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Addressing the Washington State Health and Fitness Essential Academic Learning Requirements by Incorporating Yoga into the Physical Education Curriculum

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ADDRESSING THE WASHINGTON STATE HEALTH AND FITNESS
ESSENTIAL ACADEMIC LEARNING REQUIREMENTS

BY
INCORPORATING YOGA INTO
THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

A Project Report

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

Master Teacher

by

Nicola Joanne Stewart

February, 2004

ABSTRACT

ADDRESSING THE WASHINGTON STATE HEALTH AND FITNESS ESSENTIAL

ACADEMIC LEARNING REQUIREMENTS

BY

INCORPORATING YOGA INTO THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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Nicola Joanne Stewart

February, 2004

The benefits of balancing the physical, mental, and psychological well being of adolescents, was researched. The research suggests that yoga is a discipline that can greatly enhance the Washington State Health and Fitness Essential Academic Learning Requirements, which are designed to give the student skills to live a healthy and active life. Lesson plans with illustrations have been created, which can assist educators in incorporating yoga into the existing physical education curriculum. Instructions are given on how to use the lesson plans, how to adapt them, and suggestions for educators to create their own lesson plans.

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Chapter One

Background of the Project

Introduction

In 1994, Washington State established the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALR's). One of the content areas included Health and Fitness. They were put together by a committee of about thirty professionals, including health professionals, teachers, and community members. The intention of the Health and Fitness requirements is to regulate the physical education and health classes throughout the State by introducing the same broad goals. Of particular note are the following Health and Fitness EALR's that expand the traditional physical education perspective:

1. The student requires the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain an active life: movement, physical fitness, and nutrition.
2. The student acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain a healthy life: recognize patterns of growth and development, reduce health risks, and live safely.
3. The student analyzes and evaluates the impact of real-life influences on health.
4. The student effectively analyzes health and safety information to develop health and fitness plans based on life goals

The Health and Fitness EALR's, however, are often in contrast to the traditional physical education program. These traditional programs were focused more on discrete skills such as dribbling, team sports, and competition. The emphasis of the Washington

State Health and Fitness EALR's, however, is on recreation and lifelong fitness. Throughout the last decade it has been difficult to modify traditional physical education to meet the intentions of the Health and Fitness EALR's. Therefore, many schools and districts are not implementing fully the Washington State Health and Fitness EALR's. One way to address this gap in implementing the EALR's is to incorporate yoga into the traditional physical education program.

Yoga is a way of life. Georg Feuerstein, in his book *The Shambhala Guide to Yoga* (1996), lists the eight principle limbs of yoga written in the Yoga-Sutra (yoga's main text attributed to Patanjali over two thousand years ago). These limbs compare to the four EALR's, and include how to look after yourself, what to eat, when to eat, how to breathe, how to feel, how to think, meditation and physical poses. Yoga represents a nonauthoritarian philosophy. The work begins with the students allowing time to connect with themselves, beginning to like and trust themselves. They discover how intricate their body is, how hard it works and realize it needs to last a lifetime: As a result they no longer want to abuse themselves. They start making better choices, getting more sleep and not eating so much junk food. They begin to like themselves more, feel content to just be with themselves instead of looking for constant approval from others. As they make the right choices, they trust themselves to recognize the truth and to come from a place of truth themselves.

The educator Palmer (1998) points out that the person who has the knowledge is not the only active agent; the subject itself can act upon a person drawing them in. For example, a mathematician may be drawn to numbers and calculations, whereas writers Palmer says, "are people who hear the music of words" (p.105). Yoga emphasizes the subject and the student, with

the teacher as facilitator. Educators can see the importance of keeping the student interested and involved or true learning cannot take place. Yoga instruction can accomplish this.

Feuerstein and Bodian (1993) are quick to point out that Yoga is not an eastern religion, where practitioners tie themselves up into knots, and fast for weeks at a time. They say yoga is a universal art. "The art of living at the highest level possible for a human being, in attunement with the larger life" (p. 6). Feuerstein and Bodian say that yoga can fulfill whatever the practitioner wants to focus on: For the physical benefits they can become stronger, more flexible and subtly change the way they look: If doing it for the mind, some poses create more blood flow to the brain, making them more alert. Some poses, like balances help with mental concentration. Some poses with the weight on the head can cause the sutras in the skull to widen, and thus create the capacity for improved intelligence. To help grow spiritually the practitioner needs to quiet his mind by connecting with the breath and staying focused on the present. The physical poses help with this concentration, so that the mind becomes peaceful and one pointed, meaning more focused and not moving from one thought to another.

Yoga unites the body, mind and spirit. Dr. Sharma (1993) says that western doctors are just beginning to realize that the mind and body cannot be separated when treating a patient. Eastern philosophy tries to keep the mind, body and spirit together in perfect balance.

Schiffman (1996), one of the great practitioners of our day, calls yoga the practice of moving into stillness. He says when you experience this stillness you will be taught from within the stillness, "how to receive inner guidance during the day from the Infinite Mind" (p. 4.). He says through all his years of practicing, "Yoga makes you feel good. It's relaxing. It's

energizing. It's strengthening. You feel better at the end of a session than when you began and life runs more smoothly when you maintain a constant discipline than when you do not" (p. 20).

Each requirement includes benchmarks to help the student obtain his goal. The benchmarks are divided into separate levels, appropriate for different ages.

The intention of the project is to show that yoga instruction helps implement the Washington State Health and Fitness Essential Academic Learning Requirements. According to the literature that has been studied, yoga can greatly enhance the lives of young people, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Purpose of Project

The purpose of this project is to close the gap between the Health and Fitness EALR's and traditional physical education by bringing yoga into schools. To do this, a detailed description of what yoga is, and its health benefits are laid out. A comparison with the Washington State Health and Fitness Essential Academic Learning Requirements has been made. Lesson plans are included, providing teachers with a working plan for getting involved with yoga. The lessons provide the names of the poses, and illustrations, the beneficial sequencing plus references for yoga books that show clear photographs of each pose. This is also an opportunity for teachers to really get involved with their students' lives, and allow their students to slow down, to become more relaxed, more focused, and to teach them how to handle stress. The lesson plans are suitable for ages thirteen to eighteen years, and can be adapted to suit younger children. It is advisable for teachers to attend some yoga classes themselves before teaching to familiarize themselves with the poses.

Significance of Project

Research has shown that practicing yoga can lengthen your life, and give you a better quality of life (Desikachar, 1995). According to Alice Kelly (Yoga Journal, 2003), yoga is being adopted by many professionals: doctors, chiropractors, and coaches, who are sending clients to yoga teachers to help them with their illness, stiffness, chronic pain, flexibility, and stressful lives. Groups of eastern and western medical specialists (including especially trained yoga teachers) are coming together to treat patients. Kelly explains these are called “pain teams”, and the reason why they are not the norm is that insurance companies do not see the multidisciplinary approach as cost effective. The American Psychological Association (2003) agrees that there is a growing area of therapy that taps into the healing potentials of the body and the spirit. These techniques can include dance, music, drama, art, ritual, and yoga.

Practicing yoga as a way of life keeps the body in balance. When the body is out of balance “dis-ease” occurs. Uniting body, mind and spirit by practicing yoga daily will prevent imbalances from occurring, and therefore help stop disease. In his book *Freedom from Disease*, the scientist Dr. Sharma says extensive research on yoga poses has been carried out in India. The studies show that yoga poses produce many of the same physiological effects as meditation, including, “physical relaxation, reduced blood pressure, and increased alpha waves in the brain. Long term effects include reduced cholesterol levels, biochemical changes indicative of healthier functioning in the autonomic nervous system, decreased blood sugar indicating potential prevention of maturity-onset diabetes” (p. 295). Other studies, he said, showed improved eyesight, improved appetite, less need for sleep, and help with weight management. The

research also showed, “improved memory and intellect, reduced incidence of the common cold, and improvement in rheumatoid arthritis” (p.295).

Pranayama (breathing exercises) were also studied. The research shows increased lung capacity, which tends to decrease with age, and decreases in pulse rate and cholesterol. Dr. Sharma states “Pranayama has also been shown to improve the reactivity of adrenocortical function, indicating an improved ability to cope with stress, and to improve digestion and liver function” (p.296).

When yoga poses and proper breathing are practiced together the combined effects were researched. Dr. Sharma cited one study as showing such physical benefits as improved muscular endurance and delayed fatigue. Another study showed psychological and mental improvements, including “decreased neuroticism, decreased mental fatigue, improved cognitive performance, and improved memory” (p.296). If yoga is able to perform all these functions then healthier students will be less absent from school. When they are at school, they will be able to focus for longer periods of time on their lessons. They will have a better attitude towards school, each other and the teachers. Because they learn how to handle stress there will be less problems for them in their home life and at school. They will gain a better self-image, which will help their motivation to do well at school.

Focusing on yoga addresses the students’ problems rather than the quality or quantity of the teachers, the administration, the education districts, and the building and facilities.

Limitations

Here are listed some limitations of the project:

1. Since concentration span of adolescents varies widely, some may find staying in the poses boring, whilst others need to stay longer in the poses. The teacher has to use his/her judgment when to move on to the next pose.
2. The lesson plans only covers a fraction of the poses available. The author chose the most beneficial and basic poses for students getting started.
3. The lesson plans should not be taken as yoga in its entirety. Other books should be used for reference once the teacher is comfortable with the subject matter.
4. If the lesson plans are being used without the backing of the school board and school district, it is advisable to send a letter home with the students advising the parents that the students will be doing yoga and what it entails.
5. To gain the full benefit of a healthy life-style that yoga promotes: These lesson plans should be taught throughout the high school, so that the students have a chance to progress, and notice the difference it makes in their lives. If it is only given as an elective, the children should be made aware of any yoga classes in the district, and encouraged to keep practicing.

Definition of Terms

To provide a clearer understanding for the reader a definition of terms is provided:

Asana: Pose or posture.

Bhakti yoga: Is the yoga of devotion and love; work done for the love of fellow human beings.

EALR's: Essential Academic Learning Requirements.

