



# CRITICALLY EVALUATING SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH (CESMH) ONLINE REPOSITORY

## BACKGROUND

### Why?

At present, there are no known national programs or services in Canada that partner mental health or education researchers with school professionals/schools/school boards for the explicit purpose of critically evaluating school based mental health promotion/prevention programs for safety, effectiveness and cost.

### What?

CESMH\* is an online repository that provides synthesis of evidence of school mental health promotion/prevention programs for educators across Canada to assist them in selecting the programs for their schools.

### Who?

CESMH is led by teenmentalhealth.org where the repository will be housed. Participants in the development of the repository include mental health, education, and research experts across Canada.

## EVALUATION PROCESS & TOOLS

The CESMH team will conduct focused systematic reviews that critically appraise the quality of evidence on all available research studies for school mental health programs as requested by schools, as well as applying the Office of Justice Program (OJP) What Works Repository. The OJP What Works Repository classifies programs into 6 levels of evidence of effectiveness and 3 levels of readiness for dissemination, using rigorous scientific criteria.

## CESMH ON MINDFULNESS

The CESMH team conducted a focused systematic review that critically appraised all published research studies on two school-based mindfulness programs that are widely disseminated and heavily marketed to schools in North America, Learning to BREATHE (L2B) and MindUP (MU), for their effectiveness and safety. Neither of these programs have demonstrated that they should be used in school settings.



# CESMH Mindfulness: MindUP and Learning to BREATHE



## FINDINGS

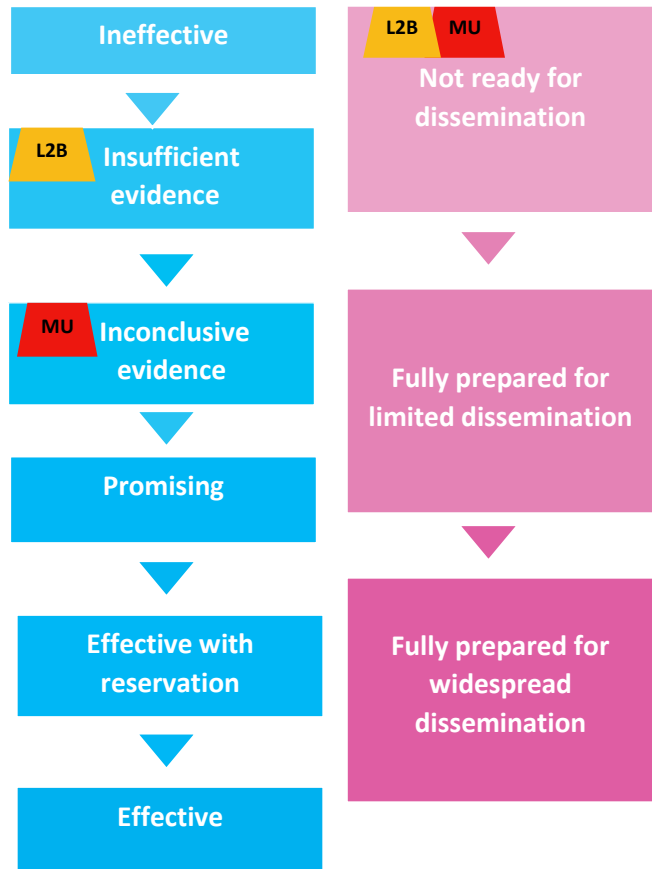
- 1 A focused systematic review evaluating the effectiveness and safety of Learning to BREATHE and MindUP (two common school based mindfulness programs) revealed that neither met objective criteria for effectiveness, neither had evaluated safety and neither was ready for widespread dissemination.
- 2 Numerous scientific problems were found in the studies analysed, including problems in measurement of key outcomes. The poor quality of the available research does not provide the evidence needed to support use of either program.

Learning to BREATHE (LB)

L2B

MindUP (MU)

MU



## KEY POINTS TO SHARE

- 1 The Learning to Breathe and MindUP mindfulness programs are not recommended to be used in schools to improve mindfulness or any other related outcome. No study even showed that mindfulness significantly improved.
- 2 Schools have to make informed decisions about which interventions they choose for their students, and the programs chosen should be supported by strong research findings.
- 3 Objective standards should be set to assess the evidence for effectiveness of mindfulness programs and other school mental health programs before they are widely implemented.
- 4 Consideration should be made into assessing the safety of the implementation of school based mental health programs, especially when there is evidence that psychological interventions can produce adverse effects. This may extend to mindfulness interventions as well.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Given the available evidence, it is recommended that schools not purchase nor introduce either the Learning to BREATHE or the MindUp program. We recommend that further research be implemented to properly determine the effectiveness, safety and distribution readiness of these programs.
- 2 It is vital to ensure school-applied mental health related programs are based in solid scientific evidence of effectiveness and safety prior to purchase and implementation.

## USEFUL INFORMATION

- A full report of this project can be found at: [www.teenmentalhealth.org](http://www.teenmentalhealth.org)
- Information about the OJP What Works Repository can be found at: [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/220889.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/220889.pdf)