



Teaching BrainWise to a Broad Spectrum of Teenagers



School Psychologist
Karyn Singley Blair
BrainWise Instructor for
15 Years for Special
Needs High School
Students

School psychologist Karyn Singley Blair, M.S., has been teaching BrainWise to high school students for 15 years. Her expertise is working with special needs youth, and one-third of her students have IQs under 70. She adapts the lessons to fit their abilities and uses concrete examples in creative ways to engage them. These include fun activities that incorporate games, stories, movies, and crafts to reinforce the 10 Wise Ways.

When she teaches about the brain, she makes a jello brain from a mold. Students have fun touching the slimy, wiggly, lifelike brain and identifying both the Wizard Brain and Lizard Brain areas.

I had an opportunity to interview with Karyn after a Challenge Day event that she helped organize for students at the public high school where she is on the faculty.

Some of Karyn's students participated in the Challenge Day activities, and she will incorporate BrainWise into the ones she uses in her classes.

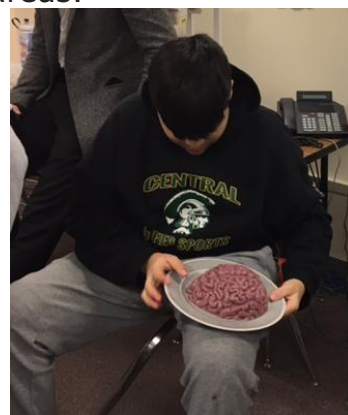
Here is our conversation:

PGB:

Karyn, please tell us about your experience teaching BrainWise.

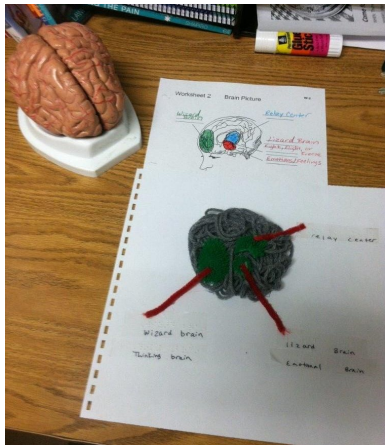
KSB: I learned about BrainWise through our school social worker, who has since retired. She had encountered a special needs student from another school who talked about using his Lizard Brain and Wizard Brain. Impressed, she found out that he was learning BrainWise at his high school and got more information. I got involved immediately, and we introduced the program at our school. That was 15 years ago, and I have been teaching BrainWise ever since.

My caseload is entirely special needs students. Their disabilities range across the spectrum, and include more than one of the following: learning



Karyn Uses Jello Brain to
Engage Students

disabilities, health impairments like ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, emotional disturbance, speech or language impairment and visual impairment -- including blindness, deafness and hearing impairments, orthopedic impairment, intellectual disability, and traumatic brain injury. BrainWise gives me tools that help my students. I can adjust the lesson to fit their needs and abilities, and use whatever learning approach works best for them. I can use BrainWise with *any* curriculum and customize it to fit my students. We address problems that range from gossip and bullying to talking about suicide, school shootings, and depression. The 10 Wise Ways can be used to address any problem. I use it all the time because it can be applied to everything.

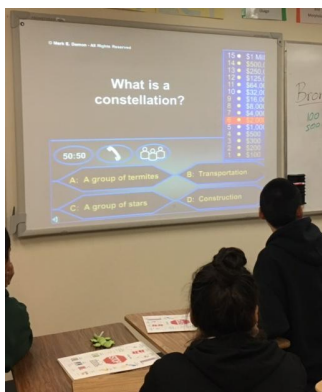


Tactile Brain with Braille
Explanation

PGB: You have helped blind students learn the 10 Wise Ways with Braille teaching tools. Please share this story with us.

