



## Yoga & Mindfulness in Schools:

### Backed by Research, Built for Real Classrooms

Imagine a classroom where students are focused, calm, and kind. That's the power of yoga and mindfulness in action. These simple, age-appropriate practices help children build emotional resilience, reduce stress, and improve focus—skills that support both academic success and overall well-being.

*What if a few minutes of breathing and movement could transform your classroom?* Today's research says—it can.

Yoga and mindfulness aren't just trendy extras. They're powerful, evidence-based tools that help students thrive emotionally, socially, and academically. And the latest studies prove it:

- Improved emotion regulation and attention (McCurdy et al., 2024)
- Reduced anxiety and better mood (Cook-Cottone, 2017), spelling and math (McCurdy et al., 2024)
- Fewer behavioral disruptions and more positive peer relationships (Felter et al., 2015; Zenner et al., 2014)

These practices cultivate self-awareness, emotional regulation, and stress management—key competencies of Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Whether it's a few mindful breaths before a test or a short yoga break between lessons, these moments help create calmer classrooms and more connected kids. And the benefits go beyond students.

Teachers consistently report:

- Better classroom climate
- Reduced behavioral issues
- Improved educator well-being and emotional resilience

Backed by Science. Practical for Every Classroom.

Mindfulness and yoga programs are:

- ✓ Inclusive and adaptable
- ✓ Easy to implement (even in 5 minutes a day!)
- ✓ Designed to support all learners—regardless of background or ability

From individual well-being to a stronger school community, these practices are a proven approach to fostering mental health, equity, and lifelong social-emotional skills.

## Research-Backed Impact: 8 Years of Data

Challenge to Change, Inc. has conducted extensive research in partnership with universities and schools across the Midwest to assess impact and inform continuous program improvement.



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### C2C Internal & Partnered Studies (2017–2025)

- 2017 – 2018: [University of Kansas](#) – Year One Curriculum
  - [Summary](#): The Yoga in the Schools program was evaluated through surveys and assessments from 974 students, 64 teachers, and 103 parents across participating schools. Participant feedback was largely positive: students reported feeling calm, happy, and relaxed during yoga, and many noticed personal improvements. Teachers implemented yoga with varying frequency, averaging 31.67 minutes per week, and observed benefits such as improved focus and self-regulation. Parents also noted positive behavioral changes at home and expressed support for continuing and expanding the program, and requested additional resources.
- 2018 – 2019: [University of Kansas](#) – Year One and Year Two Curriculum
  - [Supporting Study](#)
  - [Supporting Study](#)
  - [Summary](#): The Yoga in the Schools program received predominantly positive feedback across students, teachers, and parents. Students reported feeling calmer and more relaxed, teachers observed benefits in self-regulation and transitions, and parents noted improved emotional control at home.
- 2019 – 2020: Kansas University – Cut short due to covid
- 2022 – Present Day: [Mercy One in Dubuque](#) – Effects of our Workplace Mindfulness Curriculum on their floor nurses – [IRB](#)
- 2022 – 2023: [The University of Iowa](#) – All Years of Curriculum
  - [Supporting Studies](#)
  - [Summary](#) – Students who participated in the Mindful Education for Schools program showed notable improvements in growth mindset ( $t = 1.393$ ,  $p = 0.083$ ) and self-esteem ( $t = 1.797$ ,  $p = 0.037$ ), suggesting positive effects of the Challenge to Change initiative on specific aspects of social-emotional learning. The difference in total scores approached significance ( $t = 0.956$ ,  $p = 0.176$ ); although not statistically significant, still clinically meaningful.
- 2023 – 2024: [Yoga Alliance Impact Study](#) – Bowman Woods Elementary – Year Four Curriculum
  - [Yoga Alliance Snapshot Findings](#)
- 2024 – Present Day: Yoga Alliance Impact Study – All levels of curriculum, including middle and high school
- Fall of 2025: Saint Ambrose University – Mindful Leadership Certification Program for their MS, MA and PHD students

## National Research That Supports Our Approach

In addition to our own findings, we rely on leading national research that confirms the power of yoga and mindfulness in schools. These studies were given to us in 2017 by **Dr. Sat Bir Singh Khalsa** at The Children's Yoga Festival in Washington, DC. He is an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. He is a prominent figure advocating for the inclusion of yoga in schools. He is also the director of research at the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind-Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Khalsa's research focuses on the impact of yoga and mindfulness on stress reduction, resilience, and overall health.

[Pediatric Studies – Over 30 studies!](#)

[Yoga in the Schools Study – Over 100 studies!](#)

[National Library of Medicine Studies](#)

## The Program in Their Words

### What Educators Are Saying

[Teacher Testimonial](#)

[MES LINK](#)

[MES FEEDBACK FY2025](#)

[Davenport Schools Survey 2022](#)

[More Overall Program Testimonials](#)



### Student Reflections

[Student Feedback From United Way](#)

[Secondary Testimonials](#)

[MES LINK](#)

### 95 (Teacher Training) and Continuing Education Feedback

[Online 95 Feedback](#)

[Continuing Education Course Feedback](#)

## Observed Outcomes

These real-world reflections from educators show how mindfulness and yoga are shifting classroom culture, emotional awareness, and educator well-being—one breath at a time.

### From an Elementary Teacher:

"One of my students who used to have daily meltdowns now leads the class in mindful breathing. He even reminds his classmates, 'Let's take a breath together.' It's changed how we all handle stress."