Hatha: Ha is the sun in Sanskrit, tha is the moon.

Hatha Yoga: Is known as the posture or physical yoga. It is the coming together of the sun and moon. In other words, yoga is a way of joining together opposites, reintegrating the fragmented and broken parts of life, the yin and yang, hot and cold, dark and light.

Jnana Yoga: Is the yoga of knowledge; wisdom gained through study and meditation.

Karma Yoga: Is the yoga of action; Karma Yoga usually involves service to the community.

Pranayama: Breathing exercises

Sutra: Thread

Vinyasa: Flow

Yoga: A Sanskrit word meaning unite

Project Overview

Chapter One tells the purpose and significance of this project, including the limitations and the terms used throughout the project.

Chapter Two is the review of literature that is used to support the growing need for yoga in schools, and shows that yoga instruction addresses the Washington State Health and Fitness Essential Academic Learning Requirements..

Chapter Three explains the procedure: How the school yoga lesson plans were devised addressing the Washington State Health and Fitness Essential Academic Learning Requirements, and how the information was gathered.

Chapter Four explains the project.

Chapter Five includes the summary, the conclusions and the recommendations for the project.

Appendix A consists of the lesson plans with illustrations.

Appendix B has the questionnaire and a list of relevant literature for the teachers and students.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

Literature that supports the inclusion of physical, mental and spiritual education has been studied. This literature supports the belief that the spiritual and physical, as well as the mental attributes of a student must be nurtured and cultivated to create a well-balanced and healthy individual, in accordance with the Washington State Health and Fitness Essential Academic Learning Requirements. Palmer, in *The Courage to Teach*, states “to educate is to guide students on an inner journey toward more truthful ways of seeing and being in the world” (p. 6). Educators today are realizing it is not the job of the teacher to regurgitate information to the student, “The question of pedagogy is reduced not to a dialogue and much less a dialect between teachers and students, than to a form of pedagogical training in which teachers provide the learning conditions for students to discover the ‘truth’” (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1997, p. 94). Feurstein (1996) reminds us that it was Americans such as Emerson and Thoreau as early as the 1840’s who were reading and discussing the Bhagavad-Gita, one of yoga’s core texts. In 1893 Swami Vivekananda came to America, and so yoga took root in this country.

The literature researched focuses on the benefit of meditation for mental well-being. Also, the physical benefits of the postures for the mind and body, and the breath (which, yoga teachers, equate as the physical counterpart to the mind) for relaxation. The therapeutic benefits of yoga are discussed, plus the similarities between yoga and the recommended program for children with behavioral disabilities studied. The specific

benchmarks in the Health and Fitness Essential Academic Learning Requirements are addressed and a comparison made between them and yoga.

Meditation

Webster's New Century Dictionary (2001) defines meditate as "to think deeply; to reflect; to empty the mind in order to concentrate on nothing or one thing." According to Patanjali, the "father" of yoga (cited by Isherwood, 1981, p. 41) "Meditation is evolution in reverse. Meditation is a process of devolution. Beginning at the surface of life, the meditative mind goes inward, seeking always the cause behind the appearance and then the cause behind the cause, until the innermost Reality is reached." The dictionary tries to explain what we need to do to meditate, whereas Patanjali's explanation actually explains what the process of meditation achieves: what it is. He then goes on to explain that there are four stages of concentration. At first meditation is just concentrated thought that can not be maintained for more than a few minutes, but can become easier with practice. The fourth stage, the highest level of meditation, is union with the universal consciousness. Paddy O' Brian (1991) reminds us that meditation is something we all do spontaneously. For example, whenever we are wholeheartedly immersed in an activity, maybe playing a challenging piece of music, listening to the rhythm of our breath, or focusing on our stride as we run is when we are freed from the kaleidoscope of outside distractions. This is when we feel happy and peaceful at the time, refreshed, and revived afterwards. The point of choosing to meditate deliberately by some people is to make this calming, healing, and strengthening activity part of their lives. Yoga scholars and practitioners call this "oneness." Educators try to achieve this focused attention for their students.. It is tried through manipulation of the environment, through changing the texts, through using

relevant material and through re- educating teachers. Palmer points out that when he is teaching, “The moment I break the silence, I foreclose on all chances for authentic learning. Why would my students think their own thoughts in the silence when they know I will invariably fill it with thoughts of my own?” (p. 82). So too with students whom are accustomed to being entertained all day by parents, peers, school teachers, television, and video games. It becomes a monumental effort for them to become focused on school work, even work that seems relevant to them.

Rama (1979, cited in Yoga International 2003) says from childhood onward we are taught to examine and try to understand things in the external world. We become skillful at manipulating the outside world for our own benefits. Nobody teaches to look within first and understand ourselves. But Rama says unless we learn to know ourselves we will fall short of our goals in the outer world. He says meditation is the key to achieving this inner balance. Palmer points out that our culture is to blame:

In this culture, objective facts are regarded as pure, while subjective feelings are suspect and sullied. In this culture, the self is not a source to be tapped but a danger to be suppressed, not a potential to be fulfilled but an obstacle to be overcome. In this culture, the pathology of speech disconnected from self is regarded, and rewarded, as a virtue.
(p.18)

He also realizes that “Good teaching requires self-knowledge” (p. 3), and “We cannot know the great things of the universe until we know ourselves to be great things” (p. 110).

Yoga can teach students how to stay focused and therefore how to think problems through for themselves without relying on classmates or the teacher for the correct answer.

Vaughan (1993, cited in Feuerstein and Bodian, 1993 p. 117) states, “Learning to relax and quiet

the mind can make you feel better, function better, and maintain better health.” As stated in the first and second Essential Academic Learning requirements, “The student acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain an active and healthy life.” Performing the physical poses in yoga is doing a moving meditation, with the mind staying focused on the movement in hand. B.K.S Iyengar, one of the leading authorities on yoga today, (cited in Feuerstein and Bodian, 1993) says “Yoga is without doubt the master key that unlocks the frontiers of the mind” (p.360).

The Indian Psychology Association for so long influenced by Western psychology is now trying to develop an indigenous psychology (American Psychological Association, 2002). They are incorporating Indian traditions into Western psychology to help India’s social problems. A technique has been developed that helps with panic disorders, depression and stress management. The technique combines four yoga poses with meditation. It is a relaxing technique that makes thoughts more accessible and is compared to Western cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Meditation will help the students to stay focused longer in all their lessons, and so help them to acquire the knowledge and skills to maintain a healthy and active life in accordance with the EALR’s. The relaxation and meditation practiced actively at the end of each yoga class directly addresses the first benchmark in the second EALR giving the students a stress management strategy.

The Physical Poses (asanas)

Scientific studies on the individual poses are very limited to date. Studies have mainly been conducted when thought that some yoga poses might be lessening the ailments of a certain disease. More will be discussed later in this chapter. The main data collected on the benefits of

poses has been passed down by word of mouth through the lineage of great yoga teachers through their personal experience, validated, written in Sanskrit and rewritten in English.

The yoga student learns to focus his mind on breathing and staying in the present as they focus on performing the pose, adjusting in the pose and relaxing in the pose. This teaches the mind one pointedness, which when practiced over and over again strengthens the focusing skill of the student. The balancing poses in particular are essential for improving mental concentration. The information is still passed on from teacher to student and the benefits passed on to the practitioner when doing the poses regularly and consistently. Palmer says, "Truth is an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline" (p.104). A conclusion, he says, is not needed for us to gain knowledge. It is the conversation and questioning that makes us knowledgeable. Yoga is the same. It teaches consistency, discipline, and asking the questions for yourself, to find the answers you need, it is a journey not a destination. Practicing yoga will give the student confidence. This confidence will make them feel good about themselves and reinforce good choices instead of bad. This aligns with EALR number two, the third benchmark (2.3), "acquire skills to live safely" and "apply skills to avoid and resist use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs." This also reinforces EALR number 3.1 for grade nine, "Develop decision making skills regarding health behaviors for self, others and community. The student learns to take control of his own life, aligning with EALR 1.2, grade ten, "Act independently of peer pressure."

One of the leading yoga teachers in America, Erich Schiffmann, is one of the few masters who has tried to list the benefits of all the poses he teaches in his book, *The Spirit and Practice of Moving into Stillness* (1996). The poses are usually divided into five distinct groups: forward

bends, backbends, balances, inverted poses and twists. For example backbends promote confidence. The yogi is opening himself up, making his chest vulnerable to attack. This is a very unusual position in our daily lives. Usually people sit hunched over desks or computers, protecting their hearts as they sit or walk with shoulders rounded over. They only open to stretch and relieve their fatigue, arching their backs and stretching their arms overhead in a gentle backbend. Backbends are for rejuvenating and cleansing. When arching the back blood flow is restricted to the liver and kidneys, then when released, blood goes rushing through these organs cleansing and rejuvenating.

Inverted poses aid sleep. Schiffmann tells us all the benefits of inverted poses. They revitalize the whole body, reversing the effects of gravity and flooding the brain with nourishment: "Inversions are cleansing and nourishing at the deepest levels, and thereby engender tremendous systemic harmonization or health benefits." He goes on to say that as the brain is flooded with rich new nutrients, "The mind clears. Thinking improves. Understanding ensues." (p. 267). Headstand activates the pineal and pituitary glands, which control the chemical balance in the endocrine system. Shoulder stands stimulate the thyroid and parathyroid glands, strengthening the nervous system, emotions, and regulating the metabolism. By elevating the legs, circulation and lymph drainage are improved. All of which Schiffmann says "nourish cells in the face, muscle and skin, relieve strain and fatigue in the legs and feet, and stimulate intestinal sluggishness, improving digestion and elimination" (p. 267). The inverted poses are especially beneficial after a stressful day because they soothe the nerves and quiet an over stimulated brain. Schiffmann gives two examples of inverted poses.

