

# **Faith and Wellness Evaluation Report**

## **Testing a Social Emotional Learning Intervention for Catholic Elementary School Teachers Across Ontario**

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# Executive Summary

*“Sometimes it was maybe three minutes, maybe five minutes, but it completely changed the entire afternoon. You felt the whole room just calm down and then [my students] were in a space that was better for them to start learning. It was really fantastic to see how they could start to use this to regulate themselves.” – Grade 2 Teacher*

## The Faith and Wellness Research Project

During the 2019-2020 school year, a research project was conducted with Catholic Elementary Schools across Ontario to determine the effectiveness of Faith and Wellness: A Daily Mental Health Resource. Over 200 teachers from 19 school boards, as well as 271 students from 11 schools participated in the research project. Approximately half of the teachers (from 9 school boards) were randomly assigned to implement social emotional learning (SEL) practices from the Faith and Wellness Resource between November 2019-February 2020, and the other half were assigned to wait to implement practices until March 2020.

## Does the Faith and Wellness Resource Work?

Teachers’ responses to questions provided strong evidence supporting the Faith and Wellness Resource. Teachers who had been randomly assigned to use the resource during the three-month implementation period reported that they:

- 1) Had higher confidence in their ability to deliver social emotional learning (SEL) practices
- 2) Taught SEL skills more frequently
- 3) Thought more students in their class demonstrated SEL skills
- 4) Thought more students in their class demonstrated competencies in the Catholic Graduate Expectations
- 5) Had more positive perceptions of their classroom climate
- 6) Thought more students in their class were motivated and engaged in school.

Teachers who did not use the resource reported no changes over time.

Further, the more times teachers implemented the resource, the more positive these changes were (for SEL knowledge, general SEL confidence, specific SEL confidence, and perceptions of students’ SEL). These changes were found regardless of prior teaching experience or grade level. There was little evidence that other factors (prior teaching experience, grade level taught, or initial scores on outcomes of interest) presented a barrier to teachers implementing the resource.

Students’ responses showed somewhat less strong evidence; there were no overall differences between students whose teachers implemented the resource and those who did not in terms of change in outcomes over time. We did find, however, that the more times teachers implemented the resource, the more students increased in their:

- 1) Confidence in their SEL skills
- 2) General wellbeing
- 3) Sense of positive classroom climate

#### 4) School liking.

## What Changed for Teachers and Students, and How?

The SEL practices supported changes for teachers, particularly in terms of improving teachers' SEL awareness and confidence. Seeing the impact of the practices for students helped increase teachers' confidence to understand that taking time to focus on SEL in the classroom was necessary. Teachers reported changes in their own behaviour, including changing the way they spoke to and treated students in their classroom, as well as engaging more frequently in SEL teaching. Finally, the practices supported teachers' own mental health and wellbeing, by being able to engage in SEL strategies themselves and providing leadership for their students.

Both teachers and students who had used the resource were able to identify specific SEL skills gained by students. Students learned new **stress management and coping skills**, which helped them calm themselves down, helped support transitions during the school day, and allowed them to acknowledge when to take a short break and re-focus during a challenging time. Students improved in their ability to **identify and manage their emotions**. Students learned common language to talk about their emotions and were able to select from a number of strategies to support their regulation of emotions. **Positive motivation and perseverance** practices supported students' positive outlook, decreased negative self-talk, and increased expressions of gratitude. Through relationship building practices, students made new friends and learned **healthy relationship skills**. The practices supported students' **self-awareness and sense of identity**; students were more open, better able to express themselves, and showed increased self-confidence. Finally, **executive functioning skills** impacted students' overall school success by improving problem solving skills, enhancing critical thinking skills, and supporting students' organizational capacities.

Teachers identified the key mechanisms responsible for supporting students' learning through using the Faith and Wellness Resource. First, was the importance of a whole class approach. Having specific skills and strategies that everyone in the class was familiar with allowed teachers to refer back to these skills when students needed support. Second, the practices provided students with new vocabulary and language to talk about their feelings, stresses, or experiences. Third, the practices were short and easy to implement frequently and throughout the day. Many teachers noted the importance of predictability and the routine aspect of repeating the practices. Finally, learning a variety of strategies for different situations allowed students to lean on and use these strategies in the classroom as well as in other contexts.

## Satisfaction and Feedback

Both teachers and students who used the Faith and Wellness Resource reported high levels of satisfaction. Students felt that the resource had been helpful for themselves and their classmates, and over 80% said they would like to continue using the resource. Similarly, teachers thought the resource was beneficial, easy to implement, and well suited for students of diverse backgrounds

and learning needs. Teachers reported that students had generally positive responses to the practices and appeared to understand the concepts, and that the Catholic connections included in the practices were applicable and grade appropriate. The vast majority of teachers said they would recommend the resource to others (97-98%).

Teachers did indicate some challenges in implementing particular practices, though challenges were noted only 20% of the time. Most frequently, teachers reported challenges in engaging some students in the practice, preventing students from acting silly or off task, or finding that students needed more time to master the particular strategy. In almost all cases, teachers reported that only one or a few students had such challenges, and in many cases, challenges dissipated after a few times implementing the practice.

Highlighting the adaptability of the practices themselves, teachers also reported specific changes they made or suggested changes to practices (37% of the time). Here, teachers most frequently modified the practice to be developmentally appropriate, engaged in other related activities with their class, or connected the practice to another lesson. Some teachers also changed the length of time spent on the practice (both lengthening and shortening), changed the format (utilizing whole class, small groups, and individual formats), or changed the setting (using a quieter space as opposed to the classroom).

## **Conclusion**

Results from this research project support the effectiveness and usefulness of the Faith and Wellness Resource for teachers and students in Catholic Elementary Schools across Ontario. Overall, the Faith and Wellness Resource was well received by teachers and students, easily implemented in the classroom, and helped to support students' SEL skills as well as their general mental health and wellbeing.

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## Background

Social emotional learning (SEL) is the process of developing a variety of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are necessary for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing. SEL can include the ability to understand and manage emotions, develop self-awareness and self-control, establish and maintain positive relationships, set positive goals, and make responsible choices. By developing strong SEL skills, children are better able to successfully manage everyday challenges, which benefits them in all areas of life, including academically, socially, and psychologically. Evidence-based SEL programs can help support students in developing and expanding their SEL skills, which, in turn, can support student mental health and wellbeing, and also help prevent future behavioural and emotional problems.

Teachers play an important role in promoting students' SEL skills, mental health and wellbeing at school. While large, pre-packaged SEL programs can be helpful, they can be costly. Further, some teachers have difficulty fitting a structured program into a busy classroom schedule. School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) is working to build a repository of evidence-based, implementation-sensitive mental health promotion and prevention programming options for the Ontario classroom. As one initiative designed to meet this goal, SMHO and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) have partnered to modify an everyday mental health resource for educators, based on a previous resource developed in partnership between SMHO and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO). This resource, *Faith and Wellness: A Daily Mental Health Resource*, provides a repository of practical, brief, easy-to-learn strategies for enhancing SEL skills and mental health among students as part of the regular school day. The Faith and Wellness Resource practices were created with evidence/review support from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Provincial System Support Program and in collaboration with practicing Catholic teachers, to ensure applicability within the Catholic context.

In Spring 2019, the study team engaged in a pilot project, testing the feasibility of the Faith and Wellness Resource in selected classrooms in Ontario. Preliminary support was found for the effectiveness of this resource: teachers reported increased knowledge and confidence in their ability to deliver social emotional learning practices, improved perceptions of classroom climate, and improved perceptions of students' SEL skills after implementing the Faith and Wellness Resource.

The purpose of the current project was to expand upon the evaluation of the Faith and Wellness Resource by conducting a more rigorous test of its effectiveness. We used a waitlist randomized control trial design (RCT), such that teachers were randomly assigned to either Group 1 or Group 2. Teachers in Group 1 were able to implement the Faith and Wellness Resource right away, while teachers in Group 2 (the waitlist) waited until the first implementation period was over. Comparisons were then made between teachers (and their students) in Groups 1 versus 2, to see if the groups differed in whether and how they changed over time. With this design, our goal was to examine the effect of the Faith and Wellness Resource for both teachers and students. For teachers, goals were to examine whether use of the Faith and Wellness Resource (compared to not using the Faith and Wellness Resource) was associated with increases in their:

- 1) Knowledge and confidence in their ability to deliver SEL practices
- 2) Frequency of SEL teaching
- 3) Perceptions of students' SEL skills
- 4) Perceptions of students' competencies in the Catholic Graduate Expectations categories
- 5) Perceptions of classroom climate
- 6) Perceptions of students' school motivation and academic performance

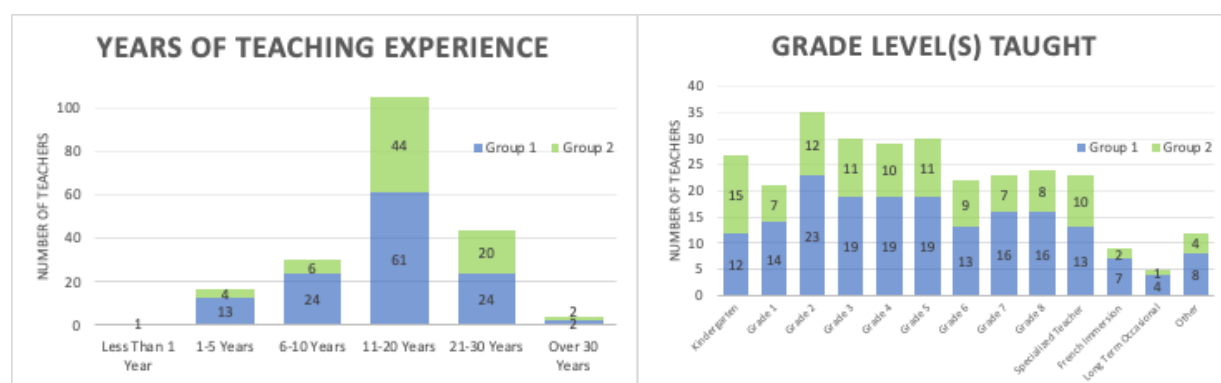
We also aimed to examine the impact of the resource on students':

- 1) Confidence in their SEL skills
- 2) Sense of general wellbeing
- 3) Perceptions of classroom climate
- 4) School liking
- 5) School motivation and engagement



# Recruitment of Teachers and Randomization

At the beginning of the 2019 school year, all elementary OECTA teachers were invited to participate in the research project via electronic flyers and notices shared on the OECTA website. Principals and school mental health leaders were also encouraged to invite interested teachers to obtain more information via the OECTA website. Interested teachers were invited to view an informational presentation by OECTA staff that included information on the Faith and Wellness Resource and the research component of the project, and attend a virtual question and answer session with OECTA staff and research team members. Following the informational sessions, teachers were asked to indicate their interest in participating in the project. All evaluation procedures were approved by Brock University Research Ethics Board, as well as the research ethics boards from each participating school board. Participating school boards ( $N = 19$ ) were match-paired based on unit size and urban/rural makeup, and then each pair of school boards was randomly assigned so that one school board was in Group 1 and the other school board was in Group 2. Group 1 schools were able to access the Faith and Wellness Resource right away, while Group 2 was the waitlist group. Randomization was conducted at the level of the school board (as opposed to the school level) because board-level mental health leaders played an active role in supporting teachers using the Faith and Wellness Resource; thus this randomization method avoided contagion due to mental health leaders' involvement. Randomization resulted in a total of 9 school boards with 125 participating teachers in Group 1, and 10 school boards with 76 participating teachers in Group 2. Teachers varied in their teaching experience and grade level(s) taught.

