



Instructor Jim Glasgow leads class like drill sergeant

Exercising is educational

By APRIL KORNHILLER
Several women stand silently in the doorway, watching their children as they exercise in the gymnasium of Cloverdale Elementary School in Farmington.

One child tumbles on the mat, having trouble knowing how to position his hands and bend his head for the tumble he is to execute.

Over to the right, instructor Jim Glasgow encourages a tiny child with arms like bleached skeletal bones to bounce on the trampoline and build his strength. "Big fella" he calls him for encouragement.

This is one of the three exercise classes sponsored once a week by the Farmington Chapter of the Michigan Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (MACLD).

PARENTS AND EDUCATORS in the 31 chapters of MACLD throughout the state pay dues which support educational instruction outside the school classroom for children with learning problems.

There is no such program in West Bloomfield Township.

These 20 children — the great majority with average or above average intelligence — possess a variety of physical learning problems, many of which are not spotted until they reach school age.

They often have problems in reading or writing or in physical coordination in walking and running.

SOME LOOK at words on a printed page and see the letters reversed, some cannot distinguish between left and right, and still others have problems with concentration because of being overactive.

And coupled with these physical problems, most have a low self-image because of their learning problems.

To overcome these learning problems, these children from many communities in the Detroit area will repeat gymnastic exercises over and over again to establish motor patterns which previously had short-circuited.

The child who hesitates to perform on the tumbling mat has spatial disorientation — meaning that he feels like he is being asked to do a forward roll on a board suspended 40 feet in the air.

"I'd like to see some of our so-called teachers get up and do this," said Glasgow of the rigorous in-place and equipment workouts.

For special ed

GLASGOW BELIEVES teachers and parents are too often the first to criticize and the last to praise a child.

In "Glasgow's Gym Class," the aim is to keep on trying.

Those who work the hardest are given the first jumps on the trampoline or extra bonus points.

"At least you try, you do more than just stand there," Glasgow tells those who may not have yet mastered a skill.

No child or adult is allowed to laugh at the attempts of another.

"If you're perfect you don't belong here," he explains.

GLASGOW SPITS out commands like an Army drill sergeant — "Knee drop, seat drop, hop on your right, hop on your left" — till the child begins to make a distinc-

tion between up and down or left and right.

Children who read letters reversed stamp out the shape of the letter on the tumbling mat, have the letter traced on their back by an assistant or write the letter over and over again on the bulletin board.

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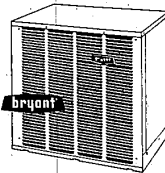
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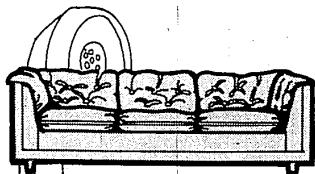
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