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Brimfield educator: Remedial program an innovative one

> *Dr. Al Milliren and wife, Mary, lead Brimfield Elementary students in a movement re-education exercise designed to develop the brain's potential.*

BRIMFIELD – Brimfield Elementary School recently initiated an innovative summer school with a remedial program using Edu-Kinesthetics to help slower students catch up and remain with their peers, a school official said.

According to Brimfield Principal Jim Griner the program is designed for first through fourth-grade students and lasts for one month.

A total of 23 students, some suffering from learning disabilities, have enrolled in the program.

The unique four-phase Edu-Kinesthetics program is supervised by Helen Cox, of Options in Health and Education, of East Peoria, and her assistant Cindy Piro. The program utilizes eye-hand, coordination and brain stimulation exercises, coupled with

active learning experiences in an effort to help develop better patterns of learning and thinking.

Griner, who prefers calling the program an "innovation" rather than an experiment at this school located about 25 miles west of Peoria, said he believes it is important for educators to keep abreast of new technology and approaches to enhancing student's learning abilities.

Brimfield Elementary School teachers were trained in the program by Helen and are assisting with the classes.

Before the summer school program began, Helen said she conducted a diagnostic screening on each student in the areas of reading and mathematics. Students' hand, foot and eye dominance were checked. The students were questioned about their learning style in regard to reading and concentration. Basic patterning was checked to see how well the brain functioned, and students were videotaped while performing a variety of activities such as walking, running and crawling.

Once evaluated, the students were placed into one of six groups, consisting of four pupils each, and are being taught reading, phonics, mathematics, thinking skills and movement re-education.

Computers are being used in teaching mathematics. The students also will use computers to complete "computer puzzles" such as dot-to-dot pictures which aid in the development of thinking skills, eye-hand coordination and color identification, said teacher Mrs. Alberta LaFollette.

She noted that as a student completes certain puzzles fashioned by the computer, particularly those involving colors, staff are better able to identify and understand the student's emotional state that day.

Helen stressed that enhancing students basic thinking skills will help the students become more creative thinkers and learners and, overall, helps build self esteem while easing stress.

"Movement re-education" is another phase of the Edu-Kinesthetics program, Helen said. In all, 14 energy pathways stretch from various parts of the body to the brain. By stimulating these pathways through touch, movement and balance activities, the brain becomes activated and learning occurs more easily, according to Helen.

As an example, Dr. Al Milliren – who recently visited the summer school and joined students in some of the exercises – noted that the massaging of the calf of the leg stimulates the brain in such as way that it improves verbal expression. "There's energy in the calf for language," he remarked.

Milliren wrote the learning manuals being used by Options in Health Learning Center in East Peoria.

While at Brimfield, Milliren met with Griner, Helen, parents, teachers and other supervisory personnel to discuss the program and the impact it has had on the students.

Students of the summer school will be videotaped at the end of the four-week

session. Their learning skills in the various fields will be re-tested. It will then be noted if this new approach of using calisthenics, pressure points and stimulation, computer puzzles and movement re-education, brain gym exercises, and balancing of dominance patterns actually improved the students' learning skills.

> *Students begin to improve thinking skills as they put together giant puzzles.*