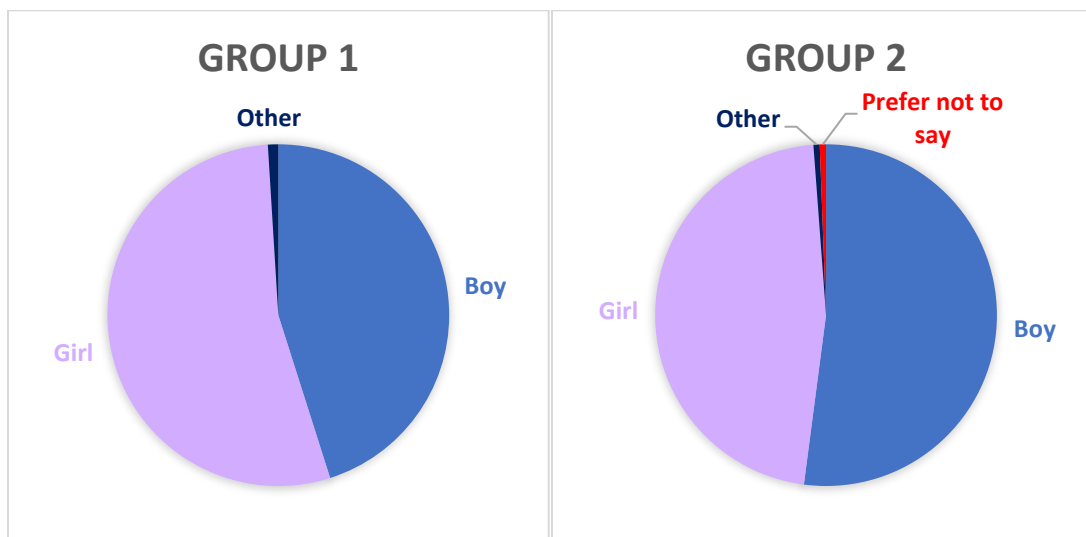
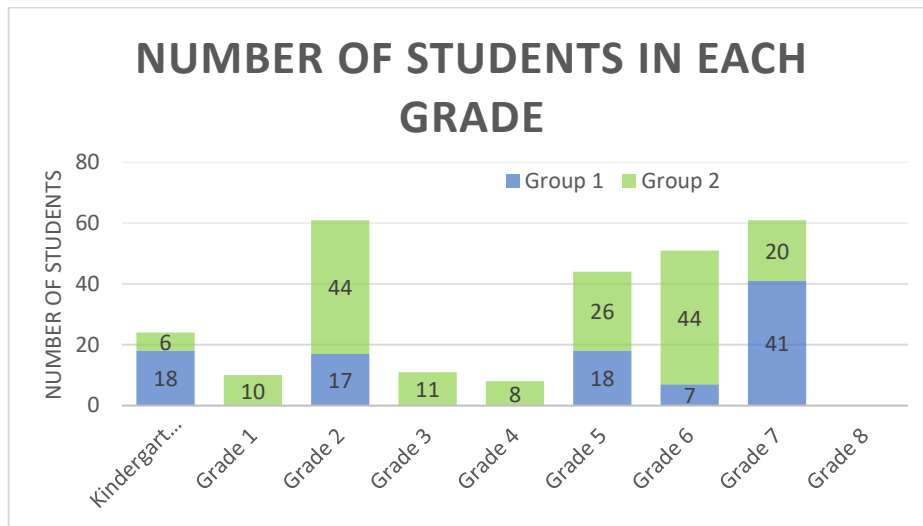


## Selection of Students

From the total group of participating teachers, teachers were randomly selected to have students in their classrooms participate in data collection. Selections were made to ensure approximately equal representation of classrooms in Groups 1 and 2, as well as representation across grades. If there were other teachers in the same school who were also participating in the study, those classrooms were also invited to participate. This resulted in a total of 19 teachers (42% Group 1) from 11 schools (45% Group 1).

Teachers in each participating classroom sent informed consent forms home with students. Students whose parents provided consent and who themselves provided assent were able to participate. This resulted in a total of 102 participating students in Group 1 and 169 participating

students in Group 2 (response rate for parental consent = 74%, consent rate = 83%). Students ranged from Kindergarten to Grade 7 and were approximately half female.



## Evaluation and Implementation Timeline

Time 1 October/November 2019	Implementation November 2019-February 2020	Time 2 February/March 2020
<p><b>Teachers</b> Teachers in Groups 1 and 2 were asked to complete an online questionnaire package. This included questions related to SEL (e.g., teachers' own knowledge and confidence of SEL) and perceptions of students in their classrooms (e.g., students' school motivation and engagement).</p> <p><b>Students</b> Students in Groups 1 and 2 were also asked to complete a questionnaire package. This included questions related to students' confidence in their SEL skills, perceptions of classroom climate, and school motivation and engagement. For older students, each question was read aloud by trained research assistants and students could follow along and complete the pencil-and-paper questionnaire. This was done as a whole class (Grades 6-8) or in small groups of 2-4 students (Grades 3-5), with research assistants available to provide assistance as needed. For younger students (Grades K-2), the questionnaire was completed one-on-one in an interview style. Research assistants read each question aloud and students could respond verbally or by indicating their response on a visual scale. Their response was then recorded by the research assistant.</p>	<p>Following completion of the questionnaire package, teachers in Group 1 were given access to the Faith and Wellness Resource website. A package of resources (e.g., information on how the Faith and Wellness resource related to the Aligned and Integration Model for School Mental Health and Wellbeing, as well as other information sheets) was made available to board mental health leaders and superintendents to keep them apprised of the project and enable them to support participating teachers.</p> <p>For the next three months, Group 1 teachers were asked to complete a minimum of 18 daily mental health practices (1 from each SEL core element category, repeated at least 3 times). Each activity is designed to take approximately 5 minutes, allowing it to be easily incorporated into teachers' daily instruction. Teachers were sent an electronic feedback form approximately every two weeks, which they were asked to complete after they had implemented a practice at least three times. The feedback form asked questions regarding teachers' use of and comfort with the resource, students' reaction, and any modifications made to the practice.</p>	<p><b>Teachers</b> Following the three-month implementation period, teachers in Groups 1 and 2 were invited to complete another online questionnaire package. Some Group 1 teachers also participated in focus group discussions. After completing the Time 2 questionnaire, Group 2 teachers were provided access to the Faith and Wellness Resource website. Group 2 teachers (as well as Group 1 teachers) were also asked to implement practices over the following three months for a second implementation period. All implementation and data collection ceased in mid-March, however, due to COVID-19 school closures.</p> <p><b>Students</b> Students were also asked to complete a second questionnaire package. Some Group 1 students also participated in focus group discussions. Data collection did not occur for 2 schools (5 teachers) due to COVID-19 school closures.</p>

# Effect of the RCT: Did the Faith and Wellness Resource Work?

## Teachers

The main goal of this study was to understand whether there would be improvements in a variety of outcomes (e.g., SEL knowledge, SEL confidence) for teachers who had been using the Faith and Wellness Resource (based on random selection), compared to teachers who had not been using the resource. To assess this goal, we examined how teacher responses to a variety of outcomes changed over time (Time 1 to Time 2), and whether these changes differed for teachers who did versus did not implement the Faith and Wellness Resource. Many of the questions asked specifically about the six skill categories represented in the Faith and Wellness resource. These categories were: stress management and coping, identification and management of emotions, positive motivation and perseverance, healthy relationship skills, self-awareness and sense of identity, and executive functioning. Teachers were given a description of the skill categories at the beginning of the questionnaire package.

Teachers' Scores at Time 1				
	Group 1		Group 2	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
SEL Knowledge	4.38	.51	3.39	.63
General SEL Confidence	3.61	.72	3.45	.85
SEL Confidence	3.52	.71	3.51	.73
SEL Support	3.89	.94	3.95	.96
Frequency of SEL	2.63	.93	2.66	.90
Student SEL	2.24	.50	2.36	.44
Student Catholic Graduate Expectations	2.42	.45	2.51	.39
Classroom Climate	2.54	.38	2.56	.46
Student School motivation and Engagement	2.85	.46	2.82	.46
Student Academic Performance	2.47	.50	2.58	.39

Teachers' Scores at Time 2				
	Group 1		Group 2	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
SEL Knowledge	3.81	.53	3.37	.61
General SEL Confidence	3.93	.58	3.47	.77
SEL Confidence	3.81	.56	3.41	.73
SEL Support	4.03	1.02	3.96	.96
Frequency of SEL	3.12	.85	2.67	1.00
Student SEL	2.66	.47	2.37	.39
Student Catholic Graduate Expectations	2.79	.55	2.53	.37
Classroom Climate	2.79	.37	2.62	.47
Student School motivation and Engagement	3.12	.45	2.80	.46
Student Academic Performance	2.59	.58	2.61	.39

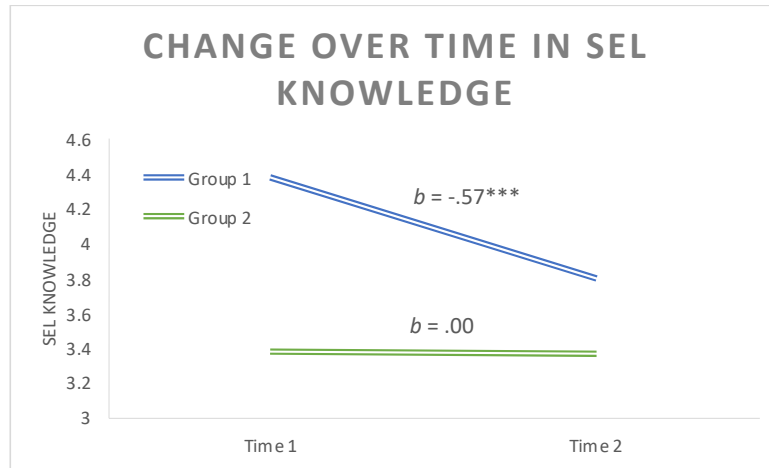
## SEL Knowledge

Teachers were asked to indicate their current level of knowledge related to each of the six SEL skill categories (i.e., the degree to which they have the knowledge required to introduce each competency to students, model it in the classroom, and answer related student questions), rated from 1 = Not at All Knowledgeable to 5 = Extremely Knowledgeable.

