Implementing a Mindfulness-Based Social and Emotional Learning Program with Early Adolescents During Covid: Lessons from the Field

Presenters: Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, PhD, Jenna Whitehead, PhD, Rebecca Baelen, PhD
Moderator: Danielle Carter-Sullivan, Executive Director, B.C. Ministry of Education and Child Care
HELP Webinar: January 26, 2023

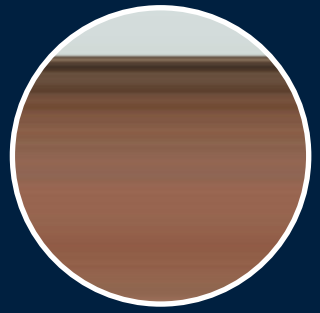
UBC
HUMAN EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

UBC LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge that UBC is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) People

OVERVIEW OF TODAY'S WEBINAR

1. Why Now? What Now? Social and Emotional Learning



2. Study Overview

3. Participants, Timeline, and Pandemic Adaptations

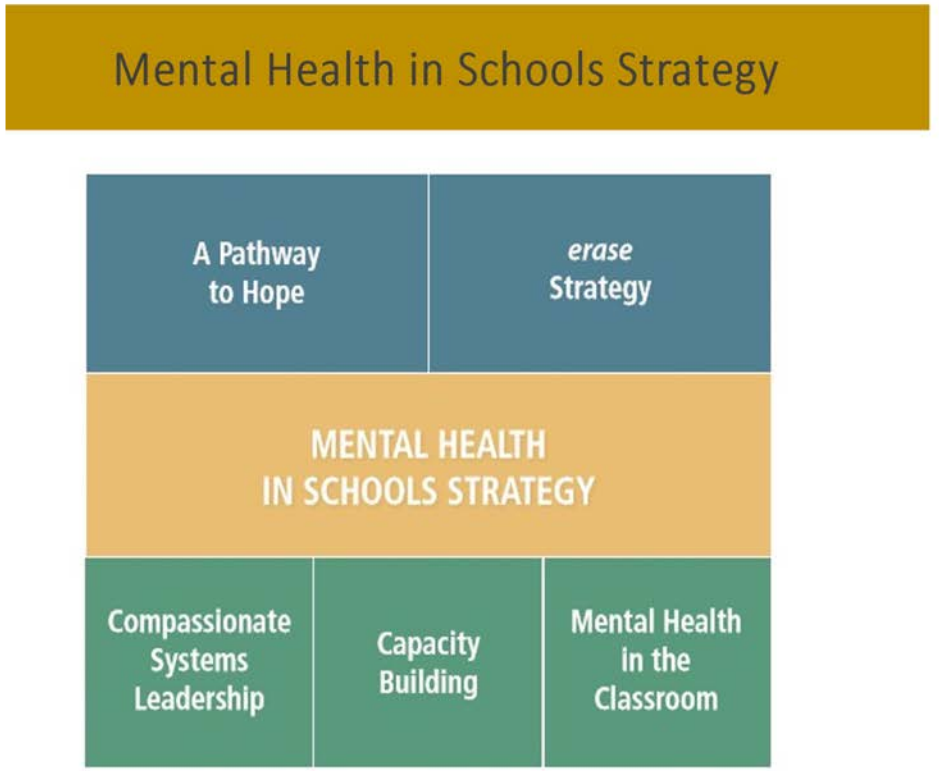
4. Key Findings: Implementation and Preliminary Outcomes

5. Lessons Learned

BC's Mental Health in Schools Strategy

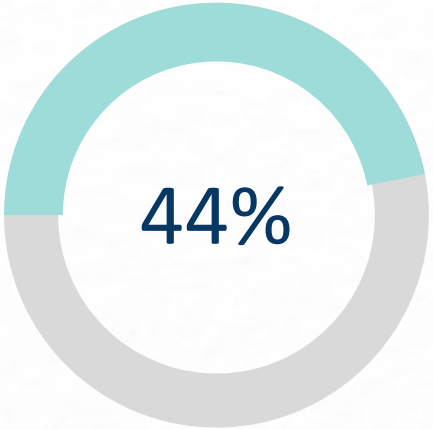
VISION

A whole-school system that promotes positive mental health, where mental health promotion is embedded in all aspects of the education system including culture, leadership, curriculum and learning environments.

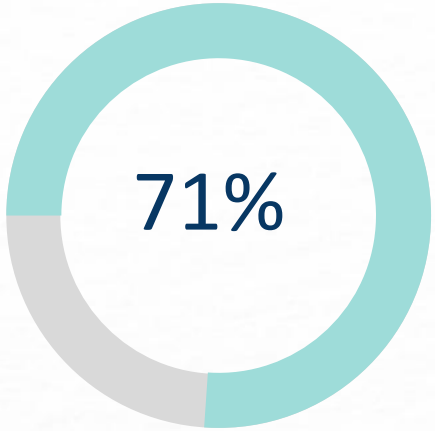


Part 1:
Why Now? What Now? Social and Emotional Learning

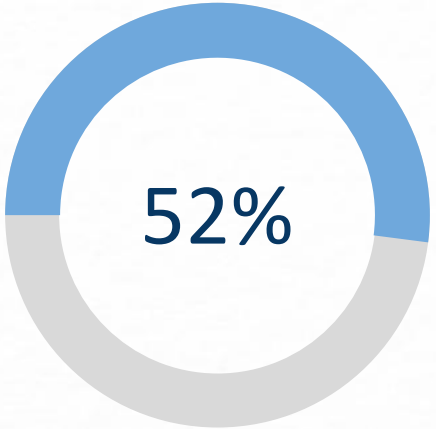
The well-being of our children and educators is in crisis



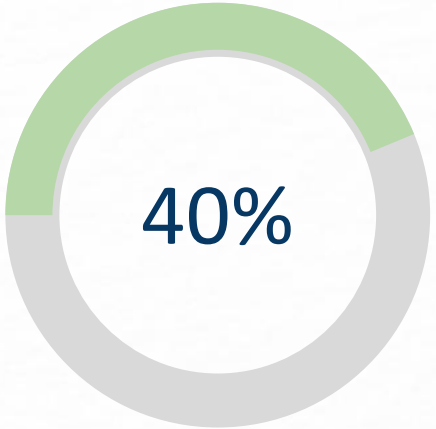
Of high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless in the past year (CDC, 2022)



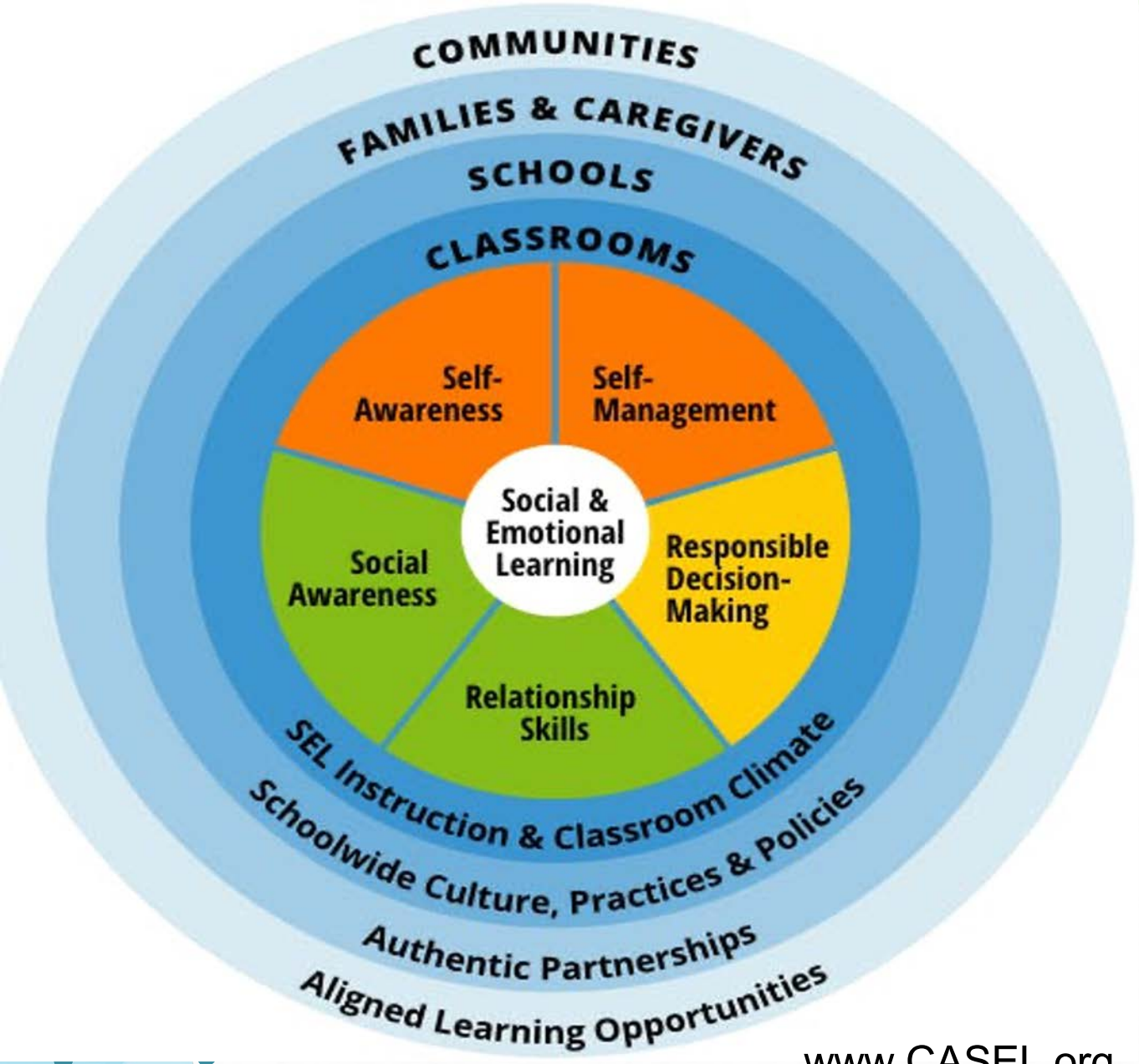
Of parents said the pandemic had taken a toll on their child's mental health (National survey by Lurie Children's Hospital, 2020)



Of K-12 teachers report significant burnout – the highest among all professions (Gallup Poll, 2022)



Of K-12 teachers reported that they were now more likely to leave the profession than before the pandemic (Gadermann et al., 2021)



www.CASEL.org

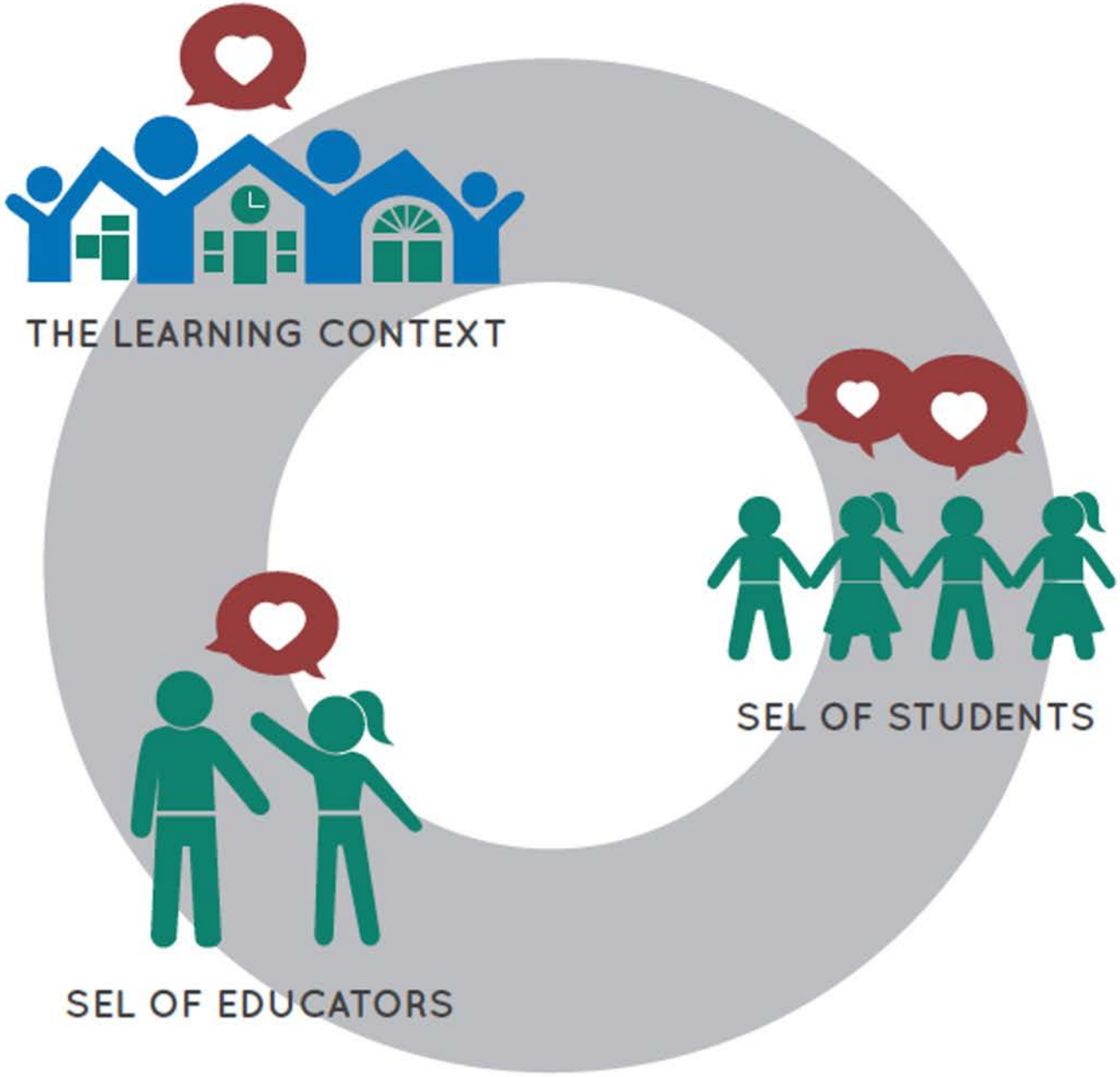
SEL is . . .

- The process through which ***all*** young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to:
  - Develop healthy identities
  - Manage emotions
  - Achieve personal and collective goals
  - Feel and show empathy and compassion for others
  - Establish and maintain supportive relationships
  - Make responsible and caring decisions.

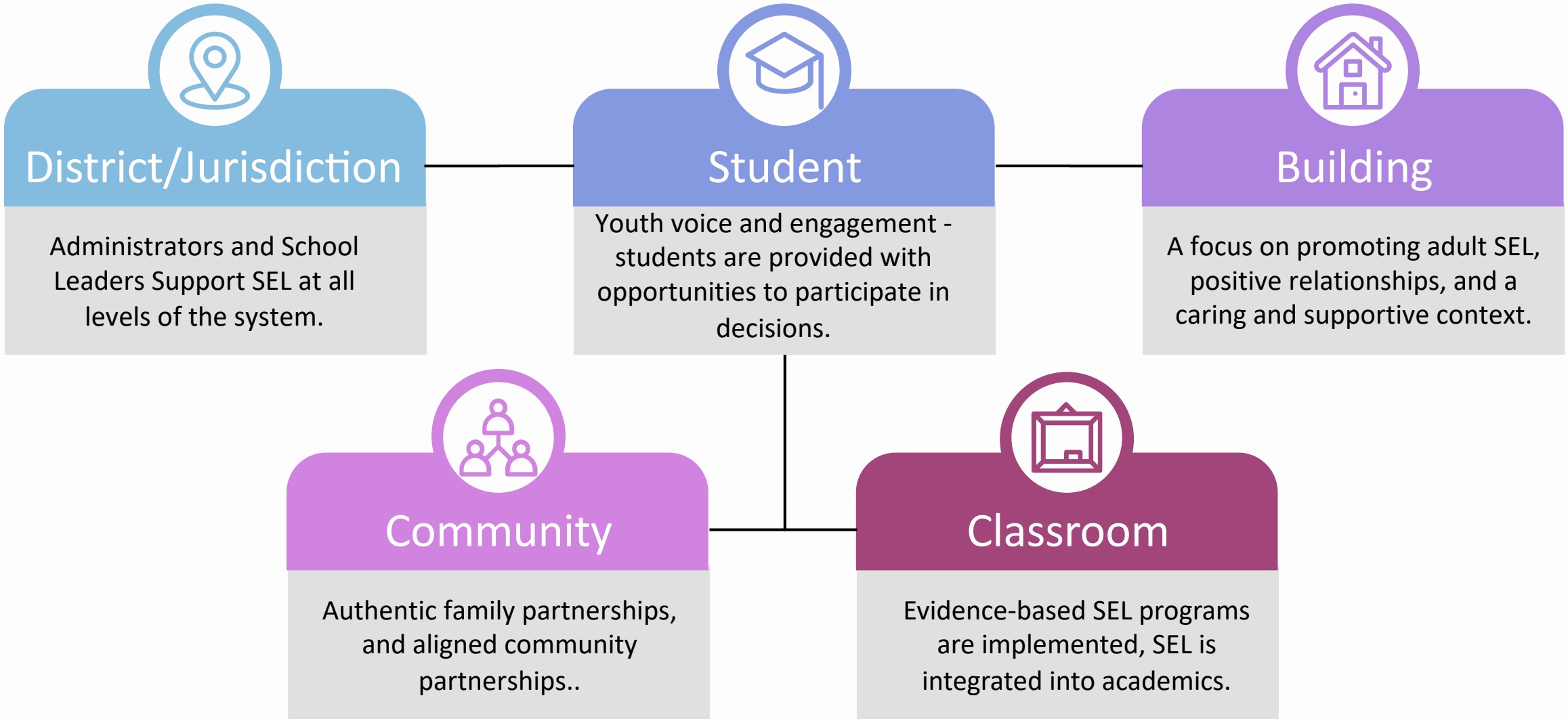
ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OF SYSTEMIC SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

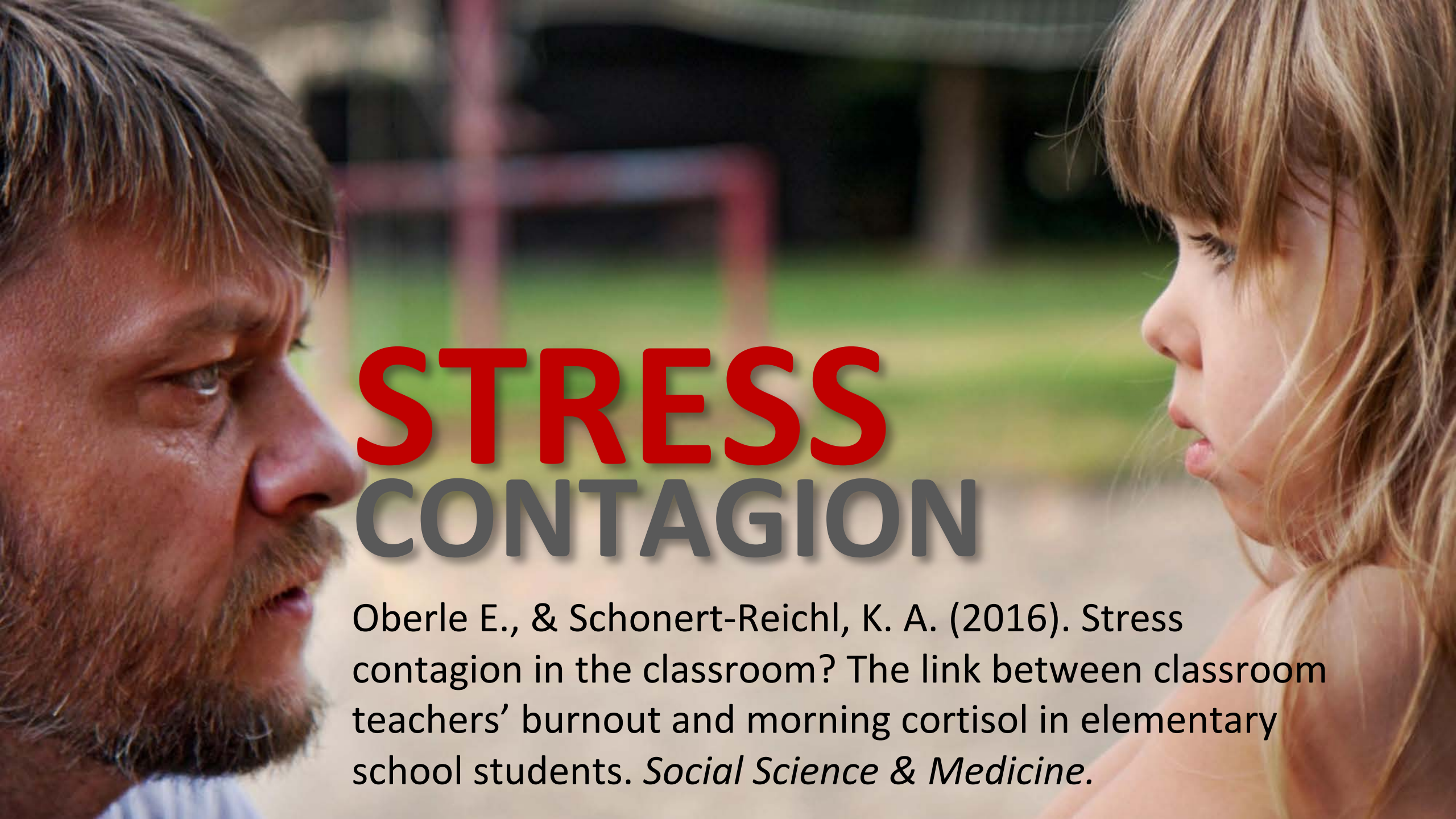
"Systemic SEL is an approach to create equitable learning conditions that actively involve all Pre-K to Grade 12 students in learning and practicing social, emotional, and academic competencies (Mahoney et al., 2020)

