate while reinforcing teachers' reflective awareness and professional efficacy. Collectively, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how mindfulness and reflective practice intersect to enhance teaching and learning within PreK through 12 educational settings.

## **Summary**

This qualitative descriptive case study explored how PreK through 12th grade educators in a small private school in Northern New Jersey described their use of mindfulness practices and the perceived effects of those practices on students. Twenty educators participated in one-to-one semi structured interviews or focus groups, and their descriptions were analyzed using Yin's five-step approach to identify patterns in how mindfulness was implemented and reflected upon

within classroom contexts. The study remained aligned with the approved methodology and protected participant confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms and generalized descriptors.

Five themes emerged from the findings, providing a broad understanding of how educators described mindfulness in daily practice. These themes described mindfulness as a reflective tool that supported professional presence, emotional regulation, student readiness, and engagement. Educators also identified contextual influences that shaped their use of mindfulness, such as time, developmental fit, and available support. Collectively, these themes highlighted mindfulness as a flexible and practical routine that could be embedded into classroom instruction to foster calm, focus, and smoother transitions.

The findings also indicated that mindfulness supported educators' reflective processes. Participants described how they adjusted routines based on student responses, lesson flow, and classroom dynamics. They perceived that consistent mindfulness routines contributed to a more positive classroom climate and improved peer interactions. Although academic outcomes were described as indirect, educators reported that mindfulness created conditions conducive to learning by reinforcing emotional balance and attentional readiness.

The results offered a synthesized understanding of how mindfulness functioned as both an instructional and reflective practice. Educators viewed mindfulness as a supportive strategy for themselves and their students, and their reflections underscored the importance of flexibility, consistency, and schoolwide support. In this chapter, I have provided a summary of the major themes that emerged from the findings. The next chapter will discuss the implications of these findings, provide recommendations for practice and future research, and present conclusions grounded in the theoretical framework and participants' experiences.

## **Chapter 5: Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions**

The problem addressed in this study was the limited understanding of educators' descriptions of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students (Maynard et al., 2021). Although mindfulness practices have been associated with cognitive and emotional benefits for students, there remains insufficient exploration of how educators described their use of these practices in daily classroom instruction or interpreted their effects on students' readiness, emotional regulation, and engagement. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to explore PreK through 12 educators' descriptions regarding the implementation of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students at a private school in Northern New Jersey. A qualitative descriptive case study design supported this inquiry by emphasizing participants' natural descriptions of practice without imposing interpretive abstraction beyond the data. Semi structured interviews and focus groups served as the primary data sources and were analyzed using Yin's (2018) five-step analytic approach, which resulted in the development of five themes directly related to the research question: mindfulness as reflective awareness and professional presence, emotional regulation and classroom climate, readiness, attention, and engagement, conditions and supports for implementation, and perceived academic outcomes.

Several limitations were identified, including the single-site context, reliance on self-reported data, and the absence of measured academic outcomes; however, the findings contribute meaningfully to the understanding of how educators apply mindfulness within classroom settings and how they perceive its influence on students. This chapter includes the implications of the study organized by the research question and themes, followed by recommendations for practice and future research, and concludes with a summary of the significance of the study.

## **Implications**

The implications presented in this section reflect participants' descriptions of their mindfulness practices and how those descriptions relate to the problem, purpose, and theoretical framework guiding the study. Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory provided the foundation for interpreting educators' accounts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action as they implemented mindfulness practices. The findings offer insight into the ways educators used mindfulness to guide their instructional decisions, respond to classroom dynamics, and support students' emotional and behavioral regulation. Consistent with reflective practice theory, educators' narratives demonstrated how ongoing awareness and reflection shaped their adaptation of mindfulness strategies to meet classroom needs. The implications are presented below according to the single research question.

### ***Research Question 1: How do PreK through 12 educators describe their use of mindfulness strategies in the classroom and their perceived effects on students?***

The analysis revealed that educators consistently described mindfulness as a brief, intentional, and accessible set of routines used within daily instruction to support student regulation, readiness, and engagement. Participants described relying on predictable practices—such as breathing pauses, quiet starts, visualization, and reflective prompts—to help stabilize classroom tone and support smoother instructional transitions. These descriptions reflected educators' ongoing efforts to integrate mindfulness within time-limited school schedules while addressing the emotional and attentional needs of their students. Additionally, the data indicated that educators frequently refined mindfulness routines through reflective adjustments, aligning with Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory. Collectively, the findings suggested that

mindfulness was used as an instructional and relational tool that supported both teacher presence and student participation.

