



WOW! Ed

The Center for Educational Improvement
2011 Yoga and Meditation in Schools

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Current Events

CEI is now offering Praxis Prep sessions for teachers. Contact Nadia at nctorney@edimprovement

.org

Interested in strengthening your use of technology in the classroom? CEI has several technology experts. Dr. Audrey Kremer, a former IBM staff member, and adjunct professor at George Mason University, leads our efforts in this area. Contact her at audrey@creatingknowledge.net

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Services Provided

School Improvement Plans We can help you develop and monitor School Improvement activities to meet state and federal requirements. We are certified as school improvement officers in Ohio and trained in school improvement reviews in Washington

Dear Christine,

Since Wow! Ed started in November 2009, we have posted newsletters focusing on Wow! in Schools, the Wow! of Technology, and STEM (Science, Technology, Education, and Math) in Education. We have provided both a description of the importance of wowing! students to increase their engagement and also provided links to additional resources for our readers.

In our first few newsletters we described an international arts community in Ghana, the use of mobile phones to teach reading in Africa, and STEM education with young children in after school programs in California. **In the spirit of balance, in this, the first newsletter in 2011, we focus on the research that supports the value of yoga and meditation.** (In February we will turn our attention to importing international educational practices.)

Yoga

In November, CNN posted an article on yoga where it reported that "Kids...some as young as 3, can take seven-week long sessions with names such as Charlie and the Chakra Factory and the Wizard of Ohm....Watching a class is like watching puppies. It's adorable. They bark in Downward Dog and hiss on their bellies in Snake pose. They imagine aloud what color their gum would be while repeatedly breathing deeply for "Bubble Gum Breath." They act out "Go To Your Room" by bending over, grabbing their ankles and stomping backward, squatting down and mimicking slamming a door." With young children, yoga is often closely aligned to dance, movement,

DC.

Workshops and Seminars

CEI implements our unique "WOW! Factor" presentation style for interesting and vibrant workshops.

We also provide over 30 different training modules that can be formatted to fit your school's needs. Among these are workshops on: co-teaching, closing achievement gaps, global education, and the Response to Intervention model. We provide both live, in-person and web-based workshops.

Data Driven Instruction

CEI can assist teachers and administrators in training and implementing DDI programs into their schools.

Praxis Tutoring

We offer Praxis tutoring for teachers working on completing their Praxis I or II tests, as well as the speciality exams.

More information

Please visit our website for information or to arrange for a presentation regarding [services](#).

Contact Information

Contact our Executive Director, Dr. Christine Mason.

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(571) 213-3192

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and song. There are even CDs of yoga music to use with preschoolers.

Like art, music, or physical exercise, yoga has value in and of itself, without thoughts for what it does to improve academic achievement, attitudes, cognition, or health. However, there is also more and more research supporting the benefits of yoga for all the above.

For the yogis who already know about the benefits of yoga, read on. For all including the skeptics, we have included links to research articles supporting the many benefits of yoga.



Getting the Down Dogs into Schools

Yoga practices began in India over 6,000 years ago. Yoga refers to the 'union' between the mind, body and spirit. It involves the practice of physical postures and poses. It is an art and science of self and self-development. As the name suggests, an ultimate aim of practicing yoga is to create a balance between the body and the mind. To accomplish it, the practice makes use of different movements, breathing exercises, relaxation technique and meditation. Yoga is associated with a healthy and lively lifestyle with a balanced approach to life.

There are several styles of yoga, and they focus to varying degrees on the following practices: Pranayama (breathing); asana (the postures); yama (restraint); healthy observances (niyama); dharana (concentration); dhyana (meditation); pratyahara (sensory withdrawal); and sanadhi (high consciousness). The most popular styles include:

- Ashtanga
- Bikran
- Hatha
- Integral
- Iyengar
- Kundalini
- Kripal

Many of the poses are based on animal movements. For example: cobra, cat-cow, frog, butterfly, cat stretches, and downward dog. These names add to the sense of play which can be part of a yoga session and are useful both for children and adults as they help us form images of the postures. For example, we arch our backs up into cobra, and rapidly bounce our legs up and down like "butterfly" wings.

Yoga for Youth, a program working with incarcerated youth, headed by Krishna Kaur in California, now has branches throughout the United States, and internationally (<http://www.yogaforyouth.org>). Here are some of the benefits of this program:

Violence reduction: The art of deep breathing and breath control can be a foundation for violence reduction. These exercises are combined with relaxation and meditation techniques to eliminate stress and develop mental clarity and emotional stability, leading to spontaneous decision-making.