SYSTEMIC SEL: Three Essential Ingredients



Systemic Social-Emotional Learning





STRESS CONTAGION

Oberle E., & Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2016). Stress contagion in the classroom? The link between classroom teachers' burnout and morning cortisol in elementary school students. *Social Science & Medicine.*

SEL Strategy: To reach the students, CARE FOR Educators

Part 2:
Study Overview

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS

Principal Investigator:

Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, PhD, Professor

NoVo Foundation Endowed Chair in Social and Emotional Learning

University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC)

Faculty of Education, UBC

Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP)

School of Population and Public Health,

Faculty of Medicine, UBC

Co-Investigator:

Lara Boyd, PhD, Professor

Director, Brain Behaviour Laboratory, Department of Physical Therapy, Faculty of Medicine, UBC

Research Team:

Jenna Whitehead, PhD, Research Associate & Primary Research Coordinator, UBC

Rebecca Baelen, PhD, Postdoctoral Research Associate, UIC

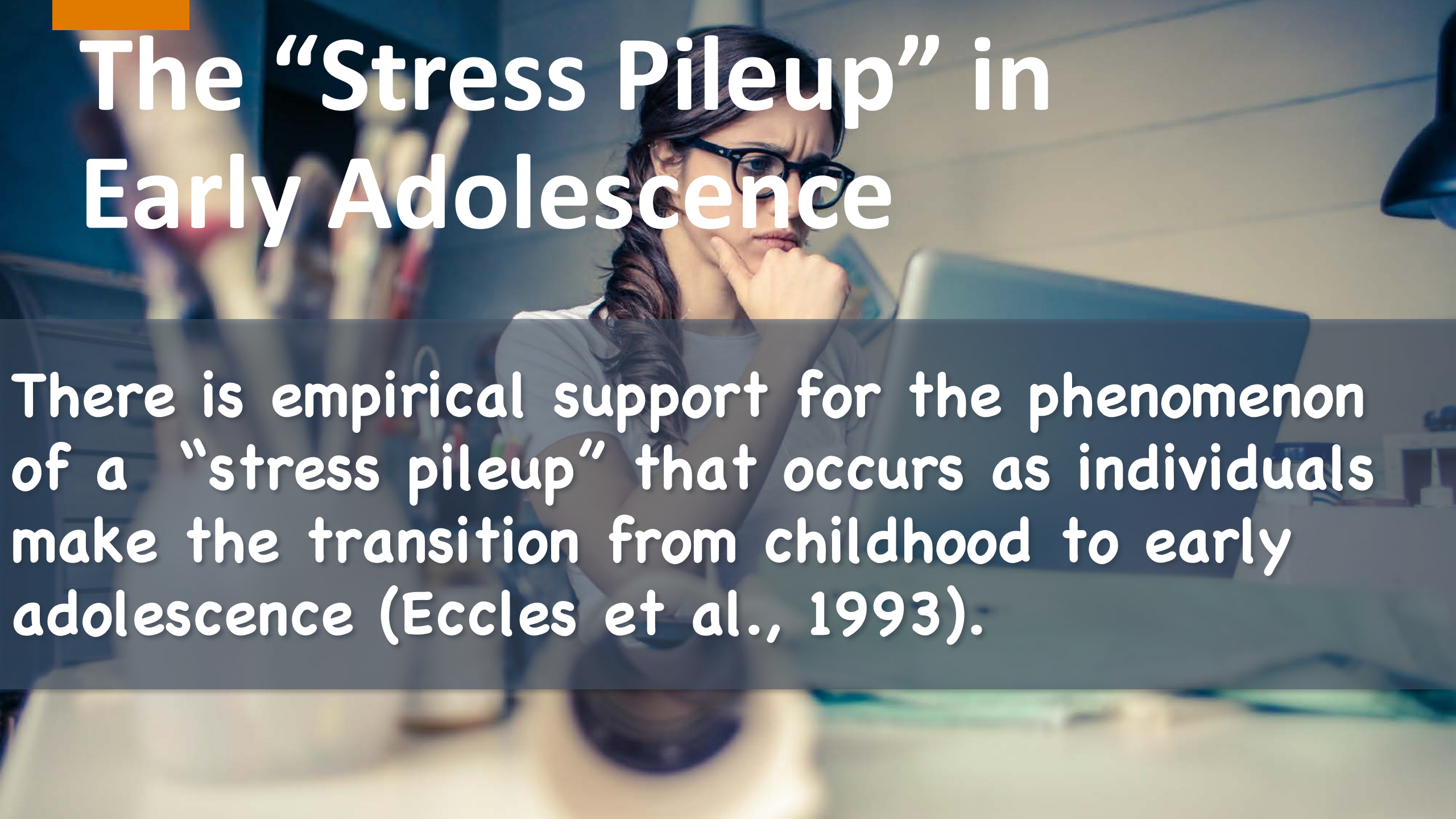
Jennifer Kitil, PhD, Research Associate, UBC

Understanding the Effectiveness of a Social and Emotional Learning Program on Middle School Students' Social and Emotional Well-Being: Reducing Stress, Increasing Health, and Promoting Empathy and Compassion

The *MindUP Middle School*
2021-2022 UBC Study

Why Focus on Middle School Students?

The "Stress Pileup" in Early Adolescence



There is empirical support for the phenomenon of a "stress pileup" that occurs as individuals make the transition from childhood to early adolescence (Eccles et al., 1993).

Early Adolescence: A Transitional Time in Development

Changes:
Cognitively
Socially
Academically
Physically

Well-being and adolescence….

Transitions should not only be thought as “risk promoting” or “vulnerability inducing” times in child development – transitions may also be thought as “windows of opportunity”

(Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996)

Study Purpose

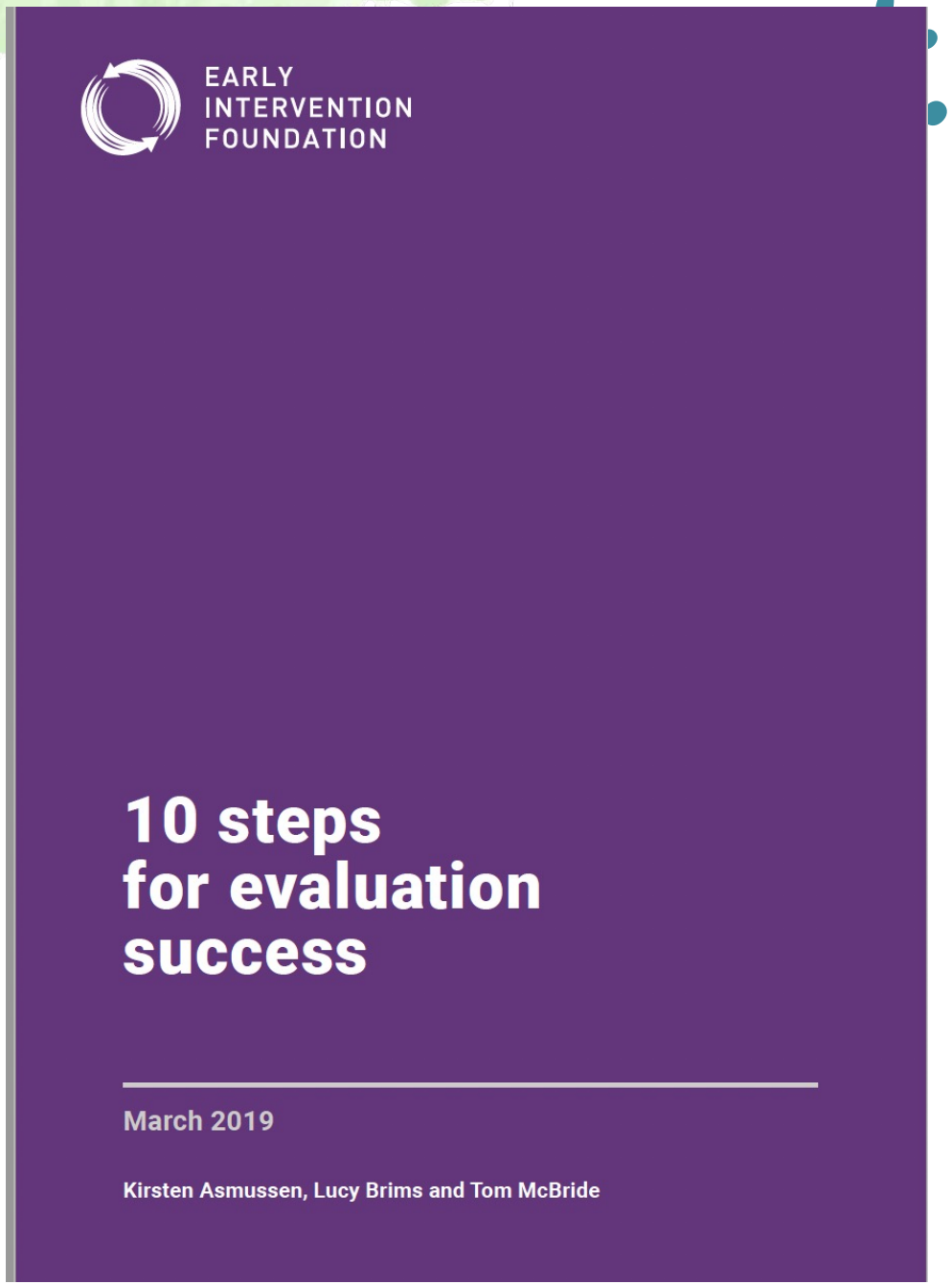
The goal of this study was to evaluate the feasibility, acceptability, and effectiveness of a new MindUP curriculum, designed specifically for middle school students that focuses on promoting social and emotional well-being.

The MindUP Middle School program lessons focus on reducing stress, increasing health, promoting empathy, compassion, resiliency, and well-being in students during the middle school years.

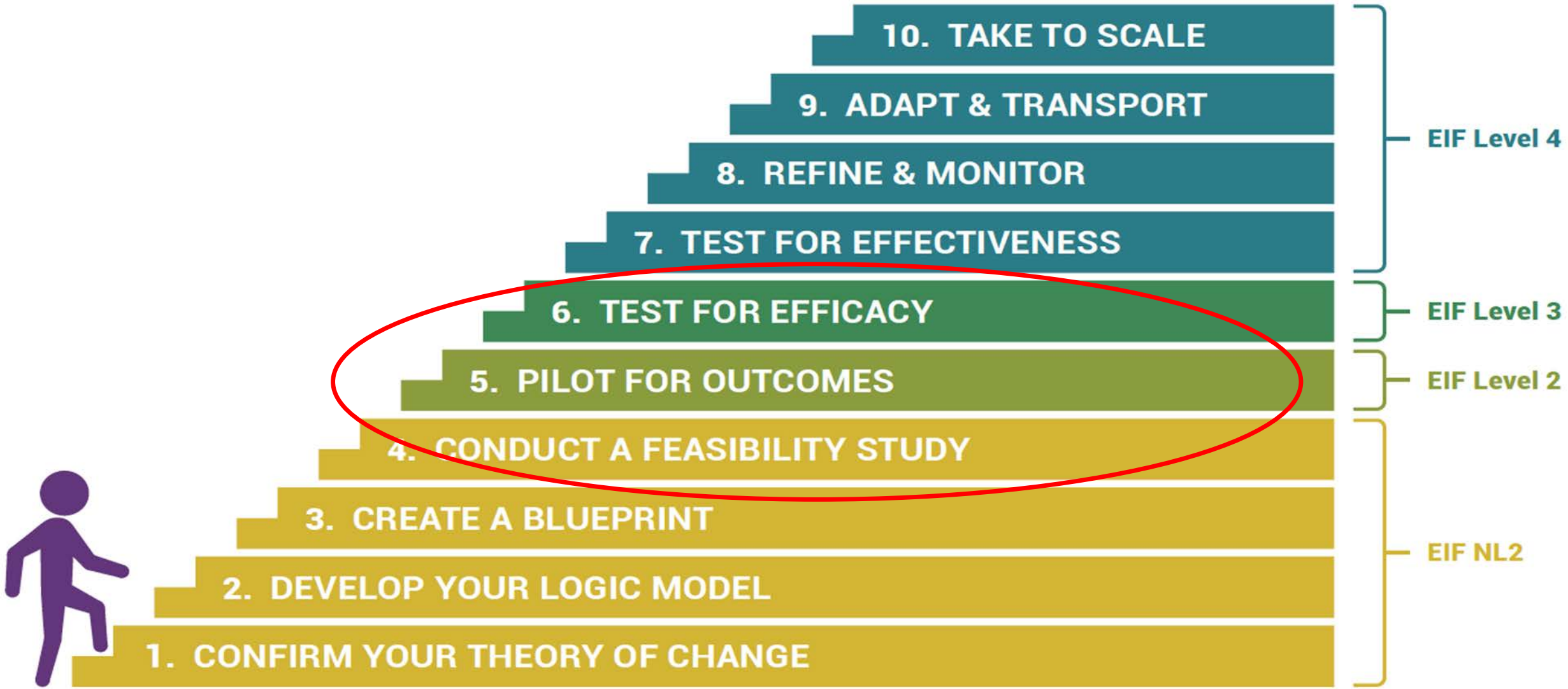
The study had two components:

- Implementation
- Student and Teacher Outcomes

- https://www.eif.org.uk/



10 STEPS FOR EVALUATION SUCCESS



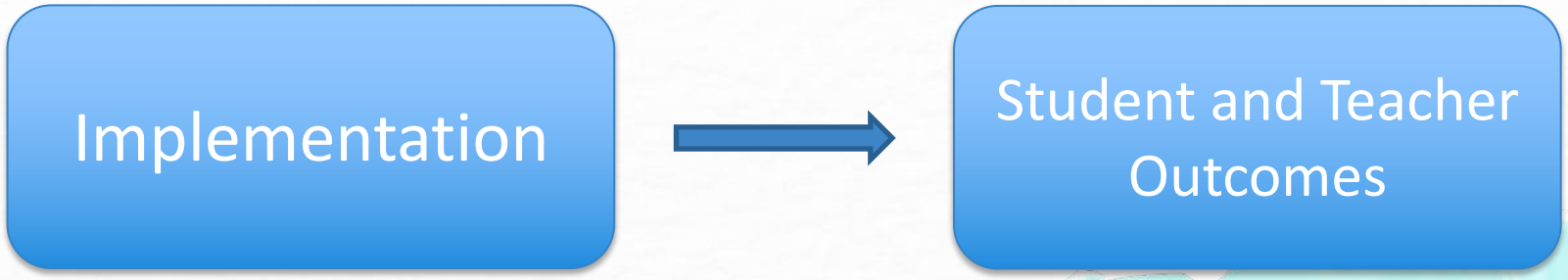
Source: EIF

A Focus on Implementation

"Implementation can be defined as the ways a program is put into practice and delivered to participants… Implementation thus refers to what a program looks like 'on the ground' when it is being conducted, as opposed to what a program looks like in theory or on the drawing board." (Durlak, 2015, p. 1124).

One of the most important factors affecting program outcomes is the program's implementation, especially the quality with which the program is implemented.

Assessing implementation also matters to discern for whom the program works and under which conditions.



How do we think about & assess implementation?

"Monitoring and understanding implementation is an essential element for all programme evaluations and is necessary for determining a programme's true value" (Durlak, 2016, p. 336).

Quality

-Fidelity to program
-Facilitator competence
-Program adaptations

Amount

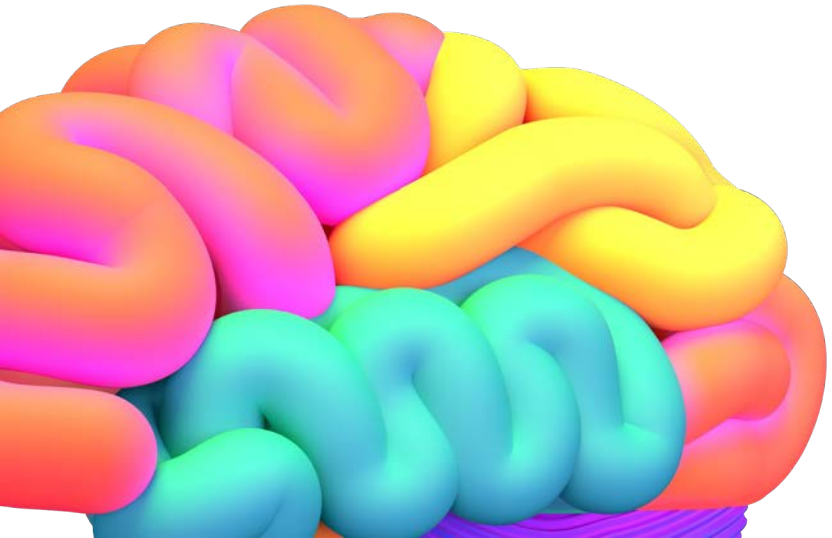
-How much of program was delivered and how much was received?

Fit

-Feasibility
-Acceptability
-Engagement

MindUP

Background on the Program



mindup For Life

mindUP For Schools

The Goldie Hawn Foundation

The Four Pillars of the Program

Neuroscience

Mindful Awareness

Positive Psychology

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

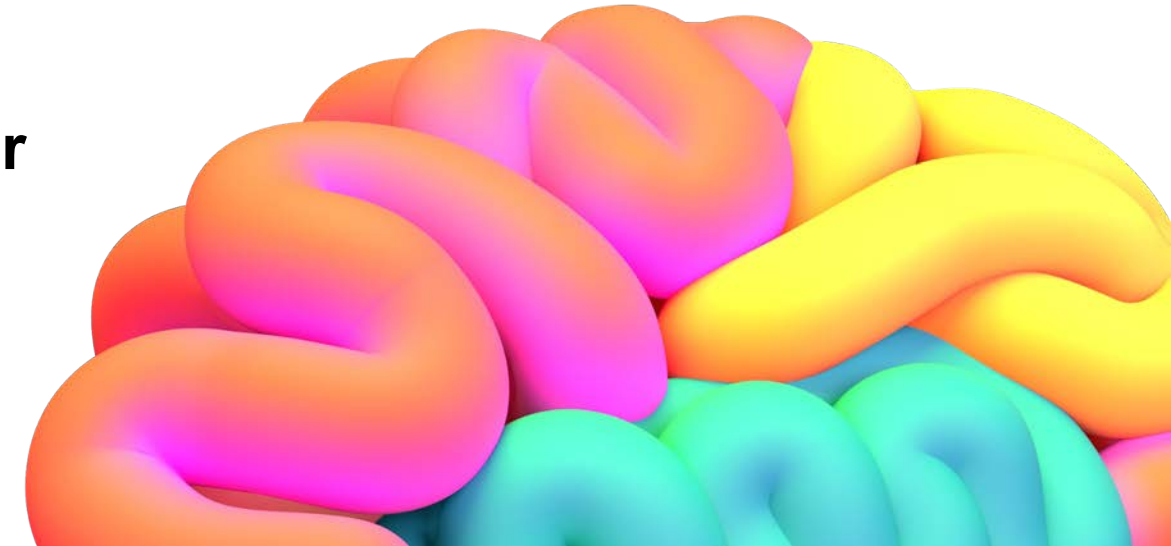
Benefits of the Program

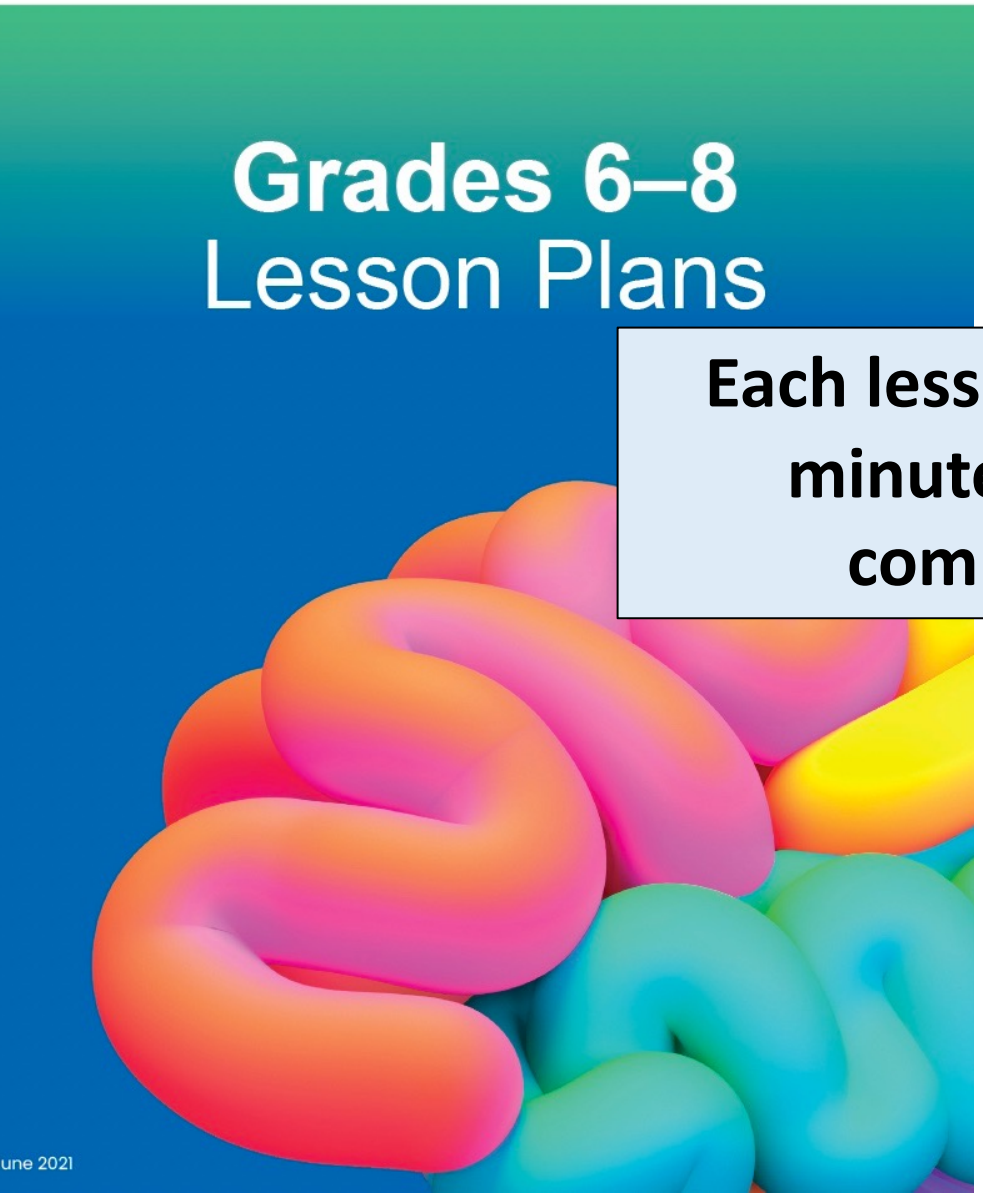
- ✓ Improved Attention
- ✓ Improved Stress Physiology
- ✓ Improved Academics
- ✓ Increased optimism, happiness and resilience
- ✓ Improved pro-social skills

mindUP For Schools | The Goldie Hawn Foundation

MindUP offers the following grade level specific curricula:

- **Early Years (Ages 3-5),**
- **Primary (Grades K-2),**
- **Intermediate (Grades 3-5),**
- **Middle School (Grades 6-8),**
- **Out of School Time/Extra Curricular**





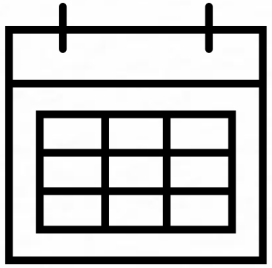
MINDUP MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM LESSONS

- **Lesson 1:** Building the MindUP Learning Community
- **Lesson 2:** Understanding the Brain
- ing Our Senses
- **Lesson 8:** Empathy - Relationship Builder
- **Lesson 9:** Fostering an Optimistic View
- **Lesson 10:** Practicing Gratitude
- **Lesson 11:** Acts of Kindness and Compassion
- **Lesson 12:** Taking Care of Me
- **Lesson 13:** We Are All Connected
- **Lesson 14:** Mindful Consumption
- **Lesson 15:** Taking Action in Our Community

Each lesson was approximately 30-45 minutes and contained multiple components and extensions

Part 3: Participants, Timeline, and Pandemic Adaptations

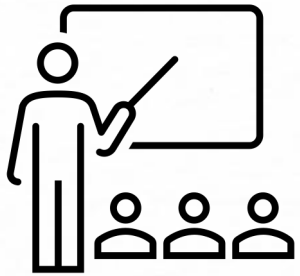
Study Context and Participants



Study occurred from **January – June 2022**

MindUP Training **Mar 10 & April 6**

One **large, urban public school district** in British Columbia, Canada



14 teachers

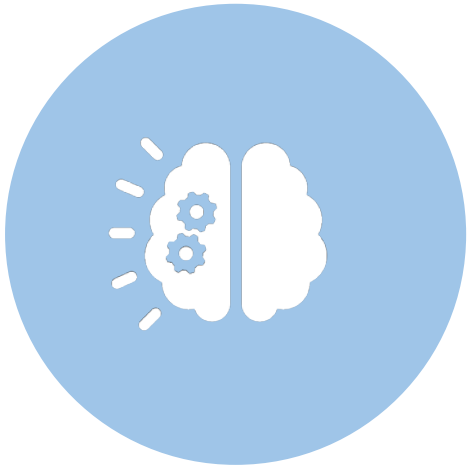
15 – 50 years teaching experience

327 Grade 6 -7 Students

91% participation rate

Prior Experience with Mindfulness

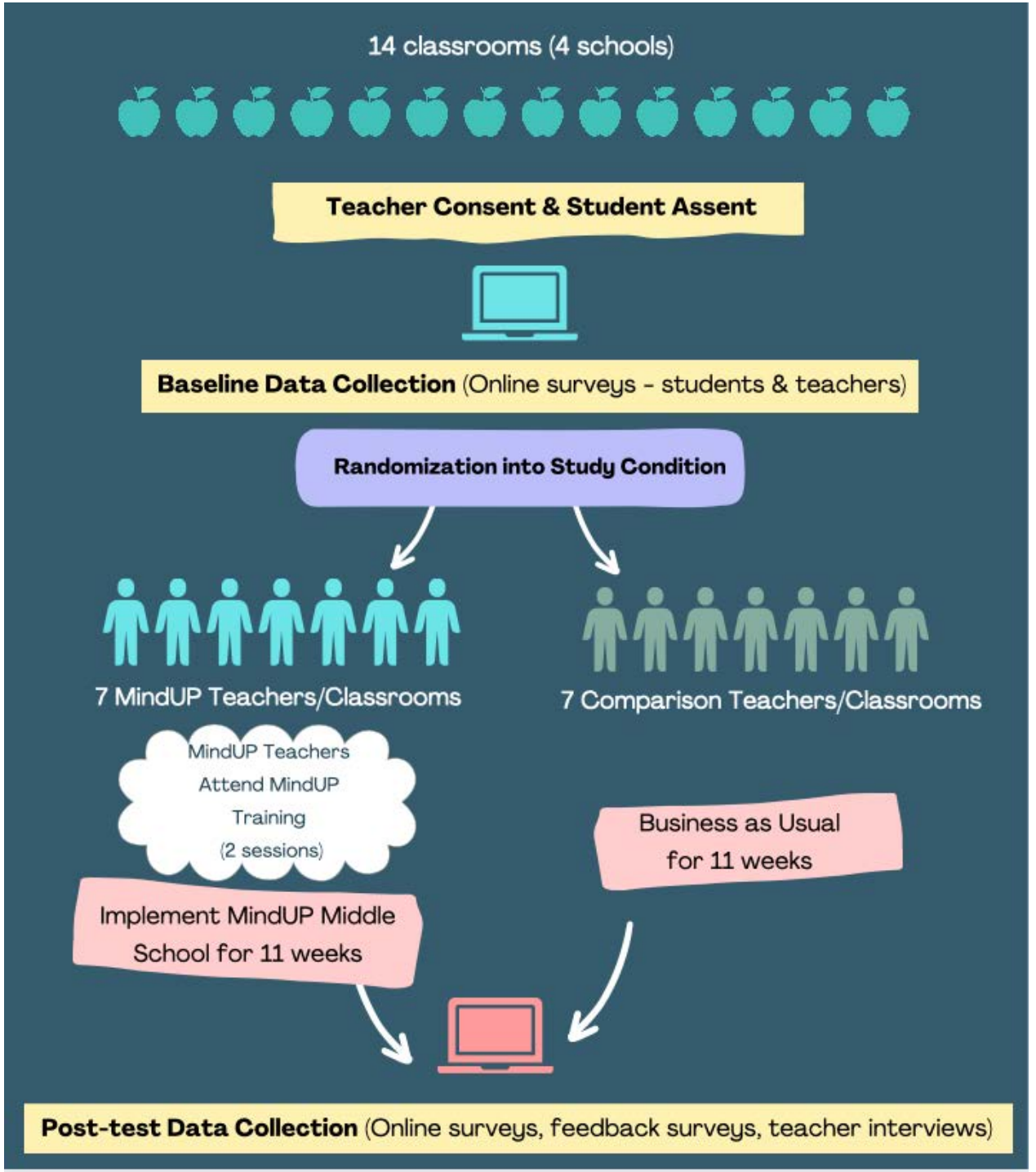
75% of students reported prior experience with mindfulness practices/programs



5 of the 14 teachers (incl. 2 comparison) had received MindUP training prior to the present study

Study Design:

Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT)



Pandemic Adaptations

MindUp Training Adaptations

Standard MindUP Training

One full day of in-person training

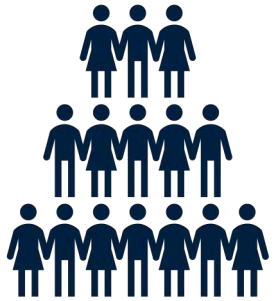
During school hours, time covered with TTOC

Pandemic Adaptation for Current Study

Two 1.5 hour Zoom sessions

After-school (no TTOCs)

Data Collections Adaptations



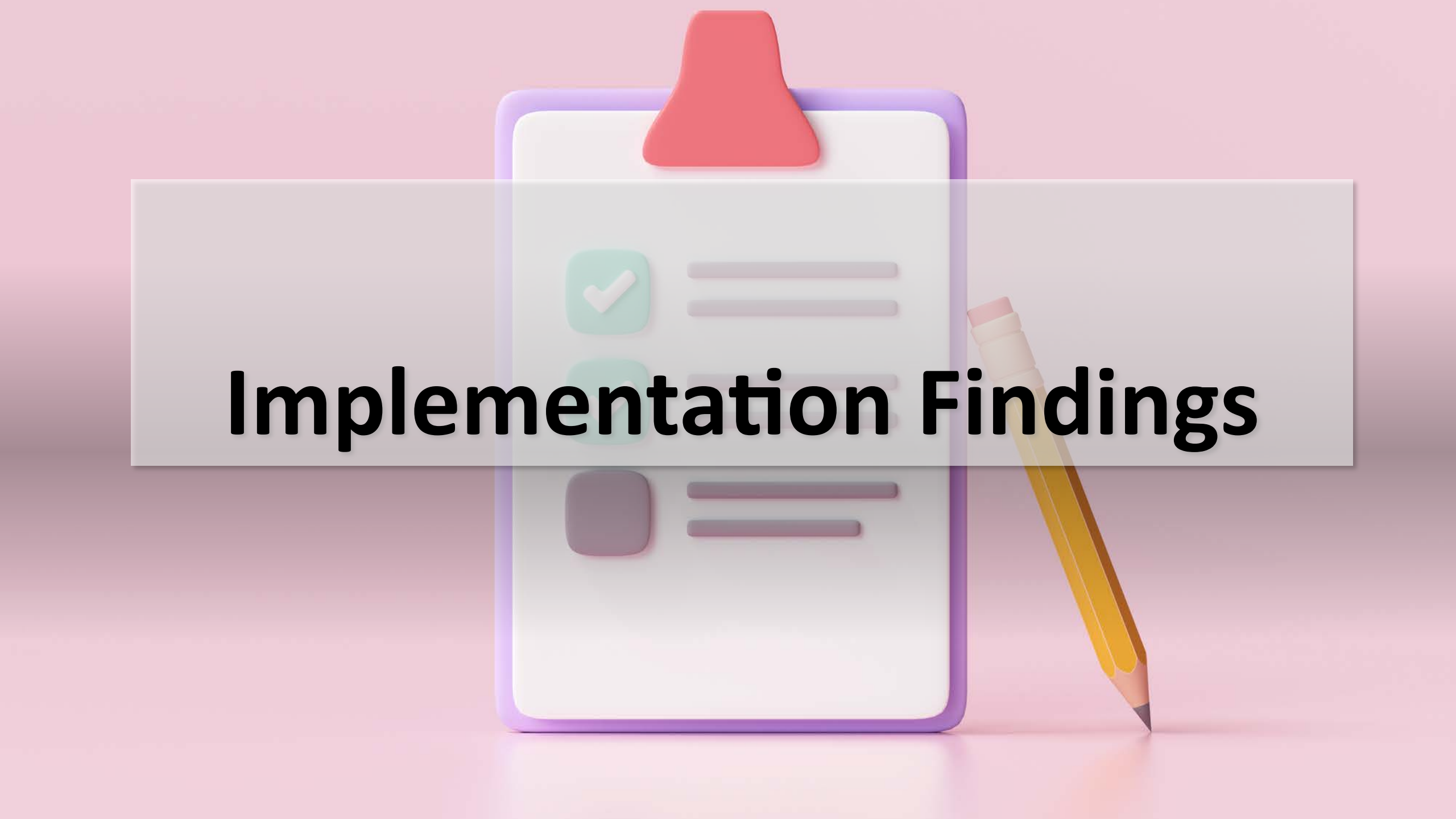
Standard Data Collections Procedures

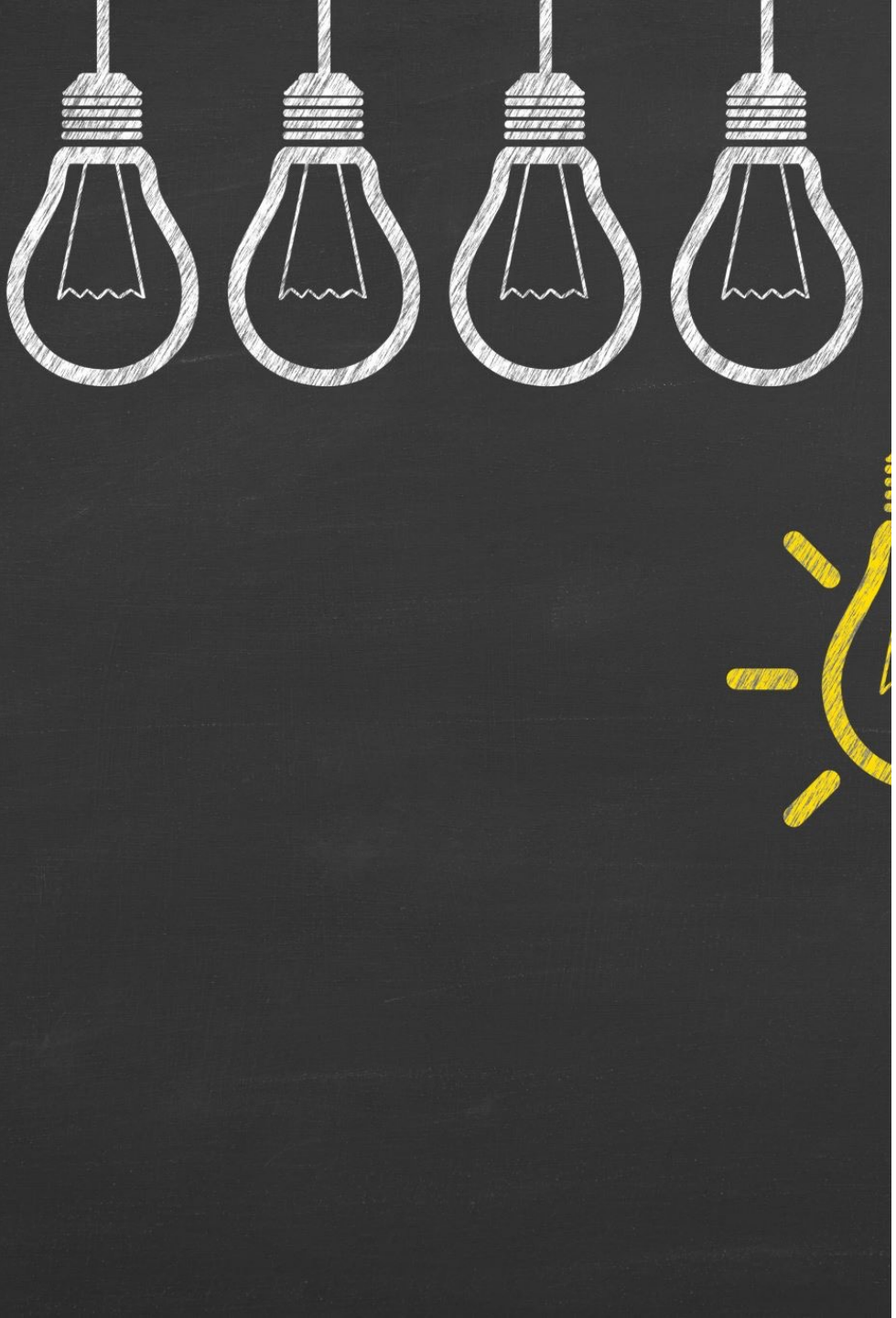
In-person permission slip and data collection visits with students

Pandemic Adaptation for Current Study

Student permission slip visits and surveys completed online, facilitated virtually (Zoom) by researchers

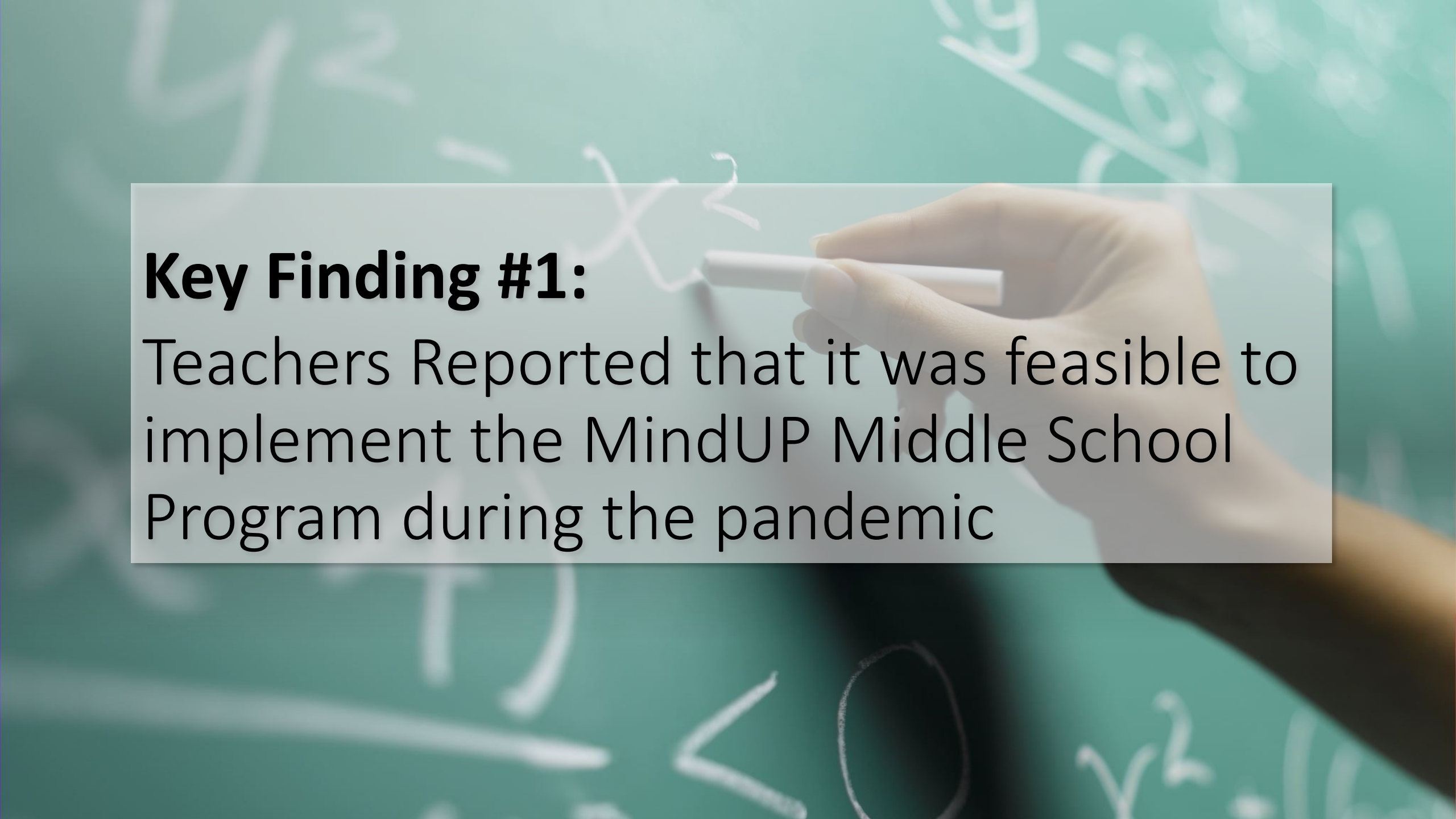
Part 4: Key Findings - Implementation and Preliminary Outcomes


