

Overview of Transformative Life Skills (TLS)

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Transformative Life Skills (TLS) is a universal yoga-based prevention program that targets key social-emotional learning skills in children and youth grades K-12, as well as transition age adults (TAY). The TLS curriculum actively engages students in three core yoga practices: poses, breathing techniques, and centering meditation. These core practices are referred to as the ABCs (i.e., action-breathing-centering), and are centuries-old techniques known to manage stress, relax and focus the mind, enhance flexibility and physical strength. Scientific research with school-age children has found that these very simple practices can be an effective means to reduce stress and tension, dissipate excess energy, relieve tiredness, strengthen children's attention span¹, and help students cultivate better interpersonal relationships.² Concurrent improvements in students' general memory span³, spatial memory⁴, visual perception⁵, general intelligence⁶, complex learning skills,⁷ and performance on standardized achievement tests⁸ (e.g., SAT) have been observed as well. Although the mechanisms of action are not fully understood, it appears that yoga and meditative practices may evoke a calming effect, which helps students get into a frame of mind conducive to learning that is distinctive from the effects of physical exercise alone.⁹ The beneficial effects of these practices have been demonstrated among students from a wide variety of backgrounds, including those with cognitive disabilities,¹⁰ health impairments¹¹, and emotional-behavioral difficulties (e.g., ADHD, depression, anxiety)¹² making them particularly promising for use in diverse school settings.

The Niroga Institute has been actively engaged in research on the effectiveness of the TLS curriculum in cooperation with researchers from University of California-Berkeley, University of California-San Francisco, WestEd, and the Prevention Research Center at Pennsylvania State University over the past decade. A recent randomized control trial of TLS in an ethnically and economically diverse high school revealed that implementation of TLS resulted in statistically significant improvements in student self-control and concurrent reduction in perceived stress. Follow up interviews with program participants revealed a high degree of intervention acceptability and social validity among both students and teachers.

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⁵ Manjunath, N. K., & Telles, S. (1999). Improvement in visual perceptual sensitivity in children following yoga training. *Journal of Indian Psychology*, 17 (2), 41-45.

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⁸ Barnes, B. L., & Nagarkar, S. (1989). Yoga education and scholastic achievement. *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 16, 96-98.

⁹ Gates, G., & Wolverton, M. (2007). *Emerging Thought and Research on Student, Teacher, and Administrator Stress and Coping*. Information Age Publishing Incorporated CT.

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