



School: **Pontiac**

Date: **Spring, 1993**

Grade: **Elementary grades, various**

Pontiac Students Benefit from Options Program

When six students from Pontiac began taking classes with Options Center, their learning ability increased, according to those associated with the problem. Helen Cox, director of Options Center Inc., Peoria Heights, mostly noticed an improvement in the attitudes of the students toward teachers, school and learning. "They like school," said Helen. "They had an increased self-awareness and stopped struggling with learning."

Dorothy Rodgers, director of Montessori School, Pontiac, noticed an increase in awareness among the students taking the classes. "They are more aware," said Dorothy. "It's perceptual acuity which allows them to see their environment better." Another major area of improvement for the students is concentration. Dorothy sees this as a key to the learning process. Montessori School was founded on this principle. "Once a child can concentrate, he or she can learn anything," Dorothy quoted as Dr. Montessori's original philosophy in developing the school.

The two women have seen other positive results from the students after taking the classes as well. Among the improvements were increased ability in focusing and tracking, better coordination in fine and gross motor skills, an increase in memory, an increase in the ability to follow directions, higher test scores, better concentration on tasks and even a higher IQ score in one case.

Helen and her staff developed the Pontiac program after Dorothy began referring a number of students to Options in Peoria Heights. Travel became an issue for some of the Pontiac families, so Helen and Dorothy made arrangements for Options staff to teach classes one night per week in Pontiac. Classes offered included Thinking Skills, Vision Therapy and Stress Management. Helen will offer a similar program called Summer Learning Options to students aged three through adult in Pontiac beginning May 26. More information is available through Helen or Dorothy.

Helen said she wants to "offer readiness" to children and adults for whom learning has not been easy. "I want to reach people who are struggling in school or who want to enhance their learning ability. The courses concentrate on preventative work, rather than "curing" or "treating" an existing problem. Many come to her after long years of traditional learning disorder diagnosis and treatment.

Options staff work with students individually and in pairs on visual perception, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, creative learning, test taking, whole-body coordination, hand to eye coordination and crossing the visual and auditory mid line, which helps with integration of the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

The left brain is said to control the verbal, linear thinking, logical part of the brain, whereas the right brain controls creativity, abilities in the arts and nonverbal communication. It is integration of the brain which first attracted Dorothy to the type of work Helen and her staff



Helen talking about the Pontiac program.

do with their students. Dorothy, a longtime educator and author of a book on childhood learning says the traditional education system is geared toward left-brain thinking. That was okay until relatively recently, since about 80 percent of the students were left-brain dominant. But now, about 50 percent of students in America are right-brain dominant. "They're stuck in a left-brain curriculum," said Dorothy. "They don't get anything and the left-brain people don't get right brain material. We've got to get both brains going and Edu-Kinesthetics does that."

Edu-Kinesthetics, or Brain Gym®, is a series of exercises designed to increase integration between the hemispheres of the brain. Dorothy and a number of her teachers have taken courses on Brain Gym® taught by Dr. Al Milliren, founder of Options Center Inc. and a leader in Edu-Kinesthetics.

"I think we are really on the frontier," said Dorothy, of the use of Brain Gym®.