****

**Embargoed for Release:**

April 11, 2018

**Media Contact:**

Carolyn Scofield

(407) 342-8809

cscofiel@tulane.edu

**School-based yoga can help children better manage stress and anxiety**

NEW ORLEANS – Participating in yoga and mindfulness activities at school helped third-graders exhibiting anxiety improve their wellbeing and emotional health, according to a new Tulane University study.

The research is being presented Thursday at the Society of Behavioral Medicine’s (SBM’s) 39th Annual Meeting & Scientific Sessions.

Researchers worked with a public school in New Orleans to add mindfulness and yoga to the school's existing empathy-based programming for students needing supplementary support. Third graders who were screened for symptoms of anxiety at the beginning of the school year were randomly assigned to two groups. A control group of 32 students received care as usual, which included counseling and other activities led by a school social worker.

The intervention group of 20 students participated in small group yoga/mindfulness activities for 8 weeks using a Yoga Ed curriculum. Students attended the small group activities at the beginning of the school day. The sessions included breathing exercises, guided relaxation and several traditional yoga poses appropriate for children.

Researchers evaluated each group’s health-related quality of life before and after the intervention, using two widely recognized research tools. The Brief Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale-Peabody Treatment Progress Battery version was used to assess life satisfaction, and the Pediatric Quality of Life Inventory was used to assess psychosocial and emotional domains through baseline, midline and endline assessments.

“The students who received the intervention demonstrated significantly greater improvement in psychosocial and emotional quality of life compared to their peers who received standard care,” said Christopher Anderson, a co-investigator on the study and a doctoral student in epidemiology at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

Researchers targeted third grade because it is a crucial time of transition for elementary students, when academic expectations increase and literacy levels progress from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.”

“Students at that stage need to be more on task and complete their work with autonomy,” said Alessandra Bazzano, principal investigator of the study and associate professor in the Global Community Health and Behavioral Sciences department at Tulane. “The learning process in third grade is all about preparing them for what is coming in the next years, but that process can cause a lot of stress and anxiety for 8-year-olds, particularly around test time.”

Tulane University co-authors of the study include Bazzano, Anderson and Jeanette Gustat, clinical associate professor of epidemiology. The study was funded by the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking and the Center for Public Service at Tulane University.

The research team will present the findings Thursday at 3:30 p.m. CT during a paper session at the SBM Annual Meeting, being held in New Orleans at the Hilton Riverside New Orleans.

The Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) is a 2,400-member organization of scientific researchers, clinicians and educators. They study interactions among behavior, biology and the environment, and translate findings into interventions that improve the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities ([www.sbm.org](http://www.sbm.org)).

###