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Supporting Early Childhood Teachers' Literacy Instruction During COVID-19 Pandemic:

A Trauma-Informed Professional Learning Approach

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Abstract

As an urgent response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this research project aimed to address the challenges faced by early childhood educators in providing effective classroom instruction. The project designed and implemented a professional learning (PL) program based on trauma-informed practices (TIP). The primary objective of the PL program was to enhance the emotional well-being of both teachers and children by integrating social-emotional and early literacy instructions into classroom routines. The research project consisted of two phases. In the first phase, an online survey study was conducted, involving 161 early childhood educators from the Georgia early childhood education system. This survey study aimed to identify the specific challenges that educators encountered during the pandemic. The findings from this phase served as the basis for developing the PL program. In the second phase, the PL program was implemented in 10 preschool classrooms located in high-need communities in the Atlanta metro area. The program was designed to cater to the unique needs of these communities. The results from this phase indicated that the PL program had a positive impact on the participating teachers' ability to deliver both literacy and social-emotional instruction effectively. Interviews conducted with the teachers further highlighted the program's influence on their emotional well-being, as well as that of the children in their classrooms.

Background and Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly interrupted the typical routine classroom instruction in early childhood classrooms. This project, with an implementation science design, aims to (1) investigate the pandemic's impact on young children's learning and early childhood educators' teaching experience. (2) address the urgent needs of supporting children from backgrounds most impacted by the pandemic by targeting children and educators from minority and low-income communities, (3) develop of a professional learning (PL) program for helping teachers and children recover from the COVID-19 trauma experience. (4) implement a trauma-informed PL approach, which has shown positive impact on children's behavioral and academic outcomes (Berardi & Morton, 2017). This study extends existing literature by implementing this approach in an early childhood setting. Teachers will use meaningful literacy learning activities to support children's social emotional development during the pandemic and promote early literacy skills at the same time.

The Pandemic Impact on Early Childhood Educator

The COVID-19 pandemic, unlike any other previous natural hazard event, greatly changed typical dynamics in all ecological systems centered around children, particularly the quality of teacher-child interactions. In the microsystem of the school, typical schooling routines were interrupted. School closures and the new mode of online virtual instruction amid the pandemic provided a different experience from children's typical classroom learning from in-person interactions with teachers and peers (e.g., Stites, Sonnenschein, & Galczyk, 2021). Early childhood educators experience stress during the pandemic that, in turn, affects the quality of their interactions with children (e.g., Friedman-Krauss et al., 2014). In cases in which the early childhood education system is not considered a part of public education, which occurs in many

countries, the pandemic intensified stressors in the school context that influence educators' professional well-being, including low wages, overwhelming workloads, and lack of autonomy (Eadie et al., 2021; Yang, Tian, & Huang 2022). A survey study by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (2020) showed that nearly 50% early childhood programs would not be able to survive a closure of more than two weeks without significant public investment and support and that childcare programs face limited resources and unclear guidance in terms of supporting families who keep their children at home. Early childhood educators endured physical, mental, and financial stress during the height of the pandemic due to additional teaching responsibilities and unpredictable changes in classroom teaching (Crawford et al., 2021; Swigonski et al., 2021). Notably, researchers have observed clear reductions in teachers' emotional well-being and job commitment since the pandemic started (e.g., Markowitz & Bassok, 2022).

Regardless of their socioeconomic and cultural background, educators experienced increasing work-related stress (e.g., Hong, Liu, & Zhang, 2021; Shin & Puig, 2021). Teachers' stress amid the pandemic may affect their teaching efficacy, i.e., their perceptions of their ability to have a positive impact on children's learning and development. This is particularly true when teachers have to abruptly switch from in-person instruction to an online teaching mode, for which they were not trained in teacher preparation programs prior to the pandemic (Negrette et al., 2022). Preschool teachers may find it extremely challenging to provide online instruction, given young children's limited cognitive skills and need for hands-on social-emotional guidance (Guirguis & Plotka, 2022). From this perspective, the pandemic may have a stronger impact on novice teachers than on veteran teachers.

Infusing Trauma-informed Practice into Literacy Teaching

Having recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic may be viewed as a traumatic experience that affects teachers' and parents' emotional well-being and mental health, many researchers advocate for adopting a trauma-informed practice (TIP) to promote school and family climate so that a safe and positive environment can be created for children's development (e.g., Collin-Vézina, Brend, & Beeman, 2020). TIP has been implemented in child welfare systems that focus on creating an emotionally positive and safe environment for children to recover from a prior negative experience (Bunting et al., 2019). Implementing TIP principles (i.e., safety, transparency, peer support, collaboration, empowerment and cultural responsiveness; Chafouleas, Johnson, Overstreet, & Santos, 2016) requires systematic changes in a specific environmental context (e.g., school, out-of-home foster care).

When implementing a TIP program in a school, multiple-level changes and guidance are needed, from the administrative level to all educators and staff (Chafouleas et al., 2016). School policy and procedure should be responsive to children's emotional needs. Teacher and staff professional development should occur for learning new strategies of supporting children. For example, teachers should implement trauma-sensitive classroom practices, giving positive and restorative responses to children's difficult behavior. Trauma-informed practices promote a positive school climate, transform deficit perspectives of children's challenging behaviors to strength-based child-centered support, advocate for culturally responsive instruction, and support staff well-being (Thomas, Crosby, & Vanderhaar, 2019). Because TIP programs have a broad scope and often require organizational changes in schools, their implementation requires interdisciplinary efforts and school or community resource support. Further, strong cross-system collaboration among school staff and mental health professionals should be promoted (Oehlberg,

2008). It may be too costly and time consuming, however, for childcare centers to implement TIP, especially when confronting the post-pandemic teacher shortage. Researchers also have noted that, although TIP programs make theoretical and practical contributions, the actual impact on teachers and children's well-being is difficult to evaluate due to the complexity of program design and implementation (Maynard et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2019).

This PL project takes a different approach of implementing TIP in early childhood context by infusing TIP into teachers' literacy teaching practices. The key components of TIP include promotion of educators' knowledge of traumatic experience, implementation of emotion-focused teacher-child interactions in the classroom, collaboration among teachers (classroom) and professionals/researchers (research-base), and ongoing assessment of children's emotional wellbeing (Thomas et al., 2019). Because literacy activities provide a meaningful context for discussing, observing, and assessing children's emotional states, in this study, trauma-informed practices will be infused into classroom literacy activities. Such effort expands teachers' use of TIP strategies to support children's social-emotional development and well-being, while providing typical classroom instruction. For example, by reading a book and discussing emotions of story characters, teachers can create an emotional positive and safe environment for children to recover from negative COVID experience outside of school (e.g., Prewitt, 2014). This intentional design is aligned with the pillars of "positive learning climate" and "language nutrition" in the framework of GA literacy development. Consistent with an implementation science approach, the PD program in this study is highly flexible for teachers. Teachers' existing teaching expertise and experience in classroom are recognized and valued. The reflective practices allow teachers to implement new teaching strategies based on the existing routine activities in their classrooms (e.g., Zhang et al., 2019). This will allow teachers to provide

continuous emotional support to children along with effective literacy instructional support, which reflects the pillar of “access” in the current framework of GA literacy development.

High-Leverage-Teaching-Practices (HLTP) approach of Early Literacy PL

Instead of taking a “one-way” PL delivery approach from researcher to teacher, this project takes an HLTP approach, which recognizes teachers’ existing expertise, individual needs of professional and personal support, and collaborative relationships between researchers and teachers (Grossman et al., 2009; Zhang & Bingham, 2019). With an HLTP approach, educators’ reflections on their own professional and personal needs guide the development and implementation of PL. Through two-way communication and collaboration, researchers and teachers work together to identify existing teaching practices that can be leveraged as high quality instruction and develop a set of core practices for teachers to implement in classroom without interrupting existing classroom dynamics and routines. Teachers’ professional identity is integrated in the process of professional learning for developing professional workshops and providing ongoing mentoring.

The theory of change in this PL program is presented in Figure 1. Teachers were first surveyed and interviewed to understand the pandemic’s impact on their classroom instruction, and the needs of support for their classroom teaching. The results of teachers’ interviews and survey inform the development of professional learning workshop content. Instead of directly assuming teachers’ need of professional support, researchers in this project observed all teachers’ classrooms to understand teachers’ strengths and existing expertise in classroom teaching. This informs the development of ongoing collaborative mentoring sessions. The integration of professional learning workshop and ongoing mentoring is expected to improve the quality of teacher-child interactions in classroom (e.g., discussion of social emotional and early literacy

skills), which leads to teachers' higher quality of classroom instruction and children's improvement in both social emotional and literacy skills.

The following processes have been undertaken in this project: (1) teachers' perspectives and expertise of teaching were integrated into professional learning. (2) teachers were introduced to existing research that explains the impact of trauma experience on children's development. (3) teachers were guided to implement emotion focused talks during typical routinized literacy activities (e.g., discuss feeling and emotions during shared-book reading or writing activities using explicit instructions, think alouds, and open-ended questions). (4) teachers were introduced to simple strategies to assess children's emotional states through observation of children's emotions and behaviors during literacy activities. (5) teachers received ongoing support from researchers for the implementation of trauma-informed literacy instruction.

Two Phases of Program Implementation

Following the theory of change, this PL project had two phases of investigation utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methods. **In the first phase**, we conducted an online survey study to understand (1) pandemic impact on early childhood teachers' wellbeing (i.e., teachers' efficacy), (2) teachers' classroom instruction, and (3) the relations between teachers' wellbeing and classroom instruction. **In the second phase**, we developed a PL program based on the findings from the first phase. We only implemented the PL with 18 pre-kindergarten teachers from six childcare centers serving high-need communities in metro Atlanta area (e.g., lower-income, refugee and historically marginalized communities). The teachers received a PL workshop and a series of mentoring sessions in phase two. The PL impact on teachers' teaching and children's learning was investigated by classroom observation and teachers' focused-group interview.

Phase I: Teachers' Survey

Participants

A total of 161 early childhood educators (*Mean Age* = 43.21 years old, *SD* = 12) were recruited in Summer 2021 for the Phase I survey study. The researchers contacted partnership early childhood programs across Georgia and invited teachers to participate via partnership programs' email list. The teachers, who provided consent to participate in the project, were invited to complete an online survey. The teachers came from a variety of ethnic background, 15.5 Caucasian, 68.5% African American, 0.5% Asian, and 15.5% Latino or Hispanic American teachers. On average, the participating teachers had 14.12 years of experience teaching (*SD*=9.59 year).

A total of 15 Pre-Kindergarten teachers (14 African American female teachers and one Caucasian male teacher) from six childcare centers serving high-risk communities in Metro Atlanta Area were invited to have a focused-group interview. The focus-group interview was led by an African American researcher. The interview lasted for approximately one hour. In the interview, the teachers were prompted to reflect on their personal experience during the pandemic, and their teaching experience during the pandemic (e.g., social emotional and literacy instruction). The teachers were also prompted to reflect on the types of professional support they may need for coping with the pandemic impact on teaching. The interview was transcribed for content analysis.