1. Headstand: "Irrigates the brain, stimulating pineal and pituitary glands. Strengthens neck, shoulders, arms. Relieves tired legs. Stimulates circulation, digestion, elimination. Centering, warming, develops concentration and focus. Energizing, calming and soothing to the whole body. Clears the mind. Heightens sensitivity. Conducive to meditation" (p. 267).
2. Shoulder Stand: "Irrigates the brain, thyroid, and parathyroid. Strengthens upper body. Opens chest. Stretches neck, shoulders, and upper back muscles. Stimulates circulation and energy flow through the neck to the brain and body. Improves digestion and elimination. Relieves fatigue. Relaxing. Aid to insomnia and exhaustion. Soothing, energizing. Calms and rejuvenates body. Nurturing effect" (p. 277).

In these two examples, plus the benefits cited in all inversions, we can see that the poses grouped into forward bends, backward bends, inversions, twists and balances all have similar benefits in their groups, as well as added individual benefits.

Twists are similar to inverted poses in that they are wonderfully cleansing. They wring out the body and so assist in releasing an enormous amount of tension and toxins. Schiffman states, "When you then release the twisting, wringing-out action, and the musculature relaxes again, that area becomes flooded with nutrients. This is both deeply cleansing and deeply nourishing." He says that the twisting poses are especially good for the spine. Twisting poses keep the whole spine free and mobile and so lessens the chance of injury to the back. When compressed or contracted, circulation is diminished so the area becomes malnourished.

Practicing the twisting poses in yoga improves mobility and releases tension in the back muscles,

spine, shoulders, neck, hips, abdominal organs, and improves circulation and energy flow in these areas. Every nerve throughout the body originates from the spinal cord and so every part of the body will rejuvenate and heal. Blandine Calais-Germain, a physiotherapist, in her book *"Anatomy of Movement"* (1991), describes the link between the nerves and the spinal column, "The vertebral column contains a central tunnel through which runs the delicate spinal cord. The nerve roots which supply the muscles and bring in sensory information branch off the spinal cord and exit through small openings between the vertebrae" (p. 25). Schiffmann alluding to the ayurvedic theory that dryness encourages ill health, whereas moistness promotes good health, says:

A tense, dry self will give way to a youthful, hydrated, strong, highly elastic, vital sense of self. As the trunk rotates, the kidneys and abdominal organs are activated and exercised. This improves digestion and removes sluggishness. Backaches, headaches, and stiffness in the neck and shoulders can all be eliminated or diminished. You'll also notice a heightened sensitivity can help us be more in tune with ourselves, other people, the world and universe (p. 25).

It is important to keep the spine healthy in order to maintain a healthy life. Many sports in the physical education curriculum today have repetitive stiffening movements such as baseball or tennis. Some activities such as weight lifting or body pump may even damage the spine. Yoga practiced at school can help the athletic student and the nonathletic student remain healthy through adolescence into adulthood, in accordance with EALR number two.

Erich Schiffman (1986) tells us that forward bends are soothing and calming. They stretch and lengthen the entire backside of the body. This releases tension and improves circulation in the ankles, feet, knees, hips, legs, spine, torso, lower back, and neck. The stretch

along the spine encourages space and circulation between the vertebrae. As the spine is being stretched in the forward bend the front of the body is being firmed and toned. The organs are massaged. Digestion, elimination, and reproduction are stimulated in this deep massaging effect. Forward bends can be comfortably held for a long time. Schiffman says:

This is soothing to the nervous system and generates calmness, serenity and a new outlook on life. Your kinesthetic sense, the feeling of you, instead of being ragged and on edge will become smooth and even. Lengthening the backside of your body frees you from the past, so you are no longer bothered by events or circumstances that occurred earlier in your life. This helps you experience your newness in the now. Done properly, forward bends simulate bowing and are humbling. (p. 233)

Backbends, Schiffmann tells us, encourage a sense of confidence and emotional openness. They are strengthening, opening, exploratory (as are all poses), and exhilarating. The backbend is the opposite of a forward bend, opening and stretching the entire front of the body. Schiffman assures us it is unhealthy to round the shoulders and constrict the chest. Vital energy flow is restricted, which he says inevitably causes feelings of depression and fear. Curving over causes the vertebrae to push backward out of alignment whilst impairing the functioning of the lungs and abdominal organs. The backbends strengthen back muscles making it easy to sit or stand all day long. They release tension and blocked energy, so are rejuvenating poses.

Backbends encourage youthfulness by keeping the spine supple. As an old Chinese proverb states "A truly flexible back makes for a long life." Most of the day students sit in an unhealthy position, spines rounded out of alignment, unable to take deep breaths and the chest collapsed restricting the flow of oxygen and energy. The regular practice of yoga poses will strengthen the

back and stomach muscles. The students can work at their own pace and at their own level of ability, strengthening the areas needed to be strengthened. This individual method of learning epitomizes the flexibility of yoga, and aligns neatly with EALR 1.2, grade ten, “adjust activity level to meet personal needs.”

The balancing poses have a mixture of benefits depending whether the balance is on the head or feet. But they all develop concentration, stability, poise and balance. Baptiste (1999), found that many athletes whom were advised to take up yoga for the stretching routines also find the balancing poses help them become better runners, skiers, basketball players, or cyclists. All sports, where the whole body is moving, usually involve a constant on and off balance. Balancing poses can help the athlete become more comfortable with this.

All the physical poses in yoga promote health and fitness covering the basic requirements set out in the health and fitness EALR's. The physical poses allow the student to “Develop fundamental physical skills and progress to complex movement activities “ (EALR 1.1). Yoga can be taught with a partner, learning to trust and work with that person. EALR 1.6 describes working with a partner or in a group. Different yoga poses can be linked together creating a flow of movement, giving the students a chance to be creative as they experiment with linking their favorite poses together. This can be done at any level, the beginners choosing easier poses. EALR 1.5 states “use and develop movement skills and techniques to solve movement problems and express ideas.” Under the grade ten benchmark is a description of vinyasa yoga, the flow of yoga, “improvise and create original compositions or activities using the movement elements of space, time and energy.”

Yoga is also a fitness plan that the students can take with them and use throughout their lives. Yoga is everywhere in the community. It is now taught in sports centers, private clubs, church halls, dance studios and even in private homes. Being able to continue yoga outside of school aligns with EALR 4.2, “explore activities available in the community” and “participation in individualized physical activities outside the school day.” Teaching yoga could also be an area of occupation or career interest for anyone interested in the health industry, thereby aligning nicely with first benchmark in the fourth learning requirement, “investigate the health and fitness requirements for occupational/career areas of interest.”

The Breath (pranayama)

“As long as there is breath in the body, there is life. When breath
departs, so too does life. Therefore, regulate the breath.”

(Hatha Yoga Pradipika-Ch.2:S.3.)

The term pranayama is composed of prana (life force) and ayama (extension), thus meaning the lengthening of the breath. The sympathetic nervous system consists of a chain of ganglia (a mass of nervous matter and nerve cells) running down the side of the spinal column and ganglia scattered in the head, neck, chest and abdomen. From these ganglia numerous fibers branch out to blood vessels and the organs of the body. At some points the nerves come together and form what are known as plexuses. This Sympathetic System controls the involuntary processes, such as growth, circulation, digestion and respiration (Calais-Germain, 1993).

In his book *Science of Breath* (copyright 1905) Ramacharaka explains that the power of force transmitted from the brain to all parts of the body in science is known as “nerve force,” in yoga it is called Prana. Without this nerve force or electric current the heart cannot beat, therefore the blood cannot circulate, the organs cannot function, nor the lungs breath. The

importance of the absorption of Prana becomes evident. Prana encompasses more than just breathing air into the lungs; it also refers to transmitting the nerve force throughout the body, allowing the body to function. Ramacharaka goes on to say that some Western scientists are calling the Solar Plexus the “Abdominal Brain.” The solar plexus is situated on either side of the spinal column at the bottom of the stomach and is composed of white and gray brain matter. In yoga theory this is regarded as the great storehouse of Prana.

Iyengar, in his book *Light on Pranayama* (1994) explains the respiratory system:

The basic energy needs of the body are oxygen plus glucose. The oxygen oxidizes the waste matter aiding in elimination, while glucose supplied with oxygen nourishes the cells of the body during respiration. The purpose of pranayama is to make the respiratory system function at its best. This automatically improves the circulatory system, without which the processes of digestion and elimination would suffer.

Toxins would accumulate, diseases spread through the body and ill-health becomes habitual. The respiratory system is the gateway to purifying the body, mind and intellect. The key to this is pranayama. (p. 17)

Why is the breath so important in yoga, and how can pranayama help students? Georg Feurstein, in *The Shambhala Guide to Yoga* points out that our attention informs the choices or decisions we make which in turn affects the quality of our existence. For example: wherever our attention is will be the decisive factor in how we experience this world. An avid reader will walk down the street and immediately notice the bookstore, whilst a sports enthusiast may walk down that same street, not notice a bookstore, but immediately spot the local gym. Understanding the power of attention yoga students do their utmost to cultivate vigilance over the mind. This they

do with the help of the breath. Rama, a contemporary exponent of yoga (1979, cited in Feuerstein, 1996, p. 73) "Breath is an external manifestation of the force of prana. Breath is the fly-wheel that regulates the entire machine of the body. Just as the control wheel of the fly-wheel of an engine controls all other mechanisms in it, so the control of the external breath leads to control of the physical and mental aspects of our life machine."

Most of us believe breathing is automatic and beyond our active control. During most of one's life it is regulated through the nervous system. Iyengar gives athletes and mountain climbers as examples of people whom have made their breathing more efficient by changing the rate, depth and quality of their breath. Their lung capacity is far greater than the average persons. Feuerstein says it is thought that erratic and shallow breathing makes for erratic and shallow thoughts. He points out that when we concentrate we often hold our breath. The breathing cycle consists of three parts: inhalation, exhalation and retention. Breath retention has been made into a fine art and explains why when tested, Feuerstein says, some yogis may appear dead but scientists now believe they can slow their breathing so much that it is imperceptible.

Where the average person is concerned, full mastery of pranayama is not necessary. Immediate benefits can be gained with just focusing on the breath. If someone is angry they say hold your breath and count to ten. If they are stressed they say take slow deep breaths. There is even a breathing technique given to women in labor to help with pain management.