KSB: This was a fun project! A vision specialist worked with me and the blind student, who had special needs, to help him learn the Wise Ways. We made a tactile brain, Constellation of Support, Red Flags, and Emotions Elevator using fabric and other materials. For example, we used different textured yarns to create a brain and represent the Wizard Brain, relay center, and Lizard Brain. The specialist typed in Braille on each teaching aid and explained the concept.

PGB: You use games as a fun way to help students practice using the 10 Wise Ways. Please share how you integrated BrainWise into a template for *Who Wants to e a Millionaire?*



Constellation of Support
Questions for Who Wants
to Be a Millionaire?

KSB: The Internet has game templates online, and I used a template sent to me by another teacher. I replaced his questions with basic information about the first four Wise Ways, and projected the questions on the board (see pictures).

I divide the students into two teams and have them choose a captain and a name for their team. I write the team names on the board (or flipchart paper) and write down Points/Money Won underneath. The team captains flip a coin to see who goes first. All of the students participate, with help from me and an aid or student intern. The team chooses a final answer and wins a "money" amount if the answer is correct. The team with the highest amount of money wins.

PGB: Do you have any suggestions that would help BrainWise instructors get parents involved in learning about and reinforcing the 10 Wise Ways at home?

KSB: We were fortunate that one year we had a grant that gave us funds to offer a BrainWise parent program. Even then, because our parents often work one or more jobs, it was difficult to get them



Questions On the Emotions Elevator

involved. I talk with parents who come to parent meetings and try to find ways to get information to them, such as sending home worksheets with the students. It is hard to involve parents, and I would love to have some suggestions!

PGB: What would you tell a new BrainWise instructor?

KSB: The curriculum has everything you need from lesson plans and activities to reproducible student worksheets. The language is simple, but it explains complex concepts. The program can be adapted for students of all abilities, from special needs students to students who understand neuroscience research on brain development. Repetition is key to learning, and the examples in the curriculum show you how to integrate the 10 Wise Ways into your classroom culture and course materials. Put up BrainWise posters not only in your classroom, but in the school hallways. Use news and current events at the school and in the community for problem situations.

Special needs students thrive on concrete examples, and BrainWise provides many opportunities to use them. For example, students can identify parts of their bodies where they feel Red Flag warnings. One student said that her "tongue feels thick" before she has a seizure. Other students identify their internal Red Flags as seeing stars, hearing ringing in their ears, or feeling tight.

I worked with a social worker whose schizophrenic student had a psychotic episode and saw flying clocks coming to steal his brain. In response, he said that he "needed to find the green." She did not know what he meant, and another student told her that he meant he wanted to use his Wizard Brain. The youth had colored his Wizard Brain green, and wanted to use it to help him get rid of the flying clocks. This example shows how BrainWise can work for **everyone**.



School Psychologist Karyn Singley Blair and Graduate Student Tanner Simpson with BrainWise Teaching Tools



Tribute to Tom Ballance, BrainWise Board Member 2001-2017

Tom Ballance, a long-time member of the BrainWise Board of Directors, passed away of esophageal cancer on December 5th. He is survived by his loving family: his wife of 50 years Vickie, his daughter Amy, his son



Tom and Vickie Ballance with Grandsons Noah and Henry

Matthew, and his grandsons Noah and Henry. Tom saw his position on the Board as an opportunity to support youth and help them make good decisions. An Eagle Scout and a Vietnam veteran, Tom had a successful career in telecommunications. His telecommunications' connections helped Dr. Pat provide conference call services with BrainWise instructors *before* they were in

general use, and the calls were useful during the development of the curricula. Tom, and his wife, Vickie, graciously hosted retreats for the BrainWise board at their home. He never missed a Board meeting. Tom's gentle disposition, sense of humor, and business acumen will be missed. He was a wonderful man, and the world was a better place with him in it. We send our heartfelt condolences to Vickie and the Ballance family.

Thanks to all BrainWise instructors for making a difference and being part of the solution!



Dr. Pat

On a lighter note . . .

Here is some background on the Jello that Karyn uses in the classroom . . .



15 Fascinating Facts About Jello



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