

HeartMath® Institute Student Mental Health Initiative

Educator Reports: Implementing HeartMath® Programs and Technology



In a K-8 Eagle County School, Colorado

Submitted by Sheila Griffith, Educational Consultant

Working with two guidance counselors from the school, we are seeing successful results from our program implementation. We worked with eight students in grades 2nd, 5th and 7th. This was an intervention scenario in response to students who were struggling cognitively, socially and emotionally. It was common that these students experienced much anxiety, leading to behavior outbursts or bouts of shutting down in their classroom and social situations.

We began by hearing the individual student's needs and then worked according to those needs. In the intervention, we used the online social and emotional learning program, WiseHeart®. The number of sessions ranged from 4-8, depending on each student's attendance and other school activities. The individual sessions lasted from 10-20 minutes. Two of the children were profiled with having trauma stemming from adverse childhood experiences. Our goals with them included safety and reassurance alongside the use of the program.

In conclusion, the guidance counselors were thrilled with the program implementation and want us back next year after seeing the positive results from the program. We heard numerous success stories from the students. All of them applied what they learned outside of school. Also, importantly, a couple of students engaged in social situations, unlike their normal behavior where they would have removed themselves from those kinds of activities because of social anxiety. We observed how they were able to use the tools and stay present or go outside shortly, use the tools and come back into the room.

Four Individual Student Reports

Student 1: A 10-year-old female 5th grader.

"It felt good using the Heart-Focused Breathing tool last week. I had gotten the news that I wouldn't get to see my brother for a while. It helped me feel brave."

"I used it before a test to calm myself. Was not as stressed. I get calm and then I can think."

Student 2: A 10-year-old female 5th grader who is struggling with self-regulation and physicality, especially after being excluded from playing games at recess.

- Has remembered to use coherence-breathing techniques the last two days of school.
- Recognizes that when she isn't coherent, her fists tighten, she becomes grumpy and is not open to whoever she is speaking with. When she is coherent, she feels like she can calm down, isn't grumpy and is happier.
- Heart-Focused Breathing™ is helping her to not react outwardly to people when they say something that she does not like or when they want her to do something that she does not want to do. Before she was physically lashing out in response.

Successes We Observed

1. Positive change in behaviors related to emotional and social behavior.
2. Positive change in classroom behavior that affects the individual and group learning.
3. Positive affect to self-efficacy.
4. Reducing loneliness.

- She is using the Freeze Frame® Technique to solve problems. It helps her to think of her dog to help her generate sunny feelings and problem-solve from that place.
- In the last week, she reported that she didn't need the techniques because she wasn't upset about not being included in games at recess. But then she noted that she was using them without realizing it. She has also started using them with her mother at home. She commented that they are both being helped in tense situations with a male in their household who can have angry, intense outbursts.

Student 3: 5th-grade male, who is struggling with his English, language comprehension and communication with teachers and counselors.

- He has great coherence in general, as seen in the emWave® Pro – one of the highest of all of the children.
- After our first session, it was abundantly clear how hard it was to communicate with him. But after practicing some of the tools including the emWave Pro technology, he showed up with much more active participation in the 2-4th sessions. He is asking for what he needs (in terms of self-regulation) and using the emWave Pro on a computer to get there.
- The counselor is seeing him behave differently in the classroom and with her. He seems to have more confidence, is helping other children and even taking a leadership role. He is expressing his needs and verbalizing what is causing him anxiety.
- The guidance counselor can't believe how different he is and is thrilled that they are communicating better together.

Student 4: Female 7th grader, who has a chaotic home life that interrupts her sleep and an older sister who uses drugs in the room, no matter what time of night.

- As a self-confident, smart 7th grader, this client was in a series of complex relationships where she struggled to regulate herself in specific situations. But she gained much greater coherence and self-control over the next four sessions.
- One day, she felt left alone and abandoned by her student partner. In response, we were able to help her find coherence and then talk about how she could see from another person's perspective (her peer partner), find more empathy, and use "I feel language" to express her frustration and pain with her friend rather than angry blame. This happened after she learned the Freeze Frame® Technique.
- Her guidance counselor was excited about the success she was having in school and expressed how much the program was supporting the student's growth.

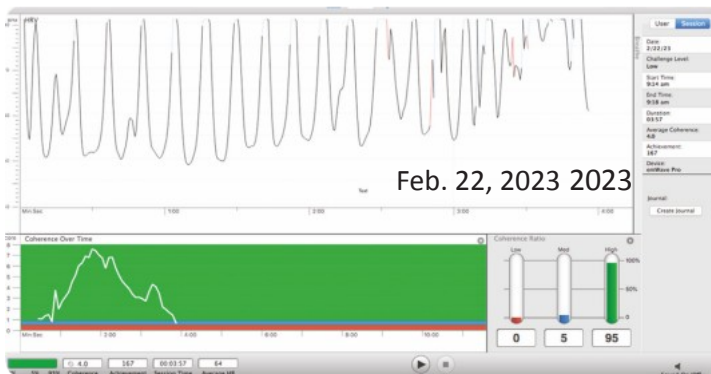
Counselor Comments

"As the saying goes we can't control what happens to us but we can control how we respond. There are a lot of different stressors affecting student's pressures from home, school and peer pressure. Things won't always go the student's way, but HeartMath® definitely gives students skills to navigate the stressors of childhood.

