

Brain Bites - What does Brain Gym®, EQAO and Special Needs have in Common? - April 2009

Category – Standardized testing in Schools and Special Needs

At a recent school council meeting it was communicated that my child's school now has OFIP support based on low EQAO scores.

Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), is a government led testing initiative to determine the effectiveness of Ontario's education system in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics.

While EQAO is designed as an assessment tool, Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP) has been designed to provide funding to the lower performing schools, so they can implement strategies and solutions that will assist in improving the EQAO test scores.

At this council meeting, the principal told the parents that ***education is changing*** and ***Executive functioning skills*** of the students need to be addressed. As well, ***their research is showing a trend in the need to establish "inferences" and "making connections" skills.***

Examples of executive functioning skills are;

- Science, Math, Art and Music
- Sense of time and space
- Pattern sensing and copying
- Planning and visualization
- Sequencing and naming
- Integrated creativity
- Speech, language and communication
- Intellect and intelligence
- Distinctions and associations

How we approach education is changing. Educators and parents need to better understand how the body-mind system integrates learning in children and what impacts their ability to achieve maximum potential.

As Educational Kinesiologists and Brain Gym® Consultants, Jill and I are aware of what is ***required to access executive functioning skills or higher order thinking in the brain – frequent doses of integrated movement!***

Advances in the science of neuroplasticity have proven that the brain can grow and rewire itself. Neuro networks of the brain are wired throughout the entire body. In order to access our whole brain potential, we need to move our body!

To access the Executive function skills of the brain we need to stimulate the neuro pathways of the Neo Cortex where the pre frontal lobe is located. When a student is in stress, they are only accessing the Brain Stem, the life saving part of our brain. The Brain stem takes over to ensure our safety and we are unable to effectively attend to anything beyond our immediate survival. Without higher brain connections our personal resources become dramatically limited, and we perceive the world accordingly.

The neuro pathways follow a map to access Executive functioning skills which begin at the Brain stem, then connects across both brain hemispheres (Mid brain) and leads up to the Neo Cortex engaging reason, insight and the communication skills of the pre frontal lobe. The Brain Gym® movements connect these pathways naturally.

Brain Gym® movements put the brain in a learning ready state for any activity by integrating the whole brain and removing physical, emotional and mental stress.

Many teachers use Brain Gym® strategically for the improvement of reading, writing and math skills, as well as to support their special needs students. Among hundreds of thousands of public schools world wide, the Peel Board of Education recognizes the value of Brain Gym® in the classroom. We have just completed a large training for Teachers, EA's, Special Education and Ed. Resource Teachers and they intend to run more programs again in the fall.

In our last update, we shared the results of a teacher who has successfully changed her approach to education to support her special needs students and surpassed the expectations of EQAO scores.

Here are her results;

At the time of this study, Liz Jones Twomey was a grade 3 teacher at Breslau School, Kitchener, Ontario. She used Brain Gym in her classroom to increase EQAO scores and provides further support to her Special needs students. The chart below shows the percentage of students achieving the higher level of 3 (letter grade B) and 4 (letter grade A), in the years both before and after her use of Brain Gym.

Year	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
1997 (no Brain Gym)	39%	31%	33%
1998 (no Brain Gym)	46%	31%	45%
1999 (with Brain Gym)	81%	84%	84%
2000 (with Brain Gym)	82%	82%	92%

Liz is quoted saying, "The success we've experienced is not attributed to luck. Wendy and I both teach concepts with physical movements attached to the learning. Although I have no doubt that my implementation of brain –based research strategies and my knowledge of teaching through movement using auditory, visual and kinesthetic strategies have had some positive effect on the results, there is no question that we could never be this successful without Brain Gym® intervention. Now several of the schools teachers combine Brain Gym® with teaching concepts, auditory, visually, and kinesthetically. Breslau School has become an exciting place to teach and learn".

There is a tremendous win win opportunity for inclusion here. OFIP funding only supports the general student population and does not support the special needs students. ***However the skills the schools are attempting to establish in their students, whether it be special needs students or not, are actually the same.***

Funding for the Brain Gym® program can be applied for through Short Term Professional Development Leave and/or through your local Elementary Teachers Union. Organizational group names may vary depending on your designated Board. Ask us how you can earn money for your school by hosting Brain Gym® training.

For full articles go to

http://www.brainworksglobal.com/articles/Teacher_Liz_Jones_Twomey.pdf

http://www.brainworksglobal.com/articles/The_RECORD_Brain_Gym_School_Article.pdf

Jill Hewlett and Sharon Todd are both Educational Kinesiologists and Licensed Brain Gym® Trainers. Their company, Brain Works Global Inc., trains clients on how to maximize their learning potential while working in conjunction with their individual goals.

They provide keynotes, in house training, and sponsored events to a wide range of organizations, schools and the community. For more information go to www.brainworksglobal.com or call 905.830.6902.