Baptiste (2002, p. 68) teaches, "Proper breathing is critical to athletic performance. It improves technique, reduces stress, and enhances the cardiovascular system." He says athletes partaking in all forms of sport can benefit from the breathing and core strength that yoga provides. School sports teams could improve their performance with a regular yoga program.

Focusing on the breath during yoga class has two main functions.

1. To make us aware of how we are breathing. Iyengar lists the four main types of respiration: high or clavicular breathing; intercostals or midbreathing; low or diaphragmatic breathing; in total or pranamic breathing. When the breath happens automatically only part of the lungs are used. Today a large majority of people use their neck muscles and breath into their chests only, using the top part of their lungs and missing out on the stored energy in the solar plexus. Yoga teaches us how to use the whole of our lungs to breath.
2. Concentrating on the breath controls the mind. Focusing the mind on the breath helps develop concentration. The mind stays in the present, not worrying about the past or future. Learning to quiet the mind and remove scattered thinking will bring peace.

O'Brien (1991) states that, "stretching, steady breathing, relaxation and meditation all help to disperse the stress-produced hormones, particularly adrenaline, and encourage the production of hormones which give a sense of well-being" (p. 104).

Stress management is one of the most valuable tools gained from practicing yoga. This may be one of the main reasons why yoga is beginning to catch the attention of the medical profession, as stress is related to fatigue, sleep problems, digestive problems, headaches and other ailments (Sharma, 1993).

When learning to meditate the breath is used as a tool for the mind to focus on, and a point to return to when the mind wanders. Learning pranayama can be used for stress management addressing benchmarks in the second health and fitness requirement: "Develop

strategies to manage stress and know how to modify the strategies throughout life” (EALR’s, 24 1998).

Yoga Therapy

Yoga teachers can now be trained in the art of therapeutic yoga. With the approval of a doctor, serious problems such as cancer, diabetes, carpal tunnel and migraine headaches can be helped through yoga. Joan Budilovsky and Eve Adamson (1998), state:

In 1931 Dr. Otto Heinrich Warburg won the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his discovery that sub-optimal oxygenation of tissues and cells is the underlying cause of cancer. Give your body oxygen! Yogis discovered thousands of years ago that the quality of one’s breath has a direct and profound influence on the quality of one’s life. Pranayama therefore is one of the best things you can do to keep your body filled with oxygen. (p. 224)

Yoga therapists are able to help people with diabetes giving them poses to improve the function of the pancreas, the organ that regulates blood sugar. They can help patients with cardiovascular disease by decreasing stress and increasing circulation. The slow movement of the yoga poses can help people with arthritis, by keeping their joints mobile, preventing them from getting inflamed. Budilovsky and Adamson go on to say that yoga can help with many minor complaints such as colds, headaches, minor back pain, and fatigue.

Yoga taught in school can help students with minor medical problems, especially if the teacher is aware of the problems and knows the poses that can help. Gary Kraftsow (2002) one of the leading teachers on yoga therapy is also treating emotional problems through yoga. He says he has to treat the body and mind together. For example, if some one is mentally agitated

by being physically sedentary, he tries to increase their physical activity to calm their mind and bring their mind and body back into balance again.

As well as treating the student's minor aches and pains, yoga can help prevent disease, aid him in his chosen sports, give them confidence in the different stages of his life, and help with his growth spurts and emotional swings. Budilovsky and Adamson say, even the simple practice of deep breathing will increase the production of endorphins in the system, the bodies natural pain killers and help lower the blood pressure and heart rate.

By including both the healthy and unhealthy students in the yoga class, the students become aware that all individuals can maintain an active life. Yoga is an activity that can be started at what ever level the student feels comfortable. Yoga therapy, like regular yoga, addresses the benchmarks in the first and second requirements that are listed in the EALR's: "The student acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain an active life."

Children with Behavioral Disabilities

The similarities between the treatment of certain behavioral disabilities and the practice of yoga have been documented. The specific area of emotional and behavioral disabilities studied are attention and activity disorders. ADD has a wide continuum from very mild to acute symptoms and can include different levels of hyperactivity (ADHD). Treatment today is a combination from Kauffman's six conceptual models (1993, cited in Heward, 1996)

- The biogenic model suggests behavior has medical causes and may be medically treated.
- The psychodynamic model is an idea based on the behavior developing from interaction of experience and internal mental processes that are out of balance. This model relies on psychotherapy rather than academic remediation.

- The psycho educational model is concerned with unconscious motivations. Intervention is based on therapeutic discussions.
- The humanistic model suggests that the child is not in touch with his or her own feelings so cannot find self-fulfillment in traditional educational settings. Treatment is in an open, comfortable setting. The teacher is mainly a resource for the child's learning; she does not give any direct instruction.
- The ecological model deals with the child's interactions. Treatment entails teaching the child how to function within the family, school and society.
- The behavioral model suggests the behavior has been learned from interaction with the environment. The educator uses behavior analyses techniques to help the child learn new, appropriate responses and eliminate the old ones.

Teachers pick the most appropriate method of instruction for their students and for their situation. The special education teacher uses an eclectic approach, combining techniques from the different models. The models themselves will overlap in some areas. The most commonly used in the classroom are the behavioral model and the ecological model. Yoga may be able to help within all these conceptual models.

Students with emotional and behavioral disabilities can show deficits in social skills. Heward (1996), using the behavioral model, understands that this will mean a large part of their education will consist of social instruction. Stephens (1992, cited in Heward, 1996, p. 271) developed an inventory of 132 specific social skills for school children. The four major categories he used are as follows:

1. *Self-related behaviors*: accepting consequences, ethical behavior, expressing feelings, positive attitude towards self.
2. *Task related behaviors*: attending behavior, following directions, performing before others, quality of work.
3. *Environmental behaviors*: care for the environment, dealing with emergencies, lunchroom behavior.
4. *Interpersonal behaviors*: accepting authority, gaining attention, helping others, making conversations.

Heward cites Abrams (1992, p. 268) “Activities that help students identify their own beliefs and values and how they affect their choices and behavior can contribute to the overall effectiveness of a social skills training program.”

Yoga can encourage a positive attitude towards self and a new awareness about behavior (Abramian, 2003). This new outlook spreads to caring about the environment and caring about others. Budilovsky and Adamson (1998, p. 10) say, “Yoga helps you reach the fullness of your potential. You will be more confident, stronger, healthier, and more at peace with who you are. You will make better decisions, see and achieve worthwhile goals, and become the person you want to be.” This aligns with the EALR 3.4, “develop a sense of individuality,” and “plan to resist unhealthy messages and create healthy.”

The social instructions Heward thinks are critical for the ADD student to learn can be taught or helped through the instruction of yoga. These social instructions are necessary for the student to maintain an active and healthy life-styles as required in the health and fitness EALR's.

Research is showing a new emphasis on self-management, learning responsibility, and

self-monitoring. Heward gives references for numerous research studies that have demonstrated that children with behavior problems can effectively use self-monitoring to help regulate their behavior. Although much more research is needed, giving students with emotional and behavioral disabilities the skills to make changes in their lives and have some control is a major success. In addition to improving concentration and decreasing aggression, yoga is invaluable for teaching discipline (Abramian, 2003). Yoga is a great self-monitoring tool. The student learns how to stay aware in the present by using the movement of the poses or staying focused on the breath. EALR 4.2 through all the grades is about developing a Health and Fitness plan , and monitoring and maintaining that system.

Using Hewards' biogenic model, psycho-stimulant drugs are usually prescribed. These allow the student to learn the new behaviors being taught, and help them deal with eliminating old behaviors. Teachers are then better able to help them with behavioral interventions and cognitive strategies. Coping mechanisms are taught to the students and parents so they have the skills to manage the problems as best they can, and then the medication should be removed.

Johnson (2002) thinks that yoga and meditation can produce the same mind and mood-altering effects as drugs. She says depressants and stimulants treat the symptoms but do not resolve the problem. Ruiz (2001) points out the side effects of Ritalin and ADDerall: lifelong dependency, insomnia, loss of appetite, weight loss, delayed puberty, irritability, and the unmasking of latent tics. Johnson says the problem with these powerful drugs is they crank up the brains supply of neurotransmitters until it crashes, then the depleted brain sends out signals of distress and more chemical drugs are given. Yoga is a safe and healthy alternative. It does however have one downside, it does require self-effort and is not as easy as administering a pill.

Studies have shown that diet can affect the behavior of some children, but none can claim a diet that causes or cures ADD. Arnold (2001 cited in Pages, 2001), who has reviewed nutritional approaches to ADD for the National Institute of Mental Health, found that the principal nutritional deficiencies found in children with ADD were the “brain foods” such as the fatty acids Omega 3 and 6, the minerals and amino acids that work with the functions of the brain. He does note that overloading on mega doses of these vitamins and minerals can do more harm than good. Like the ADD medication, the brain nutrition works in proportions not in quantity, it is vital to not upset the balance. Arnold says that contrary to popular belief, no studies have confirmed a link between high sugar intake and hyperactivity. Yoga can help the organs with this balancing act. Plus the full awareness of the body, mind and spirit that comes with the practice of yoga helps people make the right choices when it comes to health and nutrition (Skolnick, 2001), all aligning with EALR 1.4 about making healthy food choices and still respecting the choice of others.

Patton, Kronenberger, and Meyer (1996) insist teachers can create accommodative environments in which students with ADD can thrive. Among the interventions they agree upon are some activities that allow the student to move when appropriate, reinforcement techniques, attention training, relaxation and stimulus reduction. These areas that have been researched as the main change areas for a student with ADD, are all areas that are worked on in a yoga class. The repetition of physical poses, learning to concentrate on the breath, reducing outside distractions, a final relaxation and meditation at the end of a yoga class match exactly the recommendations of Patton et al for ADD students.

