



School: **St. Patrick's Grade School, Washington**

Date: **Fall, 1996**

Grade: **First**

## **Learning Made Easier with Brain Gym®**

Washington, IL -- First grade students at St. Patrick's Grade School have been getting an extra boost every day after lunch through a special program called Brain Gym®. The nine-week program conducted by Options Center for Health and Education, Peoria Heights, is designed to help the 24 first-graders with integration between the right (creative) and left (analytical) brains.

"The main purpose is to switch from the right to left brain more easily," says Principal Sister Mary Ann Schmitz. "It's mostly a right-brain class. Now they are better able to switch and settle down and concentrate. The classes are conducted in the early afternoon, when fatigue is apt to set in. Everyone benefits from it and no one is labeled. It helps everyone according to their needs without singling them out.

The classes are conducted by L. C. from Options Center for Health and Education. She leads the students in a series of exercises which are designed to be more fun than strenuous. The exercises prepare the brain for particular activities, academic and recreational. For example, there are specific exercises to prepare for writing, math and reading. The first grade teacher, Mrs. L. P., reinforces the Brain Gym® exercises daily between Lynne's weekly half-hour visits, especially when they need to keep closer attention to their class work.

Among the reported benefits of the classes, the children are better able to focus on tasks, reading scores are up and the class is able to quiet themselves down and get ready to learn. The afternoon, for this first grade class, is now a much better time for learning.

Sister Mary Ann says she learned about Brain Gym® and its reported benefits a number of years ago, but was skeptical. "I tried to because I thought it would not work. Through experience, I find it works well."

She has just recently been able to introduce it at her school and she would like to bring it into all of the classrooms as well. She says "You need experts to teach it."

That's just what is happening at the school. Options Center's staff has just completed a nine-week session of beginning Brain Gym® activities with the first grade and hopes to begin soon with another group of students. The first grade class and their parents and teachers celebrated this completion with an Exhibition on November 10 at the school. The class teacher spoke highly of the program's benefits she is experiencing in her classroom. Sister Mary Ann Schmitz, the Options Center Staff and Director Helen Cox were on hand to answer parents' questions. The children proudly demonstrated some of the Brain Gym® exercises they had learned over the past nine weeks. These exercises are tools the children (and anyone else) can use all of their lives to effectively combat homework anxiety, test stress and academic blocks. They help make lifelong learning easier and fun.

"It takes time and commitment, which is contrary to the 'quick fix' most educators want, nevertheless, we need to get Brain Gym® started in the schools, because it does work," concluded Sister Mary Ann.



*Principal Sister Mary Ann joining a classroom of students as they cross crawl.*