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Studies on Brain Gym and Its Effect on Attention, Locomotion, and Fine-Motor Control:

“Moving to Learn in Country Schools,”
by Gillian Morrison, New South Wales,
Australia. [23 kindergarten children were
assessed; in March of 2000 12 were
identified on the TOMI (Test of Motor
Impairment) as having moderate to
definite motor impairments; after a once-
a-week Brain Gym program for two
years and four months, post-test scores
reflected improvements in motor skills
as a result of the Edu-K program, and
10 of the 12 children tested as now
having no significant motor problems.]
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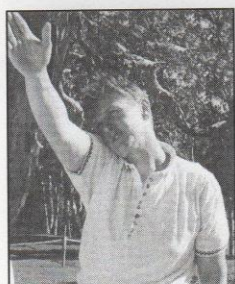
November 2002 Volume XVI, Number 3

TEACHING THROUGH MOVEMENT AWARD 2002

MOVING TO LEARN IN COUNTRY SCHOOLS

GILLIAN MORRISON, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

I travel among country schools in the mid-north coastal valleys of Australia, about halfway between Sydney and Brisbane. My classroom is usually under a shady tree or in some sheltered area where it's safe for children to move. I facilitate a sensory program called "Move To Learn," one that is full of activities to stimulate specific areas of the brain and body in the centres of movement, vision, hearing, and smell. One thing that makes this program successful and unique is the time given to relaxation and resting.



Gillian Morrison models the Elephant movement, using trees and landscape as a backdrop for vision training.

I'm a trained physical education teacher, as well as a Brain Gym® and Touch for Health instructor. In 1988 at the age of twenty-eight, in an "Edu-K for Kids" class, I learnt to Cross Crawl and, for the first time in my life, could comprehend what I was reading. I thought, "These activities are so simple and effective, this needs to be implemented daily within schools." The rest is history.

Movement plays a key role in learning, for it helps integrate and anchor new information. Addressing the Edu-K Dimensions® through Brain Gym brings an easeful readiness for life and learning that I enjoy passing on to students, teachers, and parents.

As I write this article, five thousand children in twenty-four schools have experienced my ongoing "Move To Learn" program. It is some children's third time in the program, yet they still love participating because it makes them feel better.

NAME THAT SMELL

Each class begins with a greeting, and with all participants introducing themselves as follows: "My name is Gillian; I like to; my favourite colour is; I'm good at" All of us then get into PACE®. The children then choose a goal or goals, either individually or as a group, based on some activity in which they'd like to improve their abilities and enjoyment. It is so exciting to watch a class full of kids acting out their dreams.

Next the children set a benchmark derived from one of their bodily senses. The pre-activity® might include balancing on one leg, noticing the comfort of specific eye movements, noticing

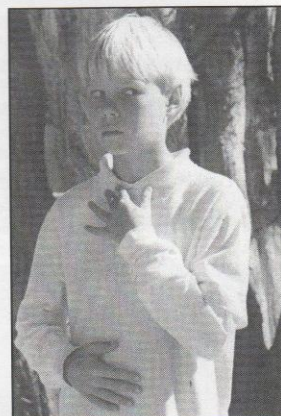
tension or relaxation in the body, awareness of weight in a range of muscle movements, or creating a drawing on paper. The children then do some Brain Gym movements according to the desired outcomes stated in their goals. In some schools the children simply go do the Brain Gym movements or Repatterning®, as they know what activities they need. They then dance, laugh, draw, relax, juggle, make noise, play games, clap sticks, move their eyes, identify a smell, or listen to lots of different music.

All the way through the classes, my creativity is sparked by Edu-K principles and by the balances®. To keep participation levels high, I continually use the Brain Gym movements. At the end of each session the children repeat their pre-activities, and again notice their level of ease or effort. I provide an opportunity to speak for those children who wish to give feedback about benefits they've experienced during the session. The class ends with a good-bye song.

The children's teacher is then asked to follow up the activities for ten minutes a day through the following week, before the next session. Staff members and parents are in-serviced at the beginning and end of my series of classes, to give them a taste of what the program is about. This enables them to develop strategies for the incorporation of movement activities into assemblies and classroom schedules.

KUDOS FROM PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

All of the principals whose schools have been involved sing the praises of the program, as is shown in the following excerpts from their letters:



Toby relaxes his eyes for reading by pointing them left and right as he does Brain Buttons.

"Our students come to school happy, keen to learn, and able to reach their full potential. Through Edu-K, students have learnt ways to switch themselves on to learning, to assess their own performance as well as to enhance their learning style. All this makes for a happy, productive learning environment."

"The teachers at the school appreciate the pre- and post-activities associated with each lesson, as well as the opportunity to learn and be in-serviced by the program."