Contrary to expectations, results indicated that teachers in Group 1 significantly decreased in their reported SEL knowledge over time, whereas teachers in Group 2 did not change over time<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> SEL knowledge at Time 1 was significantly higher for Group 1 compared to Group 2; thus, this finding may be a statistical artifact known as 'regression to the mean.'

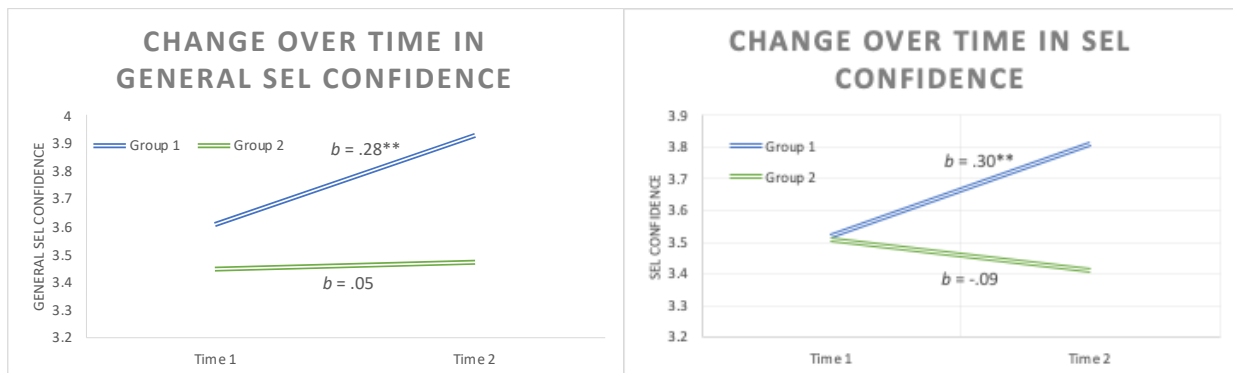
<sup>2</sup> In the following graphs, 'b' indicates the amount of change over time. \*\* indicates that the change over time is significantly different from 0.



## SEL Confidence

Teachers were asked about their general SEL confidence as it related to: discussing social emotional learning with students, delivering materials related to social emotional learning, and handling questions from students related to social emotional learning. They were also asked to rate their confidence in teaching in each of the six SEL skills categories. Both measures of confidence were rated from 1 = Not at All Confident to 5 = Extremely Confident.

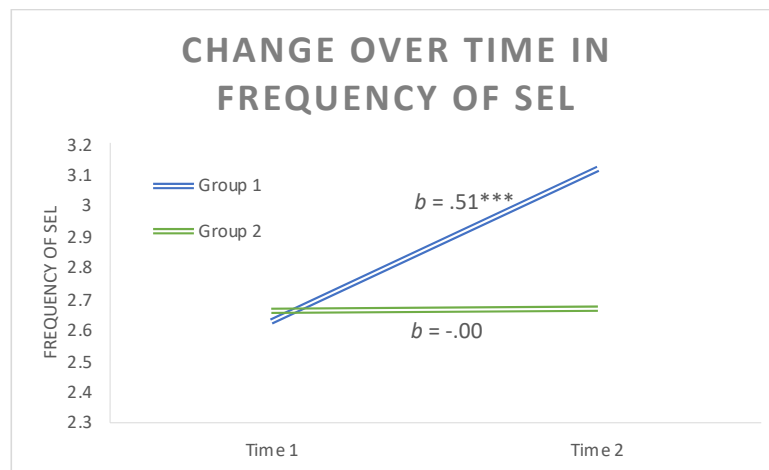
As expected, teachers in Group 1 significantly increased in both general SEL confidence and specific SEL confidence between Time 1 and 2, whereas teachers in Group 2 did not significantly change over time.



## Frequency of SEL

Teachers reported how often they supported students' SEL in the moment when challenges arose, ranging from 1= Never/very rarely (less than once a month) to 5 = More than twice a day/very often. Frequency of SEL was also assessed during structured teaching. Teachers indicated how often they engage in structured teaching in each of the six SEL skill categories, also rated from 1-5.

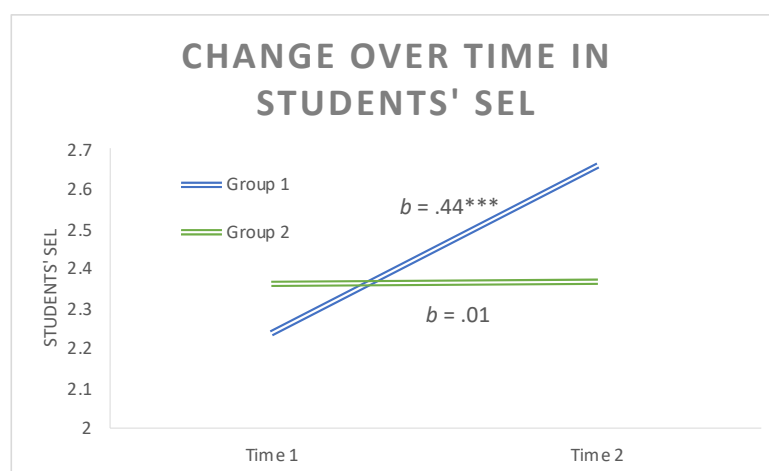
Results showed no difference between teachers in Group 1 and 2 in their amount of ‘in the moment’ SEL support. For frequency of structured SEL teaching, however, teachers in Group 1 showed significant increases over time, whereas teachers in Group 2 did not.



## Teachers' Perceptions of Students' SEL

To assess teachers' perceptions of their students' SEL skills in the classroom, teachers were asked to rate the number of students in their classroom who currently demonstrate competencies in each of the six SEL skill categories, rated from 1 = None/almost none of the students in my class demonstrate competencies in this category to 4 = All/almost all of the students in my class demonstrate competencies in this category.

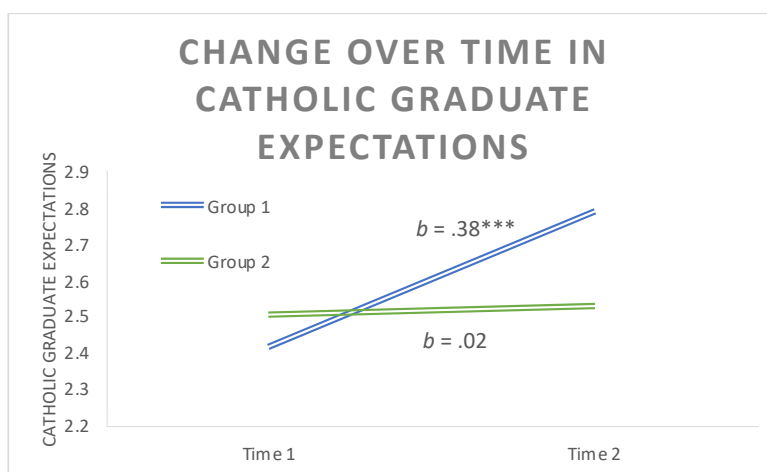
As expected, results indicated that Group 1 teachers increased in their perceptions of students' SEL over time and Group 2 teachers did not.



## Catholic Graduate Expectations

To assess teachers' perception of their students' competencies with the Catholic Graduate Expectations, teachers were asked to rate the number of students in their classroom who displayed competencies in each of the seven Catholic Graduate Expectations categories: a discerning believer; an effective communicator; a reflective, creative, and holistic thinker; a self-directed, responsible, and lifelong learner; a collaborative contributor; a caring family member; a responsible citizen. Each question included a description of the Catholic Graduate Expectation. Answers were rated from 1 = None/almost none of the students in my class match this description to 4 = All/almost all of the students in my class match this description.

The same pattern of results was found: Group 1 teachers increased in their perceptions of students' Catholic Graduate Expectation competencies over time and Group 2 teachers did not.

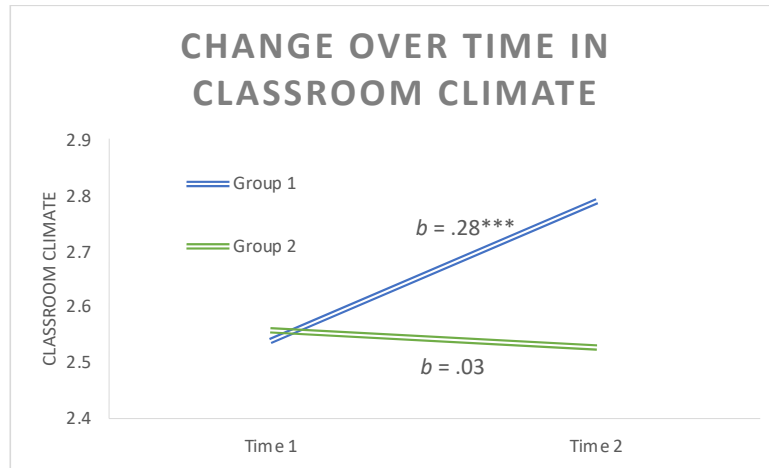


## Classroom Climate

Teachers reported on their perceptions of the classroom climate with 12 questions, rated from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree. Questions included: “Students in this class are respectful and caring of others” and “Students in this class take care to create a pleasant learning atmosphere.”

