

EDU 525:
Creating Collaborative Spaces for Learning
SUNY Oswego PROJECT SMART 2017-18

OVERVIEW

This course will focus on creating collaborative spaces for learning to support academic as well as out of school success, particularly in high need schools. Course components will include implementing mindfulness practices in teacher planning, instruction, curriculum, and assessment in order to promote self awareness and social awareness; learning and practicing effective communication skills; designing **collaborative** spaces (physical, emotional, social, cognitive, academic); and understanding and facilitating change to create **knowledge** and promote **reflection, authentic learning and social justice**. The SUNY Oswego School of Education Conceptual Framework is embedded in all aspects of this course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Examine research related to communication, collaboration and change, and draw implications for one's own teaching and student learning.
2. Experience practices that create collaborative spaces for learning, and reflect on the impact of those practices on teaching and learning, including academic, cognitive, social, physical and emotional development both in and outside of the classroom and school setting.
3. Choose a path for deeper exploration by examining one curricular program or instructional practice (e.g., Calm Classroom; Non-Violent Communication; Restorative Justice; flexible seating; deep listening; Trauma-sensitive teaching; Reading/writing workshop; behavior management, parent and community engagement, Responsive Classroom.
4. Collect/analyze and report data on impacts of this project on teaching and learning.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Complete an action research plan that specifies a research question, data collection methods that will address the question, and a timeline for completing each action step.
- Complete a final report reflecting on teacher and student learning outcomes.
- Attendance and participation (40 hours including class time and independent work time)

COURSE TOPICS

1. **Embodied Learning**---This topic includes but is not limited to: Connecting physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts without judgment to promote self-awareness. Who am I? What are my tendencies? How do I show up/present myself? What is my body teaching me? How do I behave in a group? Literacy practices that support embodied learning.

2. **Communication** —This topic includes but is not limited to: Awareness of patterns of communication; Observing my patterns; Communicating my needs; Listening deeply to others; negotiating conflict; the power of empathy; expressing gratitude, appreciation, compassion, forgiveness, advocacy. Practices—rotating chair; resonant listening, dialogue circles... Non-violent Communication. Literacy practices that intentionally support effective communication.
3. **Collaboration spaces** —This topic includes but is not limited to: Physical spaces that support collaboration in and out of schools; creating supportive emotional spaces; engaging in social spaces (citizenship, local-global), collaborating intentionally to support academic learning (cooperative learning, teaming, co-teaching), parent and community engagement.
4. **Change**--This topic includes but is not limited to: Supporting ourselves and each other through change. Examining the nature of change (personally, interpersonally, organizationally, social change, change related to trauma). Teacher and student self-care and well-being; focusing on self while focusing on others; Compassion or-co-dependence; Overcoming addictive behaviors; Resilience, flexibility, Educators as change agents, Pros and cons of and various types of risk-taking. Education Reform.

RESOURCES

for Implementing EDU 525: Creating Collaborative Spaces for Learning

An ongoing, joint collection of Books, Web-Linked Articles, PDF articles, Forms, Activities, Literature Connections, and Other Ideas

General Background Information

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[What are Learning Skills?](#), Thoughtful Learning K-12 website

[Why Social and Emotional Learning is Essential for Students](#), Roger Weissberg, Joseph A. Durlak, Celene E. Domitrovich, and Thomas P. Gullotta, Edutopia, February 15, 2016

Course Topics with Related Resources:

1. **Embodied Learning**--This topic includes but is not limited to: Connecting physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts without judgment to promote self-awareness. Who am I? What are my tendencies? How do I show up? What is my body teaching me? How do I behave in a group? Literacy practices that support embodied learning.

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Cohen Harper, J. (2013). *Little flower yoga for kids: A yoga and mindfulness program to help your child improve attention and emotional balance.* Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

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https://mobile.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/opinion/sunday/the-neuroscience-of-your-brain-on-fiction.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=annie%20murphy%20paul&st=cse&referer=http://www.theopedproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=753:the-new-york-times-qyour-brain-on-fictionq-by-annie-murphy-paul-march-17-2012-&catid=38:successes&Itemid=86

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Souers, K. & Hall, P. (2016). *Fostering resilient learners: Strategies for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

[Student Self-Assessment](#), Assessment for Learning website

[The Importance of Self-Awareness for Kids with Learning and Attention Issues](#), Amanda Morin, Understood website

Trauma Sensitive School Checklist (PDF). Lesley University.

