

Evaluation of WellEducator Neighborhoods in an
Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education
Program in the Pacific Northwest
2020 – 21 School Year



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What “worked” about the Neighborhoods?

“It really helped me get through this school year...I totally would have drowned.”

“I have encouraged the parents I work with to take care of themselves more.”

“It was a really big helpful tool for me. Increasing my mindful awareness [and] how to apply that professionally and personally.”

“I am more aware of the stressors I and my families are facing, more inclined to recommend mental health resources available online such as insight timer, head space, or mindfulness YouTube videos.”

“I am more focused at work, I have better boundaries between home and work, and I have better sleep habits and am able to get more done because I am not as tired.”

“It was like having my own personal counseling group and it was built into my work life. I loved it.”

I learned: “That it is not unprofessional for me to take a 3-min pause...it actually makes me a better person and professional.”

“Appreciated the overall positivity of the group, the things you were teaching us about. It was a good reminder of how you have the power of your mind.”

“Being a part of this group was an incredibly important component of my emotional and mental health this year.”

“It has made me a better educator and worker during these unusual times.”

Quotes were from the final evaluation and transcribed from an open-ended discussion about what worked and what could have been done differently during the last Neighborhood session on that was held on Zoom.

There were 4 Cohorts for the 2020 – 2021 School Year.

The Neighborhoods started with 22 participants on November 4th, 2020 and ended with 16 participants. A loss of 6 participants for a variety of reasons including 1 new job, 2 medical leaves, and 3 for service delivery and schedule changes. This loss can be expected especially during a pandemic year where there are additional stressors on staff and operational procedures were forever changing and shifting.

Note: All changes to schedules or medical leaves happened at least 3 months into the program when cohorts were already well established. Any changes to cohorts at that time would have severely impacted the integrity of the program. Members had created intimate relationships by that time and were relying on each other for accountability in their self-care plans. Disruption to these relationships could have negatively impacted the Neighborhoods.

The final session for the 2020 – 2021 Neighborhoods was on June 8th, 2021.

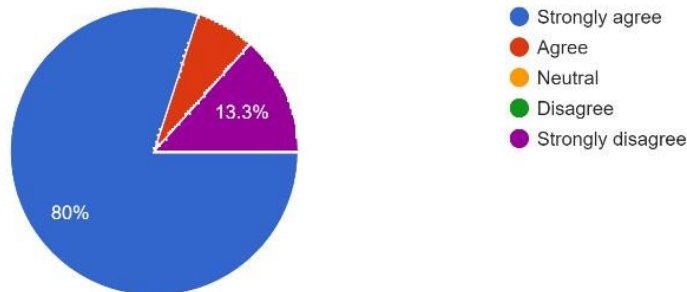
Sixteen participants completed a Retrospective Evaluation (see Appendix A for a copy of the evaluation). Participants were asked to rate how they felt their skill level was NOW as compared to BEFORE the Neighborhoods on several items related to the Skills Builders presented during the sessions. The overall average group NOW score was 5.03, (range 4.63 – 5.5). The overall Cohort average change score was 2.06, (range 1.56 – 2.69). These scores indicate that there was movement in a positive direction in how participants felt their skill level changed from before participating in the Neighborhoods to after participating in the neighborhoods on the following skills building items:

- Know ways to be in the present moment, without judging it.
- Understand emotions and have strategies to accept their existence and respond to them.
- Understand we are social beings and need each other to thrive.
- Have strategies to build community and empathy for one another.
- Understand the physiological and psychological benefits of a practice of gratitude in my life.
- Understand the benefits of values-based goal setting.
- Understand the physiological and psychological benefits of a practice of cultivating awe in my life.

Next, sixteen participants were asked to complete the final evaluation before receiving their certificate of completion. Fifteen participants completed the evaluation. Results are on the next page.

Overall, I found the mindful exercises helpful.

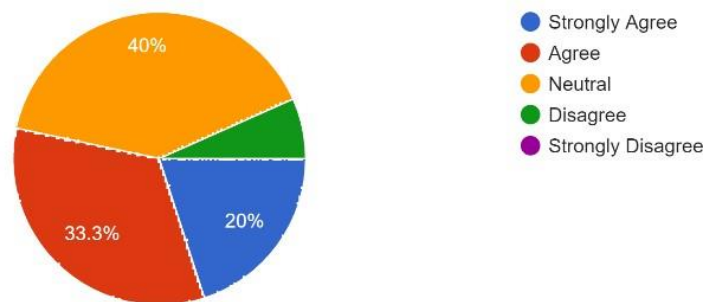
15 responses



A mindful exercise started the session. Note: For the first 3 respondents the response items were transposed. Strongly disagree was the top choice. We are suggesting respondents meant to choose "Strongly agree" when they chose "Strongly disagree" because all other data suggests that all participants strongly liked the mindfulness exercises. See all other evaluation data for proof of this assumption.