### **Theme 1: Mindfulness as Reflective Awareness and Professional Presence**

The first theme indicated that educators perceived mindfulness as supporting reflective awareness and professional presence. Participants described using brief pauses, breathing exercises, or quiet moments to help them regulate their own responses and maintain a calm tone when addressing the class. These practices were described as contributing to more intentional instructional decisions and improved classroom interactions. Educators explained that reflection occurred both during lessons and after lessons, which aligned with Schön's (1983) concepts of reflection in action and reflection on action. This theme addressed the study problem and purpose by clarifying how educators described mindfulness within daily instruction and how they interpreted its influence on teaching presence and responsiveness (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Kuyken et al., 2022).

The findings were largely consistent with prior research describing mindfulness as associated with educator self-regulation and improved relational quality in classrooms, particularly when practices were integrated routinely and modeled by teachers (Jennings et al., 2017; Maynard et al., 2021; Roeser et al., 2013). Participants rarely described mindfulness as a stand-alone curriculum, and instead emphasized short, embedded practices, which aligned with implementation-focused literature noting that school-based mindfulness is often adapted to fit classroom routines and scheduling demands (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Interpreted through Schön's (1983) framework, these descriptions extended understanding of reflective practice by illustrating mindfulness as a practical structure that supported reflection in action during instruction and reflection on action after instruction. This contribution strengthened the Chapter

2 framework by connecting educators' mindfulness descriptions directly to reflective decision-making processes rather than to outcomes alone. Overall, this theme added implementation-centered evidence that reflective practice theory was useful for explaining how educators integrated mindfulness as a professional stance in everyday teaching.

Several factors may have influenced interpretation of this theme, including reliance on educator self-report and the single-site private school context, which shaped available supports and participants' perceptions of feasibility and effectiveness (Yin, 2018). Because mindfulness practices were described as brief and embedded, some participant accounts may have overlapped with general classroom management or social-emotional learning practices, which may have affected how changes were attributed specifically to mindfulness (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). A divergent pattern involved variability in student receptivity, particularly in middle and upper grades where some educators described a need to implement calming routines without explicitly labeling them as mindfulness. Prior research has similarly reported that acceptability and implementation quality can vary by developmental level, classroom culture, and educator comfort, providing plausible explanations for variation across participants (Felter et al., 2016; Roeser et al., 2013). For these reasons, the results were interpreted as educators perceived links between mindfulness and professional presence rather than as evidence of causal effects on teacher behavior.

## **Theme 2: Emotional Regulation and Classroom Climate**

The second theme described how educators perceived mindfulness as contributing to improved emotional regulation for both students and teachers and to a more positive classroom climate. Participants stated that consistent use of mindfulness helped reduce moments of heightened emotion and created openings for students to pause before reacting. Several

participants noted calmer lesson beginnings, more respectful peer interactions, and fewer interpersonal conflicts when mindfulness routines were used consistently. Participants also emphasized that mindfulness contributed to feelings of stability and predictability, which supported a constructive learning environment. This theme addressed the study problem and purpose by clarifying how educators described the classroom-level effects they associated with mindfulness implementation, particularly related to student regulation and engagement within daily instruction (Kuyken et al., 2022; Maynard et al., 2021).

These findings were largely consistent with existing research indicating that mindfulness interventions in schools have been associated with improvements in emotion regulation, prosocial behavior, and classroom climate when implemented regularly and in developmentally appropriate ways (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; Zenner et al., 2014). The results also aligned with theoretical and empirical work suggesting that teacher social-emotional competence and regulation influence classroom climate and student behavior, which provided a plausible pathway through which mindfulness routines were perceived to affect peer interactions and overall tone (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jennings et al., 2017). In the context of the Chapter 2 framework, these findings contributed by connecting mindfulness practices to educators' observations of relational dynamics and emotional norms, rather than limiting the discussion to individual student outcomes (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Interpreted through Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory, the theme suggested that educators used reflection in action to notice emotional escalation and implement brief pauses and used reflection on action to refine routines that strengthened predictability and mutual respect (Schön, 1983).