Group 1 teachers significantly increased in their perceptions of classroom climate between Time 1 and Time 2, whereas Group 2 teachers did not change over time.

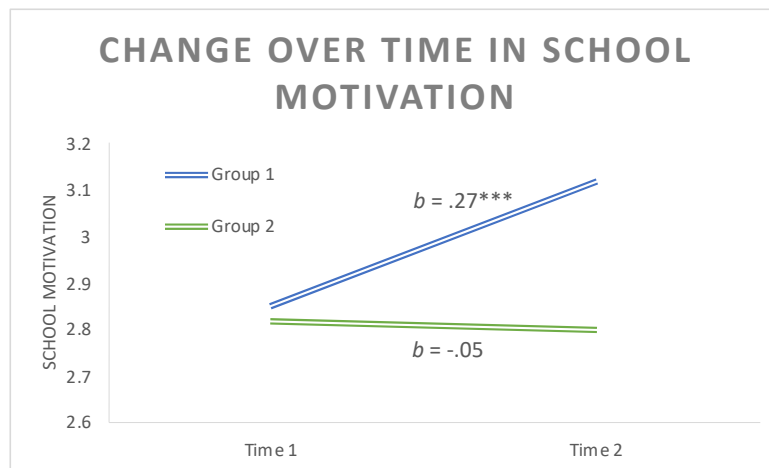




## School Motivation and Engagement

Teachers reported on their perceptions of students' school motivation and engagement with 5 questions, rated from 1 = None/almost none to 4 = All/almost all (e.g., "Students in my class try hard in school").

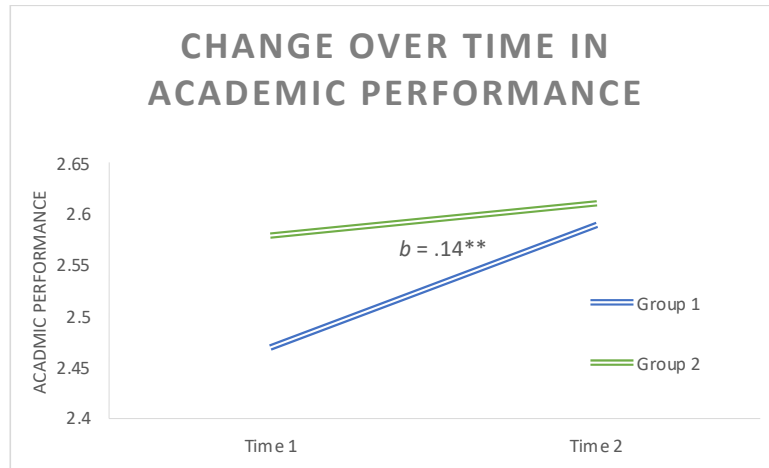
Once again, the same pattern was found: Group 1 teachers reported increases in their perceptions of students' school motivation and engagement, but Group 2 teachers did not.



## Academic Performance

Teachers rated their students' academic performance with 4 items, such as "Students in my class are doing well academically". Responses were rated from 1 = None/almost none to 4 = All/almost all.

Results indicated that, overall, teachers reported increases in students' academic performance from Time 1 to Time 2. There was no significant difference, however, between teachers in Groups 1 and 2.



## Students

Students were asked to report on their confidence in each of the six SEL skill categories. They were also asked to report on their wellbeing, with 12 questions that assessed their positive emotional state and positive outlook. Questions included: “I have been feeling calm,” and “I think good things will happen in my life.” Students reported on their perceptions of the classroom climate, with 5 questions, such as: “Students in my class work well together.” They reported how much they liked school using a 10-question measure (“I like being at school”), and finally, they reported on their school motivation and engagement using a 5-question measure (“I do the best I can at school”). All questions were rated from 1-5.

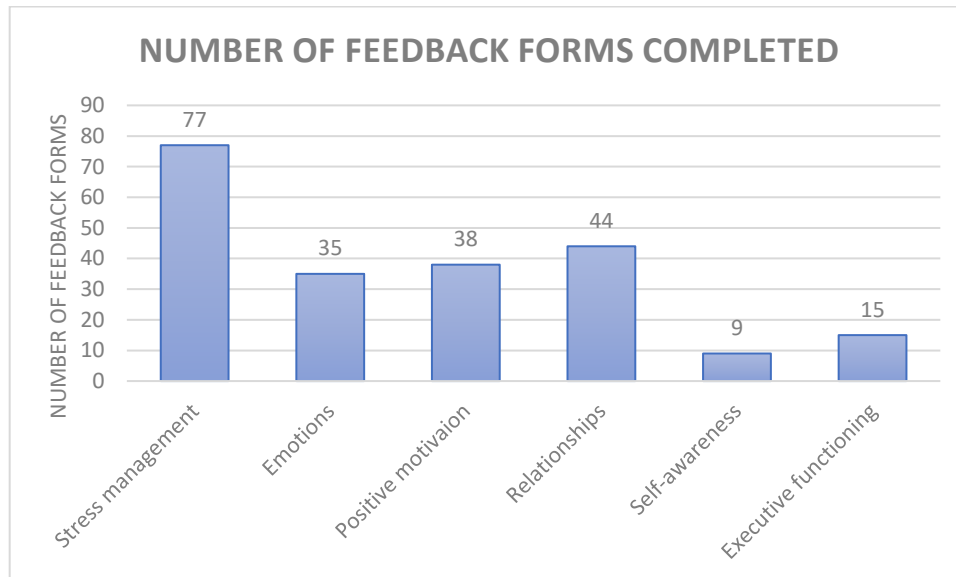
Contrary to expectations, being in Group 1 versus Group 2 was not significantly related to the change in any of the outcomes.

Students' Scores at Time 1				
	Group 1		Group 2	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
SEL Confidence	3.72	.90	3.81	.81
General Wellbeing	3.86	.73	3.94	.72
Classroom Climate	3.88	.73	4.07	.63
School Liking	3.59	.88	3.73	.88
School Motivation and Engagement	4.31	.74	4.40	.69

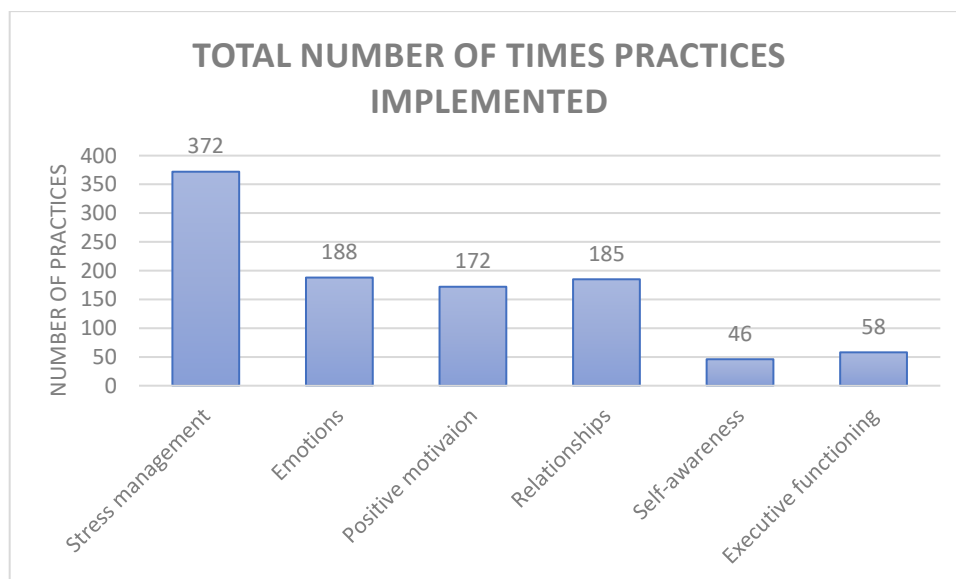
Students' Scores at Time 2				
	Group 1		Group 2	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
SEL Confidence	3.70	.85	3.83	.64
General Wellbeing	3.70	.76	3.89	.64
Classroom Climate	3.72	.70	3.96	.59
School Liking	3.62	.90	3.80	.81
School Motivation and Engagement	3.70	.85	3.83	.64

## Implementation: How Often Did Group 1 Teachers Use the Resource?

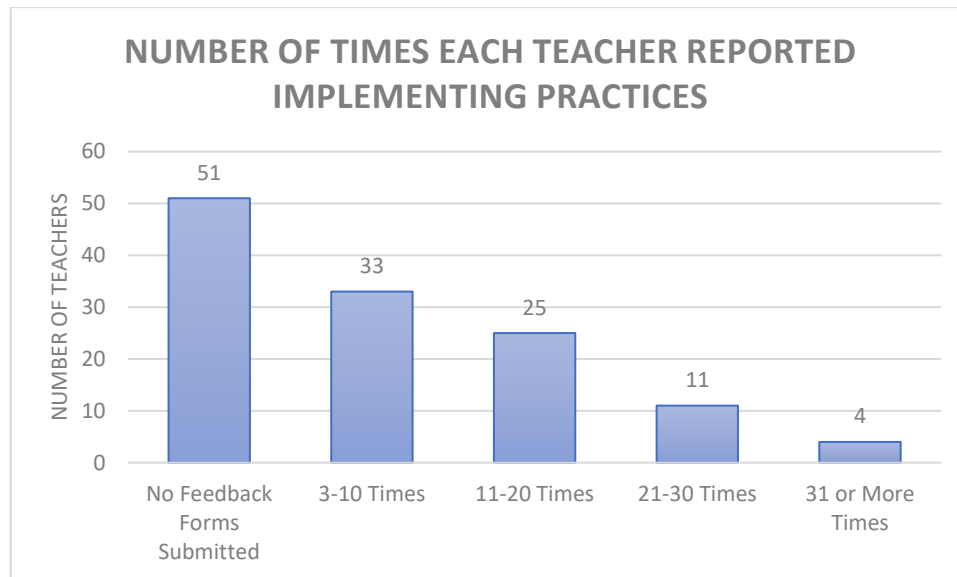
Teachers in Group 1 were asked to complete a feedback form following the implementation of a practice at least 3 times. Each feedback form included a series of questions assessing teachers' perceptions of the practice and reactions to implementing the practice. Teachers completed a total of 218 feedback forms, with rates varying across each of the six SEL categories.