Conflict resolution and mediation: Strengthening the nervous system through specific yoga exercises and breathing techniques can contribute to a higher level of self-control, self-confidence, and self-esteem. These qualities are essential to effective communication, setting the stage for conflict resolution.

Concentration and information retention: Some yogic breathing and meditations stimulate the left and right hemispheres of the brain, improving the ability to concentrate. This can result in improvements in memory and the integration of ideas and concepts.

The *Radiant Child Yoga* website (<http://www.childrensyoga.com>) includes a sample of yoga exercises for children. Following is one for ages 2-7:

"Put the palms of your hands together at the center of your chest. Close your eyes, and begin by taking three big balloon breaths. Here's how: When you breathe in deeply, raise your arms up above your head in the shape of a big balloon. Then breathe out and bring your arms back down so that your palms are together at the center of your chest."

Research over the past 10-15 years has supported the **value of yoga in reducing stress, improving health, and increasing concentration**. One study reported on the results with children with type II diabetes. Another study focused on the effects yoga has on inner-city youth and their well-being. The positive improvements on ADD/ADHD in classroom students with yoga practice have also been reported.

Research has supported the positive impact of regular practice of yoga and meditation. Yoga and meditation release endorphins in the brain that heighten a sense of calmness and produce feelings of well being. Yoga exercises and postures are particularly useful to immediately reduce stress, strengthen the nervous system, and stabilize ones' emotional foundation.

Should yoga or meditation be held as a before or after school activity or be integrated into the academic school day?



Slovacek, Tucker, and Pantoja (2003) studied the impact of **yoga with an inner-city charter school** (kindergarten through 8th grade). They found a significant correlation between students' self-esteem (positive correlation), students' physical fitness (positive correlation), and undesirable behaviors in the classroom (negative correlation). In addition, grade point averages for students in the middle school levels increased significantly during the time yoga was used in the school (data were not available for elementary level students).

Mind-Body Awareness Program

Staff with the Mind-Body Awareness Project (MBA) implemented yoga in several different communities of at-risk and adjudicated youth. These youth faced challenges such as depression, substance abuse, and violence. MBA's staff implemented an intensive 10-session program. They coded and quantified in-depth interviews using scales/measures they designed to gain a complete picture of the intervention: Staff conducted an experiential inquiry-based curriculum with three core principles: 1. meditation (vipassana), 2. yoga, and 3. council (group process). Over the 10 weeks, students received 23 hours of yoga instruction. MBA reported the following results:

QUANTITATIVE:

- perceived stress decreased 17 - 28%
- anger/provocation decreased 10.5%
- conflict resolution ability increased 25 - 29.8%
- emotion regulation ability increased 13 - 15%
- overall mindfulness increased 10.5%

QUALITATIVE:

Percentage of youth who say they-

- feel physically better after coming to class: 95%
- feel less stressed after coming to class: 93%
- feel better about themselves after coming to class: 85%
- noticed less conflict with others: 64%
- are sleeping better: 78%
- are able to use what they'd learned to deal better with being in the hall: 82%
- are better able to 'cool off' when they get angry or upset: 78%
- spend some time each week doing breathing meditation or stretching: 66%
- plan to use the skills they've learned in class once they leave the hall: 89%

To read more about MBA's past and current research, please click here: [The Mind-Body Awareness Project: Research](#)

To read more about *The Study of Yoga Ed at the Accelerated School*, please click here: [A Study of the Yoga Ed Program at the Accelerated School](#)

Why Should Yoga be Integrated into Schools?

Information provided by yogainschools.org. Not only is yoga a practice that can be incorporated into classes such as physical education and music, it is also a practice that will help students maintain a higher level of focus and attention on their academic performances. Some of the reported benefits reported by Yoga in Schools are

- An increase in students' physical strength, flexibility, balance and relaxation
- Improved individual student capacities for focusing, concentration and retention of new information
- A positive impact on students' social and psychological development as expressed in higher self esteem (confidence, efficacy) and body awareness and the ability to self-regulate)
- Reduction in peer pressure
- Increased ease in classroom management for both students and teachers
- Greater management of life stressors for both students and teachers.

Others (Naveen, Nagendra, & Telles 1997; Proger, 1980, and Zipkin, 1985) studied the impact of yoga with children with ADD and/or ADHD. They report that these youth experienced:

- Decreased hyperactivity and impulsivity
- Increased self-control
- Increased attention spans
- Reduced anxiety, leading to higher IQ scores and improved complex learning skills
- Increased spatial memory.



