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St. Patrick's Grade School Uses 'Brain Gym®' to Provoke Learning

Can exercise really provoke learning?

Helen Cox of the Options Center for Health and Education, and Sister Mary Ann Schmitz, the Principal of St. Patrick's Grade School, believe it does.

Brain Gym®, a new way of learning and integrating both the right and left brain, has been used by the Center and Sister Mary Ann.

Brain Gym® is exercise for the brain. The exercises are to prepare the brain for activities in academic and recreational areas.

Brain Gym® was created by Dr. Paul Dennison, Ph.D. According to an article from Helen, Dennison says, "Movement is the door to learning."

The exercises involve all body movement. The arms, legs and body are used in exercises and can be put to music.

The exercises are aerobic, but include techniques to stimulate both sides of the brain. St. Patrick's School had an instructor from Options Center for Health and Education, lead children in the series of exercises on a daily basis for nine weeks at St. Patrick's School.

The children were reported to benefit from the program. It helped the children better focus on tasks and reading scores went up.

Sister Mary Ann was skeptical of Brain Gym® at first, but after about two years of taking courses in Brain Gym® herself, she introduced it to her classes. "I tried it because I thought it wouldn't work. Through experience, I find it works well. It sounded like educationally we weren't using both sides of our brains and I went to the class to prove it didn't work."

Now Sister Mary Ann is pushing for more programs like Brain Gym® in the school. She believes strongly in the program and supports it.

According to Sister Mary Ann, she is mostly a right brained person and does not accomplish left brain assignments easily.

With the help of Brain Gym® exercises, she says she has rapidly improved.

"I tried it and after doing the exercises I could sit down to two and three hours of paperwork and finish it in less than an hour, and without one mistake."

The school is in the midst of a grant, says Sister Mary Ann, and if the grant is approved, the course will be incorporated into an after-school program.

She urges parents, educators, counselors and anyone interested to attend the class.

Options Center for Health and Education is hosting a workshop on "The Physiological Basis

of Learning”.

According to Helen, Carla Hannaford, Ph.D., a neurophysiologist/educator, and Charles Harter, MD, certified Brain Gym® instructor and word-wide advocate, will speak and provide insight in Brain Gym.®

The introductory lecture will be held on November 15 at 7:00 p.m. and is \$10.

The workshop is November 16 and 17 from 9:00 am-6:00 pm and includes two catered lunches. The cost is \$175 if registration is received before November 5. After November 5, the cost is \$200. A non-refundable deposit of \$25 will hold a place in the program.

The lecture and workshop will be held in room 212C at Illinois Central College, East Peoria.

For more information, call Helen Cox at 685-7721.