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INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS STRATEGIES AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND
LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in English as a Second Language

Hamline University

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The focus of my research for this capstone is how the benefits of mindfulness practices can be interwoven with best practices in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction for middle and high school students. Such benefits can include how mindfulness practices can be used to mitigate stress and anxiety levels, as well as how it can be used to improve engagement, motivation, focus, awareness, critical thinking skills and academic success. As an ESL teacher this capstone will allow me to explore how mindfulness strategies, which will be analyzed later, can be integrated with current best practices in English Language Learner (ELL) instruction and utilized in middle and high school ELL settings. This research and my personal experience as an educator will provide the basis of a curriculum project designed to address the unique needs of ELL students. The guiding question for this project is: *How can mindfulness be integrated into ELL curriculum in a way that promotes social, emotional and academic development?*

In my professional context my observation is that many of the issues our ELLs struggle with relate to negative feelings associated with not being proficient in English, school in general and feeling socially and culturally isolated. This does not apply to every ELL. However, this applies to students that I have worked with who have been in the country for years, yet have made less progress than I believe they are capable of. The primary reason for doing this capstone is to introduce our students to the potential

benefits of mindfulness in alleviating these negative feelings. Reducing negative feelings felt by our ELL students could lead to greater success in all aspects of their educational experience, as well as in life in general. Further, I believe much of what is considered to be best practice in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is mutually supported by integration of mindfulness into the classroom. This is based on my personal observations and beliefs, but one example comes from Danzak (2011) who observed negative feelings from ELLs resulting from their situation as a non-native speaker living in the United States. In order for ELLs to be successful, they shouldn't be left to dwell on feelings of inadequacy that arise from not making the progress they would like to achieve. Rather, an understanding of the challenge and acknowledgment of progress in any form or time frame is sufficient because of the time scale required for SLA. Becoming mindful of these challenges and learning how to navigate through negative thoughts can contribute to less negative feelings, greater motivation and improved outcomes.

This chapter will begin with a description of how my experiences as a student and as a professional have led me to become interested in this topic and pursue this research question. Following that will be a description of two categories of ELL instruction; push in and pull out. That is followed by detailing obstacles I have observed since starting in my current teaching position in 2017. These observations have inspired me to carry out this project.

As a teacher for me to be effective in removing potential obstacles for ELLs in my classroom, it is essential to understand the nature of the obstacles and potential ways

to address them. The focus will then turn to the historical and current state of mindfulness as a field of scientific inquiry. An understanding of mindfulness will clarify the reasons it can be a useful tool in ELL instruction. One of central arguments is that it can be used to alleviate mental health issues and improve focus and motivation that will lead to greater success in the classroom. The chapter will conclude with a description of how mindfulness has helped me and why I believe a mindfulness based curriculum can help our ELL population.

My Formative Experiences as a Student and as an ELL Educator

Since 2010 I have been in the field of education. My first four years teaching were spent working as an Educator Assistant (EA) in a Special Education setting. During this time I also acquired my license as ELL teacher. During the 2014-2015 school year I worked as an elementary ELL teacher working with East African students. From August 2015 to August 2017 I taught abroad in South Korea. Since December 2017, I have been teaching middle and high school with mostly East African students in an urban charter school.

My professional experiences have led me to be interested in the obstacles facing our ELL population. However, my formative experiences are also important in understanding my interest in the capstone topic. These formative experiences go all the way back to my own experience as an elementary and secondary student. My elementary and secondary experiences differed profoundly in the degree of diversity. For seven

years, I attended a very diverse elementary school with many different ethnic, cultural and language backgrounds represented among the population.

From what I remember at such a young age, the school was very responsive to this diversity and, in my experience, it was a successful and culturally responsive model that was appropriate for such a population. I remember that our curriculum included diverse perspectives in literature, music and social studies instruction. Additionally, I remember a strong degree of English instruction that was focused on vocabulary acquisition, grammar and syntax, writing and a diverse body of literature. Lastly, the school also implemented pull out instruction that was differentiated for the students and push in instruction that assisted ELLs in acquiring information that would otherwise have been very challenging.

However, even with this model, many students struggled immensely because of their limited English proficiency or a lack of cultural and social capital. Cultural and social capital are the skills that promote social mobility for an individual. Danzak (2011) This includes language, education and other features of culture that allow an individual to socialize in ways that promote academic, professional and emotional well being. This was a formative experience for me because so many of these students were my friends and it was clear that our different backgrounds were contributing to different experiences and levels of success at school. Given I often helped friends who were new to the country, it became clear that the gap in their English skills and accumulated background knowledge made accessing the curriculum different than my experience.

One issue these students had was that they were not able to understand content. Many could not read yet. Though it wasn't explicitly expressed to me, my sense was that they were experiencing frustration and feeling of inadequacy. I sensed that they felt isolated. This was reinforced when I would invite them to my birthdays. It is difficult to put into words, but as a child I had a sense that they didn't have the same comfort level at such events that I had because it was something unfamiliar in their experiences. Socially I observed bullying that went both ways from cultural differences. Often this turned into angry outbursts and fighting. Other times it simply led to further isolation, typically group isolation where kids were only hanging out with kids who spoke the same language. This exacerbated the problem as it prevented them from fully integrating socially in school and becoming mindful of our similarities, despite our differences. These were merely my observations, not scientifically based observations, but even as a young kid I was vaguely aware of the challenges facing my immigrant and English deficient classmates. These observations were not directly reported to me, nor was I fully able to process them at the time. Back then it was more a sense that I couldn't fully comprehend. As I grew older I became more aware and able to comprehend the sense that I had back then and was able to better analyze and interpret my experiences and my feelings about those experiences.

My secondary education experience was in two private schools with all native English speakers, very few low income students, and very limited ethnic and cultural diversity. These schools did not have the same prolific ELL services as my elementary

school did. In fact, I believe that I did not have a single ELL student in my grade during middle school. I did not observe the same struggles my ELL friends had in elementary school because there were either none or very few ELLs. Of course students struggled, but it wasn't because of a language barrier or some degree of cultural differences. My conclusion was that lack of these struggles was due to the homogenous composition of the population. Almost everybody at my high school went to college with little or no need for supplementary support. These are only memories, but I can only think of one student in my high school experience who struggled with issues related to being an ELL.

Specifically I remember a teacher who gave him a bad grade because he demonstrated poor English during a speech he gave. Aside from that, I do remember him expressing concerns about his family having immigration issues that caused him a great deal of stress and anxiety which noticeably affected him. Aside from this one student, I cannot recall a single student who dealt with issues related to being an ELL, admittedly that label is my own subjective perspective based on my potentially flawed recollection.

Fast forward to 2018/2109 and how as an ESL educator, I have rarely met a colleague who does not agree with the notion that we need to be fulfilling the needs of ELLs that struggle in a mainstream classroom. Concurrently, my colleagues and myself are obligated to fulfill prescribed requirements such as teaching state standards, improving success on standardized testing and ensuring students are receiving core content. This is in spite of the actual value such content instruction would hold for students with unique needs such as not being proficient in English. The example that

jumps out to me is a student who is an ELL, but it has become clear to me the student is also dyslexic as well. Though that is my own assertion, whether or not she is dyslexic is actually irrelevant to the concerns I have. We still implement standardized testing, we still put readings that she can't access in front of her several times a day and we still ask how we should be grading her because she can't do any of the work because of her illiteracy. I feel very strongly that the institution of education has failed her at every level and is highly contradictory in their rhetoric. One one hand, we have to meet the needs of our students, while on the other we need to provide her grade level curriculum and assess her in the same way as other students at her age level as is prescribed by educational organizations. While well-intentioned people attempt to navigate this dynamic without any concrete solutions, this student has let down miserably. In fact, I was waiting for over a year for her to go through the special education process, feeling incredibly frustrated and annoyed because I was certain of her needs, was filling out forms that were wholly irrelevant and spending one hour every day reading with her when she should have had 1 on 1 assistance. On top of that, this was a student who wanted so badly to improve, never was upset by the rigor I asked for and was very intelligent when academics were discussed rather than administered through literacy. After a year of this, she was denied special education help. I was shocked, I was angry and more than anything I felt disillusioned with what we were saying and what we were actually doing as educators. While I believe educators are overwhelmingly well-intentioned, we claim to try and meet the needs of our students, but often come up woefully inadequate. These are not merely

my observations and opinions. I have personally felt and have observed a strong, often overwhelming sentiment among my peers that the desire to meet the needs of students and fulfill prescribed professional obligations is not only challenging, but often contradictory. Two other examples from my professional experience illuminate these contradictions.

The first is from my time working with high school students diagnosed with Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD). From my experience, students with this diagnosis have intense social and emotional needs. Mainstream teachers and I worked hard to fulfill these needs by implementing low student to teacher ratios, social skills classes and modified curriculum. However, we were still required to teach core subjects at grade level which took up the vast majority of the school day.

Teaching of the core subjects at grade level frequently raised the stress and anxiety of already vulnerable EBD students because they often did not have the background knowledge or the endurance to meet these expectations in addition to other daily demands of emotional and social development instruction. In fact, these two objectives were often contradictory. Classroom instruction did lead to some success stories for our EBD students and my experience supports the idea that the staff was full of hard-working, compassionate and well-intentioned people who wanted to meet the needs of the students. In particular, I found the social, emotional and relationship development did in fact produce positive results, while our attempts to meet the state and federal mandates were often counterproductive. Overall, looking back on this time, my

assessment is that we failed in our mission to meet the needs of the vast majority of students, in large part because of the incompatibility of our mission with the requirements of the district, state and federal education requirements. Failure is subjective, but I simply believe that we could have provided a higher degree of emotional and social development that may have eventually led to the students being more equipped to tackle the challenges of the more prescriptive aspects of education. One specific example is from when we implemented morning yoga or meditation. There a high degree of buy in and students reported their appreciation of these activities. Yet this was usually followed up with core content which seemed to bring stress and anxiety levels right back up.

Another example that is more relevant to my research interests comes from my current position. One student in particular has stood out to me because of the noticeable amount of stress and anxiety that has developed since she first arrived in the country and our school. She is highly intelligent, highly motivated and generally outgoing and expressive. Since the years (2017-2020) or so that she has been with us, I have observed her become increasingly withdrawn in her core academic classes, even as her English level has improved dramatically. This student is still motivated and confident when working one-on-one or with a friend, however, she explicitly told me that she feels bad because of her lack of understanding in core classes.