### From a Middle School Counselor:

"Our students are learning how to pause before they react. We've seen fewer hallway conflicts, and teachers report calmer transitions between classes."

### From an Elementary Principal:

"This isn't just another SEL program—our entire school climate has shifted. Students are more connected to each other, and teachers feel supported. You can feel the difference when you walk into a classroom."

### From a 95-Hour Yoga Training Participant:

"I used to struggle with burnout. Now, I'm using these tools with my students and my own children at home. It's had a ripple effect I never expected."

### From a High School Teacher

"My students actually ask for the mindfulness practice now. It helps them settle in, especially before tests or presentations. It's the only thing I've seen consistently help with test anxiety."

### From a Student Reflection:

"I used to get really mad at people. Now I take a deep breath and calm myself before I talk."

## In the News:

### Our Work In the Spotlight



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KWQC News. (April 3, 2023). **Eastern Iowa mental health partnership with Challenge to Change.** Davenport, IA.  
<https://www.kwqc.com/2023/04/03/eastern-iowa-mental-health-partnership-with-challenge-change>

Living Local, Our Quad Cities. (April 2023). **Challenge to Change & Eastern Iowa Mental Health and Disabilities Region.**  
<https://www.ourquadcities.com/living-local/challenge-to-change-eastern-iowa-mental-health-and-disabilities-region>

Nashleanas, A. (2023). Episode 208 – **Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence with Jordan Turner with Challenge to Change, Inc.** Coffee for the Brain Podcast.  
<https://coffeeforthebrain.com/208>

Challenge to Change, Inc. (2023). **Mindfulness Matters: Transforming Schools with Jordan Turner from Challenge to Change, Inc.** The Best Version of Myself Podcast.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ojms2oFH-hc>

Hinga, A. (September 28, 2019). **Local schools use yoga, other methods to teach children about understanding, regulating their emotions.** Telegraph Herald, Dubuque, IA. [https://www.telegraphherald.com/news/tri-state/article\\_b6572a12-bbd9-5618-846e-fd1be3779c0b.html](https://www.telegraphherald.com/news/tri-state/article_b6572a12-bbd9-5618-846e-fd1be3779c0b.html)

Wong, A. (September 24, 2019), **Dubuque school district teaching yoga in elementary schools, studying outcomes.** KCRG News, Cedar Rapids, IA. USA.  
<https://www.kcrg.com/content/news/Dubuque-School-District-teaching-yoga-in-elementary-schools-studying-outcomes-561260721.html>

Duffy, M. (July 19, 2019), **Eastern Iowa teachers turn to yoga for kids with trauma and anxiety.** The Cedar Rapids Gazette, Cedar Rapids, IA, USA.  
<https://www.thegazette.com/subject/news/education/eastern-iowa-teachers-turn-to-yoga-for-kids-with-trauma-and-anxiety-cedar-rapids-20190719>

Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque. (June 2019). **The impact yoga in the classroom has on our students. Dubuque, IA.**  
<https://dbqfoundation.org/news/impact-yoga-classroom-has-our-students>

Associated Press. (2018). **Dubuque students learn yoga to understand, regulate emotions.** <https://apnews.com/general-news-922173fa3f524e69b4b2bac3a8afad78>

Hinga, A. (September 15, 2017), **Educators hope yoga in classroom can help students learn.** Associated Press, Seattle, WA, USA.  
[https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/educators-hope-yoga-in-classroom-can-help-students-learn/?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/educators-hope-yoga-in-classroom-can-help-students-learn/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)

Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque. (September 2017). [McDonough Foundation grant supports yoga in schools](https://dbqfoundation.org/news/mcdonough-fdn-grant-fdps-supports-yoga-schools). Dubuque, IA. <https://dbqfoundation.org/news/mcdonough-fdn-grant-fdps-supports-yoga-schools>

KCRG News. (February 13, 2017). [Yoga practice improving students' behavior in Dubuque schools](https://www.kcrg.com/content/news/Yoga-practice-improving-students-behavior-in-Dubuque-schools--413657753.html). Cedar Rapids, IA. <https://www.kcrg.com/content/news/Yoga-practice-improving-students-behavior-in-Dubuque-schools--413657753.html>



## Mindfulness in Motion: Videos

Explore videos created by Challenge to Change, Inc. that showcase how yoga and mindfulness practices are transforming classrooms, supporting teachers, and empowering students.

### Mindful Education in the Classroom Setting

[Building Resilience Through Mindful Education in the Schools](#)

[A Day in the Life of a Mindful Instructor](#)

[First Graders during Seated Practice](#)

[Lions' Breath in the Classroom](#)

[Partnership Video with Mindful Minutes for Schools- Impact Video](#)

### End of Year Videos

[Another Amazing Year \(2024-25\)](#)

[2024-25 End of the School Year Video](#)

[2023-24 End of the School Year Video](#)

[2021-22 End of the School Year Video](#)

### Learn More about Challenge to Change, Inc

[What we do at Challenge to Change, Inc.](#)

[About Challenge to Change, Inc.](#)

[Workplace Wellness with Challenge to Change, Inc.](#)

### Program Information

[Mindful Changemaker Coach Program](#)

[Yoga & Mindfulness Programming Overview](#)

[5 Parts of Practice Overview](#)

[Programming Q &A](#)

## Want a closer look at our programs in action?

Explore these printable handouts that combine a brief program overview with direct feedback from the educators implementing it.

[\[Program Overview + Testimonials – Handout 1\]](#)

[\[Program Overview + Testimonials – Handout 2\]](#)