"The difference in attitude and improvement in the children's behaviour is easily measured by the lack of entries in the behaviour book and my comparison between long-term students and new arrivals."



Teagan does the Thinking Cap for easier listening, remembering and reading aloud.

The teachers, like the principals, give me plenty of positive feedback on the Move to Learn program, as in the following written comments:

"It involves all students, regardless of ability, and it seems that children who are less successful in the other areas are able to do well at the activities and are proud of their achievements."

"The program has been of particular benefit to the boys, in that it has really improved their participation and listening skills."

A special education teacher said: "The children are more responsive, alert, and receptive in their lessons and are therefore achieving well in all curriculum areas. I incorporate movement activities in the classroom, and I believe this has contributed greatly to the children's positive results."

The benefit of the in-house style of in-service training is that there's lots of time for teachers and children to absorb, practise, and reflect on different movements and correctly locate specific points, as in the Energy Exercises. It gives me time to be able to discuss and demonstrate early-intervention strategies for specific children. In some of the schools, I work only with small groups of children who still demonstrate difficulties in either gross-motor, behaviour or focusing activities after experiencing a "Move To Learn" Program.

So as not to lose contact with the children and teachers, I take part in the school assemblies, and I get the whole school up and doing PACE and other Brain Gym movements. I am encouraging schools to constantly incorporate simple movements throughout their daily routines. As one teacher commented, "By using the start-up movements, we as a class can get through three times the amount of schoolwork in one day. Yes, you lose twenty minutes of instruction time, but the overall gains far out weigh the time that it takes. In a cluttered curriculum, activities such as these allow teachers to cover far more in an average school day."

A recent pilot study done by an occupational therapist using TOMI (Test of Motor Impairment) Movement ABC Assessment, created by Stott, Moyes, and Hederson in 1987, gave some very

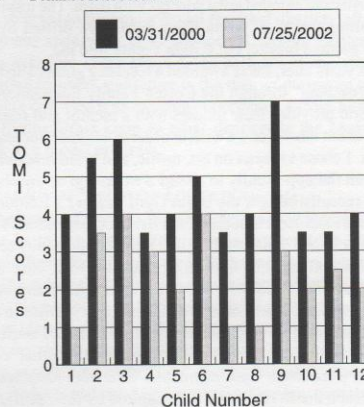
favourable results. All students progressed well and the most improvement occurred by the children who initially tested as one-sided (homolateral*). The assessment component had two parts. The children were required to perform a series of motor tasks on manual dexterity, ball skills, and static and dynamic balance. The test yielded a Total Impairment Score that was then compared with age-based norms. Twenty-three children were assessed in a private and public school. Twelve were identified as having significant motor impairment. Some of the comments in the report are as follows:

"The Educational Kinesiology programme framework provides a holistic approach to motor development. The results of this pilot study require further investigation to evaluate the potential and benefits of a kinesiology programme within the school setting. Scores of TOMI reflect improvements in motor skills functioning as a result of the Edu-K programme. In kindergarten, even a once-a-week programme can make a difference."

TEST OF MOTOR IMPAIRMENT

STOTT, MOYES AND HENDERSON, 1987

1 - 3.5 No significant Problems
3.5 - 5.5 Moderate Motor Problems
5.5 - 8 Definite Motor Problems



Each child evaluates the program by setting goals at the beginning, drawing pictures, taking writing samples, spelling and reading level results etc. The children then give themselves an award at the end of the term by reflecting on what they feel has improved by re-evaluating their personal progress. Here are some comments:

"It makes me feel better and stronger"	Laura
"I feel enthusiastic and hot"	Nikeia
"The stretching made me feel better"	Sean
"Got our brain and body going"	Ruth
"Thank you for coming, you helped me."	Love, Darren

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)

STUDENTS OF MUSIC, RELIGION, AND LANGUAGE ALSO BENEFIT

Here at Sacred Heart School, in conservative Connecticut, we dynamically incorporate the Brain Gym movements in science classes, grades five through eight; in religion classes, grades seven and eight; in some of our music classes; in the tutoring program (enrichment and remedial); and in French and Latin.

Not only are teachers doing Brain Gym with their students, but also our parents are doing Brain Gym at home with their children. For example, Kathy Tate does the exercises with her sons, and has described her boys' development and healing: "Since my sons have been practicing Brain Gym, they are able to attend better in class, their spelling and handwriting is improving, and they are much more relaxed in groups. They are able to meet adults and peers with less apprehension. Their table conversation at dinner is much more relaxed and free-flowing." Mrs. Tate is so pleased that she plans to use Brain Gym in her own work as a teacher.