The research on the affects of yoga on ADD is fairly new and not readily available. Yoga incorporates moving, reinforcement, attention practice, relaxation, and stimulus reduction just as advocated in all the literature on ADD. Health care professionals also recommend a multi-modal approach to the treatment of ADD, among them medication, dietary changes, therapy, yoga, EEG neuro feedback and EMG biofeedback. Ruiz (2001) wrote an article citing a study published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* (1982). The study focused on hyperactive boys aged twelve found significant improvement in behavior ratings, parent ratings, and psychological tests after ten relaxing training sessions using EMG (electromyography) biofeedback. The data also revealed that the EMG biofeedback closely resembles the type of neural relaxation that occurs in yoga. Ruis states that some experts believe a combination of mental and physical discipline may be the best approach to treating ADD for the long term, both effectively and safely. According to Ratey (1995, cited in Pages, 2001) exercise that integrates both mind and body engages the attention system more readily than meditation alone. Ratey says studies show that the greatest nerve growth factors occur when the body engages in complex movement patterns.

For some years occupational therapists have been working with their patient's body movements in order to stimulate different parts of the brain, thus Brain Gym was developed. They realize that to separate the students mind from his body and to focus solely on the mind is not encouraging the full growth of the student. Adolescents in particular who are going through enormous changes in their physical growth, emotional growth and fluctuating hormone levels can find balance through yoga (Ruiz, 2001).

Other Comparisons To Yoga

It is not easy to pin point the exact date yoga began. Some say over two thousand years ago, others say as much as four thousand years. It can be said, however, that it is the oldest mind, body and spirit connection that we know. There are other activities that have become popular in recent times that connect the body and mind. One such connection is termed “ Brain Gym” . As mentioned earlier, physical therapists are working on moving students limbs to stimulate different parts of the brain. Brain Gym was developed by Dr. Paul E. Dennison (1998), an expert in child motor-development. The three main concepts of Brain Gym parallel what can happen in a yoga class.

1. Specific body movements will stimulate particular aspects of brain function. For example the twenty six Brain Gym techniques are designed to activate the left and right hemispheres of the neocortex. This results in different cognitive functions, including comprehension, communication and organization, being stimulated.
2. Stress will inhibit learning. When under stress the body and mind are centered in the sympathetic nervous system, ready for a fight or flight reaction. When this occurs activity in parts of the brain where memory and abstract thinking take place, is lessened. The learner only has access to the dominant hemisphere in the brain, thus affecting learning ability. Moving the body can reactivate the parts of the brain closed down and lessen the stress response.
3. Blocks to learning can be released. Like yoga, the Brain Gym movements are activating the whole of the mind body system. This stimulates activity equally through all parts of the brain, and the fight or flight reaction is minimized. Learning is stress free and the student can then regain his interest and motivation in learning.

Dr. Hannaford (2003) states that learning is not an isolated brain function. She says that every cell and nerve in the body contributes to learning capability and intelligence. Interestingly, like yoga teachers, Hannaford advocates drinking plenty of water before, during and after class. Scientists estimate up to 90% of the brain is water, and Hannaford thinks dehydration can have a negative effect on student's concentration.

Pilates is another activity that comes to mind when thinking of an alternative to yoga. Like Brain Gym, pilates emphasizes the mind and body connection. Pilates does however insist on the movement accompanied with the correct breathing technique, so in this way, concentrating on the breath brings the mind and body together.

The Pilates method of body conditioning was developed over ninety years ago by Joseph H. Pilates. Siler (2000) states that Pilates strengthens and tones muscles, provides flexibility and balance, improves the posture, and unites the body and mind.

Similar to the yoga teacher, Iyengar, Pilates was sickly as a child, so his determination to strengthen his body resulted in a lifelong commitment to developing his system. The apparatus he invented for resistance training are big and expensive, but he also has a series of mat exercises which are now popular in sports centres around the world. As well as developing his own exercises, he studied Eastern forms of exercise including yoga, tai-chi and various forms of the martial arts. His Eastern studies were a big influence on achieving balance in body, mind and spirit.

Pilates' development of his method evolved into a vision of an ideal life-style, attained only through balance of the physical, mental, and spiritual. Through visualization, physical strengthening and stretching of the body, mental vigor and improved blood flow

returns to inactive brain cells. This renewed spirit of thought and movement is the first step toward stress reduction, grace of movement, alacrity, and a greater enjoyment of life. (Siler, 2000, p. 7)

Pilates was the first body trainer to talk about flow of movement and so trademarked the term “Contrology”. He found that fluidity of movement while exercising leads to fluidity of movement when not exercising (Menezes, 2000). A flow of movement is being in control of the body, so that the breath and movement work together to achieve a precision of movement that is flowing and coordinated. Pilates thought that consistent control throughout the body movement would create a flow, protecting the joints from stress and the soft tissues from wear and tear.

The final comparison to yoga is with Csikszentmihalyi’s “flow”. He explains it as the psychology of optimal experience:

The easiest step toward improving the quality of life consists in simply learning to control the body and it’s senses... If the functions of the body are left to atrophy, the quality of life becomes merely adequate, and for some even dismal. But if one takes control of what the body can do, and learns to impose order on physical sensations, entropy yields to a sense of enjoyable harmony in consciousness.

(Csikszentmihaly, 1990, p. 94 & p. 95)

Both men talk about improving the quality of life. What Csikszentmihalyi has to say about flow seems to repeat what Pilates states about contrology, they both insist that the mind is always involved when producing movements that flow. Yoga, on the other hand, although it may seem about controlling the senses, is ultimately about surrender and letting go of control.

Csikszentmihalyi says that the similarities between flow and yoga are very strong. Both are trying to achieve an effortless state of peace through concentration. He also goes on to say that it can be argued that flow and yoga have totally different outcomes. Flow is a way to strengthen the self, whereas yoga is about abolishing the self. He points out that to surrender the self completely must mean that the yoga practitioner has complete control of the self in order to give it up. The concentration needed to do hatha yoga in schools would suggest that at this level flow, pilates and yoga seem to have a lot in common.

Summary

Integrating a yoga curriculum into junior high school, middle school, high school and college education programs can help prepare students for the rest of their lives. Bringing mind, body and spirit together through the practice of yoga in the schoolroom is a large step in accomplishing the Washington State Health and Fitness Essential Academic Learning Requirements, and so balancing and strengthening the physical education curriculum. According to the physical education coordinator for the public schools, approximately fifteen out of a hundred Puget Sound area schools offer yoga (Stukin, 2001). They use this approach so that the students are exposed to activities they can take with them into adulthood. Yoga does not need any expensive equipment, team players, or special uniforms. Once the poses are learned the student can practice any time by himself or herself. This makes yoga an ideal life long learning activity, and one of the best places to learn good habits for life is at school. One school for high-risk children in southern California is teaching some of their students yoga. The principal says, "The kids in yoga seem to be more focused and their behavior problems have

vastly improved. It gives them a sense of self-esteem that helps them mature” (Stukin, 2001, p.153).

The author has noted through her research and own observation of yoga classes in schools, that the most popular part of the class usually becomes the relaxation at the end. The time allowed to sit still and be themselves. Students are quite literally thirsty for this reservoir of peace within: the time for themselves when they are encouraged to do nothing. This relaxation gives them a chance to connect with who they are, strengthening their confidence. The poses fulfill their physical needs. Concentrating on the breath focuses the mind. Yoga is the one activity that brings the spirit, mind and body together in balance and harmony. Yoga’s astounding increase in popularity over the last decade shows Paramahansa Yogananda’s words to be coming true. One of the first yoga teachers to travel to America in 1934, he said that “There will come a time when this great message will sweep the world...and you will find that you are carrying in your heart a portable paradise” (Yogananda, 1988, p. 128).

Chapter Three

Procedures

The author has been practicing yoga for twenty years, and teaching yoga for ten, gradually witnessing the benefit of yoga in many people's lives. While teaching at the middle school and high school level, the author has encountered many cases of low self esteem, bullying and general malaise, both mentally and spiritually.

Because of the strict separation of church and state in American public schools, the author's biggest challenge in promoting yoga in schools, will be to reassure parents, the school board, and the general public that yoga is not a religion.

The author found she had two choices. Change the name and maybe have to argue that "yoga" was not being taught. Keep the name and hope that with all the popular media focus on yoga more people will be encouraged to try it, or at least be open to their children taking yoga classes. She decided on the latter choice.

The word "yoga" is all encompassing. It is a Sanskrit word meaning "to unite" - "to come together." Sanskrit words often have many meanings. Yoga can also mean acting in such a way that all our attention is directed toward the activity in which we are engaged. This is what started the author's quest to bring yoga into schools. Our society has become so activity orientated that we are being pulled in all directions at once. We are becoming masters at multi tasking. But the price we are paying is our dependence on stimulants to keep us going, from your basic cup of coffee to over the counter prescriptions. Technology is supposed to help us gain more leisure time and family time together. The paradox is that life is speeding up. We do not have time for ourselves

anymore, let alone our family. The school physical education curriculum emphasises skills, competition, and fitness testing, none of which fully address the Essential Accademic Learning Requirements . The Gaiam Yoga for life program in Los Angeles has started adding yoga to some of the school curriculums in kindergarten through to eighth grade. They believe, “We are not going to change the education crises in America by buying better desks, more books, or paying teachers more. The core of this problem is the mental health and well-being of students” (Guber cited in Yoga Journal, 2001). One of the contemporary Western teachers, Eric Schiffmann (1986), agrees:

Moving into stillness in order to experience your true nature is the primary theme of yoga simply because everything about you, every thought, feeling, and emotion, as well as every aspect of your behavior, is predicated on the way you feel about yourself. The way you feel about yourself determines how you think, what you do, and how you interact with the world. It's the basic factor that governs the quality of your life. (p. 4)

A high school in eastern Washington asked the author to teach a unit of yoga to children aged fourteen to eighteen years. Lesson plans were written to cover a five-week period. The classes were one and a half hours, twice a week. After changing into comfortable clothes and attendance was taken, the actual time for doing yoga was one hour and fifteen minutes. The author considers this to be an optimum time to cover a well-balanced lesson. Gentle stretches, with emphasis on the breath to start, then the standing and more strenuous poses allows the students to warm up. Once the muscles are warm, more stretching, backbends and twists. Never having taught a yoga class to adolescents, or in a gymnasium in an educational environment, this was an experiment to ascertain if a yoga curriculum could be implemented into the high school educational program. The unknown factor was the reaction of the students. The very nature of

yoga is against doing anything by force, so the students needed to be open to this new experience.