This student also describes feeling lonely and sad because she is different from the other kids in our class and it is difficult for her to maintain a prolonged conversation in English. Her experience stands out to me because she is intelligent, social, incredibly

motivated, positive, is making progress, shows a willingness to make mistakes and is naturally curious about academics. Despite all of this, she still describes feeling isolated, stressed and inadequate. While this student shares her experiences and feelings, many of my other struggling students, most with fewer academic and language skills, are unwilling to be as open with me. While I can not be sure why other students are unable or unwilling to confide in me, their situation causes me concern because of how these issues are almost certainly magnified for them.

The description of my experience as a learner and a ELL teacher should make it clear that I have serious concerns about the prescriptive, and often conformist, one size fits all aspects of education that are being promoted by various educational entities in the sense that they often contradict the other widely held belief that we need to meet the unique needs of individuals. Discussion of these concerns is not entirely absent in this project, but institutional reformation is not the primary focus of my current research. This is especially the case because I do not think such change is forthcoming. Therefore, my concern is researching the obstacles that our ELL population encounters, the mental health and academic issues that stem from these obstacles, and how mindfulness can be used to alleviate these issues that arise within the current paradigm in education. While the current paradigm is strong and perpetually inadequate, my goal is to use completing this capstone as an opportunity for me to make a difference for my students and to provide strategies and support for other teachers who face similar obstacles.

In discussions with other ESL graduate students and my ESL teaching colleagues, a commonly described goal is that our job is not simply depositing information to students, but rather we are working to create independent, lifelong learners. In my experience as a teacher the skills that need to be cultivated in order to accomplish this goal are difficult to impart to our ELL students given the challenges associated with being an ELL. For example, in addition to the language deficit, some of my ELL students have academic deficits and a background that is not conducive to the cultivation of these skills. By this I mean that there may direct academic delays because of having missed a period of time in school that would normally be expected or a lack of understanding of the habits and strategies that are necessary to be successful in our education system.

Despite these sentiments, myself and other teachers I work with find ourselves frantically imparting our students with academic content and behavior management strategies that sometimes squash the natural curiosities of students. We talk about developing the whole student, but often fail in practice because our metrics for success are overwhelmingly academically oriented as the age of high-stakes testing proceeds unchecked. As a teacher, if the goal is to develop the whole individual, then I need to be pursuing and implementing practices that achieve this goal.

During my time studying to become a teacher and my time as a teacher, I have encountered a variety of strategies that research recommends for creating independent, lifelong learners. In fact some of these strategies introduced to me during my teaching training contain references to or borrow some mindfulness techniques. Some of these will

be discussed in Chapter Two, but specifically this capstone is concerned with how the explicit use of mindfulness strategies can be used to support ELL students in regards to common obstacles and become independent lifelong learners. The next section is a description of common obstacles that contribute to the lack of success for my ELL students.

Obstacles to Success of English Language Learners

In my experience as an ELL educator, the most obvious and prominent obstacle facing English Language Learners is the language barrier. However, I have also observed a deficit of background knowledge of academic language, colloquial and figurative language, even in students who have developed a strong ability to use basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). As an ESL teacher I partner with content teachers. I observe these teachers utilizing academic language as if it is a given that ELLs understand which magnifies the impact of the previously mentioned deficits. Though I don't think these teachers are unaware of these deficits and the need for adjusting to them appropriately, addressing these deficits program wide in a high stakes, standards based context is not always at the fore-front of all content teachers.

Feedback from my students in core classes report they are feeling frustrated and overwhelmed. In my years of teaching English Language Learners, I have had dozens of students report that teachers talk too fast or they do not understand so they disengage from the class, which perpetuates academic deficits. To be fair, I try to maintain rigor in my class and have had more complaints from students referencing me moving too fast

and being unclear than any other teacher I work with. This illustrates that me, and I believe most teachers, are aware of this challenge. It's simply that it's more difficult to correct than simply being aware of it. In fact, these are conversations we have often. Having these conversations does not necessarily mean it is easy to do or consciously work into every lesson plan effectively. There are other concerns. For example, behavior management is often cited by my fellow teachers as their number one concern. It is a challenge to address a variety of barriers that might prevent teachers from being fully effective in the classroom, myself included. With that in mind, the fact is that in a school with a large ELL population such as mine, it is essential that all teachers implement ELL strategies to create access to content for all students.

In my experience in my current position, English Language Learners also struggle with a deficit of cultural capital. Many of my students lack organizational skills such as note taking, studying for a test or creating a plan for success. Teachers and administrators in my school have also come to recognize the stress caused in our students due to a hectic schedule with many changes of subjects and little time to get water, use the bathroom or socialize with friends. This was so widely recognized, that for the second semester in 2019, one period was eliminated along with the addition of study halls to reduce the obligations, narrow focus and reduce chaos that is causing our ELL students mental strain. Additionally, based on my interactions and observations, certain individuals in our specific population often feel isolation or an unwillingness to assimilate into some aspect of society. I am not suggesting that this unwillingness is not valid, but rather that is an

impediment to academic success. Again, this is not universally reported and in fact many students report that they feel limited in their ability to assimilate when they would prefer to assimilate more, but it has been reported to me by some students that they hold these sentiments. Another issue is racial tensions that my students have encountered. I have not had any violent acts reported to me by students, but they have reported some bullying and general racist comments in public. One incident that was very personal to me was when there was a large fight between two groups of more than a couple dozen students that was very clearly based on perceived cultural identity. The degree to which these incidents affect a student's emotional well being and academic success is impossible to calculate, but to deny that it has a negative impact seems unlikely to me.

In addition to these challenges, many of our ELLs are refugees that have suffered a great deal of trauma. Every student in our school has a unique experience, but some traumatic experiences include separation from families, poverty, violence, war and relocation. Some face these issues even if they are not refugees. Intuitive conclusions aside, there is research (Kaplan & Stolk, 2015) that has confirmed the link between traumatic experiences and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, anxiety and a number of other mental health problems. In addition Kaplan and Stolk (2015) also assert that both traumatic experiences as well as the mental health issues that follow are correlated with academic underachievement.

These experiences and observations have inspired me to explore possible mindfulness infused curriculum that could meet the unique needs of our ELL population.

The following sections will contain a brief description of mindfulness as a field of research followed by my personal professional experience with mindfulness.

Practices Used in English Language Instruction

As an ELL instructor, I have observed two generalized approaches to addressing the needs of our ELL population. These are pushing into classrooms and pulling out of classrooms. As a student and working as an ELL teacher, pushing in has meant that a student stays in their mainstream class, but receives some form of accomodation to help them access the content. I have personally pushed in with the intention of sitting with the students in order to clarify and support them. In other situations the push in has resulted in my co-teaching with the content teacher to modify the curriculum or adopt methods so that it is accessible to everyone. Examples from my work as a co-teacher include stopping the lesson because of a difficult word and ensuring that the students understand before proceeding or modifying a reading whenever there is difficult language so that the student can understand the content more independently with the help of these explanations. Push in requires me to both plan ahead by reviewing the curriculum and doing impromptu interjections when I sense that some content is not being communicated effectively.

Working as an ESL teacher the pull-out model refers to students being pulled out of content classes in order to receive either pure English instruction or to receive the content instruction one-on-one or with a small group in order for them to get the extra

help they need. In my current position, higher need ELs are put in a separate English development class in place of an elective. Our staff have chosen to replace the elective because ELL students are legally required to attend their content courses. These are strictly English Language Development (ELD) classes that focus on development of English speaking, listening, writing and speaking as well as vocabulary instruction and supplementation of core subject instruction.

However, there are times when EL students are pulled from their content classes in our school. This creates problems because of this legal requirement to receive content curriculum. The legal requirement means that if we pull out one or a small group of students, we are still required to teach the content, even if that content is beyond the accessibility of the students. One example is when the students were reading *The Giver*. One student was having a very difficult time reading the words, but was completely lost because of the abstract concepts of dystopian society and a lack of cultural capital that was required to make inferences necessary to understand the plot. Rather than simply choosing a different book, she was still required to meet the content standards as a legal requirement. This goes back to the contradiction that I laid out earlier in which we attempt to meet the needs of our students while maintaining standards that simply don't align with those needs. In an attempt to address this issue, our EL team may modify content in order to make it more accessible. Even with this model, the students are required to attend their content courses on a regular basis (as opposed to being pulled out on a daily basis) which does not allow for a consistent form of English help appropriate

to their needs. The teaching practices in this section are common in my experience. The next section provides an overview of mindfulness that could become an additional strategy in the teacher's tool kit.

A Brief Introduction to Mindfulness as Field of Clinical Research

Mindfulness has strong roots in Buddhism (Wright, 2017). While I have found this connection is important and interesting, this capstone is focused on mindfulness as it has been used in clinical psychology and other scientific fields of inquiry. However, I think recognition of the connection between historical connection between Buddhism and mindfulness is useful because it illustrates that mindfulness is something that has been found useful for millions of people for thousands of years. A scholar of the more historical and philosophical aspects of Buddhism, Walpola Rāhula (1974) acknowledges that mindfulness has been utilized in Buddhism as a method of alleviating mental suffering, fostering good relationships and improving one's cognitive functioning. Myself and other proponents (Wright 2017) of mindfulness are part of a paradigm that is different from more traditional perspectives of Buddhism such as those of Rahula (1974). Nonetheless, the fact that the benefits of mindfulness are acknowledged in both schools of thought demonstrates that many mindfulness practices are not merely a modern conception, but have been utilized and appreciated by millions of people for the 2,500 years since they were adopted by adherents of ancient Buddhism.

My current understanding, based on my personal work with mindfulness, is that our modern conception of mindfulness is the outcome of contributions from many

different researchers, advocates and thinkers who are not only diverse in their ideas, but also in their backgrounds and geographic origin as well. For the purpose of this capstone project mindfulness will be considered a topic of clinical psychological inquiry. During my personal inquiry I have encountered the work of many individuals who have pioneered and popularized mindfulness-based strategies or programs intended to improve people's health or lives in some way. One of the most well known is Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994) who has designed a mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) approach to address a variety of psychological concerns. His work, as well as others, will be discussed further in the literature review.

Many of the proposed benefits of mindfulness are based in neuroscientific analysis (Britton, 2016) of the effects of mindfulness on the brain as well as behavioral studies. She describes the current state of this research by analyzing a variety of studies regarding the relationship between mindfulness and a variety of topics such as stress, anxiety, prefrontal cortex development, addiction, depression and attention. In her analyses Britton (2016) presents a picture in which mindfulness has had positive impacts in addressing these neurological concerns with varying degrees of evidence. These will be further analyzed in the literature review.

