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[Brain Gym®](#) is a mainstay at Options Center for Health and Education, Peoria Heights. The exercises developed by Paul Denison, Ph.D. are used to help students balance right and left brain activity, and cope with the stress related to learning.

While mainstream education has been reluctant to offer the techniques, often seen as experimental, several area educators use Brain Gym® on a regular basis, reporting good results. Two of those are D. R., who teaches at [Notre Dame School](#), Peoria, and D. E., director of [Blooming Grove Academy](#), Bloomington.

D.R. has used the techniques of [Brain Gym®](#) to help her high school students determine their own strengths and weaknesses in learning, to manage stress and test anxiety, and generally be more in control of their own learning process.

At the beginning of the school year, D.R. has the students test one another for right and left brain dominance. Older students have also tested younger students. She says teachers and students alike are "amazed" at the results.

When D.R. reads the results in class, students are amazed when she can pinpoint with accuracy what they experience in school—pointing out where they have strengths and weaknesses in different areas. Likewise, teachers of children in the lower grades are surprised at the results.

The results of the tests are not used for labeling, but rather to help the students use the appropriate exercises and techniques for them and their particular concerns, which can help them achieve a better balance between right brain (imaginative) and left brain (analytical) thinking.

One of D.R.'s students was having test anxiety for an exam she was taking outside of class. The girl used the Brain Gym® exercises learned in class and "it all came back to her," she told D.R.. Students gearing up for scholastic competition also use the techniques before a contest. "You give these kids a tool where they have control over their behavior," she says.

Some of the teachers at D.E.'s school use Brain Gym® for pre-kindergarten and first grade students to help them "calm down and refocus," she says. It is especially helpful after recess and before a test, she adds, but is used to start the day as well.

"It gives kids the opportunity to slow themselves down. Transitional times are hard for kids," she explains. "As adults, we expect kids to do that (make the shift) just because it's time."

Also in the process of learning to write—of using one's imagination for writing and art—Brain Gym® helps students open their imagination and their minds. "It helps in those times when kids need to draw from inside themselves," she states. "Allowing kids to know there's that inner core to draw from." D.R. adds that school is the place to use Brain Gym®, noting that while the techniques are really valuable, it is rarely taught to educators, much less used in the classroom. "I'd taught 7-8 years before I saw anyone demonstrate [Brain Gym®](#)," she says.

For more information about Brain Gym®, contact [Helen Cox](#), Director, Options Center, 685-7721.