

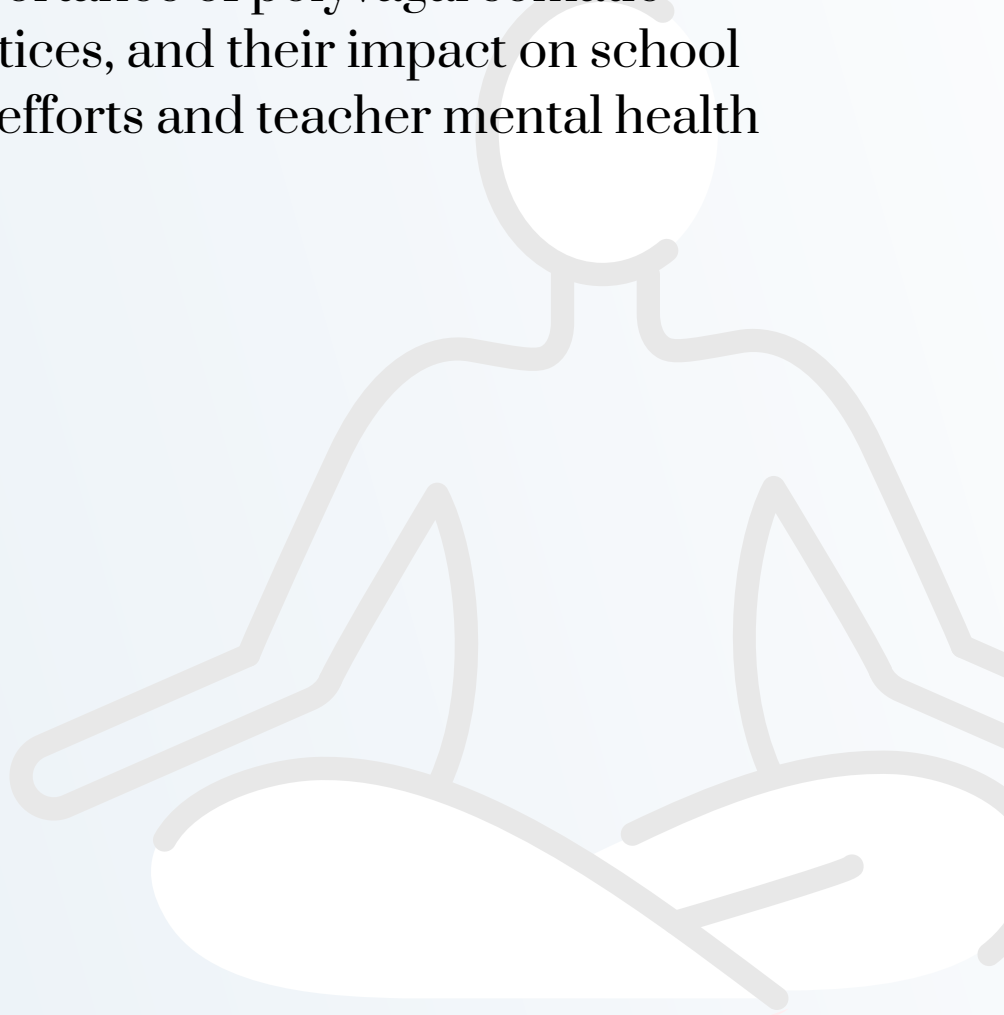


THE
NAMASTE
PROJECT

April 2023

Evidence

Exploring the importance of polyvagal somatic learning and practices, and their impact on school wide disciplinary efforts and teacher mental health



Mindfulness Interventions

Overall, mindfulness interventions are evidence based practices that demonstrate impact K-12 schools positively by directly impacting school climate and culture.

According to the literature reviewed and data collected, mindfulness based programs have been proven to:

- 1) Decrease discipline incidents
- 2) Work to decrease implicit bias and discrepancies in disciplinary measures
- 3) Increase teacher job satisfaction and decrease in teacher attrition

Attached below is evidence of effectiveness that expounds on these three points of improvement, indicated through recent mindfulness based studies and data collected through The Namaste Project.

1) Mindfulness's impact on disciplinary incidents

Overall, students who have participated in mindfulness programs showed variance in behavior change than those who did not. Furthermore, the findings from literature suggest that the teacher professional development component may have been somewhat more effective for sustaining the impact of the standard student program on student behavior. Students taught by teachers who received professional development had behavior ratings that were slightly better than those that did not.

Overall, the data from mindfulness based intervention use depicts:

- Increase in attention- Numerous studies show improved attention¹, including better performance on objective tasks that require an extensive concentration span.²
- Regulation of the nervous system and behavior Mindfulness is associated with emotion regulation across a number of studies.³ Mindfulness creates changes in the brain that correspond to less reactivity⁴, and better ability to engage in tasks even when emotions are activated.⁵
- Empathy and Compassion People randomly assigned to mindfulness training are more likely to help someone in need⁶ and have greater self-compassion.⁷
- Decrease in Mental Health Indicators Mindfulness reduces feelings of stress⁸ and improves anxiety and distress when placed in a stressful social situation.⁹

In a 2018 study by Kansas State University a small sample of 7th and 8th graders who averaged five or more discipline referrals to the principal's office for two consecutive semesters completed a series of guided meditations. For those who participated in meditation, office referrals dropped significantly, from 6.33 to 1.78 between September 2016 and April 2017. Those who did not participate in meditation saw a slight increase in referrals from 4.22 to 4.44 in the same time frame.¹⁰

Mindfulness's impact on disciplinary incidents

Case Study Data

The Namaste Project has partnered with a large urban school district since 2019. In examination of one school as seen in the data below, 2019 was the highest disciplinary action report within the past ten years- yet upon integration of the TNP program, disciplinary reports dropped significantly.

