



2022-23



Plugged Into Mindfulness Evaluation Report

November 2022 - May 2023

*Report prepared for Healthy Body,
Peaceful Soul, LLC by:*
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Delivered June 2023



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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE PLUGGED INTO MINDFULNESS PROGRAM¹

Joni Staaf Sturgill, founder of Healthy Body, Peaceful Soul, LLC, designed the [Plugged Into Mindfulness program](#) as a group training for adults. Intended to be implemented various group settings, the program proposed to support participants in learning mindfulness and breathwork techniques to promote health, particularly reducing stress and anxiety, preventing substance abuse, promoting emotion regulation, and improving adults' capacity to serve others in their employment role and share mindfulness practices with those they serve.

The program implementation described in this evaluation report includes programming funded through the Butler County Department of Drug and Alcohol.

In its grant application, Healthy Body, Peaceful Soul, LLC outlined the following benefits of mindfulness training:

- “Healthy coping skills
- Emotion regulation (learning a different way to relate to thoughts and feelings)
- Reduction in feelings of stress and anxiety
- Increase in compassion toward self and others
- Improved attention skills (focus as opposed to auto-pilot)”

Further, the grant application indicates such practices have measurable positive effects on the brain, related to decision making, impulse control, learning, memory, and addiction. It proposes that simple mindfulness practices can be integrated in daily life for long-lasting positive outcomes.

The program's grant application outlined the following performance objectives for its various audiences.

“Educators who learn mindfulness not only reduce their own stress levels and minimize burnout, but are more attentive, empathetic, effective, and emotionally-regulated. In short, research shows that continued mindfulness training increases educator well-being and efficacy in the classroom, as well as prevents the use of substances.

Students and those at-risk who learn mindfulness could reap the benefits of improved attention and focus, greater social-emotional skills, and a reduction in anxiety, stress, and depression, according to recent research. Additionally, those at-risk benefit from skills that promote non-judgmental awareness of the present moment (mindfulness). For example, mindfulness can prevent experiential avoidance, by interrupting the tendency to respond using maladaptive behaviors like substance abuse, and instead allow one to respond with awareness to sensations.

Medical professionals who learn mindfulness not only reduce their own stress level and minimize burnout, but offer more effective, compassionate care. Specifically, those who practice mindfulness reap the benefits of improved attention, greater social-emotional

¹ Program information from Plugged Into Mindfulness grant applications.

skills, and a reduction in anxiety, stress, and depression. Additionally, patients can benefit from learning skills to help them manage stress and provide them with healthy coping techniques in the moment.

Research shows **law enforcement officers** who learn mindfulness reduce their stress level, minimize burnout, and reduce their risk of substance use. Those who practice mindfulness reap the benefits of improved attention, greater social-emotional skills, and a reduction in anxiety, stress, and depression. Our program includes mental health and mindfulness training for law enforcement officers so they may use the techniques themselves to manage stress, have greater attention, effective emotional regulation, and compassion.”

The program includes instruction, support, and resources for using mindfulness techniques and practices. Weekly auto-delivered emails reinforce sessions with mindfulness quotes, breathing exercises, or another reinforcement.

Learning outcomes were to include:

- Mindfulness & breathwork training
- Techniques for managing active and stressful thoughts and managing challenging emotions
- Research on mindfulness and substance abuse prevention
- Basic neuroscience of attention, stress, emotion, and mental health
- Practices that cultivate positivity, gratitude and compassion
- The role of mindfulness in communication and interaction
- How and when to offer different strategies and techniques to students
- How to facilitate mindfulness exercises in the classroom and one on one.
- Support for creating your own daily sitting practice
- Specific mindfulness assignments

The standard 10-hour program was designed to be implemented over 10, one-hour sessions with a trained instructor. Participants were afforded a mindfulness book recommendation that supported the training; an 80-page training manual, reading materials, and exercises in print and electronic form; mindfulness program videos; and for educators, a training kit that included age/grade-appropriate curricula, exercises, resources, evaluation tools, and library recommendations.

ABOUT HEALTHY BODY, PEACEFUL SOUL, LLC

The following passage was included in the program’s grant applications to describe founder and leader Joni Staaf Sturgill’s background and capacity to successfully deliver this program.

“For 18 years, Joni [Staaf Sturgill], owner of [Healthy Body Peaceful Soul, LLC](#) and developer of Plugged Into Mindfulness, has been teaching stress management, using mindfulness, meditation, relaxation and yoga. She is a licensed professional counselor, nationally certified counselor, an advanced yoga/mindfulness educator (ERYT-500) has a Master of Science in Counseling Psychology, BA in Communications and also studied at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. Through her business, Joni shares insights on

mental, emotional and physical wellness to corporate populations, cancer patients, therapists, educators, students of her training programs, and other various groups and individuals. Joni implemented her comprehensive Plugged Into Mindfulness Program at multiple school districts across Western Pennsylvania, as well as in counseling offices, health and human service centers, and medical facilities.”

PLUGGED INTO MINDFULNESS EVALUATION DESIGN

Program evaluation is a process by which an intervention is examined to determine what happened. Such an examination may review the intervention’s implementation, outcomes, or both. Evaluations may be formative (studying the program’s evolution while the program is happening) or summative (looking at the whole of the program after it concludes). Evaluations may also use a combination of methods to comprehensively examine the program from different approaches and perspectives.

Program evaluation differs from research, though there may be similarities or overlap.² Research typically employs, to some extent, experimental design and is primarily concerned with testing a theory or contributing to general knowledge, while evaluation is focused on a particular program in its applied circumstances. Program evaluation is typically called for as an accountability process in grant-funded programs to determine the extent to which a program happened, what result was achieved, and what could be done better or differently next time. Evaluation is about determining the *value* of an effort.

In its funded grant application, the program implementer budgeted for an external evaluation of the program. An external evaluation has some advantages over managing evaluation and accountability internally, such as perspective and distance from the program that add objectivity, additional capacity for data management and analysis; potential staff time savings as accountability needs are addressed by external resources, reduction in burden on program staff who should be more focused on implementation, and consultant support for program leaders, among other benefits.

While Plugged Into Mindfulness has been implemented and evaluated in the past, this iteration of the program was the first year that North of the Present conducted the evaluation. Healthy Body, Peaceful Soul, LLC engaged the services of North of the Present, LLC to serve as the external contracted program evaluator. This evaluation report is a product of that engagement. Leslie McConnell, Founder and President led the evaluation. Ms. McConnell has evaluated grant-funded educational programs for more than 20 years, specializing in supplemental education programs that support adult and youth learners. These programs have focused on children and youth of all ages, teacher professional learning, parent programming, and community impact. Ms. McConnell earned her Master of Science in Educational Foundations with a focus on program evaluation from Duquesne University and a Bachelor of Arts in Professional Writing from La Roche University. She is a recent Fellow of the Education Policy and Leadership Center³ and has completed a variety of post-graduate program evaluation courses

² Rogers, P. (2014), “Week 19: Ways of framing the difference between research and evaluation.” Better Evaluation. Retrieved from

https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/blog/framing_the_difference_between_research_and_evaluation

³ <https://www.eplc.org/>

through The Evaluators Institute⁴. North of the Present, LLC may also engage qualified associates or subcontractors as appropriate.

The evaluation design for Plugged Into Mindfulness is based on the grant applications supporting the program's operation as well as program implementer interests. This evaluation model was intended to examine the program's implementation and results of this program cycle. Future reports will include comparisons from this year against the future years. Because of differences in methodology, results from this report are not comparable to those found in reports produced by other evaluators.

While the evaluation takes a summative approach to each program year, each program year's evaluation can serve as a formative guide for future iterations or other initiatives.

Four primary evaluation questions guided this inquiry:

1. *To what extent was the program **implemented as designed**?*
2. *To what extent did the program realize positive changes in practice related to the program's identified goals and purposes? To what extent did participants change what they **do**?*
3. *To what extent did the program influence positive **outcomes** for participants (adults and youth), particularly outcomes identified in performance objectives? Are there differences in results for some subgroups?*
4. *How might we **improve** upon this program for future iterations and expansions?*

These questions and the program's grant objectives guided the evaluation design. The Evaluation Plan developed identified that the primary intents of the program are to reduce stress and minimize burnout of participants; support adult participants in more effectively serving their constituents; and improve participants' social/emotional skills; and improve participant focus.

Table 1 outlines the inquiry alignment between the performance elements and data collection and analysis.

⁴ <https://tei.cgu.edu/>

Table 1. Evaluation Design – Performance Alignment.

Performance Element What is to be achieved?	Data Collection, Analysis, and Timeline What evidence will we collect?
The Plugged Into Mindfulness program will be implemented as designed.	Program schedule/calendar of sessions, participant attendance records, program curriculum, program content samples/examples, implementer feedback/reflections, participant demographics (for results context)
Participants will demonstrate new learning.	Participant survey feedback on strategies, tools, and practices used; level of participant integration/employment of new approaches
Participants will exhibit positive results during or after participation, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced stress/anxiety • Increased efficacy • Improved ability to manage emotions/support positive emotional response; emotional regulation • Feelings of empowerment • Increased capacity to support/serve others • Improved outlook on life • Increased compassion for others • Improved focus • Reduction in substance use/abuse • Positive personal performance • Increased self-awareness • Improved self-care • Other benefits 	Participant survey (adult and student) feedback related to and reflection on their implementation of new learning, analysis and comparison of pre/post instruments, post-only reflective instruments, educator observation responses related to student outcomes (groups with and without student direct instruction) NOTE: Student surveys at the elementary level will be limited to just a few very simple questions (likely Yes/No, limited answer/response). As students under age 10 are generally still learning to read, their comprehension is limited results are typically unreliable. Elementary student surveys have value and can contribute meaningful information when used with other data sources, but only when limitations are considered.
Program leaders will make informed decisions about the program’s future, including revisions, replications, iterations, expansions, etc.	Program leadership/implementer reflections, curriculum and instruction adjustments, program shifts, new options, future plans

Data collection instruments, sources, and protocols were to include:

- Pre/post instrument using the Five Facets of Mindfulness Questionnaire⁵ (abbreviated) as its core and supplemented with additional program-specific questions;
- Brief implementer session reflection survey;
- Program attendance records [implementer managed];
- Program content and implementation details [implementer provided]; and
- Other data sources identified throughout the program.

The evaluation was to be both formative (occurring during and informing the evolution of the program) as well as summative (occurring after implementation concludes and reflecting on the whole implementation term. Data analysis was to include quantitative and qualitative data, summary and descriptive statistics (counts and variance), pre/post comparisons, year-over-year

⁵ <https://novopsych.com.au/assessments/formulation/five-facet-mindfulness-questionnaire-ffmq-15/>

comparisons/growth/decline [starting in Year 2], reflections, and other methods identified as appropriate during the evaluation term based on the volume and quality of data available.

This report addresses programming that occurred from November 2022 through June 2023, which is the first of a two-year grant funding cycle.

While this program has been evaluated in the past, this evaluation report cannot be directly compared or contrasted as it is unknown the extent to which the methods used by the previous evaluator align with those of the current evaluator.

HIGHLIGHTS

While the evaluator encourages readers to consume the entire evaluation report, a brief overview of the highlights can support readers in identifying program accomplishments and provide a snapshot of program results.

- Plugged Into Mindfulness served 84 adults through the November 2022-June 2023 program cycle, with 71 adults participating on an ongoing basis. This included 61 educators from three districts/schools, healthcare professionals from the Butler Health System, and law enforcement professionals from the Butler County Sheriff's Office. Sixty-nine participants (82%) were new to the program.
- Forty-nine participants (69%) attended at least 80% of the sessions afforded to them.
- The program collectively delivered more than 45 hours of instruction to participants.
- More than three quarters of respondents to the POST-program survey indicated that their self-awareness increased (100%); they know different strategies to use in different situations (100%); they learned new stress and anxiety techniques that work for them (98%); they feel better prepared to deal with challenging emotions (98%); they feel better prepared to positively and compassionately handle challenges (96%); they have increased their ability to focus using mindfulness (89%); they are employing mindfulness techniques or resources while working with others (87%); and they are using mindfulness in place of external or unhealthy solutions like alcohol, tobacco, or substance use; overeating, nonproductive internet time; shopping/retail therapy, or others (76%).
- 76% of respondents showed a net improvement from pre-program to post-program, with respondents improving on an average of six statements, and up to 13 of the 15 statements. Nearly all (40 of 41) improved on at least one of the 15 PRE/POST measures.
- More than 70% of post-program respondents indicated that they are now practicing mindfulness daily, almost daily, or frequently/more than once a week.
- 80% of post-program respondents indicated that they expected mindfulness would be an "integral" or "very useful" resource, personally and/or professionally.
- 82% of respondents indicated interest in future mindfulness training or resources, in particular virtual sessions or refreshers, emailed resources, and asynchronous activities or videos.
- Between 27% and 49% of respondents completing both a PRE and POST instrument improved on each of the 15 measures from Five Facets of Mindfulness.
- An ANOVA statistical test found statistically significant positive results based on PRE and POST data. This means that we can be confident that the positive results seen from PRE to POST were a result of the program and not chance.

FINDINGS

Evaluation findings shared in this report include information and results of data analysis from program and participant sources from November 2022 through June 2023.

IMPLEMENTATION

This section of the report answers the evaluation question: *To what extent was the program implemented as designed?*

Plugged Into Mindfulness engaged participants from five Butler County organizations. Three of these were school entities: [Mars Area School District](#) (“Mars”) and [Slippery Rock Area School District](#) (“Slippery Rock”), K-12 public school districts, and [Summit Academy](#), a private, residential school serving male youth in grades 7-12. In addition to the education entities, the program also engaged adults from [Butler Health System](#) and the [Butler County Sheriff’s Office](#).

This cycle of Plugged Into Mindfulness was funded by grant funds through the Butler County Department of Health and Human Services.

While the core values of the program were the same, each entity’s implementation design varied slightly to account for the participating organization’s schedules and needs.

As a returning participant, Slippery Rock’s program was designed as a “refresher” or continuing education program. The individuals engaged for this cycle of the program had previously completed the full program. The “booster” sessions were designed to reinforce and strengthen learning from the previous year through exercises, review, troubleshooting, and exploration. This program was implemented as five, one-hour live (synchronous) virtual sessions between November 2022 and January 2023.

In addition to the adult component, students from Slippery Rock were engaged in direct instruction. Student instruction and exercises covered the basics of mindfulness, including awareness, breathing patterns for dealing with stress, and strategies for managing difficult thoughts. Student sessions were in person and educators were present for the student sessions. One elementary class, two middle school classes, and one high school class participated. Each class received two in-person sessions with session content and timing selected based on class time segments and developmental considerations. Elementary sessions were 30 minutes, middle and high school were 45 minutes long.

The other entities were new to the program; none had previously participated in Plugged Into Mindfulness.

Mars’ 10-hour program was implemented as five in-person sessions of two hours each from November 2022 through March 2023.

Summit Academy’s 10-hour program was implemented over eight in-person sessions that occurred between February and May 2023.

Butler Health System’s program followed the traditional program progression of 10 one-hour sessions. Their program occurred in person between January and March 2023.

The Butler County Sheriff's Office program was fully virtual and asynchronous. In this case, the program was made available to Sheriff's Office staff via recorded video of the program instruction. The recorded instruction, which varied from 35 to 50 minutes per session, was emailed automatically on a weekly cycle. “Sessions” were shorter for this group because they did not include time that would typically be spent on group activities or live discussion. Material was covered more quickly because it was not live.

