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## Center Teaches Mind-body Connection to Enhance Learning



*Carla Hannaford teaching at the "Physiological Basis of Learning" Workshop at ICC.*

"The Physiological Basis of Learning" is the topic of a lecture and workshop sponsored by the Options Center for Health and Education this weekend. Carla Hannaford, PhD. And Charles Harter, M. D. will lead the three - day lecture and workshops series. The sessions will focus on the brain and how to it learns, how to overcome stumbling blocks and the effectiveness of such learning programs as Brain Gym®.

Anyone is welcome to attend the workshop, form parents and educators to health professionals, psychologists and counselors.

Physical movement as the key to learning is one of the principles emphasized at Options. One activity participants in the children's programs learn is the "cross crawl." In it, the children march in place while touching the left hand to the right knee, and vice versa to "run on the brain." Options Center director and founder Helen Cox says this crossing over creates a bridge between the left and right halves of the brain.

"It's a beautiful way to get the left and right brain working together," Helen says.



*Emmy is one of the participants.*



*Participants learning a variety of ways to do Cross Crawls.*

Helen says movement as a catalyst to learning is very important. Another activity participants perform is the "Lazy 8s." Tracing a figure 8 on a chalkboard prepares a child for reading and writing by strengthening hand-eye coordination. The Lazy 8 serves as Options' unofficial logo.

Helen says programs at Options are for everyone, not just children. The center offers programs for adults as well, who usually are concerned with improving their memories or concentration abilities.



Helen, who is a registered nurse, founded Options in 1988. She was inspired by the concepts of Dr. Al Milliren, a former Illinois State University professor of education and counseling and acquaintance of hers.

"He was my motivator," she said.

Students at Options are taught the "Whole Brain" approach to learning. When they first come to the center, they are given a test to assess their learning style. The 16-week classes then are tailored around the students' needs.

*Carla and Helen at the workshop.*



*Students are doing “Heart Space”, an integrative Brain Gym® exercise.*

Many classes are taught on a one-to-one basis because emphasis is made on the individual, although some are conducted in small groups.

Classes at the learning center cover a variety of topics, from study skills to reading and math fundamentals. Some problems, such as visual processing, sometimes take more than one session to work out.

Learning is the main goal at Options.

“I want everyone to be able to learn easily. ” Helen says. “I believe learning should be easy, natural and fun. When it’s not, something is wrong.”

According to Helen, if children are under stress, it is difficult for them to learn.

“Children have feelings of inadequacy and failure,” she says. They say, “I can’t do it.” They can spend hours [on a concept] and not do well or retain it.

“I hate seeing kids under stress. That’s not the way it has to be.”

Remedial help is offered for students with failing grades and low self-confidence. “Enrichment classes also are offered for students who want to get ahead.

For M.R.’s son, R.J., taking him to Options when he as 5 ½ was a preventive measure. She wanted him to get ahead in the skills he would need in the first grade.

M.R. already knew about Brain Gym®, a series of movements used to develop balance

between the two hemispheres of the brain. With a degree in physical education and health, she knew how important movement is for learning.

"[Options Center's program] helped him learn how to control his concentration and develop his reading skills," she says. "I wanted him to be able to use both sides of his brain. I was finding out by the end of the class that he'd started to balance."

Now 7, R.J. has been through several sessions at Options. M.R. says they have helped him in school and were fun for him as well.

R.J. thoroughly enjoyed the program," she said. "It was something we truly did believe in doing."

All programs at Options constantly are undergoing staff review. New theories in education always are being evaluated and if a learning program meets with staff approval, it is incorporated in to the curriculum. The staff at Options mixes conventional wisdom with cutting-edge technology.

Helen Cox is proud of the work she does and how the Options Center programs help people.

"It gives you a lot of job satisfaction," she says.