Teachers reported variety in the number of times they implemented each practice, with rates varying from 3 to 10 or more times within each feedback form. Rates of the total number of times the practices were implemented also varied across each of the 6 SEL categories.



Teachers varied in the extent to which they implemented the resource, with individual teachers reporting that they had implemented practices anywhere from 0 to 64 times over the three-month implementation period<sup>3</sup>.



## Why did Some Teachers Not Implement the Resource?

To understand why some Group 1 teachers may not have implemented the intervention, we compared teachers who completed feedback forms ( $N = 73$ ) to teachers who did not complete feedback forms ( $N = 51$ ) on a number of factors. We examined the number of years individuals had been teaching, the grade level in which the resource was being used, and Time 1 scores on all outcomes. There were virtually no differences found between the groups. This suggests that there is little evidence that prior teaching experience, grade level taught, or initial scores on outcomes of interest (e.g., SEL knowledge, SEL confidence) present a barrier to teachers implementing the resource.

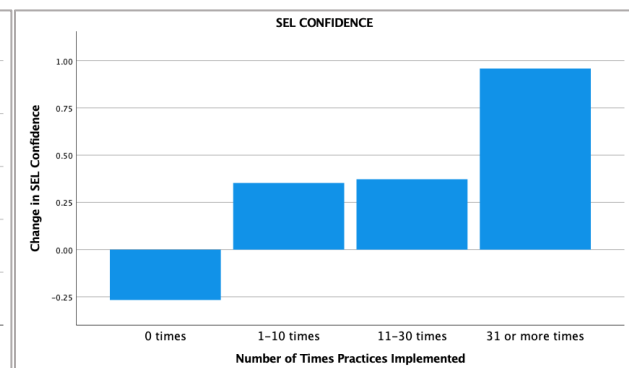
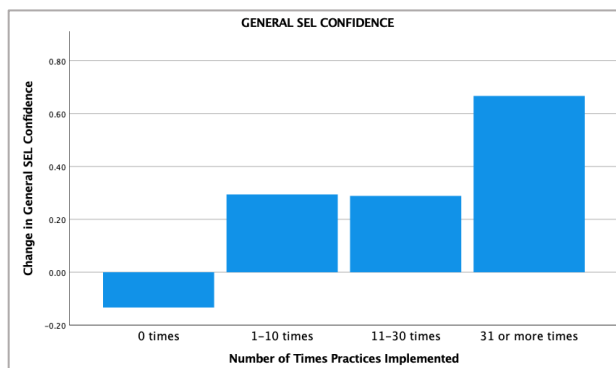
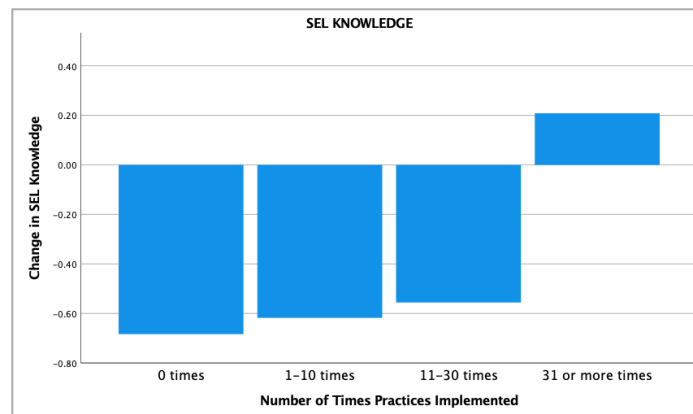
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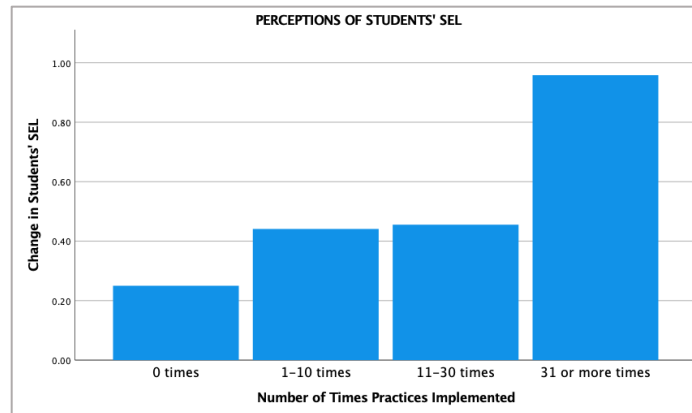
<sup>3</sup> These numbers are based on submitted feedback forms; it is possible that teachers implemented practices but did not complete an accompanying feedback form. Subsequent analyses should be considered with that in mind.

# Dosage: Did it Matter How Often the Resource was Used?

## Teachers

Given the large range in number of times teachers reported implementing the practices, we examined whether the number of times each teacher implemented practices (ranging from 0-64) was related to the extent to which they reported change over time. For SEL knowledge, general SEL confidence, specific SEL confidence, and perceptions of students' SEL, we found that the more times teachers reported implementing practices, the more positive change in the outcome. For the remaining variables, there was no significant prediction from the number of times teachers implemented the practices.





As a follow-up, we also assessed whether years of teaching experience or grade level taught predicted change in any outcome. With one exception<sup>4</sup>, there were no significant findings. This suggests that, overall, changes in outcomes were found regardless of teaching experience or grade level.

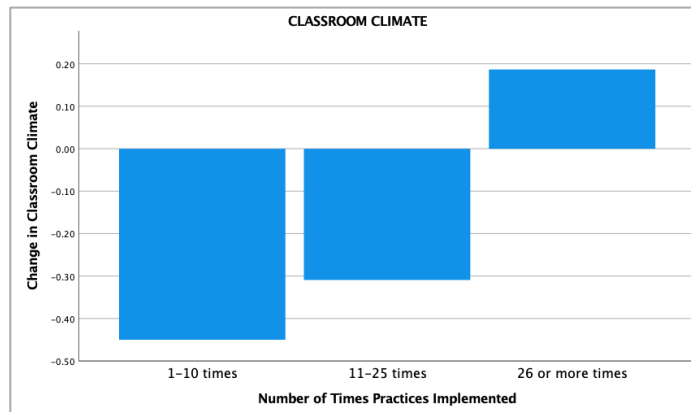
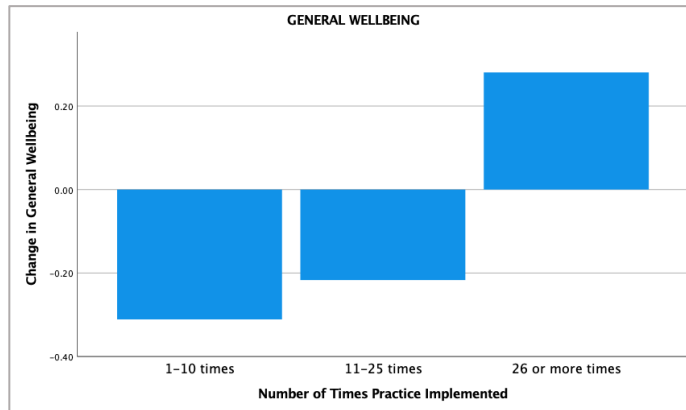
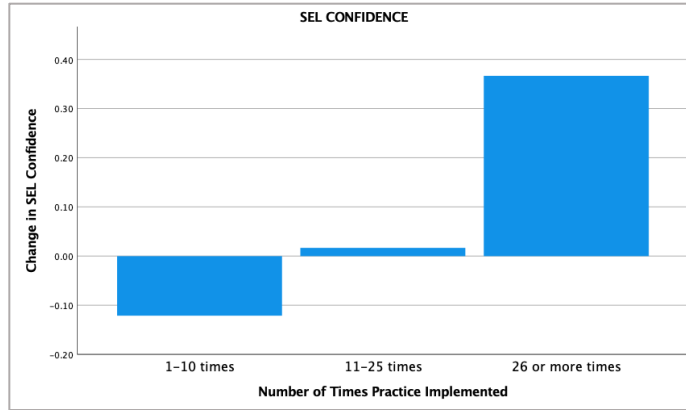
## Students

For students in Group 1, there was also variety in the number of times each teacher implemented the Faith and Wellness practices. Across the 6 classrooms with both Time 1 and Time 2 data collection, teachers implemented practices with their students between 7 and 26 times over the three-month implementation period<sup>5</sup>.

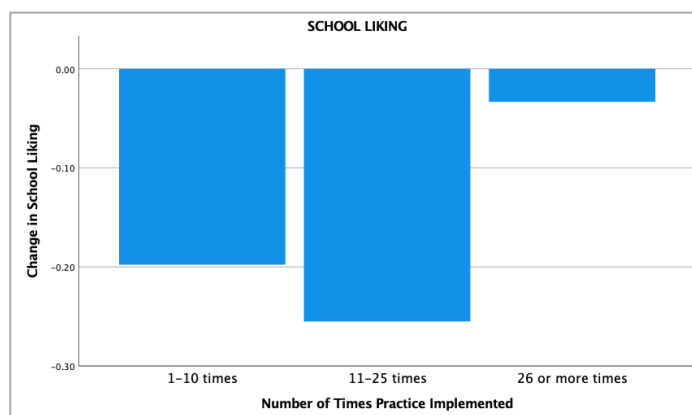
Because of the range in implementation, we examined whether the number of times teachers reported implementing practices was related to students' reported changes over time. We found that the more times teachers reported implementing practices, the more positive change in students' confidence in their SEL skills. The same pattern was found for general wellbeing, classroom climate, and school liking. There was no significant effect of number of practices implemented on school motivation and engagement.

<sup>4</sup> Use of the resource in primary grades (Grades 1-3) as well as intermediate grades (Grades 7-8) was associated with larger increases in frequency of SEL teaching (compared to use in Grades 4-6).

<sup>5</sup> These numbers are based on submitted feedback forms; it is possible that teachers implemented practices but did not complete an accompanying feedback form. Subsequent analyses should be considered with that in mind.







## SEL Skills: What Did Students Learn from the Practices?

### Teachers

Teachers were asked to provide feedback and talk about their experiences using the Faith and Wellness Resource as part of focus group discussions. Select Group 1 teachers (based on a randomized list) were invited to participate in the focus groups. A total of 6 teachers participated. Teachers were asked to reflect on their use of the Faith and Wellness resource and how using the resource changed both their own and their students' social-emotional learning.