In total, the program delivered approximately 47.5 hours of instruction:

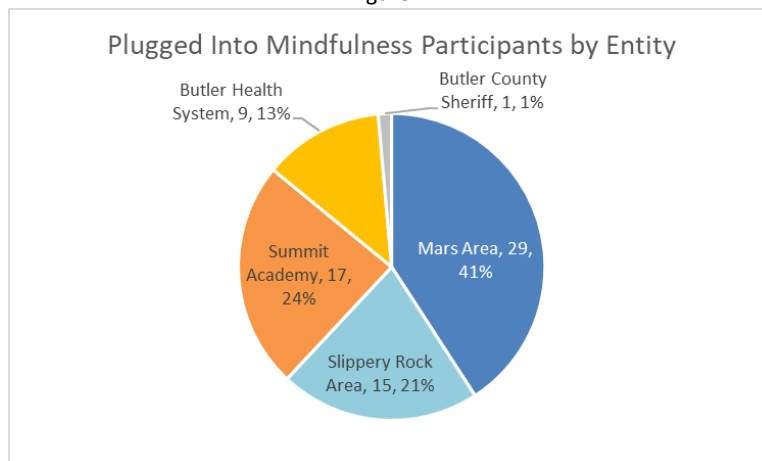
- 35 hours of live, direct adult instruction;
- 5.5 hours of live, direct student instruction; and
- An estimated 7+ hours of recorded instruction for the Sheriff's Office group.

Plugged Into Mindfulness delivered more than **45 hours** of programming to participants

PARTICIPANTS

Plugged Into Mindfulness served a total of 71 adults, on an ongoing basis, who are included in this evaluation. Mars Area was the largest group (29 adults), followed by Summit Academy (17 adults), then Slippery Rock (15), Butler Health System (9), and finally the Butler County Sheriff's Office (1).

Figure 1.



An additional 13 individuals, five from Mars, two from Summit Academy, and six from Butler Health System, began the program but dropped out early in the cycle. In keeping with previous program practice, individuals with very low and early participation were excluded from the analysis in order to examine the implementation and influence of the program for those individuals with sustained participation. However, it should be noted that this exclusion of low participation may indicate a difference inherent to the participants themselves that may be a consideration in reviewing results.

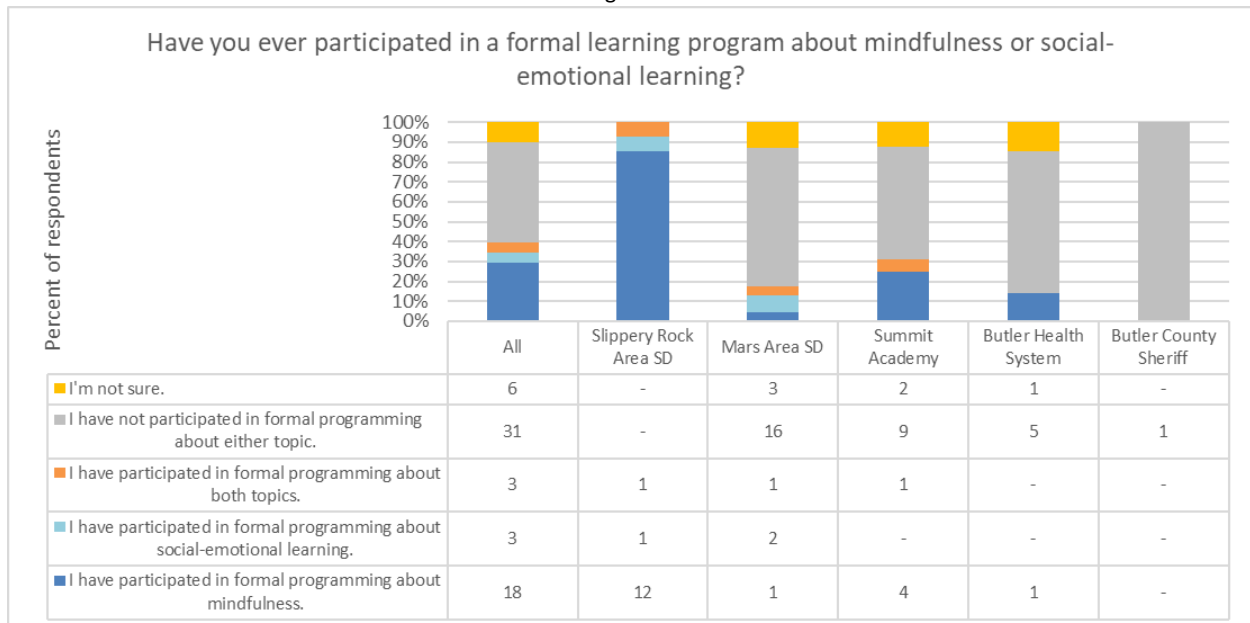
An estimated 61 students participated: 20 elementary, 16 middle school, and 25 high school students.

Data was collected through the pre-program survey about participants' program engagement circumstances and experience in their professional field. Data were available for 61 of the 71 participants (86% of participants).

More than half of respondents indicated that they had never participated in a formal program about mindfulness or social-emotional learning. Thirty percent of respondents had previously participated in a mindfulness program, with nearly all of these being from Slippery Rock. This is not surprising, as this group was participating in Plugged Into Mindfulness as a continuing education initiative. Ten percent were not sure, and the balance participated in social-emotional programming or programs on both topics. The education respondents were most likely to participate in such programs.

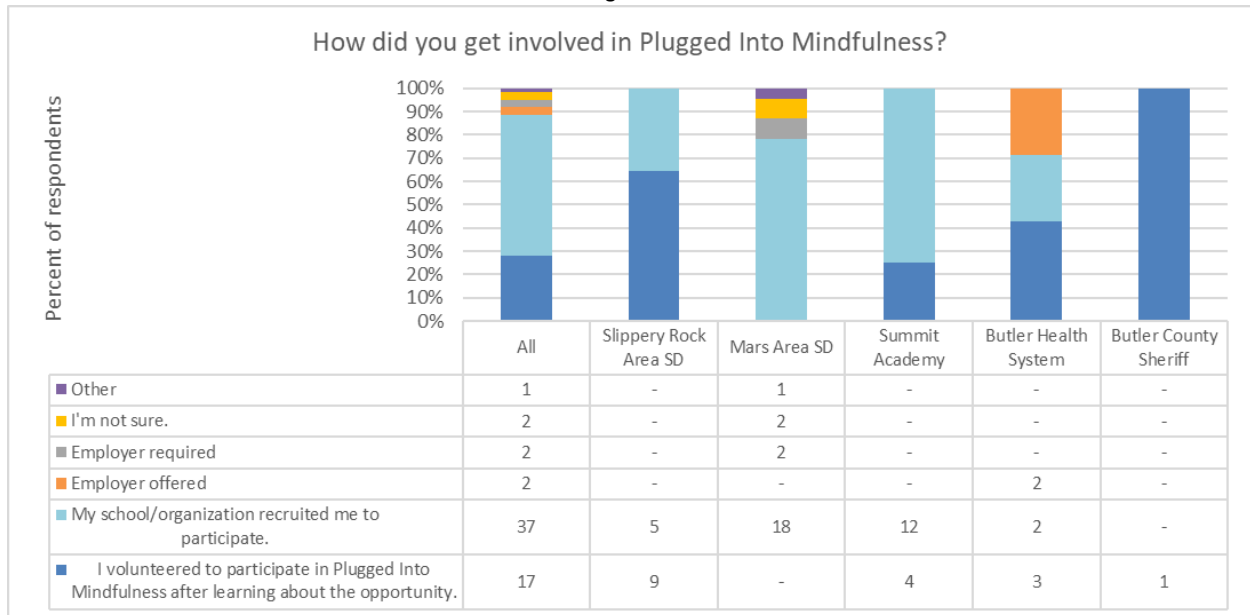
So, excluding the group from Slippery Rock, most participants had limited or no prior experience with mindfulness training programs.

Figure 2.



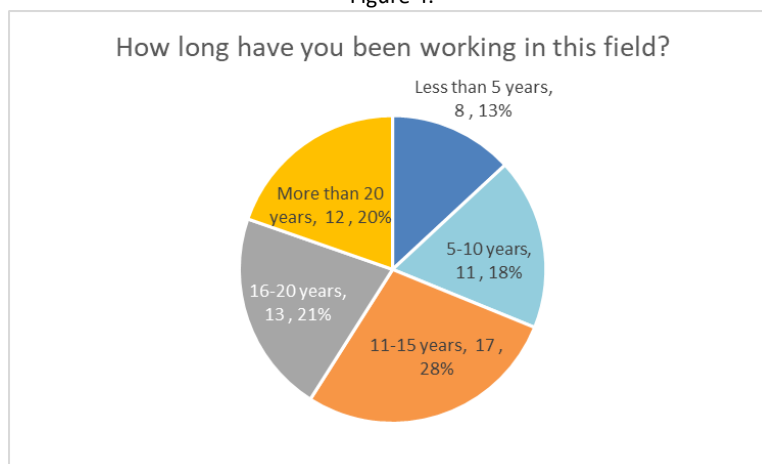
Many of the participants were recruited by their organization to participate (61%), with another 28% volunteering for the program. Two participants were unsure how they became involved. The ‘employer offered’ and ‘employer required’ options were added based on repeated responses shared in the ‘other’ answer field; these answers may or may not be integrated with the previously defined answer options.

Figure 3.



Participants were both veteran and new to their professions, with percentages similar across time gradations. To protect anonymity of the smaller groups, a breakdown by entity is not provided.

Figure 4.



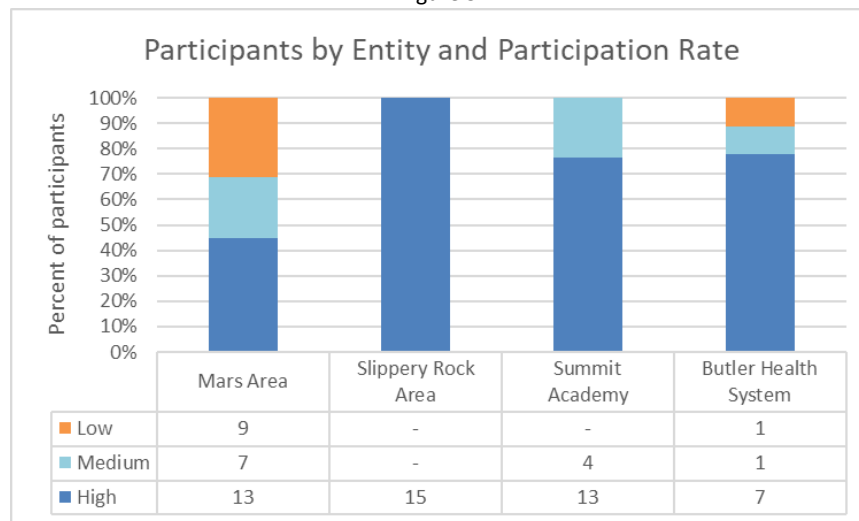
For the 53 educator respondents, 33 were classroom teachers (62%); 16 (30%) were school counselors, therapists, drug and alcohol counselors, or in related roles; and the balance (8%) were administrators or other school leadership.

PARTICIPATION

Participant attendance was examined for all participants based on the number of sessions attended compared to the number of sessions offered, except the Sheriff’s Office, as this program was offered asynchronously via recorded instruction. As such, attendance at sessions does not apply. Participation rates of 50% or less were considered “low” participation; rates greater than 50% through 79% were considered “medium” participation; and participation of 80% through 100% was considered “high” participation. This alignment was used to best capture the volume of content delivered/received based on the different configurations of the program (five, eight, or 10 sessions). It is worth noting that in this year, all “low” participation individuals had participation rates of 40% or less.

Most participants attended at rates of 80% or more (69% of participants). All of Slippery Rock’s participants attended all five of the offered sessions. Summit Academy and Butler Health System had similar high participation rates, with nearly 80% of participants attending 80% or more of the sessions offered. Mars had the lowest high participation rate. The Sheriff’s Office participant completed all the recorded videos.

Figure 5.



IMPLEMENTER SESSION REFLECTIONS

To capture information from the implementer perspective, the evaluator created a very brief session reflection survey. Of the 28 total sessions implemented, session reflections were completed for 25 of them (89%).

The first element examined was participant engagement. On a scale from completely disengaged (0) to highly engaged (5), the implementer rated all sessions a three or better. Nearly half (48%) received the highest rating of highly engaged. Comments indicated that many of the sessions went “great” (17), but a few (3) had challenges or unexplained disengagement.

71 adults
had ongoing participation, with 69% attending 80% or more of the sessions offered

The survey asked the implementer what, if any, changes or adjustments were made to session. Four entries indicated that the session was shortened by about 10 minutes to better fit the schedule or because participants seemed tired. Other insights included a session where participants were more conversational, which allowed for some expanded content; a session with virtual breakout rooms for practicing mindful communication skills; a later session where breakout room time was shortened; a tripled-up session (3 hours) that went really well and participants were engaged, despite the long sessions; an observation that participants were less engaged during virtual sessions than they were for in-person sessions; and an observation that some techniques end up needing to be over-explained or that participants are not taking it seriously. It was not clear if this last comment was isolated to that session or if it was a larger issue.

Finally, space was available for the implementer to share anything else relevant or interesting about the session.

Comments included:

- Summit Academy sometimes seems exhausted and it affects their engagement. In response the implementer adjusts instruction and the sessions timeline to be responsive to participants' capacity that day. Additionally, Summit Academy required this group of educators to participate; however, the implementer noted that they still engaged with the instruction.
- Slippery Rock educator participants requested more strategies for teaching students.
- Participant stories and questions provided opportunities for expanded discussion and content and reinforcement of previous concepts.
- Participants shared mixed feedback about role playing using a virtual format.
- Participants appreciated less breakout room time and also appeared to enjoy instruction around "working with irritating life situations and applying mindfulness in the moment."

RESULTS & OUTCOMES

Plugged Into Mindfulness used an established instrument, the [Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire \(FFMQ-15\)](#), to examine program results. Together, the program leadership and the evaluator coupled this established instrument with additional questions designed specifically for Plugged Into Mindfulness to examine elements unique to the program, investigate specific interest areas, and to add context to results. The instrument, in the form of a survey, was administered to participants at the beginning of and ends of the program in a pre/post fashion.

This section of the report addresses the evaluation questions:

1. *To what extent did the program realize positive changes in practice related to the program's identified goals and purposes? To what extent did participants change what they **do**?*
2. *To what extent did the program influence positive **outcomes** for participants (adults and youth), particularly outcomes identified in performance objectives? Are there differences in results for some subgroups?*

100%

of post-program respondents indicated increased self-awareness and knowledge of different strategies

This report will share the results of all PRE responses, all POST responses, and then a comparison of PRE and POST for those individuals completing both instruments. Care should be taken in comparing all PRE and all POST, as these groups are inherently different. Not all participants completed both the PRE and POST instrument.

The results of the PRE assessment are useful mostly from a needs assessment perspective, giving insight to how future groups might enter the program.

POST results give insight to how the group (including only those who responded) ended the program.

The PRE/POST comparison will share information about how individuals may have changed over the course of the program.

Table 2. PRE/POST Completion.