Several factors may have influenced interpretation of this theme, including reliance on self-reported perceptions rather than direct behavioral observation and the single-site context,

which may have shaped both the consistency of implementation and expectations for student behavior (Yin, 2018). Because classroom climate is influenced by multiple interacting variables, including school culture, relationships, and classroom management practices, participants may have attributed improvements to mindfulness when changes were also supported by other concurrent practices or policies (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). A divergent pattern involved variability in student receptivity, particularly among older students, where some educators described resistance to explicit mindfulness language and reported better outcomes when calming routines were embedded without labeling them as mindfulness. Prior research has similarly documented that acceptability and perceived “fit” can vary by developmental level and classroom culture, which provides a plausible explanation for differences in how strongly educators perceived climate-related changes (Felver et al., 2016; Roeser et al., 2013). For these reasons, the results were interpreted as educators’ perceived links between mindfulness and emotional climate rather than as evidence of direct causal effects.

### **Theme 3: Readiness, Attention, and Engagement**

The third theme reflected educators’ descriptions of mindfulness as supporting readiness for learning, improved attention, and active engagement. Participants described using short routines such as quiet focus, visualization, or three breaths to help students transition from high-energy activities to academic tasks. Educators stated that students-initiated tasks more efficiently and required fewer repeated directions after these routines. Several participants also reported that students began to request mindfulness activities during challenging academic moments, which they interpreted as evidence of perceived benefit. This theme addressed the study problem and purpose by clarifying how educators described the role of mindfulness within daily instruction to

support readiness and engagement, rather than treating mindfulness as separate from academic learning (Kuyken et al., 2022; Maynard et al., 2021).

The findings were generally consistent with existing research suggesting that mindfulness practices have been associated with improvements in attention regulation, executive functioning-related behaviors, and cognitive readiness among school-age students, although outcomes have varied across studies depending on program design and measurement approaches (Klingbeil et al., 2017; Maynard et al., 2021; Zenner et al., 2014). Participants' emphasis on brief routines during transitions aligned with implementation literature indicating that short, embedded practices are commonly used in schools because they are feasible and can be integrated at points of predictable dysregulation such as after recess or before assessments (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Roeser et al., 2013). In relation to the Chapter 2 framework, the theme contributed by connecting mindfulness directly to educators' observations of task initiation, sustained focus, and engagement behaviors that function as proximal indicators of learning readiness (Kuyken et al., 2022). Interpreted through Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory, educators' descriptions suggested reflection in action when teachers noticed decreased focus and implemented brief routines, and reflection on action when they adjusted timing and structure based on student response (Schön, 1983).

Several factors may have influenced interpretation of these results, including reliance on educator perception rather than direct observation or standardized measures of attention and engagement. Because improvements such as fewer repeated directions and smoother task initiation are also influenced by classroom management practices, instructional design, and student maturation over time, attributing change solely to mindfulness may have been complicated by overlapping supports within the school environment (Meiklejohn et al., 2012;

Yin, 2018). A divergent pattern involved variability in student responsiveness across developmental levels, with some educators describing stronger receptivity among younger students and greater resistance among adolescents, particularly when mindfulness was labeled explicitly. Prior research has similarly noted that acceptability and perceived relevance can vary by age, classroom culture, and implementation approach, providing a plausible explanation for differences across participants (Felver et al., 2016; Roeser et al., 2013). For these reasons, the findings were interpreted as educators' perceptions of readiness and engagement shifts associated with mindfulness routines rather than as evidence of direct causal effects on academic attention.

#### **Theme 4: Conditions and Supports for Implementation**

The fourth theme reflected the conditions and supports that shaped how educators implemented mindfulness practices. Participants identified time limitations, noise levels, classroom layout, and developmental differences as factors that influenced the structure and placement of mindfulness routines. Educators reported that one-to-two-minute practices were the most feasible within daily instruction. Professional learning, peer collaboration, and administrative modeling were also identified as supports that increased confidence and encouraged routine use. This theme addressed the study problem and purpose by clarifying how educators described the contextual realities that shaped mindfulness implementation in daily classroom instruction, including factors that supported or constrained consistency (Maynard et al., 2021; Meiklejohn et al., 2012).

