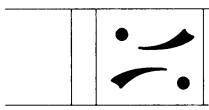

7. *The Yoga in Schools Movement: Using Standards for Educating the Whole Child and Making Space for Teacher Self-Care*

ANDREA HYDE

> *These great aims are meant to guide our instructional decisions. They are meant to broaden our thinking—to remind us to ask why we have chosen certain curriculums, pedagogical methods, classroom arrangements, and learning objectives. They remind us, too, that students are whole persons—not mere collections of attributes, some to be addressed in one place and others to be addressed elsewhere.*
>
> —NEL NODDINGS (2005, P. 10)

Part of the national education agenda

In *The Learning Compact Redefined: A Call to Action*, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's Commission on the Whole Child (ASCD, 2007) frames education "within the context of the personalized engagement and nurturing of the whole child" (p. 2). Whole children are intellectually active; physically, verbally, socially, and academically competent; empathetic, kind, caring, and fair; creative and curious; disciplined, self-directed, and goal oriented; free; critical thinkers; confident; and cared for and valued (p. 10). The report positions student success as positive "social, emotional, physical, ethical, civic, creative, and cognitive development." (p.10). The new learning compact is meant to replace the "one-size-fits-all," high stakes accountability, standards-driven reform that is currently upon us, and which the commission finds to be doing harm to our children.

This renewed interest in educating the whole child appears as a stated purpose of public education policy and curriculum practice (AAHE, 2007; NASPE, 2004) and has found expression in several federally endorsed school and community programs in the U.S., such as "Let's Move" (HHS et al., 2010) and the "NFL Play 60" Campaign (NFL, 2009). Attention to the health and wellness of public

school students corresponds to widespread concern, bolstered by media attention, about the increase of U.S. citizens who are overweight and obese. Anyone who consumes dominant media forms could tell you that childhood obesity is on the rise. Positioned to take advantage of this "crisis" discourse is the yoga in schools movement (hereafter referred to as the YIS movement) (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).

The movement to include yoga and meditation in schools contributes to a revised discourse on the goals of public education, one that attends to the health and wellness needs of "the whole child." Here is a phrase just as politically invulnerable to criticism launched by progressive educators as "no child left behind." In this case, however, this discourse allows, rather than blocks, social justice educators and advocates to take part in the national conversation on accountability. Furthermore, this "crisis" discourse positions educators and scholars within the YIS movement to hijack the conservative neoliberal agenda, so as to make transformative practices of self-care and empowerment available to all students. This holds special relevance for students in what are now called "challenge" schools, in the language of the latest proposal for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/NCLB, called *A Blueprint for Reform* (USDOE, 2010). These are the same schools that were labeled "failing" under NCLB.

In this chapter, through specific examples of how yoga programs are impacting students, teachers, and communities in K–12 schools across the U.S., I will illustrate the potential to exploit the official and ideological power of the health crisis discourse, state social-emotional learning standards, and state and national Health and Physical Education standards for spreading a socially transformative agenda.[1] Next, I will capture some of the key aims behind the yoga movement in order to illustrate how it offers schools a socially transgressive pedagogy, which has the potency to improve students' and educators' individual well-being as well as to eradicate systemic barriers and forces causing oppression in schools and in the wider society. Finally, I will conclude by arguing that social advocates and critical pedagogues must take the yoga movement seriously because it has the potential to change the purpose and structure of the unjust institutions in the U.S. from within, making use of whatever resources are currently available and working within and through whatever conditions are at hand.

Post-NCLB possibilities

Blueprint calls for supporting "successful, safe and healthy students" (p. 31) by moving toward a model of full-service community schools. Building on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act goals and funding, competitive grants are available to fund before- and after-school and summer programs with priority given to those projects that will serve challenge schools. Most of the concern is for students to have "safe, healthy, and drug-free environments" and grant RFP's

(requests for proposals) state a preference for programs that "take a comprehensive approach to meeting student needs, drawing on the contributions of community-based organizations, [and] local agencies" (p. 32). Here is an opportunity for community organizations offering yoga and meditation to received federal and state dollars, access to school buildings, and to support school-based programs.