Entity	Completing the PRE		Completed the POST		Completed Both PRE & POST	
	#	% of all	#	% of all	#	% of all
Mars	23	79%	11	38%	9	31%
Slippery Rock	14	93%	14	93%	14	93%
Summit Academy	16	94%	12	71%	12	71%
Butler Health System	7	78%	7	78%	5	56%
Sheriff's Office	1	--	1	--	1	--

All PRE Results

A total of 61 individuals, or 86% of the 71 included in this report, completed the PRE survey.

The beginning of the instrument asked participants to use a scale to indicate how true a series of 15 mindfulness-related statements were for them. The scale included agreement levels of “very often or always true,” “often true,” “sometimes true,” “rarely true,” and “never or very rarely true.” The results for the PRE responses are shown in the three graphs that follow.

Overall, the three statements with the highest percentage of “often true” or “very often or always true” included the following statements, in order of volume.

- “I’m good at finding words to describe my feelings;” 51% of respondents indicated this was often, very often, or always true for them.
- “I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face;” 43% indicated this was often, very often, or always true for them.
- “Even when I’m feeling terribly upset I can find a way to put it into words;” 41% indicated this was often, very often, or always true for them.

The three statements with the highest percentage of “rarely” or “never or very rarely” included the following statements, in order of volume.

- “I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn’t feel them;” 59% of respondents indicated this was rarely, very rarely, or never true for them.
- “I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn’t think that way;” 52% of respondents indicated this was rarely, very rarely, or never true for them.
- “I tell myself I shouldn’t be feeling the way I’m feeling;” 48% indicated this was rarely, very rarely, or never true for them.

These results indicate that a portion of respondents have some self-awareness related to how they feel and translating those feelings into words, as well as being aware of how appropriate their feelings may be for them.

The statements that were more evenly divided among the often/always, sometimes, and rarely/never answer options or where it appeared there was the most opportunity for growth were the following, in order of appearance on the survey:

- “When I take a shower or a bath, I stay alert to the sensations of water on my body.”
- “I don’t pay attention to what I’m doing because I’m daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted.”
- “When I have distressing thoughts or images, I ‘step back’ and am aware of the thought or image without getting taken over by it.”
- “I do jobs or tasks automatically without being aware of what I’m doing.”
- “When I have distressing thoughts or images I am able just to notice them without reacting.”
- “I find myself doing things without paying attention.”
- “When I have distressing thoughts or images I just notice them and let them go.”

Figure 6.

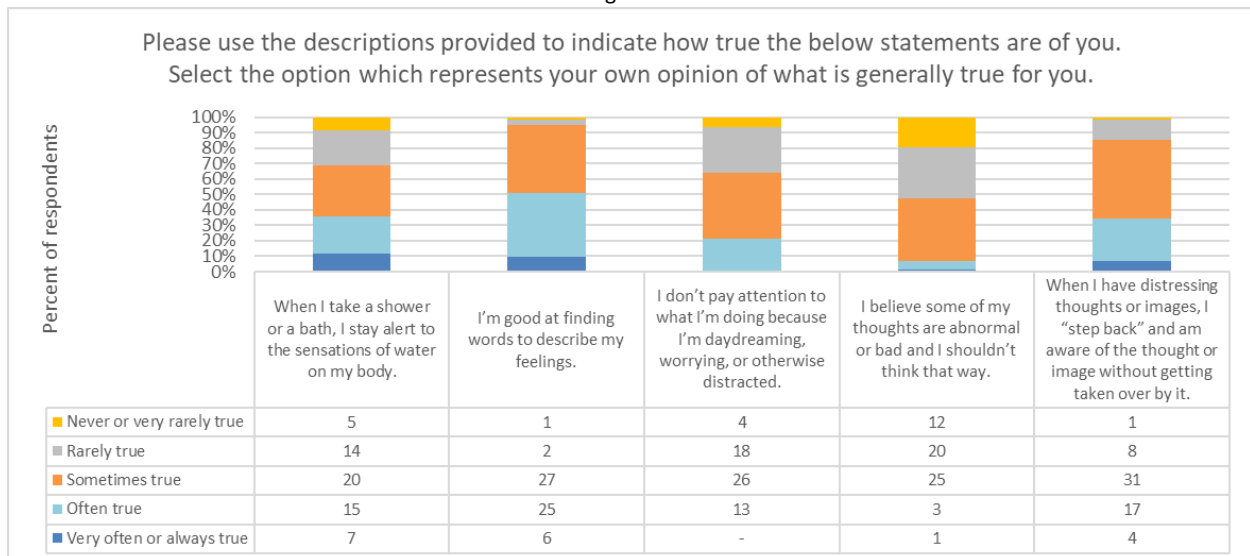


Figure 7.

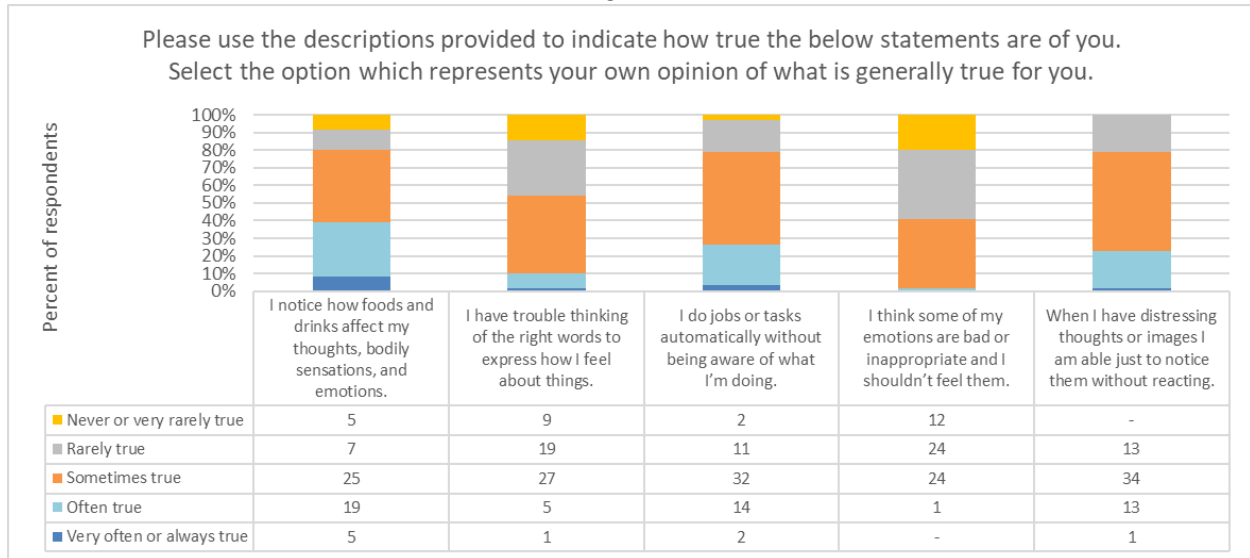
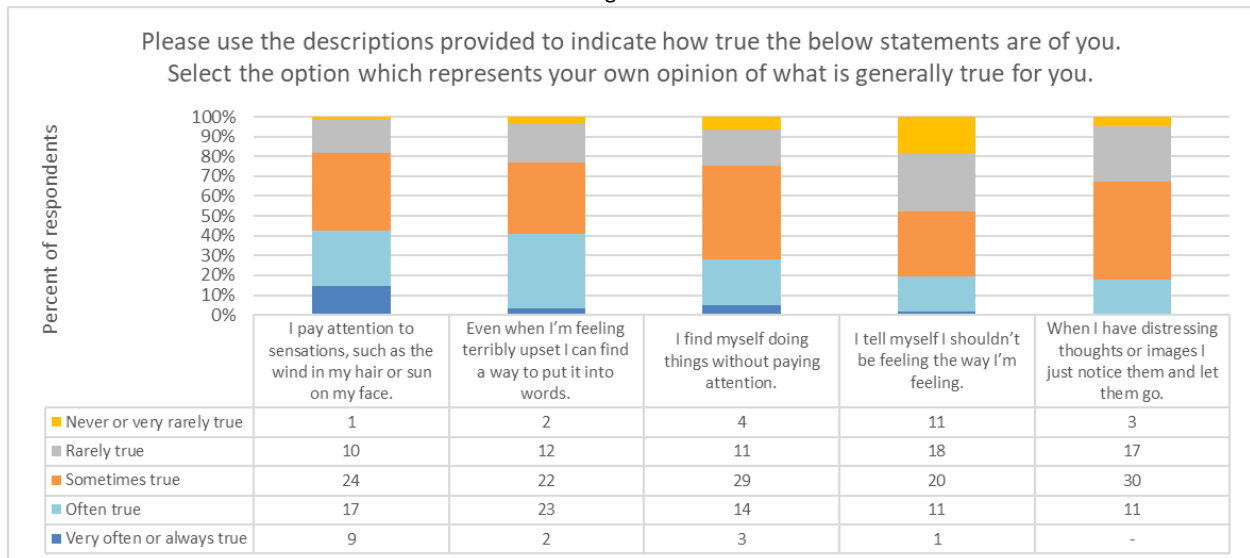


Figure 8.



All POST Results

A total of 45 individuals, or 63% of the 71 included in this report, completed the POST instrument. This group includes individuals who completed the PRE instrument, as well as individuals who only completed the POST instrument.⁶

⁶ Two individuals who participated in most of the program did not have the opportunity to complete the POST instrument because they had left the employment of their respective entity. As such, their absence from the POST instrument is not a matter of non-responsiveness; their employer email would not allow them to be contacted post-employment.

Like the PRE survey, the beginning of the POST instrument asked participants to use a scale to indicate how true a series of 15 mindfulness-related statements were for them. The scale included agreement levels of “very often or always true,” “often true,” “sometimes true,” “rarely true,” and “never or very rarely true.” The results for the POST responses are shown in the three graphs that follow.

Figure 9.

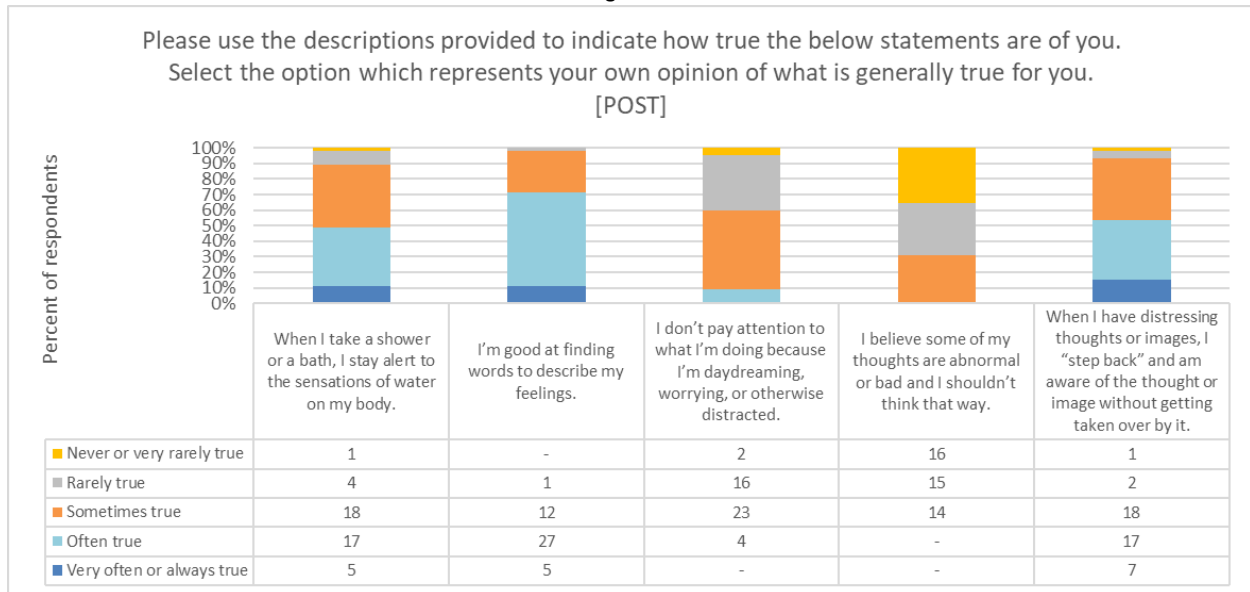


Figure 10.

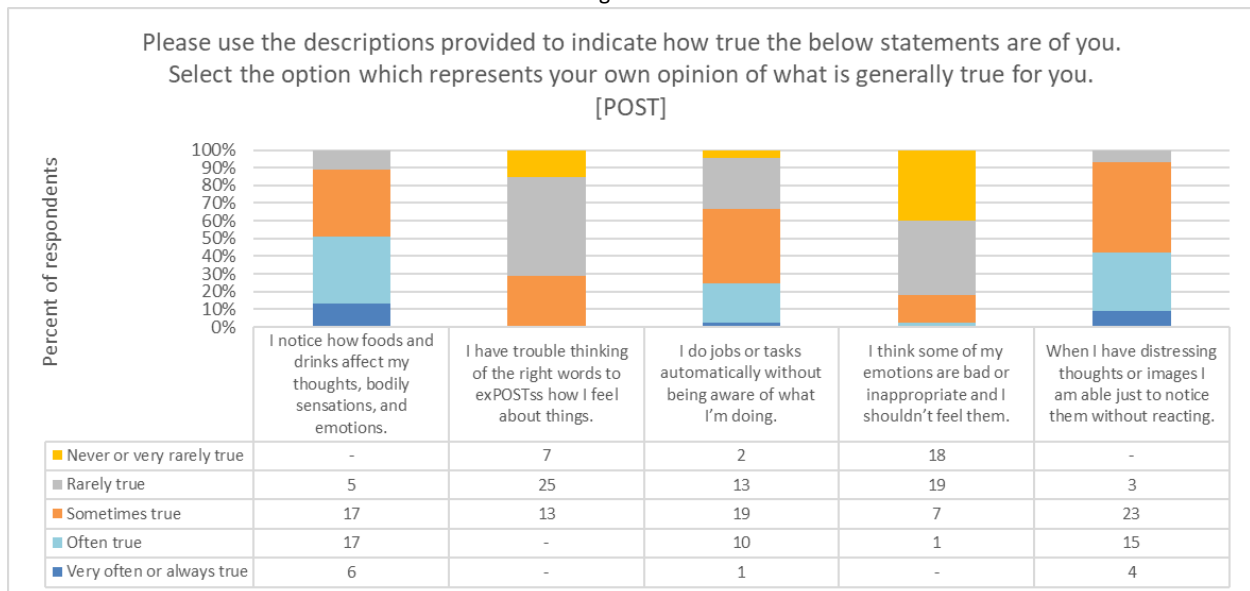
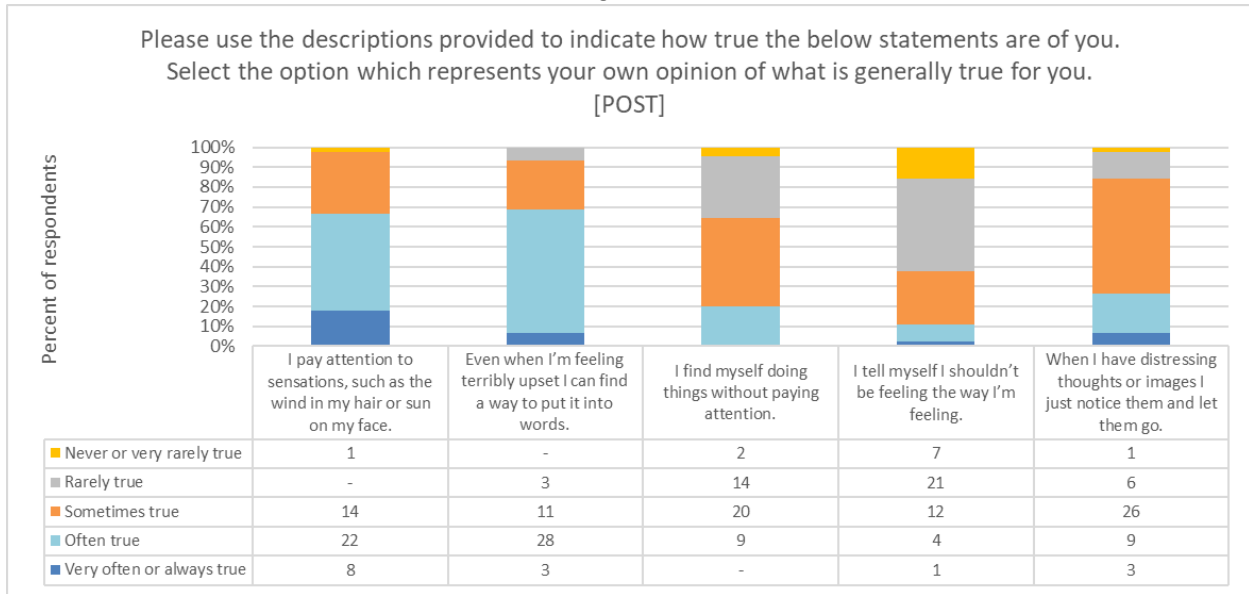


Figure 11.