Twenty-eight students attended the classes on average, an even mix of male and female. A few students did not want to be there, a few looked forward to it, but most had a mental teenage attitude. They were asked how they felt before the class and how they felt directly after the class. Before the classes the predominance of words were, - “tired, angry, stressed out, anxious, tense and nervous.” After the classes, -“ relaxed, peaceful, focused, revitalized, refreshed and calm” were among the words used. On the last day they filled out a questionnaire (in appendix B). None of the results were very surprising. What was surprising was that everyone of them answered all the questions sensibly. This showed that they had taken the unit on yoga seriously, and their unfocused behavior sometimes may have been due to nerves and being uncomfortable in a new situation.

The experiment was extremely useful to the author. The school atmosphere was not conducive to relaxation, but gentle background music helped, especially during the final relaxation. Thirty students would be the most who could safely be taught and given individual attention. An ideal number would be twenty or less. Male and female students practicing together worked well, though separate classes could work out beneficial to both, with a greater emphasis on separate male and female issues, thus making the program a more individual fit.

The author had originally planned to emphasize the physical side of yoga, concentrating more on the poses and technique. This would allow the students to keep in their comfort zone, while learning the physical movements. After experiencing the first few classes, it was realized that the students desperately needed the breathing techniques, the meditation and the relaxation. The students need time to relax, slow down and be themselves, without any competition or

conflict, and without anyone watching them. This was reflected in the answers in the questionnaire, they all checked the relaxation time as their favorite part. The final relaxation is usually about eight to twelve minutes long. The difficult part is to train the body and mind to relax even when given permission. The author started with only a few minutes relaxation and gradually increased it to eight minutes.

Each pose in yoga has a beneficial effect on the body. It was developed four thousand years ago in India when some people realized that in order to stay in communion with a higher consciousness they needed their bodies to be strong enough to sit still hour after hour, and sometimes for days. What makes hatha yoga more than just physical movement is that it encompasses mind, body and spirit. The poses are done concentrating on the breath and staying in the present, being aware of the body position, of any stiffness or tension, and using the breath to relax deeper into the pose.

Feuerstein and Bodian (1993) assure us that, "Yoga can be as meaningful for nondogmatic agnostics, Christians, or Jews as it is for Hindus. It is a universal art, which flourishes wherever a person is dedicated to higher values, to a way of life that outdistances the egotistical preoccupations of the unenlightened mind, the way of inner joy and outer harmony" (p. 6).

The Washington State Health and Fitness Essential Accademic Learning Requirements were studied, and comparisons made with what can be learned through the study of yoga. Yoga is one activity that encompasses health and fitness for life and offers a stress management tool aligning with the Health and Fitness EALR's.

This project provides teachers with a background to yoga, lesson plans adapted for middle school or high school students, evidence of accomplishing the guide lines set out in the health and fitness EALR's, and the inspiration to begin a unit on yoga in their school district. Attending yoga classes or asking the help of a trained yoga teacher before getting started would be highly recommended. Once exposed to yoga at school, it is an activity that a student can continue at home and ultimately throughout his or her life as advocated in the Health and Fitness EALR's.

Collection of information

The information used in this study has been gathered mostly from books and journals, and some from talking to yoga teachers and educational administrators. These methods were chosen because the author wanted to make sure her sources came from reputable yoga teachers and scholars. Some web sites gave a few tests that had been conducted by people with an unknown background in yoga. Experts in the field of yoga have now translated the ancient texts and published them in English or compiled their own findings after many years of teaching. Yoga is not mainstream yet, and there is a strong feeling of not wanting to dilute the true yogic way of life. So far the only two yoga journals printed are "*Yoga International*" and "*Yoga Journal*." The information compiled in these two journals is always thoroughly researched. Yoga International is for the serious yoga student with many articles that would be of no interest to anyone unless they already had a firm background knowledge of the ancient texts. Yoga Journal has more colored illustrations and can be enjoyed by beginner and advanced students alike.

The project shows students and teachers that yoga can strengthen the whole school curriculum, and is an essential learning requirement in the health and fitness curriculum. The focus is on helping the students realize their full potential so they can flourish in the classroom setting. They learn to be content with where they are or to do something positive about it. They learn they can influence the community in better and more caring choices. Yoga is a tool that can help them become life-long learners.

The project includes the unit taught in the experimental high school classes. The lessons have been adjusted along the way and are ready to use in the physical education curriculum.

Chapter 4

The Project

Introduction

This project will be used to implement the Washington State Health and Fitness curriculum. By introducing yoga into the school curriculum, all three elements of body, mind and spirit will be addressed and brought into balance. The yoga lesson plans were written mainly for physical educators as yoga encompass the health and fitness EALR's, and they are already trained in a well-rounded program for the mind and body. However, any teacher may incorporate these yoga lesson plans into his class curriculum, especially if he is a yoga practitioner himself. Most importantly, the information in this project will inspire teachers to work on the whole of the student, balancing the mind, body and spirit. Working with the lesson plans and then observing the students as they grow can only prove the benefit of yoga in the health and fitness curriculum.

The Project

This project includes sample lesson plans that can be used and adjusted for variety (Appendix A). These lesson plans start with an easy introduction to yoga and then progress in order to more difficult lessons. There are a limited number of poses in yoga. Iyengar (1976) states 1500. But these include lots of variations on poses, and some very difficult poses that would be too difficult for the average person to master. All styles of yoga tend to offer the same poses. How long one stays in the pose and how long the rest is in between poses usually dictates how hard the class is, with the exception of more

difficult poses being taught in advanced yoga classes..

The assessment needs to be student based. The holistic growth of the student's body, mind and spirit is mostly intrinsic and should not be measured against another student. A sample questionnaire is given in appendix B and can be used by the teacher to ascertain what part of the yoga lessons they enjoy, and their knowledge about the benefits of yoga. An individual's flexibility, concentration and relaxation can be measured but as each child is unique and starting at his own level, for the purpose of this project it is not needed. The students should not compare themselves to others, so should not be given a grade. The student does the evaluation. For example, they will feel if they have become less stiff and more flexible, more relaxed and less stressed.

Summary

As a result of this project, educators will have lesson plans that can empower the Washington State health and fitness EALR's bringing together body, mind and spirit, and work on the whole of the individual. Chapter two provides the research to support the benefits gained when approaching the student's education holistically. The research also shows that yoga is the one main subject that can be introduced to students making them aware of the importance of these three aspects in their lives and helping to bring them into balance.

The conclusion of this project has a bibliography of the resources used followed by the appendixes. Appendix A has the example lesson plans in order of difficulty. Appendix B has an example questionnaire that may be used by teacher or student to assess the value of their yoga classes. Also, a reading guide is given for teachers and students who want to read and learn more about yoga.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

This project began in 2002. The author was asked to teach a unit of yoga twice a week for five weeks to a group of high school adolescents, ages fourteen to eighteen. She used this time to experiment with and adapt lesson plans for children in a school environment. She found the optimum time for each yoga class to be one hour to one hour fifteen minutes. Only a little shorter than adult classes because their attention span tended to be shorter and some students would have preferred to be doing something else. This being the case, they also took some time to settle down and start focusing, so a little extra warm up time was needed.

The students were asked to write down at the beginning and end of each class how they were feeling. This was to make sure that the new classes were relaxing for them and not adding stress. At the end of the unit a final questionnaire was handed out so the author could find out a little more about what they liked or did not like about the yoga classes. Emphasis was then taken off the physical poses and a balance between breathing, relaxation, and physical activity was achieved.

This first hand experience of teaching yoga in the school environment, and feedback from other yoga teachers, helped the author to establish and refine lesson plans suitable for the adolescent.

Conclusions

To conclude this project, physical education teachers or classroom teachers have lesson plans, illustrations and references for yoga books that will help them introduce and teach a unit of yoga to high school or middle school students. A general format has been laid out, so that the lesson plans may be used as is or changed, when the teacher begins to feel comfortable teaching yoga. Different warm up examples are given, and the lesson plans are labeled introductory, beginner, and intermediate. The intermediate lesson will give examples of some poses that are a little more difficult, so that even if all the students are beginners those who like a challenge can be challenged. A choice of two textbooks is given. Both have the poses written in Sanskrit and English, and both have comprehensive illustrations of all the basic poses. Copies have been made of the photographs in Silva, Mira and Shyam Mehtas' book and included with the lesson plans in appendix A.

The primary goal for this unit of lesson plans is enjoyment. It is a chance for students to exercise and stretch just for themselves with no competition. Along the way, their concentration will deepen, their confidence will grow, and they will gain a deeper awareness of themselves and what is going on around them. Through yoga the body, mind, and spirit will be more in balance, helping the students make better decisions in their lives. The work the student applies through yoga will fulfill the requirements of the Washington State Health and Fitness program, strengthening its curriculum.

Recommendations

This project has provided teachers with a step-by-step guide to teaching yoga, with excellent illustrations of each pose given in each lesson plan. However, it is recommended that before teaching a lesson, the teachers attend some yoga classes for themselves.

There are many types of physical (hatha) yoga, most named after the teacher who started them. Bikram and Ashtanga yoga are both set sequences. The student learns the poses in that sequence. These forms of yoga are better learned after becoming familiar with some poses first. Iyengar or Viniyoga classes teach all the poses. Iyengar focusing on alignment and using props to help obtain good form. Viniyoga classes are usually smaller and cater to the individual. Modified poses are used instead of props. It is therefore recommended that classes based on either of these two methods be taken. Iyengar especially will give a good grounding in alignment, teach all the basic poses, show the time usually spent in each pose, and give the general atmosphere and flow of a yoga class. It is advantageous to go to different teachers, as all teachers will offer something different.

New books are frequently being published. Teachers can find reviews on most books, and ask other yoga teachers which books they recommend. Specific workshops are always being offered, for example helping students with back problems or preparing for the ski season.

