

Stress. Stress. Stress. This is the word more and more students are saying. Today's students are under more stress than ever before. Aside from ever increasing educational demands and responsibilities, students today have to learn to manage stress created by trying to balance school, extracurricular activities, a part-time job, family responsibilities, and more. Many students have said they simply do not have the time to fit in the self-care needed to manage their stress. If I had 12 of the Children's Factory Rainbow Rest Mats from Friends Office, I could assist my students with stress management by providing Mindful Mondays which would consist of introducing short yoga sessions during class. These sessions would be geared toward relaxation, stretching, and breathing, which can lead to less stress, better health, and a more positive educational experience.

In an article titled "Seven Ways That Yoga Is Good For Schools," one teacher interviewed described practicing yoga as "hitting the reset button." The article goes on to share that the school has been able to see an improvement in test scores and a decrease in the number of students being sent to the office; these results are over the span of two years (Butzer & Flynn 2018).

The students I work with are special education students at the high school level. Because of their daily struggles with reading, comprehension, and mathematics, courses at the high school can bring even more challenges and stress to their daily lives. An 11th grade student stated, "I stress over working two part-time jobs, completing my schoolwork, and making sure I am at family things. The rest mats will benefit me by giving me time to relax and get focused for school and work."

Butzer and Flynn (2018), focused on seven key ways yoga can improve school success. The first is an improvement in emotional regulation. This means being able to keep an eye on one's behavior and emotions and make changes as needed. Many students struggle to know when they are reaching their breaking point...until it's too late. The article referred to a study of 37 high school students who did 40 minutes of yoga three times a week for 16 weeks. The study yielded an improved ability to control emotions when compared to those in a typical gym class.

Improved academic performance is another benefit. There is research suggesting that improved attention spans and memory can work to get rid of stress related to learning. The article cites a study of 95 trial controlled high school students who took part in either yoga or gym class for 12 weeks. At the end, those who participated in yoga were able to keep a steady GPA while those who only did gym saw a decline in their GPA.

A third benefit of yoga in school is a decrease in anxiety and tension. As previously stated, students today face increasing demands. Being able to have the ability to reduce anxiety would greatly aide students. "I think the rest mats for yoga would help us be less tense. If I could be able to relax, I'd get more work done and be less tense," stated another 11th grade student.

Outside of school, we know students face stress. Another benefit of yoga during school is that students can have a better mindset when facing oppositions in life. Butzer and Flynn

(2018), state, “Yoga practice may increase the student’s sense of control and self-efficiency with respect to stress and emotion, thereby increasing resilience.”

This leads to the fifth benefit of yoga in school: fewer behavior problems. As students learn self-control, bullying could decrease. The article goes on to cite a 10 week program of an hour of yoga a week. It found that a decrease in bullying was noted.

In addition to the benefits of better behavior, less bullying, and better grades, our youth is being encouraged to get up and move more. For several years, the NFL has been promoting this idea through their Play 60 program (2020). Just as active play can bring about better health benefits, yoga can, too. Butzer and Flynn (2018) reference a year-long study of yoga activities. This took place for 5-15 minutes a day and led to improved posture, sleep quality, fatigue, and diet.

Lastly, there is a benefit to teachers and the vibe that goes with his or her classroom. A study found that teachers who took part in a 20 minute yoga or mindfulness program four days a week had better classroom management, mood, blood pressure, and mindfulness. At a time when there is more discussion related to teacher burnout, making sure teachers are well-cared for can only work to benefit the students.

To conclude, yoga in the classroom is a fairly new concept, but early students show there are benefits to it. My students at Wilmington Area High School have expressed an interest in taking part in Mindful Mondays and I am excited to see the benefits it can provide.

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Works Cited

Butzer, Bethany, and Lisa Flynn. "Seven Ways That Yoga Is Good for Schools." *Greater Good*, 20 Nov. 2018, greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven_ways_that_yoga_is_good_for_schools.

"Play 60." *NFL.com/Play60*, 2020, www.nfl.com/play60.