

EPICENTER NEWS

JULY/AUGUST 2008



Brain Gym: Balance for Daily Life

"Movement is the door to learning."

Paul E. Dennison, creator of Brain Gym

What is Brain Gym? Brain Gym was developed by Paul E. Dennison and Gail E. Dennison in the 1970's, and has been utilized by educators, therapists and movement facilitators as a way to break through cognitive barriers. Its success in restoring optimal learning potential through movement relies on creating an integrated mind/body dynamic. The process is called Brain Gym, a sort of gymnastics for the brain, and it's changing how young minds learn!

In the simplest of terms, Brain Gym is a series of 26 movements designed to create coherence, or working together, between the left and right hemispheres of the brain. This unity then integrates learning into the physiology. Brain Gym stimulates the nerves of the brain to integrate the brain's activities for whole brain functioning. When the nerves of the brain and nervous system are stimulated with these movements, learning becomes easier, faster and more in-depth.

Brain Gym also focuses on coordinating front and back areas of the brain, a process that facilitates focus. Focus is essential for interpretation, comprehension, and the ability to find meaning within the details. Brain Gym also works to coordinate the top and bottom of the brain, a centering process related to grounding, organization, expressing emotions, and rationality.

Who can benefit from Brain Gym activities? Brain Gym was originally designed with children in mind, and is highly utilized in elementary education settings, but the mental exercise is really for people of all ages who want to enhance their lives and learning skills. Brain Gym is used to bring about rapid and often dramatic improvements in reading, writing, language, and numerical skills. Many also use it to enhance their attention and concentration, relationships and communication skills, memory and organizational skills, and athletic performance. Examples would include; the struggling student, daycare workers, teachers, therapists (OTs, PTs, SLPs)...ANYONE WITH A BRAIN!

Information for this newsletter retrieved from Brain Gym 101 Balance for Daily Life, by Paul E. Dennison and Gail E. Dennison, the article "Waking the Mind Through the Body," by Karrie Osborn in August/September 2005 Massage and Bodywork (138-144), and the official Brain Gym website at: www.braingym.org

See reverse side for more information on the course provided locally by Linda Grinde, MFA using the Brain Gym philosophies.



Sheri Simkins, PT PCS and Linda Grinde, MFA
at the Brain Gym course held here in Bozeman

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

One Step Up, a new preschool located upstairs in the Nash Finch building will be opening October 1st, and will provide education for kids with special needs.

A **Yoga** class for kids with special needs will be starting soon instructed by Nancy Harris, DPT and Holly Kassner, COTA/L. For more information on this class or if interested contact the Epicenter at (406) 522-3722.

For general Epicenter information or details about our new preschool visit our **NEW WEBSITE** at: www.epicentertherapy.com.

LILLI NIELSEN'S "LITTLE ROOM"



Johnathan Watkins playing in our very own "Little Room" in the Epicenter gym

The idea behind a "Little Room," was developed by Dr. Lilli Nielsen, a special education adviser at Refsnaesskolen, National Institute to Blind and Partially Sighted Children and Youth in Denmark. She was trained as a preschool teacher and psychologist, and has performed research in the area of spatial relations with infants who are congenitally blind or have low vision. Dr. Nielsen encourages Active Learning, and believes young children learn by being active, rather than passive recipients of stimulation

One of her most famous ideas, the "Little Room," is a partial enclosure that is laid over a child that has toys and other stimuli hanging from it. The child learns through play with these toys, with the idea that the room would provide visually impaired children with a frame of reference concerning spatial relations and facilitate the child's learning about the outside world.

Why does a "Little Room" work? In one of Dr. Nielsen's experiments, 20 infants were exposed to a control environment and thereafter to the "Little Room". Despite the fact that the control environment was arranged with the same number of objects as the Little Room, the infants were mostly passive in the control environment but became much more active during stays in the Little Room.

THE "LITTLE ROOM" (CONT.)

Dr. Nielsen concluded that the main reasons for the improvements were: **1)** Sounds from the outside world were sufficiently eliminated, enabling the infant to concentrate on the object-based sounds he was producing **2)** Stability of the equipment and arrangement of the Little Room provided the child with a certain feedback on each movement, thus facilitating the child's learning of the position of the objects and early object concept **3)** Echoes in the Little Room reinforced the child's auditory experiences **4)** The Little Room was equipped with objects of tactile and auditory qualities, which encouraged exploration of these qualities, therefore established early integration of the kinesthetic-tactile-auditory senses **5)** Objects were present in sufficient number enabling the child to compare his experiences and to play sequence games **6)** Nobody was interfering in the child's activities once in the Little Room

The objects of a Little Room should: be of pleasure to the child (and specific to each child); be easy to grasp; have tactile and auditory qualities; be visually inspiring; have comparable qualities; and be present in such a number that the child has the opportunity to choose, to combine his experiences, and to play various sequence games.

Upon completion of this study, more knowledge has been gained concerning different ways of equipping "Little Rooms" as well as about how the achieved spatial relations can be applied to environments outside of the "Little Room."

For more information see: "An Introduction to Dr. Lilli Nielsen's Active Learning", by Stacy Shafer, from VISIONS newsletter or Nielsen, Lilli. *Active learning*, VIP Newsletter, Vol. 10, No. 1. or *SPATIAL RELATIONS* and the "LITTLE ROOM" by Lilli Nielsen, Ph.D.

CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES ATTENDED

On June 12, Claire Adam, DPT and Nancy Harris, DPT attended a course which included information specific to orthopedic pediatric conditions, entitled "Orthopedic Care: It's Not Just Broken Bones" by Michael E Zychowicz, DNP, RNFA, NP-C, FAANP.



On June 28th and 29th, Claire Adam DPT, Sheri Simkins, PT PCS, Amy Hogen, OTR/L, and Holly Kassner COTA/L attended a Brain Gym course presented by Linda Grinde, MFA.

To left: **Epicenter Staff during the Brain Gym course**

Sheri Simkins, PT, PCS attended the NDTA National Conference entitled "NDT: The Foundation of Treatment for Babies During the First Year of Life." Information included research and therapeutic intervention in vision, postural control, feeding and oral motor issues, and early intervention

OUR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE THE BEST FOR THE CHILDREN WHO NEED THE MOST