In the focus groups, teachers reported specific skills students had learned through their implementation of the Faith and Wellness Resource. Teachers described observing students using these skills, in each of the six SEL categories, both during the implementation and during other times.

### Stress Management and Coping

Students' skills in stress management and coping were frequently discussed. Several teachers reported that implementing the Stress Management and Coping practices helped students to calm down and focus. Teachers used these practices quite frequently. With (at times) a gentle reminder, students were also able to use specific coping strategies themselves when experiencing a challenging time.

*"The stress management...I could easily catch them in a situation and say, 'Were you using a calming strategy to help your focus here?' and they would be able to use that."*

Some teachers described these practices as providing a short mental health break for both the students and for themselves. Practices were used to support transitions during the day (e.g., coming in after recess, at the end of the day) or were used sporadically throughout the day when the class just needed a short break to calm down and re-focus.

### Identification and Management of Emotions

Teachers were able to identify several instances where their students showed increased ability to both identify and manage their emotions. The practices provided some new language and vocabulary that students were able to use in different situations to identify how they were feeling and then choose a strategy to manage those emotions. Teachers used these practices frequently, including asking students to check in daily around how they were feeling (e.g., *What's My Temperature*), such that it became part of their regular classroom talk.

One teacher stated that the Identification and Management of Emotions practices were particularly helpful for older students, in that sharing experiences and using common language helped students understand that all of their peers might be experiencing some similar challenges.

*"I think it's good especially with older students to hear these kinds of things in their class because then it really takes the taboo away from kids thinking that it's not okay to talk about your feelings or you push away [your feelings]. So, I think [talking about your emotions] is something that's so good to just have open in your class."*

### Positive Motivation and Perseverance

Teachers noticed that the practices supported students' positive outlook and positive motivation. Teachers also noted that, through repeating some of the practices, students improved in their ability to express gratitude. For instance, in the *Thank You God* practice, students at first focused on thanking God for the birds or the clouds. Over time, teachers supported students to think about having gratitude for others and even for themselves.

*"Having that gratitude even for recognizing the good that you did yourself. So, that recognition of yourself and the goodness that you have given to others ... as well as recognizing it in others."*

### Healthy Relationship Skills

Some teachers reported that the healthy relationships practices were more challenging than practices in other areas. There were some practices that were more difficult to implement frequently, which prevented students from having repeated practice of these new healthy relationship skills. While students were able to demonstrate new skills in the classroom during implementation of the practice, teachers suggested that it might take more time and focus on healthy relationship skills for those to transfer to other situations and contexts. Some teachers did have success with the healthy relationship skills. One teacher talked about their modifications to the *Kindness Jar* practice, and how effective it was for students to not only show kindness to one another, but to do so in a way that was visually overt for everyone to see.

*"It became this overflowing visual piece."*

### Self-Awareness and Sense of Identity

A number of teachers noticed the impact of the practices on students' confidence. Particularly for certain students who had previously been struggling with their self-confidence, teachers saw

improvements. Teachers talked about how the practices had provided these students with a voice. Students were more open, and better able to express themselves. One teacher noticed that supporting self-awareness and identity was particularly important early in the school year; upon returning to school after the summer, students needed a self-confidence boost. For this teacher, focusing on self-confidence and identity early in the school year was helpful.

## Executive Functioning

Some strategies, particularly in the executive functioning category, were particularly well suited to enhance students' academic success. Students learned to break a large task down into smaller pieces, to be more effective problem solvers, and to think critically about what other worries or stresses they might have that keep them from their academic work. Teachers discussed other practices that supported students' organizational capacities, and several other practices supported students in their ability to focus. Even taking a short break to implement a Faith and Wellness Resource practice changed the climate in the classroom.

*"You felt the whole room just calm down and then they were in a space that was better for them to start learning and it was really fantastic to see how they could start to use this to regulate themselves."*

## Students

Students from two randomly selected Group 1 classrooms also participated in focus group discussions; one Grade 5 class and one Grade 2 class (21 students total; 62% Grade 5, 52% girls). Students were asked to reflect on their experiences in school over the past few months, as well as talk specifically about the Faith and Wellness practices.

In the focus groups, students in both grades 2 and 5 reported specific skills they had learned to deal with challenging situations, in each of the six SEL categories.

## Stress Management and Coping

All of the students commented on stress management and coping practices that they had done. Several remembered *Tense and Relax* and various mindfulness practices, and spoke about how these practices had helped them learn to calm themselves down.

*"It's sometimes when you are mad and you calm yourself down, like you have moments of silence."*

*"I take a few breaths, like you guys taught us to do, and sometimes I meditate, so I just calm myself."*

Students also spoke about a number of different strategies and techniques they used to help them remain calm in a stressful situation, including taking a deep breath, listening to music, reading, drawing or colouring, praying, meditating, and doing something calm.

## Identification and Management of Emotions

Students in grades 2 and 5 mentioned thinking of a happy place or calming themselves down when they are feeling upset. One student described how, if she were having an argument with a friend and getting upset, she recognized that she might say something offensive. She said that she was able to calm herself down before she talked to the friend to avoid furthering the argument.

## Positive Motivation and Perseverance

A grade 2 student remembered learning about *The Power of Yet*, a Faith and Wellness practice that focuses on reducing negative self-talk and adopting a growth mindset. Other students spoke about various ways they were able to persevere and stay determined, even if working on a very challenging task.

*Student 1: "I ask my partner."*

*Student 2: "You ask a friend."*

*Student 3: "Ask a teacher."*

*Student 1: "Or sometimes read it over a lot of times and you'll get it."*

## Healthy Relationship Skills

Grade 2 students spoke about how, during the Faith and Wellness practices, they learned to be kind to others. One mentioned that he had made new friends through the relationship building activities they had done in their class.

Students in grades 2 and 5 talked about a variety of strategies they used to help them work through disagreements with friends and classmates to maintain positive relationships. Strategies included talking through the problem together, writing an apology card, taking turns, taking some time for oneself and then apologizing, or simply letting go of hurt feelings and moving past a disagreement.

## Self-Awareness and Sense of Identity

Self-awareness and identity skills were infrequently discussed, though students in both Grades 2 and 5 did mention these skills. A Grade 2 student remembered learning how to use positive self-talk. A Grade 5 student demonstrated self-awareness and self-confidence when she spoke about herself.

*"I'm a joyful person at home. I'm joyful at school, I laugh like crazy. I don't know why, it's just something about me. I laugh all the time, and I laugh so I feel more joyful. I'm very happy most of the time."*

## Executive Functioning

Students talked about a wide range of problem-solving skills and ways to stay engaged with a task or their schoolwork.

*“I take my time and I look over everything.”*

*“I just take it home and then I ask my mom and dad; they are really good at math somehow. So, I ask them, and they usually tell me what to do and after if I still don't understand I go on the internet and they explain it to me. Then after I went on the internet, then I'll ask my teacher after, I just get a lot of information.”*

One grade 5 student noted that, sometimes when her classroom was too loud for her to concentrate, she would stop, take a deep breath, and was able to ignore some of the distractions occurring and stick to her goals.

# Impact of the Resource: Changes for Teachers and Students in Key Areas

## Teachers

When teachers discussed their experiences implementing the Faith and Wellness Resource in the focus groups, they noted changes had occurred for themselves. These changes fell into three general categories: awareness and confidence around SEL teaching, increased frequency of SEL teaching and changes in their own behaviour, and improvements to their personal wellbeing.

### Awareness and Confidence

One teacher talked about how, through engaging in the practices with her class, she realized that for some students, even the basic concepts could be challenging.

*“I had one student who was very high energy, hyperactive, ADHD, and I realized through these activities that he didn’t know what it felt like to be calm. It was kind of eye-opening for me because when I just tell him to calm down or breathe and be calm, he didn’t even really understand what that felt like.”*

She talked about how this realization prompted her to further her teaching on SEL, including considering how bodies can feel in different states.

Other teachers reported increased awareness of the importance of SEL. They spoke about gaining confidence in their own skills from engaging in the practices. They also talked about how seeing the impact of the practices on students helped increase confidence that taking time to focus on SEL in the classroom was necessary.

*“The fact that it works... I feel confident in saying that it is something where time should be spent and that’s why.”*

### Behavioural Changes and Frequency of SEL Teaching

Some teachers reported changes in their behavior, specifically in relation to how they spoke to and treated the students in their class. One teacher noted that she was engaging her students by speaking to them in a gentle, softer tone. She also reported checking in on students more frequently to see what wellness strategies they were using. Another teacher mentioned viewing her students very differently now, as a result of engaging in the Faith and Wellness practices.

*“I listen more to what they’re saying and what they’re not saying...I take more time to read their body language.”*

Many teachers talked about increasing their frequency of SEL in the classroom. Many found that engaging in the practices multiple times, even daily or throughout the day, was very effective for their students. For some students, it provided predictability in their schedule. For others, the practices were used as a quick break throughout the day to bring students back to focus, or as a way to support transition times.

*“They were doing it every day throughout the day. So not just a lesson for this period in time, but some of those breathing exercises...were [incorporated] into the actual programming of the day as transitional pieces.”*

One teacher even said that she had left a Faith and Wellness practice for a supply teacher. The supply teacher had left a note saying that the practice was so helpful, they wanted to add it to their repertoire for when they had a full-time class themselves.

## Teacher Wellbeing

Teachers also discussed how the practices helped support their own mental health and wellbeing. Some noted that, in leading students through the practices, they too would calm down or self-regulate. They were able to remind students of strategies they would use themselves and encourage students to do the same.

*“I really did rely on this program a lot for my own sanity and for the harmony in the classroom.”*

## Students

Students were asked to speak generally about changes they had experienced since the beginning of the school year, before their teachers had started implementing the Faith and Wellness Resource. Students discussed feelings about themselves, their relationships with classmates and friends, and their thoughts about school.

### Self

Students generally reported feeling good about themselves; they could identify things they were good at and skills and abilities that they were proud of. Only one student reported feeling happier at the beginning of the year compared to now; she noted that it was because the kids in her class were a little nicer at the beginning of the year. Other students reported feeling better now compared to at the beginning of the year. Students reported that the reasons for feeling better included feeling important and feeling more confident now than they had before.

