

Pitt, of the Birmingham-based Transcendental Meditation Program-Detroit, said people must understand what TM is and isn't.

"It's not a religion. It's not a philosophy," Pitt said.

It's a mental technique Nataki students practice for 10 minutes, twice a day, and staff practice for 20 minutes, twice a day.

"It gives the body a very deep rest, a rest that's twice as deep as the rest we get during sleep at night," Pitt said. "The difference is the mind is fully awake and alert. It's a very pleasant experience."

As meditators relax, they silently think about their mantra, a sound that has no particular meaning. Each person is assigned a mantra, which they keep private.

The routine has helped Jared Williams, 13, control his anger. Before he began meditating, he was sensitive and quick to get angry if someone teased him. "I've started to calm down and get a sense of humor," Jared said.

Students take the meditation seriously. Almost on cue they began filing into the gymnasium Wednesday morning to pick up their carpet square and their floor seat, then lined up on the gymnasium's wood floor.

Students said later that the morning meditation helps them stay alert in class.

"It makes you not fall asleep in class," said seventh-grader Reginald Dozier, 12.