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## **Least Peoria learning center presents "Options" for Eureka students**

### **Brain Gym helps integrate left and right sides of the brain**

Whenever Judy Peyton's students appear to be losing focus on the topic at hand, or feeling restless and out of sorts, she takes a break for gym class and a little exercise—brain gym, that is.

"It gives them energy," she says, "at the same time, it quiets them...and they enjoy it, too."

With exercise titles such as "cross crawl," it's clear that Davenport Elementary School teacher Peyton is not teaching ordinary calisthenics. These exercises, while often as physically demanding as exercises designed to shape the body, are actually intended for shaping the mind and the way it works.

The cross crawl calls for participants to touch their left hand to right knee alternately with touching right hand to left knee in a marking motion. This is said to connect the right and left sides of the mind and body to help with the integration process.

Of the Brain Gym regimen which Peyton teaches her class, she says, "It brings back their attention to what's important in a positive way. It doesn't do anything but let them work with their own bodies and minds."

Peyton learned the techniques in a workshop conducted by Al Milliren, Ed.D., co-founder of Options in Health and Education Learning Center at 240 E. Washington St. in East Peoria. Although he has since moved out of state, he remains on the advisory board of the center, now directed by Helen Cox, RN.

Milliren and Helen are proponents of brain gym as one method of integrating the two sides of the brain to enable persons to increase their learning capacity. Integrating encompasses the theory that the right side of the brain is the intuitive, visionary side and the left is the analytical, realistic side.

In the spring, 1989 issue of his newsletter, *The Enabled Learner*, Milliren writes, "When one side of the brain is in control, the other side either cooperates and coordinates its movements with the controlling hemisphere, or it may 'switch off' and block integration."

Helen believes that "all of us can improve our learning capacity" by training ourselves to have more integration between right and left brain as well as between body and mind.

Helen and the learning center staff serve clients on an individual basis as well as conduct workshops and lectures on the techniques utilized by the center.

The Davenport PTO hosted Options representative at the Nov. 16 meeting to talk about student reading problems.

Davenport Principal Wayne Logston was present at the meeting and was impressed by the information presented.

"They talked about the different learning styles of children," said Logston.

"I've always believed that everybody can learn," he added. "The key is learning how each student can learn most effectively."

Logston wants to learn more about the techniques used by Options and wants his teachers to learn them as well. He plans to schedule a workshop conducted by Options staff for the teachers and himself later in the school year.

It is part of Helen's goal to introduce the techniques into the school system with the cooperation so teachers and school administrators.

Helen would like to start in the pre-schools, "and eliminate the learning disability before it's recognized."

Involvement by parents and teachers is essential, Helen contends even when working with an individual client.

"We can get tons of results," she says, "but unless it is reinforced at home, they'll go right back to old habits."

Therefore, when a youngster is referred to the center and enters a program, the family is involved with three of the eight classes and the teacher, with the permission of parents, is invited to participate as well.

Most students are referred to the center due to reading problems, Helen says.

In a typical referral, Helen conducts a two hour initial session to test the students in learning styles, rate of functioning, dominance patterns of the sides of the brain and how well the student follows oral instructions. A recommendation for the type of program needed follows with an eight week course. The ninth week is reserved for post-testing so that Helen may present the student and parents with a graph showing progress from "where they began, to where they are now, to where they need to be."

"Our approach is different," Helen says. "That's why I want the parents to know what we do; I want the teacher to know what we do."

Persons interested in more information may call Helen at the Options in Health and Education Learning Center at 694-4111.