A series of follow-up statements asked respondents to consider the extent to which the program contributed to positive changes and new learning and practices.

Figure 12.

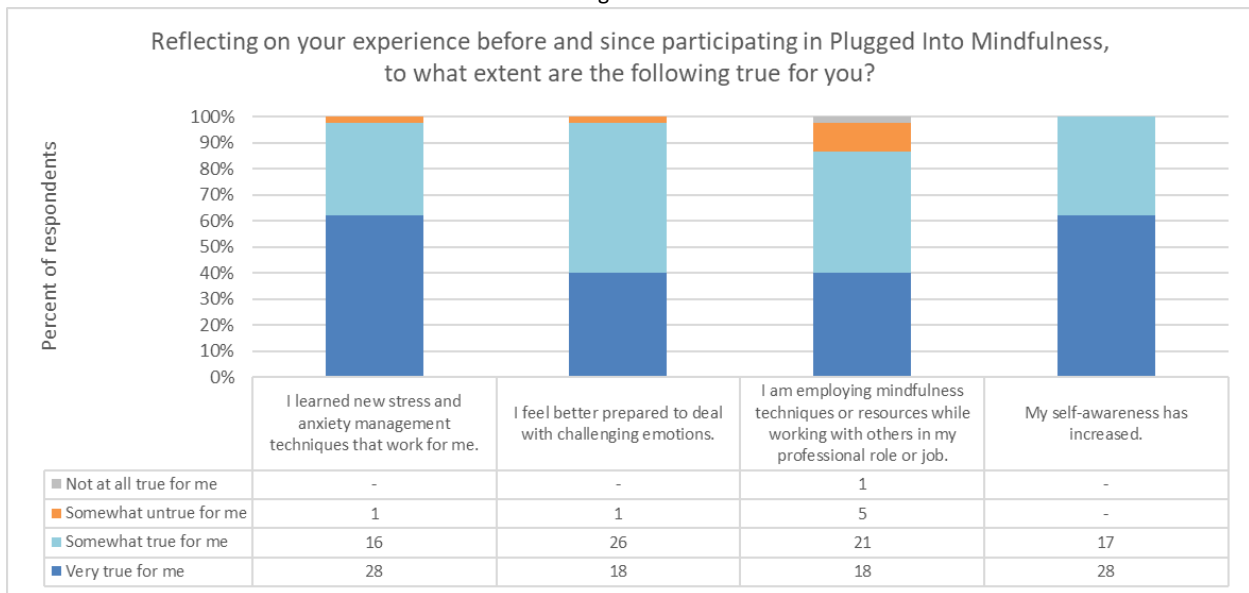
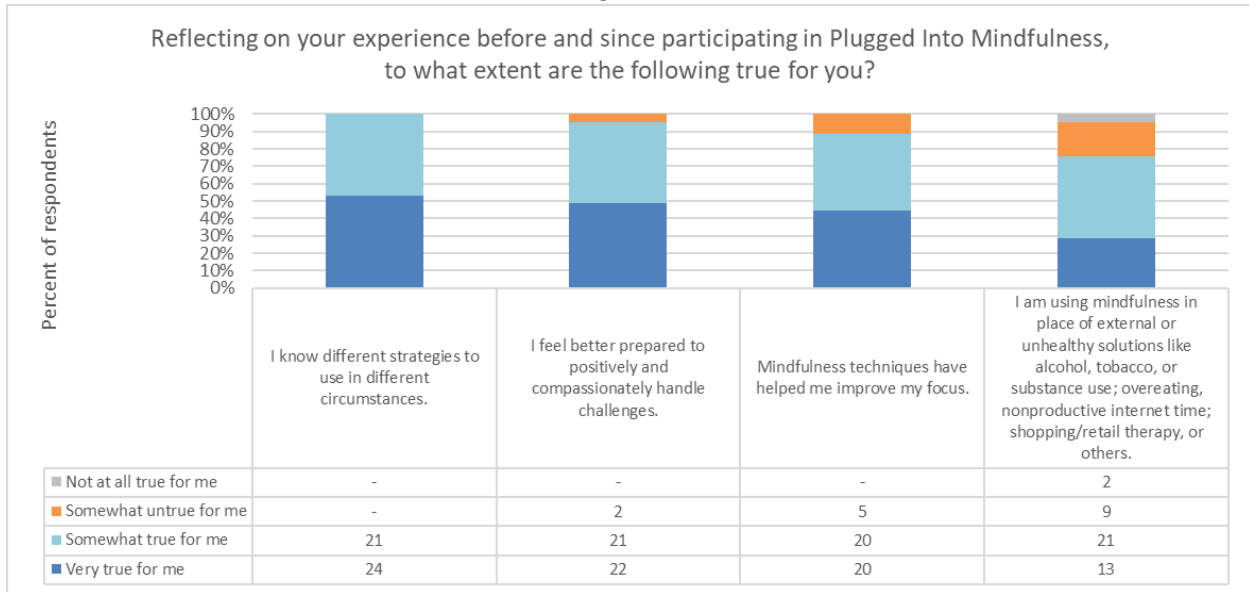
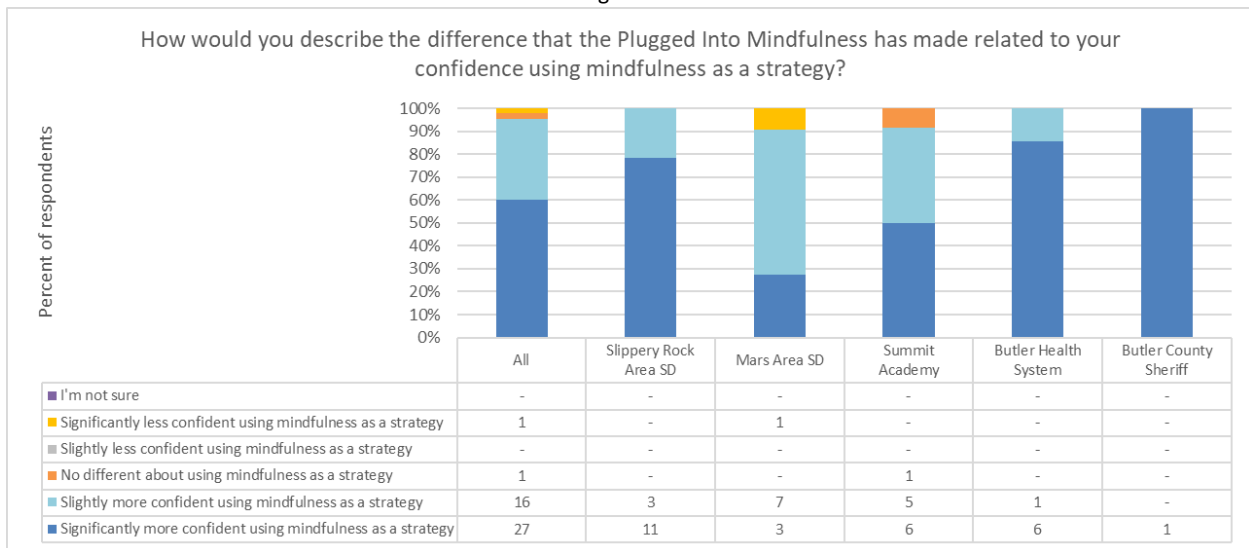


Figure 13.



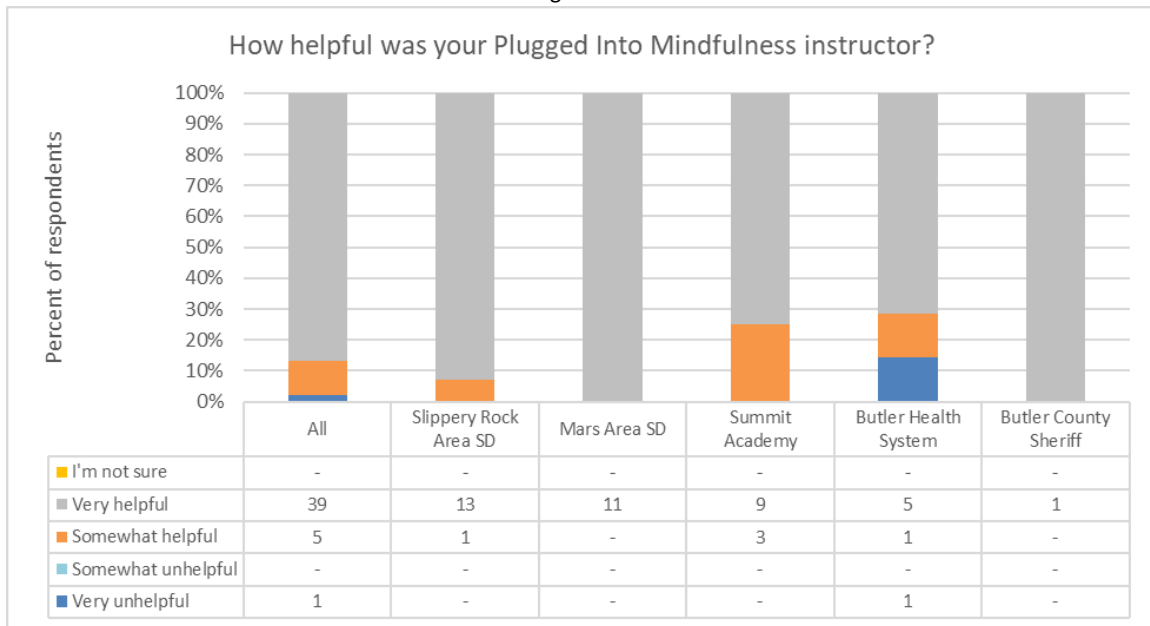
The POST survey also asked participants to share the extent to which they felt more or less confident using mindfulness as a strategy. Nearly all (96%) indicated that they felt more comfortable to some extent using mindfulness as a strategy, with those indicating “significantly more confident” far outnumbering those indicating “slightly more confident.”

Figure 14.



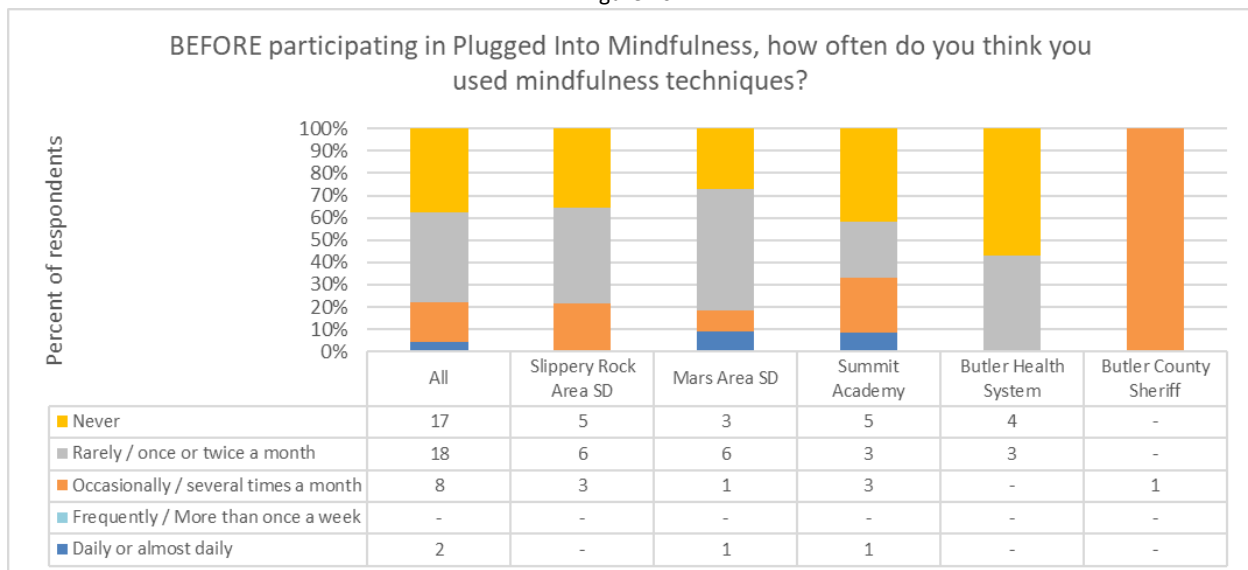
Many participants found the instructor to be “very helpful” (39, 87%) with a few indicating “somewhat helpful” (5, 11%) or “very unhelpful” (1, 2%).

Figure 15.



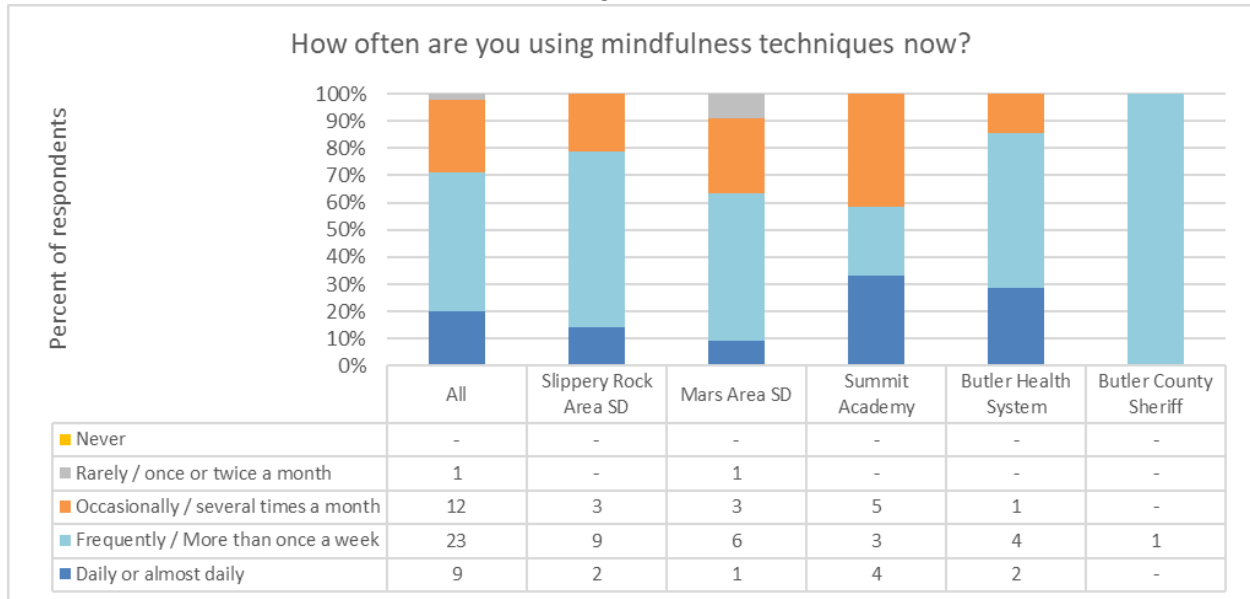
To get a sense of changes in practice, the POST survey asked participants to reflect back on their practice before Plugged Into Mindfulness and share the frequency with which they employed mindfulness techniques. Nearly 80% indicated that they rarely or never used such techniques before participating in the program.

