

## Application Report

International Reading Association

Teacher as Researcher Grant 2010

### Application Data

Short Title	"MBSR and Metacognition: a logical match?"
Short Summary	This study will attempt to ascertain whether regular engagement in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) has an impact on the literacy abilities of struggling adolescent readers. Qualitative and quantitative methods will document changes in concentration, active use of metacognitive reading strategies, and ability to answer comprehension questions after reading.
Application Type	Individual
Requested Amount	\$2,375
Research Methods	Correlational; Descriptive Research; Research Synthesis
Grade Levels	High School
Referral Source	Web site

### Research Description

You will be able to update and edit until you submit your application. Save changes as you work and return at any time to complete the application. The description of proposed research should be as specific as possible and follow the outline typically used for dissertation or sponsored research proposals. Follow APA style and format guidelines. Do not include the name(s) of the submitter(s) and institutional affiliation(s). Do not use underline, bold or italic text. Character counts include spaces and punctuation.

**1. Full Project Title \***

(150 characters maximum)

Metacognition and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction: an action research study examining use of MBSR as a tool to enhance literacy intervention

**2. Abstract \***

(700 characters maximum) Describe the purpose, method, and potential significance of the proposed research.

This study will measure the impact that regular engagement in a scientifically researched relaxation technique known as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction has on the literacy abilities of high school

students who read below grade level.

The mixed methods approach will include a pretest and post test as well as surveys and teacher observations, all seeking to answer the following questions: Can MBSR increase students' ability to concentrate on reading? Can MBSR, combined with explicit strategy instruction, increase students' active reading skills more than strategy instruction alone?

If results are positive, MBSR instruction could become a teaching tool to enhance literacy instruction.

**3. Proposed Support Start Date \***

(mm/dd/yyyy)

05/31/2010

**4. Proposed Support End Date \***

(mm/dd/yyyy)

01/31/2011

**5. Research Description \***

(3,000 characters maximum) Describe your role as a teacher researcher

- How will you benefit specifically as a teacher researcher?
- How did you become interested in this question?
- What do you already know about the question from any professional literature and from your own experiences that will help you with the project?
- How will you as a teacher researcher, your students, and the broader school community benefit from this research?

As a teacher researcher, I will lead student participants in a relaxation technique known as mindfulness based relaxation technique, or MBSR. I will begin the process by undertaking a week of MBSR teacher training through the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Gaining experience in teaching MBSR is one of the major benefits I would receive as a teacher researcher.

In September 2010, I will begin the main phase of the action research by introducing my tenth grade literacy intervention students to MBSR. Student research participants will then be accepted based on their interest and on parental approval.

Student participants will begin by taking a pretest (from the Qualitative Reading Inventory-4) that measures reading comprehension as well as a survey asking them to self-assess their ability to concentrate when reading. I will then, over two class periods, teach students how to engage in mindfulness based stress reduction. Once they have learned the technique, I will guide the students through three sessions of mbsr each week over the course of the next eight weeks. Each MBSR session will last ten minutes for the first four weeks and fifteen minutes during the next four weeks.

During the same eight weeks, I will teach students how to use the research-based reading strategies of visualizing, inferring, and questioning. Students will also practice these reading strategies during both guided and independent reading. A second group of students will serve as a control group. These students will also be given the pretest and survey and then engage in eight weeks of reading strategy instruction, but this group will not engage in MBSR.

At the end of the eight weeks, both groups will take a post test (from the QRI-4) measuring changes in reading comprehension since the pretest. Both groups will take a second survey again asking them to self-assess their ability to concentrate when reading.

Results of the assessments, surveys, and researcher descriptions of observed behaviors will then be

compared between the two groups as the teacher researcher analyzes the data and seeks to answer the research questions outlined in the abstract.

I became interested in the question of how MBSR might enhance literacy instruction when I learned that decades of empirical research on MBSR show that it can reduce stress, enhance coping mechanisms, and increase self-efficacy. Even if literacy related goals of this project turn out to be overly optimistic, students will still benefit from learning how to use MBSR in their lives.

While mbsr has been used in education as well as in medical clinics, prison rehabilitation, and mental health programs, a relatively small number of educators use mbsr in the classroom. If MBSR is shown to be effective in improving students' literacy skills, the implications could be very significant for millions of at risk adolescents and the teachers across the country who are working every day to help them improve their futures.

#### 6. Rationale \*

(2,000 characters maximum) Describe your teaching context (e.g., school setting, community, classroom environment).

- What role do you play in this context and what is the nature of your role as a teacher researcher?
- What is the question or issue as a teacher researcher that drives your proposed inquiry?

I teach small groups of tenth grade students who read below grade level. Over the past three and a half years of working in this type of literacy intervention setting, I have continually looked for more and better ways to help them overcome life-long literacy struggles. How to best serve these students has been the guiding question of my education career and is the guiding question of this proposed inquiry.

For the past two years, I have also taught a mixed-grades English class as part of a school within a school alternative learning environment. I followed a long-standing tradition of this program by inviting a local meditation and yoga instructor to guide the students through some stress reduction activities. What I noticed--and what empirical research on MBSR confirms--is that students came away from these activities with a heightened sense of self awareness, greater self-efficacy, and a greater ability to function under stress.

As I saw these results, I began to wonder if these types of activities might also help with literacy problems. I have been on the lookout ever since for programs that train teachers to guide students in stress reduction techniques. Several exist, but none with a firmer foundation than the University of Massachusetts' MBSR training program.

