

Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga All Year in School

Date : August 14, 2017



At Ambrit International School in Rome, Italy, [Kumar-Kumari Yantra Yoga](#) has been offered as an after-school activity for well over ten years. The hour long class, once a week, for children 6 to 9 years of age, has room for 12-13 students due to the teaching space which is a very large classroom where tables are moved aside and mats placed on the floor.

The class has always been full, and sometimes there is even a waiting list. Nearly all the children remain a full year even though they have the choice to change after-school activities twice in the school year. It has been wonderful to see some children remain even for two and three years. They become capable assistants in the class, leading warm-ups and demonstrating the more complicated movements and explaining the sounds used with the breathing in kumar-kumari yoga.

At the end of the lesson, all the children help roll up the mats and sit down together for pizza, biscuits and something to drink.

This last year, some of the children thought we should get more students to join the group so they advertised the club by making and placing posters around the school stating, 'Yoga is COOL', 'Kumar-Kumari makes you the strongest' and even, 'K.K.Yoga makes you like Michael Jackson'. Well, interesting!

Over the years of teaching Kumar-Kumari Yantra Yoga, I have been approached numerous times by parents and teachers who are more than ready to send their 'over-active' boys and girls to the class in the hopes of an instant calming effect on the child. What I can see as results of the weekly class are children learning to form a group and work together, and each child beginning to understand his/her own breathing, and coordination of movements to that breathing. I sometimes read to them a description of the benefits of one of the Kumar-Kumari movements. The youngsters have their own way to describe the benefits using words like 'I feel calm, stronger, I just feel better'.

The opportunity to expand Kumar-Kumari Yoga within Ambrit's school took place this last year when I became free from day to day work as a Nursery teacher — Yes, I finally retired after teaching 29 years at the school. And, all the more, the motivation to do this came when I received my Kumar-Kumari teaching certificate/diploma in Tenerife's Teacher Training last November, 2016.

When I sent an email to Ambrit administration and staff about being available to present yoga in classes, requests came in from a number of teachers as varied as a 10 minute warm up class for 3 year olds in Nursery to 'taking over' the Middle School physical education classes.

When the first grade classrooms had a unit on 'What Makes a Healthy Body', I was asked to present Kumar Kumari in each of the 3 classrooms for a 20 to 30 minute period. The children and space available in each class was different. But there was room to present the beginning purification breathing and some of the different *tsigjon* and *lungsang* exercises. Though brief, it gave the students a beginning experience and possible interest in learning more about children's yantra yoga.



Through the year, indoor and outdoor spaces were used. In the school early childhood garden, it was easy to call over a group of children, form a group and do some stretching and movements on the grass. As a substitute teacher in classrooms, a set of kumar kumari's purification breathing, a few other movements and closing breathing, was a new way to start the day.

In March, the school counselor asked if I would offer an hour long yoga lesson in each of the 8th grade classes (13 years old) as one of the activities in their study of handling stress. The large school classroom became a 'fitness center' with 20 mats placed on the floor. The young teens were surprised by how ACTIVE this yoga was, calling out 'hey this isn't yoga, this is a gym class.' They followed a set of warm ups, beginning breathing, and did nearly all the *tsigjon* and a sample of *lungsang* and *yantra* movements. The emphasis was both to have them note their breathing and to attempt to tire them out giving them then the time to relax totally at the end, lying on their mats, noting how they felt. Their reactions about kumar kumari were varied, from 'yeah, I like it' to 'hey I might try it out', to 'now I'm even more stressed out, cause it was something really new'. An article and photos about the yoga classes were sent out to parents and teachers in the school's

monthly electronic newsletter.

What are the possibilities for the next school year? Certainly a continuation of the after school club, Kumar Kumari, Yoga to Grow On. A return visit to the 8th grade classes has already been requested. And there may be the development of a unit on kumar kumari yoga as part of the 5th-6th grade physical education program.... that's work in progress.

Again and again, I thank my Teacher, Chogyal Namkhai Norbu for this precious teaching to children; it is a great help for them and is a particular, wonderful means for yantra yoga teachers, child educators and parents to introduce yantra yoga movements and an understanding of breathing. Within a school setting, in whatever setting, the benefits are immense for children as they grow and develop.

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July 12, 2017