Figure 16.



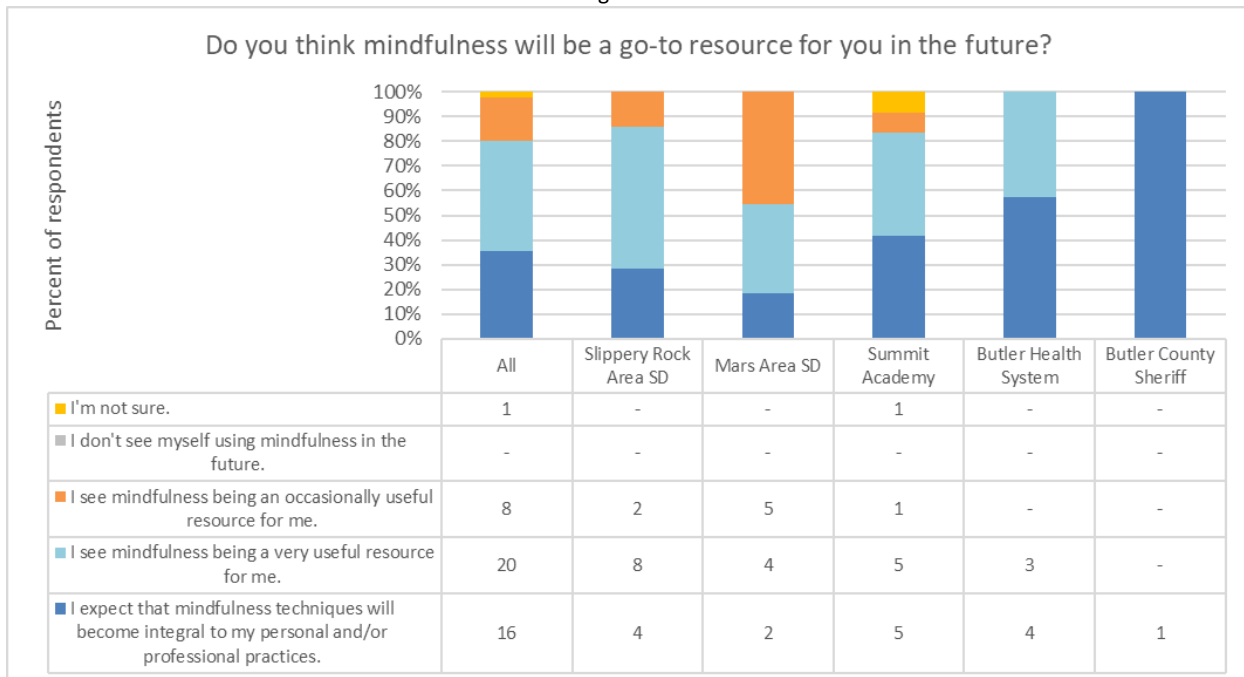
Following the program, more than 70% reported that they are using mindfulness techniques daily, almost daily, or frequently/more than once a week. In fact, only one respondent selected “never/once or twice a month.”

Figure 17.



When asked whether mindfulness might be a go-to resource in the future, 80% shared that they thought mindfulness would be an integral or useful resource. One respondent was unsure. Eight indicated that they thought mindfulness would be an occasional resource for them.

Figure 18.



PRE/POST Comparison

A total of 41 individuals completed both a PRE and POST instrument (58% of all included participants). The evaluator collected these PRE/POST data and matched each PRE response to its corresponding POST response, where matches could be made.

For some statements, positive improvement meant a response that was more true at POST than on the PRE. For other statements, the converse was true. As such, each statement was examined and considered individually. For clarity, the response that is considered “improved” is called out in each figure. Further, all statements where ‘more true’ equals ‘improved’ are described first, and then the statements where the reverse is true are described, even though this is not the order that they appear in the instrument. Of the 15 statements, eight statements were identified as “more true = improved” and seven statements were identified as “less true = improved.”

Results were examined for:

- All respondents who had a PRE and POST response;
- All educator responses (Mars Area, Slippery Rock Area, and Summit Academy together);
- Each entity separately;⁷ and
- By participation levels, high and medium (no low participation individuals completed both a PRE and POST instrument).

It is important to note that small numbers of individuals in some of these groups may result in potentially misleading graphical representations. The number of individuals included in the group should always be considered when interpreting results. The numbers of individuals responding in each category for each grouping is provided in the figure for easy reference.

Overall Change

The evaluator examined overall change from PRE to POST for all individuals who completed both instruments. In order to look at whether an individual improved overall, experienced no change, or exhibited a decline overall, the evaluator converted change designations to scores. If a respondent improved their response on an individual statement – they selected a more desirable response at the POST administration than they had previously – then they were assigned a score of 1. If the converse of this was true, they selected a less desirable response at the POST administration than they had previously – then they were assigned a score of -1. If they selected the same response for an item at both PRE and POST, they were assigned a score of 0.

These scores were then totaled to determine a net total change for all statements together. Individuals were then classified in three potential change categories:

⁷ A separately category is not provided here for the Butler County Sheriff’s Office as there was only one respondent. This individual’s responses are included in the “all” group, but are not broken out as a group in the chart because the graphical result may be misleading and to protect the anonymity of the respondent.

- Individuals with a net zero total either selected the exact same responses on the PRE and POST, or, they improved on the same number of items as they declined.
- Individuals with a net improvement improved on all responses – meaning they selected all more desirable responses, or they improved on more measures than they declined or selected the same response from the PRE to the POST.
- Individuals with a net decline declined on all responses – meaning they selected all less desirable responses, or they declined on more measures than they improved or selected the same response from the PRE to the POST.

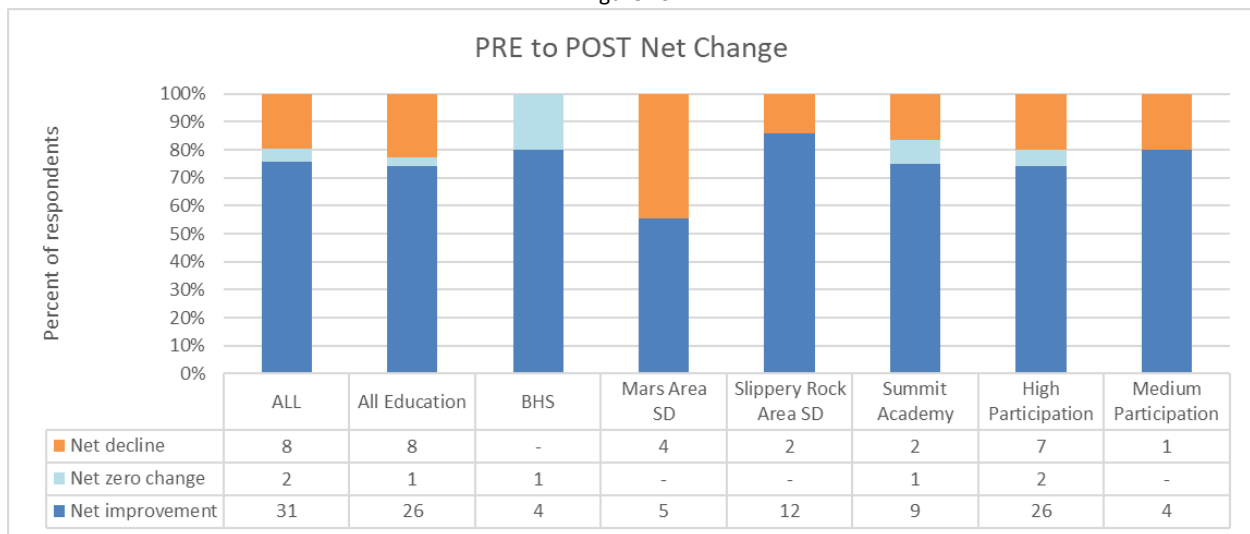
It should be noted that no one selected all the same responses on both administrations and no one declined on all statements.

Results were examined overall and for each subgroup.

Overall results show 75% of all respondents exhibiting a positive change, or a net improvement, from PRE to POST, indicating that they selected more desirable responses at the POST administration than they had on the PRE administration. Further, each subgroup’s results indicated that the largest portion of respondents showed a net improvement, although the percentages of respondents showing a net improvement varied from group to group. Mars Area had the lowest percentage of respondents showing a net improvement – 56% - while Slippery Rock had the highest – 86%. Butler Health System was also among the highest improvement percentages (80%), but also had the highest net decline percentage (20%); however, this is likely a factor of the small group size.

Slippery Rock’s results are particularly interesting given that all these individuals had participated previously. Simply because of their previous experience with the program, they might have been more likely to experience no change.

Figure 19.



Of the 41 respondents with PRE and POST data, 40 (98%) improved on at least measure. The one individual who did not show improvement on any of the 15 PRE/POST measures was from Mars Area School District. Respondents selected more desirable responses at POST on two to 13 of the 15 statements, and they improved on an average of six statements (40% of statements).

Respondents selected the same response on two to 11 statements, with an average of 6.6 statements.

Of the 41 respondents, **10 did not decline on any statements (24%)**; 31 declined on one or more of the 15 PRE/POST measures. Individuals declined on between one and eight statements, with an average of three decline statements.

These results indicate that the program contributed to overall positive change to some degree for nearly all respondents during the course of the program. Not only did nearly all respondents show improvement on at least one statement, the average number of statements improved (6) outnumbers the average number of statements with a decline (3) per respondent.

Individual Measure Change

The evaluator also examined change on each statement separately.

Most statements trended toward improvement, though the extent to which this occurred varied for each statement. This indicates that **in many domains, the program likely had a positive influence on participant outcomes**. However, the small group sizes make it difficult to generalize these results. Additional data and a larger population size would add strength to the results.

Here are the statements in descending order of improved percentage (all participants).

- I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face. (49% improved)
- Even when I'm feeling terribly upset I can find a way to put it into words. (49% improved)
- I have trouble thinking of the right words to express how I feel about things. (49% improved)
- I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn't feel them. (49% improved)
- When I take a shower or a bath, I stay alert to the sensations of water on my body. (44% improved)
- When I have distressing thoughts or images I just notice them and let them go. (44% improved)
- When I have distressing thoughts or images I am able just to notice them without reacting. (42% improved)
- I tell myself I shouldn't be feeling the way I'm feeling. (42% improved)
- When I have distressing thoughts or images, I "step back" and am aware of the thought or image without getting taken over by it. (42% improved)
- I do jobs or tasks automatically without being aware of what I'm doing. (39% improved)
- I notice how foods and drinks affect my thoughts, bodily sensations, and emotions. (34% improved)

76%

of respondents showed a net improvement from PRE to POST, with 40 respondents improving on at least one measure

- I'm good at finding words to describe my feelings. (34% improved)
- I don't pay attention to what I'm doing because I'm daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted. (32% improved)
- I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn't think that way. (29% improved)
- I find myself doing things without paying attention. (27% improved)

For about half the statements, a small number of respondents selected the highest value at both PRE and POST, and so they could not improve further. In this analysis, they are included in the "same" group, as they selected the same response at both administrations. This may contribute to higher percentages in that group, and also lower percentages in the "less true" and "more true" groups. These statements were:

- I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn't think that way. Eight respondents selected "never or rarely true" at both administrations.
- I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn't feel them. Five respondents selected "never or rarely true" at both administrations.
- I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face. Four respondents selected "very often or always true" at both administrations.
- When I have distressing thoughts or images, I "step back" and am aware of the thought or image without getting taken over by it. Three respondents selected "very often or always true" at both administrations.
- I tell myself I shouldn't be feeling the way I'm feeling. Three respondents selected "never or rarely true" at both administrations.
- I have trouble thinking of the right words to express how I feel about things. Three respondents selected "never or rarely true" at both administrations.
- I'm good at finding words to describe my feelings. Two respondents selected "very often or always true" at both administrations.

Statements Where More True = Improved

Overall for the statements in this section, the number of individuals indicating the statement was more true for them post program outnumbered those indicating it was less true, indicating overall improvement. Results by the identified subgroups were mixed. Smaller numbers in some of the groups make it difficult to draw conclusions about, or make comparisons of, subgroup results.

Figure 20.

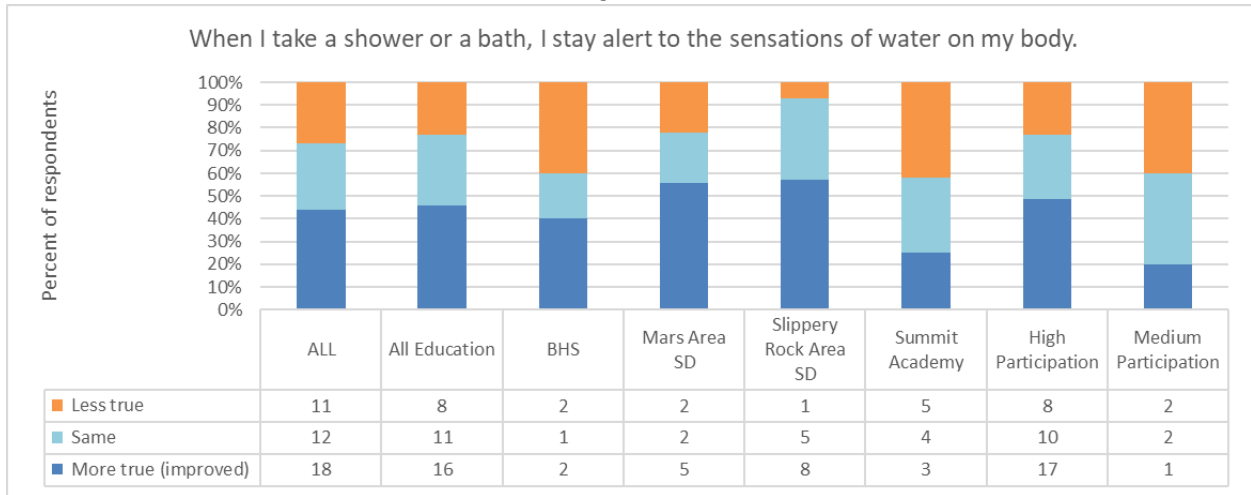


Figure 21.

