

# Littlefeet Yoga

November 3, 2015

## Yoga with Kids!

**Contributed by Leanne Takman (Teacher Candidate -Comprehensive School of Health - University of Ottawa)**



What a treat we had on Thursday October 8, 2015! We were lucky to have a guest yoga instructor visit and introduce Littlefeet Yoga and her instruction method which we can integrate into our practicum or future classrooms. Littlefeet Yoga was created 8 years ago by Catherine Lesage in an effort to extend the focus of physical activity to include the whole body, connected mind, and spirit. Littlefeet Yoga is a unique amalgamation of exercise, creativity and mindfulness that fulfills the criteria of the Foundations for a Healthy School as well as each of the pillars in the Comprehensive School Health cohort.

Catherine Lesage offers a unique insight to physical education as she herself was a teacher for many years before embarking on this innovative journey. The intention of Littlefeet Yoga is to work with children to explore physical activity in an alternative fashion. Through her three pillars: Play, Creativity, and Cooperation she keeps children engaged through learning in a fun environment while demonstrating steps and laying the foundation for sustaining health and well-being.

In our yoga session we began with breathing exercises. Catherine encouraged us to focus on our breath and the manner in which we breathe. Being mindful while relaxing, we attempt to breath with our abdomen to centre ourselves. Breathing exercises allow the

instructor to explain how children and adults alike can understand their inner selves which helps connect the mind and body.

Not only is Littlefeet Yoga a great social activity to practice as a class but it helps connect the class on a deeper level. Since cooperation is practiced and encouraged among students in each session, the school environment will also benefit as students learn to fit into the roles of cooperative individuals. Yoga also offers a calm environment to practice mindfulness which in turn can help relieve stress through keeping oneself in the moment. A less stressed student population will also benefit the social environment.

Through Yoga we can teach the content of our physical education curriculum while instilling the notion of mindfulness, play, creativity, and cooperation which together build self-esteem and confidence in our students. Students are engaged throughout as the class is based on play, imagination, and exploration. Some poses are incorporated into games, such as Wind in the Trees, which allow the creativity to flow and even enhance the senses as we play with our eyes closed. Getting familiar with one's body and the space it occupies is an important stage of learning. We practice balance and spacial awareness through multiple games and poses.



Through allowing children to get excited about physical activity, especially through integrating the mind and the body, hopefully children will become more mindful about their routines in general. There is even a pose, Fiery Dragon, which is used to acknowledge emotions and get rid of negative feelings. How can you be sad while imitating a baby dragon? Positivity breeds positivity which leads to healthier students and a healthier school environment.

When I think of yoga I think of an independent activity but with Littlefeet Yoga cooperation is encouraged and even necessary to perform some of the poses such as Umbrella and games like Wind in the Trees. In Catherine's class there is also time to create your own yoga! Children can relate to the pictures and drawings Catherine provides and can use these to create a yoga routine or even incorporate their own poses offering a chance for their independence and creativity to shine, how liberating! Children will take this

experience home to their families, to show their friends and loved ones. The discourse that follows might even lead to a community wide concentration on health and well-being which we, the Comprehensive School Health cohort, are ultimately trying to promote.

The Comprehensive School Health cohort believes in the interest of the student beyond academia and recognizes the importance of positive relationships/attitudes and healthy active living while fostering autonomy through increased self-esteem, confidence and resilience. Littlefeet Yoga offers an enjoyable and active way to enhance all of the above. Through boosting confidence students will be able to support their own healthy active journey and will create a positive and healthy school environment. I encourage everyone to get involved in promoting a healthy mind and body which will lead to healthy well-rounded students and a healthy school community.

Namaste!



For more information please visit: [www.littlefeetyoga.com](http://www.littlefeetyoga.com)

Leanne Takman