The findings were consistent with implementation-focused research indicating that feasibility, scheduling, educator preparation, and leadership support are central determinants of mindfulness sustainability in schools (Felver et al., 2016; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Roeser et al.,

2013). Participants' emphasis on brief, repeatable routines aligned with prior literature noting that classroom-based mindfulness is commonly delivered in short segments to fit school-day demands and reduce disruption to academic pacing (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Zenner et al., 2014). In the context of the Chapter 2 framework, this theme contributed by highlighting that mindfulness outcomes are closely tied to implementation quality and the presence of supportive structures, rather than the existence of mindfulness programming alone (Roeser et al., 2013). Interpreted through Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory, educators' descriptions suggested that reflection in action informed real-time adjustments to routines based on environment and student needs, while reflection on action supported iterative refinement and selection of strategies that were sustainable within constraints (Schön, 1983).

Several factors may have influenced interpretation of this theme, including the single-site setting and the specific resources, professional learning opportunities, and administrative norms available within the school (Yin, 2018). Because mindfulness implementation was described as highly adaptable and context dependent, participants may have emphasized feasibility-related supports more strongly than would educators in schools with different schedules, staffing models, or accountability pressures (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). A divergent pattern involved variability in perceived staff buy-in, particularly where some educators described consistent use across classrooms while others described uneven implementation, which could have affected student familiarity and receptivity. Prior research has similarly documented that inconsistent implementation and variability in teacher comfort can reduce coherence and influence both perceived effectiveness and sustainability, offering a plausible explanation for differences in participant descriptions (Felver et al., 2016; Roeser et al., 2013). For these reasons, the findings

were interpreted as educator perceptions of implementation conditions and supports rather than as definitive evidence that any single support guaranteed effective practice.

### **Theme 5: Perceived Academic Outcomes**

The fifth theme reflected educators' descriptions that mindfulness contributed indirectly to academic outcomes by strengthening behavioral and emotional conditions for learning.

Participants noted perceived improvements in task initiation, persistence, work completion, and willingness to attempt challenging assignments following consistent mindfulness routines.

Although academic achievement was not measured in this study, educators stated that calmer learning environments and improved focus supported academic engagement. Participants emphasized that mindfulness influenced attitudes toward learning and classroom readiness more than immediate, measurable achievement outcomes. This theme addressed the study problem and purpose by clarifying how educators interpreted the relationship between mindfulness implementation and student learning behaviors within authentic classroom contexts (Maynard et al., 2021).

The findings were generally consistent with existing research suggesting that mindfulness interventions are more consistently associated with proximal learning behaviors, such as attention, self-regulation, and engagement, than with immediate changes in standardized academic outcomes (Klingbeil et al., 2017; Maynard et al., 2021; Zenner et al., 2014).

Participants' emphasis on indirect effects aligned with scholarship indicating that mindfulness may influence academic functioning through regulatory pathways, with achievement effects, when present, potentially emerging over longer durations or through sustained changes in classroom climate and learning habits (Kuyken et al., 2022; Maynard et al., 2021). In the context of the Chapter 2 framework, this theme contributed by locating academic outcomes within a

developmental and behavioral sequence, where improved readiness and persistence were perceived as precursors to later achievement rather than outcomes that shifted immediately. Interpreted through Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory, educators' accounts suggested that they used reflection in action to address disengagement and refocus students during work periods and reflection on action to refine routines that supported sustained independent work (Schön, 1983).

Several factors may have influenced interpretation of this theme, particularly the reliance on educator perception without triangulation through grades, standardized scores, or systematic academic progress monitoring. Because multiple classroom and contextual variables influence academic performance, perceived improvements in work completion or persistence may have reflected broader instructional practices, maturation, or concurrent supports rather than mindfulness alone (Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Yin, 2018). A divergent or cautious pattern involved educators' repeated emphasis that grades did not always change immediately, which aligned with the study limitation of not collecting direct academic measures and with mixed findings in the broader literature on mindfulness and achievement (Klingbeil et al., 2017; Zenner et al., 2014). Prior research has suggested that dosage, implementation quality, and alignment with instructional goals can moderate whether academic effects are observed, offering plausible explanations for why participants described engagement shifts more readily than achievement changes (Felver et al., 2016; Maynard et al., 2021). For these reasons, the findings were interpreted as educator-perceived academic engagement outcomes mediated through regulation and readiness, rather than as evidence of direct academic causality.