Though we are far from free of the core ideological assumptions of NCLB and the threat of extreme negative sanction remains for the most vulnerable schools in each state, President Obama's latest reauthorization proposal does acknowledge the considerable influence of "out of schools factors" (Berliner, 2009) on in-school achievement. Most interesting for the YIS movement, *Blueprint* supports a vision of public schools as "full-service community schools" that would provide "enrichment activities, which may include activities that improve mental and physical health" (p. 32).

Much has already been said to criticize *Blueprint* as being far too punitive in pushing accountability and not nearly different enough from NCLB as to actually represent educational change for the better. Heavy emphasis on standardized test scores and a preoccupation with raising such scores remain. Furthermore, the Obama/Duncan policy proposal champions competition for funds and prefers a vision of charter school proliferation, despite a lack of evidence showing that charter schools do more than public schools in supporting student success by any measure (Mathis & Welner, 2010; Noguera, 2010). I am not advocating for the creation of yoga charter schools. My present interest is in how the introduction of yoga into public schools as a "movement approach to educational reform" (Palmer, 1992) can change the purpose and structure of the institution from within.

Education reformers critical of the Obama/Duncan plan may wince at the ASCD report's suggestion that schools and communities should "lay aside perennial battles for resources and instead align those resources in support of the whole child" (p. 8). However, the much-admired teacher and education scholar Noguera, who delivers one of the most comprehensive critiques of *Blueprint,* was a commission member (Noguera, 2010). The report provides examples of public school–community partnerships and lauds state and district programs that express their vision of developing whole children. This spotlights schools that are doing well according to data from multiple measures, in contrast to reports that reinforce an ideology of crisis and failure. It is a hopeful document; it is designed to alter hegemonic philosophy of education in the U.S., which is to prepare children to become mindless, obedient consumers, dutiful workers, and passive citizens.

Grant magnets

Offering customized yoga programming for students, and trainings or group workshops for teachers, reflects a belief that partnering with schools should be

an empowering, locally relevant, and highly personalized process. In most cases, programs are designed to meet the needs of teachers, counselors, administrators, and students alike. In some cases, the needs of the community drive the long-term goals of the programs. Services range from yoga instruction for students, yoga curriculum instruction for Physical Education teachers, yoga techniques for classroom teachers, and yoga for self-care for teachers and other staff.

Some yoga program providers have been successful in securing competitive public and private grants to fund their programs. This is due, in part, to the hard work and social advocacy-identity of so many yoga educators; however, a major aspect of crafting a winning grant request involves co-opting the language of several school "crises": children's heath/stress/obesity, school safety, teacher burnout, and the overall failure of U.S. public schools. Smaller nonprofit organizations that teach yoga and meditation to students and teachers in public schools have won competitive grants usually by working with larger NPOs and private foundations, some of which critical educators might readily disapprove. For example, New Visions for Public Schools is a privately funded nonprofit and the largest education reform organization in New York City. After September 11, 2001, New Visions asked the nonprofit yoga education organization Bent on Learning to coordinate a yoga program to help children to heal and to manage the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Bent on Learning now serves more than 20 school and approximately 1,000 students each week. New Visions may appear suspicious to critical educators for its association with large financial corporations, and its mission to expand charter schools. But they received 26 million in federal stimulus money under the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) grants.[2] Critical educators might consider whether it might make sense for some of the resources to be spent on critical-transformative change projects.

Yoga programs like the one at Jefferson Elementary School in Berwyn, IL, could be funded with stimulus money. Quoting the 2009 ASCD report "Using Stimulus Dollars for Lasting Impact," Principal Violet Tantillo said "[our school yoga program] is a 'sustainable' school improvement and 'capacity-building professional development' that 'guarantees lasting effect of the education reforms funded by the stimulus dollars, which translates into long-term benefits for our students.'" The added benefit in the eyes of the ASCD would be the program's focus on the whole child. The program, called "Student Wellness in 8–10 Minutes Each Day" ("Mindful Practices," 2011) takes very little time out of the day and costs nothing to use. Jefferson serves a high "at-risk" population of K–5 students. Before implementing this program, Principal Tantillo was beset with a long line of daily behavior referrals for incidents such as hitting and pushing. Now, "[i]ncidents of inappropriate behavior have dropped over 50%. Aggressive behavior, bullying, trash-talking, etc. has significantly decreased" (Tantillo, 2009, personal communication).