Implementation Findings



Implementation Research Questions

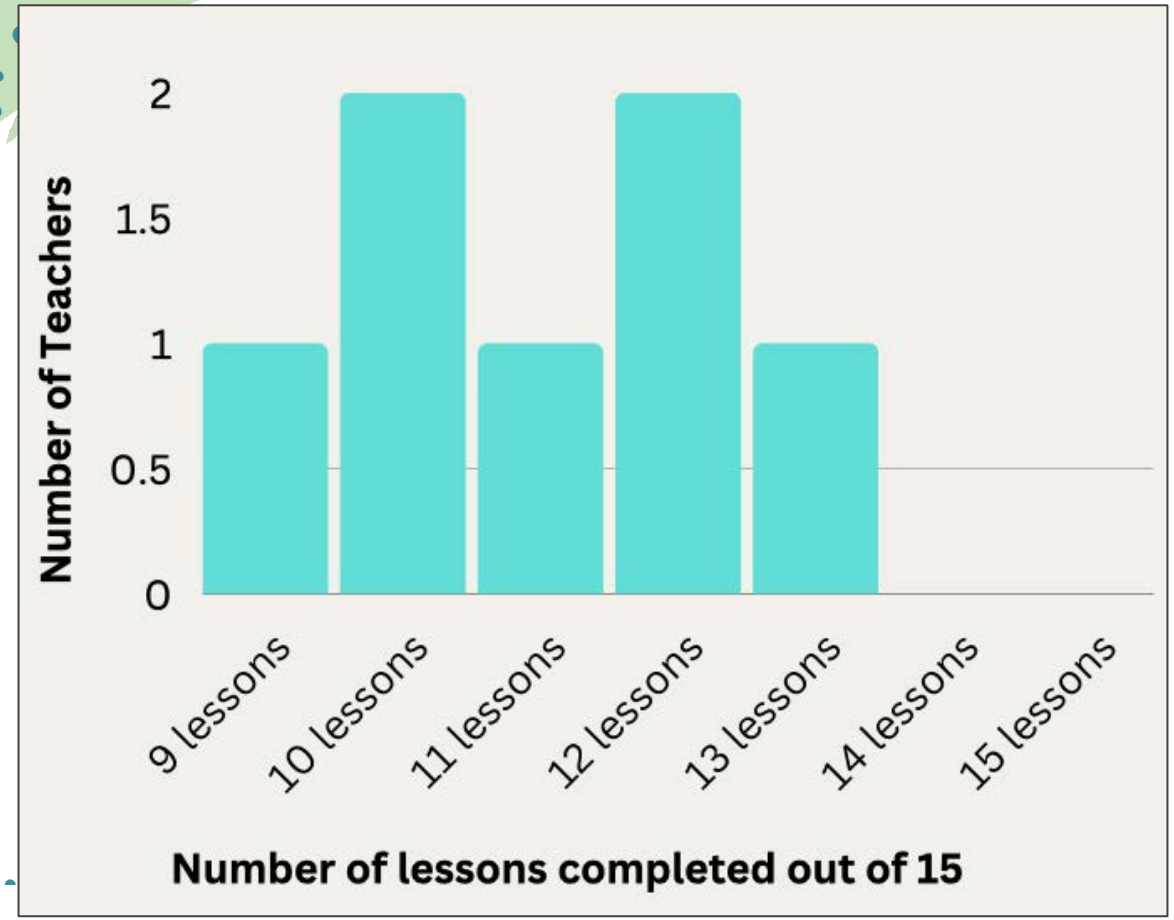
- How feasible do grade 6 - 7 teachers find MindUP Middle school, especially during demanding times such as increased COVID-19 illness and pandemic restrictions?
- What are teachers' perspectives on and perceived benefits of the new MindUP Middle School Program?
- What are the students' perspectives on the new MindUP Middle School Program?



Key Finding #1:

Teachers Reported that it was feasible to implement the MindUP Middle School Program during the pandemic

Dosage:
How many lessons were implemented?



- Teachers completed **between 9 and 13** lessons
- **None of the teachers completed all 15 lesson**
- **Note: Teachers had 11 weeks to implement the 15-week program**

Fidelity: The degree to which lessons were implemented as intended

Q: How closely did you follow the lesson as described in the lesson plan?

Most lessons were followed with >60% fidelity by most teachers.

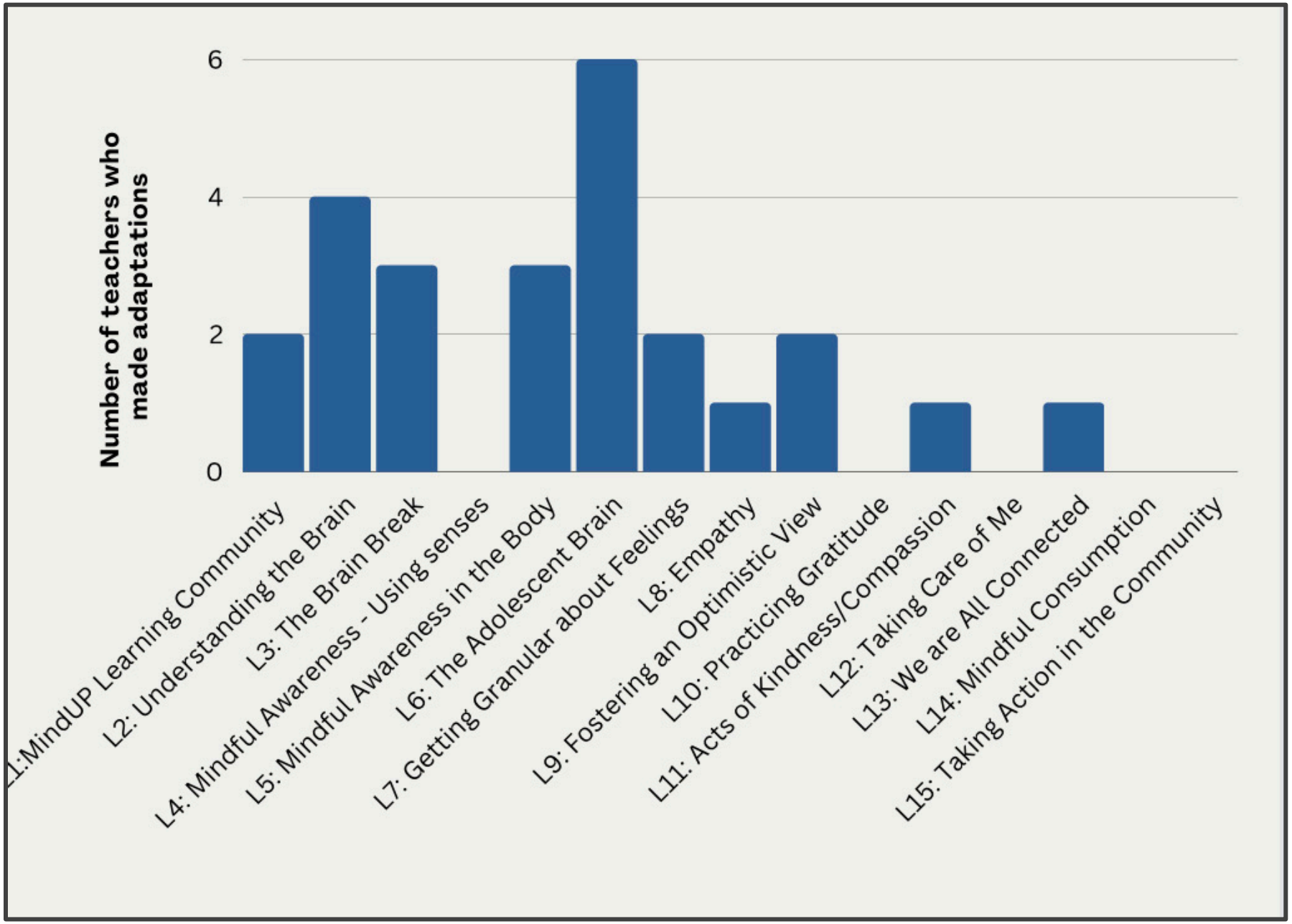
Feasibility: Teachers' Voices

"The slides are great everything, like all the bits and pieces that come with it are fantastic and really easy to use."

*"Some of them [lessons] were just way **too long** to try and deliver in a block and you've lost them, they just don't have the attention span to focus on anything for that long."*

Adaptations

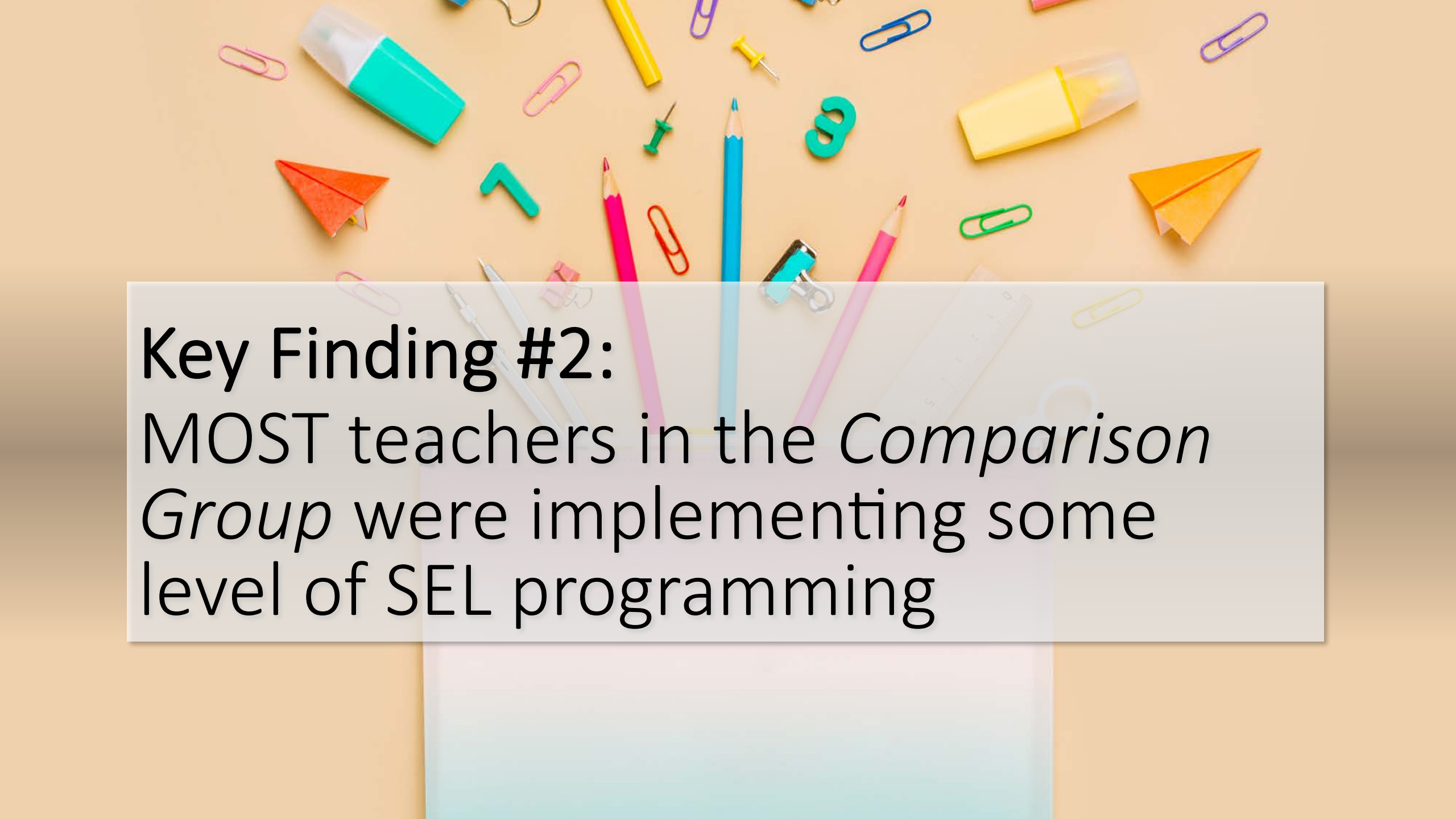
Many teachers made **adjustments and adaptations** of the lessons for diverse learners



Adaptation: Teachers' Voices

"Some of the lessons were really heavy on the teacher talk ***so if I was following the script and like to a T which, to be honest, I didn't do a lot****… and there were too much teacher talk and not enough either reflecting or kids working with kids or just thinking about their own… it was just too much sitting and listening."*

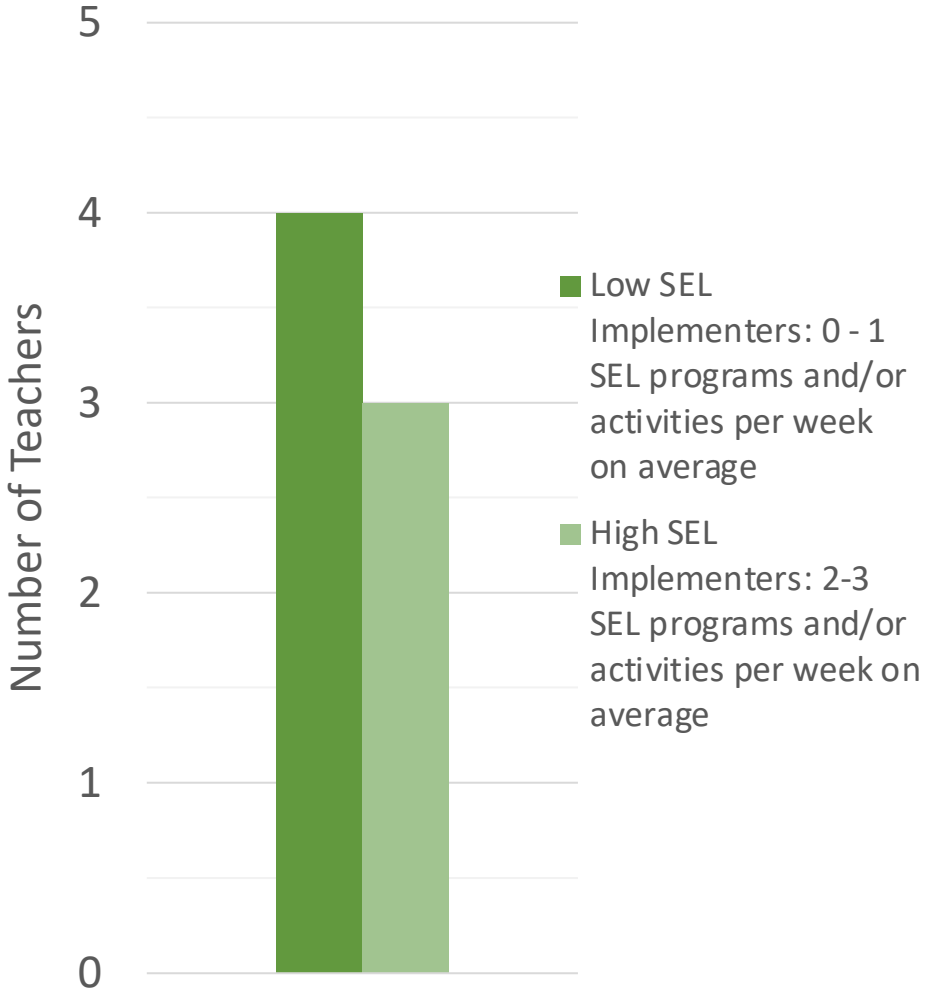
"So just that that following the script and then really having to make sure I knew when some of the lessons were literally "them sit and me read" – it was just was to ***actually put in a lot of videos and some other things I had to had to sort of supplement with****, but… in the grand scheme of challenges, those are not really big issues."*



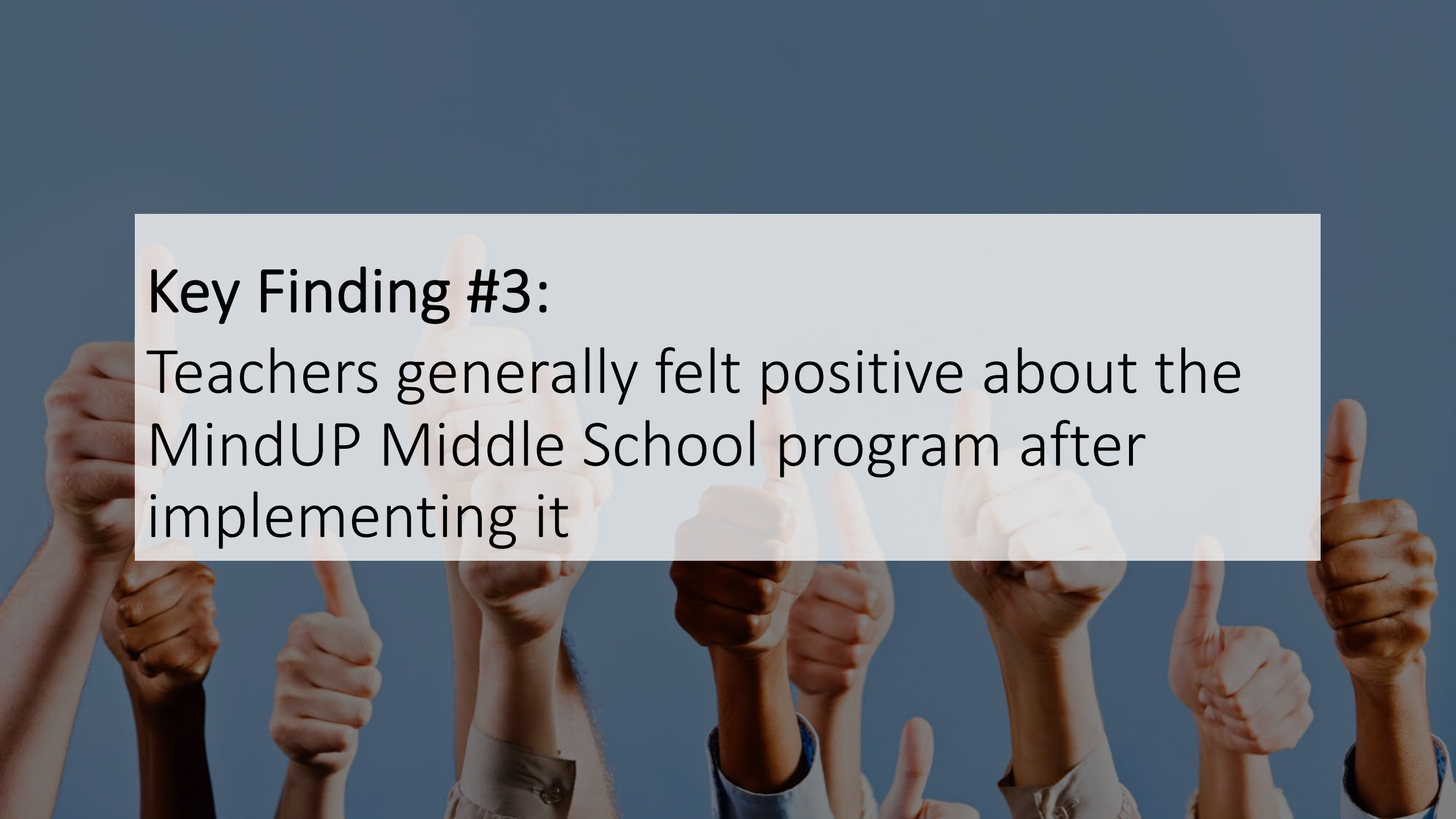
Key Finding #2:

MOST teachers in the *Comparison Group* were implementing some level of SEL programming

Comparison classrooms were on average implementing SEL activities and programs in their classrooms to varying degrees



Examples of SEL Activities/Programs Implemented by Comparison Teachers	
SEL Programs	**SEL Activities**
• RULER • Second Step • Kindness in the Classroom • Zones of Regulation • My Strong Mind	• Habits of the Mind • Mindful breathing practices • Gratitude practices • First Nations Art Journaling



Key Finding #3:

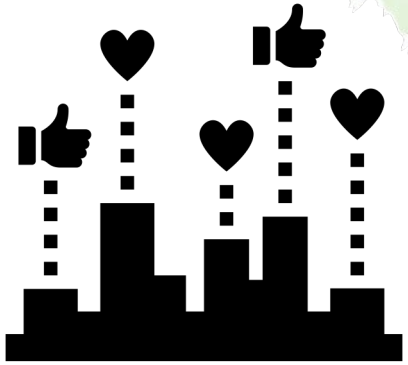
Teachers generally felt positive about the MindUP Middle School program after implementing it

Teachers felt positive about the MindUP Middle School program and would recommend it

POSITIVE FEELINGS ABOUT MINDUP

100%

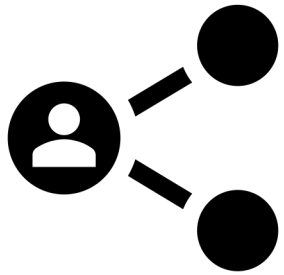
Of teachers felt *Positive* to *Very Positive* about the MindUP Middle School program



