

Yoga helps children soothe away stress

By **SARAH GONET**
Standard-Times correspondent

MARION — Timothy Donahue stretches and the students at the Sippican School in Marion stretch along with him. He said he hopes his instruction gives them lifelong skills for dealing with stress.

“When I get there, sometimes the kids are so wired up that they need to be shown how to take a step back and calm themselves down,” said Mr. Donahue, executive director of Yoga Kids. Mr. Donahue also teaches yoga at the Hathaway School in New Bedford.

“When you take into consideration all the things children have to deal with, their lives are much more stressful than you might think,” said Dennis M. Winn, principal of the Hathaway School.

In an effort to expose students to positive ways of dealing with stress, Hathaway is one of several local schools that have enlisted the help of Yoga Kids Inc., a Marion-based nonprofit.

Mr. Donahue, a certified yoga instructor who also has a bachelor's degree in physical education, has two chil-

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dren of his own. He started Yoga Kids six years ago, realizing the potential benefits the discipline could have on children. He conducts a number of in-school and after-school programs in New Bedford and Marion and recently received a \$4,000 grant.

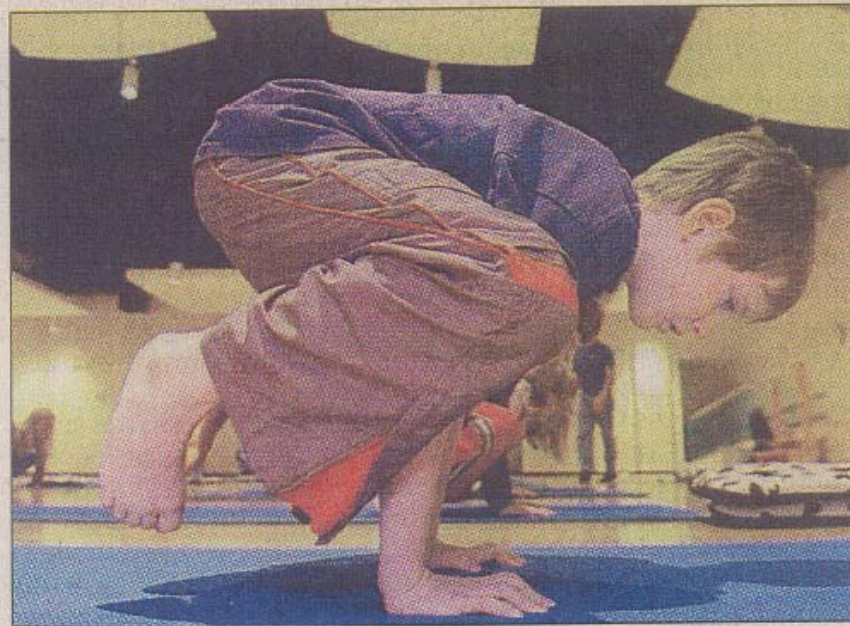
“What I show them are techniques they can use when they start feeling very stressed or nervous,” said Mr. Donahue, noting the case of one student who was able to control her panic attacks after taking part in his class.

“It's a wonderful stress management tool for children,” said Diane Cook, a third-grade teacher at the Sippican School whose class participates in Yoga Kids. “There is both a mental and physical component to it, so it puts the children on an equal playing field.”

Her students agree.

“I love yoga,” said Talia Lyons, one of Ms. Cook's students.

As for the students at Hathaway, the techniques they learn in Mr. Donahue's classes seem



to be hitting home, as well.

“I think yoga is great. It helps you concentrate and think,” said Brandon Gonsalves, a fourth-grader.

“I have asthma, and yoga helps me when I have an attack,” said Victoria Melo, also a fourth-grader.

“Yoga is fun,” third-grader Ethan Martinez said. “When you're sad or mad, yoga will calm you right down.”

For more information about Yoga Kids Inc., call (508) 748-2025.

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ETHAN MARTINEZ , third-grader