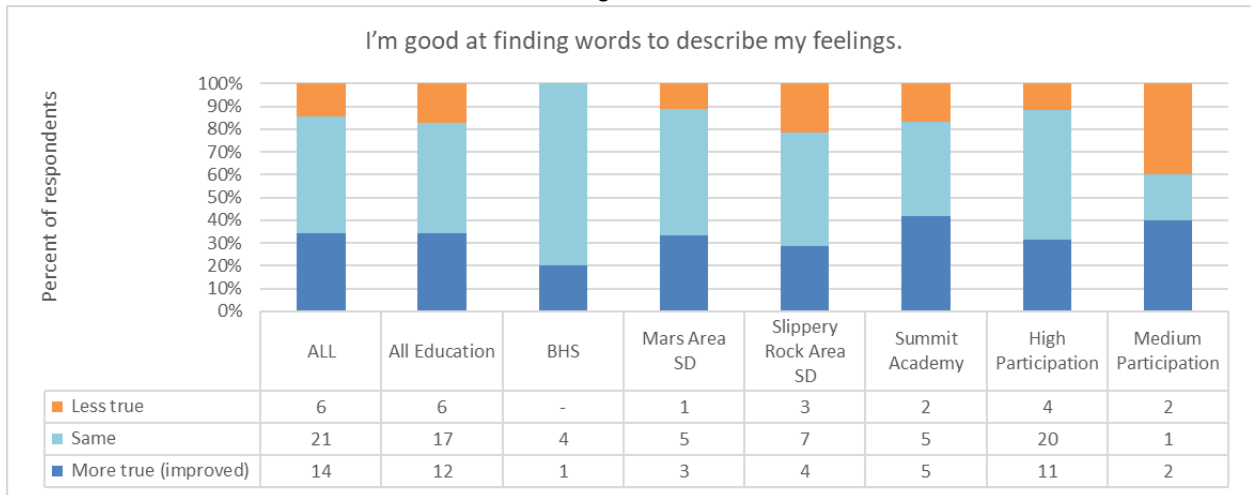


Figure 22.

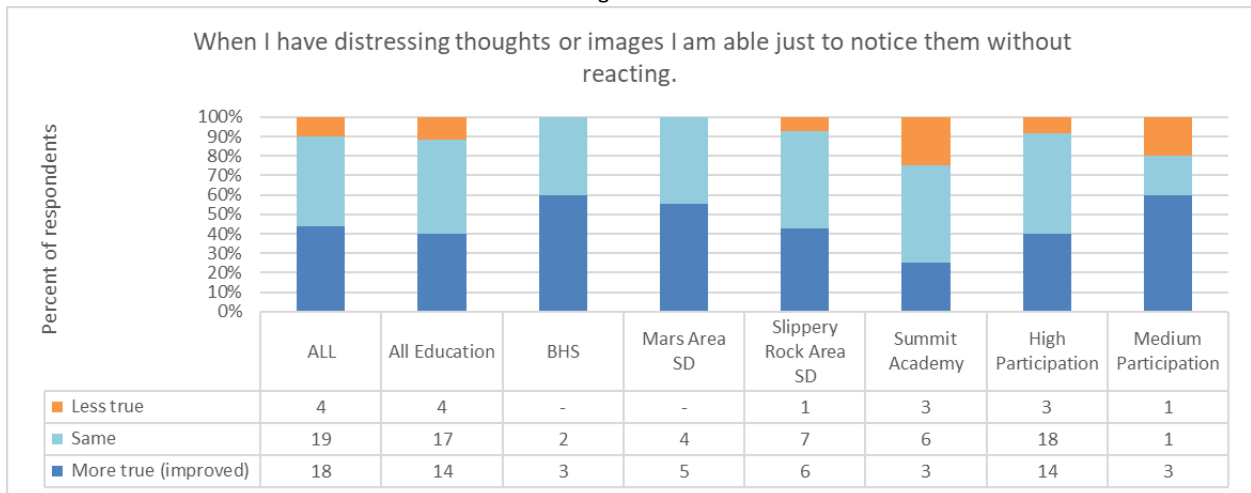


Figure 23.

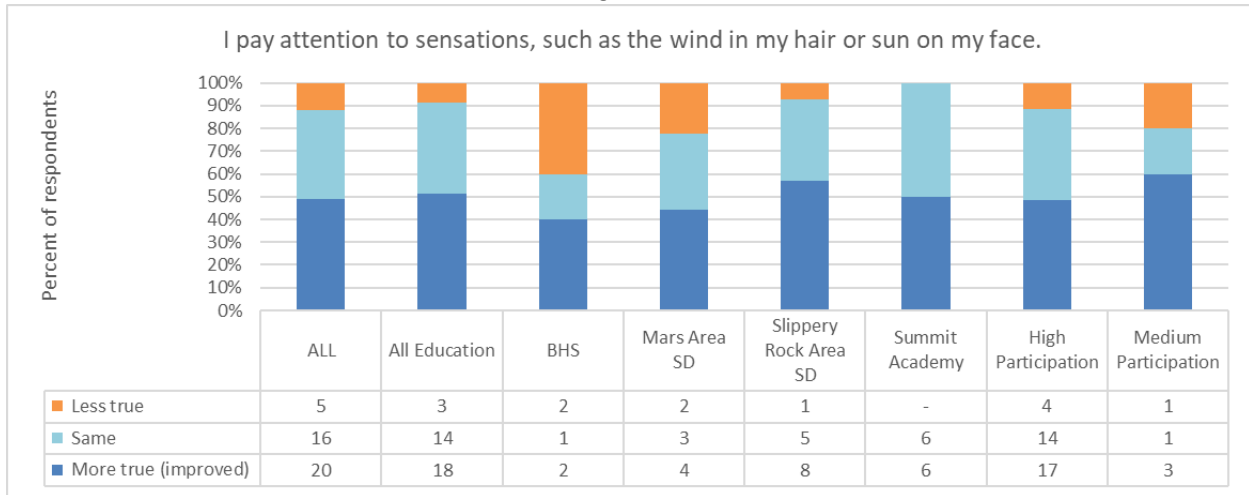


Figure 24.

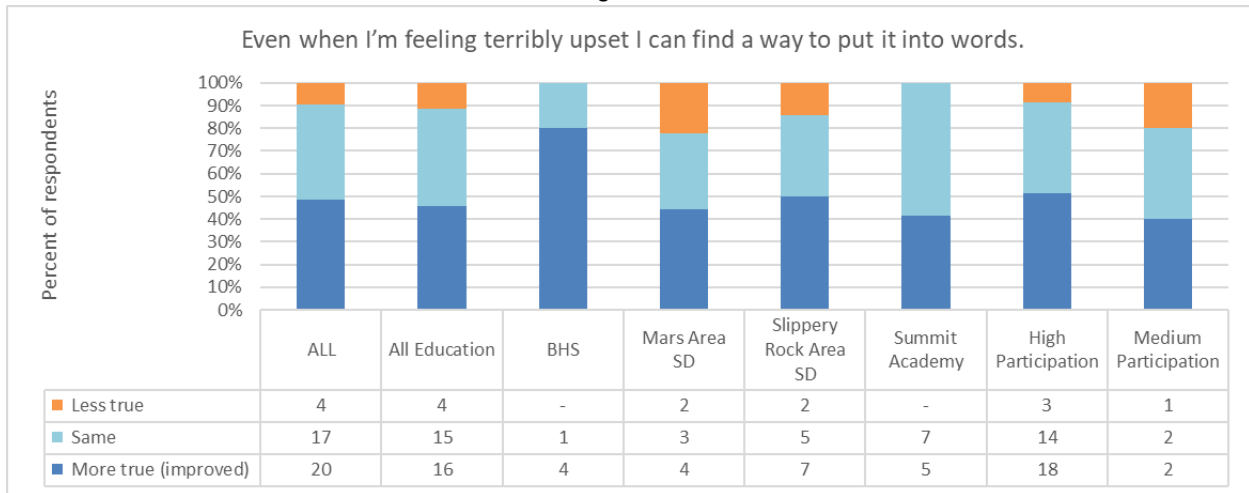


Figure 25.



Figure 26.

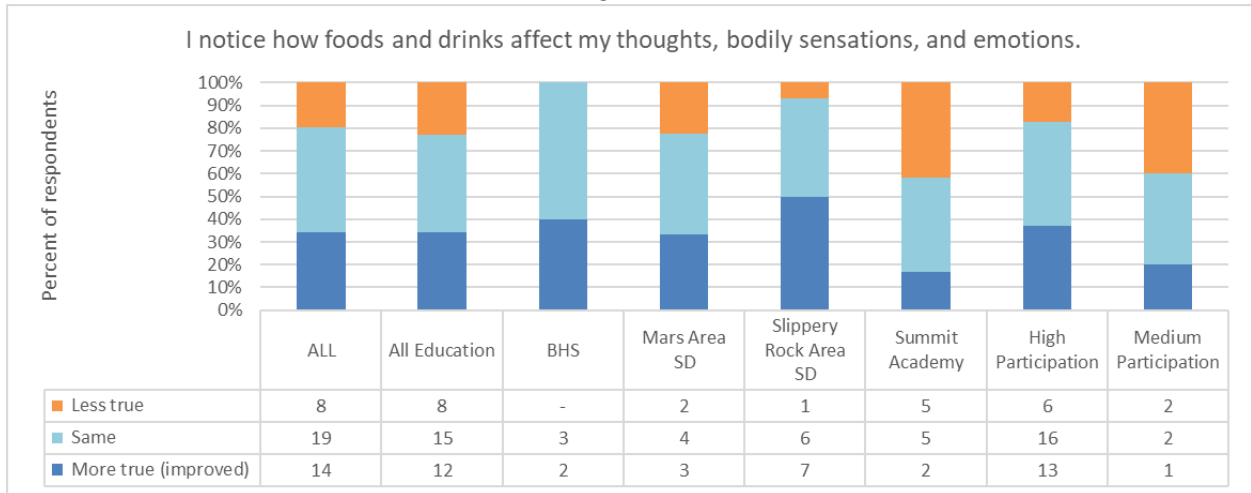
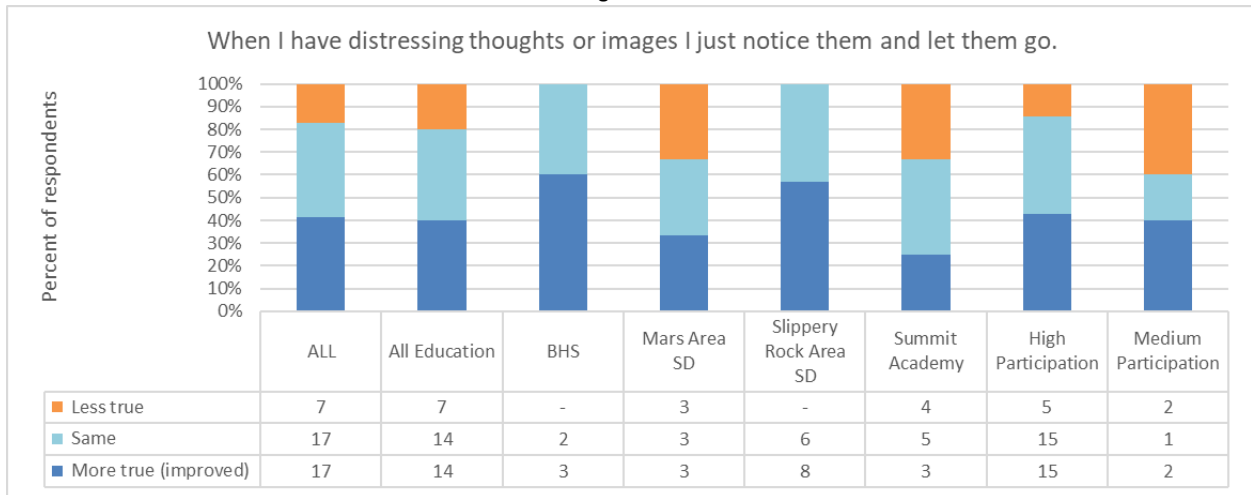


Figure 27.



Statements Where Less True = Improved

As in the previous section, the number of individuals indicating improvement tended to be higher than those showing a decline. Also like the previous set of statements, results by subgroup are mixed, most likely a factor of small counts in each group.

Figure 28.

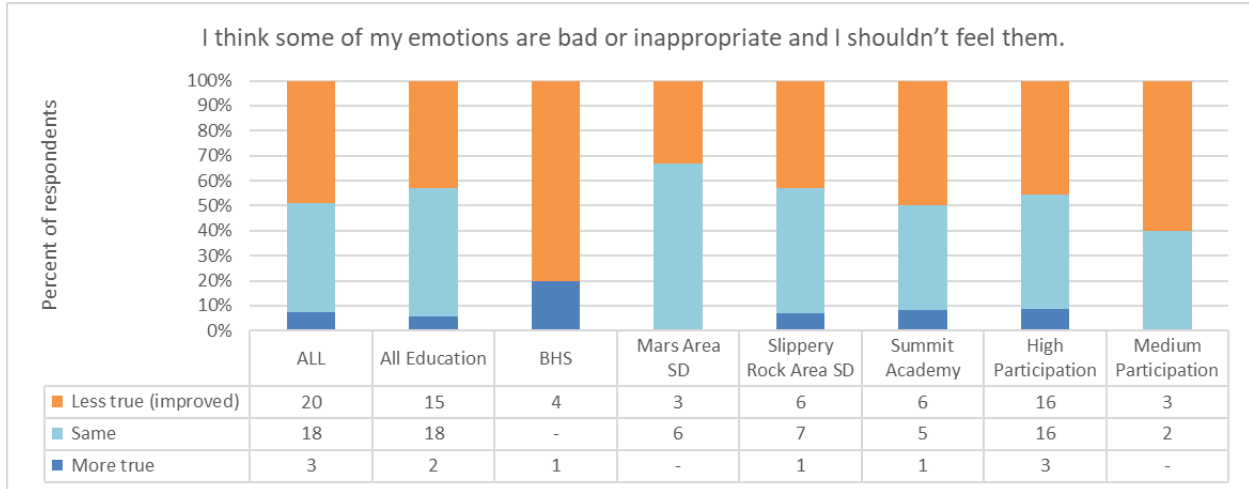


Figure 29.

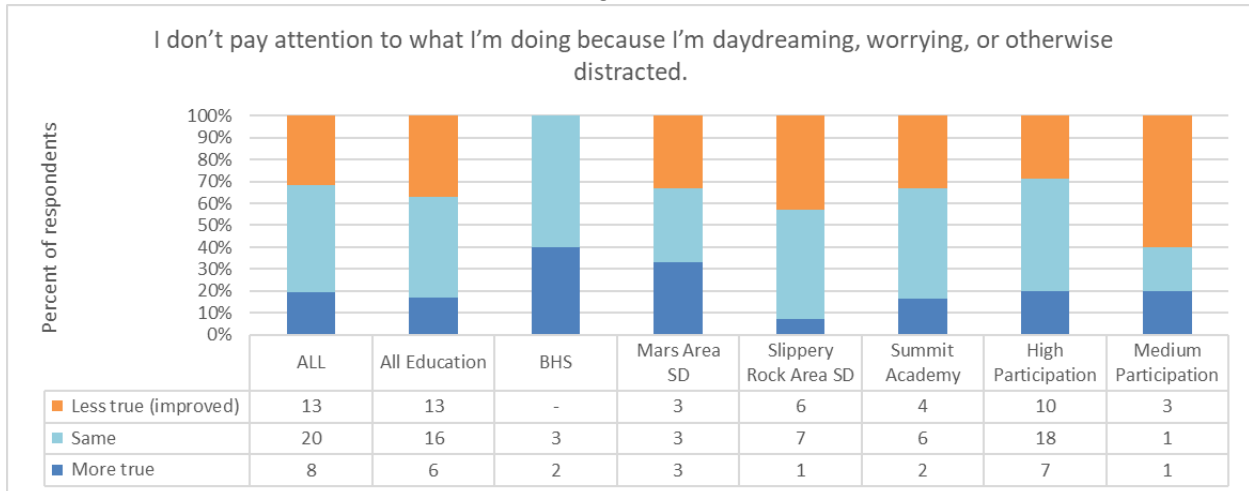


Figure 30.

