

Meditation as a Tool in Classroom Management

Abstract

Children experience stress in school where they need to earn good grades; a majority of them feel overwhelmed by tests and homework. Participants in this action research study are third grade students in two classrooms at two different schools. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of meditation on the students' behavior. Outcomes will be measured through the use of behavior management plans.

Summary

Statement of the Problem

Third grade students, especially those who are gifted, tend to be self-directed learners, problem solvers, interested in a variety of topics and are often specifically committed to exploring higher level thinking (Wallen, 2007). In both third grade classrooms, in the present study, the students' behavior needs improvement. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of yoga and meditation on the behavior of third grade students.

Purpose and/or Research Question(s)

This study is being conducted due to the number of struggling students in both third grade classrooms. The study will investigate yoga and meditation as behavior management techniques to improve student behavior in the classroom.

Research Question: Will there be a difference in the behavior of students after the implementation of yoga and meditation?

Literature Review

Everyday people are put under stress at work, at home, in college and even in school. In a world that undergoes change and includes challenge, stress plays a significant role (Gilbert &

Morawski, 2005). One might think that children do not experience stress because they do not yet have adult problems. However, children experience stress especially in school where they need to earn good grades; a majority of them feel overwhelmed by tests and homework. For this reason, elementary schools have begun to adopt stress management planning in their curricula (Gilbert & Morawski, 2005). In regards to these classrooms' behavior, students get out of control if they do not exteriorize those feelings or emotions which make them anxious or stressed in one way or another. Sometimes students exhibit aggressive behaviors in the classroom (Smith, 2009).

Schools are always looking for new methods in which teachers can have a better management of behavior, mood and concentration in students. It appears both teachers and students are receptive to the use of meditation, breath work and focus training for five minutes a day (Sessa, 2007). It is said that boys and girls express their feelings differently. Boys tend not to show their emotions or stress instead they internalize them according to the Brody theory. On the other hand, girls tend to talk, letting their feelings and emotions be heard.

Research Methodology

This research study will have two groups of participants: a gifted third grade class in public school and a third grade class in private school setting. The research study participants are between the ages of eight and nine years old. Both groups of participants are diverse in ethnicity, composed primarily of White, Black and Hispanic students. Also, among the participants there is one participant with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

The study will be (in one classroom) boys and girls will be seated on a rug in a circle. (In the other classroom) boys and girls will remain at their assigned seats, standing. The teacher will instruct them to close their eyes and start counting to ten as they breathe in and exhale out. As a next step, the teacher will say they are going on a trip he/she will describe scenery, such as the

beach, a forest or a walk in the park. The description has to be as vivid as possible describing color, movement, temperature, touch and even smell. Then the teacher will tell them to visualize themselves coming back to the classroom relaxed and happy after taking this trip. Finally, the teacher will count back from ten to one and tell students to open their eyes.

Teachers use consequence maps to visually identify and discuss learners with management issues (Tobin & Simpson, 2012). The study will be measured using a behavior chart consisting of three levels: Green (G), Yellow (Y) and Red (R). Each letter is worth 1-3 points.

Anticipated Findings or Results

Data for the present study will be captured and analyzed during the current spring semester. Two weeks prior the beginning of the study of meditation interventions, the students' behavior will be measured using a "behavior chart" to capture a baseline measure of behavior. A behavior chart looks like a traffic light with a red circle on the top, a yellow in the middle and at the end a red circle. Green means respectful and good listener, yellow is not on task and has to be reminded, red is not respectful and disturbing others. Each student name is written on a wooden clothespin, at the beginning of the day they are in green but as the day goes on depending on their faults they are moved to yellow or red. We will make a checklist with points to keep track of the students' daily behavior, green (G) is 1, yellow (Y) is 2, and red (R) is three. After this two week behavior observation, mindfulness will be implemented for two weeks, during five minutes in the morning.

Behavior chart data will be gathered each day during the two weeks of the intervention. Data will be analyzed to compare the baseline behavior data to the behavior data gathered during the intervention (within groups comparison). Data will also be analyzed to compare behavior scores between the two classrooms (between groups comparison). Findings will be available for presentation in June.

Implications for the Field

This research study will benefit not only the students participating in the study, but also other teachers who can also implement yoga and meditation into their daily lessons to relieve

student stress and behavior issues. The practice will spark a cultivating good will, also known as “sending friendly wishes”. If successful, the results may be published in an education journal or magazine.

References

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