Measures

Teachers' Online Survey

Teachers' online survey consists of the components of (1) teachers' professional background, (2) teachers' classroom learning activities, and (3) teachers' teaching efficacy.

Professional Background. In an online survey, teachers indicated their educational level, cultural backgrounds, experience of teaching in early childhood setting, and the length of their teaching experience.

Teachers' Classroom Learning Activities. Participated teachers were invited to complete a set of Likert-scale items to report the frequency of different types of classroom learning activities (i.e., literacy, math, science, art and motor activities). For example, "how often do you provide literacy activity in your classroom." Teachers also indicated their perceived challenge in teaching these activities (e.g., how challenging do you feel to provide early literacy activity in your classroom). Teachers were also invited to report the mode of teaching in Summer and Fall 2021 (i.e., fully online, fully in-person, and hybrid).

Teachers' Wellbeing. The Early Childhood Teachers' Experience Survey (ECTES, Fantuzzo et al., 2012) was used to capture participated teachers' teaching efficacy and working experience during the pandemic. The ECTES (Fantuzzo et al., 2012) is a teacher-report measure and assesses three dimensions of teacher experiences: (a) Teacher self-efficacy, which consists of ten items and describes teachers' overall assessments of their effectiveness as a teacher; (b) job stress, which is comprised of seven items and describes experiences teachers have in response to the demands of their jobs that may have negative psychological effects and affect their ability to effectively manage time; and (c) school support, which consists of six items and assesses teacher perceptions of the feedback and support they receive from their supervisor and colleagues. The three dimensions demonstrate adequate internal consistency, with *Cronbach alpha* of .80, .76, and .78, respectively. This measure has also been validated in recent studies of Head Start teachers (Lawrence, et al., 2020). The sum scores of each dimension were used for data analyses.

Focused-group Interview

The focus-group interview consists of questions related to (1) the pandemic impact on teachers' teaching responsibilities, e.g., "how did the pandemic have impact to your teaching?" (2) the pandemic impact on teacher-child interactions in classrooms, e.g., "did you notice any changes in children's learning behaviors in classroom when they return to in-person learning, how did you handle such changes?" (3) the needs for professional support in classroom instruction, e.g., "what kind of support may make your teaching early literacy skills easier?"

Results

The descriptive statistics and correlational matrix among the variables of teachers' teaching experience (i.e., teachers' efficacy, teachers' stress and school support), the frequency of learning activities and teachers' backgrounds are presented in Table 1 and Table 2. The results showed that, in general, teachers perceived a basic level of teaching efficacy and school support. At the same time, teachers' work-related stress was at a lower level. At the time of this survey study (i.e., August 2021), some childcare centers started reopening for in-person instruction. In this study, about

Correlational analyses suggested that teacher-perceived stress negatively correlated with teachers' efficacy and school support. The teachers, who had more teaching experience, reported higher teaching efficacy than other teachers. However, teaching experience was not correlated with the frequencies of learning activities. Teachers' efficacy and school report showed significant correlations with the frequencies of learning activities in classroom. Teachers' efficacy was related to the frequencies of literacy, math, art, and motor activities, while school support was related to the frequencies of science activity. Teaching format (i.e., online vs. in-person) had significant correlation with the frequencies of science and art activities. Teachers

provided more frequent science and art activities in-person than did online. Teachers' teaching experience was negatively and significantly correlated with teaching mode, while teachers age did not correlate with any learning activities. These results suggested that teachers' teaching experience, rather than teachers' age, played an important role in the mode of teaching and confidence in teaching.

In the online survey, participated teachers also completed three Likert-scale items (from zero to five) indicating the extent to which they may move to another early childhood center (Mean = 2.27, SD = 1.02), change to another career path outside of early childhood education (Mean = 2.20, SD = 1.07), and plan to seek advanced education in early childhood such as master or doctoral study (Mean = 2.96, SD = 0.97). Correlational analyses showed that teachers' stress significantly correlated with teachers' decision of leaving current job position ($r = 0.21, p < .01$), leaving early childhood workforce ($r = 0.24, p < .01$), and continuing advanced education ($r = .15, p = .06$). Teachers' efficacy was negatively and significantly correlated with teachers' decision of leaving early childhood workforce ($r = -.30, p < .001$). The higher teaching efficacy teachers had, the less likely they may leave early childhood workforce. Teachers' age and teaching experience were negatively and significantly correlated with teachers' decisions of leaving teaching position. Veteran teachers were less likely to leave teaching position ($r = -.29, p < .001$) and early childhood workforce ($r = -.30, p < .001$). School support did not show any significant direct correlations with teachers' decision of leaving teaching position.

Despite of teaching mode, the majority teachers indicated that book reading is the most frequently implemented literacy activity online or in-person, while writing instruction (e.g., letter writing and composing) was the least frequently implemented activity. About 46% of teachers considered book reading the most important literacy instruction while 60% of teachers

considered writing instruction the least prioritized. However, it is important to note that the majority of teachers suggested that early writing skills were the most challenging to teach.

Focus-group interview indicated several themes. First of all, teachers reported additional teaching responsibilities outside of typical classroom instruction. For example, teachers had to develop strategies to involve parents for online teaching. Sudden changes in teaching arrangement, such as moving to online teaching mode or merging classrooms due to teacher or child COVID diagnosis, created additional burden for teachers. Teachers also indicated they had to complete additional paper works related to COVID health guidelines and new center policies. Second, teachers observed children's increasing needs in social emotional skills. Teachers suggested that, in comparison to pre-COVID time, children showed more challenging behaviors due to lack of attention and motivation to learning activities. Children also showed difficulty to develop understanding of and following classroom routines. And because a classroom routine was difficult to maintain, teachers found challenging to provide literacy instruction in a consistent way. For example, it was difficult to do large group shared book reading activity when children frequently showed disruptive behaviors. Third, teachers indicated the need of emotional support for teaching. The participated teachers reflected their working experience and suggested that school support usually focused on teaching practices rather than emotional support to teachers. They felt that they were not being valued as teachers and their emotional needs were not acknowledged and recognized. And because teaching responsibilities were stressful when children returned to in-person learning without salary increase, emotional support to teachers may play a critical role in teachers' decision making of leaving teaching position.

Findings And Discussions

The survey study in Phase I revealed several important issues that a PL program should address in the post-COVID era. First of all, teachers' teaching efficacy plays an important role in classroom teaching. Teachers with higher teaching efficacy tended to provide more frequent learning activities and were less likely to leave the ECE workforce. Teachers' efficacy may also help teachers coping with work-related stress when confronting changes in teaching arrangement. However, in this study, participated teachers' efficacy was at a basic level. It is important for a PL program to take a strength-based approach for promoting teachers' confidence in teaching. Reflective practices may also be helpful for encouraging teachers to connect personal experience to classroom teaching experience.

Secondly, the results showed that the majority of teachers have been implementing literacy activities during the pandemic, although literacy skills were mainly introduced through book reading. The focus of other literacy skills, such as phonological awareness, letter knowledge and writing skills, was not clear. Early writing activity was the least prioritized in teachers' literacy instruction. It may be because writing activity requires teachers' hand-on modeling of writing procedure, which was difficult to achieve during the pandemic following physical-distancing mandate.

Thirdly, novice teachers and veteran teachers may have different needs for professional support. Correlational analyses suggested that veteran teachers tended to have higher teaching efficacy than did novice teachers. This, in turn, led to more frequent learning activities implemented during the pandemic. However, veteran teachers may need support to adjust to new teaching arrangements, such as online teaching.

Fourth, professional learning programs should take teachers' wellbeing into account. The results suggest that teachers' efficacy and school support had direct correlations with the occurrence of learning activities. Although teachers' stress was not related to learning activities, it may lead to teachers' high turnover. Given the teacher shortage in post-COVID time, PL program should integrate the promotion of teachers' efficacy and implementation of learning activities.

Phase II: PL Development and Implementation

Participants

The 15 Pre-Kindergarten teachers, who participated in the focus-group interview in Phase I, were recruited from six early childhood programs to participate in the Phase II development and implementation of PL from January to December 2022. Among participated teachers, eight teachers withdrawn from the study in early 2022. Three teachers withdrew due to the changes of position (i.e., being promoted to leadership positions and no longer working in the classroom). Five teachers left their teaching positions due to a variety of reasons (e.g., family relocation and personal sickness). In total, seven teachers completed all PL activities and classroom observations.

Professional Learning Model Development

Connecting Trauma-Informed-Practices (TIPs) and Mindfulness Practices

Based on the Phase I findings, teachers' efficacy and emotional wellbeing plays a critical role in teachers' classroom instruction, as well as the quality of teacher-child interactions. Mindfulness practices were introduced to teachers. In alignment with TIP's goal of creating a positive environment for children, mindfulness practices aim at building and promoting individuals' resilience against psychological distress (e.g., sleep disturbances, rumination, anxiety; Keng et al., 2011). It generally related to helping individuals to intentionally become aware or "take notice" of their internal and external present-moment experiences with an attitude of curiosity, non-judgment, and acceptance (Tang et al., 2015). Mindfulness has roots in Eastern philosophy systems, such as Buddhism and Taoism, and the Western conceptualization views mindfulness as a teachable skill that is independent of a larger system of practice, ethical code, or philosophy (Keng et al., 2011). Broadly speaking, practicing mindfulness increases self-

awareness, improves attentional control, and builds emotion-regulation skills (Chiesa et al. 2013) that, in turn, can decrease perceived stress (Guendelman et al., 2017). Some correlational studies have established the link between mindfulness and improved performance on tasks that require sustained attention (Schmertz, Anderson, & Robins, 2009) and persistence (Evans, Baer, & Segerstrom, 2009). Practicing mindfulness has been shown to lower the risk of psychological distress and perceived stress, increase emotion regulation, and curb the effects of burnout among the individuals who experience high stress (Irving et al., 2014).

Integrating mindfulness practice in classroom teaching is beneficial to both teachers and children's wellbeing. Emerson et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis showed that mindfulness practices integrated within classrooms through teacher education, training, and practice showed a positive impact on teachers' emotion regulation, self-compassion, and self-efficacy. Classroom mindfulness activities, such as breathing activities, may promote a positive classroom climate and teacher-child relationships (e.g., Meyer & Eklund, 2020). For example, Beuchel et al., (2022) found that teachers who participated in a mindfulness practice program perceived lower stress, higher satisfaction with work, and better classroom management than did other teachers.

Because mindfulness cultivates in-the-moment awareness, some researchers believe that a mindfulness program may be particularly beneficial for novice teachers when they navigate the complexities of classroom teaching in the first few years of their work (Zimmerman, 2018). Singh et al. (2013) conducted an 8-week professional learning program in which preschool teachers were guided to implement a variety of mindfulness activities in the classroom (e.g., body scan meditation, breathing) and found that children's challenging behaviors and negative social interactions in the classroom decreased. Several studies also suggested positive relationships between mindfulness practices and parents' well-being. Corthorn and Milicic

(2016) reported that mindfulness correlated with lower parental stress, depression, anxiety, and general stress.