The Wellness Initiative (TWI), which brings yoga to low-income students from more than 20 schools in Adams, Boulder, Arapahoe, and Denver Counties in Colorado, is supported by a host of private foundations, corporations, and government agencies. The Colorado Health Foundation recently recognized TWI with a $40,000 Healthy Living program grant for teaching lifestyle skills that will help to decrease the growing obesity rates in Colorado. TWI uses the Yoga Ed™ ("Yoga Ed," 2011) curriculum in their "secular yoga-based wellness programs" including yoga classes for students (before or after school, or during the day as part of PE), a Tools for Teachers workshop (meant to demonstrate yoga-based techniques that teachers can use in their classrooms), and yoga classes for teachers and other school staff (The Wellness Initiative, 2010).

Wielding policy language in service of transformative projects

The International Association for Human Values, an NGO dedicated to serving communities affected by trauma and stress, has developed a youth program called Youth Empowerment Seminar for Schools! (YES!). The YES! Program fits neatly into state mandated Service Learning, School Safety, and Social Emotional Learning Programs and can be aligned with state and national standards in Health and Physical Education. As of this writing, 40 schools in the United States are using the program. Because the program incorporates a medically proven breathing and relaxation technique (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005),[3] it reduces stress and increases self-control and focused attention. As these have been positively linked with a reduction in violence and increased academic performance, schools should be able to argue effectively for using YES!

ChildLight Yoga, in Dover, NH, will help schools write grants to pay for their modestly priced training for schools to implement the Yoga 4 Classrooms™ curriculum, which is aligned with the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) standards and the CDC's National Health Education Standards (NHES). This organization acknowledges the goals and purposes of No Child Left Behind: "to expand local control and flexibility of education, to do what works based on scientific research, to have accountability for results, and to have more options for parents" ("Yoga 4 Classrooms," 2011). The point to be taken is that ChildLight helps schools to accomplish these goals; it does not represent efforts *in addition* to these goals. This is a major rhetorical success for school yoga programs and the specific point at which academics can help the movement. University faculty who partner with nonprofit organizations and local yoga teachers can use their facility with the discourse of educational research and policy and their knowledge of where to find and how to use research to support their assertions. For instance, when a harried district principal was concerned that continuing yoga programming would take away from time that the school needed to focus on "improving teacher effectiveness" as a condition of receiving an award from a powerful private foun-

dation, I was able to help draft a letter explaining that the current yoga program and curriculum *was consistent with* increasing teacher effectiveness.

Research-based practice

For those who value or, as is often the case, need it to gain approval to implement yoga programs in their educational communities, "scientifically based" research abounds to support what practitioners know experientially to be true. Clinical or controlled studies that use sophisticated statistical analysis support the positive effects for children of mindfulness (yoga and meditation, in particular) on stress reduction (Benson et al., 2000; Berger et al., 2009; Galantino et al., 2008; Khalsa et al., 2011; Vempati, 2002), depression (Bennett et al., 2008; Gates & Wolverton, 2007; Woolery et al., 2004), ADHD (Jensen, 2004; Treuting & Hinshaw, 2001), and autism (Kenny, 2002). Studies have also connected stress reduction to an increase in desirable behaviors for children and to academic achievement. Because of the value placed on making a more direct connection between yoga programs and academic achievement, work here is ongoing and promising (Cohen, n.d.; Jennings et al., 2001; Mendelson et al., 2010; Slovacek et al., 2003; Stewart Stanec et al., 2010). Specifically, yoga and meditation have been found to decrease school behavior referrals (Marie et al., 2008; Walker et al., 2004), increase "time-on-task" (Peck et al., 2005), and improve academic performance by reducing stress (Beets & Mitchell, 2010; Kauts & Sharma, 2009). School psychologists use yoga as an alternative or complement to behavioral and medical interventions for children with attentions problems (Peck et al., 2005) and other social, emotional, behavioral, and academic difficulties (Nardo & Reynolds, 2002). University of Pennsylvania researchers have found yoga to be beneficial to teachers working in "high-risk," urban settings (Jennings et al., 2011). Researchers are investigating other mind-body practices, in particular Tai Chi Chuan, Qi Gong, and Transcendental Meditation. However, it is easiest for public schools to incorporate a generic, infinitely adaptable style of yoga, which is not nearly as strict—nor as pure—in its disciplinary requirements as these.