## **Recommendations for Practice**

The purpose for conducting this study was to address the limited understanding of educators' descriptions of mindfulness practices and their perceived effects on students (Maynard et al., 2021). I explored how PreK through 12 educators described their use of mindfulness practices and their reflections on how these practices influenced classroom functioning, student readiness, emotional regulation, and engagement. The findings are noteworthy because educators consistently expressed a commitment to implementing mindfulness while also describing variability in confidence, training, and contextual support. Participants shared similar insights regarding the benefits of mindfulness for classroom climate and focus, as well as challenges related to time, developmental appropriateness, and access to professional learning. The results and conclusions of this study generate several recommendations for educators, school leaders, and institutions seeking to strengthen the use of mindfulness practices in educational settings.

### ***Structured Mindfulness Professional Development for Educators***

Consistent with prior research indicating that educator training influences the quality and sustainability of mindfulness practices (Jennings et al., 2020; Meiklejohn et al., 2012), participants in this study described limited formal preparation in mindfulness. Many educators relied on peer modeling, personal experimentation, or informal resources to guide their implementation. These findings reflected the need for structured training that supports educators' understanding of mindfulness, including its purpose, developmentally appropriate variations, and reflective components.

To address these inconsistencies, schools may consider implementing formal professional development programs that introduce mindfulness within the context of reflective practice theory

(Schön, 1983). Such programs should include opportunities for educators to observe modeled routines, practice facilitation language, engage in self-reflection, and receive feedback.

Professional development should also incorporate information on developmental differences, practical constraints, and methods for integrating mindfulness into existing instructional routines. Supporting educator knowledge development is essential, as reflective awareness and intentional implementation were central factors perceived to influence student readiness and classroom tone.

### ***Consistent, Developmentally Responsive Mindfulness Routines***

Supporting student participation and providing equitable access to calming and focusing routines requires educators to implement mindfulness in ways that are consistent, accessible, and aligned with students' developmental stages. Participants in this study demonstrated a commitment to embedding brief mindfulness routines such as breathing, quiet reflection, or visualization; however, they also described variation in how these practices were introduced, adapted, or sustained. Several educators expressed uncertainty about which routines were most appropriate for specific age groups or how to modify practices effectively.

School leaders may consider developing guidance that outlines recommended mindfulness routines for various grade levels and provides examples of how routines can be adapted to different classroom contexts. These guidelines should emphasize brief, sustainable practices, as the findings indicated that one-to-two-minute routines promoted participation without disrupting instructional time. Research discussed in Chapter 2 supports that developmentally responsive mindfulness fosters stronger engagement and emotional regulation, particularly when activities reflect students' cognitive and social needs (Klingbeil et al., 2020; Kuyken et al., 2022). Establishing consistent expectations can also ensure that students experience continuity in routines across grade levels.

### ***Promote Collaborative and Reflective Professional Communities***

A prominent theme in this study was the value of collaboration among educators implementing mindfulness practices. Participants noted that observing colleagues, sharing language for facilitation, and discussing classroom experiences strengthened their confidence and ability to adjust routines. These findings aligned with prior research demonstrating that collaboration and reflective dialogue support the successful integration of mindfulness into daily teaching (Jennings et al., 2020; Roeser & Eccles, 2021).

Schools may benefit from establishing formalized structures for collaborative professional learning, such as peer observation cycles, grade-level discussions, or professional learning communities focused on mindfulness and reflective practice. These collaborative spaces can foster shared decision making, consistency across classrooms, and a culture of reflective growth. Building strong communication and collaboration systems also reinforces a sense of collective responsibility for creating calm, supportive classroom environments.