Introducing HLTP with Reflective Practices

The PL in Phase II employed an HLTP approach in PD development. The PL content was developed based on teachers' survey and interview findings. Teachers' existing classroom routine was taken into account when developing core teaching practices that are relatively easy for teachers to implement (Ball et al.,2009). In an HLTP PD model, teachers' reflections inform the delivery of PD training and support the implementation of newly introduced practices. First, during the PL workshop, teachers were frequently prompted to reflect whether the new practices could be implemented with their existing classroom routines and what kind of materials may be helpful for their classroom implementation. Such reflections on the effectiveness of their existing teaching practices indicate their beliefs regarding children's early development. Such insight can provide researchers the opportunity to deliver tailored, in-depth explanation of research-based teaching pedagogies (i.e., procedural knowledge) alongside learning theories and scientific research of children's learning and development (i.e., conceptual knowledge). In this way, teachers may develop a rigorous understanding of the necessities of the new teaching practices. When teachers recognize the effectiveness of the new practices on children's learning and their own professional development, and specifically why the newly introduced teaching practices are meaningful for becoming a quality teacher (Grossman et al.,2009).

The PL Components

PL Workshop. In a four-hour-long workshop, researchers introduced a conceptual understanding of traumatic experiences amid the pandemic and mindfulness practice. Teachers were introduced to a set of Taoism principles to reflect a strength-based perspective and world

view. Koenig and Spano (1998) summarize the five primary principles of Lao Zu's Taoism: (1) reality as a process of constant flow and change, (2) holistic dualism (e.g., no absolute right and wrong), (3) nonaction or following the natural flow as a method to collaborate with an everchanging universe, (4) unconsciousness and intuition as a valid approach of thinking and feeling, and (5) virtue or kindness as coming from internal consciousness rather than external forces, such as rules and regulations. These Taoism principles fit into the TIP framework that promotes a positive climate for teacher-child interactions. They also are in alignment with conceptualizations of mindfulness, such as non-judgmental acceptance and in-the-moment awareness (e.g., Singh et al., 2013), which will help teachers to navigate unpredictable changes and challenges (Zimmerman, 2018) when their childcare centers reopen after the pandemic.

During the workshop, teachers were introduced to a set of research-based teaching strategies that follow TIP principles (Figure 2). Some new teaching strategies were social-emotional and literacy focused. One example is teachers' explicit explanation, demonstration, and discussion of emotions (i.e., emotion talk; Grazzani & Ornaghi, 2011; Yelinek & Grady, 2019). Research consistently suggests that there is a relationship between teachers' emotion talk and children's social-emotional and self-regulation skills (Alamo & Williford, 2020). Teachers also were encouraged to utilize existing routinized classroom activities, such as morning meeting time, to implement new strategies. Routine activities allow teachers to leverage their existing teaching practices to include mindfulness components daily without rearranging or changing the classroom environment (see Figure 3). This also allows teachers to provide repeated mindfulness activities for preschool children to have an impact on their self-regulation skills (Lim & Qu, 2017). Taoism principles were used to explain the rationales of implementing new strategies during the workshop. An example is that teachers should be responsive to in-the-moment

children's needs without classifying children's behaviors as "good" or "bad" because all behaviors reflect children's existing skills and developmental status (i.e., holistic dualism). Thus, teachers should have flexible lesson plans to be in the classroom flow and children's interests (e.g., reality is constantly changing). Teachers should guide children to express emotions, e.g., spontaneously care for their peers and teachers to express kindness (i.e., internal virtue). Teachers were also encouraged to integrate writing into their classroom instruction (see Pictures 1 and 2). This is because writing is a quiet activity that can be done along with mindfulness practice that includes breathing and meditation. Preschool children's writing practice also may positively influence their early self-regulation skills (Zhang & Bingham, 2019).

Ongoing Collaborative Mentoring. The individual mentoring session was conducted monthly following the TIP structure (total of three mentoring sessions; see Table 3). Each mentoring session started with a one-hour classroom observation in which the researcher noted teachers' implementation of newly developed teaching strategies. After the observation, the researcher prompted the teacher to reflect on his or her teaching effectiveness, growth in professionalism, and personal well-being in terms of alignment with TIP principles. Reflective practices enable the researcher and teacher to collaborate in the process of professional learning (e.g. Zhang & Cook, 2019). Based on teachers' reflection, researchers provided suggestions and recommendations, utilizing Taoism principles, such as non-action and intuitive thinking for flexible classroom instruction, self-care for their own emotions before supporting children, and leveraging children's positive emotions in the process of teaching early literacy skills (e.g., intentionally discuss story characters' emotions and guide children to talk about their positive experience). Based on the strength-based perspective, researchers' feedback did not "correct" or "eliminate" teachers' ineffective instruction but, rather, "confirmed" teachers' existing effective

literacy teaching strategies and encouraged teachers to “promote” the effectiveness of these strategies with mindfulness practice. We recognized, according to the holistic dualism, that both “ineffective” and “effective” teaching strategies reflect teachers’ cognitive and emotional capacities of teaching and are part of the reality of teacher-child classroom interactions. Thus, promoting teachers’ “effective” literacy teaching strategies may improve teachers’ positive experience of classroom teaching and may, in turn, reduce the frequency of “ineffective” teaching. After each mentoring session, a summary of the mentoring session with the researcher’s feedback was prepared and emailed to teachers. The summary explicitly indicated the strengths of teachers’ teaching, recommendation for future teaching, and useful teaching resources (see Picture 3)

Procedure and Measures

In order to investigate the PL impact on participated teachers’ literacy teaching practices, as well as teacher-child interactions. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. In order to investigate the effectiveness of collaborative mentoring. The participated teachers received mentoring at different time points. While three teachers received mentoring after the first classroom observation, four teachers received mentoring after the second observations. In this way, by tracking the changes of teachers’ classroom observation, the impact of mentoring may be revealed.

Classroom Observations

All participated teachers’ classrooms were observed monthly. The first observation occurred before the PL with the goal of understanding teachers’ existing teaching routine and classroom learning environment. The following observations were conducted along with individualized mentoring sessions. Each observation lasted about three hours. After each

observation, researchers provided feedback to leverage teachers' existing teaching practices for integrating social emotional and literacy teaching practices. Each classroom observation was conducted using both existing and self-developed measures.

Classroom Literacy Learning Environment. Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Pre-K (Smith et al. 2008) was used for observing classroom literacy environment and participated teachers' early literacy instruction quality. The ELLCO Pre-K measures five key literacy elements: classroom structure, curriculum, the language environment, books and book reading, and print and early writing supports. The rating scales ranged from 1 (Deficient) to 5 (Exemplary). The ELLCO observations were completed by researchers and trained research assistants after reaching inter-rater reliability higher than $Kappa > .90$. The mean scores of each element were used for data analyses.

Social Emotional Instruction. Observations that were collected through an instrument called the Adapted Teaching Style Rating Scale (A-TSRS). Teachers' teaching was observed and rated on: Classroom management (i.e., consistency/routine, preparedness, classroom awareness, positive behavior management, negative behavior management, and attention to/engagement with behavior in the classroom), social-emotional instruction (i.e., emotion modeling, emotion expression, emotion regulation, social awareness, social problem-solving, and provision of interpersonal support, and scaffolding: supporting/extending dramatic play and peer interactions. This tool has been used in previous studies of teacher-child relationships in Head Start Program (i.e., Mattera et al., 2013). A-TSRS was completed by researchers and trained research assistant along with ELLCO observation after reaching inter-rater reliability higher than $Kappa > .90$. The mean scores of each dimension were used for data analyses.

Fidelity Checklist. A fidelity-checklist was used to capture teachers' implementation of newly introduced social emotional and literacy teaching practices. The observational items included the practices related to classroom daily routine structure, teachers' guidance of emotional regulations, teachers' guidance of literacy learning, and teachers' support for peer-interactions among children.

Focused-group Interviews

The participating teachers were interviewed in a focused-group in Phase II after the PL implementation (i.e., in the end of 2022). In the interview, the teachers were prompted to reflect on their experience in the PL program related to workshop and mentoring experience. Teachers provided feedback and discussed the PL impact on their personal and professional growth, as well as the impact on children's literacy learning. Focused-group interviews were led by an African American researcher. The interviews were guided by a set of reflective questions probing teachers' perspectives of professional support in literacy and social emotional teaching. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour. All interviews were transcribed for content analyses.

Results

Classroom Literacy Environment Changes

By examining the changes of each teacher's classroom ELLCO scores, several patterns of teachers' improvement overtime can be detected which reflects the PL impact. First of all, all participated teachers' classroom general quality (e.g., classroom structure and curriculum, see Figure 4) and book reading quality (Figure 5) improved over time. The teachers, whose initial scores were lower, made more noticeable improvement. In contrast, the teachers, whose initial

scores were high, did not change significantly. By the end of the PL implementation, all teachers' classrooms had above average scores in general quality and book reading.

Secondly, the quality of language environment (Figure 6) and the quality of print and writing instruction (Figure 7) changed along with ongoing mentoring. In the PL implementation, a group of teachers (i.e., teacher 102, teacher 202, and teacher 301) received reflective mentoring right after the PL workshop at time 1, while another group of teachers (i.e., teacher 101, teacher 103, teacher 201, and teacher 401) did not receive the same mentoring until time 2. The pattern of change scores showed that teachers who received reflective mentoring made consistent improvement over time. The teachers, who did not receive reflective mentoring, may have had difficulty providing high quality language instruction until ongoing mentoring was provided. It is important to note that the quality of print and writing instruction was relatively low. Although two teachers provided high quality writing instruction at the end of the PL implementation, the other five teachers provided limited support for children's exploration of writing.

Classroom Social Emotional Instruction Changes

The scores of TSRS suggested teachers' social emotional instruction. All participated teachers' social emotional instruction quality improved over time. There were three domains of social emotional instruction: social emotional instruction (Figure 8), classroom management (Figure 9), and emotional talk (Figure 10). The patterns of change scores suggested that most teachers' social emotional instruction improved after the PL workshop at Time 1. There was a decline at the beginning of the semester in the quality of classroom management and emotional talk. However, the teachers, who received reflective mentoring, improved after receiving mentoring session at Time 2.

Fidelity of Implementation

The fidelity of teachers' implementation of newly introduced practices was observed in the first observation after the PL workshop and the last classroom observation. The change of fidelity score (Figure 11) suggested that all teachers could independently implement 60% of the new teaching practices at the end of PL. Three teachers could implement more than 80% of the new teaching practices. All teachers infused social emotional and literacy teaching into daily routine (e.g., have an emotional check during morning meeting time). Many teachers still found challenging to provide writing instruction in the classroom.