From Child's Pose to the Classroom: How to Incorporate Yoga into Schools

Teacher Training Programs

Information provided by yogajournal.com

Because of its popularity, more and more programs have been developed by yoga practitioners specifically for the school setting. Yoga is being integrated into physical education classes, recess and break periods, and during some academic courses such as math, science, and art.

Three organizations- YogaKids of Long Beach, Indiana; YogaEd of Los Angeles, California; and Yoga'd Up of London, England- have started training programs for yoga teachers that focuses on yoga for kids. These programs help yoga teachers become established in the school systems.

Brain Gym and Yoga

Information provided by mrsnelsonsclass.com

But what if the teacher training option isn't available to you or available in your area? How can you integrate yoga into your classroom starting today?

Mrs. Nelson, a teacher in Sarasota, Florida dedicates a portion of her schedule each day to yoga. She uses "Brain Gym and Yoga" exercises throughout the day to stimulate the children's minds and keep them alert. In her lower elementary grades, she includes yoga in a "Take 5" area. Students who are being disruptive or who are

having difficulty concentrating on the task at hand go over to the area which has a yoga mat and pictures of different poses. For older students, she integrates yoga into the beginning and/or end of day routines. "Brain Gym" is similar to yoga in that students are using physical exercises to help stimulate their brains.

For more information on [Brain Gym and Yoga](#), please click on the links below:



Mrs. Nelson's Class



Brain Gym Exercises

→ More Yoga Research

Below you will find some research-based materials on yoga and medical studies. It is important to recognize that although yoga has significant mental benefits, it has also been found to be beneficial to patients with different medical conditions. If you would like our complete list of research articles on yoga, please contact Lauren Lomdale at llomdale@edimprovement.org.

Aljasir, B., Bryson, M., & Al-shehri, B. (2008). Yoga Practice for the Management of Type II Diabetes Mellitus in Adults: A systematic review. *Evidence-based Complimentary and Alternative Medicine*, 5(1): 119.

Alexander, G. K., Taylor, A. G., Innes, K. E., Kulbok, P., & Selfe, T. K. (2008). Contextualizing the Effects of Yoga Therapy on Diabetes Management: A Review of the Social Determinants of Physical Activity. *Family & Community Health*, 31(3), 228-239.

Black, D.S., Milam, J., & Sussman, S. (2009). Sitting meditation among youth: A review of treatment efficacy. *Pediatrics*, 124, 3, pp. 3532-e541.
(<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/124/3/e532>)

Galantino, M. L., Galbavy, R., & Quinn, L. (2008). Therapeutic Effects of Yoga for Children: A Systematic Review of the Literature. *Pediatric Physical Therapy*. 20(1), 66-80

Smith, K. B., & Pukall, C. F. (2008). An evidence-based review of yoga as a complementary intervention for patients with cancer. *Psycho-Oncology*. DOI: 10.1002/pon.1411.

→ Yoga and CEI

Yoga can involve a serious workout, a gentle meditative session, intensive stretching, watching one's breath, laughing, chanting, aerobic exercise, or fun and creative movements. Some styles focus on precision (it's all about angles) and use

props or bolsters to assist those who are not quite as flexible. With other styles it is about the flow or energy. Sometimes music is played; other times rooms are heated. This past weekend I worked with one class in a room where we found that the heat was not working. I modified my session so that we could create more body heat. This reminded me of the yoga I do at 4:30 in the mornings in the mountains in New Mexico (where the temperatures can be in the 30's).

I have been teaching yoga for 11 years and despite all my focus on education, I find time to teach 3-5 classes each week. One of the things I love about yoga is that it provides immediate results. While most of my students are adults, I have been trained to teach yoga to children and youth. Occasionally one or two teenagers will join my classes at the local parks and recreation center. Some students have been with me for the full 11 years and several others have been faithful students for 3, 4, 5, and 7 years. During that time we have come to value the time we come together to be in harmony with each other, to take time out from our frenetic existence, and to be together to stretch and breathe. Yogis believe the quality of your life is reflected in the quality of your breath.

Yogi Bhajan, my yoga teacher from the Punjabi region of Northern India, is often quoted. Here are a couple of his thoughts on yoga and meditation.

"Your strength is how calmly, quietly and peacefully you face life."

"Meditation is not what you do in the morning, that's practice. Meditation is the daily result of that practice."

I am positive that the Center for Educational Improvement is a better organization because of the balance that yoga brings me and the lessons I have learned by doing and teaching yoga. I invite you to consider how yoga might help your students, with their test prep, with their health, with their concentration, with their lives.

Sincerely,

Christine Mason
Center for Educational Improvement
www.edimprovement.org

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