Many children are carrying the movements into their homes, and at a group home in Rochester, New Hampshire (connected with the order of teaching sisters), the sisters there are helping the children do the exercises.

After this school year, we'll continue the use of Brain Gym during the summer tutoring program, both here in Taftville and also possibly in Stow, Massachusetts, since parents in Stow have asked for the program.

In the fall we'll present an intensive and informative Brain Gym workshop for teachers and parents, in order that the entire school community may begin to do the exercises as a cooperative learning unit, for the benefit of the children.

We are delighted that we're able to help meet the diverse needs of many children through the Brain Gym program. Everyone involved has been pleased with the tremendous results, and even skeptics have applauded, due to the positive changes in the students.

The children have gained so much knowledge and self-esteem. And given the fact that they were asked not to study for science at home, the results are quite amazing. Test scores are above average and students perform well, even when they happen to miss the review lesson before the test.

Because Brain Gym is not yet widely practiced in this part of Connecticut, we would like to share it with as many people as we can by taking instructor courses as soon as possible. Thank you, Paul and Gail Dennison, for your program. It works!

Sister Mary Cabrini has taught science and religion for the order The Sisters of Charity, Our Lady Mother of the Church, for 22 years. She has served as vice principal at Sacred Heart School in Taftville, Connecticut, for five years. Recently she has received a grant for her work developing an innovative fifth grade science curriculum, which is being extended to include the sixth grade curriculum, and onward. Alice Crosby has tutored students in many subject areas, specializing in French, Latin, and ancient Greek. She has worked with Sister Cabrini for the past three years, developing middle school science curricula according to Gardnerian multiple intelligences theory. The two incorporate arts media, classical music, and Brain Gym exercises in their curriculum. Their work has earned an Edu-K Teaching Through Movement Award for 2001-2002. ▲

MOVING TO LEARN

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

I am passionate about education and movement, and I'm even more passionate about children and how important it is for them to feel safe.

cross crawl has helped me learn and my maths is now heaps better
crosses hook-up has helped me relax and listen
Rabbit has made me faster in running and I have stronger muscles in my legs.
my favourite exercise is = Hookup!

One eleven-year-old girl wrote about her experience with the Brain Gym movements.



She also drew this picture of herself doing Hook-ups.

Educational Kinesiology constantly provides a framework of skills and exercises to help children organize their internal world, and help to create a safe place. My reward is when I hear children tell me stories about including parts of Edu-K in their lives, such as how Hook-ups helped them calm down or Cross Crawling helped before an exam at high school or Balance Buttons stopped them from feeling carsick. It is wonderful to watch children grow up and achieve the most fantastic goals for themselves, and be willing, ready, and able to learn.

Thank you, Gail and Paul Dennison, for bringing movement back into the world of education.

Gillian Morrison of Allgomera, Australia, is a full-time teacher for the New South Wales Education Department. A physical education teacher as well as an instructor of Brain Gym and Touch for Health, she has presented her Move to Learn program to more than five thousand students in twenty-four schools. Gillian is a recipient of the Edu-K Teaching Through Movement Award for 2001-2002. ▲

About

THE TEACHING THROUGH MOVEMENT AWARD

The Educational Kinesiology Foundation, together with founders Paul and Gail Dennison, is proud to announce the recipients of the Teaching Through Movement Award for 2001-2002. They are Sister Mary Cabrini and Alice Crosby, Connecticut; Darcy Lewis, Michigan; Natasha Gogin Moses, California; Gillian Morrison, Australia; Terry Sanchez, Virginia; and Liz Jones Twomey, Canada.

This award honors classroom teachers who creatively use movement to facilitate the learning process. For these educators, the Brain Gym® activities are an essential element of the daily curriculum. The articles in this issue of the *Journal* were written by our award-winning teachers, whose stories reflect grassroots leadership and generous community outreach. Their dedication to awakening their students' curiosity to learn, particularly in challenging situations, inspires us. Through their passion for teaching and their innovative application of the Edu-K work, these teachers have brought the experience of Brain Gym® into their schools and communities.

Gail and Paul created this award to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of individuals who choose to become catalysts for change. The Foundation celebrates these few in full knowledge that they represent many others who also work to make a difference for learners and schools. For next year's awards, we again invite the participation of our international membership and affiliates. We hope these stories will inspire you to nominate someone you know for 2002-2003. We love to hear your stories. For more information about the Teaching Through Movement Awards, visit our Web site at www.braingym.org.



These drawings were done by a student of Gillian Morrison. The one at left was drawn on May 3, 2000 before Brain Gym® exercises were begun. The one to the right was drawn on June 6, 2000, after one month of the Brain Gym® program.