My Personal and Professional Relationship with Mindfulness

My personal long-term interest in mindfulness was a catalyst that led me to pursue this research. Personally, mindfulness practices, especially meditation, have been effective methods in terms of reducing stress, anxiety and promoting general mental

health well-being. Another strategy that has been profoundly helpful for me is becoming aware of, appreciating and detaching myself from knee-jerk emotional responses. These strategies specifically alleviated stress caused from my experiences as a student and as a professional teacher. My desire to educate others on the potential benefits of these strategies has led me to conduct this research.

One book that had a major impact on my perception and inspired my current research is *Why Buddhism is True* (Wright, 2017). Despite the title, he is much more concerned with the clinical psychology aspects of mindfulness. In his book, Wright (2017) discusses how certain mindfulness ideas and techniques have a strong basis in the fields of neuroscience and evolutionary psychology. In addition to my personal benefit, Wright's (2017) book led me to realize that these are techniques that could be broadly applied because of their scientific justification. This fortified my interest in pursuing this research.

In the summer of 2018, I began this research. At the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year, my school began to implement restorative practice which is the idea of building, maintaining and restoring relationships with students through dialogue. What my colleagues and I have been taught about restorative practice is that we need to foster relationships and communication with each other, our students and among our students. Additionally, we have been adopting strategies to become a trauma informed school (Sporleder & Forbes, 2016). According to Sporleder and Forbes (2016) trauma informed schools are heavily based in neurology, communication and community building. As I

learned more about these trauma informed strategies I noticed that there are many mindfulness strategies embedded in them, including reflection, emotional self-awareness and stress reduction strategies. The experience of learning about these strategies has also inspired me in my research for this project. Trauma and trauma-informed teaching will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2.

Chapter Summary and Overview of Rest of Capstone

My whole life has been spent in schools. I love learning and teaching. I have an intrinsic desire to create learning for myself, our schools and society in general. While I've had success, I often observe failures that in my mind are unnecessary. In my current teaching position, there are opportunities to turn failure into success. The purpose of this capstone is to create a curriculum that synthesizes best practices in SLA with the benefits of mindfulness practices in order to meet the needs of the ELL population.

In the following chapter, I will investigate the relevant literature in order to create a comprehensive understanding of the relevant topics. I will begin with a discussion of the history of mindfulness, what it is and the potential benefits for students and people in general. I will then explore the literature relevant to the obstacles that our ELLs encounter including English and academic deficits as well as mental health, social issues and the potential side effects of traumatic experiences. My research will then shift to best practices based on the research in the field of SLA. While there are many subjects that could be discussed, the discussion will primarily focus on the benefits of bilingualism, the relationship between language, identity and motivation, the role that age plays in

language acquisition and the input hypothesis. In Chapter 3, I provide a rationale and a comprehensive overview of the specific details of the curriculum design. In chapter 4, I will compose my personal reflection on the process of designing the curriculum.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will review the currently available research and literature relevant to the research question: *how can mindfulness be integrated into English Language Learner (ELL) curriculum in a way that promotes social, emotional and academic development?*

The objective of this review is to elucidate current best practices in mindfulness, English as a Second Language (ESL), Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and education more generally in order for the curriculum design to have a solid foundation in academic research. This will contribute to the successful design and implementation of the curriculum.

The first section will begin with an analysis of mindfulness through both a Buddhist and modern clinical psychology perspective before discussing common practices, methods and programs in order to illuminate the historical importance and current applications of mindfulness. This will lead into an investigation of mindfulness practices in schools which will serve as a resource for the project. The second section will analyze obstacles to success for ELL in order to ensure that these obstacles are being considered during the curriculum design. These include simultaneous English and content

instruction, dealing with issues of identity, social and cultural capital, and the consequences of traumatic experiences. The third section will provide an overview of SLA by looking at relevant research, prevailing theories and important disagreements in the field so that the curriculum can have a strong foundation in utilizing research based best practices. Finally, a brief discussion of the inadequacies of the current state of ESL instruction will complete the literature review. The final section is to help illuminate areas where growth can be made.

Mindfulness: Buddhism

As mentioned in the introduction, mindfulness has roots in Buddhism (Wright, 2017). This is not to say that other philosophical or religious traditions do not have meaningful connections to mindfulness. However, Wright (2017) explains that our modern conception of mindfulness has deep connections to aspects of what is taught in Buddhism and many secular practitioners of mindfulness are either also practicing Buddhists or at least acknowledge that some degree of what they believe about mindfulness in a clinical psychological context is synonymous with the teachings of the Buddha on the subject of mindfulness.

It is useful to understand that mindfulness techniques have been practiced, studied and understood to have benefits to the well-being of individuals for thousands of years. It is not merely a modern paradigm. Though the modern conception has some unique characteristics, such as being studied in clinical psychology, Wright (2017) describes how many of the essential features of mindfulness have a long history of use in a variety

of societies and cultures. A grounding assumption of this project is that it is useful to understand this because people recognized the benefits of mindfulness long before western science began to investigate. Many different conclusions could be drawn from this fact and there may be reason to believe that this is evidence of the clinical benefits of mindfulness. Regardless, it is useful and perhaps necessary to acknowledge the benefits that millions of people throughout history have gained from mindfulness practices and how these may be useful in addressing many of the issues our students encounter including trauma, stress and isolation that are discussed elsewhere throughout this research.

According to Rahula (1957), a Buddhist monk, meditation is an often misunderstood concept, even within the context of Buddhism. The author continues to explain that the idea of meditation as escaping reality is not what the Buddha taught. Instead, Rahula (1957) explains that it is more accurate to define it as mental development and becoming aware. It is far more holistic than the perception of numerous individuals I have conversed with whose perception may be something along the lines of a person sitting cross-legged and focusing on breathing.

While Rahula (1957) acknowledges how meditation can be focusing on breathing, he also expands the definition by stating that it is always being present and aware of the action currently being carried out. It is not simply saying to yourself that you are doing the action, but that you are fully immersed in the present moment rather than living in the past or future. It includes being aware of your emotions and acknowledging their source

which can help you become detached from them and the negative consequences that would otherwise follow. If Rahula's (1957) interpretation of the Buddha's description of meditation is accurate, one could make the argument that how the Buddha conceived of meditation is nearly synonymous with our modern conception of mindfulness which Kabat-Zinn (1994) defines as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (p. 4). This definition is an important foundation on which this curriculum design is based.

Mindfulness: Common Practices

Sitting meditation encompasses many of the fundamental features of mindfulness and is one of the practices that will be included in this curriculum design project (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Rahula 1957). Kabat-Zinn (1994) states that this method includes focusing on your breathing. He elaborates that if you lose focus, you should acknowledge that you lost focus without judgement. According to him, not applying judgement means trying not to get annoyed or discouraged when losing focus, but simply acknowledging that it happened and refocus. Kabat-Zinn (1994) continues by stating there is no perfect method or progression in the ability to be present, but with time it will be easier to notice other aspects of the present moment, both internal and external without judgement. This type of meditation will be habitually practiced as part of the curriculum design.

Kabat-Zinn (1994) also provides advice on a variety of other mindfulness practices. The purpose of these strategies is to relieve stress and anxiety which is useful for the purpose of this project as they will be implemented to various degrees. Some

strategies draw upon natural forms such as mountain meditation, lake meditation and standing meditation, which Kabat-Zinn (1994) describes with a heavy dose of tree imagery. While meditating he suggests thinking about what the imagery of these forms symbolizes and how this symbolism can be applied to non-meditative states of mind.

For example, Kabat-Zinn (1994) suggests thinking of the calm below the surface of a lake, even in times of turmoil. He suggests ruminating on this idea during meditation, but also applying this symbolism to situations in our lives. Some of these strategies will be included and synthesized with ESL instruction. For example, if the strategies above are included, the words imagery or figurative could be taught as vocabulary instruction in addition to the strategies themselves. This is an example of the synthesis of mindfulness and ESL content that will inform this project.

Kabat-Zinn (1994) also gives advice on walking meditation by stating that it is the same as sitting meditation and that it is essentially an individual preference or a supplemental form of meditation. He proposes lying down meditation with a few unique suggestions for where the focus should be. He suggests doing a body scan where one focuses on the different parts of the body while noticing physical and mental sensations that this focus evokes. He suggests this method as a way to reflect on our emotional state as emotional states can occasionally be manifested in physical sensations. Kabat-Zinn (1994) also gives the example of the heart. With lying-down meditation, one can feel the sensations in that area of the chest and bring awareness to the physical sensation's

relationship with a particular emotional state. These practices will be synthesized with content curriculum such as anatomy instruction.

As mentioned, a key component of meditation is being non-judgmental when acknowledging thoughts and sensations. A great example of this non-judgmental approach is presented by Wright (2017). He recalls a time at a meditation retreat when there was construction going on and they would be meditating with buzz saws and other construction noises in the background. It might be assumed that this would ruin the meditation experience, but it actually exemplifies the goal of mindfulness meditation. The goal is to be aware of the present without judgment. He recalls how at first he was quite annoyed, but as he continued to embrace the sounds non-judgmentally, his negative feelings turned into positive ones as he began to enjoy the sounds as if they were music. This example illustrates one of the key goals of this curriculum which is to improve the ability of the students to maintain focus and self-control in the face of distractions that they face everyday. Additionally, it can be directly tied to ESL content through discussion of vocabulary words like adapt and perspective that relate to changing our assumptions and instincts which may not be benefiting us.

Mindfulness: Programs

In regards to clinical psychology, one of the most often implemented and researched mindfulness based programs is the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (Kabat-Zinn, n. d.) program known as MBSR. According to Baer (2003), the program consists of a weekly session for 8-10 weeks of practicing mindfulness meditation skills.

These can vary from program to program, but usually consist of a few sessions a week that are each a few hours long. Additionally, the participants are asked to practice the learned techniques in their own lives. Though these programs are typically designed for adults, the model is useful in informing this curriculum project. This is because, as is discussed elsewhere, the benefits of mindfulness are often incremental or require consistent utilization to be sustained.

Biegel, Brown, Shapiro, and Schubert (2009) carried out a study of the effects of a MBSR intervention for adolescent psychiatric outpatients. One group participated in a MBSR program while another group was a control group that received the same treatments they had previously been receiving which often included individual or group psychotherapy and/or psychotropic drug treatment. They found that those who received the MBSR treatment showed reduced depression and anxiety as well as improved sleep quality and self-esteem when compared to the control group. This provides evidence that such a program can be useful for adolescents in improving mental health. This is important because this curriculum is being designed for adolescents and one of the primary objectives is to improve the mental health of students.