The PL Impact on Teachers and Children

Analyses of focus-group interview transcripts revealed several themes in teachers' reflections. First, teachers observed the impact of mindfulness practice and mentoring on their own well-being, especially work-related stress.

Teacher: You can teach us and train us all day. But when you got four special need kids in one class, your memory even goes out the door. So, he [the mentor] did bring us back to what we were, what we tried to do. And just like that, because of the program, he's a person that understands what we're going through. . . . I think we need to have one training under one umbrella and let us work [in our own ways]. I think the stress comes in when you're trying to do what everybody wants.

Secondly, some teachers indicated that the program changed their perspective about teaching and started to view children as active learners rather than passive receivers.

Teacher: I did take a lot [of tasks] away from [children] because I'm a nurturer and it [e.g., sharing classroom responsibilities] doesn't work for me . . . but after listening to him and after talking to him [the mentor] about me doing everything, like, go, go, go, go, go . . . Yeah, I can multitask; yeah, I can do it. And, yeah, I enjoy it. However, he made me realize that I wasn't enabling them. . . . I took that [mentor feedback], and I was so excited to tell him, yeah, I let children do it. Yes. And now you can hear children . . . like, "Ms. Teacher, what do you need me to do? Ms. Teacher, can I help you with this?"

Thirdly, teachers also reported that mindfulness practice can have a positive impact on children's behavior in the classroom.

Teacher: I turned it all the way around. Yes. And that was on the advice of the program. Yeah. Right. And in my mind, I'm just thinking, I'm just doing what I love. I'm just doing what I love. It's like, no, you need to let children do it. Yeah. And it makes them feel so much better . . . they're happy. They're telling their parents, "Look what I did today. And I helped Ms. Teacher do this. And I made Ms. Teacher happy." And I really talk about my emotions with them."

Teacher: I know with one of my children [children who misbehaved and interrupted classroom learning] . . . and I came back, and I said, "Well, you know what, what you're doing is really not making me happy. Mm-hmm. I want to be happy today. I want to have a happy day. I want to have a good day." So, the next day, something went down, and the same little boy came and said, "You're not making me happy. That's not a good thing.

Uh, we need to have a happy day.” And every day he would say, “Are you making Ms. Teacher happy enough?” So, they are taking . . . account of themselves, that what they’re doing and how I feel. Okay. Yes. So that, that does make a difference. I love that.

Fourth, this program also enabled the development of a positive collaborative relationship between the researcher and teacher.

Teacher: This program has a different vibe from other programs. We have other observers come in this semester, too. When they are in the classroom, it is stressful. I feel I am being judged. When the researcher comes in, I just feel I can be myself, and I can just do what I like. He is here to help me and make my work easier.

Teacher: I hope this program can involve other teachers; this is a great program. I think every teacher should receive support like this one. I would love this program to last longer. I can see how the researcher really cares.

Discussions

In Phase II, we developed and implemented a PL introducing teaching strategies that integrate social emotional and literacy instruction. Teachers received a trauma-informed PL workshop, in which teachers were introduced to the concept of traumatic experience, mindfulness practices and strategies of utilizing mindfulness in classroom teaching. Teachers also received monthly ongoing reflective mentoring, in which researchers provided strength-

based feedback to teachers' teaching based on observation. The PL program showed a positive impact on the quality of teachers' both literacy and social emotional instruction.

The PL Impact on Teachers' Instruction

The PL program showed a strong impact on teachers who had limited knowledge of effective literacy teaching strategies. The preliminary analyses of classroom ELLCO scores indicated that the three classrooms that had lower literacy instructional quality in the beginning of the semester showed greater improvement by the end of the semester, while the other higher-quality classrooms remained at the same quality or declined slightly. The quality of teachers' literacy instruction declined after the first month of the semester but increased after the individual mentoring session was provided. This pattern also was found when tracking teachers' emotional scaffolding quality in the analyses of A-TSRS scores. This decline may be related to the fact that emotional scaffolding requires teachers' intentional guidance of emotional regulation skills through interactive conversations. Such strategies, similar to other literacy instruction, are challenging to implement in the classroom (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Teachers may need additional demonstration and modeling from researchers to implement new literacy teaching strategies, especially when the new strategies are integrated with emotion talk.

Another reason may be related to the new Omicron variant breakout in the spring 2022 semester. Teachers experienced sudden changes in classroom arrangements due to staff shortages, sick leaves, and the sudden stay-at-home mandate. The classroom instruction in the first month may have focused on classroom management rather than literacy instruction. This may also explain why all participating teachers showed significant improvement in social-emotional instruction and classroom management after the one-hour workshop. Despite the challenges of our program implementation, all participating teachers could implement over 60%

of the newly introduced teaching strategies, and the novice teachers showed competence in implementing over 90% of the new teaching strategies. Overall, the classroom observations indicate that group-level professional learning workshops about TIP and mindfulness may be effective in supporting teachers' social-emotional instruction, while individual-level mentoring may be effective in supporting teachers' literacy instruction. It may be because social-emotional instruction mainly relies on teachers' understanding and knowledge of children's emotional needs, which can be effectively addressed through workshop. Literacy instruction, on the other hand, needs intentional planning and implementation. And because each classroom has a different classroom routine, teachers may need concrete demonstration and explanation of new teaching strategies provided by researchers.

The Critical Role of Reflective Mentoring

The results suggest that individualized reflective mentoring may be critical for supporting teachers in classroom teaching in post-COVID era. Fidelity observations showed that teachers implemented almost all teaching strategies introduced in the PD workshop only after they received mentoring sessions. Without mentoring, teachers' instructional quality slightly declined in the first month after the PL workshop. Mentoring sessions allow researchers to provide individualized support to teachers' teaching based on existing classroom routines. Teachers may find the implementation of evidence-based literacy or writing instruction during regularly occurring classroom routines less challenging and more convenient than implementing a completely new and unfamiliar activity (e.g., Wasik & Hindman, 2011).

Another reason may be related to the fact that in-person mentoring sessions allow development of personal relationships between researcher and teacher. In the mentoring sessions, we recognized teachers as "human" and "power holders" in their classrooms. We granted

teachers a large amount of flexibility in implementing new teaching practices. Rather than completely modifying morning routines, we preserved the objective of the activity as a welcoming time for children (i.e., a time to build community). We encouraged teachers to make decisions regarding which routine tasks they modified based on their reflection of children's interests and their own preference, as long as they implemented most, if not all, new teaching practices of writing skills during morning routines. Such an approach promoted teachers' frequent self-reflection and exploration of different types of teaching practices based on their own interest in teaching. This, in turn, may enable teachers to develop confidence and interest in enacting new teaching practices based on reflection (Clark, 2001). Importantly, this modification did not significantly increase the length of morning meeting time in intervention classrooms compared to control classrooms but capitalized on existing routinized practices in ways that increased children's exposure to writing interactions.

During the mentoring sessions, teachers' reflection on the effectiveness of new teaching practices reinforced teachers' understanding of research-based, teaching practices and skills to spontaneously leverage the quality of classroom teaching with new teaching practices. During the researcher-teacher brief meeting following classroom observations, we prompted teachers to reflect on their observation of children's learning performance and their own feelings when implementing the new practices. Such reflective practices not only enable teachers to understand the effectiveness of new teaching practices based on their personal experience, but also develop teachers' awareness that implementing research-based instruction is feasible and easy to do. In our last observation, a few teachers had spontaneously created new classroom activities using the newly introduced teaching practices of writing skills without researchers' guidance (see Picture 1 and Picture 2). During the study, teachers' reflection also enabled us to form a two-way

communicative partnership with participating teachers. We not only introduced new teaching practices to teachers, but also provided individualized support and guidance to teachers' classroom teaching based on their reflection and questions about classroom teaching and children's early writing development. We acknowledged teachers' concerns and frustration in classroom teaching, and collaboratively developed solutions to the challenges in classroom teaching. Such mentoring may have a greater impact on novice teachers. The teacher who made the greatest gain in this project was the teacher who recently started teaching as a lead teacher.

Other Factors Affecting Teachers' Wellbeing and Instruction

By following and observing participated teachers in classroom for a semester, we noticed other factors that may affect teachers' effectiveness of classroom teaching and wellbeing. First of all, the high turnover rate of assistant teachers may affect teachers' teaching quality. In this study, we initially included assistant teachers in the PL workshop. However, most classrooms had a different assistant teacher in the first month of semester. Some assistant teachers were volunteers from local communities or children's families. Assistant teachers may come from different backgrounds with different levels of teaching experience. The high turnover of assistant teachers leaves lead teachers additional teaching responsibilities. In some of our observations, assistant teachers needed guidance from lead teachers to interact with children. The high turnover of assistant teachers also lead to interruptive changes to classroom teaching. We observed several incidents in which the children from two classrooms were merged into one classroom due to the sudden absence and turnover of teachers.

Secondly, teachers may find challenging to address social issues in their interactions with children. In one of our observations, a child used aggressive language related to gun violence in a small group activity. The teacher found it challenging to address this issue in a developmentally

appropriate way. Teachers suggested that children needed additional behavioral guidance when they return to in-person learning; children showed difficulty understanding and following classroom routines. Such difficulties may be related to children's experience at home and in local communities.

Thirdly, the format of teaching resources may have impact on teachers' professional learning, especially the likelihood teachers would utilize these resources. In the first few months of Phase II, we created a traditional website in which we provide teaching resources (e.g., videos of trauma-informed practices, and demonstration of teaching strategies) and materials (e.g., lesson plans, and printable documents). However, the browsing history was very low. It indicated that teachers rarely visited the website and utilized the resources in their teaching. It may be because teachers were too busy with teaching responsibilities to visit a website that required additional steps (e.g., typing passwords and clicking links). We then quickly changed the format, and infused teaching resources into the mentoring summary and feedback email (see Picture 3). In this way, teachers can directly view comments and have access to teaching resources that are relevant to their ongoing teaching.

Fourth, school support should include positive interactions between administrative staff and classroom teachers. In our mentoring sessions, teachers often expressed limited interactions with administrative staff (e.g., curriculum specialist). They were confused about the purposes and necessities of some new documentation required by their administration. They often felt the interaction with administrative staff tended to be one-direction. It may be necessary to promote interactions between administrative staff and classroom teachers for effective collaboration and communication which may lead to efficient workflow, better support for children and teachers' higher job satisfaction.

Project Summary

This project developed and implemented a PL program for promoting teachers' early literacy instruction with a trauma-informed approach. The program was developed based on teachers' personal and professional experience during the COVID pandemic, and teachers' existing teaching practices and routines in classrooms (i.e., Phase I teachers' online survey study and focus-group interview). The PL program includes both professional workshops and ongoing mentoring sessions (i.e. Phase II implementation study). Reflective practices were utilized in the process of professional learning. A set of core practices of integrating social emotional instruction and early literacy instruction were introduced to teachers in the workshop. Teachers also received ongoing support through individualized mentoring.

This implementation research project resulted in several significant findings.