*“[I feel] a bit happier because... with my friends, I feel like I'm needed around my friends, I feel like I'm important.”*

### Relationships

Students reported exclusively positive changes in terms of their friendships. Students noted that they were more familiar with more peers in their class, they had more friends, and were happier now because of their positive relationships with friends. Students noted trust and familiarity as key components of their improved relationships with peers.

*“Now is better because now I feel like I get to know everybody more, everybody's familiar with me, I can talk to anyone, and I know who I trust.”*

Students also noted positive changes with regards to other classmates who may not have been their friends but were helpful and kind. A few students noted, however, that because classmates were more familiar with one another, the classroom environment felt more chaotic.

## School

Many students discussed how they liked coming to school, particularly because they liked learning. Some noted that school was challenging, especially when they had a lot of homework or tests.

*Student 1: “I’m frustrated.”*

*Interviewer: “How come you’re frustrated?”*

*Student 1: “All the work that I have to do...And when we get back we have to do a bunch of work.”*

Though students generally reported feeling positive about school and enjoyed coming to school, very few reported that their feelings around school had actually changed over time. One noted that she did not used to enjoy coming to school, but now she did due to the variety of things she was learning. Some noted that school was more difficult now than it had been at the beginning of the year because they felt like they had much more work to do.



# Mechanisms: How Did the Resource Support Changes for Students?

In their discussion of the changes that they had noticed for students in their classrooms, teachers were able to identify a number of key mechanisms that helped to support change for students.

These included:

1. The importance of a whole class approach
2. That this approach provided students with new vocabulary and language they could use
3. That practices were short and easy to implement frequently and throughout the day, and when repeated, provided students with predictability and routine
4. That learning the practices provided strategies that students could use on their own both in the classroom and in other contexts.

## Whole Class Approach

Teachers talked about the benefits of engaging in the practices as a class, as well as having flexibility for students to reflect individually. Particularly in terms of academic engagement, teachers noted that having specific skills and strategies that everyone in the class was familiar with was helpful. After learning the skills and being aware of the strategies, all it took was a quick reminder for students to be able to enact the strategies themselves when they were having difficulties. One teacher mentioned that, after implementing a practice with the whole classroom, she provided students a private place to reflect on their experiences.

*“Recording their responses really did allow those kids who were shy or who were more introverted an opportunity to think about it and express themselves.”*

Another teacher spoke about how being able to learn and talk about calming strategies as a whole class was particularly helpful for one student who struggled with these strategies. The student began to talk to his classmates and hear about the ways in which they were able to calm down and what that felt like in their bodies.

*“This particular student, it was very interesting because he started talking to his class...He was starting to identify ‘I think I should try that; I recognize that I’m [doing that].’ He became more self-aware.”*

## New Vocabulary and Language

One of the ways in which the practices helped to support changes in students’ behaviour was by providing them with new vocabulary and language to talk about their feelings, stresses, or experiences. Teachers reported students even as young as Kindergarten being able to report their feelings, and what strategy they were able to use, and how their feelings had changed.

*“Kindergarten students themselves recognizing, ‘I’m feeling upset right now, I’m feeling I’m not happy at this time.’ They’re really starting to identify how they’re feeling and what things that they can do that are available for them in their classroom.”*

Teachers noted more talk about SEL concepts in the classroom, and students being more open in expressing themselves.

## **Short, Predictable, Reliable**

Teachers noted that the brevity of the tasks was helpful, particularly for use in the classroom. Students could take a two-minute break or do a short activity during a transition time, which helped them focus academically without losing too much instruction time. Teachers discussed how, having a number of practices that were familiar to students, and used frequently, helped to normalize them. That is, students could engage in a quick SEL practice not only during specific instruction time, but also on their own time when needed.

*“They felt comfortable with it and instead of waiting for me to introduce what we would be doing that day, they would ask for permission to go and take a minute and do that. [A student would say] ‘I just need to go out into the hallway and do my deep belly breathing, are you okay if I do that, but I’ll leave the classroom door open’.”*

Several teachers also mentioned the importance of predictability and the routine aspect of repeating the practices.

*“I found that implementing the practices into my classroom on a routine basis helped with class engagement and improving their mindset about mental health, and the importance of mindfulness.”*

Even after being away on leave, one teacher mentioned that she was able to re-implement the strategies and quickly regain control of the classroom climate. Other teachers mentioned that students requested the practices and reminded teachers of the practices they had previously learned. Incorporating the practices into an everyday routine was helpful for students, and students learned to anticipate and expect them.

*“I did not remember to incorporate meditation into our day, they would request the meditation. They found it calming and helped them for the rest of the day.”*

## **Using the Strategies in Other Contexts**

Several teachers spoke about the practices having an impact in that students had learned a variety of new strategies that they could use in the classroom, as well as in other contexts. Teachers noted times when students were independent and proactive in using their new SEL skills. After engaging in some meditation practices as a whole class, students in an intermediate class began to lead the meditation themselves. In some classrooms, teachers had organized the physical space to support students’ use of their SEL skills.

*“I saw changes in that they would say, I need to go...to the pillow corner and do some deep belly breathing.”*

*“You see [Kindergarteners] in their little safe havens that are created and maybe afterwards when they leave, if you approach them and ask them they will tell you why*

*they were there and what they were feeling when they went there. Maybe they were sad because a friend wasn't sharing with them...and then [they can identify] how they are feeling afterwards. It's pretty remarkable actually that little 5-year-olds are expressing these before and after emotions and feelings."*

Teachers talked about seeing students implement some of the strategies they had learned in the hallway or on the playground. Several students reported using the practices at home or before they went to bed. Through this, teachers noted that they felt the impact of the Faith and Wellness Resource was extending to other students and families.

*"I do believe that this has rippled out to families as well. So, not only has the program taken care of the little ones, but it's also taking care of their extended family too."*

# Satisfaction: Were Teachers and Students Satisfied with the Resource?

## Teachers

### Overall Perceptions

As part of the feedback forms, teachers were asked to report on their perceptions about the practices, including whether the practice was well suited for diverse students, beneficial for students, and easy to implement. Teachers responded to 7 items, rated from 1 = Somewhat disagree to 4 = Agree. Teachers reported very positive overall perceptions of the practices. Perceptions were consistently positive across the 6 SEL categories.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Practices		
	Mean	Standard Deviation
The practice was at the appropriate level for my students	3.83	.41
The practice was well suited for the diverse backgrounds of my students	3.82	.43
The practice was well suited for the diverse learning needs of my students	3.77	.46
The activity was easily implemented into my practice	3.85	.41
I found this practice beneficial for students	3.81	.46
I found this practice beneficial for myself	3.80	.48
I would engage in this practice again	3.86	.40

## Student Reactions

Teachers were asked to respond to 3 questions that assessed students' reactions to the practice. Each item was rated from 1 = None to 4 = All. Results indicated that teachers believed students were highly engaged with the practices. Again, student engagement was consistently high across SEL categories.

Student Reactions to the Practices		
	Mean	Standard Deviation
How many students participated in the practice?	3.54	.58
Of the students who participated, how many seemed to enjoy the practice?	3.30	.59
How many of the students appeared to have understood the concept in the practice?	3.27	.61

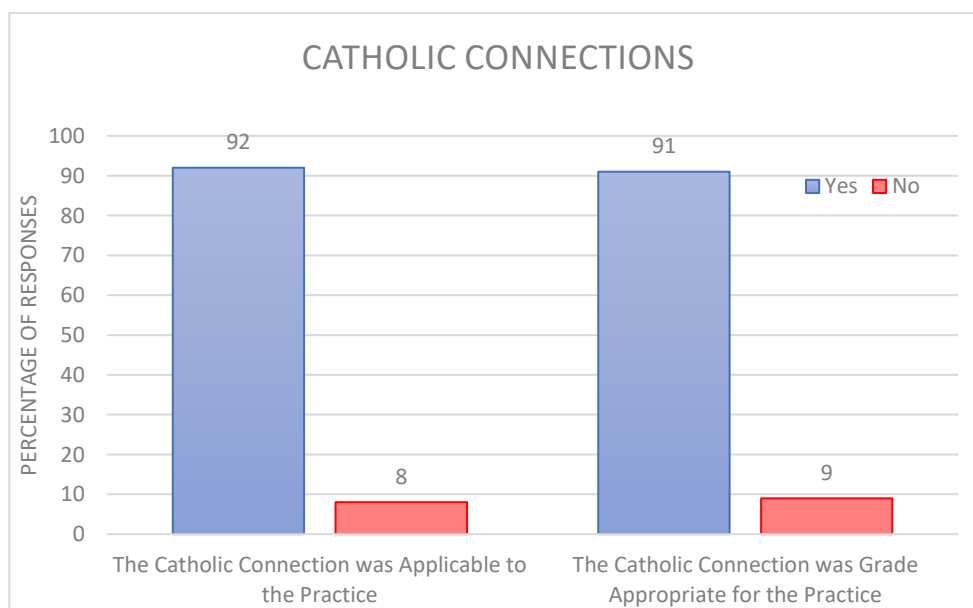
## Usefulness for Diverse Students

Teachers were also asked to provide their feedback on the resource as part of a focus group discussion. As part of these discussions, teachers commented on how the Faith and Wellness Resource was useful for a variety of students. Some practices were more group-based and active, whereas others were quieter and more individual. Teachers talked about using a combination of these practices to support the diversity of students in their class. One teacher noted that some practices were challenging for a few students who had significant needs, but these students were still able to participate in certain parts of the activities. Another teacher mentioned that the predictability of the Faith and Wellness practices was very effective for some children with exceptionalities in her class. She had added the practices to a visual schedule and having them as part of the daily routine worked very well.

## Catholic Connections

As part of the feedback form, teachers were asked whether the Catholic connections included in the practice were applicable to the practice as well as grade appropriate for the practice (no/yes).

The vast majority of teachers reported that the Catholic connections were applicable to each practice and grade appropriate. These perceptions were similarly high across SEL categories: between 86-100% of teachers thought that the Catholic connections were applicable and between 83-100% thought they were grade appropriate, across SEL category.