Overall, I found the Yoga pairing handouts useful.

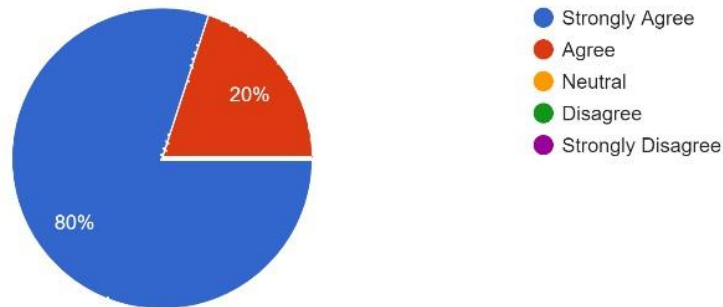
15 responses



Each session, participants were provided with a handout with a Yoga pose designed by WellEducator and provided by Healthy Living Expert and Yoga Instructor, Maggie Verderame from Magareeshi.com. These handouts described a Yoga pose that matched the theme of the Skills Builder for that session.

Overall, I found the Skills Builders useful. (Information presented by Renee in each session.)

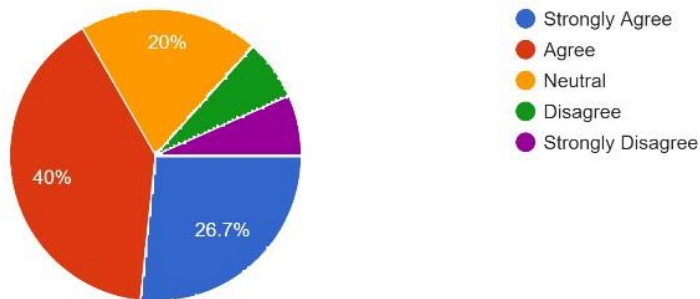
15 responses



The Skills Builders were the content the session facilitator (Renée) presented each session which was based on one of the 8 dimensions of wellbeing (Cognitive, emotional, social, physical, spiritual, financial, environmental, occupational).

Overall, I found the Recipe pairing handouts useful.

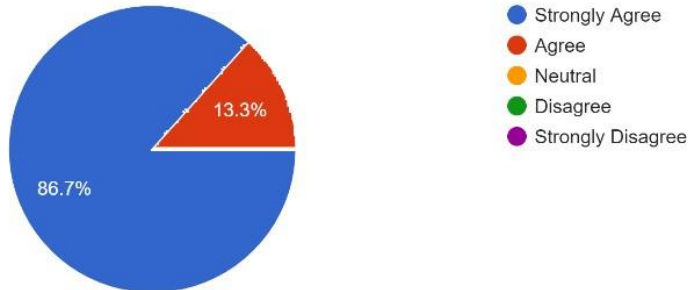
15 responses



Each session, participants were provided with a handout with a healthy recipe designed by WellEducator and provided by Healthy Living Expert and Yoga Instructor Maggie Verderame from Magareeshi.com. These handouts described a recipe that matched the theme of the Skills Builder for that session.

Overall, I found the Mindful Check-Ins useful.

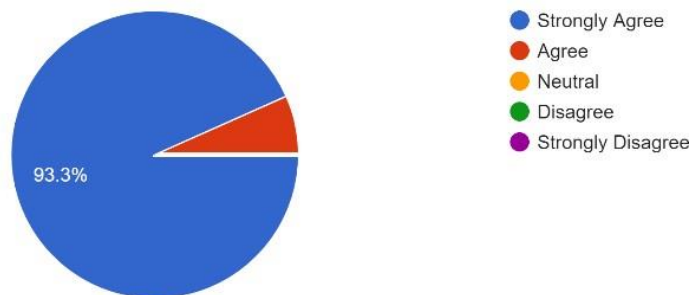
15 responses



Mindful Check-Ins were when each participant shared their goal for that session, then shared what worked for them since the time of last session in relation to that goal and what they might have done differently (what did they learn).

Overall, I found the Intention Setting time useful.

15 responses



Intention Setting time was held at the end of the session when each participant set their goal for the next session.

Open-Ended Questions (N=15)

A sample of responses have been selected and are included below.

Q1: I would recommend the Neighborhoods to colleagues. (yes or no and why?)

