



[Today Show Segment](#)

Thank you for inquiring about Operation Dragon Heart at East Elementary and the use of heart rate monitors to support social and emotional skills of students. The use of the heart rate monitor is actually a culmination of several years of work to best meet the emotional needs of students. It is important to know that the heart rate monitor is not the answer, but is simply a tool to help students make a connection to their emotions and then respond to the reading on the monitor by implementing self regulation skills they have been taught and practiced. At East Elementary, we feel strongly that there is an important foundational work to be done in order for students to find success with the heart rate monitor. To follow is a brief overview of the work we have done over the past four years:

1. **Changing Our Lens:** It is important for all staff to have a common belief and understanding around student behaviors. We started by studying and learning about the work of Ross Greene and his [Walking Tour For Educators](#). All staff must have the mindset and common understanding that “students will do well if they can.” When students are struggling with behaviors, this is due to lagging skills and unsolved problems. We must respond appropriately to these problems and teach the lagging skills. Dr. Greene also reminds us that not all students must be treated the same but rather they must be treated based on their unique needs.
2. **Trauma Informed School:** Another big focus for our staff has been about building awareness around trauma and teaching the whole child. Recently, our staff has read *[Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom](#)* and *[Relationship, Responsibility, and Regulation: Trauma-Invested Practices for Fostering Resilient Learners](#)*, both by Kristin Souers and Pete Hall. The three R’s: Relationship, Responsibility and Regulation are foundational to our work with students.
3. **Social and Emotional Lessons for All students:** In order for students to learn about self-regulation and build strong relationships with teachers and peers, we implemented a morning





meeting block and teach social and emotional skills to all students as a tier I instructional approach. It is important to us that the social and emotional lessons we teach have a connection to brain research and that students learn about the three levels of their brain: brain stem (safety), limbic system (emotions and motivation), and cortex (thinking). At East, we have enjoyed using *[In Focus](#)* by Tom McSheehy, MSW, LSW. The lessons are very user friendly and easy for teachers to implement. We love the common language that the entire school can use, and we love that students are gaining an understanding that their behaviors and emotions are connected to a specific part of their brain and there are strategies they can learn in order to self regulate. To be very honest, the heart rate monitors would have no meaning to students without the skills and knowledge they are gaining through the ***In Focus*** lessons. Students must be taught self regulation skills.

4. **Heart Rate Monitors:** Lastly, we wanted some students to have a visual tool to help them connect their feelings to a visual representation of a number on a heart rate monitor. We do NOT have all students on heart rate monitors and have found that some students do not benefit from using them. We currently have approximately 30 select students using the watches. Students check the watch out in the morning and get a quick “check-in” with our school counselor or assistant principal. This provides an opportunity to discuss certain self regulation strategies or goals on which they are working. Additionally, the counselor or AP may discuss certain patterns or points of interest they may be noticing on the heart rate reports they are monitoring. There may be certain times of day or content areas that are impacting a student’s heart rate, and the check-in or check-out time is a great opportunity to discuss what strategies could be helpful for them to use.

Typical heart rate monitors in the school setting are used to monitor physical activity such as in a physical education class. To use them for monitoring emotions is what is new and unique. We have been working with IHT to try and make the heart rate monitors work for our needs and they have been very responsive to making adjustments to this unique program. If you would like more information about their heart rate monitors you may contact Eric Larson at eric@ihtusa.com.

Thank you for your interest in our program and supporting the social and emotional needs of kids.

Kelly Card
Principal

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