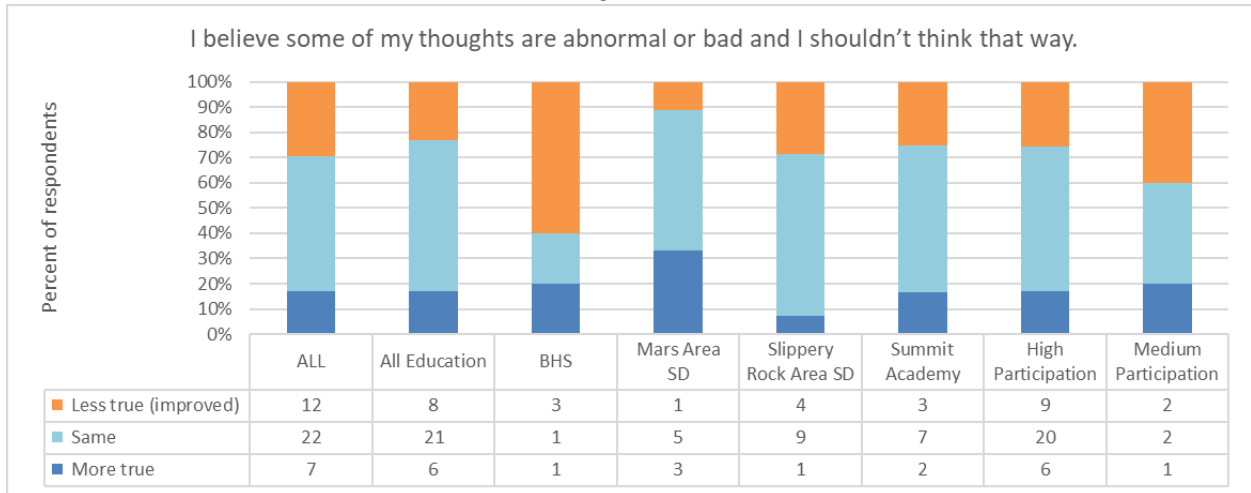


Figure 31.

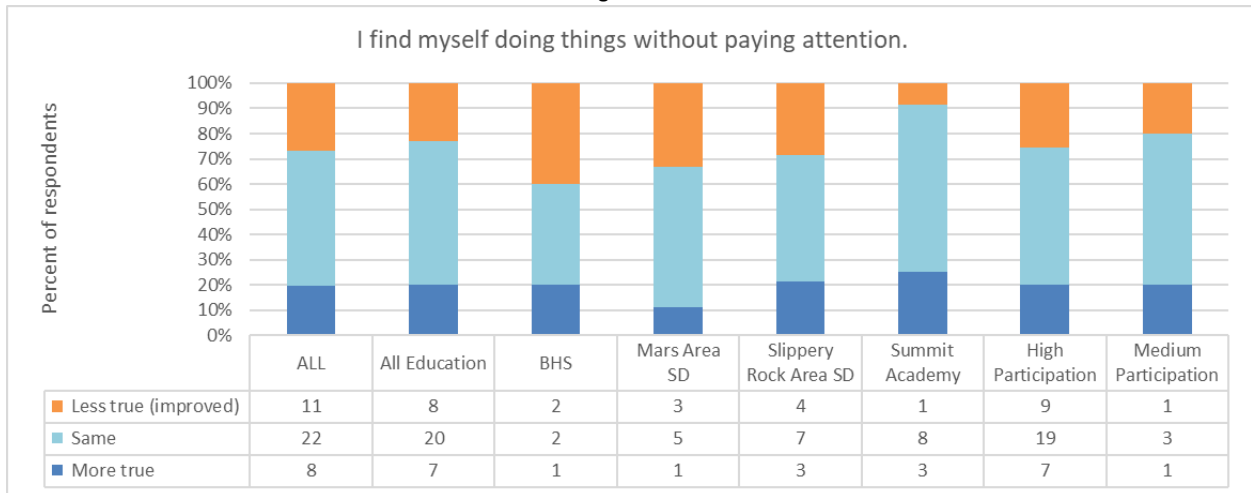


Figure 32.

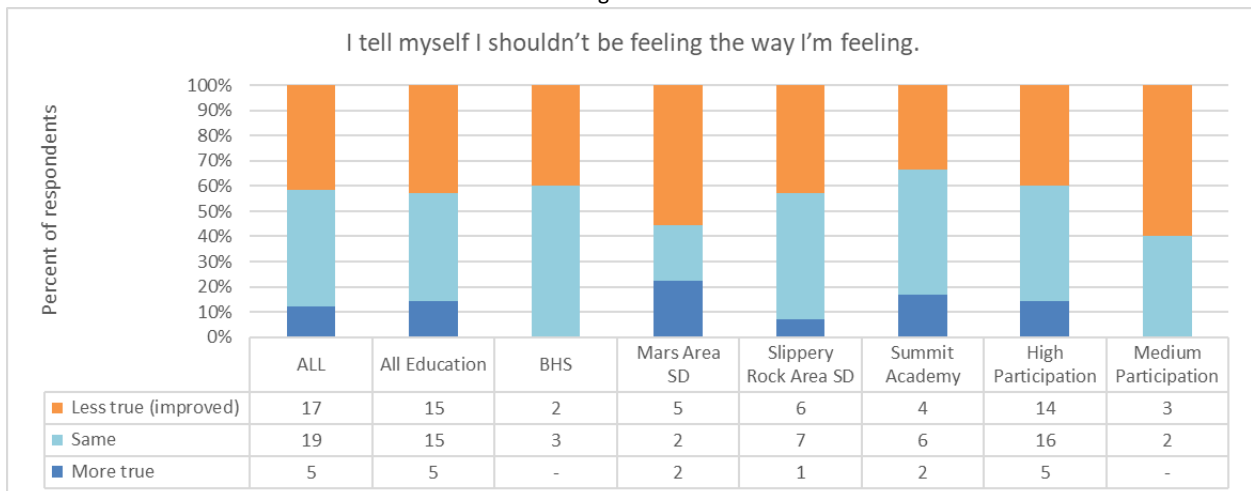


Figure 33.

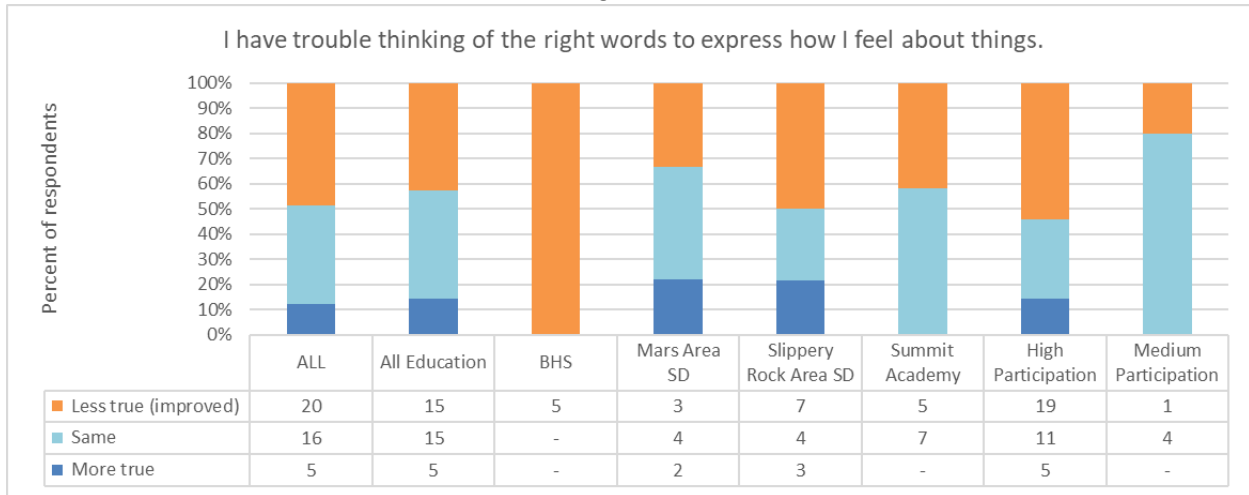
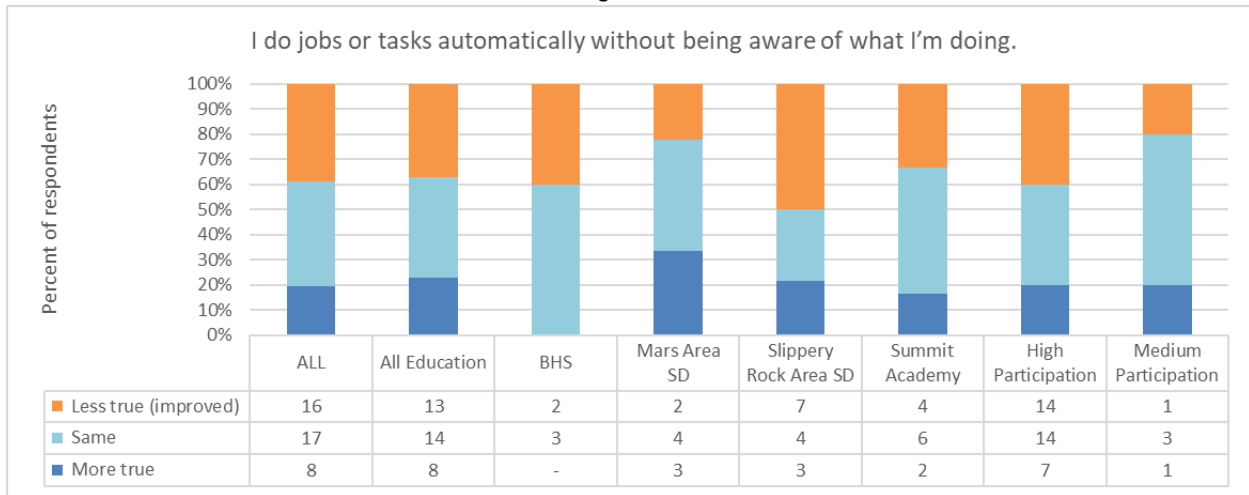


Figure 34.



Statistical Analysis – Overall Results

In addition to the comparison of each matching PRE and POST instrument and examining overall change, the evaluator conducted analysis to determine the extent to which any of the comparison results were statistically significant. Statistical significance⁸ is determined by conducting statistical tests on a set of data to determine the likelihood that the program and the result have a causal relationship, or that the result is not a factor of chance or other factors. Lack of statistical significance does not mean the program does not positively influence outcomes. Results may have practical significance even if they do not have statistical significance. Small data sets may also make it more difficult to test for and see statistical significance. Statistical significance is just one measure of a program’s influence that can be

⁸ Statistical significance is a largely misunderstood, and yet, widely used term. The Harvard Business Review shares a definition of statistical significance: “Statistical significance helps quantify whether a result is likely due to chance or to some factor of interest.” <https://hbr.org/2016/02/a-refresher-on-statistical-significance>

considered among a variety of measures that examine change over time. Statistical significance should not be the sole determiner of program quality.

For consistency and comparability, overall results analyses were conducted similarly to prior evaluations. As explained previously, the Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire contains 15 items that are rated on a five-point Likert scale. Responses were interpreted on that scale from the least desirable response (1) to the most desirable response (5) and scored accordingly. As such, the maximum score possible is the total number of items (15) x the highest possible score (5), or a total possible score of 75.

In this analysis, the evaluator calculated the mean (average) PRE and POST scores of the group. As in the previous cycles, an *ANOVA Single Factor* analysis was conducted to compare the mean PRE and POST distribution of scores to determine if the result was statistically significant.

Based on the scoring methodology described here, the mean PRE score was 48.95 and the mean POST score was 53.91, for a difference of 4.96 points, or a 10.1% gain from PRE to POST.

The evaluator conducted an *Analysis of Variance* test (ANOVA) to determine statistical significance. **The difference in PRE and POST means was tested at the 95% confidence interval and found to be statistically significant.** In this case, the *F value* of the result was 14.57, which was considerably higher than the *F critical value* of 3.93. This means that the result did not occur by chance.

Probability values, “*p* values,” describe the extent to which a result occurred by chance. Results where $p \leq .05$ indicate significance. The *p* value for these results was .00022, which is considerably less than .05, allowing the conclusion that program contributed to positive change as measured by the selected instrument with a high degree of confidence.

96%
of post-program
respondents indicated that
they feel more confident
using mindfulness as a
strategy

FEEDBACK

Adult Participant Survey

The post-program survey asked participants to share feedback about their experience that might be used or considered in future program adjustments, extensions, or services.

Asked about the most helpful or useful techniques, activities, practices, or resources they learned from the program, all respondents to the POST survey (45 individuals) shared a response. Breathing techniques and exercises, specifically 4:8 breathing, was among the top responses (34 respondents, 76%). Other most-helpful elements shared included the following, in no particular order. Some of the responses are shared in the respondent’s own words.

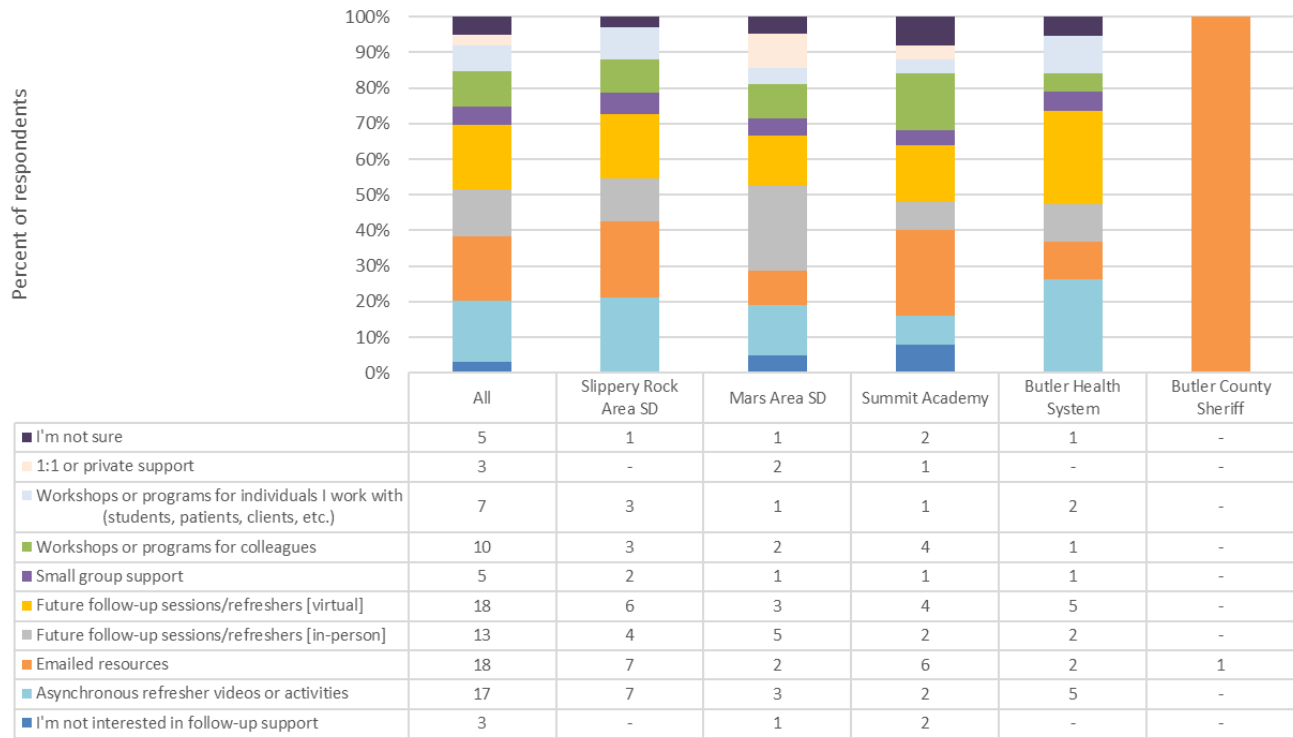
- The book
- The sessions/presentations
- Meditation and visualization exercises
- Gratitude exercises
- Awareness
- Positive thought focus
- Body scan
- “In the moment” strategies
- Communication practices
- Mindful speaking and listening
- Active listening skills
- Mindful eating
- Anger exercise from the book
- Yoga stretches
- “Not holding onto negative thoughts”
- “Noticing without judgement”
- “Four Truths”
- “I am practicing quieting my mind and breathing. I am taking more time to just pause; some of this training has been very difficult for me, but I am committed to working on it!”
- “Being more present in the moment. Taking in the sunrises on the way to work, finding joy in the small moments of the day, taking a pause break to collect my thoughts before I speak.”
- “Understanding how to let go of the issues that swarm in your brain and just ‘be’.”