And for those of us who are qualitatively minded, observation and self-report surveys, participant feedback, program evaluations, and self-studies reveal a consensus of firsthand experience bearing witness to the positive effects of yoga on themselves and others. These informants often include teachers, principals, and students (Lamb, 2006).

Almost all of the studies, stories, and reports recognize that evidence linking yoga and meditation to increases in academic achievement would be the surest way to implement additional yoga programs in schools. While funding may not be the problem (since yoga programs often come at very little to no cost to schools), time certainly is, and time in schools is mandated by the states, in part, responding to federal mandates that they show progress toward raising test scores and increasing graduation rates. Clearly, many factors contribute to test performance that lie outside the control of the school environment, including

student motivation and physical, psychological and emotional health. Using test scores as a proxy for learning assumes that the tests actually measure "achievement"; that recall or sight identification of the right answers counts as achievement; and that this achievement is valuable (Thomas, 2004). One of the chief complaints of NCLB is that the law relies on one measure of academic success, when many parents, educators, cognitive scientists, and other researchers argue that learning involves much more than, and perhaps something entirely different from, the ability to score well on a standardized test (AFT, 2004; Apple, 2007; Bloomfield & Cooper, 2003; Fusarelli, 2004; Hill & Barth, 2004; Kumashiro, 2003; Meier & Wood, 2004; NEA, 2007; Ohanian, 2007; Sunderman et al., 2005; Thomas, 2004; Valencia et al., 2001). Still, since high-stakes testing increases stress for the whole school community (Kruger et al., 2007), stress-reduction programs that do not interfere with test preparation and which may even reduce test anxiety are an easy sell to those who have control over resources earmarked toward schools. Foucault (1979/1995) would say that yoga educators and teachers are using disciplinary power *productively* when they secure resources to promote their transformative agendas in K–12 schools. Unlike some progressive educators, they are not letting the discursive and material constraints of high-stakes testing block them from challenging the status quo.

Yoga educators, like most teachers, are interested in individual harmony in the community, personal growth, and happiness. We want academic success for our students, but we also want to have our field theories about what "successful" children need, about what "successful" teachers need to be validated by research, but even more so, by those that we immediately serve *in practice.* Teachers want their students to be cared for, to be healthy, and to enjoy themselves and learning. Yoga programs adapt to teachers' practice, based on local wisdom and what works best in each school and in each classroom.

Furthermore, yoga and mindfulness are always practiced at each individual's pace. Participants are encouraged to listen to their own bodies; to let go of expectations, competition, and judgment; and to act compassionately toward themselves. Cueing for poses or breathing always involves affirmation and reminders to relax, be still, slow down, and enjoy. This alone contradicts the prevailing message of many public schools in the U.S.: hurry, do as much as possible, don't waste time just sitting there, and try your hardest to be the best. In a way, school yoga is the antithesis of (external) *accountability* and an exemplar of (personal) *responsibility* (Biesta, 2004).

The school yoga movement

The core aims of yoga are increased strength, flexibility, and balance for the body and the mind. Unlike other sports and fitness systems that do, of course, also improve mental health, yoga is a gentle, noncompetitive self-care practice of physical, emotional, and psychological wellness. As a complete philosophical sys-

tem, yoga can be traced to practices arising in India more than 5,000 years ago. Yoga, as it is most often practiced in the United States, is a system of mind-body techniques that includes physical postures (asanas or body positions), conscious breathing, and deep relaxation. Yoga poses are more closely related to early 20th-century European gymnastics than to any religious practice of Hinduism or Buddhism (Singleton, 2010). They are infinitely adaptable; there are many traditions to choose from but in the United States, the tendency to invent a personal practice is arguably more popular than any of those specific practices brought over from India and the Far East. Studies also show that children and adults can experience the breathing exercises and postures of yoga and meditation as therapeutic interventions without adopting any particular philosophical or spiritual aspects of ancient tradition (Khalsa, 2006).