1. The COVID pandemic may have impacted teachers' classroom quality through teachers' efficacy, stress and school support. The pandemic may worsen teachers' stress that existed even before the pandemic (e.g., low salary and limited school resources).
2. The pandemic may have a greater impact on novice teachers than it did to veteran teachers.
3. Mindfulness practices can be utilized in classroom routine activities to promote both teachers' social emotional and literacy teaching.
4. Mindfulness practices have positive impacts on teachers' own wellbeing.
5. Professional workshops and ongoing mentoring may be effective in promoting different types of instruction. The workshop showed impact on teachers' social emotional instruction, while ongoing mentoring showed impact on teachers' implementation of early literacy instruction.

6. Reflective practices enable teachers to recognize the significance of the newly introduced teaching practices and their impact on children. This may lead to high fidelity of implementation of new teaching practices.
7. The quality of teachers' classroom social emotional and literacy teaching improved in this PL project. However, there are contextual factors related to school and community climate influencing teachers' teaching in classroom.

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Figure 1

The Theory of Change in Professional Learning Intervention

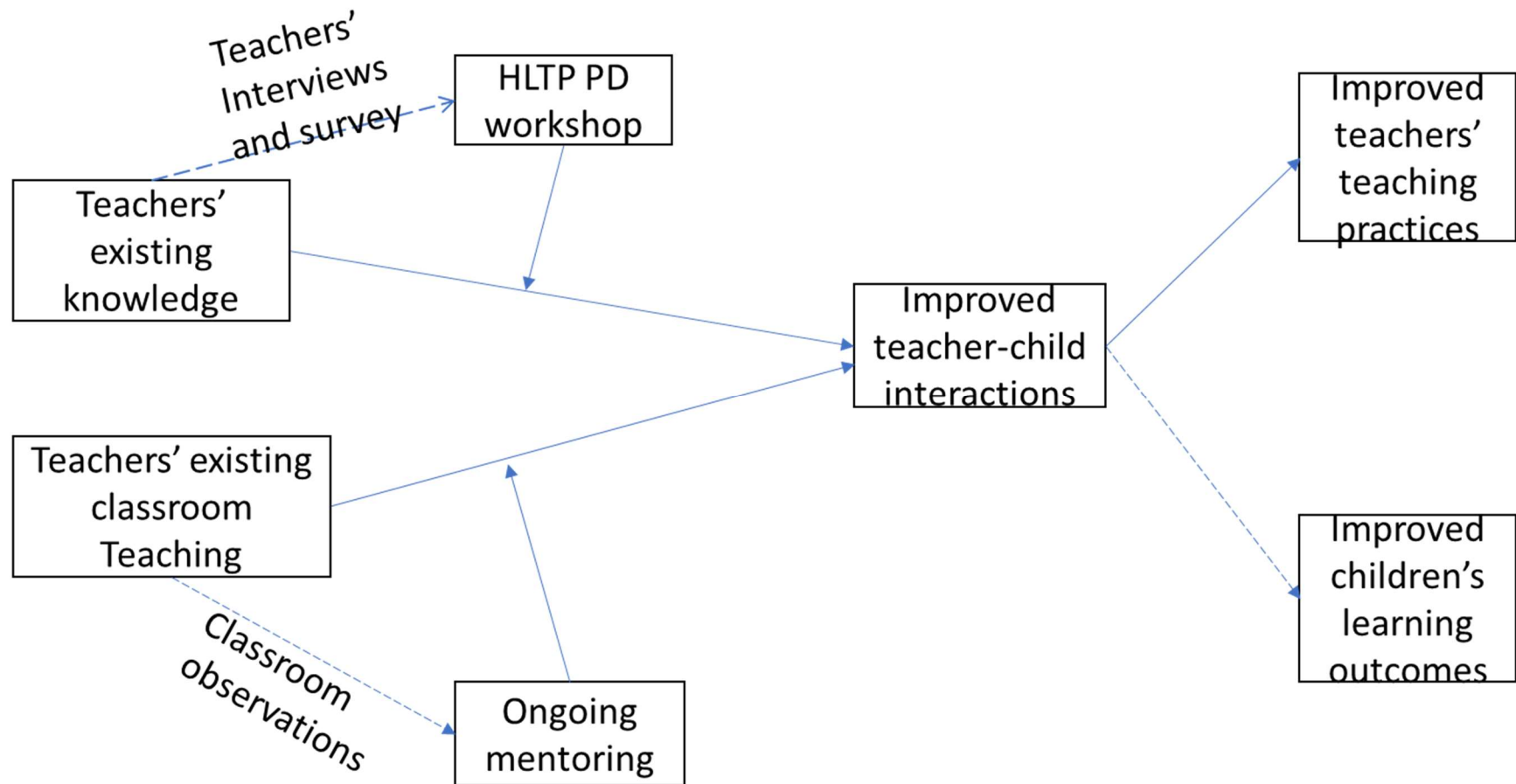


Figure 2

Connections between Trauma-informed and Mindfulness Practice within the Early Childhood Classroom

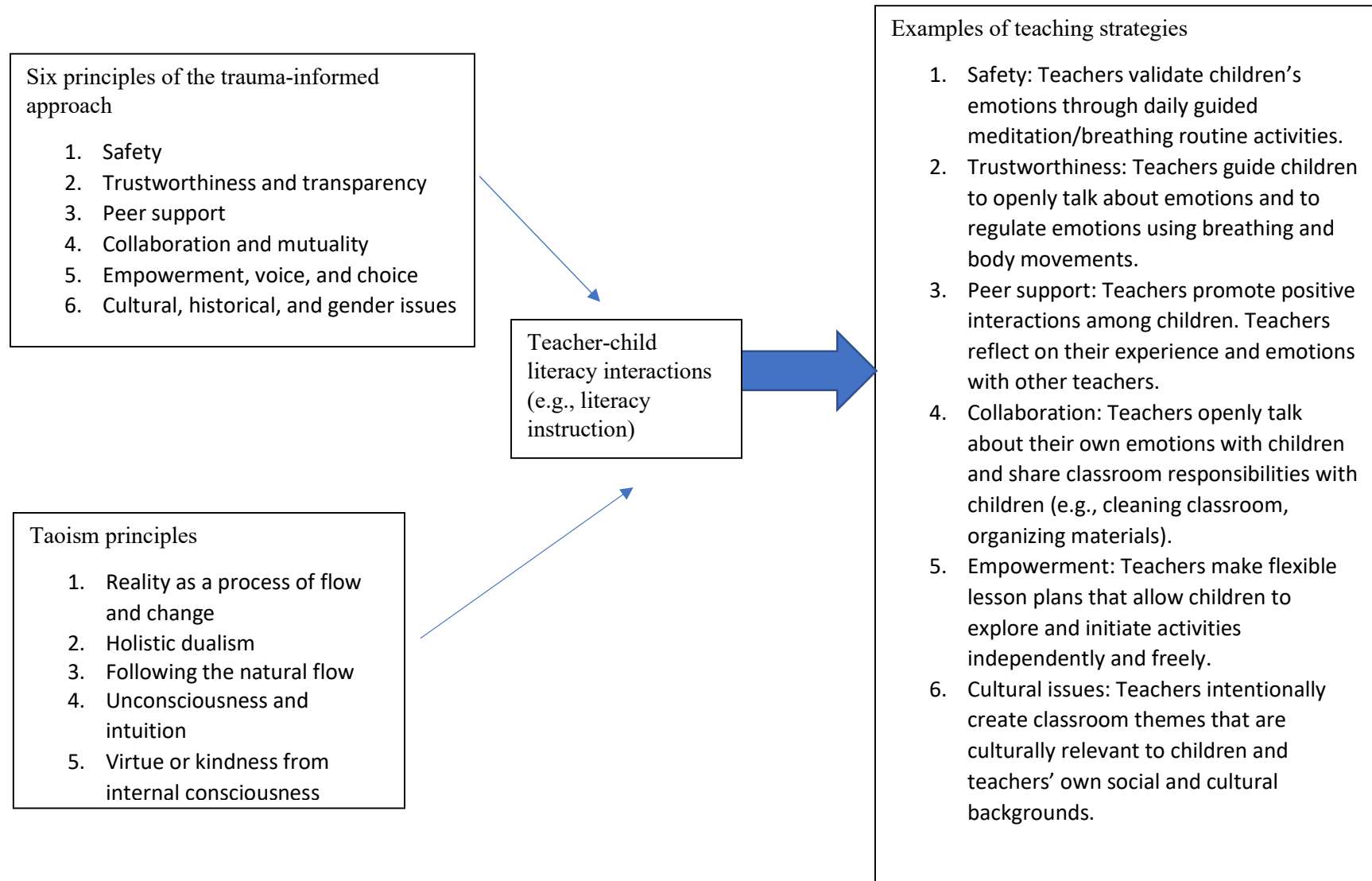


Figure 3***Example of a Mindfulness Literacy Morning Routine*****8:30–9:00 a.m. Daily Sign-in**

Children write their names on a blank piece of paper upon their arrival in their classroom (soft meditation music is played in the background). Children can choose to write their names with any writing or art materials (e.g., pen, pencil, colored marker, glitter glue).

Once children finish writing their name, they can freely explore any learning center.

9:00–9:05 a.m. Daily Meditation

Meditation music time. Children gather in the carpet area in a circle. They can follow guided meditation music to practice breathing and the feeling senses.

9:05–9:15 a.m. Daily Check Routine

Teacher prompts the children to check the days of the week, the month, and the weather. Teacher talks about his or her emotion of the day and explains how to celebrate positive emotions or support negative emotions, using a variety of materials. Teacher prompts children to share their emotions with each other through facial emotions, sounds, and body movements.

9:15–9:20 a.m. Transition to Learning Centers

Teacher gives a brief explanation of all available learning centers and tables and asks personal and emotion-related questions before dismissing them to the learning centers (e.g., Who loves the color blue? You can go pick a center. Who went to a party last week? You can go pick a center).

Figure 4.