### ***Strengthen Schoolwide Support and Administrative Modeling***

Participants emphasized the importance of leadership modeling and schoolwide normalization of mindfulness routines. Educators noted that experiencing mindfulness in staff meetings or through administrative demonstrations increased their comfort level and signaled institutional support. These findings are consistent with literature indicating that leadership engagement enhances implementation fidelity and supports the development of reflective and emotionally balanced school cultures (Jennings et al., 2020; Schonert-Reichl & Roeser, 2021).

To support sustainable implementation, school leaders may consider modeling mindfulness during faculty meetings, providing protected time for educators to plan and reflect

on routines, and ensuring that mindfulness expectations are communicated clearly across the school community. Schoolwide support can also include providing quiet transition spaces, informational materials for families, or dedicated time for students to engage in regulation practices. When these structures are established consistently, educators may be more likely to integrate mindfulness practices with intention and confidence across instructional contexts.

### ***Communicate Purpose and Practices to Families and the School Community***

Participants in this study described stronger student participation when families understood the goals of mindfulness practices. This finding highlights the need for transparent communication with parents and guardians to establish trust, clarify instructional purpose, and support carryover beyond the classroom. Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 suggests that family understanding enhances the acceptance and perceived value of mindfulness practices (Roeser & Eccles, 2021).

Schools may consider offering informational sessions, written materials, or demonstrations that explain the benefits of mindfulness for emotional regulation, classroom engagement, and reflective learning. Clear communication can also mitigate misconceptions and reinforce the alignment between mindfulness and broader school values, particularly those related to student well-being and holistic development. When families and educators share a common understanding of purpose and practice, mindfulness initiatives may be more readily accepted and sustained within the school community.

### ***Ensure Implementation Conditions That Support Sustainability***

Educators reported that constraints such as limited time, classroom configuration, and competing instructional demands influenced the feasibility of mindfulness routines. These findings emphasize the importance of aligning school structures and environmental conditions

with expectations for mindfulness implementation. As described in the literature, brief routines embedded predictably within transitions are more likely to be sustained and effective (Kuyken et al., 2022; Maynard et al., 2021).

School leaders can support sustainability by ensuring that mindfulness routines are feasible within daily schedules, minimizing environmental disruptions when possible, and providing educators with access to materials or training needed for effective facilitation. Structural supports may also include aligning mindfulness routines with existing schoolwide practices, such as morning meetings, transitions, or advisory programs. When mindfulness is embedded within established structures, educators may be more likely to implement practices consistently without adding to instructional burden.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Schön's reflective practice theory provided the theoretical foundation for this study and supported the examination of how educators described their use of mindfulness and their reflective processes. Reflection in action and reflection on action offered a lens for understanding the ways educators adjusted mindfulness practices in real time and how they examined these practices after instruction to inform future decisions (Schön, 1983). This framework remains relevant for future investigations that seek to understand how mindfulness supports educator judgment, intentionality, and responsiveness in varied instructional contexts. Reflective practice theory can also guide researchers in examining how mindfulness contributes to professional learning and the development of reflective routines in schools. Continued use of this framework may strengthen understanding of how mindfulness functions as both an instructional and reflective tool.

Several directions for future research arise from the findings and implications of this study. The study was limited to a single PreK through 12 independent school, which restricts the transferability of the findings to settings with different structures or student populations. Future researchers may examine mindfulness practices in additional school types, including public and charter schools, which often differ in resources, expectations, and school culture. Studies that incorporate diverse contexts may provide broader insight into how environmental and organizational factors shape the implementation and sustainability of mindfulness practices. Comparative studies across multiple sites may also clarify whether certain school conditions influence the frequency, consistency, or perceived outcomes of mindfulness practices.

Future research may incorporate additional data sources beyond educator description to expand understanding of mindfulness in classroom settings. The present study relied on interviews and focus groups, which provided valuable perspectives but did not include observational or student-generated data. Researchers may strengthen future investigations by including classroom observations, student focus groups, student self-report measures of emotion or attention, or behavioral engagement indicators. These forms of data collection would support triangulation and enhance understanding of how mindfulness is experienced by students, how it is enacted by educators, and whether observable behaviors align with educator reflections (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Including student perspectives is particularly important because students interact directly with mindfulness routines and can provide insight into perceived benefits and challenges.