Meditation retreats are another common method for people who want to immerse themselves more in mindfulness. A meditation retreat may take a variety of forms. Generally speaking it involves spending a period of time practicing meditation and other mindfulness practices. A week-long retreat is common, but they can be shorter or much longer. Cohen, Jense, Stange, Neuburger, and Heimberg (2017) carried out a study of 195

participants who participated in a 1-week retreat at a leading meditation center. The retreats were fairly typical in the sense that they were silent and consisted of 8-10 hours of meditation a day. Cohen et al. (2017) investigated the effects on psychosocial outcomes, the durability of outcomes and baseline predictors of outcomes. The psychosocial outcomes they analyzed included mindfulness, emotional awareness, perceived awareness and control, attention focusing/shifting, set-shifting ability, depression, anxiety, and emotion regulation. Although this curriculum design does not include such intense practice of mindfulness techniques, it yields relevant data.

In their study, some measures such as anxiety and depression show a marked improvement which is consistent with much of the existing literature according to the authors. Contrary to their hypothesis, some measures such as attention did not show a significant change. Cohen et al. (2017) note that this is consistent with some previous research, but add the caveat that the methods used in this particular study and style of retreat may be a factor in the results for the measures which did not show a significant change.

In a one-month follow-up analysis, Cohen et al. (2017) reported that almost all of the results they gathered after the initial retreat were maintained with a few exceptions. They also found that age was an important predictor. Older participants had better psychosocial measurements overall, but also showed less improvement than other groups. This is a relevant observation as this research suggests these practices have great potential for growth in these areas.

Mindfulness: Current Practices in the Schools

Albrecht, Albrecht, and Cohen (2012) conducted a literature review that analyzed teacher training on mindfulness practices that teachers themselves can use for their own potential benefit. They found that mindfulness practices reduce the stress levels of teachers and improve their ability to implement behavior management techniques. Their findings also suggest that teachers are better able to grasp the curriculum and teach it in ways that promote a more holistic understanding among their students. A key observation Albrecht et al. (2012) make in their review is that teachers are better equipped to teach mindfulness practices in the classroom when they are also adhering to these practices. Finally, they suggest that it is better to implement these practices across the whole school as opposed to just a single class. This is important because it suggests that teachers implementing this curriculum for this project should also be experienced practitioners of mindfulness techniques.

Moss, Reibel and McCown (2016) advocate for guided meditation in the classroom. They advocate for guided meditation because it offers an opportunity for mindfulness to be co-created among the students and teacher. During guided meditation students and teachers are experiencing similar sensations and thoughts. In this way the teacher can be more helpful as a guide for students who may be inexperienced with mindfulness. The authors state that this practice requires an investment on the part of the

teacher. Moss et al. (2016) provide four dimensions the teacher must be familiar with in order to be an effective guide. These will be briefly analyzed in the following paragraph.

One is that they must embody the practice. This is validated by what Albrecht et al. (2012) found in that teachers who practice mindfulness themselves are better equipped to teach it. Moss et al. (2016) also mention the dimension of orienting. Orienting is providing guidance in the form of a narrative of organizing concepts. The body scan mentioned earlier follows a concept and possibly a narrative as the focus moves in an organized way throughout the body. It can take many forms, but orienting is a key part of co-creating mindfulness with the students. A third dimension is the focus on language.

Moss et al. (2016) provide numerous examples of how to effectively choose language such as emphasizing certain words that may increase engagement with the guide or help the student understand what they should be focused on. The final dimension is allowing which seems to contradict the others in the sense that means not becoming overly concerned with making sure the students have a specific experience. While a skilled guide should consider the first three dimensions in order to create the most beneficial guided experience, the guide should always allow students to have their own unique experiences. These dimensions will be essential in this project as regular meditation is a fundamental component of the curriculum.

Santorelli (2016) believes that understanding the unique and holistic aspects of students is an essential component of mindfulness teaching. Santorelli (2016) suggests a path to this through questions rather than answers and specifically refers to the Socratic

method. These questions may not have a clear answer and are meant to invoke a desire to learn within an individual. Santorelli (2016) challenges teachers teaching mindfulness to explore territory which may not normally be considered a teacher's domain. This kind of dialogue is productive and even essential when it comes to mindfulness teaching. These suggestions are consistent with my personal observations and conclusions about what it means to cultivate skills in our students that will lead them to be lifelong and independent learners. This will be a major consideration when designing this project. One example is that authentic discussions and reflections on culturally relevant topics will be implemented.

The investigation of mindfulness as a clinical intervention is a scientifically based field of research. Albrecht et al. (2012) pointed out that mindfulness educators are more likely to be successful if they themselves practice mindfulness. Britton (2016) makes an argument that synthesizes these two ideas which is that mindfulness teachers should have a foundational scientific literacy when it comes to mindfulness as a clinical intervention.

Britton (2016) argues that mindfulness has gained credibility as an intervention because of scientific and evidence based research. Therefore, teachers must use evidence based practices when they implement it. Further, teachers must be scientifically literate in order to continue their investigation into evidence based research. Therefore, it is essential for the successful implementation of this curriculum that teachers are literate in the scientific findings of the use of mindfulness strategies. They must also be literate in the scientific and academic findings about the challenges that ELLs encounter and be

literate in the field of SLA. The following section will discuss these challenges for ELLs and then the final section will shift to SLA and best practices.

Obstacles for English Language Learners

English Language Learners (ELLs) face unique obstacles in addition to the challenges that face every student. Challenges that face non-ELLs are not limited to academic challenges. Danzsk (2011) describes that challenges for ELLs also include social and cultural challenges. All challenges are only exacerbated for ELLs, according to Short and Fitzsimmons (2007), because of ELLs limited English skills and because of the time and effort they exert in an effort to improve their English and learn content curriculum.

This section will begin by looking at the challenge of learning English and content simultaneously. Then there will be a discussion of the challenges of navigating social and cultural milieus. Finally, there will be an investigation into the effects of traumatic experiences on the cognitive, emotional and social functioning of individuals and the resilience that many individuals show in spite of such challenges.

Obstacles for ELLs: Language and academic deficits for ESL students.

Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) state that in order to be able to master the complexities of high school coursework, students should have a vocabulary of around 50,000. These authors also state that “the average student learns 3,000 new words each year. In 4 years, then, the average beginning ELL might learn 12,000 to 15,000 words without targeted interventions, falling far short of the 50,000-word goals” (p. 27). Short

and Fitzsimmons (2007) add that the challenge of a limited vocabulary inadequate for success in high school is reinforced by the more nuanced aspects of language that are required in secondary education.

For example, Collier (1989) comments that in addition to all the features of language that must be mastered, ELLs also must master the conventions of each subject and how features of language are uniquely utilized in each subject. Collier (1989) proceeds by stating that demonstrating knowledge through the conventions of oral and written methods is another skill that must be mastered. These are challenges that are directly affecting secondary ELLs who are the target population for this project.

Though each individual brings unique skill sets and requires individually appropriate interventions, two researchers (Collier, 1989; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007) describe that most ELLs need anywhere from 4-7 years to bridge the academic gap between them and native English speakers. During the time ELLs are learning English they may not be acquiring the content knowledge necessary to be successful in the long term.

This affects all students, but secondary ELLs already in their early to mid teenage years when they begin English instruction face unique challenges because of the nature of the American school system which, according to Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) “continues to favor the traditional 4-year high school model for all” (p. 27). For the purposes of this project, ensuring the students are aware of these deficits themselves and

reflecting on them is important because it is a form of mindfulness that can alleviate the negative emotions students experience as a result of trying to overcome these deficits.

Obstacles for ELLs: Social and Cultural Capital

Danzak (2011) carried out a study of six ELLs who self-reflected on a variety of questions about their experiences as ELLs. The students who did not speak English well did not want to learn, felt uncomfortable in America, wanted to return home and often felt isolated, especially when they were told not to speak their native language. Considering the students who spoke English well had almost the exact opposite responses, there appears to be a degree of correlation between social and cultural fulfillment and success in the target language. Danzak (2011) describes how “their [ELLs] need for social capital and their challenges with language and literacy may place these students in a vicious circle, impeding their attempts to succeed in both social and literacy-based interactions” (p. 3). Nawyn, Gjokaj, Agbenyiga, and Grace (2012) were also interested in the interaction of social capital within an immigrant community.

Nawyn et al. (2012) looked at Burundian and Burmese immigrant communities in Michigan. They sought to learn about the experiences of these immigrants with language as social capital in a non-economic framework by interviewing participants from both communities. They concluded that a lack of linguistic social capital within these communities created anxiety because of their uncertainty in their own ability to survive and succeed in society. Nawyn et al. (2012) separated the use of English as a tool for economic success in order to illustrate their conclusion that English proficiency would at

least alleviate the anxiety and isolation that is caused by their inability or lack of confidence in navigating the social realm. This idea concurs with the findings of Danzak (2011) in that a deficit of social language capital correlates with increased anxiety, isolation and other negative mental health outcomes. The reporting from Nawyn et al. (2012) that English would alleviate these stressors does not negate the fact language acquisition is typically a process that occurs over years. Therefore, I have included a discussion of these studies because mindfulness could be a potential short-term strategy that could alleviate some of these stressors. I was not able to find any specific research on this, but rather I am synthesizing these studies with the previous discussion of mindfulness to suggest that such research would be a valuable contribution to this discussion. A study on the implementation of this curriculum design in an ELL setting similar to the ones described by Danzak (2011) and Nawyn et al. (2012) could be just such a contribution.

Obstacles for ELLs: Refugees and Trauma

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2018), over half of the nearly 25.4 million refugees in the world are under the age of 18. Many of these refugees experience traumatic events such as war, violence, poverty, relocation, separation from families and other traumatic events. In my current position, many students have experienced one, multiple or all of these traumatic events. This curriculum design will include trauma responsive practices with the intention of addressing the negative symptoms of these experiences that students may be living with.

In order to achieve this goal, it is important to understand the effects of these traumatic events by investigating relevant research. Fazel, Wheeler, and Danesh (2005) did a meta-analysis of interview-based studies exploring the prevalence of post-traumatic stress syndrome, major depression and generalized anxiety disorder among refugees displaced in high income countries.

