# Supporting Self-Regulation Through Mindfulness and Social-Emotional Learning in Inclusive K-2 Classrooms

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## ABSTRACT

This literature-based capstone examines how mindfulness and social-emotional learning (SEL) practices support self-regulation among elementary school students, with a focus on inclusive K–2 classrooms. Findings highlight potential benefits for emotional regulation, attention, and social-emotional development, although outcomes vary across studies. Drawing on educational research and my experiences as a Kindergarten/Grade One teacher, this review identifies practical strategies for incorporating mindfulness and SEL into daily classroom routines.

## INTRODUCTION

**Why Self-Regulation Matters**
Self-regulation supports children's ability to manage emotions, behaviours, and attention. These developing skills influence classroom participation, positive relationships, and readiness to learn (Bockmann & Yu, 2023).

**Research Question**
How do mindfulness and social-emotional learning practices support self-regulation among elementary school students?

**Theoretical Foundations**
**Dewey (1938):** Meaningful learning develops through active experiences and reflection.
**Vygotsky (1978):** Social interactions, teacher guidance, and modelling support children's learning and development.

**Research Context**
My experiences teaching Kindergarten and Grade One in British Columbia have shaped my interest in how mindfulness and SEL can support young learners in inclusive classrooms.

## LITERATURE REVIEW: Key Findings

**1. Emotional Regulation & Behavioural Self-Control**
Mindfulness-based interventions show potential to support emotional awareness and self-regulatory behaviours in young children. However, findings vary across studies and intervention designs (Bockmann & Yu, 2023; Culotta et al., 2025).

**2. Attention & Executive Functioning**
Some school-based mindfulness programs report improvements in attention and executive functioning, although these outcomes are not consistent across all interventions (Flook et al., 2025; Saviano et al., 2026).

**3. Social-Emotional Development & Classroom Engagement**
Mindfulness-based SEL programs have demonstrated benefits for emotional control, empathy, and prosocial behaviours. These skills may contribute to positive classroom relationships and participation (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

**4. Effective Classroom Implementation**
Teacher preparation, consistent routines, and developmentally appropriate strategies are important considerations when introducing mindfulness practices. Inclusive implementation requires flexibility and attention to students' individual needs (Munk et al., 2022; Saviano et al., 2026).




## REFERENCES

Scan to view full APA references.

## RECCOMMENDATIONS

**1. Integrate Mindfulness Into Daily Routines**
Introduce short breathing exercises, mindful listening, and movement breaks during morning routines and classroom transitions (Bockmann & Yu, 2023).

**2. Combine Mindfulness With SEL and Teacher Modelling**
Use emotional check-ins, discussions about feelings, and guided problem-solving to support emotional awareness and positive relationships (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; Vygotsky, 1978).

**3. Strengthen Inclusive Implementation**
Provide visual supports, flexible participation options, and collaboration with educational assistants and learning support staff to respond to students' diverse needs (Munk et al., 2022).

## CONCLUSION & FUTURE RESEARCH

**Key Takeaway**
Mindfulness and SEL offer promising approaches to supporting self-regulation in early elementary classrooms. Consistent routines, positive teacher-student relationships, and inclusive practices are important for meaningful implementation.

**Barriers & Considerations**
Limited instructional time and teacher preparation.
Diverse learning and emotional needs.
Variation in student engagement and intervention outcomes.

**Future Research**
Further research is needed to examine the long-term effects of mindfulness and SEL practices, particularly among K–2 students with diverse learning needs.

**Implications for Teaching**
Supporting self-regulation is an important part of creating classroom environments where children feel safe, develop confidence, and participate meaningfully in learning.