SCHOOL YEAR	STUDENTS WITH INCIDENTS	TOTAL INCIDENTS
2019	42	86
2020	24	44
2021	1	1
2022	12	12

2) Discipline disparities for minority students

Data has consistently shown that black and Latino students and students who are in special education are disciplined with suspensions and expulsions at much higher rates than their white and Asian American peers.

Black students made up 15 percent of K-12 students nationwide, but 27 percent of those restrained at school and 31 percent of school-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement, according to federal civil rights data. Black boys, specifically, made up 25 percent of out-of-school suspensions and 23 percent of expulsions, despite being only 8 percent of the student population.

Using meditation as an alternative discipline can go beyond teaching students breathing techniques. Alternative discipline can build trust between students and staff that traditional discipline can fracture.

Addressing issues of bias and prejudice such as those related to race require us to learn about and work for change at four levels: personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural.

Participants in the CMU study listened to a guided meditation before and after taking the Implicit Association Test. Results showed that listening to guided meditation led to a reduction in race and age bias. In another study conducted by researchers at the University of Sussex, those who participated in a brief loving-kindness mindfulness meditation specifically directed toward a racial out-group reduced their racial bias toward that group

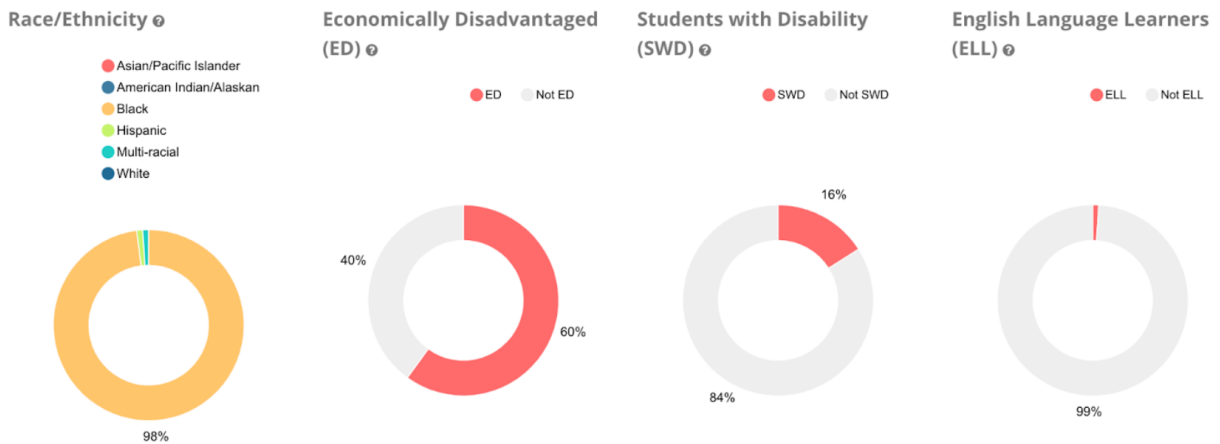
Mindfulness training and practices incorporate racially and culturally conscious approaches. Research shows that adopting these approaches significantly reduces racial disparities in disciplinary measures. A recent study of a rural district in the southeast saw significant reductions when incorporating racially and culturally conscious mindfulness practices with teachers and students.

Empathetic mindfulness practices have also been shown to have a long term impact on students' trajectories through school. Practices reduced suspension rates especially for Black and Hispanic students, cutting the racial disparity over the school year from 10.6 to 5.9 percentage points, a 45% reduction. Significant reductions were also observed for other groups of concern. Moreover, reductions persisted through the next year when students interacted with different teachers, suggesting that empathetic treatment with even one teacher in a critical period can improve students' trajectories through school.

Mindfulness’s impact on disciplinary incidents for minority students

Case Study Data

The Namaste Project’s Mindful Student program has been proven to be effective. The program has been rigorously evaluated by outside parties. The chart below demonstrates the impact of the mindfulness for student program on a school in a major city with a student population of:



Year	Disciplinary Incidents	Number of students with incidents	Program
2022	12	12	School wide mindfulness
2021	Not Reported	Not Reported	School wide mindfulness
2020	44	24	Tier 2 & 3 Mindfulness Program
2019	86	42	None
2018	61	30	None

3) Increase in teacher job satisfaction and decrease in teacher attrition

The GA Policy lab rigorously evaluated the Mindful Educator Wellness program providing wellness to a selection of 300 randomly selected participants and found

- a decrease in perceived stress
- A decrease in disengagement
- A decrease in reported exhaustion
- A decrease in turnover intention

Participants also reported overall increase in satisfaction with the district and feelings of value and importance from their central office.

Listed below are insights from our qualitative data, from teacher survey responses depicting their biggest takeaway from working with TNP.



“Slow down”

“Mindfulness strategies”

“Breathe and take time for myself”

“Meditation takes practice, and it is about being aware of the moment, not trying to make your mind blank”

“My biggest takeaway is the belief that the district is actually concerned about teacher welfare; physical and mental”



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