In total, 6,743 adult refugees were reported on from seven different western countries. While the rates of some mental health conditions of this population are similar to the general population in the country they are living in, they are also ten times more likely to suffer from PTSD. Children in particular had much higher rates of PTSD. It is important to acknowledge that each student is unique in their experiences and what they need to be successful in in school and in life. Nonetheless, this meta-analysis indicates that teachers need to be considerate of practices that would improve their ability to address the needs of our large refugee population with high rates of PTSD. This a major consideration for this project as an essential goal of this project is to improve mental health outcomes.

Considering the prevalence of PTSD among individuals suffering from traumatic experiences, it is important that the curriculum is designed in order to include considerations of the unique symptoms of PTSD. Banks, Newman and Saleem (2005) investigated a variety of studies regarding the efficacy of mindfulness based techniques in alleviating symptoms of PTSD. They concluded that the literature is limited and further investigation is necessary. However, Banks et al. (2005) note that the current literature is

promising as mindfulness strategies improved the ability of individuals to accept their traumatic experiences and reduced their avoidance of triggers that would remind them of their experiences. This is evidence that mindfulness practices implemented in this curriculum design may be appropriate for students who have had traumatic experiences that result in PTSD symptoms.

Kaplan, Stolk, Valibhoy, Tucker, and Baker (2015) present further evidence of the connection between trauma and mental health issues in a literature review. They concluded that traumatic experiences can lead to a variety of cognitive, emotional and behavioral issues. These issues include impaired memory, attention, executive skills, and abstract reasoning. The authors established a link between refugee children and higher incidence of PTSD, anxiety and depression. Symptoms of these conditions, such as poor concentration, can interfere with learning. Kaplan et al. (2015) also found that these conditions can negatively impact socio-emotional development, which creates another obstacle in terms of cognitive development. This is also supported by the work of Danzak (2011) that was analyzed earlier. These conclusions support the rationale for this curriculum project being based in trauma responsive practices.

Obstacles for ELLs: Trauma and Resilience

An interesting observation I have made during my tenure as an educator is that refugees and immigrants who have experienced trauma are sometimes very resilient. One study by Rousseau and Drapeau (2003) that supports the existence of this phenomenon found that Cambodian refugees in Montreal did not exhibit a greater level of mental

health issues than their counterparts who were native to Montreal. The authors did not find the impacts of trauma to have as profound an impact on the social, emotional and cognitive functioning of refugees as some other studies have shown.

Possible explanations for this resiliency mentioned by Rousseau and Drapeau (2003) include the possibility that these students were born closer to the end of Pol Pot's regime in Cambodia and therefore may have had fewer or less impactful traumatic experiences. Additionally, they acknowledged that cultural forces may have played a role, such as the Buddhist value of modesty which may have led to some imprecise or inaccurate reporting. Regardless, they conclude the health care worker, social workers and others who work with traumatized individuals should question their assumptions about traumatized children. There is the risk of generalizing the effects of traumatic experiences and providing treatment or assistance that is not appropriate and maybe even damaging. An important goal of this project is the validation of the individual. Acknowledging the unique aspects of their personality, abilities and mental health regardless of what experiences they have had is in agreement with this principle and the suggestions of Rousseau and Drapeau (2003).

Another relevant study investigated the long-term effects of trauma on Holocaust survivors. Lomranz (2013) emphasized the adaptability and overall well-being of survivors that was often different than control groups. The survivors actually score higher than non-survivors groups in some cases. These are important considerations for this curriculum design. Each individual is unique and appropriate accommodation should be

made with any curriculum implementation. However, an important guiding principle of this project is not to lower the expectations of what our ELLs can accomplish because of their trauma. These studies demonstrate that some trauma victims have been able to thrive beyond the normal expectations. This project seeks to help traumatized students overcome whatever limitation their trauma has created for them and facilitate optimal success.

The research indicates that traumatized refugees can be resilient, but of course not all of them are. An important question to ask is what factors are predictive of an individual being resilient or not. I was fortunate to converse with Jim Sporleder (personal communication, January 11, 2019) and Ahmed Hassen (personal communication, October 15, 2018). I asked both of them if there is a predictive factor or factors that indicate whether or not a traumatized individual will be resilient or not. They both said that the research has shown that a strong, reliable, supportive and trusting relationship with one or more individuals seems to be the key factor. Based on this and other research, the curriculum created for this project will include building relationships with my students and community as it can support the development of resilience for students who have traumatic experiences. The focus of this chapter will now shift to an investigation of what research has demonstrated regarding second language acquisition and what are some current best practices based on the academic literature.

Second Language Acquisition: Bilingual Education

In a conversation with Dr. Amy Young from the Department of Curriculum Instruction at the University of Minnesota, she stated the most successful model for ESL instruction was bilingual education (personal communication, October 15, 2018). There is strong evidence of the benefits of bilingual education and the importance of simultaneous development of both the native and second languages.. According to Collier (1989) a lack of continued cognitive development in the first language can lead to lowered proficiency levels in development of the second language and cognitive development in the second language as well. Furthermore, she refers to research that shows simultaneous cognitive growth in both languages results in students who often outperform monolingual students in a number of measures including cognitive flexibility, linguistic and metalinguistic abilities, concept formation, divergent thinking skills, creativity and diversity.

In another study, Winsler, Kim and Richard (2014) analyzed the role that cognitive ability, Spanish proficiency and socio-emotional-behavior play in the development of ESL among a group of low-income hispanic preschoolers with diverse countries of origin. As with other studies, they found that Spanish proficiency at age 4 positively predicted success in English development a year later in kindergarten. This reinforces the idea that proficiency in both the native and second language are correlated. While bilingual education is often difficult to implement and is not the goal of this project, it is important to acknowledge and encourage the development of student's native languages and to implement some limited use of their native language in this

curriculum. These approaches also validate their cultural capital which Danzak (2011) has stated is important in improving a variety of mental health, academic and social outcomes.

Another study expands on the connection between first and second language development as well as the positive social and mental outcomes put forth by Danzak (2011). Spears and Joseph (2010) researched the use of French and Creole as primary languages of instruction in schools in Haiti. Although Creole is the language spoken among the vast majority people in Haiti, schools have historically taught all subjects in French. The work of Spears and Joseph (2010) highlighted how Haitian students had little to no background in French and were often memorizing rather than actually becoming literate. Furthermore, speaking Creole in schools was punished. The authors suggest that these conditions contribute to the Haitian education system suffering from very high illiteracy and high dropout rates. The situation for students whose first language was Creole changed in 1987. In 1987 two things happened. One, the Bernard Reform was officially put into practice. The reform provided support for the use of Creole in schools, produced broader access to education and pedagogical changes that promoted development. The second change was that in 1987 Creole became the co-language of the country, along with French.

Following these changes Spears and Joseph (2010) conducted a case study in a high school in Haiti that was implementing Creole as the language to teach all content material. The school focused on trilingualism by teaching English and French as separate

subjects. Case study data indicated that the students at this high school tested better in all content areas with the new use of Creole as the primary language of instruction.

Surprisingly, the students also improved their French scores as well. This case study is further evidence that simultaneous development of the target language and the native language reinforce each other leading to greater proficiency in both as well as improving proficiency in the content subjects. This project is informed by this paradigm shift to an understanding of the development of the primary language as an asset rather than a hindrance.

Second Language Acquisition: Language, Identity and Motivation

For many years, Dornyei and Ushioda (2009) describe how the focus on motivation in the field of SLA has focused on the concept of integration. The idea was popularized by Gardner and Lambert (1972) who defined integrative motivation as motivation to learn a language because of an interest in navigating the society or culture of the language being learned. They believed the process of motivation in learning a second language is similar to the process of first language acquisition where social identification is a motivating factor that leads to proficiency. Dornyei and Ushioda (2009) claim that this model has been the subject of debate because there is evidence that undermines it. However, Dornyei and Ushioda (2009) raise the question of whether or not integrative motivation receives too much focus while motivation for English acquisition in order to improve one's potential for economic success is overlooked.

Ozgun and Griffiths (2013) conducted a study at a private language school in Turkey that seems to shed light on this debate. Their interest was analyzing the relationship between motivation and SLA. The study included a survey about motivational reasons for learning English and a test of academic ability in English. The four kinds of motivation they look at included integrative, intrinsic, extrinsic and instrumental.

Ozgun and Griffiths (2013) define instrumental as motivation to learn for a practical purpose such as academic, economic or professional success while integrative is motivation for increasing social and cultural capital. Intrinsic is motivation to do well for the sake of doing well, while extrinsic is motivation from a secondary entity such as a parent or teacher. In their study Ozgun and Griffiths (2013) found that instrumental was the primary motivation, while integrative was also a strong motivator. Their results also indicated that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were weaker motivators with extrinsic being the least common response.

Interestingly, despite being a less common motivator, Ozgun and Griffiths (2013) noted how the students who were motivated by intrinsic factors were the most successful. Their results also indicated that integrative motivation was also strongly associated with success. Despite being the primary motivator for students, instrumental motivation was not strongly correlated with success. In other words, in this research study, extrinsic motivation had a very poor association with success. This demonstrates that cultivating intrinsic motivation and a desire to be socially and culturally mobile are more likely to

result in successful English development. Reflecting on why students are learning English and other school subjects and promoting these values in order for them to be strong and effective motivators will be a focus of this project.

Spears and Joseph's (2010) analysis of the use of French as the only language of instruction in schools in a society that is overwhelmingly made up of Creole speakers seems to support this research. Haiti is not a bilingual society, but rather it is a dual language society where the majority speaks Creole, while the language of government, school and written language is almost entirely in French. The country generally views Creole as inferior and this perspective results in use of French in schools which has historically led to high dropout rate and low literacy rates across the country. This failure is consistent with the results from Ozgur and Griffiths (2013).

One impact of considering Creole as inferior is that teachers and parents often forbade use of Creole and demanded the use of French. This is an extrinsic motivator which is not conducive to success. Further, Creole speakers are already socially and culturally integrated because their language is the primary language. The strongest motivator found by Ozgur and Griffiths (2013) was integrative. This motivator was absent for these students, at least in their immediate surrounding and daily lives because they were already fully integrated. Therefore, this failure is not surprising considering the strong presence of extrinsic motivation which is not successful and the absence of any integrative motivation which is highly successful. As mentioned, when this situation was changed, the Creole speaking students became more successful. This demonstrates how

the affiliation between language, motivation and identity can have consequences for the ability or willingness of students to succeed in an academic setting where their primary language skills are not given the opportunity to develop.