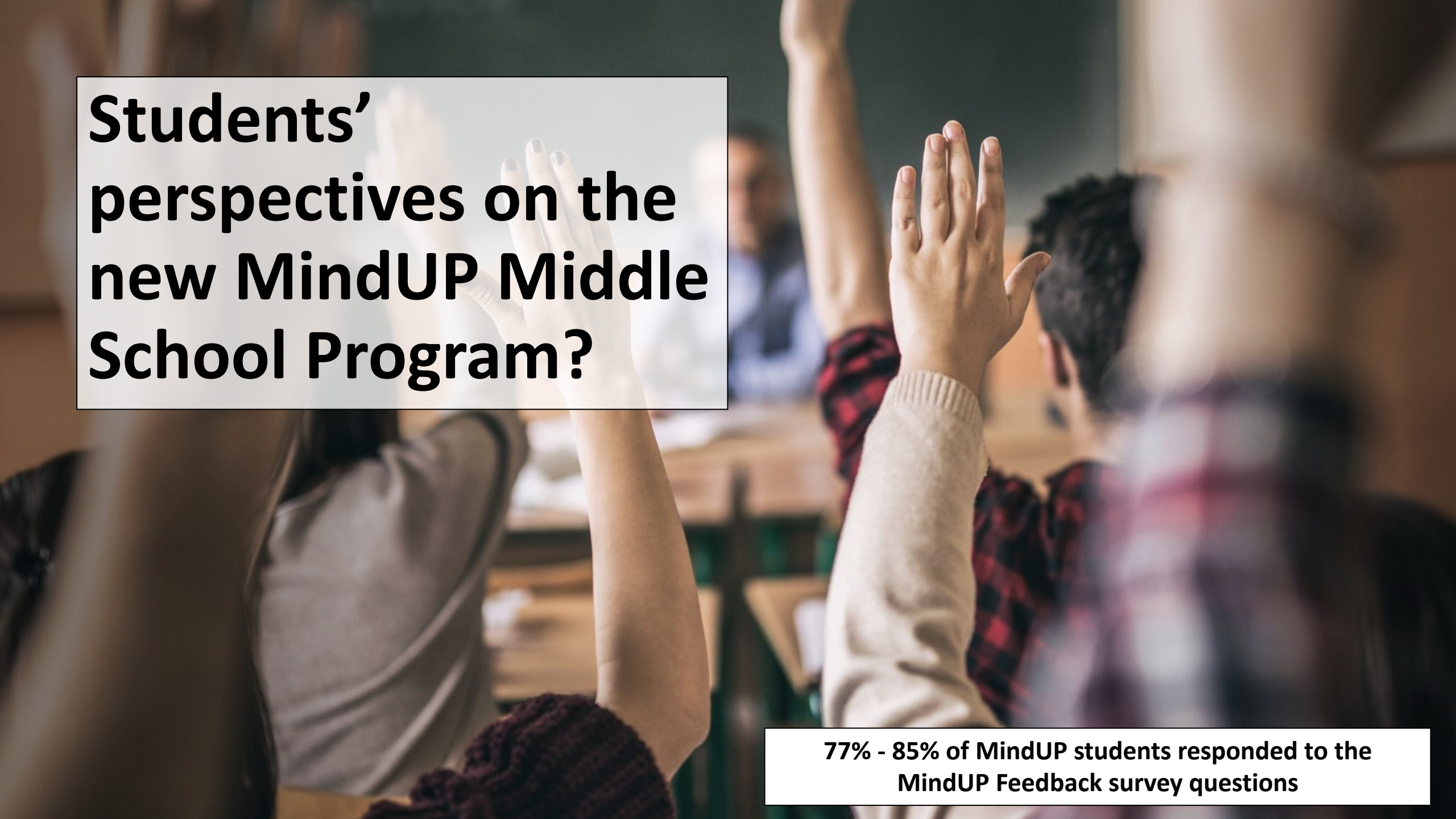
WOULD RECOMMEND

100%

All MindUP teachers said they would recommend MindUP Middle School to a colleague.



Students' perspectives on the new MindUP Middle School Program?

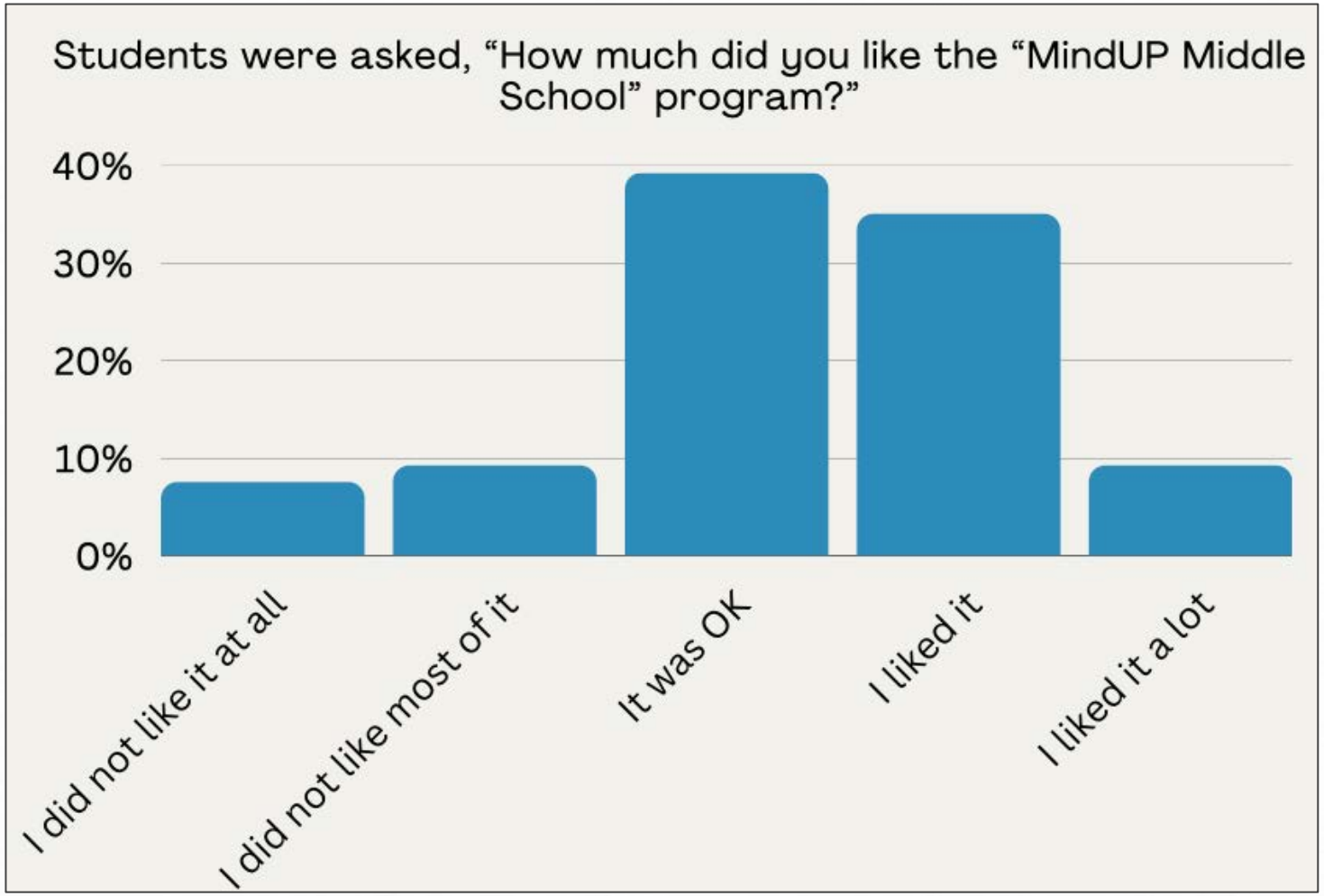


77% - 85% of MindUP students responded to the MindUP Feedback survey questions

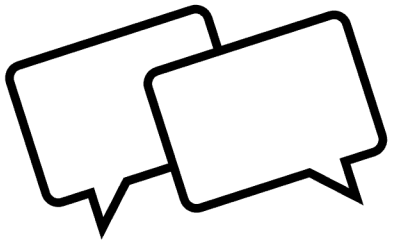
Key Finding #4:

Most students reported enjoying the MindUP Middle School program

Most students reported that they liked the MindUP Middle School Program



Based on 120 students who responded to the question (out of 145 MindUP students).



WOULD RECOMMEND

47% Of students said **they would recommend** MindUP Middle School to a friend

”Because it teaches you life skills.”

“It helps you kind of look at life in a different way and be more aware of all the things you have in life”

“Yes because it was very fun and it helped me learn more about my brain, empathy and more.”

“Because it can help them get out of a hard place”

“I would to like a friend who is suffering but not to just anyone”

“Because it will teach kids about [their] emotions”

“Since I understood myself much more then I used to.”

“I'd recommend it because I know some people with problems with their emotions and I think showing them some of these exercises could help”

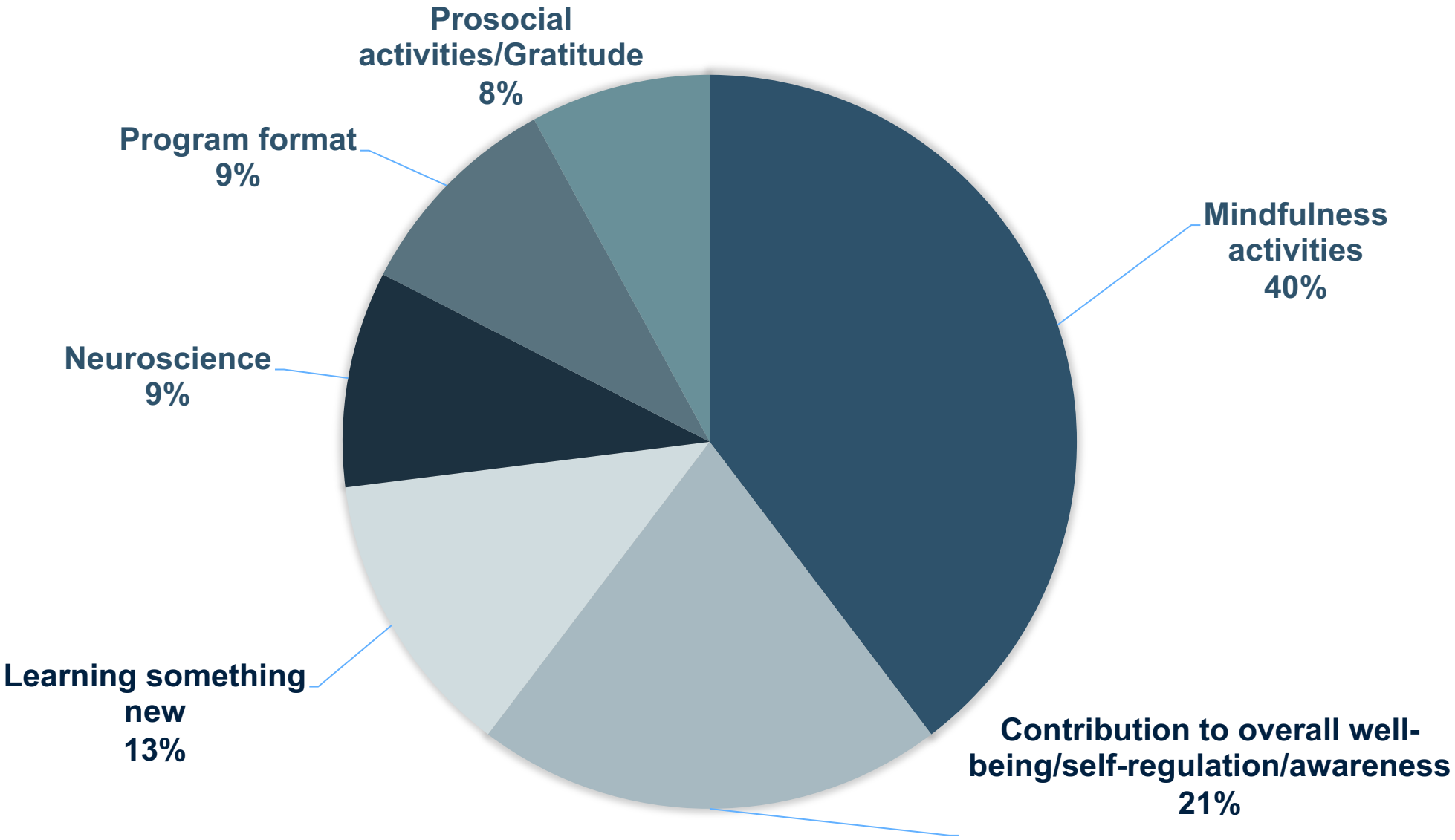
STUDENTS WERE ASKED RESPOND TO:

WHAT DID YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THE MINDUP MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM?

Of the 145 students who participated in MindUP, 41%
provided specific feedback on what they liked best about MindUP

STUDENTS WERE ASKED RESPOND TO:

WHAT DID YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THE MINDUP MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM?



STUDENTS WERE ASKED RESPOND TO:

WHAT DID YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THE MINDUP MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM?

Theme	Comment	Grade & Gender
Mindfulness activities	"When we focused how this piece of candy tasted and felt."	Grade 6 girl
	"I liked the chime because it was a time where I could relax."	Grade 6 boy
Contribution to wellbeing	"It was calming."	Grade 7 boy
Learning something new	"I liked learning about the way people can be mindless and not mindful, then they make mistakes and learn."	Grade 6 boy
Neuroscience	"It helped me learn more about my brain and how I can develop it."	Grade 6 girl
Program format	"Hands on."	Grade 6 girl
Prosocial activities	"The concept of empathy, I most enjoyed."	Grade 7 girl
Gratitude	"I didn't realize objects I used every day and how lucky we are and how significant it is."	Grade 7 girl

STUDENTS WERE ASKED:

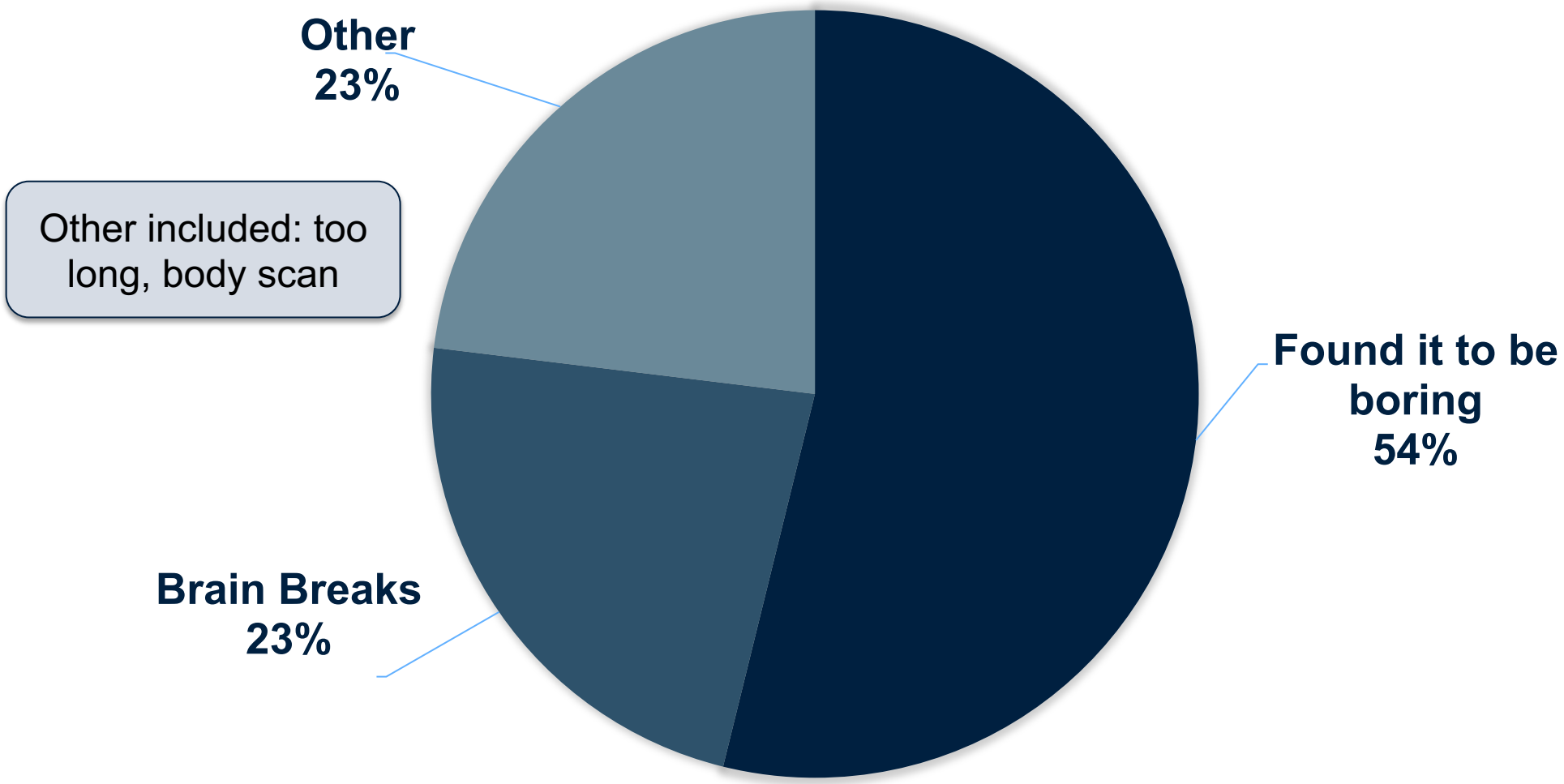
WAS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU DID NOT LIKE?

16% (*n* = 46) of students reported not liking something about the MindUP Middle School Program

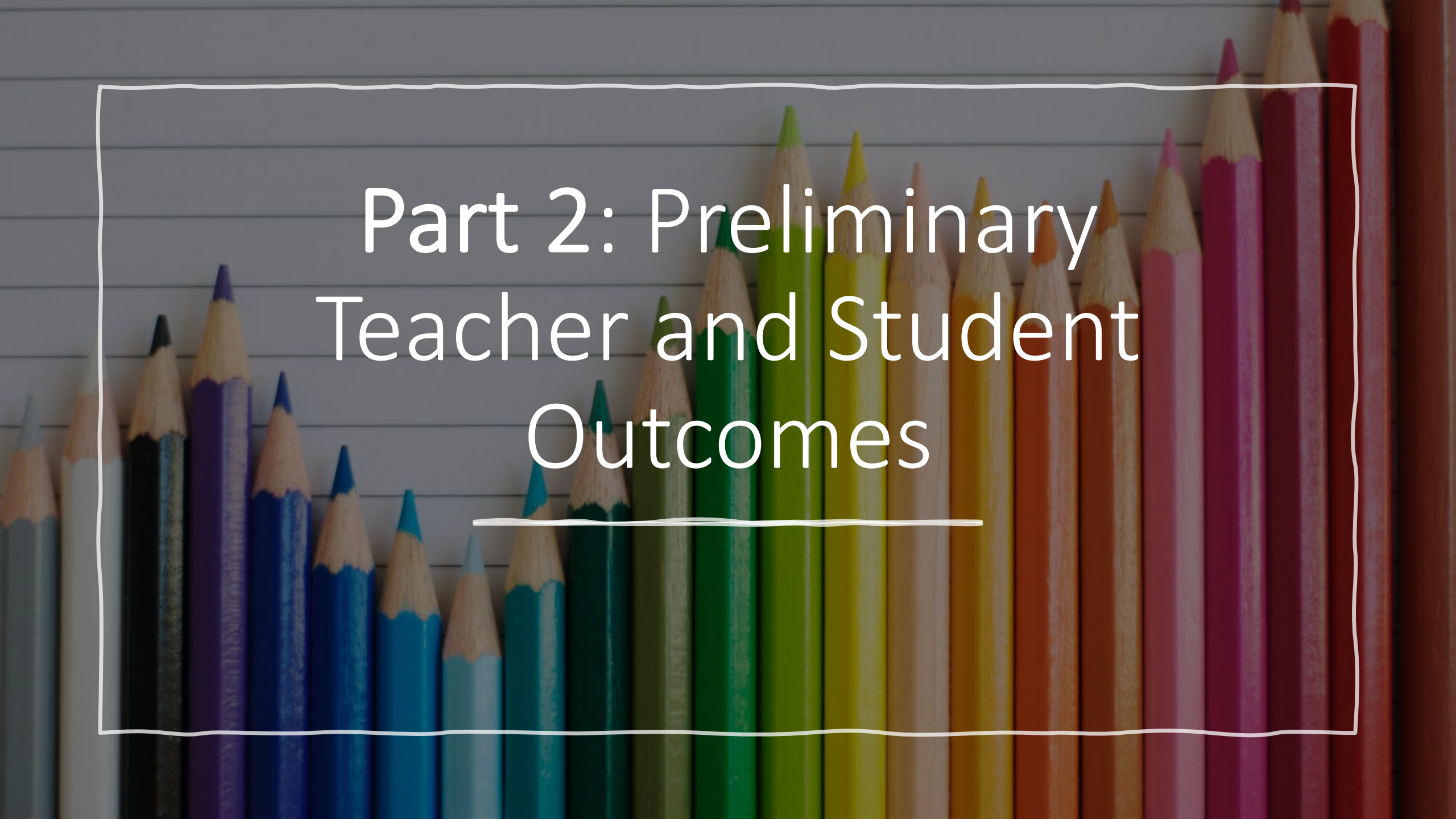
Of the 145 students who participated in MindUP, 8.2% provided specific feedback on what they did not like about MindUP.

