

Developed and funded by the Hawn Foundation (founded by actress Goldie Hawn), the “Mindfulness Education” (ME) program consists of teaching a series of simple techniques designed to enhance self-awareness, focused attention, problem solving abilities, stress reduction, and prosocial behaviors in children. Study participants included 12 teachers and 249 children from grade 4-7 classrooms (6 experimental and 6 wait-list control classrooms).

Results revealed that students who participated in the ME program, compared to children who did not, improved in self-concept, self-reflection, positive affect, optimism,

mindful awareness, and prosocial goals. Compared to children in the control group, teachers reported children in the program showed significant reductions in aggressive and oppositional/dysregulated behaviors and significant increases in social competence and attention/concentration.

As the evidence grows, educators and policymakers will increasingly be able to adopt mindfulness-based techniques. ●

Dr. Patricia Jennings is the director of the Garrison Institute's Initiative on Contemplation and Education. Its April 2008 Education Symposium presenter materials and audio clips, and a mapping survey of contemplative methods now used in K-12 educational settings, are available at www.garrisoninstitute.org.

‘Why Does the Buddha Wear Lipstick?’

The title reveals just one of the questions inquisitive children ask at Jamyang Buddhist Centre in London. Brian Richardson reports ...

So far this year, Jamyang Buddhist Centre has had visits from ten primary schools and one teacher training college. Altogether, about 350 primary school children have visited the center. In previous years there have been as many as 1,400 children visiting.

Jamyang’s team of volunteers give children and teachers a tour of the building and an explanation of some of the ways Buddha taught on how to live life with a good heart. Jamyang not only contributes to a school’s curriculum, but also offers a positive experience for both kids and teachers, who often speak of the peace and happiness they experience after the meditation session in the gompa. “By teaching children to have a good heart and be kind to others, they grow up to be good human beings,” Lama Zopa Rinpoche has explained.

Fortunately, nobody has asked what enlightenment is. Having enjoyed a jammy dodger and an apple juice, we do a short secular meditation, which the children love. They also love waiting for the note of the bell to fade away before they can open their eyes. We get comments like: “My memories all disappeared and my mind became fresh.”

We are planning to put some web pages on the Jamyang site with details of how to book a tour, along with other pages for children to learn about Dharma. We also want to develop some teaching materials, and to visit schools.

Oh yes, why does the Buddha have red lips? Because it symbolizes his sacred speech. And when Cynthia Bonell (who has recently returned from teaching Tibetan children at the refugee reception centers in Kathmandu and Dharamsala) did the equanimity meditation, one child said afterwards: “I felt like my head and my heart changed places.”

NOTE: As *Mandala* went to press, a week-long summer school for children between the ages of four and twelve was being planned, providing an opportunity for youngsters to participate in arts and crafts work and to play together in the conducive environment of the center, with an emphasis on learning to appreciate and value each other in all the activities that were to be undertaken.

A crèche facility for parents was also offered, and activities for parents included discussion, meditation and some free time. ●

For more information go to www.jamyang.co.uk.