Danzak (2011) conducted a study which drew data from the interviews, questionnaires and bilingual journals of six Spanish speaking ELLs. Three of the students identified as bilingual, were fairly proficient in English and enjoyed or were comfortable living in the United States. The other three students demonstrated very opposite profiles. They were not proficient in English, did not identify as being bilingual, did not feel happy or comfortable living in the United States and showed a desire to move back to Mexico. One can frame the responses of the students in this study as further evidence that integrative motivation is a strong predictor of success.

This curriculum project includes a deliberate attempt to have the student's reflect on their own English education and social and cultural identification. While creating a desire for the students to be motivated by specific factors is a challenge, creating a classroom that does not rely on extrinsic motivation, but works to create integrative and intrinsic motivation, as well as instrumental to a degree, is a desirable outcome of this curriculum design.

Second Language Acquisition: Age

The target population for this curriculum design is middle and high school students. It is important to consider how the age of individuals impacts their development of English. Long (2007) investigated how age impacts an individual's ability to acquire a

new language. He presents many versions of the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) that have been suggested in a variety of research traditions. In SLA, CPH posits that there is a period of time when native-like fluency can be attained and after a certain age, native-like fluency becomes more difficult or impossible.

Long (2007) presents research that indicates multiple critical periods for different aspects of language acquisition. For example, from birth to around 6 is a critical period for mastery of phonological features of language, while morphological and syntactic mastery has a critical period from birth to the mid teens. While there is research that suggests these periods are not deterministic and there is variation among individuals, Long (2007) concludes that it is necessary for a child to begin learning a language at the age of six or younger to achieve native-like fluency, though even beginning at this young is not guaranteed.

Krashen, Long and Scarcella (1979) presented evidence for three generalizations regarding the relationship between age, rate and attainment in SLA. The first is that adults develop language faster in the early stages than children. The second is that older children develop faster than younger children. The third is that those who begin learning a second language naturally as children generally achieve higher proficiency. In other words, although older children and adults acquire language in the early stages of learning faster than children, children are more likely to achieve lasting proficiency. Krashen et al. (1979) specify that older children and adults, even those with rapid progression early in language learning and are highly motivated with extensive learning opportunities, will

maintain an accent, smaller vocabulary and make numerous grammatical and collocation errors. Long (2007) suggests that this data is consistent with the existence of biological constraints on language acquisitions related to age.

Although this curriculum design is targeted for middle and high school students, there will be variation among the students in terms of their exposure to English. Many of the targeted students will have begun learning English later than the age of six and many of them more recently. While their growth and development may have been rapid in the beginning, the research discussed above indicates that there is a plateauing. Individual students will react differently to experiencing this, but it is important to take this into consideration as this may lead to frustration and disengaging from further English development.

Additionally, the instructor of this curriculum must be aware of the challenges of continued English development over many years for those who did not have early exposure. This will require the instructor of this curriculum to be sensitive to both the challenge presented by continued development as well as any potential issues this creates with identity, self-perception and motivation among the students. Acknowledging these challenges explicitly with the students will be a component of the curriculum design.

Second Language Acquisition: The Natural Approach and Comprehensible Input

Krashen (1983) outlines what he calls the natural approach to learning a second language. The first principal he outlines is that comprehension precedes production. He states that research has shown that acquisition only happens when the target language is

understood. A key part of this is that the input is more effective when it is of interest to the student. The second principal is production of language should be allowed to emerge in stages. An example would be moving from single word responses to phrases and eventually sentences slowly over time so the student is not being forced to produce language they are not ready or able to. Krashen (1983) summarizes this concept as teaching comprehensible input +1.

The third principle, described by Krashen (1983) is that a class activity should be focused on the topic rather than the grammatical structure being taught. The rationale is that grammar is not used in isolation, but always in context and using grammar in genuine contexts is a more effective way to learn. The final principle is to lower the affective filter of the students. Lower the affective filter means that the class should have low anxiety, interesting and relevant topics, freedom of expression and good relationships among the students and teacher. He goes so far as to say this is a necessity and acquisition will be impossible otherwise.

The natural approach and comprehensible input are essential influences on this curriculum design. All four principles are important. In terms of ESL instruction, the first two principles guide what will be taught and how it will be taught in a way that focuses on the target language so that it is comprehensible and able to be produced by the students. Authentic conversations and engaging curriculum are implemented in order for the language to be broadly applied and in authentic ways that are meaningful and relevant to the students' lives.

The final principle ties into the inclusion of mindfulness. Reducing anxiety, reflecting on our purpose in the classroom and creating a strong and welcoming community. The ideas of Krashen (1983) are essential guiding principles of this curriculum design. Furthermore, the prior investigations in bilingualism, identity, motivation and age inform this project in order for it to be based in best practices regarding what is known about SLA. This is in order to avoid making mistakes in language instruction that are prevalent and will be discussed in the following section.

Inadequate Services and Unsatisfactory Outcomes

In a study of the challenges faced by struggling ELLs in a mainstream classroom, Duff (2001) found that “the actual requirements for ESL student’s successful participation in SS10 went beyond the usual prescriptions and practices for integration and academic success in mainstream social studies” (p. 120). Duff (2001) notes that students struggled even though the teachers in this study were well-trained in performing interventions that are commonly thought to be necessary or even sufficient in order to produce academic success for ELLs.

Duff (2001) described three reasons for this based on empirical student responses and teacher observations. The first reason is that ELLs, non-ELLs and teachers often had a lot of difficulty in understanding each other. The second was a lack of focus on English conventions such as syntax and vocabulary. The third was that ELLs were noticeably disengaged, at least in terms of their willingness to speak, due to their fear of not

accurately expressing what they intended. A guiding principle of this project is to address these issues.

Despite Collier's (1989) finding that it often takes up to seven years for ELLs to attain a level of English comparable to their peers, Harklau (1994) points out that students are often mainstreamed long before this. One possible reason for this is because sometimes big strides that are made early in English development seem to indicate a student is ready. She notes that there is a prominent belief that mainstreaming students earlier leads to higher English proficiency. Krashen et al. (1979) caution against this because of the plateauing they found among older learners after rapid development early on. Research by Harklau (1994) sheds light on the down side of transitioning ELLs to the mainstream classroom too soon.

Harklau (1994) conducted a study of ELLs who were transitioning from ESL classes to mainstream classes over a three and a half year period. She found that for ELLs the mainstream classroom did not provide opportunities for extended interaction or feedback on their use of the target language. This often led the students to rely on intuition rather than explicit feedback which could clarify and solidify understanding. This model of moving ELLs into a mainstream classroom quickly contradicts the recommendations of Krashen (1983). Krashen (1983) notes how a more appropriate setting for ELLs is one where they would be able to receive language instruction, explicit feedback and opportunities for extended dialogues. This informs the many conversation and open ended question based activities that will be included in this project.

Harklau (1994) found that ELLs in the mainstream often felt a barrier between them and non-ELLs that made social interactions difficult. This was not the case in the ESL classroom which provided them with more authentic opportunities for interactions with peers in order to promote social and emotional growth. Despite this she noted that these students often perceived these classes negatively because they thought they were too easy or even remedial. Harklau (1994) navigated the terrain between mainstreaming and pull-out ESL instruction by stating “the fact is that there was no truly appropriate educational environment for L2 learners at Gateview. Rather, students' educational experience was a makeshift response of a system fundamentally geared towards the instruction of native speakers of the language” (p. 267). She adds that it is essential that mainstream classes and teachers become more proficient in catering to the needs of ELLs. Therefore, many of the learning objectives contained in the design are not isolated ESL instruction that isn't related to their grade level content curriculum. Rather they support grade level curriculum directly through vocabulary instruction, a slower pace, more opportunity for questions and discussion as well additional practice that reinforces mainstream content that might otherwise move too quickly for them to keep up with. This curriculum seeks to break the stigma of ESL that students may feel by focusing on the same concept their peers are learning, but providing a safe, welcoming and accommodating environment where they are better able to access the content, in addition to continued language development objectives.

Summary

There are many challenges in meeting the needs of ELLs. Language deficits are not isolated struggles that our ELLs encounter. These relate intimately to issues of content being inaccessible, social and cultural isolation and inability to express their own personality in a way that validates them as individuals. Potential traumatic experiences can exacerbate these problems. Often we fail to meet the unique needs of this population.

In order to meet these needs, this curriculum project seeks to implement best practices in SLA. Further, there is evidence that mindfulness can be a useful implementation that alleviates many of the struggles of our ELL population, in regards to emotional, social and academic success. The synthesis of mindfulness and best practices in SLA is justified by the relevant research in both fields. Mindfulness is in agreement with much of the research in SLA as it relates identity and motivation, community building, authentic engagement and reduction of stress and anxiety. This contributes to our understanding of the guiding question of this capstone: *How can mindfulness be integrated into ELL curriculum in a way that promotes social, emotional and academic development?* The following chapter will provide an overview of the specific aspects of the curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE

Rationale and Curriculum Design

Introduction

The guiding question for this capstone is: *How can mindfulness be integrated into English Language Learner (ELL) curriculum in a way that promotes social, emotional and academic development?* The inspiration for this question comes from certain shortcomings in meeting the needs of ELLs. Educators agree that we need to maintain high expectations as well as promote social and emotional development. In my experience, schools are not implementing effective strategies to meet both of these goals simultaneously. This curriculum is designed with the intention of addressing this shortcoming.

This chapter will outline and describe the mindfulness based ELL curriculum that I will be designing. I will begin with a general overview of the curriculum and the rationale for its implementation. I will then discuss the participants and setting. A brief analysis of the backwards design model of curriculum design presented by Wiggins and McTighe (1998) that will inform the project design will be followed by a description of the objectives that will inform the activities and content of the unit. Finally, a summary of the chapter will complete the discussion of the curriculum design.

Rationale for Capstone Project

In order to meet the social, emotional and academic needs of ELLs, the curriculum will be heavily informed by research discussed in the literature review.

Meditation and mindfulness informed activities will be essential in addressing social, emotional and academic needs by creating awareness of mental health as well as greater awareness and critical thinking skills in regards to academic content. Strategies specifically catered to ELLs including engaging visuals, vocabulary, receptive and productive language instruction will be interwoven into the curriculum. Lastly, considerations from the section on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) will be considered at every stage. Some examples of this include Krashen's (1983) natural approach and Ozgur and Griffith's (2013) research about motivation. By integrating these approaches, this curriculum seeks to address the guiding question of this capstone. The following section will provide a general overview of the project.

