

# Be CALM Connections

## High School Program Evaluation

2021-2022



This program was developed by Desiree W. Murray and Rachel Mills-Brantley at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, with funding from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (Grant #90ZD0023-01-00). Evaluation support was provided by Child Trends.

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# Program Description

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The [Be CALM \(Cool, Attentive, Logical, Mature\) Connections \(BCC\) program](http://www.becalmprogram.com) ([www.becalmprogram.com](http://www.becalmprogram.com)) is a mindfulness-based social-emotional learning program adapted for high schoolers that **promotes school success and healthy relationships** by teaching skills related to **emotion regulation, communication, and conflict resolution**. This is accomplished through: 1) **teacher professional development** that utilizes mindfulness to enhance the quality of interactions with students, build positive relationships, foster a supportive classroom environment; 2) **16 weekly 45-minute student lessons** addressing key program skills ([Scope and Sequence available on program website](#)); and 3) **delivery support** provided by a trained mental health specialist (e.g., a school counselor).

	<h2>C is for COOL</h2> <p><b>Press the Pause</b> and breathe. Managing thoughts and strong emotions in healthy ways, especially when dealing with stress and conflict.</p>
	<h2>A is for ATTENTIVE</h2> <p><b>Tune In</b> to the present moment. Noticing what is happening in your mind and body as well as in your environment.</p>
	<h2>L is for LOGICAL</h2> <p><b>Be Curious</b> about what is happening. Being curious about your own and others' values, identities, and perspectives.</p>
	<h2>M is for MATURE</h2> <p><b>Be Kind</b> to self and others. Working out conflicts with others to support healthy connections.</p>

Lessons within the BCC curriculum align with the CALM program goals and support all five CASEL-identified social-emotional learning goals ([Crosswalk available on program website](#)).

Key phrases for each module support application of skills within and beyond the classroom.

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Each lesson includes a mood check-in, a "Mindful Moment," and a self-reflection on skill application throughout the week.

Additionally, lessons include activities such as modeling, video demonstrations, one-on-one and small group peer discussions, and role plays.

# Program Implementation

During the 2021-2022 academic year, a total of 11 AVID teachers delivered the Be CALM program to 9th-grade students at four schools within two school districts in rural North Carolina. Two schools implemented the program as intended with one teacher as the sole facilitator for the full school year. The other two schools experienced a disruption in teacher delivery. For both of these schools, students completed the program with instruction from either a new teacher or program staff.

Across two initial workshop days and bimonthly implementation support meetings, teachers participated in an average of 18 hours of professional development from program developers. Teachers consulted with Be CALM mental health specialists for an average of 5.5 hours over the course of program delivery with the goal of implementing the curriculum in a way that is culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate, engaging, and relevant for all students.

Of the 195 students who participated in BCC, 107 provided parent permission to be included in the program evaluation. Of those students, 106 completed >50% of program lessons and were included in the evaluation. Female-identifying students comprised 60.4% of the evaluation sample. The sample was 35.5% non-Hispanic Black, 30.8% non-Hispanic White, 14.2% Other (predominantly students who identified as two or more races), and 24.5% Hispanic or Latino. In total, 56.6% of students were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Implementation Measure	Outcome for Evaluation Sample
Lesson attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>98% of students successfully completed the program (i.e., attended 13 out of 16 lessons)</li> <li>On average, students attended 15 out of 16 total lessons</li> </ul>
Program activities delivered & teacher delivery quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers delivered, on average, 88% of all curriculum activities</li> <li>The average teacher intervention delivery quality score was 2.49 on a 1–4 scale, with a score of 3 indicating full competency (range = 1.5–3.0 across teachers)</li> </ul>
Student engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On average, 59% of students reported feeling interested in the program content</li> <li>50% of students felt motivated to practice program skills, while over 80% reported doing so</li> <li>72% of students were comfortable participating in mindfulness practices during class</li> <li>Over 80% of students described their experience in the program positively</li> <li>Engagement varied significantly by teacher, and appeared to be related to program delivery quality and sense of connection with peers</li> </ul>

# Key Findings

## Student & Teacher Outcomes

Pre-post self-report student surveys reflected **statistically significant improvements** with regards to conflict resolution skills, academic efficacy, and difficulties regulating emotions.

