

movemindfully: What are Teachers Saying?

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Early in my principal career I became deeply interested in Social Emotional Learning; office discipline referrals led me to want to know more about why children were having behavioral struggles and what I could do as a school leader to help. Our school implemented a variety of strategies to impact our students' abilities to self-regulate and be ready to learn.

My Social Emotional Learning journey continued with a strong desire to specifically learn from teachers how using **movemindfully** impacted them as they used the program in their classrooms. A dissertation was born, titled, [Perceptions of Elementary Classroom Teachers Using MoveMindfully®: Understanding Teacher Well-being and Teacher Efficacy](#). The purpose of my qualitative research study was to understand the perceptions of elementary school teachers who used **movemindfully** regarding their own personal social emotional health and well-being, and their efficacy in meeting the needs of students. Respondents included eight elementary, tenured teachers from three Minnesota schools in two metro districts who were implementing **movemindfully**. Two research questions guided my study: 1) What influence, if any, does **movemindfully** have on teachers' social emotional health and well-being? and 2) What influence, if any, does **movemindfully** have on teachers' efficacy to teach all students? A few of the final outcomes of the study included teachers reporting that using **movemindfully** strategies 1) reduces emotional responses, 2) increases awareness of the need to be self-regulated, 3) strengthens relationships, and 4) equips them to improve students' capacity to learn. I encourage you to read the full dissertation as well as the article [movemindfully: A Principal's Perspective from Practice and Research](#).

The purpose of this one-pager is to provide school leaders with a snapshot of the conversations I had with the study participants to be informed about the positive impact of **movemindfully** in the school setting.

HOW DOES **movemindfully** IMPACT ADULTS?

Teacher social emotional health and well-being has become a hot topic among school leaders and teachers. The need for social emotional skills and strategies could not be greater than it is right now. The teaching profession and our teachers need and deserve what programs like **movemindfully** have to offer.

Participant G revealed, "It helps everyone in the space be calm. Even as the adult it regulates my body. It connects your...brain to your body."

Participant D revealed, "If I'm feeling overwhelmed by something, just taking that moment to pause is big, reminding myself to breathe." Participant B also made a strong statement about how the strategies have positively impacted her success as a teacher. "I have felt myself being a better teacher because of it. I don't get so anxious or riled up and I know all these tools I can use."

Participants reported examples of being centered and grounded with words such as regulated, calm, focused, became more present, helped me slow down, and grounded myself. Participant C reasoned, "The strategies that I learned to help the kids have really helped me to regulate."

Participant C articulated, "If you're dysregulated, you cannot regulate anyone else. I remember one year, I kept saying to myself, 'An escalated adult cannot de-escalate an escalated child.'"

Participants agreed, in order to know what students need, teachers must be able to observe and be aware of what the students' behaviors are communicating. Participant G reported, "What's your behavior showing us? What's your body showing me right now? What do you need? Let's figure it out."

Teachers reported the need to have evaluation skills in order to choose from a plethora of **movemindfully** strategies and tools to meet students' needs. Teachers reported evaluation skills with phrases such as try to find what they need, see what they need, see where they're at, and become more aware. Participant G emphasized, "What are they showing you, but then, what am I doing as the adult in the room to react to it and help them bring themselves back to center. You're giving the kids tools."

HOW DOES **movemindfully** IMPACT STUDENTS?

Teachers shared how using **movemindfully** positively impacts their relationship with their students. Participant H elaborated, "It took a while, but it really did help our relationship of having her be my helper with it and show the kids how to do it. Once she was seeing how it was helping everybody else and she did want to buy in, our relationship really got stronger, and her behaviors became less and less and less, and by the end of the year there were none. She was my buddy."

Participants remarked how empowering **movemindfully** strategies are for students. Teachers shared how students will suggest a **movemindfully** strategy to the teacher, students recognize when they are not ready and know they need to regulate, and students ask to be able to go to a place in the room to use a strategy. Teachers honor students' feelings and emotions in order to help them be ready to use a strategy, and using the strategies allows some students who struggle emotionally or academically to shine. Participant A reflected, "Making the kids feel both powerful and empowered and important. I see you. I see you."

Interviewees emphasized how students began to use the strategies independently to be able to self-regulate. Teachers shared how students use the Breathing Ball on their own, implement a strategy when they know they need it, and strategize to choose an approach without the teacher's help. Participant F explained, "So, it causes them to be in control of their behavior and also be a lot more independent."

HOW DOES **movemindfully** IMPACT THE CLASSROOM?

movemindfully impacts students' engagement. Participant B pointed out, "I think [one] hundred percent they are so much more engaged after we do these **movemindfully** poses or breaths. They are so much more engaged. And if they're not, then we'll do something else until they are. I think engagement is on when I use [the strategies]."

movemindfully influences the learning environment. Interviewee B emphasized, "I [one] hundred percent feel that it works. I just see that whole being, that stillness, and thinking."

CONCLUSION

movemindfully is impactful; for the adults who are learning and leading the strategies as well as for students and the school culture.