

Yoga In Schools Residency Pilot Project (YSRP)

by Debbie Spence, YAA Executive Director

The Yoga Association of Alberta (YAA) applied for and received a grant from the Government of Alberta's Healthy Active Living and Recreation Initiatives Funding Program to carry out a pilot project in support of the Government of Alberta's Active Alberta Policy as it applies to children and young adults. Based on the high degree of alignment with the Active Living Policies (active.alberta.ca), the government approved funding for the Yoga in Schools Pilot Project.

As part of this six-month project, six certified yoga teachers taught yoga for extended periods of time in 11 schools across urban and rural Alberta. Whole school yoga classes in which everyone could participate took place daily; longer, more in-depth classes for students and staff were held during

curricular and non-curricular times. The classroom teachers learned skills to maintain what was taught during alternate weeks.

The final number of teachers, students and staff participating in the program was over 2,782. The rural schools that participated were: Peace River School Division (K-12; 82 participants), Aspen View School Division (K-7; 770 participants); Parkland School Division (K-9; 512 participants). The urban schools that participated were: Parkland School Division (K-4; +700); Rocky View School Division (K-4; +430); Calgary School Division (3,4; +100). As well, staff and teachers had opportunities to participate in Professional Development learning activities presented by the yoga teachers.



YAA Intermediate teacher, Keely Scott with students

VISIT YAA'S WEBSITE FOR LINK TO THE SCHOOLS VIDEO

<http://www.yoga.ca>

A professional filmmaker (Jason Gondziola, mtset), attended classes at the schools and made a 5-minute film of the project. The film will be circulated to Alberta schools. Link on YAA website: <http://www.yoga.ca>

Classroom School Teachers' Feedback

- *We saw huge growth in our student perseverance and focus during yoga from start to finish. Vice Principal*
- *Our yoga classes were always first thing in the morning and my class was always calmer and more focused on yoga days!*
- *Students looked forward to the yoga instruction and have asked to do some of the breathing exercises in class.*
- *On yoga days, children were more centered, ready to learn and focused.*

Choice Quotes from 1,558 Students' Comments in response to: The Best Thing about Yoga (YSRP) is:

- *I feel WAY more relaxed and calm...it made me happier. I LOVE YOGA!!*
- *I just wanted to say, "Thank you".*
- *I hope you come back.*
- *I do better in*



sports.

- *It made me listen more in Social (Studies).*
- *It made me happy every time I did yoga.*
- *It made me feel relaxed and not emotional.*
- *Learning how to do different things and how to calm my body and how not to feel sad. It makes me happy when I am having a bad day.*
- *There is no winning or losing.*
- *Being able to calm myself and enjoy a peaceful moment.*
- *Having fun with friends. I'm doing better in school behaviourally, but not academically.*
- *All my stresses are gone and I feel better after school and have fun.*
- *More balanced which helps me in Kung Fu.*
- *That it was quiet so I didn't have a headache!*
- *It made me do it at home. I love yoga.*
- *I like the poses.*
- *I enjoyed yoga. It helped me be calm and get to bed at night easier. I dislike sports so I'll do yoga instead now. Thanks!*
- *It was really relaxing to me.*
- *(It made) my back feel more relaxed because my back hurts. My back was not hurting after yoga.*
- *I do yoga with my Mom. Thank you.*
- *It was very fun. I have been doing*

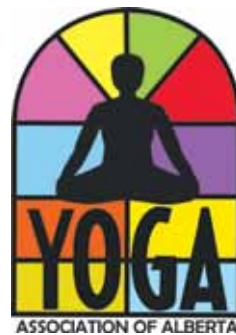
yoga with my grandmother.

- *I learned how to handle stress when I'm mad.*
- *I love yoga. It helped me in class.*
- *Gets me in shape for hockey, soccer and basketball. Missing class!*
- *I do yoga with my family. Stretching and relaxing. Good. O Yeah.*
- *I'm better at school. Breathing.*
- *I can't just choose one thing. It was all awesome.*
- *I think it should happen next year!*
- *I love yoga so much I can't wait till next year!!*



- *I appreciate this "new to him" method of calming his mind/emotions. He needs this. School is the best place for it as he thinks his mom is crazy when I start talking about soothing his soul. Thank you so much for this opportunity.*
- *One of the students was recently diagnosed with epilepsy and her mother noticed a marked improvement in her anxiety level when she was doing yoga classes at the school. She has asked if there are yoga classes available for her daughter to start taking in her community.*

The Yoga Association of Alberta joins its voice with the many children, parents and classroom teachers who expressed their sincere gratitude for the foresight of the Alberta Government in providing the funds for this very innovative program. Let's hope that we shall be able to find financial support in the future to continue exploring similar projects for extended periods of time and throughout the province!



Parents' Feedback

- *Our son enjoyed the yoga, but is already a very active 5 year old so it helped him to calm down. Thanks!*
- *Thank you for bringing yoga to this young age of children in a place where they are feeling open to learning. So much can be taught to help them get through "life" by learning the basics of yoga. Thank you.*

CONTACT THE YAA FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT OF QUALIFIED YOGA TEACHERS IN YOUR AREA. <http://www.yoga.ca>