Changes in General Classroom Quality

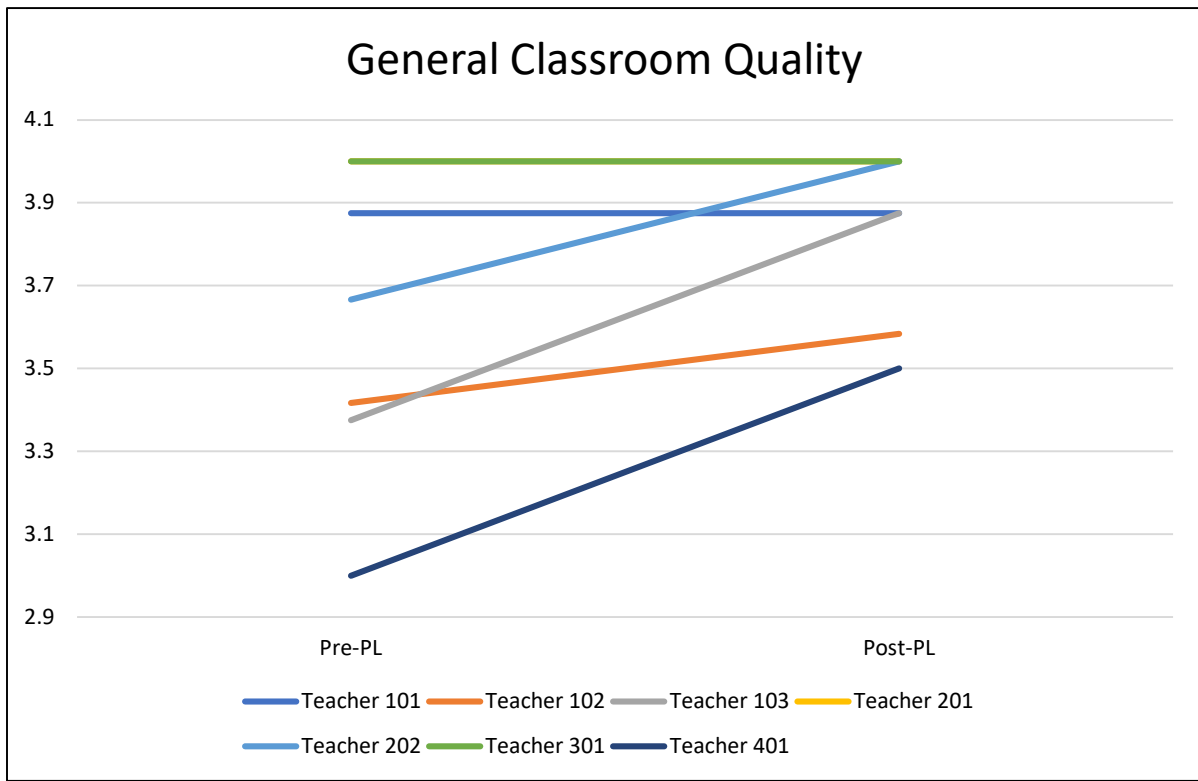


Figure 5

Changes in Book Reading Quality

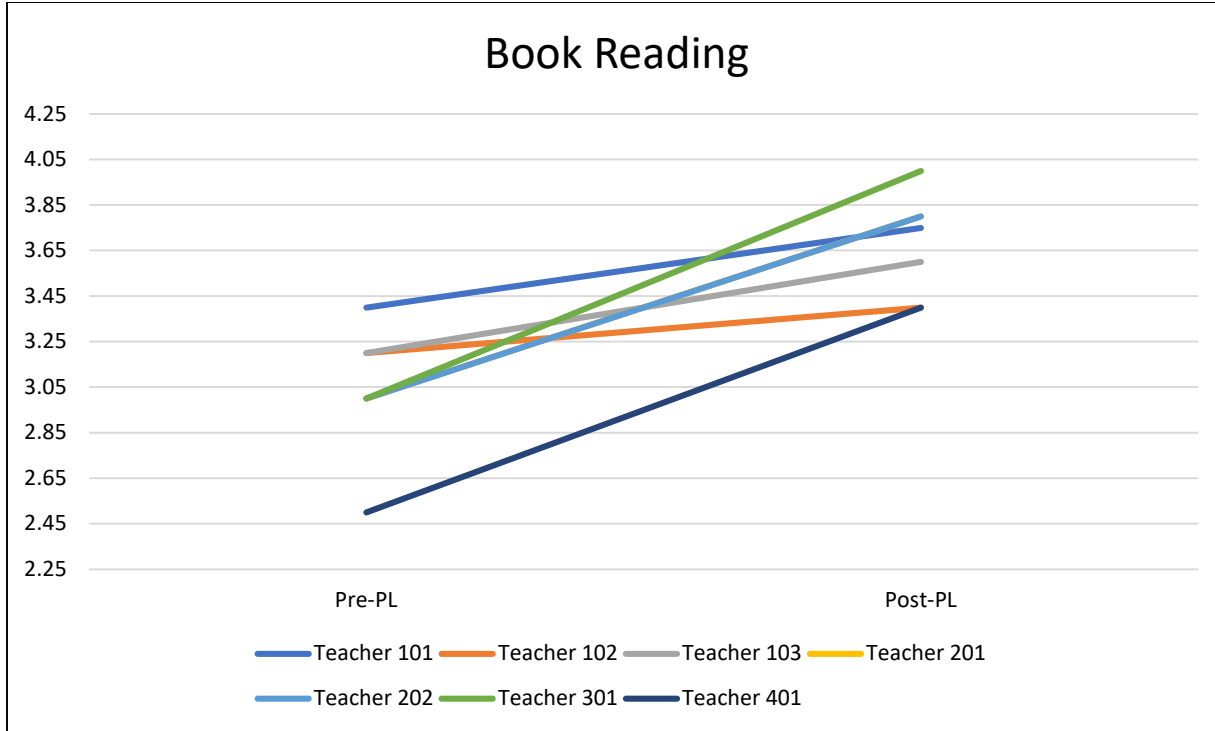
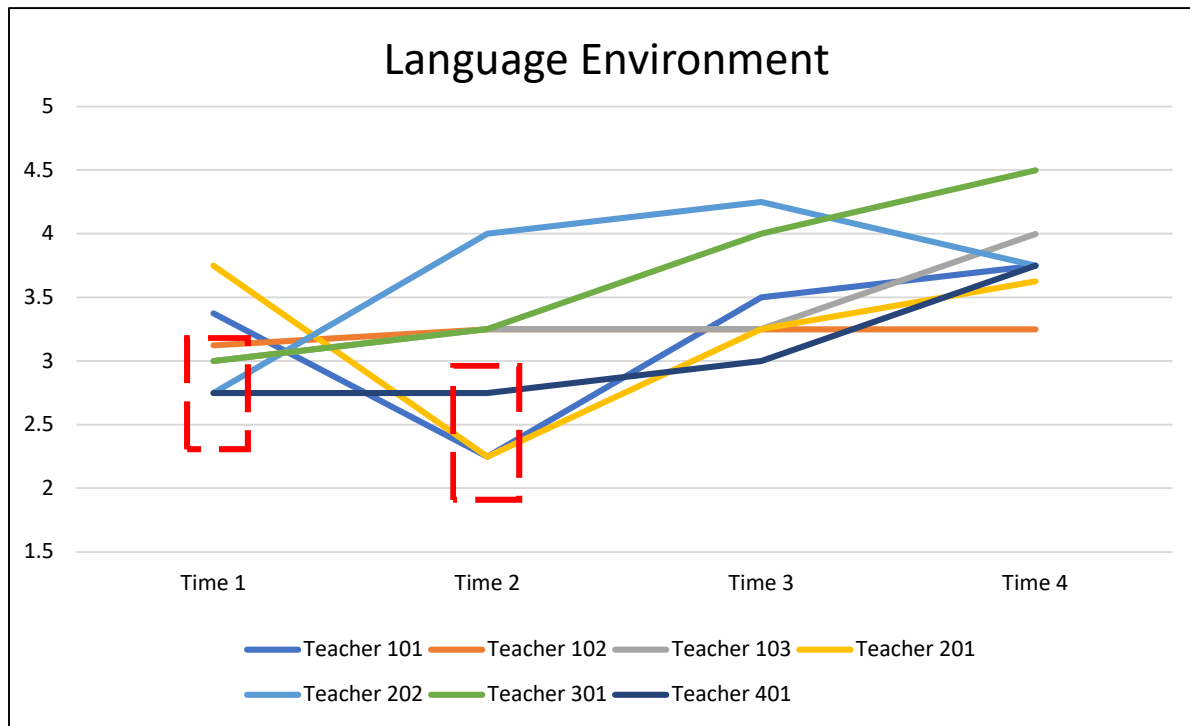
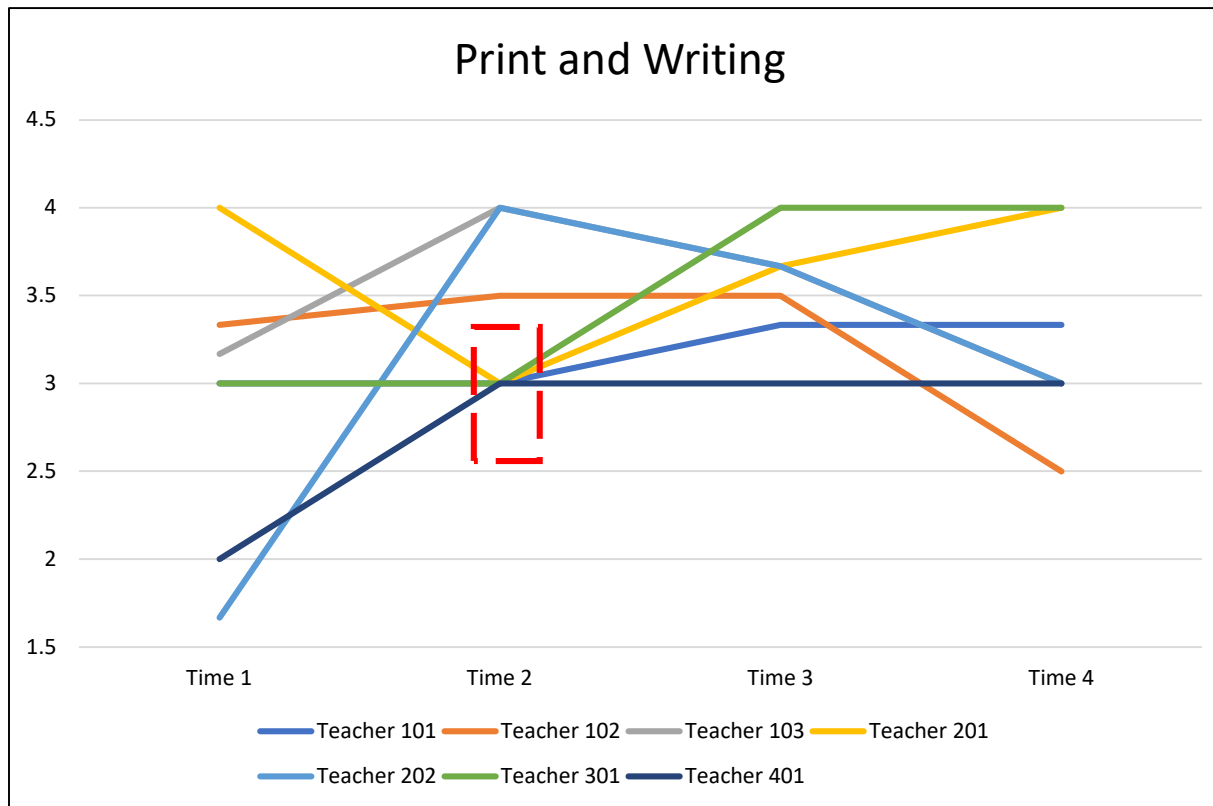


Figure 6

Changes in Language Environment

Note. The red box indicates the timing of ongoing mentoring for teachers. Teacher 102, Teacher 202, Teacher 301 and Teacher 401 received reflective mentoring right after the PL workshop at time 1, while teacher 101, teacher 103, teacher 201 received mentoring at time 2.