Longitudinal research is also needed to examine how mindfulness practices evolve over time within school environments. The present study captured educator reflections at one point in time and did not explore how routines may change across months or school years. Longitudinal

designs would allow researchers to examine the sustainability of mindfulness practices, the development of reflective habits, and potential cumulative effects on student well-being and classroom climate (Roeser & Eccles, 2021). Researchers may also explore how educator confidence and fidelity of implementation change with experience, collaboration, and professional development.

Replication studies with larger sample sizes may contribute to broader applicability of the findings. This study included twenty educators at one school, limiting the scope of perspectives. Future research may expand participation across multiple schools or districts to capture a wider range of experiences with mindfulness implementation. Larger studies may also allow for comparisons across grade levels or instructional roles to determine whether descriptions differ by educator experience, training, or subject area. Such research could strengthen understanding of which components of mindfulness are most adaptable and effective in different educational contexts.

Further research may also examine the role of professional development in supporting the effective integration of mindfulness. Participants in this study described varied experiences with training, which influenced confidence and implementation. Studying targeted professional development programs that focus on mindfulness facilitation, reflective strategies, or classroom integration may help identify components that strengthen educator skill and reflective capacity (Jennings et al., 2020). Researchers may also evaluate coaching or peer-modeling frameworks to determine whether collaborative professional learning enhances the use and sustainability of mindfulness practices.

Finally, additional research may examine the potential relationship between mindfulness routines and academic outcomes. Participants in this study described perceived improvements in

task initiation, persistence, and focus, but the study did not include direct academic measures.

Mixed-methods or quasi-experimental studies may explore whether improvements in behavioral and emotional regulation correspond with measurable changes in academic performance (Klingbeil et al., 2020). Investigating these relationships may clarify whether mindfulness supports academic engagement indirectly through improved regulation or whether additional variables moderate this relationship.

A potential next step in this line of research involves the development and testing of an implementation model that integrates mindfulness with reflective practice. A structured implementation model could include guidance on developmental appropriateness, placement of routines within the school day, reflective decision-making strategies, and collaborative professional learning structures. Testing such a model across multiple sites may support broader understanding of how mindfulness can be effectively integrated into PreK through 12 educational settings. This type of research would extend the findings of the present study and contribute meaningfully to ongoing conversations about educator well-being, reflective pedagogy, and student support.

## **Conclusions**

The present qualitative descriptive case study was designed to explore how PreK through 12 educators in a small private school in Northern New Jersey perceived their use of mindfulness practices and the perceived effects of those practices on students. The problem addressed in this study was the limited understanding of educators' descriptions of mindfulness practices and their relationship to student well-being and classroom functioning (Maynard et al., 2021). The purpose of the research was to explore how educators implemented mindfulness within daily instruction, how they reflected on these practices, and how they interpreted their influence on student

readiness, emotional regulation, and engagement. Data were collected from twenty educators through semi structured interviews and focus groups, and analyzed using Yin's (2018) five-step analytic process. The findings offered insight into how mindfulness and reflective practice intersect in classroom contexts and how educators adapted mindfulness to support instructional goals and student needs.

Results from the study identified five central themes: mindfulness as reflective awareness and professional presence, emotional regulation and classroom climate, readiness, attention, and engagement, conditions and supports for implementation, and perceived academic outcomes. These themes highlighted educators' descriptions of using brief, predictable, and adaptable mindfulness routines to create calmer learning environments and promote student focus. The findings indicated that educators viewed mindfulness as a flexible practice that supported transitions, enhanced emotional balance, and strengthened classroom climate, even when academic improvements were described as indirect. These observations suggested that mindfulness contributed to the foundational conditions that support learning rather than directly influencing academic achievement. Across participant accounts, mindfulness emerged as both a reflective tool for teachers and a regulatory tool for students.

The study's findings align with previous research documenting the emotional and attentional benefits of mindfulness in educational settings (Bauer et al., 2022; Kuyken et al., 2022). Participants described that mindfulness helped establish routines that reduced classroom tension, enhanced peer interactions, and supported students in managing emotional responses, consistent with studies linking mindfulness to improved social-emotional functioning (Broderick & Jennings, 2021; Greenberg & Harris, 2020). The results also aligned with Schön's (1983) reflective practice theory, as educators described reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action as

central to refining mindfulness routines. These reflective processes appeared to shape how teachers interpreted classroom needs and determined when and how mindfulness was most effective.