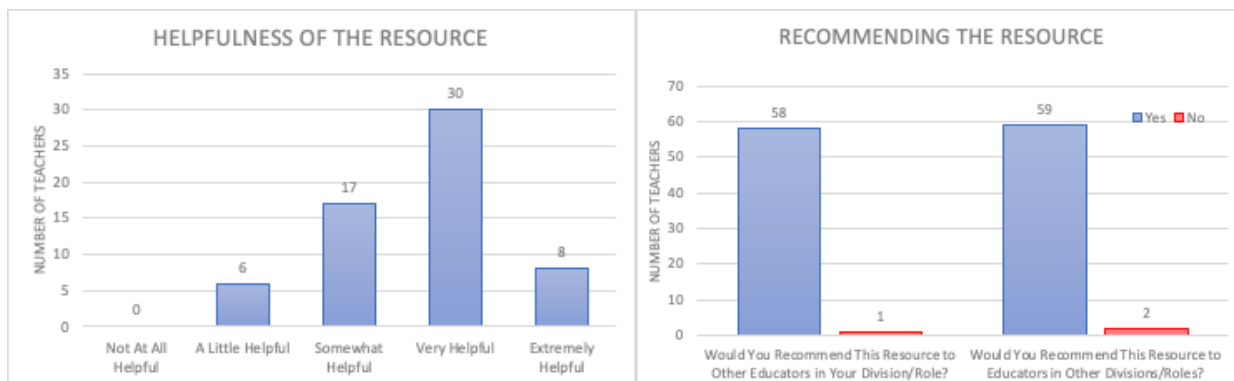


In the focus groups, some teachers thought the Catholic connections could be even stronger, with more direct suggestions for how specific practices could link to the existing religion program in the school. For the most part, however, teachers reported that the Catholic connections in the resource were helpful and that the resource itself helped support students' faith formation.

*"I do feel that it did help support student's faith formation. All of [the practices]; there was beautiful ways to connect it to our faith and to all aspects of our Catholic teachings."*

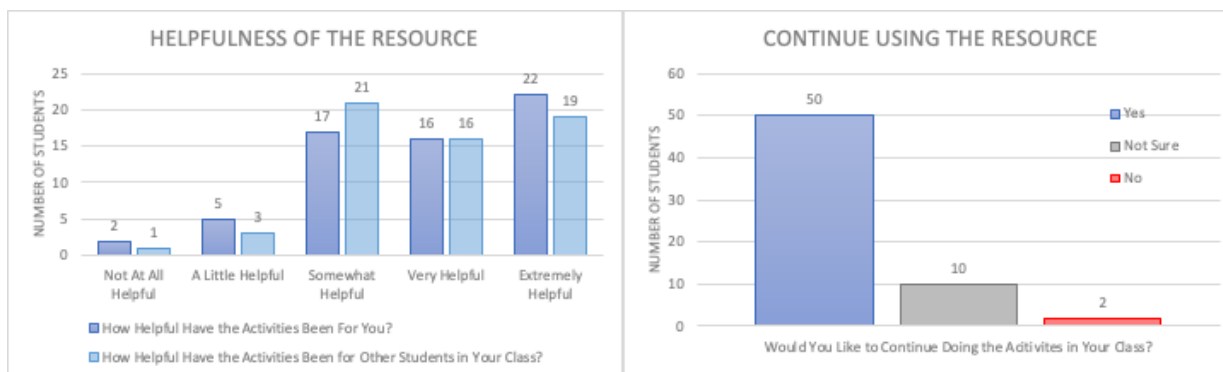
## Overall Satisfaction

At Time 2, following the three-month implementation period, teachers in Group 1 were asked to rate how helpful they found the resource to be. Teachers were also asked to indicate whether they would recommend the resource to others. The vast majority said that they would recommend the resource to others.



## Students

Students in Group 1 were also asked to rate how helpful they found the resource activities to be, both for themselves and for other students in their class. Students were asked to indicate whether they would like to continue doing the activities in their class. Overall, students reported that the activities were helpful, and the majority wanted to continue doing the activities.



# Feedback: Were there Challenges or Suggested Changes to the Resource?

## Teachers

In the focus groups, teachers' specific feedback regarding structure and content of the Faith and Wellness Resource was overwhelmingly positive. Teachers commented on the ease of the practices, particularly for those who may just be getting started in SEL teaching. They noted that the practices could be used in different grade levels, for different types of assignments, or in different schools; they provided a good stepping off point to allow teachers to start developing SEL skills among a variety of students. Teachers noted that the supplementary resources and adaptations made it easy to implement the practice in a manner that worked best for them and their classroom. One teacher commented that the 'Learning Skills and Work Habits' that were linked to each practice made it easy for her to identify students' individual learning skills on report cards.

*"I am doing report cards right now and have actually named some of the [Faith and Wellness] strategies...[One student] loves the deep belly breathing and I'll mention that...and tie in the learning skill component into his report card. So, I do go beyond just taking the [Faith and Wellness] program and doing it in the classroom. It will also be part of their report card. The principal was very very pleased to see that I had mentioned the Faith and Wellness strategy and how it worked for [the individual student] and tied it in with their learning skill."*

## Challenges

In the feedback forms, teachers were invited to indicate any challenges they had in implementing the practices, as well as any changes they made or suggested changes to the specific practices. Teachers reported challenges in 20% of feedback forms. The most frequently reported challenge was in engaging students in the practice (reported 12 times) and preventing students from acting silly or off task (reported 9 times).

Challenges	Number of Times Reported
Difficulty engaging students in the practice	12
Students were acting silly/off task	9
Practice was challenging/students needed more time to master strategy	7
Practice was challenging for students with exceptionalities/behavioural difficulties	4
Students had difficulty sharing openly	3
Practice felt uncomfortable for students	2
Interpersonal challenges in group activities	1
Did not enjoy activity (did not like feeling tense)	1
Did not enjoy activity (did not like movement activities)	1

In almost all cases, teachers reported that only one or a few students had such challenges, and in many cases, challenges dissipated after a few times implementing the practice.

In the focus groups, teachers noted two additional challenges; some teachers noted particular practices as being more challenging for either boys or girls. For instance, in some classrooms, girls seemed to be more willing to try the meditation exercises, whereas it was more difficult for the boys to settle into them. Conversely, one teacher noticed that some of the more physical activities seemed to appeal more to boys. She noted that some girls were initially shy about these activities, whereas boys seemed to “go for it.”

Finally, though this occurred for a minority of the practices, teachers did note that there were some practices that took too long or that they did not feel they could repeat more than once. These practices were deemed less effective, as students did not have a chance to practice the skills learned in a meaningful way.

### Suggested Changes

Changes were suggested in 37% of feedback forms. The most frequently suggested change was to add additional or alternate resources to a specific practice (suggested 13 times). The most frequently reported changes that teachers made included: modifying the practice to be developmentally appropriate (reported 12 times), engaging in more, related activities (reported 7 times), and connecting the practice to another lesson (reported 7 times).

Suggested Change/Change Made	Number of Times Reported
Additional/alternate resources	13
Modifications to be developmentally appropriate (for younger children)	11
Connected practice to another lesson	7
Conducted more, related activities	7
Increase length of time spent on practice	4
Change setting (to quieter space)	3
Practice conducted less frequently (once a month)	3
Conducted practice in smaller groups/individually (instead of whole class)	3
Modifications related to physical mobility	2
Practice conducted more frequently (daily)	2
Conduct practice as a large group (instead of individually)	2
Decrease length of time spent on practice (related to younger children)	2
More explanation before/after implementing practice	2
Modifications to be developmentally appropriate (for older children)	1



## Students

From the focus group discussions, students generally had very positive feedback regarding their experiences with the Faith and Wellness Resource. The only negative feedback received from students echoed a challenge that teachers reported. That is, teachers reported having difficulty, at times, getting students engaged or to stop acting silly. Similarly, students in one classroom commented on how it was difficult for some of their classmates to refrain from talking and engage fully during a quiet mindfulness practice. In contrast, several students noted that they found the practices helpful, and thought that their classmates found them helpful as well. Students talked about specific practices calming them down, allowing them to feel more relaxed.

*“I felt like that actually helped me a lot, because I had so much stuff racing through my mind.”*

One student mentioned that the practices were especially helpful when under stress. Another noted that the practices offered students strategies, because “some people might not know what to do, and the activities help them to know what to do.” Students also spoke about using the practices they had learned in class afterwards, such as at home and as needed.

*Student 1: “She said to make your own imaginary place-*

*Student 2: “To go and relax.”*

*Student 1: “– that was something, that was something I liked the most.”*

*Student 2: “I use it on a daily basis.”*

*Student 1: “I started using it and it works perfectly ... I made a whole imaginary place that actually works like crazy.”*

*Student 2: “Any time I feel I need to relax, just need to let it go. I use that.”*

*Student 1: “And I just go to my own quiet place.”*

## Conclusions

Results from this research project support the effectiveness and usefulness of Faith and Wellness: A Daily Mental Health Resource for teachers and students in Catholic Elementary Schools across Ontario. Implementation of the resource appears to support positive changes for teachers (including SEL knowledge and confidence, frequency of SEL in the classroom, and teacher wellbeing) and students (particularly changes noticed by teachers, including teachers' perceptions of the classroom climate, teachers' perceptions of students' school motivation and engagement). Frequency of using the practices is important, such that the more times teachers implemented the practices, the better.

There do not appear to be any barriers to using the resource, and flexibility in implementation allowed teachers to adapt the practices as needed for their classroom. The practices appear to work well for diverse students, from Kindergarten to Grade 8, and are viewed as helpful by both teachers and students.

Both teachers and students were able to identify specific SEL skills that students had learned, which mapped on to the six SEL categories in the resource: stress management and coping, identification and management of emotions, positive motivation and perseverance, healthy relationships skills, self-awareness and sense of identity, and executive functioning. The key components of the resource that helped support students' SEL and wellbeing included: taking a whole class approach, such that everyone was aware of the same concepts and strategies; developing new vocabulary and language with which to discuss SEL concepts; providing predictability and routine through frequent use of the practices; and offering students a range of strategies they could comfortably use on their own both inside and outside of the classroom.

Overall, the Faith and Wellness Resource was well received by teachers and students, easily implemented in the classroom, and helped support students' social emotional learning skills as well as their general mental health and wellbeing.

*“There’s so much pressure on teachers to get through the curriculum and to make sure everyone’s needs are being met....[Using the Faith and Wellness Resource] brought to my attention how important this part of learning is, and it gave me the confidence to say, ‘You know what, I am going to take the time to do it because it is that important’.” – Grade 2 Teacher*