[http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/trauma%20sensitive%20school%20checklist%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/trauma%20sensitive%20school%20checklist%20(1).pdf)

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2. **Communication**—This topic includes but is not limited to: Awareness of patterns of communication; Observing my patterns; Communicating my needs; Listening deeply to others; negotiating conflict; the power of empathy; expressing gratitude, appreciation, compassion, forgiveness, advocacy. Practices—rotating chair; resonant listening, dialogue circles... Nonviolent Communication. Literacy practices that intentionally support effective communication

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[How do Children Learn to Regulate Their Emotions?](#), Kenneth Barish, Ph.D, Huffington Post, 9/9/2013

[Explaining Self-Regulation](#), Kids Matter website

[Being a Great Communicator: An Overview for Parents](#), Kids Helpline website

[Conflict Resolution](#), Kids' Health website

[8 Team Building Exercises for Children](#), Jessica Blanchard, Brescia University

[How Children Develop Empathy](#), Lawrence Kutner, Ph.D, Psych Central website

[Teaching Empathy: Evidence-based Tips for Fostering Empathy in Children](#), Gwen Dewar, Ph.D, parenting Science website

[How do we Help Children Take Other Perspectives? A Conversation with Ellen Galinsky](#), *Psychology Today* website, July 22, 2010

3. **Collaboration spaces**—This topic includes but is not limited to: Physical spaces that support collaboration in and out of schools; creating supportive emotional spaces; engaging in social spaces (citizenship, local-global), collaborating intentionally to support academic learning (cooperative learning, teaming, co-teaching), parent and community engagement

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4. **Change**--This topic includes but is not limited to: Supporting ourselves and each other through change. Examining the nature of change (personally, interpersonally, organizationally, social change, change related to trauma). Teacher and student self-care and well-being (focusing on self while focusing on others) (compassion or co-dependence—nikki myers. Addictive behaviors)— Resilience, flexibility, educators as change agents (level of comfort/risk taking).

Bambrick-Santoyo, Paul (2010). *Driven by data: A practical guide to improve instruction*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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Hoffman, Jan (2016). Teaching teenagers to cope with social stress. *The New York Times*. Sept. 29, 2016.https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/30/health/teenagers-stress-coping-skills.html?_r=0

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plthomasedd, [Rethinking Literacy \(and All\) Assessment](#), June 22, 2017

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<https://www.sycol.com/5-leadership-tips-effective-change-management>

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The Yoga of Creativity

Using Design Thinking in Higher Education <http://er.educause.edu/articles/2015/1/using-design-thinking-in-higher-education>

SOME ACTIVITIES TO BRING INTO YOUR LESSONS AND SYLLABI

1. **Connect, Breathe, Move, Focus, Relax.** The Five Elements of *Little Flower Yoga for kids* (pgs. 23-24). Use this as a possible framework for your Smart classes.
2. Use *Yoga and Mindfulness Practices for Children* in connection with this framework. **Choose one picture card from each element to create a sequence of activity:** Connect, Breathe, Move, Focus, Relax.
3. **Cultivate, Concentrate, Observe/Investigate, Sense.** Organize your Smart class activities around these “mindfulness verbs” in the Table of Exercises in *I am here now* (pgs. vi and vii).
4. **Ask teachers to sign up to choose and/or lead** from different elements or verbs in preparation for class.
5. Use the pre and post **Mindfulness quiz** (*I am here now* pgs. 14-15) to collect, analyze and report data.
6. Create and maintain a **gratitude journal** as part of your Smart class or for teachers to use with their students. Save and use sample excerpts to support your findings in your final report.
7. Organize your year-long course around a **theme** (e.g. Change, Advocacy, disABILITY, Journey, Transformations, Sustainability, Flexibility, etc.). Choose literature selections, materials, and activities that address the theme from various perspectives and genres, including a mindfulness lens.
8. Use the **reading/writing methods** (with your own variations) in Hoffman’s 2016 article or similar texts along a theme of “change”, conduct action research with teens and document/report results.
9. Incorporate **Morning Meeting** from Responsive Classroom or even brief **Mindful Moments** (stillness and/or focused breathing) into your daily routine. Participate, observe, document dialogue among students and between teacher and students over time. What are you noticing? What are the surprises? What themes are surfacing?

10. DISCUSSION METAPHORS (taken from Yoga.ed)

Metaphors are symbolic ways to represent your concept. As useful themes, metaphors transform abstract ideas into concrete subjects and can effectively help students understand how to apply yoga tools as life skills. Introduce the day’s metaphor to your students during discussion so they can think about and explore it through class.