Yoga as multicultural education

Yoga is not a religion; therefore, including yoga and meditation in public schools as part of the regular school day, or as a before- or afterschool program, does not constitute an establishment of religion. However, yoga postures, breathing, and meditation can be used as spiritual technologies akin to prayer. Spirituality as an experience of aliveness of mind and body as a unity (Capra, 2002) holds appeal and benefits for the religious and nonreligious alike. And yoga expressed by individual students as a personal spiritual practice cannot and should not be prohibited in public schools. Learning about yoga can also be a way to explore cultural beliefs and secular, spiritual or religious tenets. In this way, yoga can be seen as inclusive multicultural education. Using yoga as a curricular theme, history, philosophy, geography as well as psychology and physiology can be explored cross-culturally, comparative, and internationally. Even the pockets of controversy over including yoga in public schools provide opportunities for critical, democratic conversations about democratic schooling in a culturally pluralistic society (Douglass, 2010).

Ameliorating the effects of poverty

And yoga may be a good resource for children living in disadvantaged communities associated with significant stressors because it helps to reduce stress and negative behavior in response to stress. The minimal cost and ability for participation after being exposed to yoga is another benefit for these populations (Berger et al., 2009). Yoga can benefit urban youth, in particular, as it reduces the stress associated with poverty and with living in neighborhoods with high incidence of violence (Mendelson et al., 2010).

Obesity has become a social marker, so closely is it correlated with poverty and therefore race and ethnicity. Writing for the *Atlantic*, politics editor Marc Ambinder (2010) says that stigmatizing individuals—making obesity a failure

of will—is immoral and racist. Reporting on the American obesity epidemic, Ambinder found that obesity rates are above average for African American women, Mexican American boys, and twice the national average for young Native Americans. "Obesity researchers increasingly believe that material disadvantages best explains the spread of obesity among poor people" (p. 76). As medical scientists and public health professionals agree, the target of our prevention and treatment should be children (Walsh, 2008). This means that state and local boards of education must be included in making policy changes that will go far beyond education campaigns. School health policy must include wellness activities and nutritious food during every school day.

The anti-obesity campaign dominating school health policy discourse is problematic when students' bodies are made another target of surveillance and shame. Describing the CA state mandate that students submit to body mass index testing, VanderSchee writes that the CA State Department of Education chose to penalize students with extra PE classes in order to motivate them to be fit (VanderSchee, 2009, p. 140). Additionally,

> It is not enough to criticize, explain or understand [health discourse]. We have to engage with the paradox of wanting to reject utterly the performative values that are driving social change while at least considering that there might also be an immediate problem to deal with in the form of poor diet, too few opportunities for play and exercise, and ill health, and their origins in the social conditions of people's lives in the context of global capitalism. (Evans et al., 2008, p. 149)

Yoga is a positive and affirming approach to health that offers an alternative to the "commonsense" notion that weight loss equals health. Yoga supports an integrated approach to weight management. It brings mindfulness to habitual behaviors, including eating and exercise, or lack thereof. Vigorous practice (power yoga) can serve double duty as a moving meditation and workout, but the real advantage of yoga is that "[t]he combined effects of self-acceptance, increased body awareness, and inward reflection that are natural byproducts of a regular yoga practice can increase your ability to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, and can have a positive impact" on body image (Sparrowe, 2010, p. 74). Vigorous yoga practice can be an effective way to lose or maintain weight, with the added benefit of increasing self-esteem (Benavides & Caballero, 2009; Kristal et al., 2005).

Yoga and social justice (education)

School yoga, as critical-emancipatory pedagogy, effectively uses the legitimizing power of standards—national standards for physical education; the PA Academic Standards for Health, Safety and Physical Education; and the current IL statewide, and proposed national, Social/Emotional Learning standards (SEL)—to provide self-care knowledge and skills to students and teachers. This is done without

adopting the alienating technologies of standardization and while attempting to interrupt the "prison pipeline" operating in some inner-city schools. According to the SEL standards, by late high school, IL students should be able to "[e]valuate how advocacy for the rights of others contributes to the common good" (ISBE, 2003) (2B.5b). A social justice educator could make use of yoga tools to prepare students toward this end. Specifically, the Yoga Ed High School Curriculum has as some of its outcomes "awareness and understanding of feelings" (emotional fitness), "tolerance and respect" (mental fitness), and "understanding of one's impact and contributions" (social fitness) (Yoga Ed, 2007).