STUDENTS WERE ASKED:

WAS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU DID NOT LIKE?



Of the 145 students who participated in MindUP, 8.2% **(~12 students)** provided specific feedback on what they did not like about MindUP.



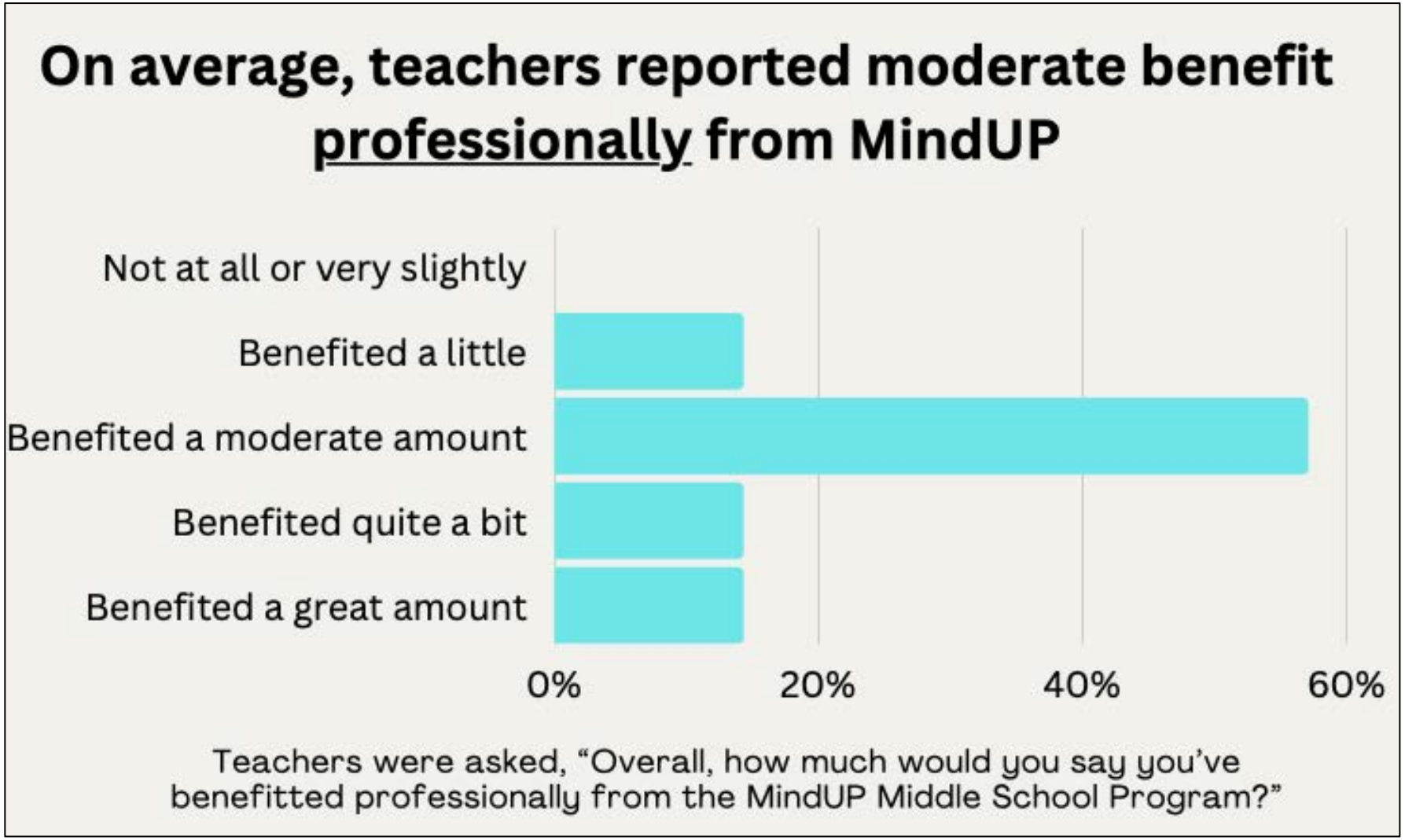
Part 2: Preliminary Teacher and Student Outcomes

What impact did the MindUP Middle School Program have on teachers?

Key Finding #5:

Teachers reported benefiting both professionally and personally from teaching MindUP

Teachers reported professional benefits from MindUP

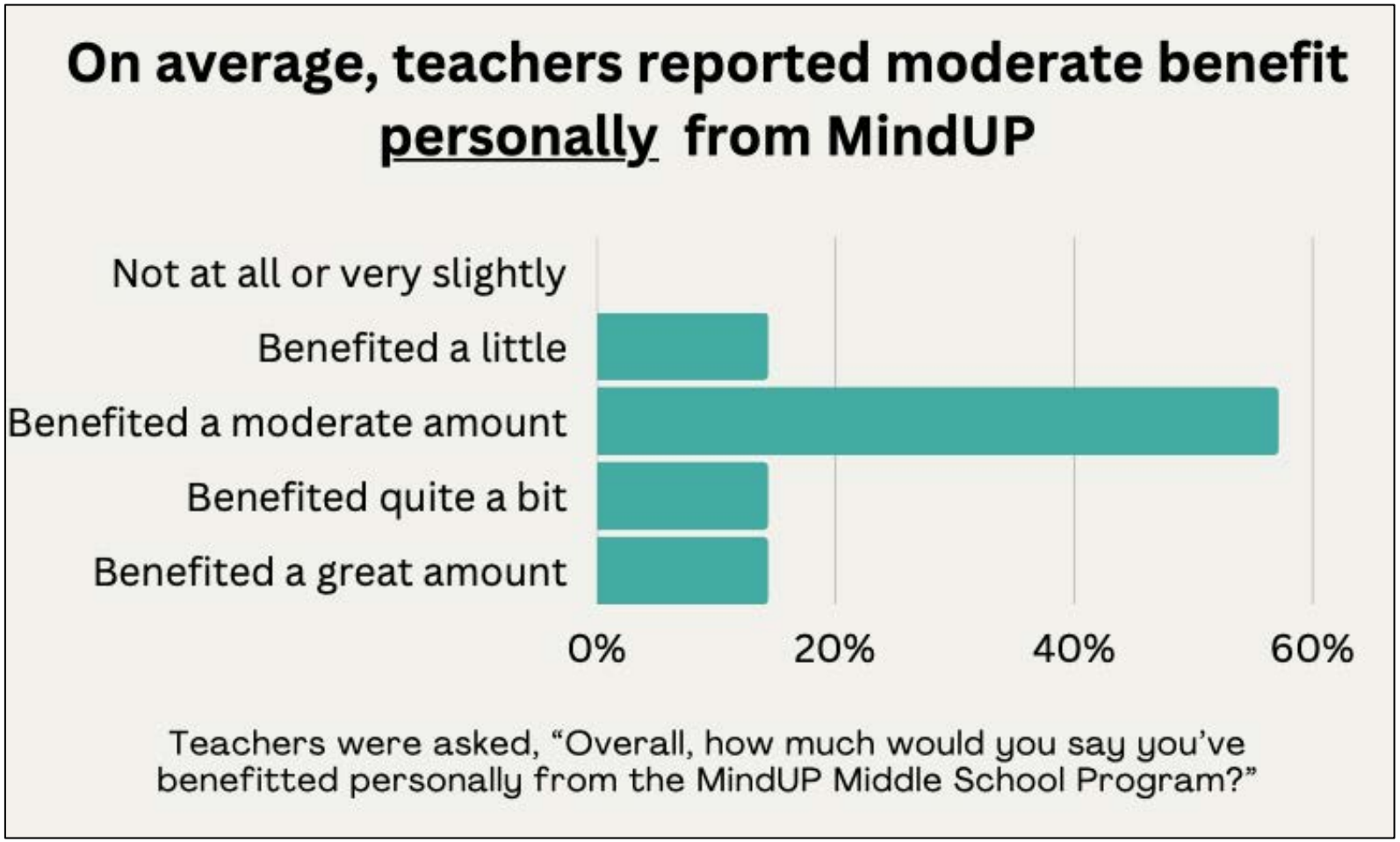


"I am finding myself pausing and noticing my emotions more, especially in times of frustration. I think this makes me a better educator!"

"As a teacher, the curriculum was helpful in delivering a set structure, however, the concepts are worked on all year with our students."

"I liked having a framework for introducing mindfulness, gratitude, etc. to my students that worked to extend some of the things we'd been doing in community circles since September"

Teacher reported personal benefits from MindUP

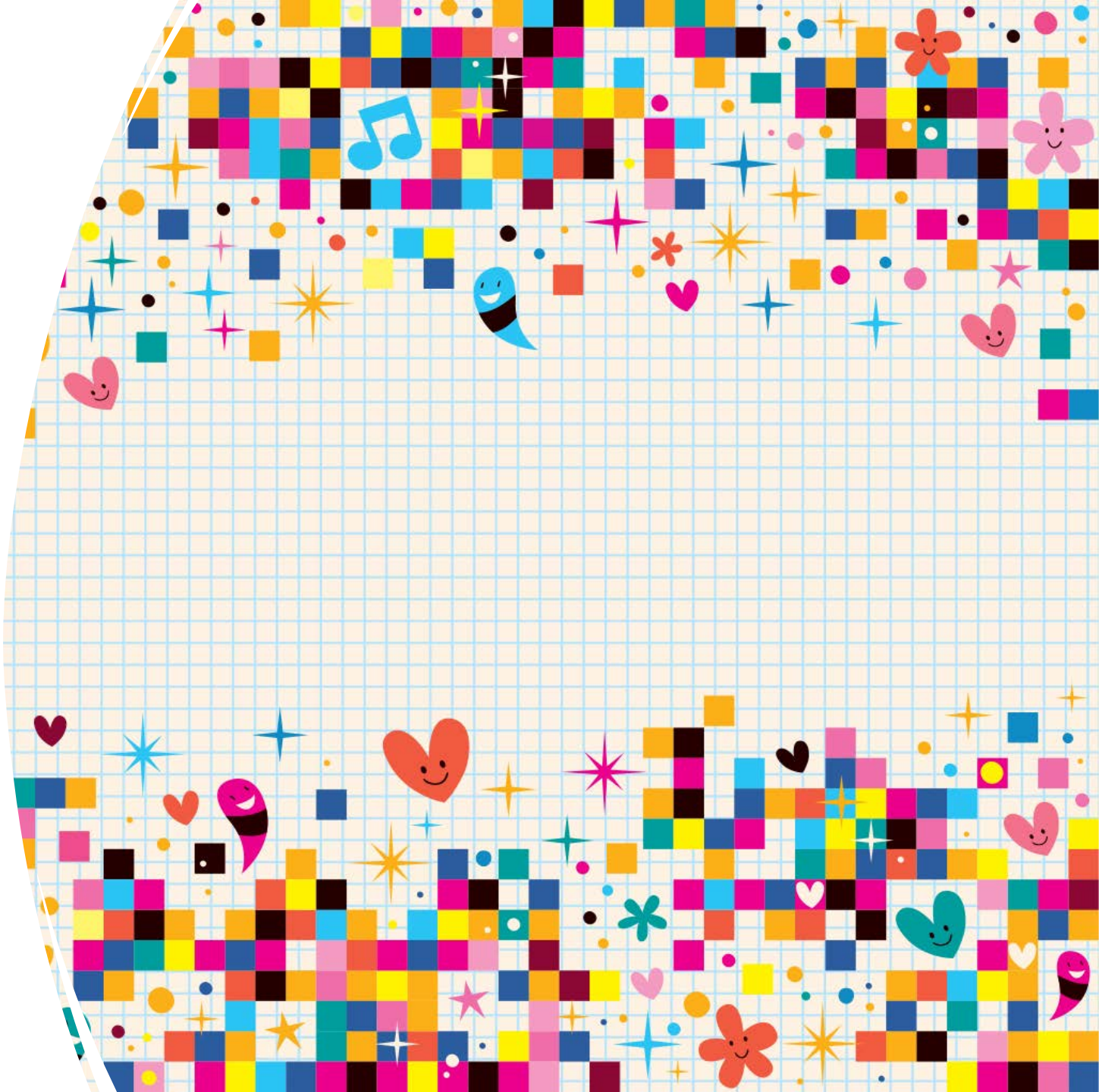


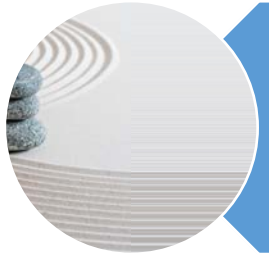
"I think it about the lessons more and find myself using the techniques!"

"It helped me be more mindful at school while we did the breathing exercises."

Key Finding #6:

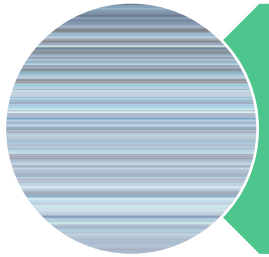
Teachers in the MindUp program showed significant improvements in their teaching practices, gratitude, and teaching efficacy in contrast to teachers in the comparison classrooms





CALM in Body (Calm bodied)

Stable, emotionally regulated, not reactive



CLEAR in Mind (Clear minded)

Present, focused, aware, not distracted, attuned, clear communication

KIND in Heart (Kindheartedness)

Warm, connected, compassionate, not critical/judgmental or biased

Mindfulness in Teaching	The "unnamed domain" of teacher expertise Skills & behaviours that constitute *embodied mindfulness* in the classroom

Hulburt et al., 2020

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Calm, Clear, and Kind: What Students Want From Their Teachers

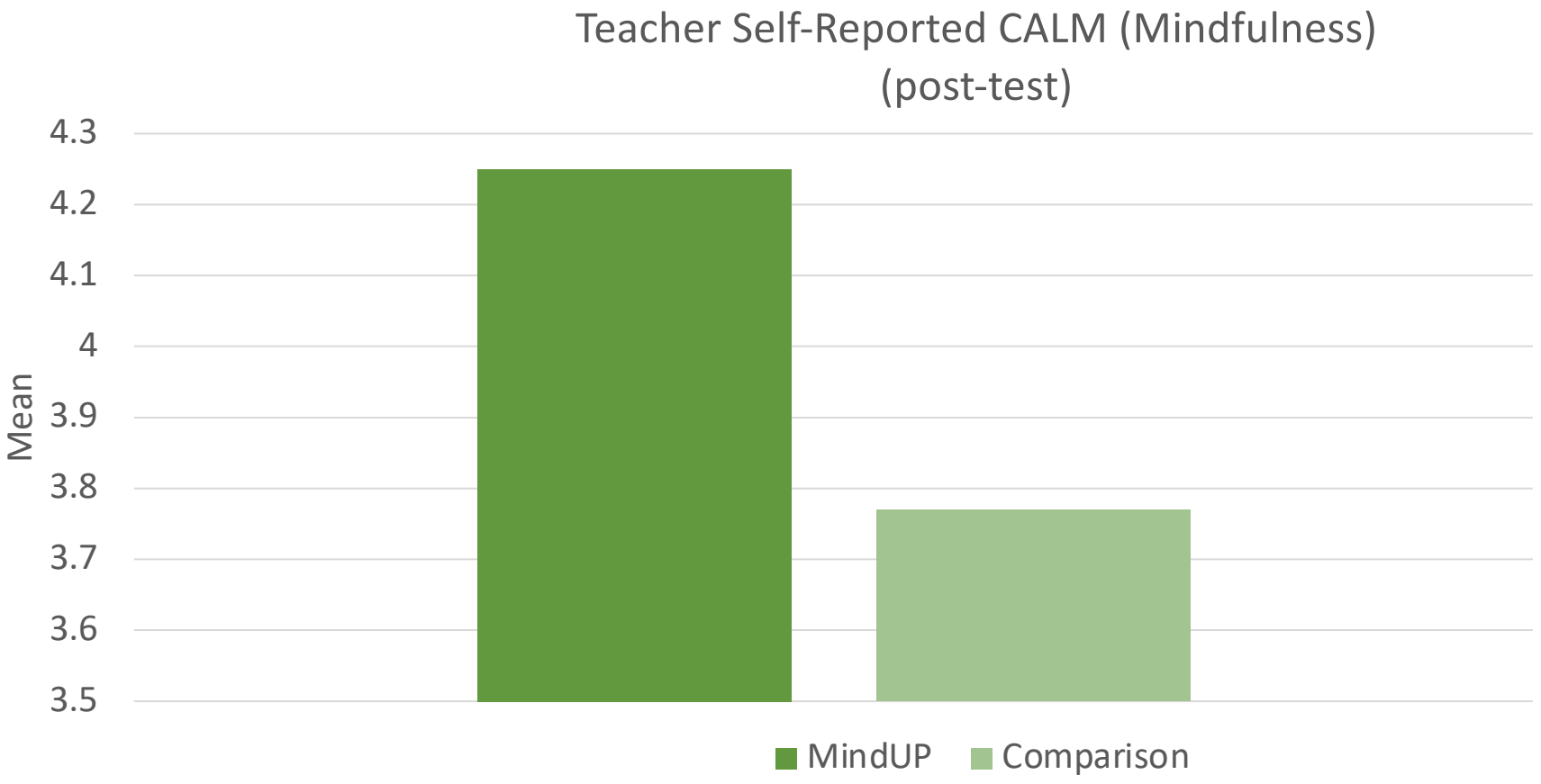
Researchers asked students what makes a caring teacher—and these same qualities may help support your well-being as an educator.

BY JENNA WHITEHEAD | APRIL 18, 2022

See here for more information about this framework and research

Teachers in MindUP Classrooms reported <u>being more CALM-BODIED</u> at post-test compared to Teachers in comparison classrooms

*Controlling for baseline scores, teacher age, & years teaching.



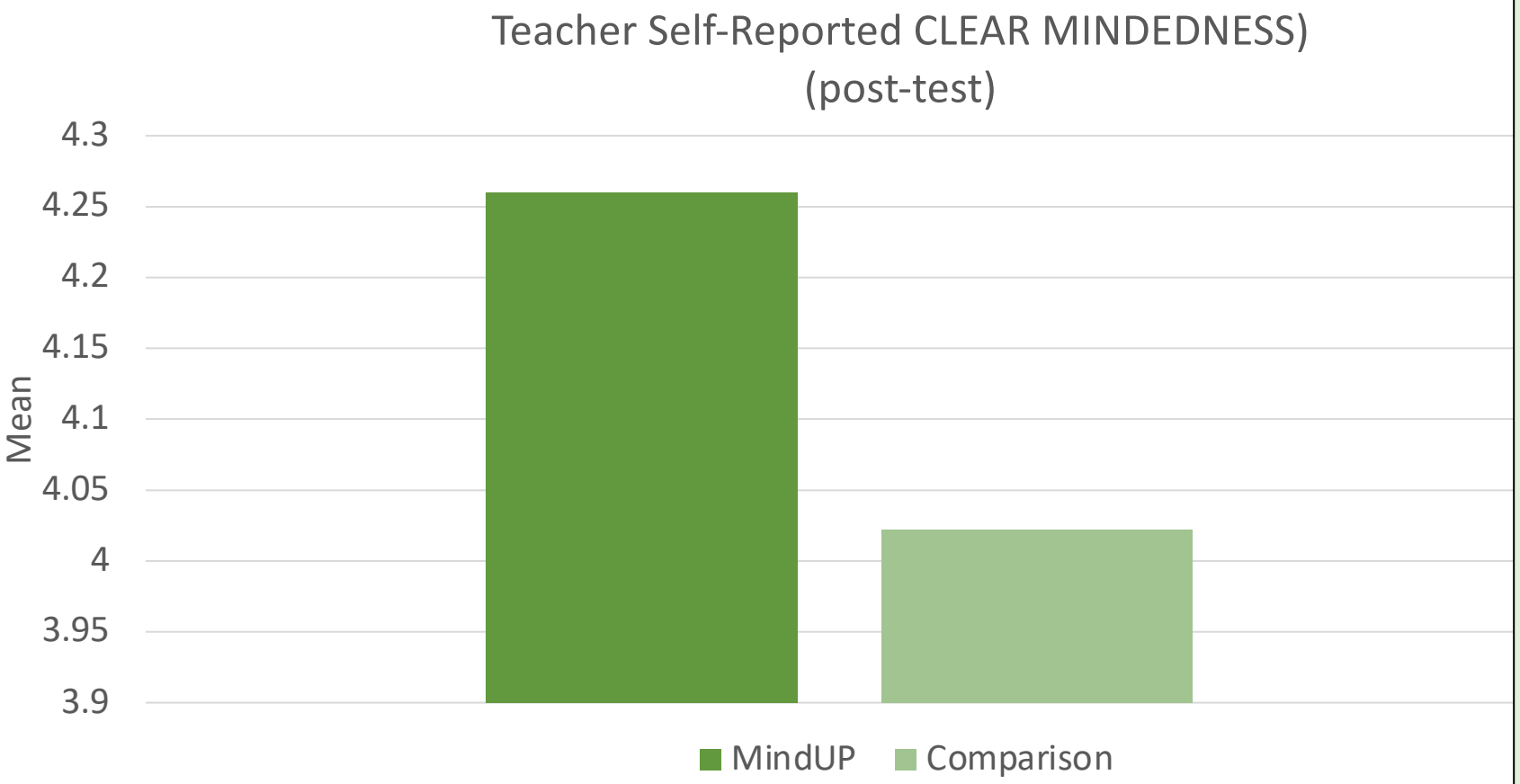
1. When I am upset with my class, I can still calmly communicate how I am feeling.
2. Even if things get crazy in the classroom, I keep my cool.
3. When students misbehave, I don't let it get under my skin.
4. Even when there is a lot going on in class, I stay calm.
5. If I get upset in class, I get over it quickly.
6. When things go wrong, I bounce back pretty fast.
7. When something unexpected happens in class, I can roll with it

NOTE: Non-significant (likely due to low n), but **a large effect size (η_{p2} = .28)**

Partial eta squared (η_{p2}) effect sizes: η_{p2} = .01 indicating a small effect, .06 a medium effect, and .14 a large effect (Cohen, 1992).