HeartMath® has provided a tool for students to be in charge of their responses in a healthy, calm way. The emWave® Pro monitor allows students to see how Heart-Focused Breathing™ steers them into coherence so that when they don't have the monitor, they understand how it feels in their body when they are in and out of coherence."

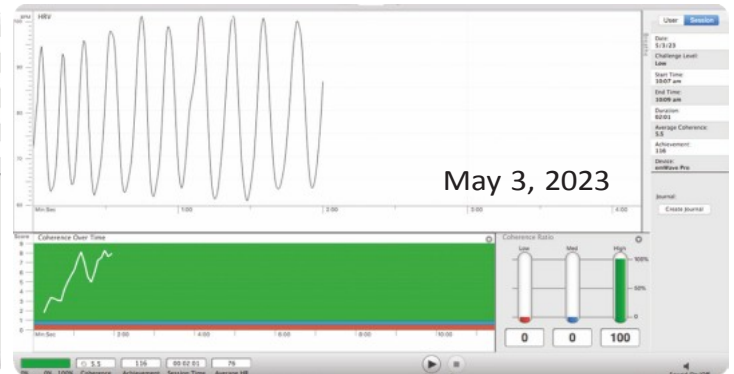
Eagle County Schools – Student emWave® Pro Sessions

Student #2, 5th Grade, 10 years old



First session February 22

3.57 mins. | Average coherence score: 4.0



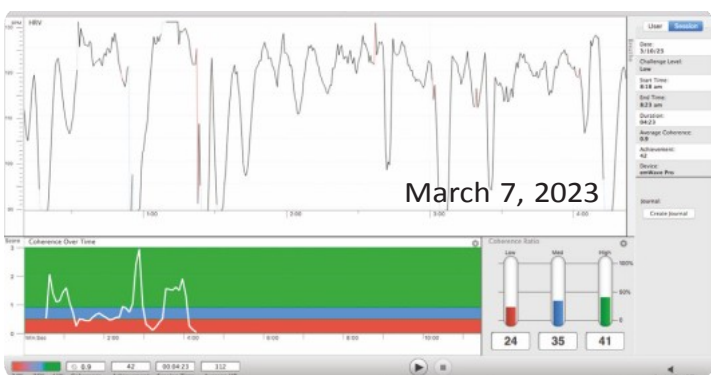
Last session May 3

2.01 mins. | Average coherence score: 5.5

This student struggles with regulating herself at school, especially after not being included on the playground by her classmates. She feels frustrated, grumpy, not open to others and can get into physical altercations.

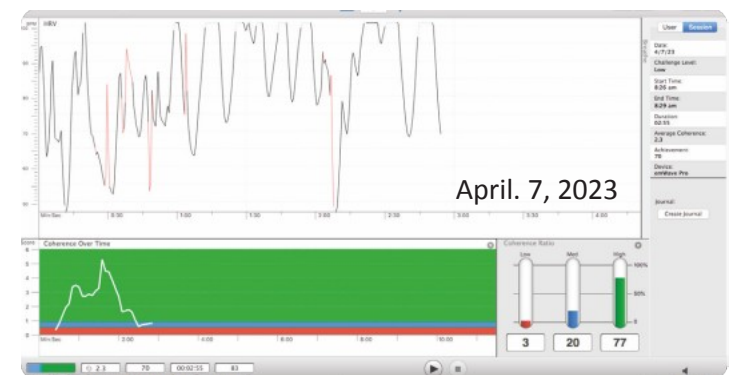
After practicing on the emWave® Pro and using the HeartMath® techniques, she was having less outbursts and felt calmer internally. She was able to remember to apply the Heart-Focused Breathing™ and Quick Coherence® techniques quickly. By the last session, she felt like she did not need the tools as she had not been having the same issues for a few weeks.

Student #8, 5th Grade, 10 years old



First session March 7

4.23 mins. | Average coherence score: 0.9



Last session April 7

2.55 mins. | Average coherence score: 2.3

The student experienced a lot of stress at home with her parents frequently out of town and she was also having some conflict with the caregiver.

After practicing on the emWave® Pro and using the HeartMath® techniques, home life is better. She was able to apply the Heart-Focused Breathing™ and Quick Coherence® techniques at a social meetup when her anxiety was flaring up.