To this end, the urban-focused nonprofit organization Y.O.G.A. for Youth serves mostly African American students in the South Central Los Angeles area, including the Watts Learning Center. In 1993, Krishna Kaur,brought yoga directly to students at "Fremont, Locke, Crenshaw and Jordan High Schools, as well as...teachers, seniors, pregnant mothers, inmates, drug rehabilitation clients and 'at-risk' youth" with a dedicated mission "to break the cycle of incarceration in our inner cities" ("Yoga for Youth," 2011). The Y.O.G.A. for Youth curriculum is being used "in juvenile detention facilities, prisons and after school programs and shared with pregnant and parenting teens throughout Southern California with satellite programs in New York, Minneapolis, Seattle, Chicago and Mexico"("Yoga for Youth," 2011).

Social justice, according to Connie North's excellent mapping (North, 2008), involves recognizing "cultural groups' claims for respect and dignity," and a "more equitable sharing of wealth and power," also called redistribution (p. 1185). In education, knowledge of both oppression and agency, what used to be called consciousness-raising (Nixon, 1999), is sometimes placed in opposition to student and teacher action, where one is figured as more important, relevant, or proper for schools to pass along to youth. But, in general, a social justice perspective is one that views the purpose of education as social transformation and the primary job of education as liberation (Freire, 1973/2000). The social element of a justice-oriented belief system holds that relieving the suffering and oppression of some members of a society is the only way to ensure the overall well-being or happiness for all members. From a social justice perspective then, yoga education and practice represent both knowledge and action taken for liberation (of others) and transformation (of self). Yoga is something shared by those who have experience with those who seek it. Yet it is ever afterward something that people can do for themselves and adapt to their own interests, needs, and beliefs. There are no tests and no competition. It is free to practice and even learn. You can do it alone or with others; there is no specific equipment required and you can practice anywhere with very little space. There is no prerequisite physical form or level of ability, beyond the ability to breathe. Yoga is for *every* body. Aside from using the practice for physical fitness, people use yoga stretching, breathing, and meditation to prevent or combat poor self-esteem, depression,

attention problems, anger, anxiety, and stress. Yoga has also been used to increase focus, awareness, happiness, connectedness, and confidence.

The Niroga Institute, located in the San Francisco Bay area, is engaged in community outreach, education, and research on the preventative, therapeutic, and rehabilitative effects of yoga for hard-to-serve populations including children with special needs, "at-risk" teens, incarcerated persons, and the elderly. Their Transformative Life Skills (TLS) Program consists of 15 minutes of yoga exercise, breathing, and meditation. A report on the success of the TLS program at Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center "suggests that the delivery of a TLS program within Juvenile Hall among predominantly African American males and females, between the ages of 12 and 17...leads to a significant decrease in perceived stress, and a significant increase in self control" (Matthew, 2010, p. 2). After conducting a controlled test of the TLS program at El Cerrito High School, where students practiced TLS at least once a week for 18 weeks, researchers found that students who received the training reported feelings of greater self-control and less stress, with males perceiving a greater increase in self-control and a greater reduction in stress than females. Teachers reported that the student did seem more focused and relaxed and found the program to be very easily adapted to regular classroom instruction (Matthew, 2008).

This is particularly exciting since Duckworth and Seligman (2005) found self control to be a greater predictor than IQ of academic achievement and grade improvement (GPA not standardized test scores) among eighth graders. So any program that demonstrably increases self-control should be desirable where academic improvement, not simply an increase in test scores, is the goal. Perhaps the most significant impact that Niroga will have on their community is in training a new generation of urban, minority youth to be yoga teachers. Creating instructors with language and culture skills to match vulnerable target populations achieves one of the major social justice goals of the yoga community, democratizing and equitably distributing the practice. Other programs that are working to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline in urban areas are Street Yoga in Portland, OR, and The Lineage Project in New York City.

