

# HeartMath® Institute Student Mental Health Initiative

Educator Reports: Implementing HeartMath® Programs and Technology



## Youth Detention Center and YMCA, Wilson, North Carolina

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### Youth Detention Center, Wilson, North Carolina

I was involved in two virtual projects in Wilson, North Carolina. For both projects, I used the Zoom virtual platform. With project one, **I trained forty-four at-risk youth, ages 14-18, all assigned to a youth detention center located on a school site in rural North Carolina.** This 4-month HeartMath intervention was designed to help these youth, mostly minorities in rural settings, become more resilient and self-regulated and keep them out of trouble. We met 15 minutes a week for 4 months in two groups of 20 youths.

HeartMath ideas were woven through the curriculum. I encouraged them to practice regularly.

Typically, I would summarize what was done the previous week. The **Inner Weather Report™** was introduced so they could begin charting their emotions. Every week had a simple theme tied to events around the calendar, such as love for Valentine's Day or gratitude around Thanksgiving or overcoming test anxiety around test taking. Each week would always have a simple HeartMath self-regulation technique.

The teachers all commented that the students benefitted **based on positive feedback from students. They were listening and engaged during the sessions. Again, the goal is to help them self-regulate and stay out of trouble.**

There was a pre- and post-assessment with two measures: Anger and self-esteem. That data is being analyzed by the Rural Opportunity Institute and has not been completed yet.

### Foundation YMCA, Wilson, North Carolina

For project 2, I focused on staff resiliency. Despite having a new YMCA building site, there is a lot of staff turnover in this rural area of North Carolina. **The goal of this virtual training was to build staff resilience and well-being through the Resilience Advantage training.** I coached them once a week for 30 minutes via Zoom. It was very interactive. What is stressing them out? What is on their minds? After an initial conversation, we practiced the HeartMath self-regulation tools and used the **Inner Balance™** technology that works with their phones. Only 7 adults were involved from this small staff. I am happy with the progress we made as a group. Also, as requested, I had counseling sessions with staff and dysregulated youth. Those sessions went very well.

Now, the YMCA is trying to raise funds to get more help for their kids. They are looking to fundraise an additional 8 hours this Summer using the same virtual training we piloted earlier. And if that goes well, more funds will be raised to continue on through Spring 2024.

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity. We are making a difference.