

Issue 95

BrainWise Fulfills Educator's Wishlist

Fifteen years ago, Missouri school administrator and educator Shelia Nicholson contacted me after she had learned about BrainWise. She believed in its approach and wanted to introduce it to St. Louis elementary schools and church programs for youth. We stayed in touch, and over the years, she shared her hopes, beliefs, and frustrations, including seeing her efforts thwarted by insufficient funds, faculty turnover, COVID, and countless other barriers. Undaunted, in her retirement she continues to search for opportunities to teach BrainWise to at-risk students. Recently, she called me for information she needed for a grant application to teach BrainWise to a class of third graders.



Shelia Nicholson, M.S.E., Retired Educator

Shelia mentioned she had been a volunteer with 26 third graders who started school during COVID. The class had gone through eight teachers in six months and she and fellow volunteers had offered help. In addition to the children's disruptive behaviors, they were one and a half years below their grade level and had 13% math and 16% reading proficiency scores. The few children who were doing better were finding it difficult to learn in the existing environment.
Her wish was to get funding to teach them BrainWise.

The students' current teacher and her twice-a-week helper were retired educators who knew Shelia and had turned to her for help. Her response was to submit a grant to the St. Louis Association of Colored Women's Clubs for funding to teach BrainWise. Even though it was three months before the school year ended, she hoped to introduce BrainWise thinking skills, get the students through the semester and continue to follow them through the fourth

grade. Time and money were tight, and she was “praying for help.”

Shelia’s Implementation Plan Her plan was to find funds to purchase materials and get training for herself, Mr. Burt, her co-instructor, and seven volunteer facilitators. Her prayers were answered when a donor covered the costs for BrainWise training and materials. Shelia scheduled a BrainWise training session at the school, and Dr. Pat and master trainer Matt Sena conducted virtual training.

Next, Shelia planned to introduce the students to BrainWise with a kick-off program that included games, music, and exercises. Colorado BrainWise elementary school teachers Wendy Cameron and Judy Cardenas (see 80 Years of Teaching BrainWise) shared their materials with her, including brain photos, drawings of brains, and lesson supplements (Stop and Think Hand Brain, Brain Bumps, Helpful/Harmful Lizard Brain, and the BrainWise Buddy).







Shelia and Mr. Burt with BrainWise Facilitators Students

Shelia arranged for each child to be in contact with one or more facilitators who will reinforce the use of thinking skills. Other strategies include selecting BrainWise student leaders, setting up BrainWise teaching times in the classroom, integrating BrainWise concepts into teaching materials and daily activities, using multiple teaching methods, and recognizing students who practice Wizard Brain behaviors. The team will inform parents of the activities and encourage them to participate in the program. Pre- and post-tests will measure students’ performance.

The Vision. Shelia knows that introducing BrainWise during the last three months of the school year will not raise the third-graders academic scores. She and the facilitators plan to continue to work with the students to ensure they have 40-50 hours of reinforcement necessary to retain newly learned skills. They will continue to partner with community clubs for volunteers and support, creating a Constellation of Support that includes teachers and others who will be available to the children and their families.

When the students enter fourth grade, Shelia plans to partner with the Literacy and Hope Foundation to provide reading intervention integrated with

BrainWise. Kathy Kirk, the Executive Director of Literacy Hope, attended the BrainWise training and will use stories to reinforce the Wise Ways. Shelia says Kathy understands how behavioral struggles can disrupt the learning environment and hinder academic success.

These strategies reflect Shelia's unwavering belief in BrainWise and her commitment to teach the program with fidelity. She is fulfilling her wish to share BrainWise with her community and helping to create an environment that will improve lives. Her goal "to help children become lifelong learners and productive citizens of society" is off to a good start!

BrainWise instructors recognize the importance of teaching executive function skills. They are dedicated to helping others learn the role the brain plays in affecting behavior and how they can use their Wizard Brain to stop and think and replace harmful Lizard Brain reactions.

Control self-talk helps us reframe our thoughts when negativity drags us down. Like Shelia, give yourself a boost by thinking about how teaching BrainWise has improved the lives of tens of thousands of children, teens, and adults. It will inspire you and make you smile.

Thank you for being BrainWise!



My Best,

Dr. Pat



CORRECTION: 2000 CLIENTS TAUGHT BRAINWISE, NOT 200

A recent BrainWise newsletter featured Gary Brayton, PhD, a social worker who has trained BrainWise instructors throughout Canada and has taught BrainWise to more than 2000 clients over the last 15 years.

The article mistakenly said 200 clients. Please replace the erroneous issue with this corrected version: *BrainWise is the Foundation for My Work*.

On a Lighter Note

Before we started the BrainWise training, a voice called out on Zoom, "Where's the Wizard Brain?"

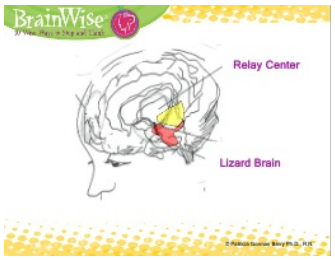
"We will get to it soon," I said and taught the introductory lesson *Everyone*

Has Problems. As we finished learning about using different size bags for problems, the voice again asked, “When are you going to do the Wizard Brain?” I laughed and said “Now!”

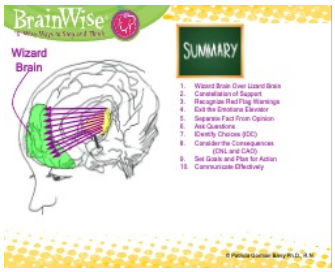
I had the participants take out their brain worksheets to label and color. I pointed out the distance from the relay center to the Wizard Brain and compared it with the Lizard Brain’s position, connected to the relay center in the back of the head. Next, they learned that the Wizard Brain was in the front of the head, behind the forehead and away from the relay center with no connections.

At the end of the training, their brain picture contained 10 lines showing the Wise Ways connected to the Wizard Brain. I asked, “What happens when you don’t use your thinking skills?” As they responded, “THEY DISAPPEAR!” I showed them a picture of the brain with the relay center connected to the Lizard Brain and no lines going to the Wizard Brain.

Shelia and her team nodded their heads. They couldn’t wait to start teaching about the Wizard Brain.



Relay Center Connected to Lizard Brain



Wizard Brain Connected to Relay Center with the 10 Wise Ways.



No Use of Thinking Skills Leads to Wizard Brain Reactions

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