Overview of the Project

This goal of the 4-week unit is to implement content based instruction infused with mindfulness strategies in order to meet the needs of middle and high school ELLs. Each week will focus on a particular content subject that is based on state standards. Content based English instruction will include vocabulary development, writing, reading, speaking and listening activities related to the content. Direct mindfulness strategies such as meditation and mindfulness inspired activities will be integrated with the content directly. To illustrate this, one example is a week-long lesson on anatomy which will be accompanied by body scan meditation meant to bring awareness of our bodies and body systems. Each lesson will be unique in the integration of English, content and

mindfulness instruction. Each lesson will contain English, content and mindfulness objectives.

The mindfulness, content and English instruction will be heavily informed by the best practices discussed at length in the literature review. For example, Krashen's (1983) third principle that English instruction should be taught in context rather than in isolation. This is an essential influence on this project as all English instruction will be within the context of the content being taught in order to make it more meaningful and relevant. Vocabulary will be broadly used to refer to areas beyond content when relevant. For example, the word pressure is important in science, but it can also be taught in the context of school, social interactions and mindfulness itself. This deepens the student's comprehension of the word. The mindfulness strategies and concepts are included because of their potential to improve motivation, engagement, focus, comprehension and decrease stress and anxiety. Each strategy will be chosen based on its utility in addressing one or more of these goals.

Another motivation for this project is to create an authentic and cohesive academic community where critical thinking skills and mental capacities are developed in addition to English. Further, the goal is to create a community of mutual support, shared experiences and a safe place that encourages self expression. This is to address the isolation and lack of individual validation that was discussed in the literature review in studies such as Danzak (2011). Therefore, implementation of meaningful discussion on engaging topics and reflection activities will be included. These activities, though perhaps

not explicitly taught in a mindfulness context, are often heavily influenced or inspired by mindfulness practices in the general sense of raising awareness and reflection. The goal of this capstone is to provide an approach to academic and intellectual development that develops confidence, cultural capital and motivation. Success in these areas will hopefully lead to improved willingness to engage in critical thinking, authentic discussion and development of English skills in a way that is more effective than approaches currently more widely implemented in the field of ELL instruction.

Setting and Participants

The inspiration and rationale for this project is based on my personal experience working in an urban charter school located in a major metropolitan area in the upper midwest. The district comprises several different schools, most of which have the general goal of providing alternative approaches to traditional education in order to meet the needs of students and families who either prefer an alternative to mainstream public schools or have not been successful in such settings.

The specific school that I am designing this curriculum for is a middle school that will eventually incorporate a high school. As of now, the grades being taught are 7-10. The students are almost entirely of East African descent, primarily from Somalia and Ethiopia with smaller populations from Eritrea, Djibouti and Kenya as well as a small number of students from neighboring countries in Africa and the Middle East. Currently there are 80 students in grades 7-10. Of these 80, 56 are on my caseload as ELLs which is shared with another ELL teacher. There is no current data on their Minnesota

Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) scores because this year's tests were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Looking at last year's scores, 15 out of 57 7th and 8th graders met expectations. Of these 15, 2 were ELLs.

Currently, there are three primary services provided in order to meet the needs of the English Language Learner population. These include sheltered instruction, co-teaching with content teachers and pull out instruction. Individuals are selected to receive services based on World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA), MCA reading and Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) reading scores, as well as anecdotal evidence. ACCESS is the standardized test for ELLs.

The focus of this project is on sheltered ESL instruction. Generally, students who scored below a 3.5 composite on the ACCESS assessment are placed in a sheltered English Language Development (ELD) class that focuses on teaching both language and content. This is an elective class so the students are still taking the core content curriculum classes. Of the 56 total ELLs in the school, 40 of them meet this criteria and would be taking these classes.

Though the inspiration for this curriculum project was the particular group of students I have experience with, the goal is to create a curriculum that will be broadly applicable and effective. This does not simply apply to ELLs. The reasoning behind implementing this curriculum is based on ideas that can be broadly applied and effective for all students.

That being said, the focus of this project is to address challenges that ELLs face. One of the main focuses is to raise awareness of the language learning process. Acknowledging the benefits of multilingualism and acknowledging the wealth of language skills that students already possess is essential in terms of building confidence and a willingness to take risks when it comes to the acquisition of English.

Understanding by Design by Wiggins and McTighe

It is useful to identify two primary objectives for this project. The first is academic success in terms of improving vocabulary and English skills in the four domains. The second is promotion of social and emotional development. These two goals will consistently be linked in a variety of ways. The curriculum is designed in a way that will often develop skills in both areas in a mutually supportive and inseparable way. Nonetheless, there are times in which understanding the unique aspects of each goal is helpful in maintaining focus on the goals, as well as being helpful in the process of integrating them in a way that does not neglect the goals of one of the two categories.

The English goals are vocabulary development as well as development in the four domains of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The mindfulness goals are to reduce stress and anxiety, improve focus and improve ability to achieve academically. In accordance with the backwards design format put forth by Wiggins and McTighe (1998), the first step in the curriculum development process is to determine what evidence is acceptable in order to identify the success or failure of the curriculum in achieving the desired results. Consequently, I will now discuss how the objectives will be assessed, the

rationale for them and how they will identify success or failure of the curriculum to help students achieve the desired goals.

Assessment of Success

Because of the nature of the curriculum design, assessment of all objectives is not desirable. Social and emotional growth are difficult to quantify. Further, if the assessment itself is not promoting social and emotional growth, I genuinely view it as counter productive and even hypocritical in achieving the original objective. Therefore, in terms of social and emotional, the assessment will be entirely either anecdotal and informal reflections. This will be done through both speaking and writing activities. There will be conversations or written responses to reflection questions that will be carried out immediately following mindfulness activities. Conversation and reflections will be analyzed in order to monitor social and emotional growth. This may appear to be flimsy data and I would concede that in one sense it is. However, as I mentioned before I find a summative assessment on this to be counter productive. I considered doing a summative survey, but I would consider the daily discussions and writing reflections to be a more accurate and complete picture of a student's growth over time rather than a summative test that is more appropriate for academic content.

In terms of academic content, every unit will have a summative assessment at the end of the week. These will include vocabulary as well as a section that is assessing their content comprehension. This will be the primary assessment in terms of achieving the content and English objectives of the units. There will also be writing projects that

include rubrics that the students will receive. The rubrics will detail how the student's writing will be assessed.

Chapter Summary

The guiding question for this curriculum project is: *How can mindfulness be integrated into ELL curriculum in a way that promotes social, emotional and academic development?* This question informs every aspect of the design. In accordance with Wiggins and McTighe's (1998) backwards design, every aspect of this design will be relevant in addressing the guiding question. The three topics of mindfulness, English and content will be addressed in every lesson with the intention of simultaneously fostering development in all three areas in a way that the three are mutually supportive.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reflection

Introduction

This chapter will be a reflection on the curriculum design project and how it addresses the research question: *how can mindfulness be integrated into English Language Learner (ELL) curriculum in a way that promotes social, emotional and academic development?*

I considered a variety of ways to structure this chapter and every outline I drafted broke the chapter down by specific topics. As I began to write about these topics, I was frustrated because I found myself struggling to maintain separation between these topics and stay focused on the topic being discussed. Through the process, I realized that the overarching problem was that one of the key points of reflection I wanted to include was chronologically based. In many ways, there was a turning point that broke the project down into a before and after which seemed to be the most profound aspect of the curriculum design process. Therefore, I decided to outline this chapter in a chronological way that will best represent my reflection on the process. The distinction between the design of the first three chapters and the design of the fourth will be the foundation of how this chapter is structured.

The first section will focus on the successes and primary limitation of the first three units. The next section will focus on the fourth unit and how it is distinguished from the first three. Following that will be recommendations for practical applications of this

curriculum. Finally, there will be a summary that answers the guiding question through recapping the chapter as a whole.

First Three Units: Successes

The two Science and Languages Arts units are far more in line with my initial vision for this project. When teachers talk about meeting the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs), they often focus on meeting high expectations and fostering appropriate social and emotional growth. In my experience, these are carried out as two separate conversations with little to no discussion of how we are going to integrate these ideas for a population that has additional barriers to both of these goals that native speakers do not have. This observation is a huge influence on why I chose my guiding question. I believe this curriculum addresses how these two goals can be integrated in a few ways.

First, it is important to note that the curriculum for all three units meets the state standards. The rigor is there and it is also important to note that this is in fact supplemental education. By that I mean that these subjects have either been taught before, will be taught again or are being taught simultaneously in their core classes. These additional exposures to the same curriculum offer additional access to the curriculum that may be necessary to address deficits that are due to language or other barriers. These units also provide support that may not be available in their content classes.

One example is that these three units feature a much bigger emphasis on vocabulary acquisition. In their content classes, it may be taken for granted that students

will know the meaning and function of certain words. This addresses Harklau's (1994) concern which is that students may demonstrate seemingly strong language skills, but the more subtle aspects of English language and academic language have not been acquired. One example that is relevant to this project is the prevalence of figurative language in English. Even if students come from languages with a strong presence of figurative language, it varies widely among languages and even within English. These units address this by taking a deeper dive into words, using them in figurative and literal contexts and one lesson includes some instruction on the distinction figurative vs literal itself. This ties back into mindfulness in the sense that this curriculum is also creating awareness that will help students navigate otherwise confusing territory.

Another aspect of the first three units that was successful is the focus on engagement. Instruction is taught with visuals, is focused on stimulation of thought and cultivation of conversation. The visuals on the slideshow are chosen carefully and with intention. They are meant to catch the student's attention, relate to them personally and relate to their interests. Of course this can be done in any classroom, but I would argue that it is more important for ELL students because it further validates them as individuals when images that relate to them personally are brought into the classroom. It motivates them to engage. It creates connections between their lives and the content which creates more lasting and deeper understanding. These are the reasons that visual learning is such an important part of this curriculum design. It makes them want to engage and speak, when they often would rather be silent.

The final success that I want to mention is the integration of mindfulness and specifically meditation. In terms of meditation, I think it would be very difficult to always have a form of meditation that ties so directly into the curriculum. However, the two science units do this very well, which is perhaps the primary reason why I chose that subject matter. In the body systems unit, the body scan meditation fits in perfectly. Also, the discussion of blood pressure and the reading on how meditation can improve blood pressure is a clear example that addresses the guiding question of this project. In the adaptations unit, mountain, tree and ocean meditation fit perfectly into the instruction about different environments. In the types of writing unit, general mindfulness rather than meditation was well integrated through the discussion of perspective. Also, the imagery activity is fun, engaging and required students to visualize the image being described which focuses their attention. These are great activities for supporting the cultivation of mindfulness in the classroom.

