

PILOT CASE STUDY 01 · EDMOTIONS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

When Students Choose Support

How on-demand access to an AI emotional coach helped a diverse middle school community regulate, reflect, and return to learning.

Real Insight. Real Readiness. Every Student.



01 Executive Summary

Over a two-month voluntary pilot, an urban middle school of roughly 1,100 students gave students access to **EDmotions** and its **Emotional Management Agent (EMA)**, an AI coach that guides students through emotional check-ins, journaling, and regulation activities while giving teachers a real-time view of student well-being.

Of the 87 students who completed the end-of-pilot survey, 50 had actively used the platform, and their responses form the basis of this study. **Every active user found EMA helpful, would use it again, and would recommend it to a friend.** Nine in ten said EMA improved their overall well-being at school, and 92% reported a better understanding of their own emotions. Educators valued the data as a way to see student needs earlier.

The central finding: **when emotional support is private, immediate, and student-directed, students seek it out on their own and return to class ready to learn.** The pilot also surfaced a clear next frontier: reaching the students who did not engage.

FROM THE CLASSROOM

“I need to talk to EMA.”

A student arrived at school visibly upset after a difficult bus ride. Frustrated and angry, she rushed into class and told her teacher she needed to talk right away. The teacher assumed she meant an adult. Instead, she asked for EMA.

Over the next several minutes, she worked through EMA's coaching prompts and regulation activities. Her teacher watched as her posture relaxed and her frustration faded. When she finished, she calmly explained what had happened and thanked her teacher for giving her a safe place to process her emotions before talking with a trusted adult. **She was ready to engage and learn.**

Teacher account from the pilot. Student details withheld for privacy.

02 Introduction

Background

Schools are expected to support student mental health with the same rigor they bring to academics, yet most emotional support still depends on an adult noticing that something is wrong. Middle school is a pivotal window: **half of all lifetime mental health conditions begin by age 14**. Students who can't yet name what they feel, or who won't ask for help, often go unseen until a problem escalates.

EDmotions is the K-12 application of the TRUmotions **Human Intelligence Operating System (HIOS)**. It pairs a student-facing AI coach, EMA, with educator dashboards that make emotional readiness as visible as academic progress.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Will middle school students voluntarily use an AI emotional coach to regulate and reflect, and does that use translate into perceived growth in emotional skills and well-being at school?

Purpose and scope

This study documents a two-month field implementation across multiple classrooms in one middle school. It examines three things: whether students adopted EMA by choice, what active users reported about their emotional skills and well-being, and how educators perceived the resulting data. It is a descriptive pilot study, not a controlled trial.

03 Case Description and Context

The pilot took place in an urban public middle school serving approximately 1,100 students. The student population reflects many of the realities facing American education today: students from historically under-resourced communities, a racially and ethnically diverse student body, English Language Learners, and students receiving special education services. Across several weeks and multiple classrooms, students journaled with coaching prompts and used aligned support activities, while teachers reviewed dashboards to anticipate, understand, and respond to student needs.

SITE PROFILE

- Urban public middle school, ~1,100 students
- Grades 6–8
- Majority from historically under-resourced communities
- Racially and ethnically diverse
- ELL and special education students represented

STUDY DESIGN

- Two-month pilot across multiple classrooms
- 1–2 scheduled check-ins per day
- Voluntary participation
- No grades or mandates
- Open use during free time

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- **Students:** primary users of EMA
- **Classroom teachers:** hosted check-ins and reviewed dashboards
- **TRUmotions team:** implementation and support

The challenges

- **Emotional disruptions arrive unannounced**, sometimes a hard bus ride or a conflict in the hallway can pull a student out of a learning state before any adult can respond.
- **Many students won't ask for help**, especially when they can't yet name what they're feeling.
- **Teachers see behavior, not the emotion underneath it**, and have little data to anticipate needs before they escalate.
- **Any solution had to work for everyone**, including English Language Learners and students receiving special education services, without adding to teacher workload.

04 Methodology

The pilot combined student self-report, platform activity, and educator feedback. Outcome measures are limited to students who actively used EDMotions, so results describe the experience of engaged users.

DATA SOURCE	WHAT IT CAPTURED
End-of-pilot student survey	87 responses. Outcome analysis limited to the 50 active users ; the 37 students who did not use the platform were excluded from outcome measures.
Platform activity	Daily check-ins, journaling with coaching prompts, and use of aligned emotional regulation activities.
Educator dashboards and feedback	Teacher review of emotional trend data and qualitative feedback on its usefulness.
Classroom observation	Teacher-reported accounts of how and when students chose to use EMA, including the case described herein.

Framework

EMA's coaching is informed by skills from **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)** and designed to align with a school's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Findings are organized using the TRUmotions **Human Intelligence (HI) framework**, five capacities that can be developed and measured: Emotional, Relational, Executive, Creative, and Leadership.