Teachers in MindUP Classrooms reported <u>being more CLEAR-MINDED</u> at post-test compared to Teachers in comparison classrooms*

*Controlling for baseline scores, teacher age, & years teaching.



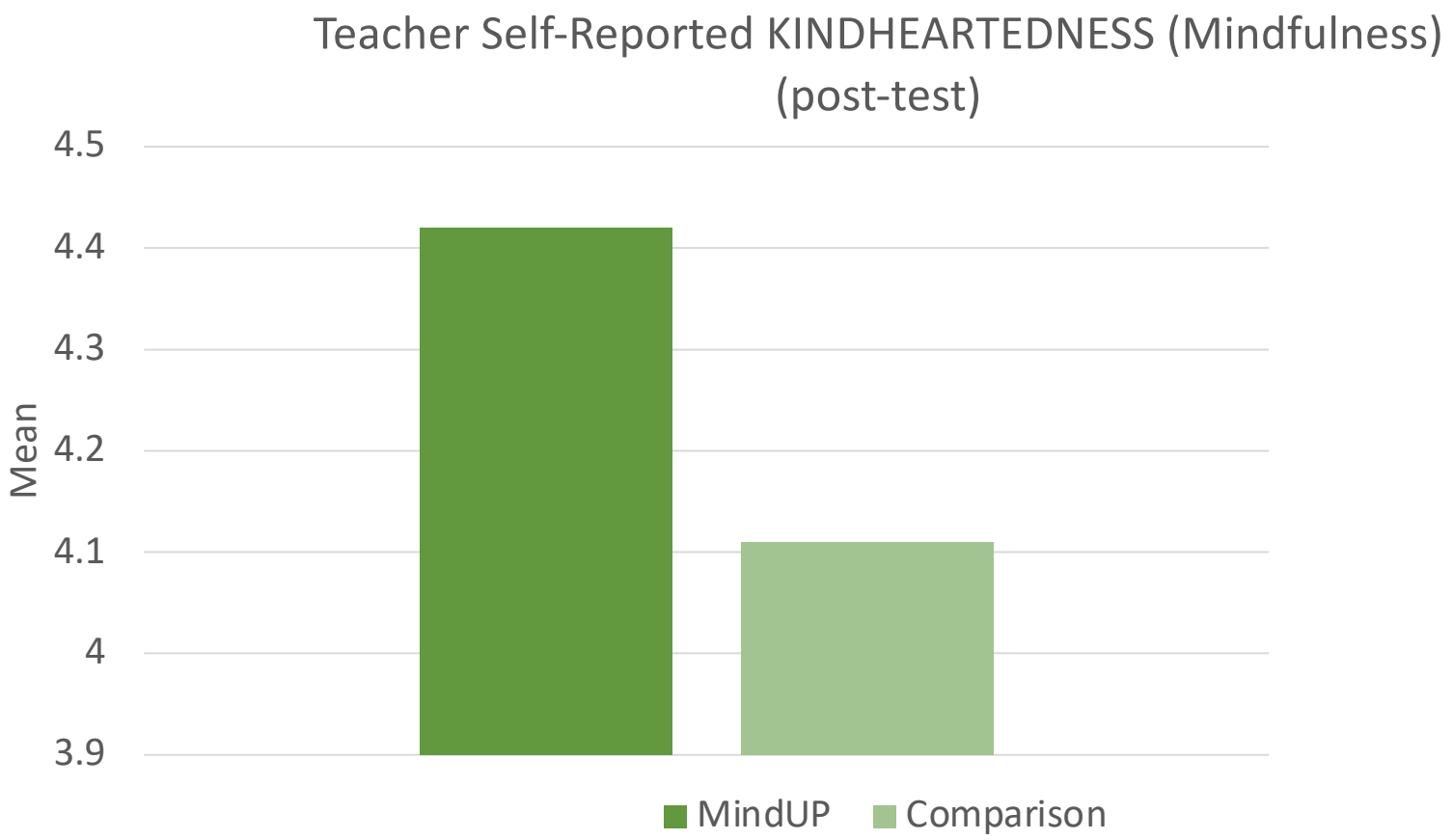
NOTE: Non-significant (likely due to low n), but **moderate effect size (η_{p2} = .04)**

Partial eta squared (η_{p2}) effect sizes: η_{p2} = .01 indicating a small effect, .06 a medium effect, and .14 a large effect (Cohen, 1992)

1. Even when my class is having "one of those days," I can still concentrate on teaching and learning.
2. Even when the classroom seems chaotic, I am able to keep us focused on what we are doing.
3. When we get interrupted in class, I find it easy to start back up where we left off.
4. When something or someone upsets me in the classroom, I am able to take a balanced view of the situation.
5. When I am unhappy with a student's behavior, I'm good at finding ways to let him or her know what I am thinking and feeling.
6. When students are out of line, I know how to get things back on track.
7. When class is not going well, I can figure out how to turn it around.

Teachers in MindUP Classrooms reported more KINDHEARTEDNESS at post-test compared to Teachers in comparison*

*Controlling for baseline scores, teacher age, & years teaching.



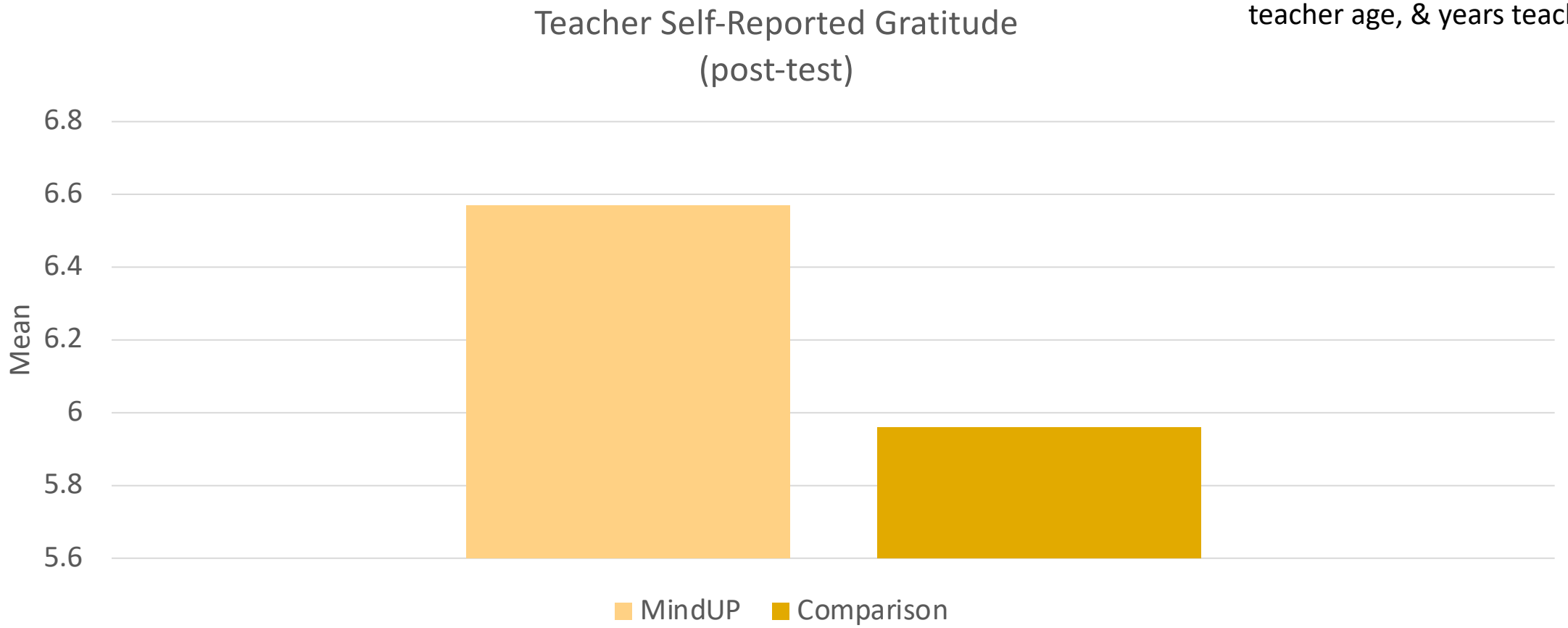
NOTE: Non-significant (likely due to low n), but **a large effect size (η_{p2} = .16)**

1. When my students are going through a hard time, I try to give them the caring and nurturing they need.
2. When students are struggling with schoolwork, I show them some extra kindness.
3. When students mess up, I let them know that I am still on their side.
4. Even when I am upset with my students, I still show them that I care.
5. I feel tender toward my students and all they are dealing with.
6. Even when students are out of line, I try to understand where they are coming from.
7. When dealing with a student's misbehavior, I try to keep the whole person and their life stresses in mind

Partial eta squared (η_{p2}) effect sizes: η_{p2} = .01 indicating a small effect, .06 a medium effect, and .14 a large effect (Cohen, 1992).

Teachers in MindUP Classrooms reported <u>greater GRATITUDE</u> at post-test compared to Teachers in comparison classrooms*

*Controlling for baseline scores, teacher age, & years teaching.

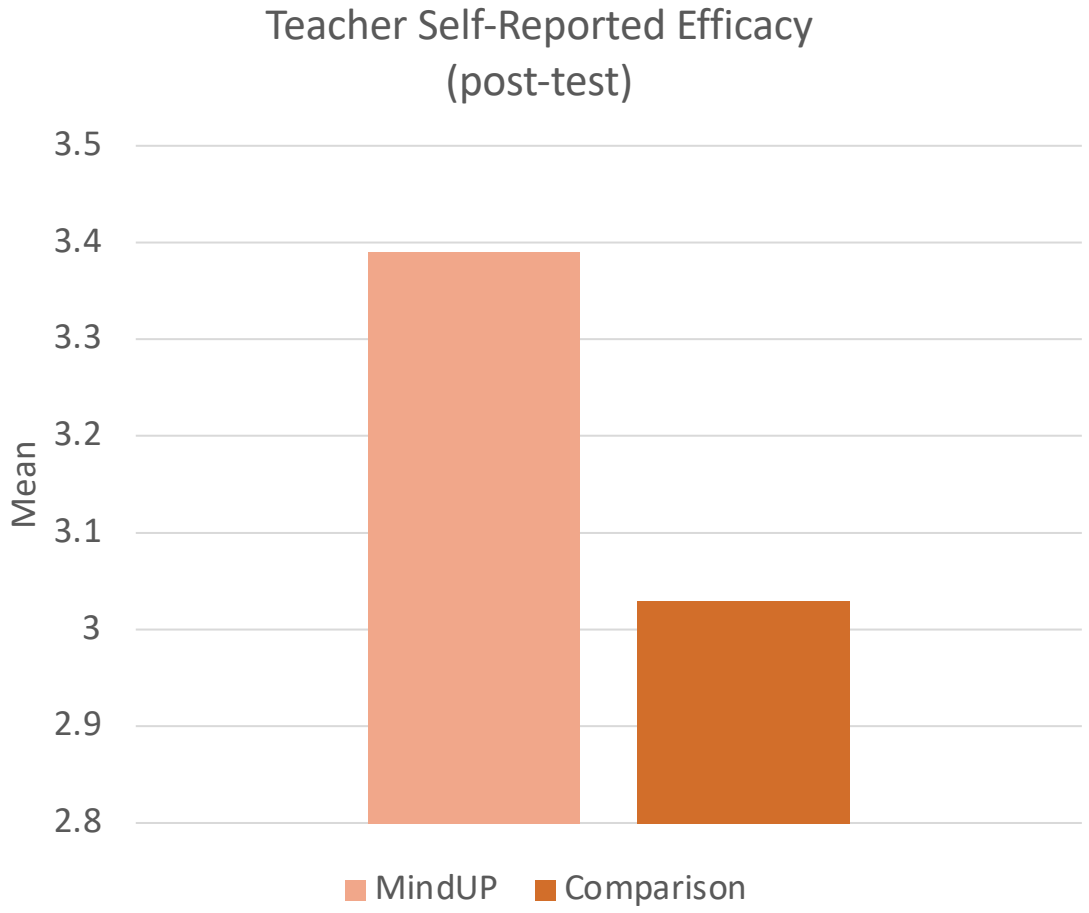


NOTE: Non-significant (likely due to low n), but a **<u>large</u> effect size (η_{p2} = .25)**

Partial eta squared (η_{p2}) effect sizes: η_{p2} = .01 indicating a small effect, .06 a medium effect, and .14 a large effect (Cohen, 1992).

Teachers in MindUP Classrooms reported greater Teaching Efficacy at post-test compared to Teachers in comparison*

*Controlling for baseline scores, teacher age, & years teaching.



Teaching Efficacy

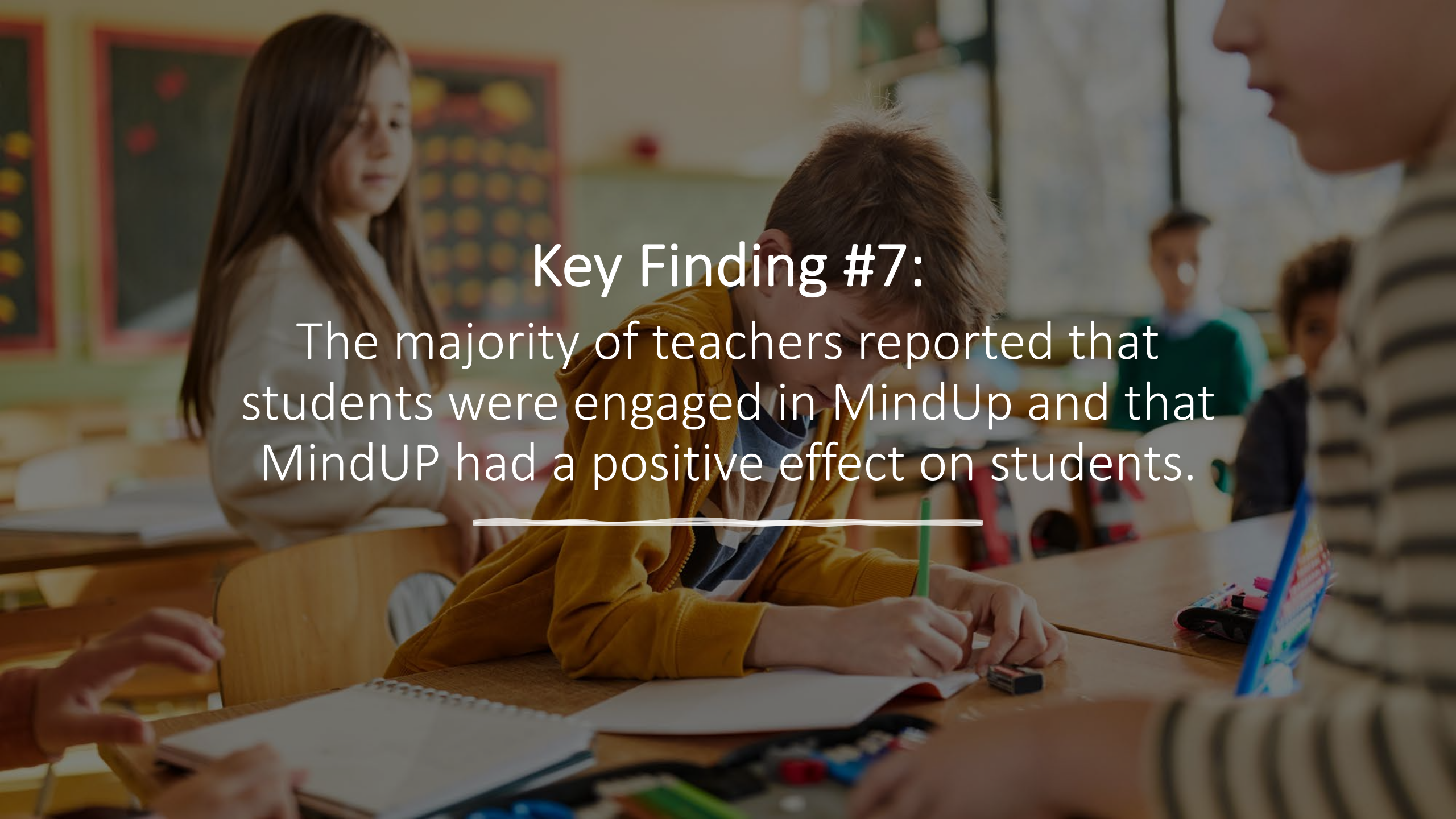
1. If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult student.
2. Factors beyond my control have a greater influence on my students' achievement than I do.*
3. I am good at helping all the students in my classes make significant improvement.
4. Some students are not going to make a lot of progress this year, no matter what I do.*
5. I am certain that I am making a difference in the lives of my students.
6. There is little I can do to ensure that all my students make significant progress this year.*
7. I can deal with almost any learning problem.

*Reverse scored items

NOTE: Non-significant (likely due to low n), but a **large effect size (η_{p2} = .22)**

Partial eta squared (η_{p2}) effect sizes: η_{p2} = .01 indicating a small effect, .06 a medium effect, and .14 a large effect (Cohen, 1992).

What impact did the MindUP Middle School Program have on students?

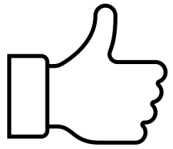


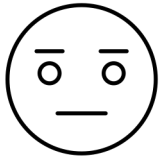
Key Finding #7:

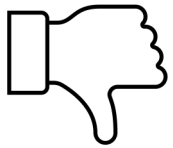
The majority of teachers reported that students were engaged in MindUp and that MindUP had a positive effect on students.

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF MINDUP ON STUDENTS

In your opinion, what effect did the MindUP Middle School program have on the students in your class this year?

5 teachers  (Positive to very positive)

1 teacher  (Neutral/No effect)

1 teacher  (More negative than positive)

Teachers reported that the:

(1) Lesson& Materials

(2) Powerpoints

(3) Videos

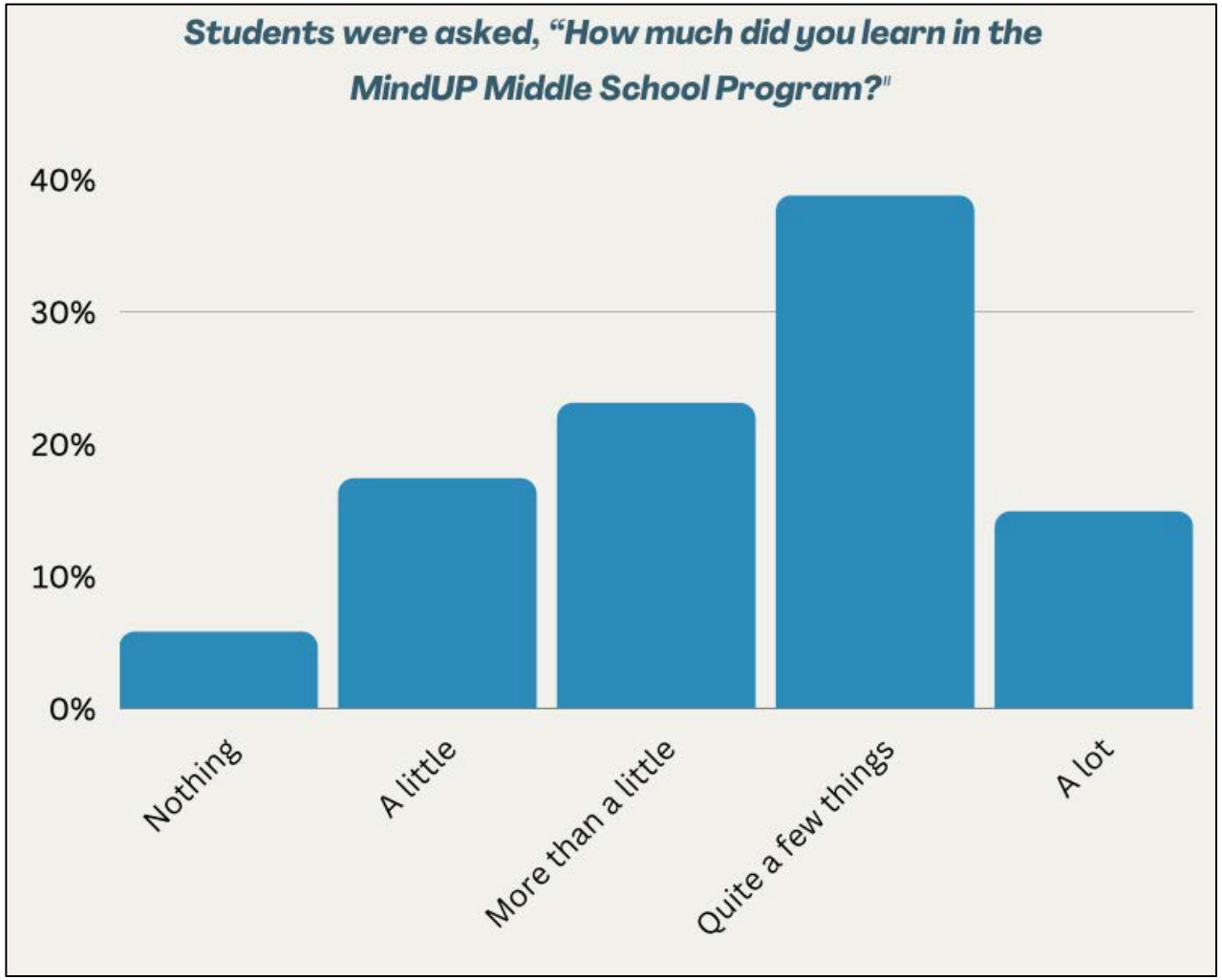
..had the most positive impact on students.