The take-home message of this study is that mindfulness served as a practical, adaptable routine that supported teacher reflection and contributed to the emotional and attentional readiness of students. Educators perceived mindfulness as accessible and sustainable when embedded in daily instruction and adjusted based on developmental level, classroom context, and real-time observations. The findings highlight the importance of reflective decision-making in implementing mindfulness practices and suggest that mindfulness may be most effective when paired with supportive school structures, collaborative learning environments, and opportunities for professional development. The study reinforces the notion that mindfulness can enhance teacher presence and student engagement, contributing to environments that support learning and well-being.

The importance of this study rests in its contribution to both theory and practice. Through the lens of reflective practice theory, the findings demonstrate how mindfulness can deepen educators' awareness of instructional decision-making and support ongoing refinement of teaching practices. In terms of application, the results suggest that schools seeking to integrate mindfulness may benefit from providing regular professional learning opportunities, modeling practices at the leadership level, and developing schoolwide expectations for reflective implementation. As a whole, this study expands the understanding of mindfulness within PreK through 12 education by illustrating how educators conceptualize its role, adapt it to their contexts, and perceive its influence on students. The findings invite continued exploration of

mindfulness as a reflective and pedagogical tool and establish a foundation for future research on mindfulness implementation and its broader implications for teaching and learning.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Protocol**

#### **Introduction**

Thank you for participating in this interview. The purpose of this study is to explore how mindfulness practices effect teaching strategies and student outcomes in PreK3–12th grade classrooms. This interview will focus on your experiences with mindfulness and reflective practices. Your responses will be kept confidential, and you may choose to stop the interview at any time. Your insights will be valuable in understanding how mindfulness can shape teaching practices.

#### **Interview Questions**

1. What initial factors led to your involvement with mindfulness in teaching practice?
2. How is mindfulness integrated into your daily teaching routines?
3. How does mindfulness impact student behavior and engagement in your classroom/classes?
4. What example illustrates a time when mindfulness practices assisted in managing a challenging classroom situation?
5. In what ways does reflective practice support the use of mindfulness in the classroom?
6. How do mindfulness practices shape your overall teaching strategies?
7. In what ways has your understanding of mindfulness evolved since it was introduced into your classroom practice?
8. What challenges emerge when integrating mindfulness into teaching?

9. Which methods, if any, do you use to assess the effectiveness of mindfulness practices with students?
10. What additional information can be offered about your experiences with mindfulness in the classroom?

**Closing**

Thank you for your time and thoughtful responses. Your insights will be helpful in exploring the role of mindfulness in teaching and its potential benefits for students.

## **Appendix B**

### **Focus Group Protocol**

#### **Introduction**

Thank you for participating in this focus group discussion. The aim of this discussion is to explore how mindfulness practices effect teaching strategies and student outcomes. During this session, we will have an open discussion on the use of mindfulness in the classroom. Your responses will remain confidential, and you are welcome to share only what you are comfortable with. The goal is to gather diverse perspectives on mindfulness practices in teaching. Please respect each other's viewpoints, and feel free to build upon each other's ideas.

#### **Focus Group Questions**

1. What experiences with mindfulness in the classroom have been introduced, and how was the integration process initiated?
2. Which mindfulness practices are considered most effective for students, and what reasons have been identified for their effectiveness?
3. To what extent does mindfulness effect teaching strategies and the classroom environment?
4. What changes in student behavior or engagement have been observed as a result of mindfulness practices? Please share specific examples.
5. In what ways does reflective practice complement mindfulness in a classroom setting?
6. Which methods are used to assess the effectiveness of mindfulness in the classroom?
7. What challenges or obstacles emerge when implementing mindfulness practices?

8. How could mindfulness be further supported or integrated throughout the entire school environment?
9. In what ways has mindfulness effected the well-being of students and teachers?
10. What additional insights about mindfulness in education can be shared?

### **Closing**

Thank you for your participation and for sharing your valuable experiences. Your input will help us gain a deeper understanding of how mindfulness practices impact teaching and student learning.