Figure 7

Changes in Print and Writing Instruction

Note. The red box indicates the timing of ongoing mentoring for teachers. Teacher 102, Teacher 202, Teacher 301 and Teacher 401 received reflective mentoring right after the PL workshop at time 1, while teacher 101, teacher 103, teacher 201 received mentoring at time 2.

Figure 8

Changes in Social Emotional Instruction

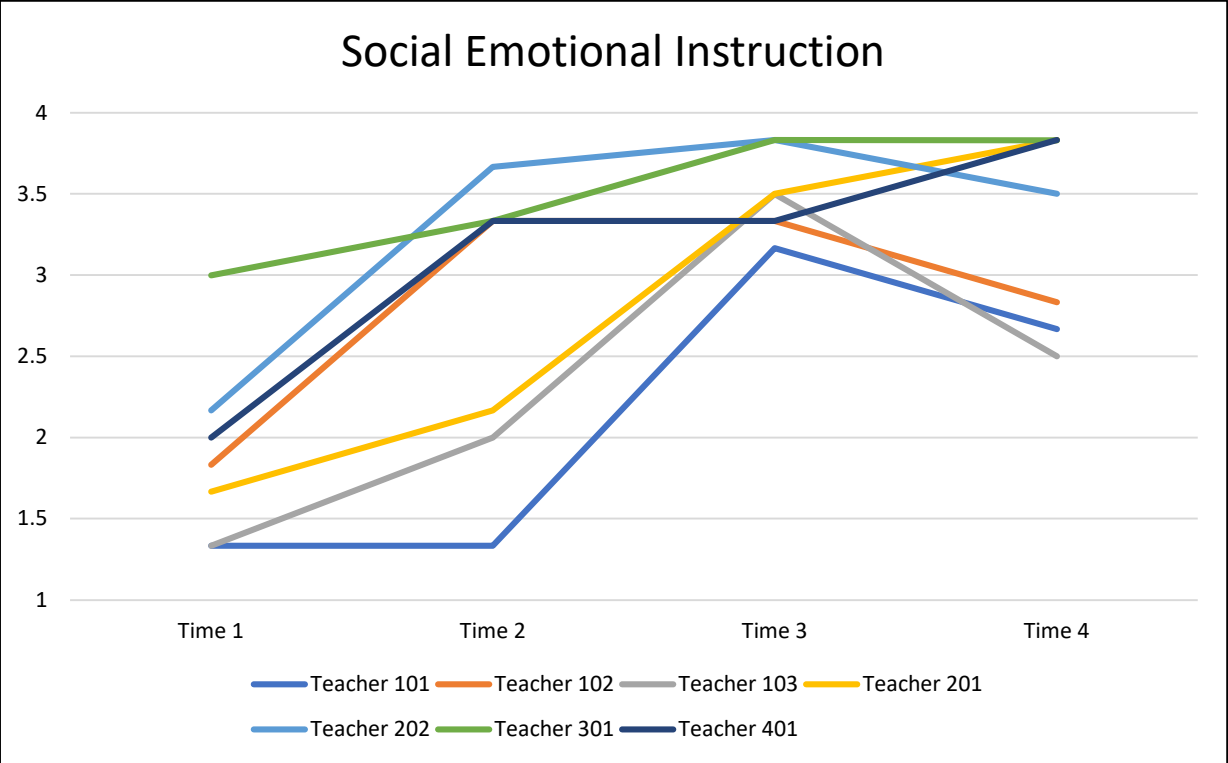
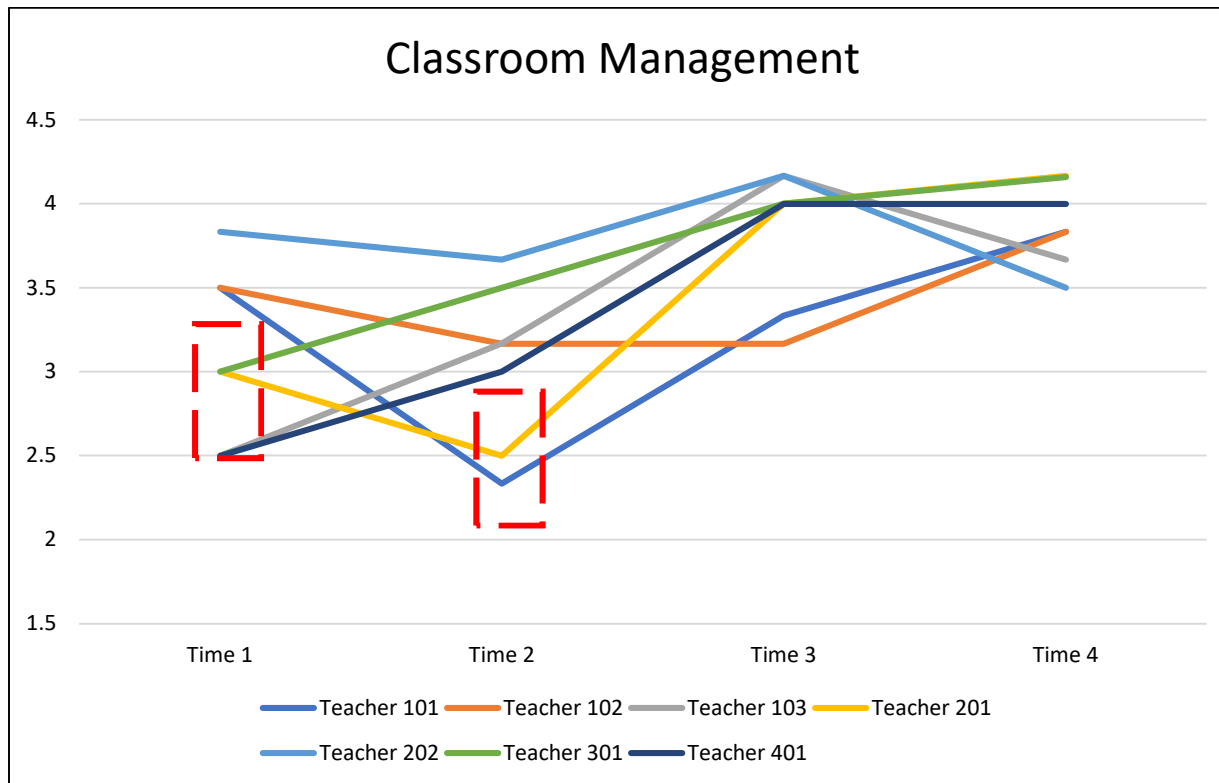
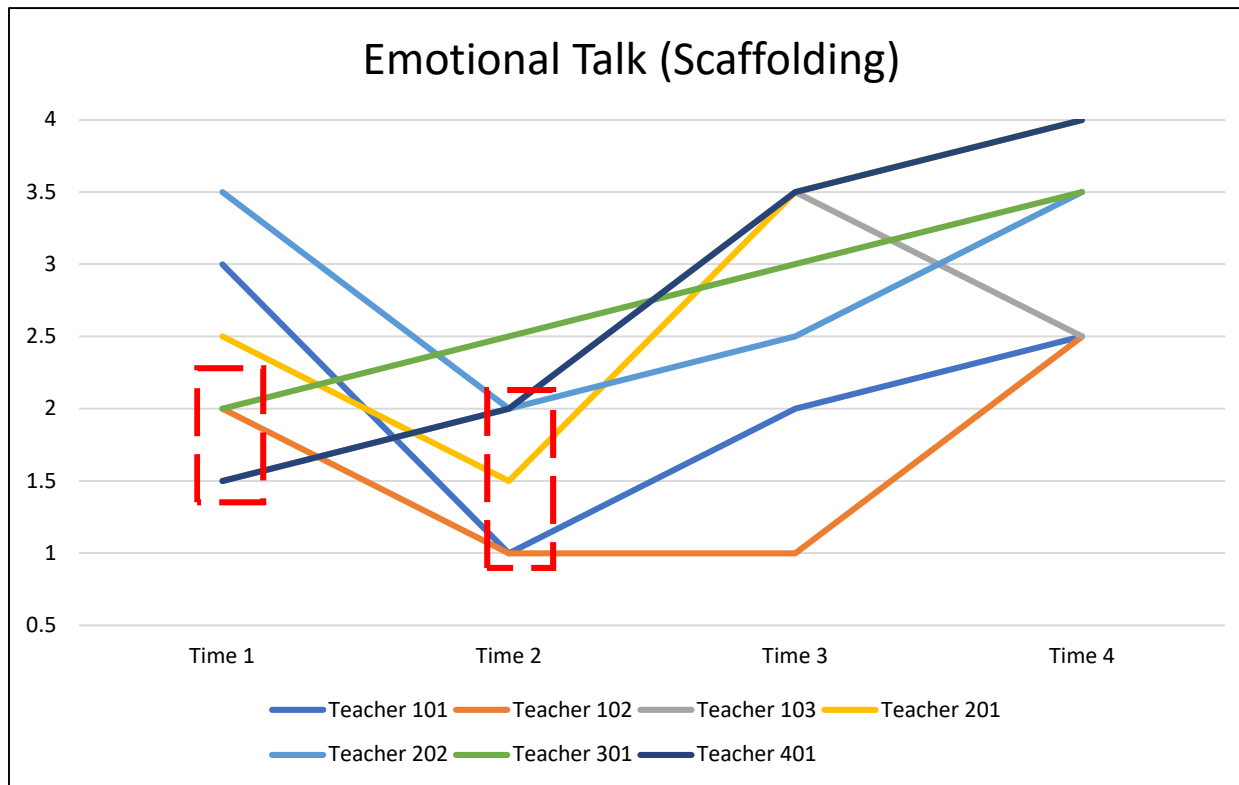


Figure 9

Changes in Social Emotional Instruction

Note. The red box indicates the timing of ongoing mentoring for teachers. Teacher 102, Teacher 202, Teacher 301 and Teacher 401 received reflective mentoring right after the PL workshop at time 1, while teacher 101, teacher 103, teacher 201 received mentoring at time 2.

Figure 10

Changes in Emotional Talk

Note. The red box indicates the timing of ongoing mentoring for teachers. Teacher 102, Teacher 202, Teacher 301 and Teacher 401 received reflective mentoring right after the PL workshop at time 1, while teacher 101, teacher 103, teacher 201 received mentoring at time 2.

