



The TNH School of Interbeing

Seed Group



May Duong

is an educator, coach, researcher, and curriculum designer. She serves as the Director of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) at Synapse School, a TK-8 school in Menlo Park, CA. Under her leadership, Synapse has developed an innovative, fully integrated social-emotional learning (SEL) program that bridges academic excellence with social-emotional growth, fostering community cohesion. Her work ensures that every member of the school community experiences a sense of belonging, maintains their joy of learning, and participates in a prosocial learning environment. Before Synapse, May was the founding Director of Parent Education at Six Seconds, a global emotional intelligence network, where she started the United Nations Children's Day Festival and the Raising Humans parenting podcast.

Currently pursuing her doctorate in Education with a focus on Social-Emotional Learning, May's research examines the impact of comprehensive parent education programs on student well-being in schools. She has trained numerous educators and parents in SEL methodologies, helping them integrate emotional intelligence and mindfulness practices into their teaching and parenting.

At Synapse, May's work exemplifies her dedication to fostering holistic educational environments where learning, emotional intelligence, and ethical development thrive in tandem. She collaborates with educators and monastics from the Plum Village tradition to create an educational model that centers the practices of mindfulness, interconnectedness, belonging, and sustainability. Through this work, she is honored to have the opportunity to bridge personal transformation with broader social change.

May earned an MBA from New York University's Stern School of Business and a BA in Philosophy and Asian Studies from Mount Holyoke College. When not working, she enjoys spending time in nature, cooking with her family, and reading anything that shifts her current paradigm.



Brother Phap Dung

is a Vietnamese-American monk, Dharma teacher, and former Deer Park Abbot in the Plum Village tradition of Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh. He was born in Vietnam in 1969 and came to the US when he was nine years old. He received a BA in Architecture from the University of Southern California and worked as an architect/designer for four years before becoming a monk. Brother Phap Dung ordained in 1998 and has since spent his time guiding communities and young people in the art of mindful living around the world.

He is most inspired by meditation as a method of examining and cultivating the mind, of the individual and of the collective; and by community building as a method to heal and develop society. He has been heavily involved in the Wake Up School initiative over the years and is passionate about bringing mental cultivation into all levels of education and collaborating with other institutions and individuals interested in mindfulness and education. Creating a school where all members of the school - students, teachers, principals, administrators and parents - are practitioners of mindfulness has been one of his deepest aspirations.



Alicia LeClair

is a passionate educator, teacher coach, curriculum writer, and professional development lead specializing in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). After serving as a classroom teacher for grades 1-5 across public, independent and international school settings, she turned her focus to systems work as the Director of School Programs and Curriculum Lead for Denver-based education nonprofit, Glowmundo. In this role, Alicia led the development of custom, community-responsive, 3-year wraparound programming for school communities on SEL, with a focus on mindfulness, trauma-informed instruction, and educational equity. To that end, Alicia created and implemented professional development curriculum for teachers and administrators, served as an in-classroom teacher coach, wrote student curriculum, and aided the formation of parent support groups. She believes that inner transformation work is the pathway to larger community culture goals.

She is the lead author of a differentiated, play-based K-5 social emotional learning curriculum that integrates key findings from the fields of resilience science, neuroscience, trauma-informed education, culturally responsive instruction, and somatic awareness (expected publication date November 2025).

Alicia and her husband Owen discovered the Plum Village tradition and the Deer Park community in 2020, which have been deeply transformative for them as individuals and as a family. Their son, Ari (age 2.5), is a frequent retreatant at Deer Park as well and, to their surprise, began breathing with the sound of the bell just as he turned 1.



Brother Phap Luu

is from the US and ordained in 2003 in the Plum Village Tradition. He graduated from Dartmouth College with a B.A. in English Literature in 1997 and also did non-degree study at Yale and Harvard in Buddhist Studies and Sanskrit before ordaining. He taught English as a foreign language in Madrid, Spain, and spent one year working part-time as a teacher in inner-city schools in New Haven, CT.