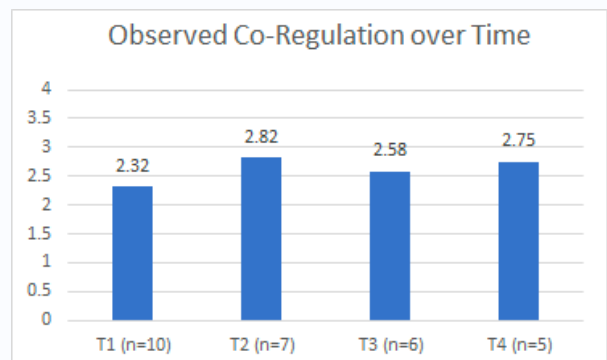
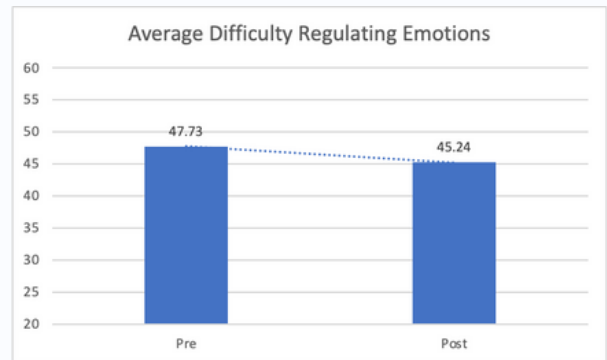
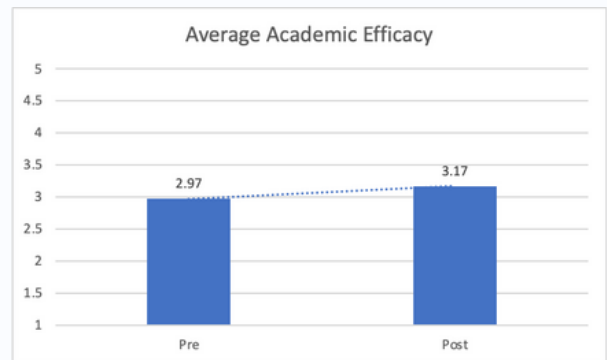
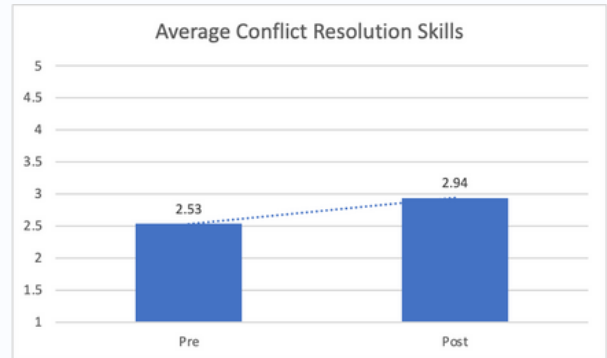
Students identifying as **non-Hispanic Black** demonstrated the **greatest improvement**, including a **decrease in stress\***.

Additionally, **female-identifying** students reported **improvement in emotional wellbeing\***.

Students reported little change in their overall social-emotional difficulties, although there was a **decrease in the frequency with which they reported making fun of others who are different from them\***.

Teachers increased the extent to which they provided **co-regulation support to students** with regards to mindful teaching, student connections, and supportive environments.

\* Contact program developers for further details.



# Participant Feedback

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## Student Voices

*"I think I learned that self-control is really important, and you don't have to react to something in a bad way. You can't control other people, but you can control how you react."*

*"I feel like I just learned more about myself. I don't know how to be more specific, but I just feel like I learned more about my values and my friends' values and all that."*

*"We've been saying 'don't flip your lid,' since we've learned it. Everyone – it's in their common vocabulary now."*

*"[Regarding a conflict with a family member] So I was able to validate her and explain to her, and then we were able to move on from that, when before I would have been too ashamed to actually apologize. I would have just ignored it."*

## Teacher Voices

*"The Be CALM curriculum has not only impacted how my students navigate their emotions, but also how I navigate my classroom. Teaching is stressful, as all jobs are, and as an adult interacting with students, it is always good to react logically and calmly to situations. Be CALM not only equips my students with those skills, but I feel like I have personally grown as well in this practice."*

# Conclusions

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- 01** Students in the Be CALM program reported improvement over time in emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes.
- 02** Non-Hispanic Black students reported the greatest improvements in stress, academic efficacy, emotion regulation, and emotional wellbeing.
- 03** Although we do not know if improvements were due to the program because there was no comparison group, student feedback suggests they learned many skills that can contribute to school success.
- 04** Teachers also gained skills in supporting students, as we observed in their interactions with students.
- 05** Further program development work is addressing ways to optimize student engagement and implementation across settings.

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