Figure 11

Fidelity of Implementation

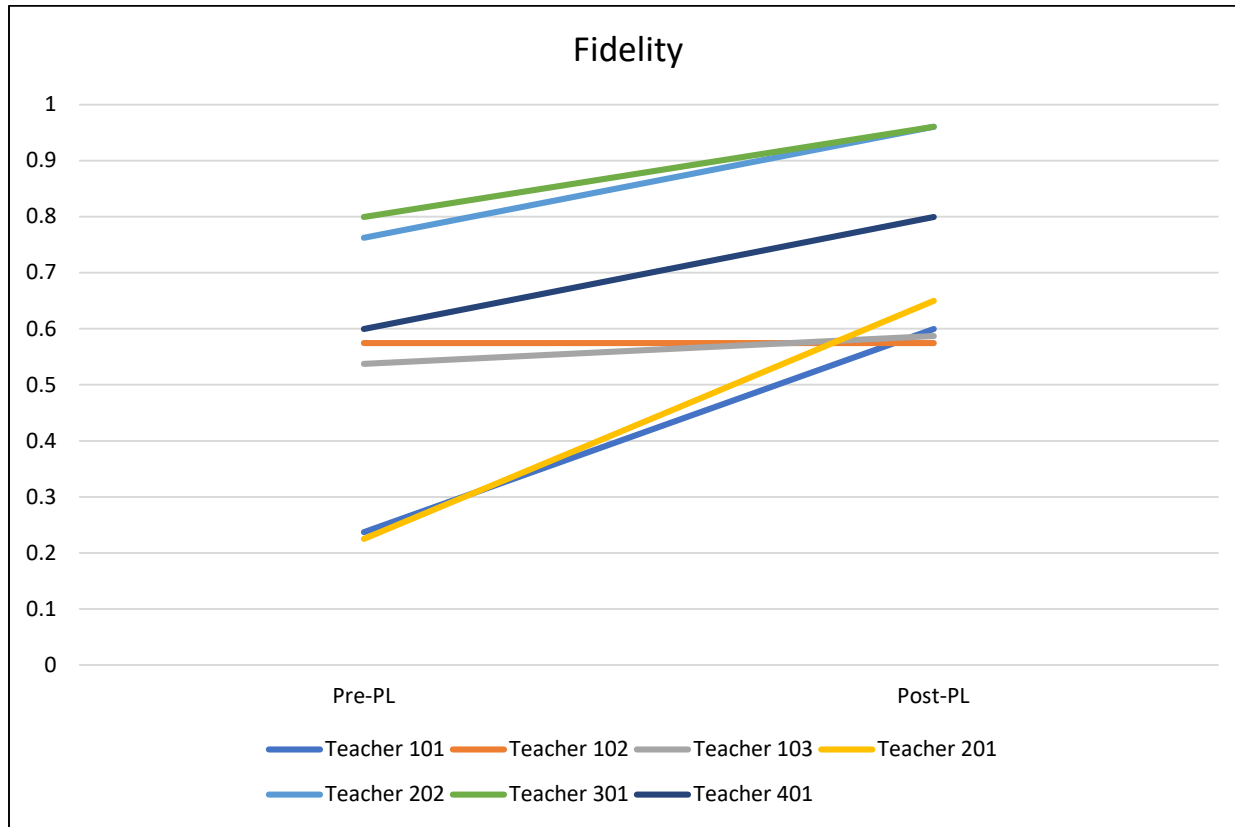


Table 1

Descriptives of Teachers' Wellbeing, Learning Activities, and Working Experience (N=161)

	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
1. Teachers' Efficacy	1-5	2.00	4.00	3.37	0.45
2. Teachers' Stress	1-5	1.00	4.00	2.40	0.58
3. School Support	1-5	2.00	4.00	3.16	0.41
4. Freq. of Literacy Activities	1-5	1.0	4.0	3.74	0.55
5. Freq. of Math Activities	1-5	1.0	4.0	3.69	0.58
6. Freq. of Science Activities	1-5	1.0	4.0	3.17	0.89
7. Freq of Art Activities	1-5	1.0	4.0	3.34	0.87
8. Freq. of Motor Activities	1-5	1.0	4.0	3.78	0.52
9. Teaching Experience	-	1.00	56.00	14.12	9.59
10. Teachers' Age	-	19.00	79.00	43.21	12.01

Table 2

Correlational Matrix Among Teachers' Wellbeing, Learning Activities, and Working Experience (N=161)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Teachers' Efficacy	1										
2. Teachers' Stress	-.17*	1									
3. School Support	.27**	-.28**	1								
4. Freq. of Literacy Activities	.14 [†]	.02	.16 [†]	1							
5. Freq. of Math Activities	.18*	-.01	.18*	.88**	1						
6. Freq. of Science Activities	.12	-.11	.22*	.44**	.49**	1					
7. Freq of Art Activities	.13 [†]	.01	.00	.41**	.50**	.67**	1				
8. Freq. of Motor Activities	.18*	.03	.14	.87**	.83**	.40**	.48**	1			
9. Teaching Experience	.16*	-.08	.10	.08	.09	-.01	.07	.09	1		
10. Teachers' Age	.13	-.08	-.04	-.01	.03	-.06	.03	-.02	.68**	1	
11. Teaching Mode	-.10	-.02	-.10	.09	.07	.27**	.28**	.06	-.18*	-.03	1

Note. [†]p< .10, *p<.05, **p< .01

Table 3

Examples of Individual Mentoring Sessions

Trauma-informed principles	Examples of reflective questions	Recommendations based on mindfulness principles
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you find any mindfulness strategies that can help you create a positive environment for your teaching and children’s learning? • Did anything make you feel that it was challenging to implement mindfulness practices in your classroom? 	<p>A high-quality classroom environment is not defined by rating scores.</p> <p>Do not worry about what you cannot do. Focus on the process and in-the-moment interactions with children. If you have positive experiences with children in this class, this classroom quality must be good.</p>
Trustworthiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you find it easy to define and talk about emotional vocabularies every day during routine activities? • Did you feel that it was challenging to guide children in expressing their 	<p>Accept all the positive and negative emotions. Focus on the way we use to celebrate, express, and learn from these emotions.</p>

	emotions in a positive way using mindfulness practices?	Reality is changing constantly. Whatever upset you has already happened and passed, but you have a choice to allow it to continuously affect you or not.
Peer support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the strategies that you found effective to get children to collaborate in learning activities? • Have you asked help from your assistant teachers to support you? 	<p>Give children more space and time to explore and take the initiative in classroom learning. You do not need to arrange your lesson plan of the day based on time. You can follow children's interests and arrange your day based on the segments of activities or classroom events.</p> <p>Invite children to feel your emotions or feel other children's emotions during activities by practicing breathing and using different senses.</p>
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you openly talk about your own emotions to children, how did you feel? Do you think children learn from that? 	<p>Kindness is like water: It can be expressed in different ways.</p> <p>Kindness can be expressed by doing trivial tasks, but it focuses on continuous caring for others.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you feel comfortable sharing classroom responsibilities with children? 	<p>Children and teachers are all members of the classroom community.</p> <p>Sharing classroom responsibilities allows them to experience different ways to care for others and contribute to the classroom.</p>
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were the strategies that you feel effectively support children to be independent and have more autonomy? How did you remind yourself to take a break when you were tired? 	<p>Praise children when they independently solve a problem or complete a project. Ask them to talk about what they create. Some of their works not only reflect their creativity but also their intuitions of feeling and caring for others.</p> <p>When children share positive emotions with you or make an effort to comfort you, give them explicit thankfulness. In this way, you can demonstrate gratitude in social interactions. This also recognizes children as important individuals to other people.</p>
Cultural issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were the activities that you have tried that are relevant to children's own interests or their cultural backgrounds? 	<p>Allow children to share their home experience with you during classroom activities and learn about their personal interests and cultural backgrounds. Utilize this information in routine activities when you do daily check-in.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What were the activities that you found personally more connected? Why?	Plan an activity for which you feel personally connected and invite children to know more about you.
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Pictures 1 and 2. Examples of classroom writing instructions in routine activities



Teacher wrote morning message about emotions and interests in the morning meeting time.

Children's faces were digitally covered for privacy reasons.



Teacher promotes collaborations among children to freely create writing samples.

Children's faces were digitally covered for privacy reasons.

Picture 3. Example of Observation and Mentoring Feedback to teachers

Georgia Trauma Informed Literacy Project

Ms. Pierce Oct. Observation Feedback

Impressive Aspects in Teaching:

I was very impressed to see how well behaved your children were, and how you developed a very structured routine. Although you had a full class of children, all children followed your lead very well. they also showed familiarities with different activities and learning centers.

The classroom routines are well organized. You intentionally had extended conversations with children and prompted them to talk more about their experience outside of the classroom during breakfast and morning meeting time. You also allowed children to freely express and talk about their experience during each activity.

The print environment in the classroom is amazing. All of that beautiful posters with accurate literacy and writing convention. I love how you made writing table always available. This is incredible especially for children with limited English language skill. Your book reading is AMAZING.

You also intentionally included movement activities (singing song, and moving body), book reading, routine activities during morning meeting time. Children were following your directions and instructions. Your efforts of engaging all children in learning is very impressive. Children were very attentive to different small group activities during free choice time. I was particularly impressed by how you are so flexible in teaching. for example, when you noticed children were loosing attention, you let them go and drink water or even wear jacket and come back to the carpet. This is so wonderful. Least resistance! Follow the flow.

I think your classroom routine is great and has been set up successfully.

Something to think about:

While I was impressed by your teaching and how calm you were in your teaching, I still hope you can be more relaxing and convenient in your teaching. I noticed that you invested a lot of your energy managing your classroom and you barely stopped and had a break during my observation. You may have used to this dynamics, but I wish you can take time and give yourself some times to take a break and rest. Or interact with children in a relaxing environment.

There are a few reflective questions I would invite you to think about...

1. Are there any transition times that we can make them more flexible and do not require all children to do center thing at the same time? I feel some of "transition" times can be eliminated or modified. Many teachers like to dismiss or gather all children together to do something. But I think your children have really good self-regulation skills that sometimes you can just allow them to "transit" by themselves based on their own pace. One example is breakfast transition. In your classroom, children gathered together in book reading center or carpet area and got ready to go to use bathroom and go to table nettv much at the same

6. And sometimes it is ok to tell children your own emotions. It was so great to observe you say that to children in morning meeting time when discussing their behaviors. And children understood, they immediately asked you "why you feel sad" and you said "because we needed to be quiet"...that's wonderful. Please also consider prompt children give you solution to handle bad emotions so they can understand the connection between behaviors and emotions, and how to regulate emotion. For example, ah, Ms. Pierce is happy today, so let's do a dance together. Or Ms. Pierce is tired, can you help me to dothis will actually guide children to think about what they can contribute to the classroom as a member of community rather than a receiver of care. In fact, this "empowers" children. once children have done something good for others, greatly praise them, and call other children's attention to the good behaviors and the "consequences" of the good behaviors.

Something to try in the future:

I found a video introducing five games that you can use for routines. These games are easy to do and prompt children to develop self-regulation skills.



5 Incredibly Fun GAMES To Teach Self-Regulation

5 Incredibly Fun GAMES to Teach Self-Regulation (Self-Control) | Social Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is the process of developing the self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, a...

[youtube.com](#)