Examples of useful metaphors:

3 Blocks as Self—Illustrates the power of linking the body, mind, and breath. Use three blocks to represent the body, the mind, and the breath. When the three are stacked and aligned, they form a strong and stable self. When the three are scattered and spread out (i.e. the mind is in the past, the body is in the room, and the breath is worried about the future), they are disconnected and form nothing.

Candle and Jar—Illustrates the concept of breath as life-force and our lives as light. Cover a lit candle with a glass jar and watch the flame go out. Discuss the importance of breath, including the value and impact of conscious breathing on our well-being. Coach students to recognize that breathing is a valuable resource for health and self-awareness. For an illustration, draw a big wavy line intersected by a straight line. The wavy line represents the roller coaster of our experience due to the activity of our minds. The straight line represents the consistency of our breathing and its ability to restore us to a state of balanced vitality.

Rubber Band—Demonstrates the space and strength created in the body by opposition. Give students a rubber band to stretch and play with. What happens when you pull it in opposite directions? What do you get? Space. Explain how you to achieve this in your body by activating opposite lines of energy in yoga poses to create more space and strength.

Sponge and Water—Illustrates how yoga helps expel stress and tension that we absorb from life. Set a sponge in a glass bowl half full of water. Observe the sponge soak up the water, and then hold it up and squeeze it out. Discuss what the water might represent. Ask students about their lives and what they absorb daily. Then, invite them to identify what kinds of things they can let go of during yoga and how yoga helps them do that.

Knot Metaphor—Experientially distinguishes the difference between force and finesse. Give students a scarf or a string with a knot in it. Encourage them to use finesse to get it out, especially as they get frustrated. Walk them through slowing down, breathing calmly, and noticing everything they can about the knot to figure out how to work with it instead of against it.

11. CROSS-CURRICULAR Yoga PROJECTS (taken from Yoga.ed)

Cross-curricular activities deepen your students' understanding of yoga and practical uses of yoga tools in other areas of their lives. When teaching in educational environments, we encourage you to cultivate relationships with other teachers and to design cross-curricular activities with your peers.

To begin, find out what your students are learning in other classes. Brainstorm ways to support these lessons through yoga. For example, writing skills can be supported by journaling after class. If you would like to take it one step further, talk to other teachers to coordinate lesson plans and share ideas on how to support one another's lessons.

You may also suggest yoga-inspired projects to other teachers. The following suggestions illustrate how you might integrate the study of yoga into other disciplines in the school.

History: What is the history of yoga? Where does it come from and how did it get here?

Science: How and why does yoga affect the body? What happens physiologically when we breathe deeply and consciously, or hold an inversion for three minutes?

Math: What are the proportions of the body? To what degrees can different joints move? Which yoga poses show symmetry and which do not?

Dance and Sports: How can yoga enhance athletic performance? What warm-ups, movements, and principles are the same between yoga and dance/sports?

Art: How does yoga make you feel? Can you express that feeling in color, shape, or design? Can you draw a yoga dance with stick figures? What are the proportions of the body? How do you show perspective or the lines of energy when drawing?

12. **BE, HAVE, & DO!** (taken from Yogaed.) The practice of yoga is much like the practice of teaching, as well as the action research process. Use the same philosophical pattern used in yoga practice to design and implement your own lessons.

BE/INTENTION. Intention is at the root of everything we do. It inspires, drives, and motivates us into action. Your intention is fundamental to the way you teach. Whether you teach because you want the children in your life to be happier or because you want your students and colleagues to be healthier, you always return to your intention for doing the work and align your intention with your approach to teaching.

DO/ACTION. You practice yoga because you understand that your practice increases your relatedness to your students. You intuit their reactions, understand their experiences, and guide them through the experience because you are on a similar journey. Your relatedness powers your teaching.

HAVE/OUTCOME. You have credibility because you live up to what you teach. You are the balanced, healthy human being you aspire to see in your students. Your work is genuine and your practice speaks for itself. Your work starts from within. Finding the yoga in your own life helps you cultivate a more authentic and effective relationship with your students. In this section, we will reflect on how an internal yoga practice and external yoga practice deeply influence your approach as an educator. Your internal practice is your self-work: the self-study and self-practices that cultivate your own well-being and balance when working with adolescents. Your external practice is your work with others: the way you communicate with your students, both physically and verbally.

LITERATURE CONNECTIONS

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