So, having found a technique that is based in science and would therefore be easily accepted in my school as well as in my community, I began thinking that I should try using MBSR as part of my metacognitive strategies-based literacy intervention program. Perhaps, I thought, I have found a tool that will make the daunting task of helping these students a little easier and, more importantly, increase my students' literacy and academic gains and set them up for a brighter future.

## Research Methods

Describe the research methods you will employ in your study. Follow APA style and format guidelines. Do not include the name(s) of the submitter(s) and institutional affiliation(s). Character counts include spaces and punctuation.

#### 7. What are you proposing to do in your classroom that will help you explore your question? \*

(500 characters maximum)

After receiving professional training in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, I will teach a group of high school students how to engage in the MBSR technique. I will simultaneously guide students to use literacy strategies. Over eight weeks, these two activities will be the foundation for students' independent and guided reading practice as well as their journal writing.

**8. What forms of documentation do you plan to use as part of your inquiry? \***

(500 characters maximum) E.g., journals, student work samples, video and/or audio recordings. Be specific about what will be done and how this documentation will help guide your inquiry.

Documentation will include comprehension assessments drawn from the Qualitative Reading Intentory-4, completed student surveys, and teacher researcher observations. For purposes of sharing this information with other teachers, I will also use a Flip video camera to record several class sessions during the process.

**9. How will you organize, reflect on, and analyze data? \***

(500 characters maximum) Be specific about how you will examine your data (e.g., qualitative, case study, generate categories).

After the main phase of the research I will compare the data gathered from the pretest, post test, and surveys. I will analyze this data first on its own terms and then in the context of the daily journal in which I have recorded my observations day to day. I will then form conclusions in response to the primary research questions mentioned earlier.

**10. Will you be working on your own or with colleagues? \***

(250 characters maximum) If the latter, explain their contribution.

I will be continually bounce ideas off of my colleagues both within the school as well as members of the community familiar with . I will ask also these people to help me reflect on the project when I am in the organizing and conclusion phase.

## Dissemination

Describe ways you see yourself sharing the results of your inquiry with colleagues and members of the International Reading Association (e.g., journal articles, workshops, conference presentations). Be specific. Follow APA style and format guidelines. Do not include the name(s) of the submitter(s) and institutional affiliation(s). Character counts include spaces and punctuation.

**11. What will you be able to change in your classroom as a result of your research? \***

(750 characters maximum)

As a result of this research, I will be able to use MBSR as a teaching tool to help my literacy students in new ways. While I have always taught reading comprehension strategies, my students have often struggled to get their minds to settle and focus long enough to actively use these strategies. Many of my literacy intervention students, in other words, struggle to pay attention to text, and that is their primary barrier to better literacy. If MBSR is successful in helping with this issue, I may able to reach more students.

**12. In what ways will you share the results of your inquiry with colleagues and members of the International Reading Association? \***

(750 characters maximum) E.g., journal articles, workshops, and conference presentations

As a literacy interventionist, I frequently conduct inservice workshops as well as one-on-one demonstrations of teaching methods. I will be able to share the findings of this inquiry in that context. I have presented at regional and state conferences, including a regional National Writing Workshop mini-conference, and the 2009 Arkansas Curriculum Conference. I will plan to present this research at similar conferences and would be delighted to do so at one or more IRA sponsored events.

**13. Include a timeline indicating when you expect your inquiry to be completed. \***

(1,000 characters maximum) List dates for data gathering, data analysis, and reporting activities.

June 2010: Attend seven day MBSR training sponsored by the University of Massachusetts Medical School

June-August 2010: Finalize details of my curriculum for the MBSR/ Metacognitive Reading Strategies

unit.

Early September 2010: Establish a group of research participants from my incoming sophomore literacy intervention students, and gain parent approval.

Mid-September 2010: Administer pretest and surveys.

October to November 2010: Conduct eight week MBSR/ Metacognitive Reading Strategies unit.

November 2010: Administer post test and surveys.

November 2010-January 2011: Analyze data and form conclusions

January 2011: Begin sharing the results of my research, first by sharing it with my colleagues, then by writing a professional article and preparing workshop and conference presentations to be offered in various regional, state, and national literacy-related conferences.

## Budget

Describe and explain the rationale for each budget line item. Enter "0" in amount and "none" in descriptor if necessary. For more information please review budget guideline. Character counts include spaces and punctuation.

### 14. Personnel Amount

\$0

### 15. Personnel description and rationale

(200 characters maximum)

none

### 16. Materials Amount

\$0

### 17. Materials description and rationale

(200 characters maximum)

none

### 18. Travel Amount

\$800

### 19. Travel description and rationale

(200 characters maximum)

This will cover airfare and onsite tent lodging to allow me to attend the training in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction offered by the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

### 20. Computer Amount

\$0

### 21. Computer description and rationale

(200 characters maximum)

none

**22. Office Expenses Amount**

\$0

**23. Office description and rationale**

(200 characters maximum)

none

**24. Clerical Support Amount**

\$0

**25. Clerical description and rationale**

(200 characters maximum)

none

**26. Other Amount**

\$1,525

**27. Other description and rationale**

(200 characters maximum)

Tuition for professional Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction training through UMASS Medical School.

**28. Amount of outside funding**

\$150

**29. Sources of outside project-related funding (if none, enter "none")**

(200 characters maximum)

Fayetteville School District: this funding is for the FLIP video camera and has already been procured.

**30. Total Project Budget \***

\$2,425

**31. Total Requested from IRA \***

\$2,375