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Educational Kinesiology

(Helping children with learning difficulties)

DAVID THROLL

While studies in Kinesiology have been extensive (Hinson, 1981), the specific approach and work by Dennison (1981, 1985, 1986), has developed interest in the potentially beneficial effects of using structured physical movements to enhance brain integration and learning in children. Dennison's work in Educational Kinesiology has been concerned with the way children learn or block learning, whether the child is using both hemispheres (bi-lateral) or is largely dependent on only one hemisphere (homolateral) during the learning process.

He contends that if children either miss or are late developers in the crawling stage they will have a greater chance of becoming homolaterally dominant. This will limit their learning potential, as they will tend to avoid movements which emphasise using both hemispheres. High levels of stress or trauma in childhood can also have the effect of blocking whole brain learning.

Brain integration or using both hemispheres is considered essential to develop students' potential to learn. A wide range of simple, easily learnt movements and activities have been developed to enhance students' experience of whole brain learning. These activities facilitate learning, without strain. Further, most students are motivated to practise these movements as they seem to bear no obvious or direct relationship to standard classroom learning or academic subjects. Feedback from N.Z., Australia, and America has indicated that changes in learning and behaviour can be rapid as the student learns successful strategies and breaks out of the negative failure syndrome.

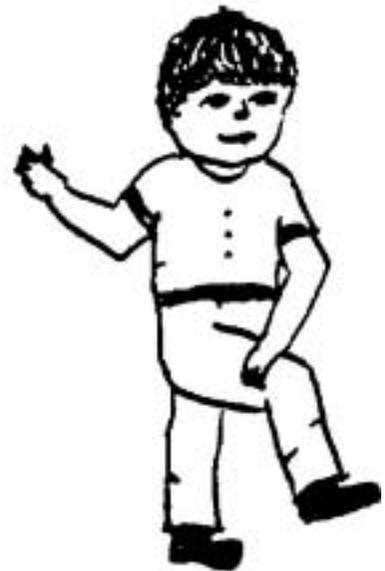
Techniques

While a wide range of exercises have been developed over the last 9 years, only a few can be explained here in any detail. There is no standard regime. However, good results can be demonstrated by

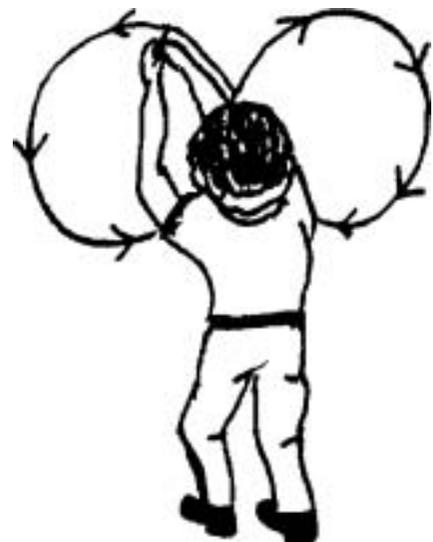
using the techniques described below for 5-10 minutes daily. Further, these exercises are useful when children are tired, under stress or poorly motivated for a variety of reasons. They can be used at any time and require no specific environment. The exercises can be taught to the whole class, groups or individuals, and have been used effectively before and during lessons, or when the pupil is frustrated or failing.

The Pictures have been taken and adapted from the first 2 references.

1. Cross Crawling (improves overall integration, see Fig 1.) While the student is standing and looking up to his left, have him raise his left knee then touch it with his right hand. Do the same for the right knee and left hand. Repeat this process for 10-20 repetitions.



2. Lazy 8's (helps reading and writing, see Fig 2.) The teacher draws a large sideways 8 on the board. Students trace the 8 with one hand, then the other, and finally with both hands together in the same direction. Three traces each time is sufficient.



3. Brain Buttons (assists the reading process, see Fig 3.) The student puts slight pressure on 2 points directly below his collarbone, either side of the sternum, while he places his other hand over his navel. Hold for 10-20 seconds.



4. The Elephant (helps listening and memory, specifically with regard to maths and spelling, see Fig 4.) The student draws a sideways 8 in the air with an imaginary pencil which is extended from his outstretched arm. Make sure the head and shoulders are "glued" to the arm, so that the whole body draws the figure with no movement of the head, neck or shoulders. The knees should be bent so that the body sways. Do 3 repetitions with each arm.



5. Positive Points (improves alertness, see Fig 5.) The student holds his forehead with his fingertips on 2 points equidistant between his hairline and his eyes. Press gently for 5-10 seconds.



6. Balance Buttons (improves alertness, see Fig 6.) Gently touch 2 fingers to the base of the skull, while placing the other hand on the navel. Hold for 1 minute, then change and hold the other side of the skull.



Cooks Hook Ups (helps relaxation and stress release, see Fig 7.) The student takes up the following position for Phase 1: a) The left ankle is placed over the right knee. b) The right hand is placed on the left ankle. c)



The left hand is put over the ball of the left foot. d) Hold for 1 minute, breathing deeply with eyes closed. Phase 2: a) Uncross legs and sit normally. b) Place fingertips together, breathe deeply with eyes closed for 1 minute.

8. Neck Rolls (improves relaxation). Gently roll head slowly, either side to side or forward and then backward. The movement must be practised without strain, and performed comfortably.

This is only a very brief introduction to Educational Kinesiology. Many teachers have found that with practice, they can determine quickly the right combination of techniques suitable for a specific class or student. The following references will give a more comprehensive account of the theory and techniques developed to date.

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