

COMMUNITY FEEL

Yoga Ed: Building a case for yoga in schools

By SHAWNA PRICE

Yoga Ed, the children's health and wellness company that utilizes the benefits of yoga and creative play in school is proving that yoga can be a formative part of public education. The brainchild of Founder, Tara Guber and Program Director, Leah Kalish, Yoga Ed's K-8 children's yoga program is having a positive and measurable impact on inner city students at The Accelerated School in South Central Los Angeles. Results of the year-long research study conducted by PERC, the Program Evaluation and Research Collaborative at California State University, Los Angeles, correlate yoga with multiple positive outcomes such as significant increases in self-esteem, good behavior, physical fitness and academic performance.

Additionally, the study found that the rate of positive outcomes increased with the amount of yoga being practiced. At schools in Aspen, CO, where the Yoga Ed Program has also grown due to the enthusiastic response of the community, a similar study is being sponsored by the Aspen Center for Integrative Health and conducted by Dr. Scott Crow of the University of Minnesota. The Yoga Ed Tools for Teachers Program, designed to train school teachers how to use yoga-based techniques into their classrooms as health, behavior and curriculum enhancement, has also been selected as the basis for a study at PS 28, an elementary school in the Bronx, NY. The study is to examine the impact of Yoga Tools on test scores and anxiety in 4th graders, with results to be published later this spring.

"Our decades of personal experience and thousands of years of yoga practice clearly demonstrate the considerable and comprehensive mind/body benefits of yoga, says Tara Guber. Yoga Ed is committed to quantifying and qualifying these benefits with scientific assessments whose methodology will be accepted by academic professionals nationwide."

Leah Kalish states, "We know yoga can positively affect academic achievement and overall health. It's time that children all over the country experience

these benefits. To do this, Yoga Ed is ensuring that there are enough qualified YE Instructors to meet the increasing demand for our programs."

Yoga Ed is now expanding its teacher training program nationally. Their 7-day training is confirmed in New York and Austin, with others in development for Asheville, Boston, Chicago, and Seattle, and more to be announced in the coming months. Keeping with their commitment to forge partnerships within the educational and yoga communities, a portion of the New York training involving local yoga and school teachers will take place at Next Generation Yoga, a studio devoted exclusively to yoga for children.

Yoga Ed is also in the second year of providing their Tools for Teachers to the District Intern Program at the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Los Angeles Teachers Union, where it has dramatically reduced teacher stress levels and improved class management skills, much to the enthusiastic support of LAUSD. Yoga Ed is very proud of the volunteer team of yoga teachers that successfully taught the first Yoga Tools For Teachers classes to the LAUSD District Intern Program. After completing the 15-week Yoga Tools course, close to ninety percent of the classroom teachers participating reported positive outcomes on evaluations. Grace Nimmualrat, another teacher from San Antonio Elementary School in Los Angeles, says, "Yoga Ed Tools for Teachers is an inspiration for me to help me understand myself so that I can help my students to better understand themselves."

"Using [Yoga Ed Tools for Teachers], I've seen my students express a joy and calmness that I haven't previously seen," said Shawn Rios, 1st grade teacher at Basalt Elementary School in CO.

In an effort to continually reach out to the greater community of educators, and support teachers in learning about using Yoga Tools for effective and healthful class management, Yoga Ed offers free introductory workshops monthly at the United Teachers Union in downtown LA.

To help make the personal and professional benefits of maintaining their own yoga practice more accessible and affordable to teachers, Yoga Ed and the YOGItimes have invited yoga studios to participate in the *Teacher Outreach Program* (TOP). TOP studios offer discounted classes to educators. TOP participant and YMI Yoga Studio owner, Christy Kimbro, says, "It's all about appreciating teachers and giving something back to them! We have quite a few teachers and I know that any yoga they use with their students makes a big difference!"

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