(Self) transformation, rather than emancipation

In the broadest and most basic sense, critical theories criticize functionalist explanations of systems and relationships and usually involve some observations of domination and oppression. Change is usually reproductive of the status quo and freedom from this cycle of reproduction is called *emancipation.* Postcritical theories make use of the critical lens but go further; they also call out the limitations of critical theories, recognize fluctuations in relations of power, and most importantl, they also acknowledge agency. Change can be reproductive and/or emancipatory, but in situations where there may be no extraction from relations

of power (for Foucault, this is every situation), postcritical scholars may speak of freedom as *transformation* rather than emancipation.

Meanwhile, mindfulness practice is transformative, in the Foucauldian sense, in that it reveals the various ways that power normalizes teachers and students according to dominant constitutions of "good teachers" as obedient technicians (Hyde, 2007) and "good students" as compliant competitors. Focused awareness and attention to each moment, especially in stressful environments, reveal the ways in which the rules of the system operate—in discursive (dominant educational ideology and agenda) and nondiscursive (institutional polices) ways so that individuals might develop strategies of resistance.

Considering the prevalence of teacher deskilling and deprofessionalization via standardization, curriculum restriction, and the current punitive accountability environment (Gunzenhauser, 2006a; Schultz, 2005; Sirotnik, 2004; Ingersoll, 2003), I see much more possibility and action in practices of teacher self-care and teacher and student self-transformation. Yoga is a practice that allows participants access to all of the domains of work upon the self, recognized in transformative education: knowing the self, controlling the self, caring for the self (paying attention to oneself, self-compassion), and (re)creating the self (Tennant, 2005).

Professional ~~development~~ "empowerment"

Within the dominant discourse of accountability, programs to "empower" teachers are often structured to examine and improve teachers so that they have more flexibility to be able to raise student test scores by whatever means necessary. But the language is a kind of doublespeak: the "empowerment" training aims to insure that teacher, know exactly how to conform to the mandates of standards. This kind of professional development is really a normalization process (Foucault, 1979/1995). In contrast, professional development that gives teachers the knowledge and skills that they want, in the way that they want it, and shows them how to take care of (change) themselves as well as their students is truly *empowering*; it treats teachers as ends in themselves.

The nonprofit organization for which I consult, Yoga in Schools, provides yoga programming and teacher training to a dozen districts in the Greater Pittsburgh area. As the director, Joanne Spence's personal mission is to empower people to sustain their own healing networks; her service approach has always been to identify the people inside of an organization, such as Physical Education and Health teachers, who will do the work of sustaining a yoga program. We are just now finishing a two-year project working with the Physical Education and Health teachers from the largest district, Pittsburgh Public Schools. Final self-reports, as well as field observations of the teachers by the instructional team, suggested that *participants experienced both personal change and change to their professional practice* as a result of participating in the yoga training program. The participants' responses revealed that *these teach-*

ers learned that making time to take care of themselves has a direct benefit to their students and their teaching practice. They felt that the training gave them new techniques to relax, stay fit, and relieve anxiety. Some reported being reminded of the reasons that they entered into Health and Physical Education teaching in the first place. They were called to reexamine how well they were living their values of personal wellness. Some resumed balanced diet and exercise routines for themselves; others made the healthy changes for their households.

Yoga as critical pedagogy: Freirean conscientization and praxis

School yoga curriculum and instruction represent mindfulness pedagogies that are critical in the Freirean sense of involving *conscientization*—social consciousness-raising starting with liberating the self from oppressive beliefs; and *praxis*—reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. For thousands of years, people have approached yoga as a path to enlightenment. And those who come to yoga as a mean for stress reduction or physical conditioning will typically still notice the transpersonal or transcendent qualities. But what does this mean? In Freiean terms, yoga raises consciousness of one's personal and social position and puts one in touch with the world as it really is. Freire assumed that people who are oppressed are under a false consciousness or even unconscious. This is a result of being uneducated or miseducated to believe that things are as they must or should be; they are unaware of the benefit to the oppressor of their complicity and ignorance. Plainly speaking, most Western educators will tell you that education is power, a way out of poverty, and the means to personal happiness and material success. What is often missing from this "awareness" is a critique of schooling as a place of banking education—where instead of being empowered, students are actually prevented from realizing their ability to choose what they learn, what they want to know, and how to participate in making changes in the world. Every individual already has valuable knowledge. But the status quo system of education controls and legitimates official knowledge, mandates that all must learn it, and then evaluates teachers and students on how well they can demonstrate that they have learned it. But there are others things—such as knowledge of the self—that are worth knowing. Students need to be alerted to this fact through problem-posing education.

