

HeartMath® Institute Student Mental Health Initiative

Educator Reports: Implementing HeartMath® Programs and Technology



East Evergreen Elementary School, Kalispell, Montana

Submitted by Melissa Fahrney, School Psychologist

Summary of Grant Implementation: The Institute of HeartMath Mini-Grant Program was implemented at East Evergreen Elementary School to introduce students to tools and programs aimed at promoting emotional regulation and self-awareness. The project involved two components: The Smart Brain Wise Heart (SBWH) program and the use of the Inner Balance app with a Bluetooth sensor. Additionally, the Inner Weather Report Poster was shared with grades 2-4 in a weekly morning meeting activity.

Participants: A small group of 3rd and 4th grade students, exhibiting symptoms of ADHD or with ADHD diagnoses, participated in the project. The group consisted of six students, with two using the Inner Balance app and four engaging in the SBWH program, incorporating Heart-focused breathing (HFB) challenges between weekly sessions.

Smart Brain Wise Heart™ Program: Under the guidance of Melissa Fahrney, school psychologist, the students attended weekly sessions where they watched videos for Welcome, Unit 1, and Unit 2 of the SBWH program. The engaging characters and short videos captured their interest, and they particularly enjoyed the “spin the wheel” physical exercise activity, requesting it at every visit. Each student had the opportunity to take a turn and engage in “the move.” The students also participated in the Heart-focused breathing (HFB) Challenge individually, filling in their worksheets for five days. The facilitator noted a shift in their emotional state, with most students reporting a transition from “stormy” to “calm” or “happy.” Considering their previously high levels of interrupting, restless body energy, and impulsivity, observing their sincerity and stillness while placing their hands to their hearts was impressive. One student shared her experience of using HFB in class when feeling frustrated by a peer, noting a subsequent increase in calmness and decreased bother.

Inner Balance™ App: Two 4th grade students utilized the Inner Balance app with a Bluetooth sensor for self-regulation over a period of five weeks. They quickly grasped the meaning of the coherence colors and found the mandala pacer engaging. Seeing their high green achievement scores often brought them satisfaction and contributed to an increase in self-confidence.

Impact and Future Implementation: The implementation of the HeartMath tools and programs through the mini-grant has demonstrated promising benefits for the participating students. The observed positive shifts in emotional regulation and self-awareness highlight the potential for further implementation in the coming school year. The school expresses gratitude for the opportunity to use these tools and materials with the students, recognizing their value in supporting student well-being.

In conclusion, the Institute of HeartMath Mini-Grant Program successfully introduced HeartMath techniques and tools to enhance emotional regulation and self-awareness among a group of 3rd and 4th grade students with ADHD symptoms and diagnoses. The students actively engaged with the SBWH program and demonstrated positive changes in their emotional states. The utilization of the Inner Balance app further supported self-regulation and fostered increased self-confidence. The outcomes of this short facilitation provide a foundation for future implementation and expansion of the program.