He received the transmission from Thay as a Dharma teacher in 2011, and has taught in North America, Europe, Brazil, Botswana, Southeast Asia and India. He has been active in the Wake Up movement for young people, co-leading two tours in the UK, and one each in the US, Spain and Ireland; to share mindfulness with young adults at universities, and has been working with the Wake Up Schools initiative to bring mindfulness into schools since its inception in 2012. Brother Phap Luu has been working lately with scientists at Dartmouth College and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health to develop research on the effect of Plum Village mindfulness practices on children. He also serves on the Advisory Board of the Thich Nhất Hạnh Center for Mindfulness in Public Health at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

He has a deep aspiration to make the simple practice of mindful breathing and embracing strong emotions available at all levels of education.



Karman Mak

is an equity-centered educator, transformational coach, and lifelong advocate for student engagement, healing, and systemic transformation. With over 25 years of experience, she brings a dynamic blend of instructional expertise, relational leadership, and contemplative insight to every space she serves.

She began her career teaching middle school history and geography in Boston and is a National Board Certified Teacher with both a California Clear Administrative Credential and Teaching Credential. Her work has spanned classroom teaching, leadership, and professional development—including roles as Principal, Assistant Principal, Instructional Coach, Induction Coordinator, and now Teacher Residency Project Lead with the Partnerships to Uplift Communities (PUC) charter schools.

Karman's mindfulness journey began in 2012 during a stressful leadership year, when she found refuge in Thich Nhất Hạnh's Peace Is Every Step. Deeply moved by the Plum Village tradition, she began integrating mindfulness into her life and work, eventually sharing its practices with fellow educators and school communities. She was ordained in the Order of Interbeing in 2022 and is certified through the Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Certification Program with Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach.

Karman is dedicated to cultivating inclusive, compassionate, and resilient learning communities. Sowing and nourishing the seeds of transformation in herself, others, and the collective is one of her deepest aspirations.



Meena Srinivasan

is a lay Dharma Teacher in the Plum Village tradition of Engaged Buddhism and has been an active member of the community for nearly two decades. She serves on the Board of the Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation and is an internationally recognized leader in the fields of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and mindfulness in education.

A former public school administrator and National Board Certified Teacher, Meena is the author of *Teach, Breathe, Learn: Mindfulness In and Out of the Classroom*—with a foreword by Thich Nhat Hanh—and *SEL Every Day: Integrating Social and Emotional Learning with Instruction in Secondary Classrooms*, which was named one of the best books for educators by UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center.

Meena was a Hemera Foundation Contemplative Education Fellow, serves on the core planning team of Mind & Life's Summer Research Institute on Reimagining Contemplative Education, and is on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Social and Emotional Learning*, the world's leading academic journal for SEL policy, research, and practice. She teaches graduate-level SEL courses at UC Berkeley and is a sought-after keynote speaker.

Meena is the Founding Executive Director of Transformative Educational Leadership (TEL), where she pioneered a visionary fellowship for educational leaders that centers personal growth as a catalyst for systemic change.



Angela Vu

is a thoughtful, innovative educator and youth advocate passionate about developing and implementing engaging, mindfulness-based curricula and programs that foster children's social-emotional growth. A committed mindfulness practitioner since 2001, she was ordained into the Order of Interbeing (OI) in 2009, reflecting her dedication to mindful living and service.

Angela holds a Bachelor's degree in Management and a Master of Public Administration (MPA), and is currently pursuing an EdD in Learning Design and Leadership. She has also completed curriculum training with Mindful Schools and the online Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course.

Raised in a traditional Buddhist family, Angela has been active in the Vietnamese Buddhist Youth and Scout organizations since the age of six. In 2006, she co-founded Bodhi Youth of America (BYA) to bring engaged Buddhism and mindfulness practices to Vietnamese American youth and the broader younger generation in the U.S., empowering them to live balanced, mindful lives. Serving as Executive Director of BYA and Bodhi Academy, Angela has led a passionate team of volunteers for nearly 20 years—organizing annual week-long summer camps centered on SEL, emotional intelligence, and mindful living. She also designs and leads integrated mindfulness after-school and summer-school programs for K–8 students, along with weekend mindfulness workshops for children and teens.

Angela gracefully blends Vietnamese and American cultures in both her life and spiritual practice. She finds renewal in nature, having traveled to and hiked in more than 40 national parks. Her long-held aspiration—to co-create a school where mindfulness is woven into every aspect of education—is now becoming reality with the formation of the TNH School of Interbeing.