

Faith & Wellness Research Project

Summary of Preliminary Research Study Findings

WHAT DID WE DO?

SEPTEMBER 2019

We put out a call to interested teachers across Ontario who were interested in using the Faith & Wellness Resource and participating in the accompanying research project.

Of the 19 school boards for whom we received ethics approval for teachers to be involved in the research, we randomly selected 9 boards to be part of Cohort 1 and the remaining 10 boards to be part of Cohort 2.



OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2019

We collected survey data from 202 teachers in Cohorts 1 and 2. We also randomly selected 11 schools and collected student survey data from 242 students within these 11 schools (19 classrooms).

All Cohort 1 teachers then received access to the resource, to use in their classroom for the next 3 months.



FEBRUARY & MARCH 2020

We collected survey data from 135 teachers and 183 students in Cohorts 1 and 2 at our mid-point. We also conducted 2 focus groups with Cohort 1 teachers and 4 focus groups with students from two randomly selected Cohort 1 classrooms.

All Cohort 2 teachers were then given access to the resource. Due to COVID-19 school closures, further data were not collected from teachers or students.



WHAT DID TEACHERS SAY ABOUT USING THE FAITH & WELLNESS RESOURCE?

We found that teachers in Cohort 1 were actively engaged in using the Faith & Wellness Resource. Teachers used practices in each of the 6 SEL categories in their classrooms.

anywhere from
3 to 64 times
across the **3** months

rating of **3.38**
on a scale
from **1 to 4**

Teachers described students as being highly engaged with the practices

92%

The vast majority of teachers also felt that the Catholic connection was both grade appropriate and applicable to the practices used.

Teachers themselves had very positive perceptions of the practices

rating of **3.83**
on a scale
from **1 to 4**

After using the resource for 3 months, teachers reported that the resource was very helpful.

rating of **3.63**
on a scale
from **1 to 5**

**88-
97%**

Teachers said that they would recommend the resource to others.

In focus groups, teachers reported extremely positive changes in their students as a result of the Faith & Wellness Resource:

“There’s a lot more talk happening as a classroom as a whole...Kindergarten students themselves recognizing – ‘I’m feeling upset right now, I’m feeling I’m not happy at this time.’ They’re really starting to identify how they’re feeling and what things they can do that are available for them in their classroom.”

KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

“I found that a lot of these strategies helped [students] to focus, helped them to be very positive about their outlook and you could see the difference even from September. Probably the biggest change was right after January after we had been doing [the Faith & Wellness practices] for a while and just the ability to focus and get back into it and go back to what they needed to do and taking these mental health breaks throughout the day. [It] was good for them and I think it was also good for me, because I would start to take those breaks when I needed them. I would demonstrate that I needed a break and I would do the same thing, just have some breathing exercises and sometimes that outlook really does affect the whole atmosphere.”

GRADE 2 TEACHER

“I think it’s still good especially with older students to hear these kinds of things in their class because then it really takes the taboo away from kids thinking that it’s not okay to talk about your feelings.”

GRADE 2 TEACHER

“I did get more confident in having the resource to help me through this kind of teaching...It showed me how important doing these kinds of things are within the day because I think there’s so much pressure on teachers to get through the curriculum and to make sure everyone’s needs are being met...There’s so much going on in the day that sometimes it’s easy to forget that everyone needs to have a little moment and correct themselves. So, I think it brought to my attention how important this part of learning is, and it gave me the confidence to say ‘you know what, I am going to take the time to do it because it’s that important’.”

GRADE 2 TEACHER

“I think that having strategies that we could always refer back to really helps with class engagement and also academic engagement because if there were times where my students were distracted... having those strategies that they all participated in and they were all familiar with...you could just say a quick ‘here’s one of your strategies, use it right now’ or ‘remember this one’.”

GRADE 7 TEACHER

WHAT DID STUDENTS SAY ABOUT USING THE FAITH & WELLNESS RESOURCE?

rating of **3.8**
on a scale
from 1 to 4

Students described the practices as being helpful, both for themselves and for others in their class.

**81-
97%**

The majority of students also wanted to continue doing the practice in their classroom.

Students talked about their reaction and response to doing the practices:

“It’s just like, pretend the meditation is just a deep breath, you focus, you put your head down and you take all the things you think about...then sometimes if you have bad things or whatever, drama or whatever just let it go, take a deep breath, and then relax.”

GRADE 5 STUDENT

“I felt like that actually helped me a lot, because I had so much stuff racing through my mind and when [the class did a meditation practice], I actually had time to relax.”

GRADE 5 STUDENT

“We talk about how we can be kind to people, and that we should say positive stuff to ourselves...We learn about the power of yet.”

GRADE 2 STUDENT

Students also spoke about specific skills and strategies that they learned by doing the practices:

“If I have a fight with a friend, I don’t know why, I get mad, so I calm myself down before I talk to them...I take some few breaths, like you guys taught us to do, and sometimes I meditate, so I just calm myself.”

GRADE 5 STUDENT

“If we’re not happy, we think of our happy place.” [And that helps you...when you’re feeling upset?] “Yeah.”

GRADE 2 STUDENT

“[If I get stressed out,] I sleep, sometimes I pray, and I have this diary at home with a key, so I normally write my thoughts there.”

GRADE 5 STUDENT

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