



**Reducing Stress In Schools**  
A guide for recognizing and addressing stress  
Online Graduate Course

Teacher Education Institute ©

**Course Description:**

Today's students and educators are experiencing unprecedented levels of stress. Academic pressures, social challenges, community stressors, and post-pandemic impacts are affecting student behavior, mental health, and academic performance. Schools need practical, research-based approaches that address the root causes of stress while strengthening learning environments.

Reducing Stress in Schools is a professional development course grounded in the research and practices outlined in *Reducing Stress in Schools: Restoring Connection and Community* by Mathew Portell, Ingrid L. Cockhren, Tyisha J. Noise, Julie Kurtz, and Julie Nicholson. The course translates neuroscience, trauma-responsive practices, and relationship-centered strategies into actionable classroom and schoolwide systems.

**Objectives:**

- Understand the neurobiology of stress and its impact on behavior and learning
- Recognize how stress affects memory, executive functioning, and emotional regulation
- Distinguish between willful misbehavior and stress-based dysregulation
- Implement classroom management strategies that promote co-regulation and psychological safety
- Apply discipline practices that reduce shame and increase skill-building
- Design learning environments that lower stress and increase belonging
- Teach students to identify stress signals and use practical regulation tools
- Balance rigor and accountability with emotional safety.

**Curriculum Design:**

*Reducing Stress in Schools* is a sixty hour, three credit graduate level course completed over a thirteen-week period. During the first week of the course, the participants will complete an introduction. Modules one through nine will be completed one per week. Module ten will be completed over a two-week period, so students will have time to revise and complete the final integration project.

**Hardware & Computer Skills Requirements**

Students may use either an Apple computer or a PC. Students should possess basic word processing skills and have internet access with an active email account. Students also are

expected to have a basic knowledge of how to use a Web browser, such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Google etc.

### **Course Materials**

*Reducing Stress in Schools: Restoring Connection and Community* by Mathew Portell, Ingrid L. Cockhren, Tyisha J. Noise, Julie Kurtz, and Julie Nicholson. ISBN 9781682539552

## **Module Outline**

### **Module One: Why Schools Need Stress Reduction**

#### **Content:**

1. Identify primary stressors affecting students and educators
2. Recognize systemic vs. individual sources of stress
3. Reflect on stress within participants' own school environments

### **Module Two: Neurobiology of Stress**

#### **Content:**

1. Explain how stress affects brain function
2. Understand why stressed students struggle with reasoning and self-control
3. Connect neuroscience to classroom practice

### **Module Three: Impact of Stress on Behavior**

#### **Content:**

1. Recognize signs of stress in students and staff
2. Differentiate between behavioral problems and stress responses
3. Understand cumulative impact of chronic stress

### **Module Four: School Environments That Support Regulation**

#### **Content:**

1. Connect stress to common classroom behaviors
2. Understand why stressed brains cannot access higher-order thinking
3. Reframe "misbehavior" as dysregulation

### **Module Five: Rethinking Discipline**

#### **Content:**

1. Distinguish helpful stress from harmful stress
2. Learn how to create optimal challenge in learning
3. Balance rigor with regulation

### **Module Six: Relationship Building**

#### **Content:**

1. Evaluate school climate through a stress-reduction lens
2. Design predictable, safe learning spaces
3. Understand how belonging reduces stress

## **Module Seven: Stress and Academic Performance**

### **Content:**

1. Implement regulation-centered classroom management
2. Replace power struggles with supportive structures
3. Use preventative strategies to reduce dysregulation

## **Module Eight: Teaching Students Stress Identification**

### **Content:**

1. Apply discipline that preserves dignity
2. Reduce re-traumatization through restorative approaches
3. Teach skills rather than impose punishments

## **Module Nine: Classroom Management Strategies**

### **Content:**

1. Understand relationships as a protective factor
2. Use connection as a preventative tool
3. Strengthen relational capacity in classrooms

## **Module Ten: Tying It All Together: Capstone Project: Stress-Reduction Action Plan**

### **Content:**

Final Integration Project:

Write a 500 word reflective essay addressing:

- The importance of life skills in education
- The role of teachers in fostering these skills
- How these skills will impact students' future success

## **Student Requirements**

1. Participation: Actively participate in all activities.
2. Reading assignments: Complete all reading assignments including online module content and linked web resources.
3. Written reflections for each session during the course are required. Each reflection must conform to APA style. Written reflections will be due as follows:
4. Reflection questions and Talking Points are due at the end of each module.
5. Final Reflections will be due at the end of the course.
6. Final project: Due by the end of Module 10.

## **Course Evaluation**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Grading Scale</b>	
Class Participation	9	72-77	<b>A</b>
Class Assignments	30	66-71	<b>B</b>
Final Project	20	60-65	<b>C</b>
Reading	18		
Total Points	77		

## **Student Academic Integrity**

Participants guarantee that all academic class work is original. Any academic dishonesty or plagiarism (to take ideas, writings, etc. from another and offer them as one's own), is a violation of student academic behavior standards as outlined by our partnering colleges and universities and is subject to academic disciplinary action.