Key Finding #8: The majority of students reported that they had learned valuable things in MindUP that they can use at home, at school, and with others.

Students Reported Learning Something from MindUP

LEARNED SOMETHING

94.2% **Of students reported learning something from the MindUP program, from a little to a lot.**



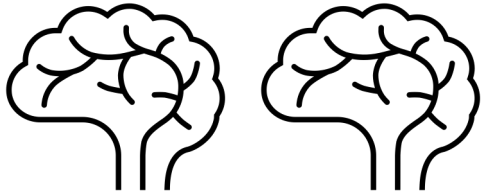
Based on 121/145 students who responded to the question.

Students Reported Learning Something from MindUP

LEARNED SOMETHING

94.2% **Of students reported learning something from the MindUP program, from a little to a lot.**

17.4% learned *A Little*



23.1% learned *More than a Little*

53.7% learned *Quite a few things* to *A Lot*

Based on 121/145 students who responded to the question.

Students responded to: *How many of the things that you learned about in the "MindUP Middle School" program can you use in your life at school?*

Most students felt they could use at least a few things from MindUP in their lives **at school.**

Based on 113/145 students who responded to the question.

Students responded to: *How many of the things that you learned about in the "MindUP Middle School" program can you use in your life at school?*

Some examples from students were:

"Breathing practice when I have strong emotions."

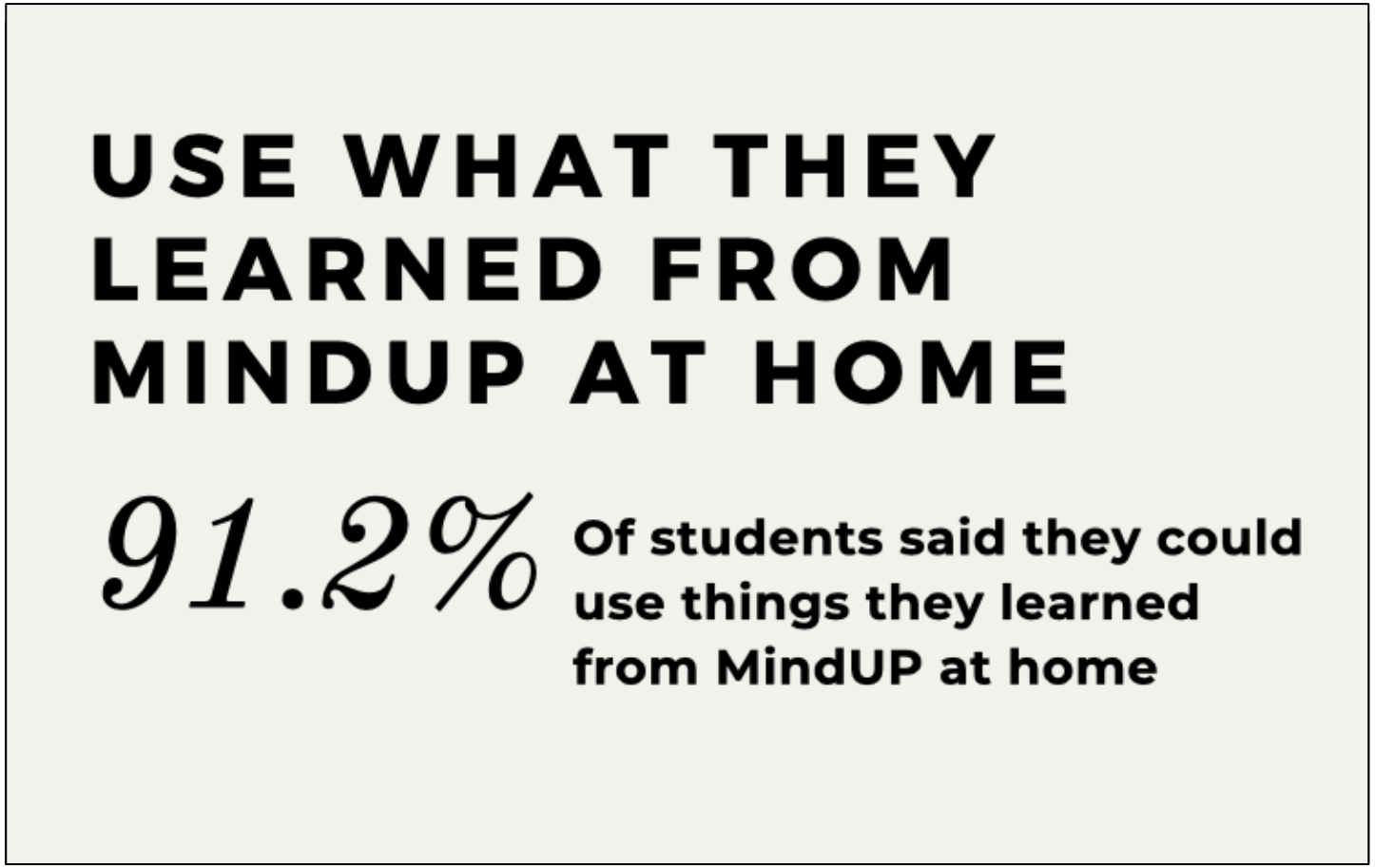
"I used breathing to focus on my homework."

"I used some things to help me fall asleep at night."

"I used it when my friends started arguing with me, I listened to why they were mad instead of getting mad back instantly."

Students responded to: *How many of the things that you learned about in the "MindUP Middle School" program can you use in your life at home?*

The majority of students reported that they could use at least a few things from MindUP in their life **at home.**



Based on 118/145 students who responded to the question.

Students responded to: *How many of the things that you learned about in the "MindUP Middle School" program can you use in your life at home?*

Some examples from students were:

"Comforting my family when they feel sad"

"I used being mindful of my surroundings when I went outside with my dog"

"I use the breathing strategy when I get an unpleasant text from my friend"

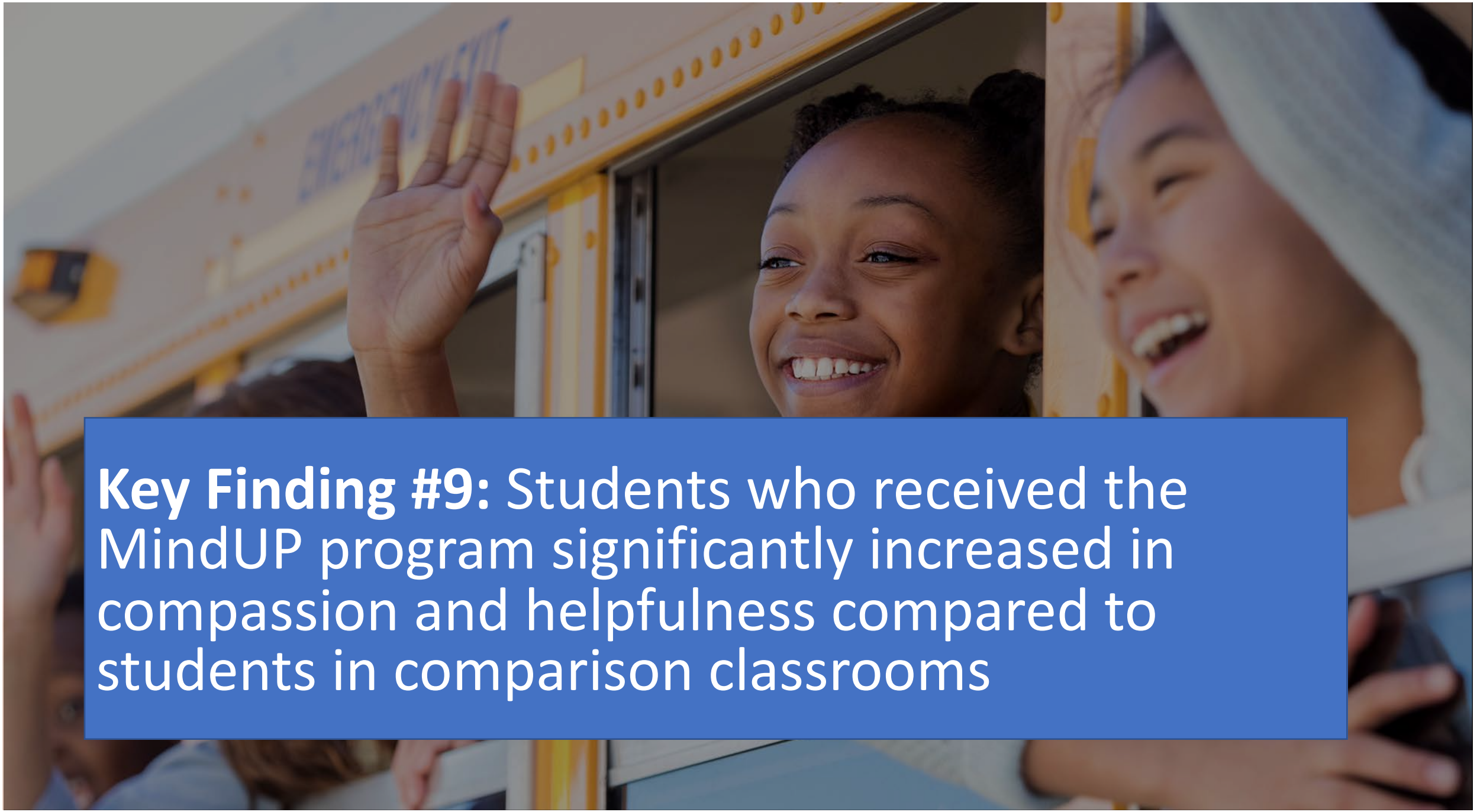
16% of students said they taught someone else something from MindUP to a **parent/caregiver**, **sibling**, **friend** or **relative**.

“Going to your favourite place and imagining yourself there.”

”About the adolescent brain”

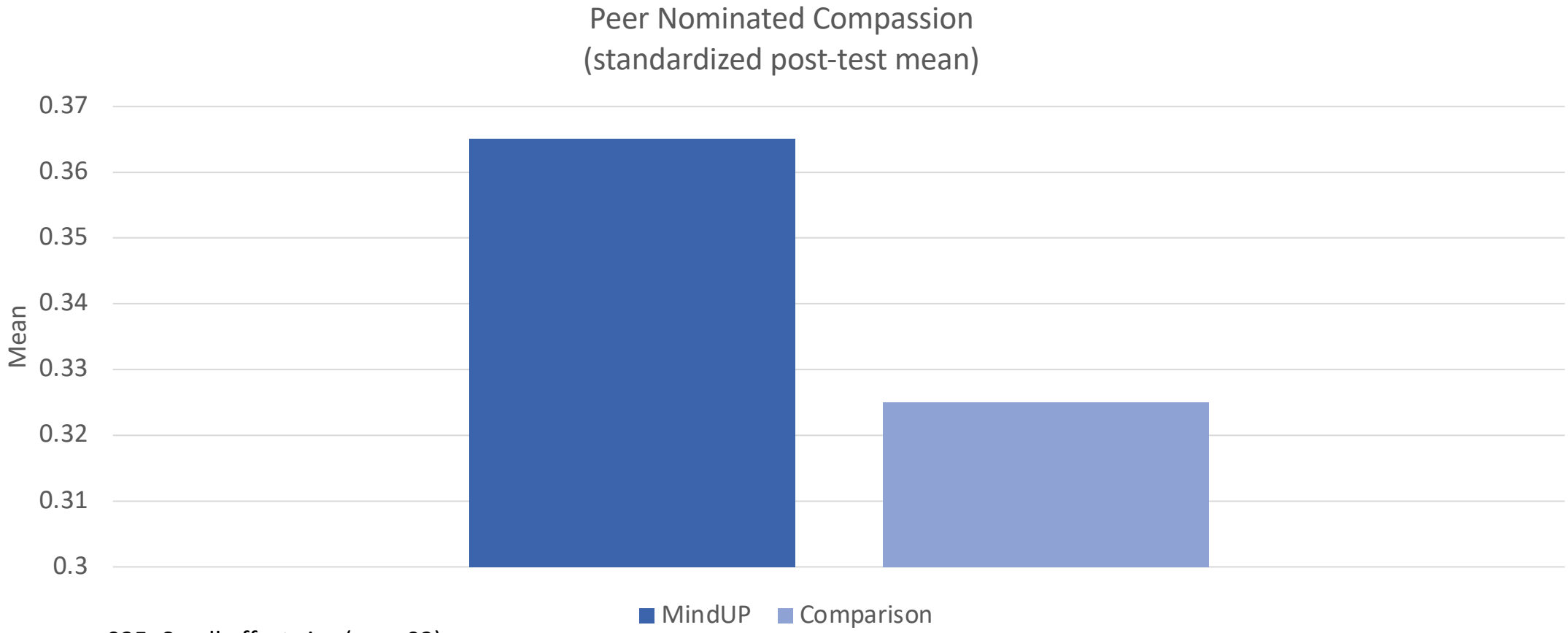
“I taught them the mindfulness breathing to help stress.”

“Breathing in and breathing out properly.”



Key Finding #9: Students who received the MindUP program significantly increased in compassion and helpfulness compared to students in comparison classrooms

Students in MindUP Classrooms rated their peers as <u>significantly</u> *more compassionate* at post-test compared to students in comparison classrooms

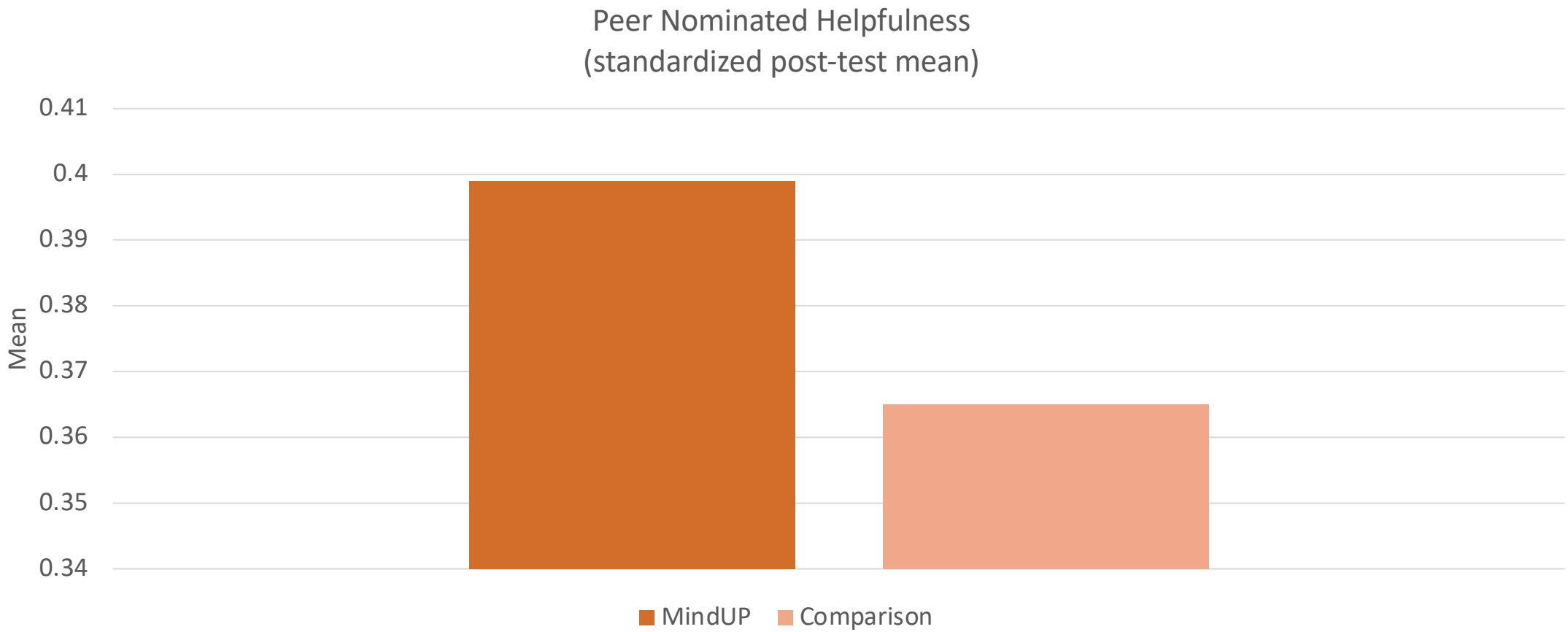


p = .035; Small effect size (η_{p2} = .02)

Partial eta squared (η_{p2}) effect sizes: η_{p2} = .01 indicating a small effect, .06 a medium effect, and .14 a large effect (Cohen, 1992).

*Controlling for student gender and baseline peer nom compassion

Students in MindUP Classrooms rated their peers as significantly more likely *to help other kids when they have a problem* at post-test compared to students in comparison classrooms



p = .034; Small effect size (η_{p2} = .02)

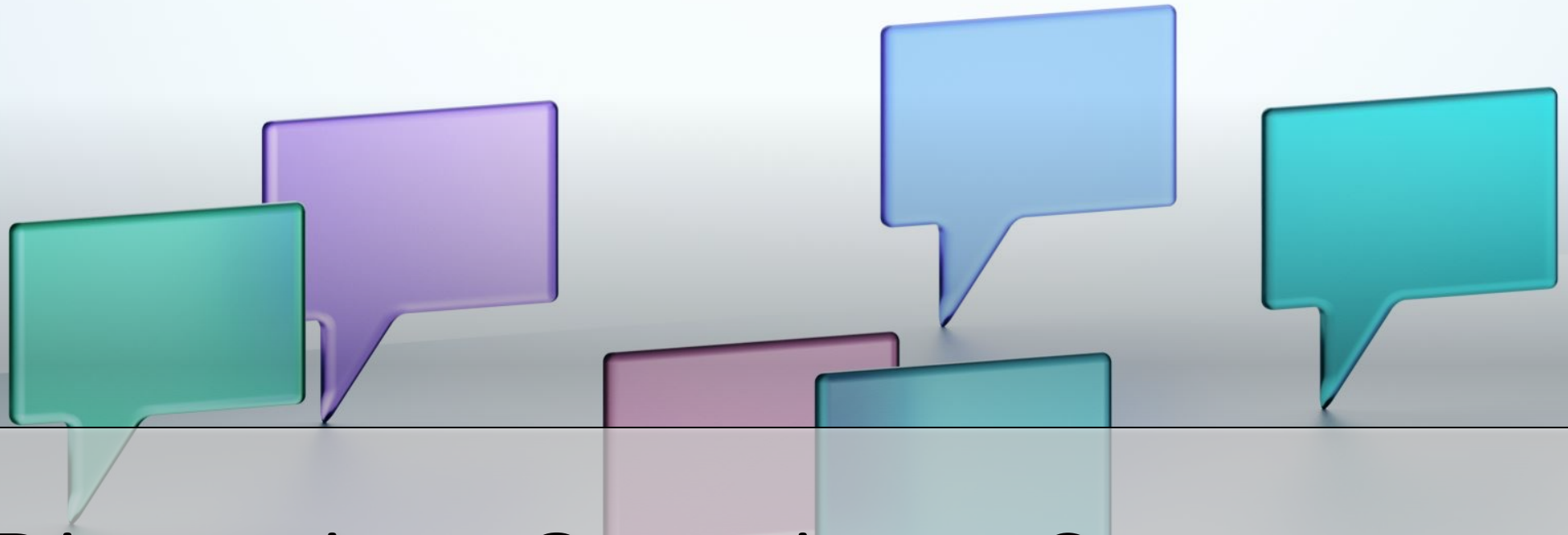
*Controlling for student gender and baseline peer nom compassion

Next Steps & Discussion

Part 5:
Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- Early adolescence as a window of opportunity for SEL
- Pandemic adaptations
- Flexibility-adaptation conundrum
- Teacher well-being, training, and buy-in
- The importance of students' voices
- The importance of teacher's voices
- The importance of monitoring implementation



Discussion: Questions, Comments, Reflections

Thank you!