Those who take up the mission of bringing yoga into public schools will typically have a personal transformation back story. Yoga changed something in their lives and left them feeling such gratitude and hope that they were compelled to share it with others who were suffering. This is especially the case for those working in urban environments. Yoga curricula are different from classical or even contemporary (popular culture-based) student empowerment programs based on critical pedagogies. Yoga emphasizes a light touch on others and the world. What this means is that instead of rallying students against an organized oppressive force or group, yoga identifies the oppressor within. The battle then is against irresponsible and self-

damaging behaviors. The emphasis is on taking care of the self, paying attention, being patient, and making incremental internal changes toward refinement.

That is not to say that yoga curricula ignore social conditions such as poverty, violence, and school failure. Taking local social action is compatible with practicing yoga. Contributing to the community could be a form of service yoga. Students may feel motivated to be positively involved because they feel better, and are more compassionate and loving as a result of doing yoga. They may feel more connected to other people and more aware of their capacity for helping.

For teachers, leading students in yoga practice in the classroom and being more mindful in their teaching and in their relationships with their students are expressions of praxis: reflection and action. It is a living through of integrity. Yoga requires personal reflection simultaneous with movement/action-posing or breathing, stilling the mind, or expanding the consciousness.

The social movement model of school reform

The popularity and success of yoga in schools illustrates what Parker Palmer (1992) calls a "movement approach to educational reform," one that can change the purpose and structure of institutions from within, making use of whatever resources are currently available and working within and through whatever conditions are at hand.

> By giving public voice to alternative values we can create something more fundamental than political change. We can create cultural change. When we secure a place in public discourse for ideas and images like [yoga education] we are following those reformers who minted phrases like "affirmative action" and made them the coin of the realm. When the language of change becomes available in the common culture, people are better able to name their yearnings for change, to explore them with others, to claim membership in a great movement—and to overcome the disabling effects of feeling isolated and half-mad. (Palmer, 1992, pp. 14–15)

Teachers deserve to be happy and fulfilled on the job and off. They are not just a means to student achievement, nor the only barriers to it. Too often, teachers are positioned as instruments, some good or bad, for taking action on students: getting them to learn, perform, behave, make good choices, and now be healthy and well. It is rare to see professional development programs that take teacher well-being into consideration unless it is proven to directly impact student achievement (performance). It is as if nothing else matters. Teacher turnover is notoriously high in poor neighborhoods and teacher burnout is figured as just part of the job, now, in all schools. Why must this be? Why must teaching be so difficult, stressful, all consuming? Why is good teaching such hard work? If we treat teachers as valuable and lovable people, if we care for them, teach them to care for themselves and their students, won't this positively affect the school climate? But none of this matters unless it is also associated with increases in academic performance.

There is no reason to accept this ideology in order to take advantage of the benefits to all of practicing yoga in schools. Yoga programming does not uncritically accept teachers or students as problems that need to be fixed in order than students get better scores on tests. I don't know any program or yoga educator that takes raising test scores as a prime objective, even when they promote their programs as something that may do that very thing. Yoga programs do not ignore the devastating effects of poverty and racism, the systemic and structural explanations for the achievement gap. A focus on internal change does not negate efforts toward social change. It does not excuse or ignore the out of school factors that affect school performance. As Parker Palmer (1992) advises, we can begin to create change in large organizations through self-change, person-to-person relationships, and the networks of like-minded people as they grow organically from them. Actually, no social movement has ever developed by any other means.

Notes

1. Based, in part, on a paper presented at the 2010 AESA annual conference.
2. The i3 fund, which is part of the historic $10 billion investment in school reform in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), will support local efforts to start or expand research-based innovative programs that help close the achievement gap and improve outcomes for high-need students. The competition was open to school districts as well as nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education working in partnership with public schools. See http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/index.html.
3. Sudarshan Kriya Yogic breathing (SKY).

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