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# Educational Kinesiology: Ten Years of Honoring the Integrity of the Learner

Paul E. Dennison, Ph.D.

Every day the Edu-K office staff receives letters and referrals from people whose lives have been touched by Educational Kinesiology. Edu-K is loved because it is safe, easily performed, and most important, effective. People tell us that they love to do the simple yet elegant movements. They love the depth, the honoring, and the mindfulness inherent in the balance process and appreciate the way the process draws out innate human potential. Improved reading ability, memory, vision and writing are just a few of the benefits offered. Once people experience the work, they want to learn more and to share it with others.

Educational Kinesiology is loved around the world because it takes a refreshing new look at what learning, work and school, and daily life activities might be. Dr. Paul E. Dennison, the founder, and his wife, Gail, set off a revolution in education by pronouncing that "Movement is the door to learning." They maintain that educators, in their fervor to "stamp in" information, have overemphasized the mental, academic, and performance aspects of

learning and, as a result, have overlooked the more physical—the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic skills needed to process that information. By addressing the physical first, the mental abilities have space to emerge and flower. And for individuals involved in any area of endeavor, the simple movements release the "trying" and bring the joy back to just "being and "doing".

The Educational Kinesiology Foundation was founded in 1987, and this year the Edu-K community celebrates a full decade of growth and expansion. The Foundation, originally only a dream of the Dennisons and a group of educators who had experienced the Edu-K process, now reaches hundreds of thousands of children and adults worldwide who are learning how to learn, bringing wholeness and ease to the classroom as well as to all facets of life.

## A BRIEF HISTORY

Educational Kinesiology is based upon thorough clinical research with children and adults by the Dennisons and their associates. Many of the Edu-K balancing procedures were originally discovered by Dr. Dennison over a twenty-year period, as he focused on the causes and treatment of learning difficulties. Others were developed by the Dennisons out of their work with body dynamics and personal growth.

Paul Dennison received his undergraduate education at Boston University in the early 1960s, then went to California to teach elementary students in the Los Angeles public schools. He assisted in the implementation of Dr. Constance Amaden's Malabar Reading Program, well known as an innovative approach to the teaching of reading. Dr. Dennison established his first reading clinic in 1969. Two years later, after studying the seminal work of



*Participants of the Edu-K Annual International Gathering enjoy interactive movement experiences.*

Dr. Samuel T. Orton and of Drs. Doman and Delacato, he began introducing perceptual-motor training and checking the eye and hand dominance of students. These activities form the basis of the present Brain Gym® program and the Brain Organization course.

Over the next three years, he worked closely with Dr. Louis Jacque, O.D., a leading pioneer in vision training, and Dr. Samuel Herr, O.D., with whom Dr. Dennison shared a learning center. During this time, he further clarified his understanding of the visual midline and its relationship to the development of patterns of movement and posture that influence learning.

Dr. Dennison majored in Curriculum Development at the University of Southern California with a minor in Experimental Psychology. In 1975, he received the Phi Delta Kappa award for outstanding research. This research study for his doctoral dissertation focused on the relationship of covert speech to the acquisition of beginning reading skills. His unique approach to education, and his appreciation of the physical skills and the diverse cognitive skills basic to reading achievement, form the foundation for Edu-K's innovative contributions to the field of education.

#### FRUITFUL COLLABORATIONS

In 1976, Dr. Dennison began working closely with Richard Tyler, Doctor of Chiropractic, who introduced him to Applied Kinesiology and muscle-checking, and with sports kinesiologist Bud Gibbs, who provided a further understanding of the relationship among muscles, posture, movement, and function. Dr. Dennison began an active chiropractic and optometric student-referral program through his nine learning centers. In 1978, Drs. Dennison and Tyler created and implemented a longitudinal research study at the centers, to see how movement interventions affect learning (see *Switching On*). In 1979, Dr. Dennison took the Touch for Health course developed by Dr. John Thie, to further his study of Applied Kinesiology. His first book, *Switching On*, was published in 1980. In 1981, he taught the first Edu-K workshop, the forerunner of the Brain Gym course. He discovered his Laterality Repatterning in 1982 and soon began focusing on the adult population.

In 1982 Dr. Dennison developed the Seven Dimensions of Intelligence process through his private session work. He first offered this as a course to the public in 1983,

the same year that he began his collaboration with his future wife, Gail. Gail Dennison continues to bring to Edu-K her love of music, art, dance, and natural vision. She has co-authored the Edu-K manuals and books with Dr. Dennison, and is the creator of both the Creative Vision and the Visioncircles courses.