First Three Units: Primary Limitation

There are many minor limitations or mistakes I could discuss, but I feel that would be more of a laundry list that doesn't provide any real insight into my process and what I actually learned. Therefore, I chose to reflect on the primary limitation because of the influence it had in changing my approach to the fourth unit. After completing the first three units, I reviewed my literature review to ensure the literature review was reflected in the project and vice versa. In some places it was reflected very well, but I found that the section on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) was not adequately being reflected in

my project. Additionally, as I was considering how to move forward with the fourth unit, I had the sense that these units were becoming redundant. In actual practice, if the approach laid out in these units is in fact effective, redundancy is the goal, but I want this project to be useful as a guide and influence rather than being the equivalent of lesson plans for a substitute teacher. Because all three of the first units had a very similar approach and I wanted to create a unit that offered an alternative approach and had alternative goals. I've always believed that a variety of approaches can be effective and all teachers have a style that is unique to them so I wanted this to be reflected by taking a different approach with the fourth unit. Also, I was inspired by rereading my section on SLA to create a unit that really focused on emotional and social growth as the main goal as opposed to starting with state standards and building around that. I am very proud of the first three units I created and I think they represent an effective way to integrate mindfulness, engagement and ESL instruction. However, I thought it was best to create a unit based more on integrating mindfulness, social and emotional growth at the expense of standards based content objectives in order to provide an alternative approach that teachers may find more effective for their unique circumstances.

Culture and Identity Unit

As already mentioned, the initial inspiration for this unit came from reviewing my literature review. In particular, I was inspired by how important it is to validate a student's unique culture and identity. I was inspired by how important it is to engage them and give them a voice with which they are able to express themselves in what

would hopefully be a therapeutic way. While other units do have social and emotional growth worked into the lesson, I wanted that to be the focus and everything else, such as the content and academic aspects, would be worked in around that. This is in reverse from the first three units.

The two primary goals of this unit are engagement and self-expression. These are mutually supportive and if you have one, but not the other then I would consider it a failure in relation to the goals of this unit. A recent example from my personal experience with distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic illustrates why these two goals are mutually supportive. In order to track attendance, our school implemented a question of the day for every student in every one of their classes. At first, this was not a priority of mine because I considered it to be just taking attendance with my main focus on regular assignments. I was asking very basic questions such as asking what their favorite animal is or where they would like to travel. In response I got very basic and uninspired answers. Over time I tried to make these more engaging in the hopes of getting longer and more engaged responses. I am at the point now where I try to find videos that are funny, emotional or amazing. The responses I have gotten to these questions are much more expressive. Students are sharing how it made them feel, their reactions and asking questions that further the conversation. In many ways, this is the goal of this unit. I will explain exactly how this unit is designed to achieve this goal.

One way is using engaging videos in the same way I am doing during distance learning. These videos are connected to the content, but more importantly, they are

selected to pique the student's interest and make them want to share their reaction naturally and ask questions. In contrast to the first three units which often had a do now in which students write something directly tied to the content, these videos are often the first activity. As opposed to the do now which is an entrance activity meant to focus the students on the content, these videos serve more as hooks which focus the students on the shared experience of everyone in the classroom which can initiate interesting conversations. The final video is TED talk in which a man who is a son of immigrants who grew up in America shares his experiences, many of which ELLs would be able to relate to.

As I have alluded to, conversation and self expression are crucial in this unit and implemented in nearly every activity. Two of the activities ask students to agree or disagree with a statement. This activity requires movement and standing in a spot in the room based on their opinion. This movement also encourages engagement because if nothing else they have to consciously make a choice about where to stand. The questions are interesting and relatable as well. One asks about whether or not they have assimilated to American culture in a particular aspect such as food or language. The other asks the students about issues relating to the individual vs the community such as is it okay for an individual to have billions of dollars when so many people are poor? The goal is to create authentic responses and organic conversations that are not structured in the way that some more traditional ESL activities are. This is in line with Krashen's (1983) recommendations for the natural approach to language learning. It directly addresses

three of his four recommendations which include input is more effective when it is interesting, language development should be focused on the topic rather than grammar and lowering the affective filter. This is an example of how something I observed in literature review directly inspired me to create this unit.

The unit also includes two art projects related to culture, one of which asks the students to create something reflective of their personal cultural background. This is a good example of how the focus in this unit has shifted from content to a focus on self-expression. The content of learning about cultures is still present, but it is a secondary goal to social and emotional growth, as well as mindfulness cultivation through self-reflection and self-expression.

Finally, this unit lacks the mindfulness practice of meditation. At first glance it may seem that mindfulness is less present in this unit, but in fact I believe it is omnipresent. There aren't the shifts from content to mindfulness instruction because every activity is about creating awareness, reflection and expression. An example from the unit illustrates this point. One activity asks them directly about their experiences as an either an immigrant, an ELL or growing up in a family with a different cultural background than American culture. This gives them a chance to reflect on and share their experience in a way that they may not have had the opportunity to in school or elsewhere previously. Additionally, it creates a sense of community and shared experience in the classroom. It develops a community in the classroom where we are more mindful of the unique or shared experiences of ourselves and the other people in the classroom. The

hope is that this can alleviate feelings of isolation and social stressors by creating a supportive, welcoming and understanding community. The TED talk the following day also addresses this because many of the students will likely be able to relate to the experiences of the speaker.

This unit was essential in fully answering the guiding question: *how can mindfulness be integrated into English Language Learner (ELL) curriculum in a way that promotes social, emotional and academic development?* After designing the first three units, I felt that I had partially, but not fully answered the question. The first three units were monotonous and gave only one approach to how this can be done. In fact, I believe there are many ways this can be done, but I thought it was very important to expand on this question and explore other ways mindfulness can be a guiding principle in the classroom. With the inclusion of this unit, I feel that I have more fully answered this question and answered it in a way that I am satisfied with. The following section will briefly provide some recommendations for practical implementation of the curriculum design.

Practical Applications: Recommendations

This section will detail what I would recommend to a teacher wanting to implement these units in their classroom. Before I give specific recommendations, some context will be helpful in understanding the intention behind those recommendations. These weekly units are not meant to be taught successively. They could be, but that is not the intention. The intention of this project was to create models of how this approach to

teaching could be used. I believe these are lessons that would be very effective in practice, but more importantly they represent an approach to teaching rather than a step by step guide for what to do in the classroom. With this in mind, I will continue by offering my recommendations.

My main recommendation would be to modify it in any way that fits your strengths. If that means throwing it all out and using a different curriculum completely, then that is best. To the degree that a particular teacher does not find an aspect of the curriculum useful or that it does not fit with their teaching style, it's unlikely to be utilized effectively, although I do believe that any teacher would be able to find some degree of value in the curriculum. The more pragmatic point I am making is that this is not intended to be dogmatically prescriptive. Rather, my intention is that it's thought provoking and would help teachers to reflect on their own practices. If a teacher were to implement these units in their classrooms, I would recommend that they focus on the objectives of the lessons. Keep those in mind at every stage of teaching the units and either maintain the curriculum as it is or make adjustments that enhance the potential of achieving the objectives of the lesson.

In that same vein, these units are reflective of my strengths and teaching style. I believe every teacher is unique in their teaching style and if they aren't able to utilize their strengths and feel comfortable as a teacher, they are less likely to be effective. I'd like to share the most important advice I ever received as a teacher. In my first year of teaching, I was struggling. I was trying to do all the things I was taught to do and I was

trying to imitate teachers that I considered successful. I was feeling a lot of pressure because trying to use strategies that were successful for others wasn't working for me and a lot of self-doubt emerged, even though in my previous experience as an Educator Assistant, I felt very successful. In my first evaluation my principal said to me that I was doing a great job following their advice. She said I was doing a great job learning from my mentor, but I was not her. Further, I was never going to be Karen because that was not the style I was comfortable with. I needed to go back to being myself and creating my own style. This immediately resonated with me because this is how I approached my previous job and was much more successful. Hearing those words took a huge weight off of me and from that day forward I not only began to feel less pressure, I began to be far more successful. I would share that advice with any teacher using this curriculum. Use it in ways that help you, don't use it ways that hinder you.

The final recommendation is more practical. I want to acknowledge the density of these lessons. There are four units, but I can imagine these lessons taking 6 to 8 weeks to cover in practice. That's important to keep in mind, but it also leads me to recommend the following advice. You can't teach everything in a single lesson. If you try to teach everything you're more likely to teach nothing. Taking a deeper dive on less objectives is more likely to create deeper and lasting understanding than skimming over objectives which can often overwhelm and confuse students. When students are able to really internalize information, it builds confidence, while a wealth of information being administered that they aren't able to fully grasp can diminish confidence.

These recommendations are based more on my personal experiences rather than empirical data. However, I think that these kinds of personal, non-academic recommendations are important. Of course this project as a whole is informed by academic research, but it's also informed and inspired by my career and what I have learned during that time. Further, creating this curriculum is actually a very personal experience and I believe this personal, non-academic reflection on the curriculum would be helpful for anyone trying to implement it. This chapter will conclude with the following summary which contains an overview of the emphasis and learnings of this chapter.

Summary

As was mentioned previously, in regards to the guiding question: *how can mindfulness be integrated into English Language Learner (ELL) curriculum in a way that promotes social, emotional and academic development?* I believe this project answered that question. It answered it by providing two examples of what this kind of integration could look like. The first three units focused more on the content and supplemented it with mindfulness techniques. The benefits of these are that they maintain academic rigor, support content curriculum and alleviate stressors while creating a more holistic approach to promote deeper and lasting understanding. The last unit focused on mindfulness, social and emotional growth and supplemented this instruction with content. The strengths of this unit are creating a sense of community, greater opportunity for self-expression, awareness of culture, society and identity, and creating engagement that can lead to a

variety of positive outcomes in social, emotional and academic development. To fully answer the guiding question would be an impossibility because the possibilities are endless. This is why I recommend modification and flexibility when implementing the curriculum. These lessons could be taught verbatim, but that's not the ultimate goal. The goal is to provide models of how mindfulness could be implemented in the ESL instruction. I believe that this curriculum provides those models and addresses the guiding question of this capstone.

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