

Adapting Evidence-based Practices to Serve Diverse Adolescents



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Background

ISSUE

- **Environmental issues** are impacting teens' wellbeing and academic outcomes.
- **Factors include:** stress, poverty, trauma, gun violence and mental health issues.
- SDP Student Enrollment: 197,288 students
- SDP CEP Rate: 100%
- SDP Student enrollment demographics: 51% Black/African American, 23% Hispanic/Latino, 13% White, 7% Asian, 5% Multi Racial/Other

OBJECTIVE

- To evaluate the ISE 12 week core curriculum, and assess program impact on adolescent wellbeing. Inner Strength Education has successfully adapted its core curriculum, which melds mindfulness-based practices, social emotional learning, compassion building, systems thinking, and evolutionary neuroscience, to help students in under-resourced schools thrive.

Methodology

- **Sample Size:** 1003 high school students
- 513 *control group* participants
- 490 *treatment group* participants
- Mixed method design

Validated Survey Measures used:

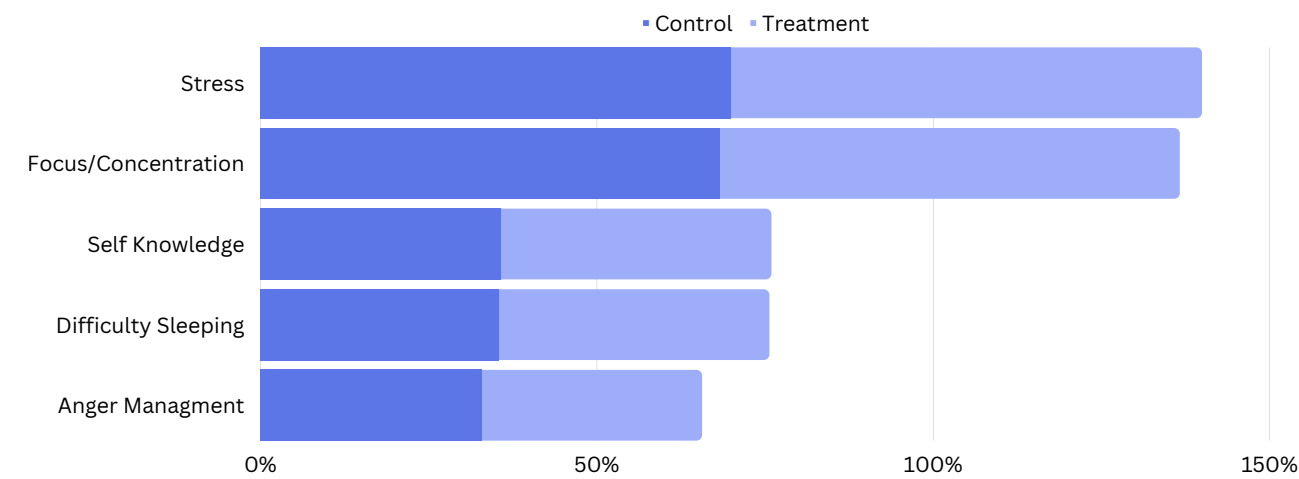
- EPOCH Scale
- Neff Self-Compassion Scale
- Adolescent Self Regulatory Index (ASRI)

Intervention

- 12-week Inner Strength program was implemented in person during fall 2022 (1/week, 45-min)
- Instruction and practice of 7 evidence-based mindfulness techniques: Mindful Listening, Mindful Breathing, Thought Bubble, Body Scan, Open Awareness, Mindful Eating, and Love & Kindness.

Results

Issues of Interest Identified by Students (Pre-Survey)



Neff Self-Compassion Scale (Youth) Self-Compassion by Group

	Control	Treatment	P-value*
Self-compassion	2.88	2.96	0.06

EPOCH: Measure of Adolescent Well-Being, by Group

	Control	Treatment	P-value*
Engagement	3.28	3.34	0.32
Perseverance	3.44	3.51	0.22
Optimism	3.42	3.42	0.97
Connectedness	4.06	4.12	0.29
Happiness	3.47	3.47	0.99

Key Themes:

A thematic analysis of the student responses yielded several common ideas (n=640):

- Stress relief, relaxation, and calming (45.8%)
- Breathing practice, techniques, and awareness (19.2%)
- Coping with, controlling and managing thoughts and emotions (18.1%)
- Silence/ meditation (15.5%)

Discussion

Post Survey Treatment Group: Student Open Ended Responses. Q: Describe what you liked or learned from the mindfulness program (in at least 20 words, with examples).

“I learned that I am not my thoughts, and different ways to relax the body.”

“I learned to destress, and find inner peace within my mind and body. It really helped me to relax my mind and body and learn ways of expressing myself.”

“It improved my ability to relax and clear my mind in a difficult or stressful situation. For example, when i'm trying to concentrate on my test.”

“Something that I liked about this program is how it can be used as a nice safe place for other students. Many students may have felt that they were alone before the program but during the program they can now realize how other students can relate to them in some aspects and situations.”

Program Modifications: (1) Prioritize increasing pre and post survey engagement and participation. (2) EPOCH gains show 10th grade could be a pivotal year for SEL. (3) Staff and host teacher collaboration is important for data collection, and student engagement.

References

Kern, M. L., Benson, L., Steinberg, E. A., & Steinberg, L. (2016). The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being. *Psychological assessment*, 28(5), 586–597. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0000201>

Neff, K. D., Bluth, K., Tóth-Király, I., Davidson, O., Knox, M. C., Williamson, Z., & Costigan, A. (2021). Development and Validation of the Self-Compassion Scale for Youth. *Journal of personality assessment*, 103(1), 92–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2020.1729774>