- Yes-helpful in creating a sense of self-accomplishment and self care.
- Wellness neighborhoods are a great way to connect with colleagues and are a supportive environment for creating intention and small positive changes.
- Yes, definitely. I think the tools I have found have helped me personally, and also to connect deeper with my colleagues.
- Yes, it was a wonderful time to check in with myself and co-workers
- Yes because it give you a chance to connest with other and also helps with grounding yourself to be able to be a better virsion of yourself
- Yes. I found these neighborhoods very grounding for myself and gave me rythems to participate in that helped me incorporate those practices into my life outside of the neighborhoods.
- Yes! It is so therapeutic and helped me do supportive things for myself.
- Yes, I absolutely would. It was like having my own personal counseling group and it was built in to my work life. I loved it.
- Yes, absolutely! Being a part of this group was an incredibly important component of my emotional and mental health this year.
- Yes! I loved this protected time to think a bit about self-care
- yes, I found that it was a great support to my mental health to have that to rely on
- Absolutely! Because we rarely have time and space to focus on our well-being. This is valuable time spent.

Q2: What did you like about the Neighborhood gatherings?

- Meditating and setting intentions
- format, printable tools to reference, mindfulness exercises, spending time with co-workers
- It was a great opportunity to connect with my colleagues and to work on different areas of my overall well being.
- Connecting with colleagues out of work to focus on wellbeing. Being held accountable to my own intentions for wellbeing, and learning about things others are doing/trying.
- I loved all the Recipes even though some I could eat due to gluten or allergies but i thought they still where great Ideas for other who maybe able to use them. I also really enjoyed connecting with my co-workes on a personal level and have other i could relate to and maybe just help other with suggestion I have that might work for them
- I liked connected with a small group of colleagues, intention setting, and the meditation practice/mindfulness practice and reflection.
- Connections w/ Renee and colleagues, a positive space for wellness, therapeutic benefits, and setting goals for myself.
- I love the community Renee creates. I felt very comfortable sharing and looked forward to seeing my "neighbors".
- I appreciated the accountability the group provided and the supportive environment in which to set wellness intentions.

- Small, scheduled times to set and check in about goals, take some time to meditate, and learn some new ideas about self care
- I liked that we were presented with different types of information throughout the sessions and were able to use these meetings as a way to frame our goals.

Q3: Has your approach to self-care changed since you started the Neighborhood gatherings? (yes/no and how?)

- Yes-I now believe in the power of setting goals, making a plan, and executing!
- I'm more aware of the small things that I can do during the day to take care over myself.
- yes, more willing to make it a priority
- Yes! Prior I always wanted to work on self-care skills but didn't really set intentional goals for myself. Being apart of the Neighborhood gatherings gave me a place to learn new skills and set up goals that I could practice self-care skills.
- Yes, I am more committed and follow through on my intentions.
- Yes it has. I now have a daily meditation practice, which helps me with my energy levels, and focus at work.
- yes, I like setting small tasks to achieve
- Yes Im more mind full of taking time for myself and giving my daily life the balance it needs and reminding my self that not every day is goin to be perfect but everyday is a day to make changes to better my family and myself
- Yes. I am more aware of my stress behaviors and when I notice them, I am proactive about taking the time I need to relax with a meditation, walk, or break.
- I am engaging in more mindfulness activities and I know how to set wellness goals for myself.
- Yes it has. I continue to use a gratitude journal, I use some of the mindfulness techniques, especially when I'm feeling anxious or have trouble getting to sleep.
- Yes. I learned about the many different dimensions that exist to my wellness and self-care. The Neighborhood gatherings helped me to learn about each dimension individually, reflect on my current wellness in that area, and then create plans and intentions for how I can focus on that specific area of wellness.
- it has kept me balanced
- Yes, I had a more limited idea of what self care meant before starting the sessions. I've been able to improve my quality of life by shifting my focus to the areas we covered in the session.
- Absolutely. I have become much more mindful and intentional with my work place and daily living.

Q4: Has your participation in the Neighborhood gatherings impacted your wellbeing? (yes/no and how?)

- Yes--sense of self-accomplishment and taking better care of myself.
- yes--it was helpful to have a dedicated space to focus on what I'm doing with intention that impacts my wellbeing
- yes, more able to care for myself in a variety of ways
- Yes, I now have a better understanding about all the different aspects of well being that affect my professional and personal life.

- Yes, I have done more because of having the support and accountability of the group I met with.
- Yes, tremendously. It was great to have a support group and community of co-workers working on self care.
- Yes, I feel that setting intentional self care was motivating
- yes I was really on track when i attended regularly but when other meeting got in the way I noticed I started to fall off track and had to tell myself to get back on the horse even if I cant always go to my meeting and that is what i did. But I do really need the support and group to help me stay grounded and focused.
- Yes. I found these neighborhoods very grounding for myself and gave me rythems to participate in that helped me incorporate those practices into my life outside of the neighborhoods
- Yes! I am regularly using some of the mindfulness activities. The group helped me to set goals and meet them. I have a better idea of how to set wellness goals for myself.
- It has because I have easily accessible tools to use when needed.
- Yes. The Neighborhood gatherings helped me to have a community in which to feel supported and safe, with a unified focus on improving our well being in our overall wellness. The gatherings throughout the year helped me to keep grounded and focused on the importance of my mental and emotional health.
- yes, really positive and grounding in a terrible year
- Overall, I feel less stressed than at the beginning of the year because of changes that have happened during neighborhood gatherings.
- 100%. I really valued each session.