70%
of post-program
respondents indicated
they are now using
mindfulness daily, almost
daily, or frequently/more
than once a week.

The evaluator asked what additional mindfulness programming, information, or follow-up support participants wanted and these are shown in Figure 34. Only three individuals indicated no interest in additional information. The greatest interest was for emailed resources (18 individuals), future virtual follow-up sessions (18 individuals), asynchronous refresher videos or activities (17), and in-person follow-up sessions (13), among others.

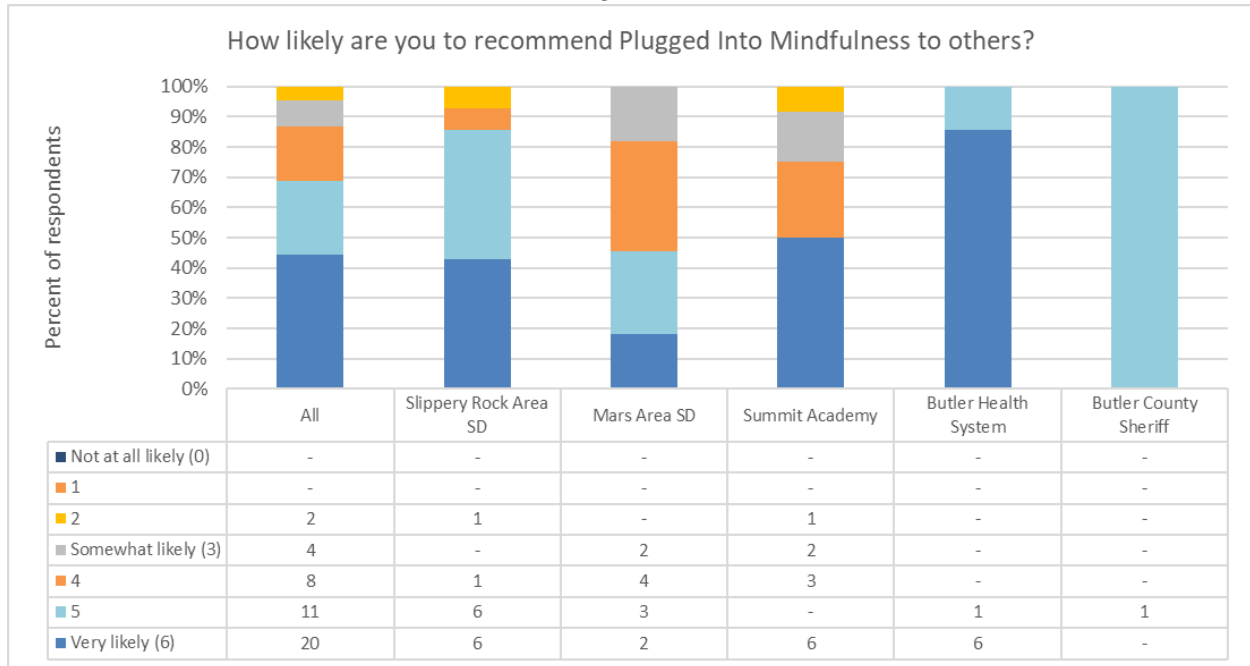
Figure 35.

What additional mindfulness programming, information, or follow-up support might you be interested in?



Recommending the program to others was considered as a measure of program relevance and utility. Participants were asked to rate how likely they were to recommend Plugged Into Mindfulness to others. The scale started at zero for “not at all likely” and ended at six, “very likely,” with the midpoint, three, being “somewhat likely.” Respondents could select any option on the 0-6 scale. No one selected zero or one; nearly half (44%) selected “very likely,” the highest option on the scale. A total of 69% selected the two highest rating options (5 and 6).

Figure 36.



When asked for suggestions, additions, or revisions might be considered, 13 shared a substantive comment and six indicated that they liked the program ‘as is.’ A few of the educator respondents commented that they would like more specific strategies for student-facing exercises. Other comments included the following, in no particular order.

- Meeting more than once per week
- Follow-up sessions to build on new learning
- Program should be optional
- Scheduling conflicts with other professional obligations
- More guided techniques
- Hold the program over fewer weeks
- “I did not care for the mindful walking, but others might. So good to keep multiple practices in there.”
- “10 hours may be too much, it could have been equally as productive for teachers to have 5 hours.”
- “We should have ‘met’ in a more ‘comfortable’ environment/sitting in the hard classroom chairs and florescent lighting for hours made it difficult.”

- “Break out groups online are anxiety-inducing!”
- “I had a hard time watching missed lectures on zoom. It would not stream on my phone while driving and I can't have a desk at work to watch the lectures. I would prefer a different method to watch missed classes.”

At the end of the POST survey, the evaluator provided an optional space for respondents to share anything else that they thought the program or the evaluator should know about their experience. Most of respondents (more than 75%) left the space blank or indicated that they had nothing further to share. The remaining responses were mostly praise for the program, but a few comments stood out with substantive comments.

- Two respondents specifically commented that the availability of a virtual meeting link was helpful as they were not always able to be physically present for sessions.
- “Thank you for everything, Joni!! I look forward to adding depth and frequency to my practices with time.”
- “The instructor did a nice job of encouraging practices but not being ‘too pushy.’”
- “It was a good experience overall and I am very grateful the district providing it.”
- “Joni was amazing every week - great motivation - would like her to come back.”
- “It gave me aides to help at work which is very stressful.”
- “Joni was awesome; her knowledge and ability to communicate and teach were perfect! I am glad I had the opportunity to participate in the program!”
- “[Joni] is an excellent trainer who presented topic well.”
- “It was incredibly convenient to have mindfulness training online, but it was terrifying to get put into breakout groups not knowing who I would end up with. I feel like some of the techniques you need to be vulnerable for them to be effective, and when I'm not comfortable with the people in my small group, it's difficult to open up and trust.”

Student Survey Results

In this program cycle, small groups of students from Slippery Rock Area School District participated in direct instruction from Plugged Into Mindfulness. While a survey was initially planned for both upper elementary and secondary students, only secondary students had the opportunity to complete the survey this cycle. The program provided the educators with a link and asked them to have students complete the survey using that link. Program implementers are not permitted to have direct access to students, so the classroom educators had to facilitate the survey.

Three high school students completed the survey.

Table 4. High School Student Feedback.

Respondent's Answer Selection	I learned new stress and anxiety management techniques that work for me.	I feel better prepared to deal with challenging emotions.	Mindfulness techniques have helped me improve my focus.	I think mindfulness will help me be successful in school.
Very true for me	3	2	2	2
Somewhat true for me	-	1	-	1
Somewhat untrue for me	-	-	1	-

Two student respondents indicated that their Plugged Into Mindfulness instructor was “very helpful,” and one selected “somewhat helpful;” none indicated “not helpful.”

Each of the three student respondents shared a different technique, practice, or resource when asked what was most helpful or useful. The three answers were crystal signing drums, breathing, and sound senses.

When asked how often they used mindfulness techniques before participating in Plugged Into Mindfulness, one indicated that they had never used such practices, one selected “rarely/once or twice a month,” and one indicated “occasionally/several times a month.” After participating in the program, two of the participants indicated a greater frequency of mindfulness practice, and one selected a lesser frequency.

Two of the three student respondents indicated that their classroom teacher had also used mindfulness instruction or activities with them, in addition to the program instructor.

All three indicated a continuing interest in mindfulness. When asked what, if anything in particular, they wanted to learn, one indicated “more stress reduction” and the other shared: “I would like to learn how to be in a present moment without thinking about something in your mind. How not to think about anything but what’s going on right then.”

REFLECTIONS, CONSIDERATIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS

The November 2022 through June 2023 program term was the first year of the two-year grant cycle funded through Butler County Drug and Alcohol.

The evaluator shares the following reflections and suggestions based on data collection and analysis, interpretations and anecdotes, and other information considered throughout the program term. The evaluator offers these recommendations understanding that it may not be possible to address all of them. Changes may not be possible at all, or they may be delayed. However, including all generated recommendations provides an opportunity for conversation, exploration, documentation, and as part of a cycle of continuous improvement.

In general, findings and feedback from this report should be used to make informed decisions about if, how, and where program development efforts might be concentrated.

This section of the report addresses the evaluation question: *How might we **improve** upon this program for future iterations and expansions?*

- The program was delivered to the entities and groups proposed in its grant application. The program intended to serve up to 160 adults: 30 educators per school (90 total), 35 health professionals, and 35 law enforcement professionals. The program ultimately engaged 71 adults (71%) in ongoing instruction, including 61 educators, nine health professionals, and one law enforcement professional. An additional 13 individuals – for a total of 84 adults – started the program, but dropped out early in the cycle. Feedback from the Sheriff’s Office indicates that while leadership believed the program would be beneficial and shared information about the program on several occasions, staff buy-in was low and/or they lacked the available time necessary to commit to the program. Plugged Into Mindfulness leadership recommended in-person sessions to improve their program experience, but the Sheriff’s Office declined the opportunity.

Recommendation: If the program wishes to increase participation in certain groups, it might consider exploring the reasons that some individuals dropped out early in the program and then designing program elements or promoting existing program elements to address those reasons, where appropriate. Successful programs and ventures are those that identify and successfully fill a need for their audience. It may be helpful to identify the “problems” that the program helps participants solve, which may differ from group to group. Messaging, recruitment, and marketing efforts may need to be adjusted depending on the audience to connect with participants who could benefit most. This includes the individuals as well as the participant entities. Further, discussions with the participating entities about increasing engagement might also yield additional insights or engagement.

- Based on whole-group POST survey results, most participants shared that they are using mindfulness more frequently than they had previously or they were continuing to use such strategies regularly. Furthermore, nearly all participants indicated an interest in continuing to learn about mindfulness. This indicates that the program was successful in increasing awareness and promoting the behaviors and interest it intended in its grant applications.

Further, this also indicates that participants experienced positive changes in practice as a result of the program, if they are seeing enough results to warrant continued interest.

Recommendation: Continue offering the program while also considering additions, revisions, and tweaks from respondent surveys, as these give insight to the needs, interests, and experience of the end user. Being able to address participant needs directly – and demonstrate same – will add to program sustainability. POST survey results indicated the greatest interest in emailed resources, future virtual follow-up sessions, asynchronous refresher videos or activities, and in-person follow-up sessions.

- Plugged Into Mindfulness is intended to be a 10-hour program. Originally, it was designed to be delivered over 10 one-hour live sessions; however, this program cycle included only one group that fit that implementation design. Program delivery element, session count, or other aspects of implementation may or may not contribute to differences in results. This could be a factor to explore in future program cycles. Multiple program cycles and groups would be needed to examine this appropriately. Certainly, it is important to consider the needs and constraints of participants and their entities in scheduling the program among other professional obligations; however, it should be considered that differences in program delivery may contribute, to some extent, to differences in results.

Recommendation: The evaluator and program leaders should collaborate to establish the ways in which the program is similar or dissimilar depending on the implementation design or delivery method. Greater consistency in program delivery might improve learning about how the program operates best and the conditions under which participant outcomes might be optimized. Program delivery method and timeline might be considered for future comparisons. Further, recruitment method might also be considered, for example, individuals required to participate versus volunteers. Ongoing evaluation and additional volumes of data would provide opportunities for this exploration.

- Matched PRE/POST results and statistical analyses indicate positive results for most participants as a result of participating in Plugged Into Mindfulness. Interestingly, many Slippery Rock Area SD respondents improved from PRE to POST, despite their previous experience with the program; mostly “same” responses were expected.

Recommendation: The evaluator and program leaders should collaborate to identify methods of increasing the response rate to both the PRE and POST instruments. Increasing the population size included in the data will also add strength to the results. The second year of this program cycle will likely add insights. Additional reinforcement or follow-up might support an increased response rate. Further, once the population size is increased, additional insight might be gleaned from breaking out the highest value “same” responses as an additional result group, “did not need to improve” or “highest value at both administrations.” Further, while the analyses indicate that the program is positively influencing results, there still may be opportunities to refine implementation and curriculum and expand offerings, such as considering areas where declines are indicated and where participant feedback indicates existing needs. It may also be helpful to examine and confirm the alignment of the program content to the chosen PRE/POST instrument.

- The first year of a program cycle and a new evaluation are naturally a learning process for all. The evaluation and the program could be strengthened overall by greater responses rates, additional feedback from stakeholders, and potentially other elements.

Recommendation: The evaluator and program leadership might find it helpful to establish a more definitive calendar of sessions and data collection time points to better understand, manage, and reinforce data collection and survey completion. Continuing to collect, analyze, and interpret data, and refine the processes by which data are collected should yield increasingly more useful information.

- Participant gains and feedback may be useful from promotional and program development perspectives.

Recommendation: De-identified feedback might be used as a tool to encourage and support future participants. Program leadership and the evaluator might collaborate to identify those elements particularly motivating for potential and future participants. Additional services or program opportunities might include follow-up workshop series (virtual and/or in person), emailed resources, individual or small group coaching (virtual and/or in person), entity consulting on supporting an organization culture that encourages mindfulness, mindfulness in leadership trainings, additional direct student instruction, and additional instruction or support for educators for implementing mindfulness with their students.

The evaluation of the Plugged Into Mindfulness program is intended to address grant accountability expectations while also supporting the program's leadership to identify, prioritize, and address program and participant needs in order improve future program iterations. Results are based on the data collected and analyzed for this evaluation as provided by the program, its implementers, and participants as of the date of this report's production. The results of this evaluation may also be useful for other groups seeking to solve similar problems and serve the needs of similar individuals; policy makers; government agencies; and others.

**Plugged Into Mindfulness
Evaluation Report 2022-23**

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