The material in this unit should just be used as a starter kit. The teacher, by practicing yoga himself and attending some classes, is able to teach firsthand through his own experience with yoga. Teaching yoga through example, rather than from a book will have a much more profound effect on the students.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

Lesson Plans

Introduction

These lesson plans are best used along with one of the texts listed in appendix B.

These texts are chosen for their clear photographs and explanation of the poses. The author has scanned an illustration of the pose along with each pose. Although they are small and not as clear as in the textbook, they do show the teacher what the pose should look like. In the rare instances that an illustration could not be found to accompany a pose, the pose is either a very simple pose or a transitional pose. For example the 'back extension' is a warm up for the cobra pose. Squatting a good stretch for the gluteus and the Achilles tendon, as well as transitioning down to the seated poses.

How to Use the Lesson Plans

The focus of these lesson plans is not to overwhelm the students by teaching all new poses everyday. It is better to let some poses become familiar, so that they are very soon able to focus on breathing and relaxing in each pose. If a unit of yoga is going to be condensed into everyday practice for three weeks it is advised to alternate two lesson plans for each week. For example week one teach the introductory lesson plan on Monday and Wednesday, and lesson one on Tuesday and Thursday, introducing lesson two on Friday. Week two, teach lesson two on Monday and Wednesday and lesson three on Tuesday and Thursday, introducing lesson four on Friday. Then repeat for week three. The teacher will need to decide if he wants to push the students a little with the

intermediate lesson plan, or if he thinks they are not ready, substitute with the other lesson plans and recap all the poses they have learned. Another alternative is to choose some of the poses in the intermediate lesson plan and mix with the other lesson plans. This is when the teacher will start feeling confident enough with her student's ability and her own basic knowledge of the poses to link some poses together and make her own lesson plan. It is a gentle reminder that these lesson plans are only a starting point for teachers. They are encouraged to buy yoga books, tapes, attend classes and educate themselves in this ancient discipline as they are leading their students.

Making New Lesson Plans

The lesson plans in the appendixes have all been made using the same basic format. Start with standing poses to warm the students up and to build strength and stamina. Just one or two balancing poses for concentration, then the seated poses and backbends, followed by inverted poses (not included in all lessons), and finally the twists. This is the format followed by most yoga teachers, even when teaching a class with a special focus on backbends or forward bends.

Each lesson plan in appendix A can be adapted, swapping in a different balancing pose, or adding or taking away a standing pose, even switching the introductions, developments, and relaxations. The teacher is also able to customize his own yoga lesson choosing poses from each category below, basing the number of poses on the existing lesson plans.

Standing Poses:

Mountain pose, half moon pose, triangle pose, warrior 1, warrior 11, chair pose, forward bend, sideways forward bend, forward bend legs apart, side stretch, downward facing dog, and sun salutation's flow of poses.

Balancing Poses:

Tree pose, eagle pose, warrior 111, crane pose, and half moon balance.

Seated poses:

Easy pose, hero pose, half hero, lotus pose, half lotus, forward bend, head to knee pose, cobbler pose, seated angle pose, staff pose, and boat pose.

Back bends:

Camel pose, cobra pose, locust pose, half locust, bow pose, fish pose, wheel pose, bridge pose, and warrior 1 pose and downward facing dog are also gentle backbends.

Inverted poses:

Shoulder stand, headstand, handstand, plough pose, downward facing dog and standing forward bends are also partially inverted poses

Twists

Sage twist, revolved triangle, revolved side stretch, and cobra pose twisting to look behind.

Relaxation:

Child's pose, restorative pose, passive twist, and corpse pose.

Some poses can appear in more than one category. For example warrior 1 is a standing pose and it is also a backbend. If the teacher wanted to emphasize backbends in

one lesson he might choose the standing backbend poses to warm up and get ready for the more active backbends. After backbends twisting poses are a good release and resting in child's pose.

Illustrations

The illustrations in these lesson plans have been adapted from Silva, Mira and Shyam Mehta's *Yoga the Iyengar way*, Erich Schiffmann's *The spirit and practice of moving into stillness*, George Feuerstein and Steven Bodian's *Living Yoga*, also Joan Budilovsky and Eve Adamson's *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga*. The author's name and page reference are listed next to each illustration.

Introductory Lesson Plan

Yoga For Beginners

Duration: Each lesson plan can be taught in one hour.

Introduction

Sitting cross-legged or kneeling (which ever is more comfortable), draw the spine up and lengthen. Visualize a space between each vertebra. Relax the shoulders down and reach the crown of the head towards the ceiling. Focus on the breath. Use the inhalation and exhalation to relax the body and check for full abdominal breathing. Breath in, expanding the abdomen, chest and lungs. Breath out, squeezing the air out of the chest, lungs and abdomen. Hands can be placed lightly over the abdomen to check they are moving out during inhalation and moving in towards the back during exhalation. (People tend to get this the wrong way round, sucking the abdomen in as they breath in and pushing it out as they breath out.)

Spend about five minutes relaxing in this easy pose and practicing the yogic breath. Lying down if sitting is tiring, although this is not quite as good as it inhibits the 360 degrees expansion of the rib cage during inhalation.

Inhaling, stretch both hands overhead, lengthening the sides of the body. Exhale twisting to one side then to the other.

Bring the soles of the feet together in cobbler pose, lifting the chest and lengthening the spine. Let the legs relax out to the side. Do not force them down, just let gravity gently open the groin area. Use the hands to initiate bringing the legs back together, so nothing is strained. And slowly stand up.

Development

Standing poses:

Tadasana; mountain pose

Mehta, p. 18

This is the pose to come back to in-between all the standing poses. It is a good pose for checking the alignment, checking correct breathing, and for relaxing and gaining the benefits of the previous pose.

Each pose should be done twice, building the length of time staying in the pose as the practitioner gets stronger and feels more comfortable. Starting at four or five breaths in each pose, staying a little longer the second time once the body is used to the pose.

Ardha Chandrasana; half moon pose

Schiffmann, p. 103

Stretch arms overhead and curve to the side. Do not let one side of the body collapse.

Try to maintain the feeling of the moons curve through both sides of the body.

Uttanasana; forward bend

Mehta, p. 44

Bend the knees a little. This allows for a great release of the spine, without strain on the hamstrings.

Trikonasana; triangle pose

Mehta, p. 22

Stay in the pose for five or six breaths each side (shorter if straining). Rest the neck by looking down at the floor when tired. The neck muscles are some of the weakest muscles in the body.

Virabhadrasana II; warrior II

Mehta, p. 28

A strong pose. Eventually coming into a right angle at the knee. Quadriceps very active and parallel to the floor. Concentrate on relaxing the abdomen using the breath, and relaxing the face.

Balancing poses:

Vrikasana; tree pose

Mehta, p. 21

When the students become proficient at this, or just for fun, try with eyes closed!

Bakasana; crane pose

Mehta, p. 130

Once they can balance in the middle, try both knees to one side then the other.

Floor poses:

Savasana pose (corpse pose)

Mehta, p. 150

Bring right leg up to the chest, hug close to the body. Change legs. Then both legs, hug close and rock to and fro.

Role over on to stomach:

Practice gentle back extensions, lifting head and chest off the floor. Arms by the side, legs straight and together. Lower down slowly. Repeat three or four times. Look down at the floor so the back of the neck is kept long. Reach arms straight out in front and repeat lifting arms and legs off the floor.

Bhujangasana; cobra pose

Mehta, p. 93

Hands under the shoulders. The same back extension, then pressing into the hands, curving the spine into a gentle backbend. Keeping the arms bent about 90 degrees.

Balasana; child's pose

Feurerstein and Bodian, p. 90

A counter pose for the backbend. Stay a few minutes to release the spine.

Dandasana; staff pose

Mehta, p. 52

Sitting, legs together, straight out in front. Spine straight. Arms by your side.

Maricyasana III; sage twist III

Mehta, p. 73

Opposite shoulder coming forward in a closed twist. Other hand placed behind on the floor and looking over that same shoulder. Spine lifting into the twist. Do not let the spine collapse as the student twists.

Mehta, p. 150

Relaxation (warm down)

Savasana; corpse (relaxation) pose

Totally relaxing the whole body. Say out loud each body part as they relax their muscles, starting at the toes and going up to the neck and face. When the whole body feels heavy and relaxed, they should take their awareness to the breath and focus on their inhalation and exhalation. They can pay attention to the sensation of the breath: The cold dry air as they breathe in, and the warm moist air as they breathe out. Or the sound of their breath. Gently bringing the mind back to the breath when it wanders.

Yoga Lesson Plan For Beginners; one

Introduction

Sukhasana; easy cross legged pose

Mehta, p. 53

Inhale lifting the sternum. Exhale relaxing the legs, relaxing the shoulders. Each inhalation lengthening the spine, each exhalation getting rid of any stresses of the day. Taking your awareness to the breath, watching the breath. As you relax, the breath lengthens and deepens.

Development

Tadasana; mountain pose

Mehta, p. 18

Coming back to tadasana between all the standing poses.

Uttanasana; forward bend

Mehta, p. 44

Virabhadrasana I; warrior I

Mehta, p. 26

This is a gentle back bend. If the spine feels compressed push the chest forward and think of gently curving the spine. If it is still uncomfortable bend the arms down to 90 degrees at the elbows. All the warrior poses are strong and energizing.

Virabhadrasana II; warrior II

Mehta, p. 28

Virabhadrasana III; warrior

Mehta, p. 32

Start with just lifting the back foot off the floor enough to stay in a balance. Eventually moving the leg higher until the trunk is parallel to the floor.

Utkatasana; chair pose

Mehta, p. 47

Bend the knees as much as possible to stretch the Achilles tendon and calf muscle. Lower the arms to gently bending, out in front, palms up, to relax more in the pose.

Squatting (no illustration):

Feet parallel arms in anjali pose (together at the chest), or touching the floor for balance. Keep the spine long.

Dandasana; staff pose

Mehta, p. 52

Sitting, legs straight, spine straight, shoulders down and relaxed.

