

2/02/17

Dear Lily Grace Foundation, or to Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to show my support for the Lily Grace Foundation and the Relaxation Station, a yoga program offered free of charge to students in the public school system.

I'm a registered psychotherapist and certified yoga instructor, who implements yoga in her mental health private practice. I have provided therapy for children with developmental disabilities and on the autism spectrum for over seven years. My yoga classes have been incorporated in studios, mental health facilities, and wellness centers and I'm the instructor and co-creator for Relaxation Station. I was awarded the honor of a "Featured Teacher" by Yoga Activist, a nonprofit that supports yoga outreach in diverse communities. Combining my skill set as a therapist and yoga teacher I helped co-create the Relaxation Station, a program provided through the Lily Grace Foundation, which implements yoga as an evidence based therapeutic modality for children in Public School ASD classrooms.

The Relaxation Station is designed to help children in the Autism Spectrum acquire self calming and sensory regulation skills in order to be successful in transition into general education classes. Relaxation Station utilizes a combination of yoga postures, meditation, and sensory tools such as weighted stuffed animals, brushes, and aromatherapy flowers. You can watch the Relaxation Station Video, from four time Emmy Award winning producer Jack Maher, as he reports on The Lily Grace Foundation's Relaxation Station for children with autism spectrum disorders at www.lilygracefoundation.org. Because of the researched benefits of this program, the Relaxation Station has now been continued as a program for Welchester Elementary and implemented into Shelton Elementary and Pennington Elementary in the Jefferson County Schools.

I believe The Lily Grace Foundation's Relaxation Station greatly benefits students in our ASD classroom. I have worked closely with the Lily Grace Foundation for 2 years and feel confident expressing my full support for this program. I personally have seen these effects: the children calming their nervous systems, falling asleep, laying still for long periods of time without falling asleep, laughter, enjoyment and concentration while using their body, learning new skills while using new muscle groups, master bilateral movement, reports of bringing yoga home, teachers reporting less aggression throughout the school day, and more.

The researched findings of the Relaxation Station showed that the Relaxation Station yoga program is feasible in this sample of population of students. This study proved a reduction in maladaptive behaviors, including irritability, lethargy, social withdrawal, hyperactivity, preoccupation, repetitive movements, inactivity, mood, tantrums, impulse, and noncompliance. Children with ASD sensory experiences can exhibit a 'fight, flight or freeze' response. Yoga can help a child feel more relaxed and less anxious. When the children feel calm and comfortable in their body, regulating behavior becomes easier. This study suggest that The Relaxation Station is an intervention that demonstrated this yoga program may be appropriate for classrooms facing the behavioral challenges of ASD and children on an IEP and help students integrate into non IEP classrooms settings.

We look forward to continued partnership of the Lily Grace Foundation for the Relaxation Station working with you for the Relaxation Station and supporting its expansion.

Sincerely,

Lauren Haug

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