Q5: Has your participation in the Neighborhood gatherings impacted your work with students and families? (yes/no and how?)

- Yes...because I feel better at my core, I am a better provider.
- I'm not sure about this. . .but I feel like when I'm more grounded and feeling good, I'm better able to connect with and support the staff that I work with.
- yes, better self care leads to better care for others
- Yes! I have more energy for my work.
- Yes, it's impacted my centeredness, patience and how I talk about and model self-care.
- I am more focused at work, I have better boundaries between home and work, and I have better sleep habits and am able to get more done because I am not as tired.
- Yes, I have encouraged the parents I work with to take care of themselves more
- yes It has made me a better educator and Worker during these unusual times
- Yes. I am more aware of the stressors I and my families are facing, more inclined to recommend mental health resources available on line such as insight timer, head space, or mindfulness youtube videos.
- Yes. Taking time to do something for myself and to be more mindful and present with families has helped me be better provider. It has also helped me build skills to pass on to families.
- I think so. Because I'm making more time for myself and making my self-care a priority, I'm a more positive person.

- Yes. The gatherings have helped me to be more reflective than reactive with my own interactions and in thinking about how I can communicate with and support families in the best way possible.
- Reinforced my understanding of how important self care and reflection are
- Yes, Having less stress in my life outside of work has given me more energy to put into work and being a better provider to the families i work with.
- I suppose. I am taking better care of myself which will in turn have an impact on my families.

Q6: Is there anything that you would change to improve the Neighborhood gatherings?

- Zoom link reminders :)
- no
- Spacing of sessions so they are once a week or twice a month if possible.
- Have a centralized place to access the resources and videos.
- Have the participants read the ground rules silently instead of reading out loud.
- No.
- I not a fan of reading out loud and I always felt bad that i would never read things in our group out loud. This was probably my lest favorite part of our sessions
- I enjoyed it as it was.
- none.
- I honestly can't think of anything. It was a wonderful experience.
- The only thing I would add is an optional way for group members to support and interact with each other during the time between the Neighborhood gatherings. It is nice to have a way to check in on others, and have accountability for my intentions during the time between group check ins.
- I would not read aloud the rules every time.
- Honestly, I'd make them a bit longer sessions. They go by too quickly. Maybe 90 minutes instead of 60.

Q7: Brief testimonial about your experience. (Optional)

“I would highly recommend this Wellness Educator Neighborhood, it is a safe and supportive group which helped me grow and supported my wellness and mental health during a challenging school year. I am forever thankful for this experience!”

- Rosa L.

“Carving out time for myself during this unprecedented year has impacted me in ways I could not have predicted.”

-Melissa W.

“I[’m] so glad I did this and I’m hoping to be able to do it again.”

-Christy L.

“This has been an incredibly challenging year and I have found the Well Educator Neighborhoods program implemented by Renee to be invaluable to my wellness. I truly believe the monthly check ins, learning about wellness dimensions, mindful meditations, resources, and monthly intentions were key to keeping myself grounded and focused during this year. This next year is going to prove to be a challenging one as well, as we all start to move back towards our previous "normal" lives. We will need tools, resources, and community, to help us as we process the trauma that we collectively experienced. When we are well ourselves, we can help others to be well.”

-Megan L.

“The well-educator sessions were an important aspect of my well-being this year with Covid, especially, because I took the time to focus on each skill builder and learn what I could do to be a better person.”

-Jennifer S.

This concludes the report.

Appendix A: Educator Wellbeing Skills Ladder (Retrospective Evaluation)

Educator Wellbeing Skills Ladder



Look at the Educator Wellbeing Skills Ladder. Some educators think their skills in certain areas are low. Others see their skills as higher.

First, think about where you are on the Ladder **NOW** for each of the skills below. Then, think back **BEFORE** you participated in the Neighborhood sessions.

Where were you then?

	NOW						BEFORE							
	LOW					HIGH	LOW					HIGH		
Know ways to be in the present moment, without judging it.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Understand emotions and have strategies to accept their existence and respond to them.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Understand we are social beings and need each other to thrive.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Have strategies to build community and empathy for one another.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Understand the physiological and psychological benefits of a practice of gratitude in my life.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Understand the benefits of values-based goal setting.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Understand the physiological and psychological benefits of a practice of cultivating awe in my life.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6