Upavista Konasana; seated angle pose

Mehta, p. 65

Have the legs a comfortable distance apart, not too wide. After stretching forward, stretch to the left side and the right side, keeping the chest open, and looking up to the ceiling, so the entire side of the body is stretched.

Pascimottanasana; seated forward bend

Mehta, p. 64

Mehta, p. 73

After doing this pose once, cross the right foot over the left leg and bend the left leg next to the sits bones. The pose is the same twist but with both legs bent. Another way into this pose is to kneel and then sit over on the left side and bring your right foot over your left knee. From the maricyasana variation it is simple to go into a deep hip stretch.

Hip stretch (no illustration):

Stack the knees one on top of the other by pulling the right foot down level with the left foot. If this stretch is too deep, rest your right ankle on your left knee. For a slightly deeper stretch in the hips bend forward, keeping the spine long. Lean back and balance on the sits bones to straighten your legs out of this pose.

Navasana; boat pose

Mehta, p. 58

Keep legs bent until abdominal muscles get stronger.

Relaxation

Roll down the spine, hugging the knees to the chest. Gently rock up and down and then from side to side massaging the spine.

Savasana; corpse pose

Mehta, p. 150

Relaxation and meditation.

Yoga Lesson Plan For Beginners; two

Introduction

Standing, stretch arms up to ceiling, gently twist from side to side. Hands on hips
roll the spine forwards, sideways, backwards, sideways: Making circles in one direction
and then the other.

Surya Namaskar; sun salutation

Mehta, p. 147

Teach the sequence one pose at a time. Stopping and breathing in each pose.
Eventually teach the sequence in time to the breath. Upward movements breathing in,
downward movements breathing out. Repeat four times.

Development

Trikonasana; triangle pose

Mehta, p. 22

Parsvottanasana; sideways forward bend

Mehta, p. 40

Have hands on hips the first time, then the students can feel where they are supposed to be bending from. Deepening the crease at the top of the leg, not bending from the waist. Hands gently clasping the elbows behind the back, when they feel balanced.

Padottanasana; forward bend legs apart

Mehta, p. 42

Legs a comfortable width apart. The further apart, the easier the students can put their hands on the floor whilst keeping their spines straight. Hands under the head in a triangle shape, trunk parallel to the floor.

Mehta, p. 150

Wind removing pose

Budilovski and Adamson, p. 164

Hugging the knees to the chest one at a time and then together. Waiting, relaxing and breathing in each stretch.

Setu Bandha; bridge pose

Mehta, p. 116

Starting with pelvic tilts, then pushing the hips up, rolling shoulders under, clasping hands together on the floor.

Relaxation

Passive twist (no illustration):

Bring knees up to the chest, arms out by your sides to balance. Slowly exhale dropping the knees to the left, look to the right. Totally relax, taking long deep breaths. Inhale bring knees back to center exhale knees slowly to the right, look to the left. Repeat three times on either side.

Savasana and meditation

Introduction

Sukhasana; easy pose

Mehta, p. 53

Stretch hands up to the ceiling. Exhale down into a gentle twist, looking behind.

Twisting to the other side.

Baddha Konasana; cobbler pose (or Bound angle pose)

Mehta, p. 57

Place hands on the floor behind legs to support the spine. To come out of the pose, use you hands to push your legs up to prevent groin strain.

Development

Ardha Chandrasana; half moon pose

Schiffmann, p. 103

Uttanasana; forward bend

_____ Mehta, p. 44

Trikonasana; triangle pose

Mehta, p. 22



Mehta, p. 26

Emphasizing the back bend

Ardha Chandrasana; half moon balance



Mehta, p. 30

A fun balance to try. Difficult, so can take time to teach it in another lesson against the wall. Emphasizing fun the first time. Concentrate on breathing, not holding the breath!

Ustrasana; camel pose

Mehta, p. 134



Modified camel pose, stay kneeling, put your hands on the floor, under your shoulders, fingers pointing towards your knees, and push your hips up.

Back extensions (no illustration):

Lie on your stomach, arms by your side, head turned to one side.

Back extensions, gently lifting head and chest off the floor.

Bhujangasana; cobra pose

Mehta, p. 93

Repeat four or five times. Do not stay in the pose for long. Backbends are more beneficial done often rather than tiring the back muscles holding the position for a long time.

Sarvangasana; shoulder stand

Mehta, p. 109

This is a good counter balance for cobra pose. Easy shoulder stand is when the legs are at an angle, the body is not straight up and down. This is easier for students, and less strain on the neck. Emphasis should be on relaxing the neck and throat, and not moving the

head. Build up to thirty seconds, then a minute. Wrists can be uncomfortable if hips are not high enough and a lot of weight is in the hands. If student does not want to, or cannot get their hips up, just holding their legs up, or resting them on the wall will have the same circulatory benefits in the legs.

Knees to ears pose (no illustration):

Curve the spine, flop your legs over your head, breathe! Keeping the spine curved and engaging the abdominal muscles, role down one vertebrae at a time.

Relaxation

Passive twist (no illustration):

Emphasizing total relaxation, and concentrating on the breath.

Rocking to and fro, massaging the spine.

Savasana and meditation

Yoga Lesson Plan for beginners; four

Introduction

Surya i

Mehta, p. 146

Repeat twice on either side.

Development

Trikonasana; Triangle pose

Mehta, p. 22

Virabhadrasana II; warrior II

Mehta, p. 28

Parsvakonasana; side stretch

Mehta, p. 24

Knee needs to be at a right angle to be able to put your hand on the ground. If too extended, rest your forearm on your knee.

Vinyasa; flow of poses: Triangle, warrior 11, side stretch, and half moon balance:

On the right side, triangle pose, inhale coming up, exhale down into warrior 11. Exhale down into side stretch pose. For fun add half moon balance (ardha chandrasana), and back to mountain pose (tadasana). Same on the left side. Try to link the poses with the breath. Stay five or six breaths in each pose.

Garudasana; eagle pose

Mehta, p. 46

A balancing pose. Easier to work on the arms and legs separately first, and then put them together in the pose.

Utkatasana; chair pose

Mehta, p. 47

Then bend knees down into a squatting pose.

Bakasana; crane pose

Mehta, p. 130

And for fun, *Parsva Bakasana*; sideways crane.

Mehta, p. 150

Savasana

Hug the knees, massage the spine, roll over on to the stomach.

Bhujangasana; cobra pose

Mehta, p. 93

Dhanurasana; bow pose

Mehta, p. 94

Try one leg at a time. Pushing the foot up to the ceiling, until the thigh comes up off the floor, then both legs together. Although it is an upward movement, when it is a very forceful movement it is better to exhale as you move, giving strength and making sure the breath is not held.

Relaxation

Balasana; child's pose

Feuerstein and Bodian, p. 90

A counter pose to gently stretch the spine. Stay for a few minutes

Mehta, p. 150

Savasana and meditation

Yoga Lesson Plan For Intermediate Students

Introduction

Cat stretch (no illustration)

On hands and knees, gently arching the spine up, dropping the chin on to the chest, then curving the spine down, dropping the belly button towards the floor, and lifting the head. Breathing in lifting the head, breathing out collapsing the chest and dropping the head.

Development

Ardha Mukha Svanasana; downward facing dog

Mehta, p. 90

Some variations are: Bend one leg slightly, then the other to give more of a stretch to the straight leg. Or lift each leg in turn, hold and breathe, strengthening the back muscles.

Lunge pose

Budilovsky and
Adamson, p. 166

Bring right foot between hands. Slowly take the weight from the hands into the stretch in the legs. Back into downward facing dog, and change sides.

Padottanasana; Forward bend with legs apart.

Mehta, p. 43

Add a twist. Both hands on the floor under the head, making a triangle shape with the feet. Keep one hand on the floor, reach the other up to the ceiling, turn the head to look, twisting the trunk.

Trikonasana; triangle pose

Mehta, p. 22

Parivrtta Trikonasana;
twisting (revolved) triangle

Mehta, p. 34

Parighasana; gate pose

Mehta, p. 48

Salabhasana; locust pose

Schiffmann, p. 92

One leg at a time. Emphasizing lengthening the leg by pulling it out and then up.

Sarvangasana; Shoulder stand

Mehta, p. 109

Mehta, p. 110

Nice release from the back bend (locust pose). Keep the legs straight, even if they do not touch the floor yet. Face and neck soft and relaxed.

Relaxation

Viparita Karani; restorative pose

Mehta, p. 122

Lie with the sits bones a few inches from the wall, and place legs on the wall. A restful inverted pose without effort.

Savasana and meditation

Mehta, p. 150

Appendix B

References For Teachers and Students

Books with good illustrations, especially for the Iyengar style, using props:

Iyengar, B.K.S. (1979).

Light on Yoga. New York: George Allen & Unwin Publishers Ltd.

Mehta, S., M. & S. (1990). *Yoga the Iyengar Way*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Yoga the Iyengar Way is the book used for the illustrations at the end of the lesson plans in appendix A.

Books with good illustrations for any style of hatha (physica) yoga:

Budilovsky, J., & Adamson, E. (1998). *The Complete Idiots Guide to Yoga*. New York: Macmillan Publishing USA.

Carrico, M. (1997). *Yoga Basics*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc.

Desikachar, T. K. V. (1995). *The Heart of Yoga*. Rochester, VT. Inner Traditions International.

Schiffman, E. (1986). *The Spirit and Practice of Moving into Stillness*. New York: Pocket Books.

Schiffman also has an appendix in his book with ten different yoga routines, showing emphasis on forward bends, backward bends or for beginners etc.

Questionnaire For High School Students
After Completing Six Sessions of Yoga

87

1. What is your favorite type of music?
2. What is your favorite movie?
3. Do you like these yoga sessions? Why/why not?
4. Place in order what you like best, 1-6:

Standing poses

Seated poses

Balancing poses

Lying down stretches

Savasana (relaxation)

Meditation

5. Would you attend another yoga class if you had a choice?
6. What best describes how you feel at the end of class:

Relaxed

Energized

Rejuvenated

Tired

Peaceful

Happy

Other_____

7. Is yoga only about flexibility to you?

Yes

No

8. What benefits do you think you can get from a regular yoga practice?