05 Findings and Analysis

IMPACT SCORECARD · ACTIVE USERS (N = 50)

100% found EMA helpful	100% would use EMA again	100% would recommend EMA to a friend	92% reported positive emotional outcomes	90% said EMA improved their well-being at school
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STUDENTS SAW GROWTH IN KEY AREAS · % OF ACTIVE USERS WHO AGREED THEY IMPROVED



Students built skills. Confidence grew. Connections strengthened.

What the data tells us

- 1. Choice drove adoption.** With no grades or mandates, students used EMA because it helped. The opening story is the clearest signal: a student walked into class and asked for EMA by name. Making support private and immediate appears to remove the stigma and delay that keep many students from asking for help.
- 2. Regulation first, then connection.** The student in our opening story used EMA before talking with an adult, not instead of one. Ninety percent of active users said they felt more supported at school, which suggests EMA works as a bridge to trusted adults rather than a replacement for them.
- 3. Awareness leads.** The largest gain was in understanding one's own emotions (92%). That fits how emotional skills develop and how DBT is taught: students have to recognize and name a feeling before they can manage it.
- 4. Data made needs visible.** Educators saw value in the emotional insight data for identifying trends and supporting students before issues escalate.

EDUCATOR VOICE

"It is good to have the data... the analytical, data-driven nature of the app proved highly effective."

Pilot educator

Reading the results through the HI framework

E	Emotional	92% better understand their emotions. "EMA helps me understand my emotions better."
R	Relational	"90% feel supported at school. "EMA makes me feel less alone and more supported."
X	Executive	88% solve problems better when upset; 84% manage stress and anxiety better. "It helps me think before I react."
C	Creative	86% grew in self-reflection. "I like writing in my journal. It helps me get my feelings out."
L	Leadership	Not measured in this pilot. A priority for future implementations.

Student voices

“

EMA helps me understand my emotions better and teaches me how to calm down when I'm stressed.

STUDENT

“

It gives good advice and helps me think before I react.

STUDENT

“

I like writing in my journal. It helps me get my feelings out.

STUDENT

“

EMA makes me feel less alone and more supported.

STUDENT

“

It's fun, easy to use, and actually helps me.

STUDENT

06 Solution and Outcomes

The solution: emotional readiness in action

Students used EDMotions during 1–2 scheduled daily check-ins and on their own during free time. EMA helped students:

- Recognize and name their emotions

- Manage stress and anxiety
- Build confidence in problem-solving
- Reflect on their thoughts and choices
- Feel heard, supported, and connected
- Develop resilience for life

When students are emotionally ready, *they are ready to learn.*

What schools gain

Early identification Real-time insights help educators identify students who need support sooner.	Actionable data Clear dashboards turn emotional data into MTSS-aligned action.	Stronger students Students build emotional literacy, confidence, and resilience every day.	Better outcomes Improved well-being supports engagement, attendance, and learning.	Healthier culture Stronger connection and belonging create a positive climate for all.
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07 Recommendations

For schools considering a similar implementation, the pilot points to five practices:

- 01 Keep access voluntary and always available.**
Student choice drove adoption. Support that is private and on demand reaches students in the moment they need it.
- 02 Build check-ins into the daily routine.**
One to two scheduled check-ins per day gave students a habit and gave teachers consistent data.
- 03 Make the path to a trusted adult explicit.**
Position EMA as the first step, not the last. Pair it with a simple way for students to request a conversation with a counselor or teacher.
- 04 Bring dashboards into existing support meetings.**
Review emotional trend data within MTSS or student support team routines so insight turns into action.
- 05 Close the engagement gap.**
Thirty-seven of 87 respondents did not use the platform. Understanding why, and designing onboarding for them, is the next lever for impact.

Limitations

This was a single-site, two-month pilot. Outcomes are self-reported and reflect only students who chose to use EMA, so they may overstate effects for the full student body. There was no comparison group. Findings should be read as strong early signals, not causal proof.

08 Conclusion

The most telling result of this pilot isn't a percentage. It's a middle school student walking into class and asking for EMA by name. When students have a private, immediate, skills-based place to process their emotions, they use it, and they return to learning and to the adults around them more ready to engage.

The broader lesson applies well beyond one school: **emotional readiness can be supported, observed, and measured with the same clarity schools already bring to academic learning.** That is what a Human Intelligence Operating System makes possible.

Data note: Outcome percentages reflect the 50 students who actively used EDMotions during the pilot (87 total survey responses; 37 non-users excluded). Data are self-reported. Student names and identifying details have been withheld.

EMOTIONAL READINESS IS THE FOUNDATION FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Real Insight. Real Readiness. Every Student.

ABOUT EDMOTIONS

EDmotions is the K-12 application of the TRUmotions Human Intelligence Operating System, helping schools understand emotional readiness and growth with the same clarity academic systems bring to cognitive learning.

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