

HeartMath® Institute Student Mental Health Initiative

Educator Reports: Implementing HeartMath® Programs and Technology



Wachusett Regional School District, Jefferson, Massachusetts

Submitted by Beth Foley, District School Psychologist

I am the school psychologist in a Massachusetts school district who helps students with learning disabilities. All of them typically have some mental health issues.

For this grant, I partnered with Megan Foley, a middle school special education teacher in 1 of the 2 schools I support. My idea was to introduce the **emWave® Pro** technology to her middle school math students as a way to prepare them for improved learner readiness. Ms. Foley's math class consists of a small number of students (3-6 on average) who are identified as having a math disability. They also have developed both a strong dislike and fear of math. They report being "bad at math" or discouraged with an attitude of "I can't do math." My strategy was to begin every math class using software games within the emWave Pro technology but only after I had taught them some of its basic biofeedback stuff such as seeing how their heart rhythms change on a screen depending on how self-regulated they are.

Ms. Foley has been amazingly supportive so far, scheduling her students to begin each and every math class with the emWave® Pro. One day per week, I also go into her class to use the online classroom program, **Smart Brain Wise Heart™**, and teach her students about why we are doing this. The students really enjoy using the program. It teaches them about how their brains and bodies respond to stress compared to when they are self-regulated. We also invite the adjustment counselor, paraprofessionals, and the principal to join us on "Fun Fridays," where we all dance to the different rap songs in the new Smart Brain Wise Heart™ program.

The results have been phenomenal! ALL the students have shown growth in their math skills this year while reporting feeling better about math in general. Incredibly, several of them have made more growth than was predicted for the entire school year by the January-March 2023 time period!

Thank you so much for this grant. We've done a lot with a small group of students.