#### WHAT MAKES EDU-K UNIQUE?

Edu-K is fundamentally a study of movement, and has drawn from the thinking of such masters as Alexander, Moshe Feldenkrais, Rudolf Laban, and Milton Trager. Some of the best concepts from Applied Kinesiology have been included in Edu-K, and the Foundation acknowledges Drs. George Goodheart, Sheldon Deal, David S. Walters, John Diamond, and (especially) John Thie, the pioneers of Applied Kinesiology. Certain in-depth pre-checks used in the Seven Dimensions of Intelligence are similar or identical to those used in the field of Applied Kinesiology. In Edu-K, though, we interpret these tests with respect to learning potential and the balancing processes, based on postural, attitudinal, educational, and developmental integration, not on therapeutic procedure. These methods are an integral part of our teaching process and also carry value as tools of assessment. The use of innovative educational tools, including goal-setting, the five steps to learning, and drawing out rather than "stamping in" or "fixing," together with a model for deeper understanding of the brain, the developmental processes, and the visual and auditory skills required for learning, are just a few of Edu-K's contributions to the field of kinesiology.

#### THE FOUNDATION, THEN AND NOW

In 1987, the Dennisons and their associates founded the Educational Kinesiology Foundation so that others could teach Edu-K and qualify students to share this valuable work. Today, the Foundation is a not-for-profit school that offers courses in more than twenty countries, with thousands of students completing the curriculum annually. It also publishes the *Brain Gym Journal* three times each year, and holds an annual Gathering for its members. The Edu-K curriculum includes over 300 hours of course work in the areas of education, natural vision improvement, and creative arts.

The Foundation has an International Faculty of forty instructors, and the numerous Edu-K publications have been translated into more than thirty languages. The work

originated by Paul and Gail Dennison has been enriched by the contributions of many others who have added to it from their own innovative expertise. These individuals include educator, neuroscientist, and International Faculty member Carla Hannaford, Ph.D., who developed the course entitled *The Physiological Basis of Edu-K* and has written two books on the subject. Other International Faculty members include Pamela Curlee, the developer of *Switched-On Golf*; Colleen Carroll Gardner, who codeveloped with her husband, George Gardner, an Edu-K program in the Colorado Rocky Mountains through their school for teenagers, Tabor Mountain School; Sylvia Sue Greene, a Teacher Practicum Course Instructor who has taught internationally; and Don Wetsel, an expert teacher known for his work with prison inmates in North Carolina.

#### A NEW HOME FOR OUR VISION

The Educational Kinesiology Foundation is a 501(c)3 corporation, a nonprofit public-benefit organization. It is funded by membership dues, workshop royalties, and donations, and it is directed by a Board of Trustees who give unstintingly of their time and expertise, attending meetings twice a year at their own expense to make our vision a reality. Its goals are to educate the public about Brain Gym, to endow the arts and to certify outstanding instructors. The Board is organized into four teams: administration, products and publications, education, and membership. They are committed to promoting and protecting the trademarks, copyrights, image, and quality of our international work. Under the Board's loving guidance the work is gaining acceptance in business, sports, geriatrics as well as in education around the world.

As the Foundation begins its second decade as an international organization, it is pleased to announce that on November 1 it will be moving to a new site in Ventura Marina, overlooking the harbor.

Not only will the Foundation have a beautiful facility in which to run its day-to-day operations, the new site will also be the teaching center for its courses. The offices in-



*Paul and Gail Dennison, Founders Educational Kinesiology.*

clude a spacious and comfortable classroom in which the rich Edu-K curriculum will be offered throughout the year. The lovely Sheraton Hotel, only a five-minute walk away, has graciously offered rooms at discounted prices to accommodate Edu-K faculty and students.

Situated on thirty-three acres of prime waterfront, Ventura Harbor Village has been designed as a center for entertainment, recreation, and shopping. Just off the 101 freeway, twenty minutes south of Santa Barbara and one hour north of Los Angeles, Ventura Harbor embodies a unique Mediterranean-style seaside village within one of the West Coast's finest harbors and beachfront areas. The Harbor Village features over forty specialty shops and restaurants, an old-fashioned carousel, narrated harbor cruises, pedal boat and kayak rentals, sportfishing, a dive shop, and boat charters. A variety of harborside restaurants serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner, offering a delicious selection of the freshest seafood, as well as Italian, Greek, Mexican, New England, and American grill cuisine.

Please join with us to make our next decade as successful as our first. *For further information, please call the Foundation at (800) 356-2109, fax to (805) 650-0524, email to [EDUKFD@aol.com](mailto:EDUKFD@aol.com), or write to the Educational Kinesiology Foundation, P. O. Box 3396, Ventura, CA, 93006-3396.*