



Students engaged in mindfulness exercises in class can improve their writing self-efficacy

What is this Research About?

Students with strong writing self-efficacy have high confidence in their writing abilities. Strong writing skills are important for students to achieve success in post-secondary studies and the workplace. Research demonstrates that techniques that calm the mind and body, like mindfulness and progressive muscle relaxation (PMR), can improve self-efficacy. Mindfulness has also been found to reduce postsecondary students' apprehension towards writing. In this study, researchers explored how mindfulness and progressive muscle relaxation might improve writing self-efficacy.

What did the Researchers Do?

The researchers collected data from two sections of first year applied health science students enrolled in a writing-intensive course at a Canadian university. Both sections listened to an 8-minute audio recorded exercise at the beginning of class for 8 weeks, with the lights dimmed and silence encouraged. One section received a mindfulness exercise focused on breathwork. The other section received a PMR exercise focused on tensing and relaxing different muscles. Researchers administered questionnaires at the onset and after the completion of the 8 weeks to assess writing self-efficacy. At the end of the 8 weeks, students also indicated their engagement with their exercises.

What did the Researchers Find?

Researchers found that students in both sections (i.e., the mindfulness group and the PMR group) experienced a significant improvement in their writing self-efficacy after the 8 weeks of exercises. Students who practiced mindfulness were 24% more engaged than those in the PMR group. Researchers also found a positive relationship between engagement in mindfulness exercises and final self-efficacy scores. This relationship was not found for those in the PMR group.

SoTL

Snapshot

A synopsis of a scholarship of teaching and learning journal article

→ How to Implement this Research in Your Classroom

- Research has shown that mindfulness and progressive muscle relaxation exercises (PMR) are beneficial for calming the body and mind and the development of self-efficacy. Researchers explored the impact of these exercises on writing self-efficacy. Both techniques significantly improved writing self-efficacy in health science students enrolled in a writing-intensive course. Instructors can support students' development of writing self-efficacy by starting their class with a guided mindfulness exercise. To support student engagement, instructors can dim the lights and limit distractions by encouraging silence.

→ Citation

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