

Beyond Academic Programs:

Overcoming Stress and Developing the Full Potential of Students

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Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Brian D'Agostino. I am an educator, a writer, and a social scientist. This is my eighth year teaching mathematics in New York City public schools. I currently teach at Humanities Preparatory Academy, a nationally recognized small, alternative high school, where I also serve as United Federation of Teachers chapter leader. I have practiced Transcendental Meditation since 1975.

Let me begin by saying that teachers and students today are subjected to an unprecedented amount of stress. Young people are growing up in families and neighborhoods that frequently experience unemployment, divorce, racism, gang and other violence, and diseases of many kinds. Many parents manage their stress through drugs, alcohol, tobacco, physical abusiveness, and mindless entertainment that often glorifies these very pathologies, especially violence.

Our youth today are struggling with these overwhelming destructive forces. We see their effects in youth culture. Can we expect youngsters to check all these problems at the door when they enter our schools? Of course, we cannot.

I am fortunate to be teaching at a very well functioning New York City public school, but still I see all around me colleagues burning out from dealing with the needs of students, and a majority of students unable to apply themselves well to academic work because of the stress in their lives. And when I meet with colleagues from the teachers' union, I become aware of many schools in the New York City Department of Education that are completely unraveling as institutions because of all the problems they are burdened with.

Under these circumstances, merely academic instruction, no matter how enlightened and well funded, is doomed to failure for the majority of our youngsters. This means wholesale failure for teachers and administrators, as well as for the students themselves. Our schools today need a program that can overcome stress and unfold full potential at the most basic level: that of the human mind and brain.

I believe, based on my twenty-eight years of experience as a TM meditator and on the peer reviewed scientific research on TM, that Transcendental Meditation is by far the most effective program of this kind available, and our best hope for a future of academic success and general wellbeing. Thank you.