

*Part 2 of Raising Student Achievement - What Works?
Practical Examples from the Field*

Continued from Keynote on Audio Education Online Journal April 2003

Marcus Conyers and Donna Wilson Ph.D.

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First, our thanks to Dr. James Cisek and the team at Audio Education Online for featuring our *Raising Student Achievement – What Works?* keynote April 2003. In the last session, we suggested that our review of 50 years of research and our work supporting the effectiveness of 55,000 administrators and educators lead us to the conclusion that leaders can facilitate raising student achievement in two ways.

1. Ensuring that teachers are teaching in ways that the brain naturally learns best. To support this we developed the *BrainSMART Teaching* approach.
2. Ensuring that students are taught the cognitive Input, Process, and Output assets they need to achieve at high levels. To support this we developed the *Thinking for Results* system.

In part 2 of *Raising Student Achievement - What Works* we will illustrate examples of these approaches in practice. We first look at an example of how to bring brain- based learning to life with stakeholders and look at some specifics of the BrainSMART model. We then look at 10 practical examples of interventions at the state, district, and school level fresh from the field in March 2003.

Some Examples of How the Brain Learns Best

Beyond painstaking research about the brain and student achievement and years of practice in putting this research to work in schools, a key intention has been to bring these ideas to life so that all stakeholders can understand them. To this end, in our keynotes across the U.S., Marcus often tells this story to help audiences visualize what *BrainSMART Teaching* might look like.

In England I was always fascinated by the fact that my brain could do three hours of homework at night and recall almost nothing the next day. However, the same brain could watch the TV show *Monty Python* and the next day and recall almost all of it. In fact almost all of my friends had learned it so well they could act out the sketches the next day. (Even the students that the school did not think were smart.) At the same time I had a social studies teacher who taught in ways that made my brain learn all his lessons. He was passionate about his topic and he brought his lessons to life. I can imagine him today.

Here is what I remember from one of his lessons the battle of Trafalgar more than 30 years ago. *The enemy ships sailed towards England their full white sails billowing in the breeze. The British ship closed. The brightly colored signal flags were flown from Nelson's flagship the HMS victory. "England expects that every*

man this day will do his duty.” The broadsides of cannon roared and the stench of gun smoke filled the air.

My teacher Nick Cleaver was teaching in ways the brain learns best. He hooked my interest; inspired me to read more books than I had read before: and to write the best assignments I had ever written. He taught in a way that my brain hit the “save” key. Few of my other teachers taught this way. They focused on dry lectures and handed out worksheets. My brain hit “delete.” And so did the brains of many of my friends. Fortunately by reading books about the brain, I began to teach myself how to learn effectively.

Years later I was working on a project with John Cleese, the star of “Monty Python,” and movies such as a “Fish Called Wanda.” He was just as funny in person as on TV and in the movies. He had just created a company called Video Arts for teaching leadership skills through videos. People learned all the information in a short time. The approach was such a hit he sold the company for a hundred million dollars. Essentially the hundred million dollar idea was to create lessons that the brain naturally learns best.

The great news is that the teaching principles that worked so well for teaching leadership skills to adults works well for teaching all content to students to students of all ages. We decided to devote the next 25 years to learning everything we could about the brain and learning so that all schools could learn to teach in the ways the brain learns best so that almost all students could achieve at high levels in school.

How Do We Put This Into Practice In Schools?

Superintendents have often said the greatest challenge is get principals and educators excited about implementing new ways of teaching while at the same time keeping them from getting overwhelmed. We looked at the last 50 years of student achievement research and breakthroughs in cognitive neuroscience and the strategies of the most effective teachers to create the BrainSMART Teaching model. It has been humbling to work with 55,000 administrators and students who reach more than a million students. In our Book *BrainSMART Strategies for Boosting Test Scores* we distill all this research in to a practical process for effective instruction. The following 5 components make up the core of the BrainSMART model.

S.tate: How to get students into engaged and motivated states so they overcome failure and sustain effort.

M.eaning: How to connect to students’ lives and brain processing styles so that meaningful learning follows.

A.ttention: How to sustain focused attention on academic studies.

R.etention: How to retain key knowledge and recall it under pressure

T.transfer: How to use what is learned to achieve high grades and in life.

When we looked at data on school districts that have shown great improvement, the superintendent's focus is always on instructional leadership. Take district 2 in New York City that went from 10th in the area to #2. The whole district made improving instruction the number one priority. In fact across the country our clients that have as their main priority improving instruction are getting the best results.

So What Are Some Examples of This In Practice?

Many superintendents and district leaders ask us for practical examples of what we are doing right now to help states and districts improve student achievement. We are blessed to support states and districts across the U.S. in long term strategic professional development designed to build administrators, parents and teacher's capacity to increase student achievement. The courage and leadership of our clients is inspiring and their commitment to implementation so that all students can learn more keeps teaching us far more than we are teaching them. Here are a few practical examples just from March 2003 that may give you some ideas about your own next steps.

10 Examples from the Field - March 2003

1. Client: Palm Beach County Public Schools Florida

Intervention: *Institute of Education Sciences Three-year Grant Proposal*

BrainSMART: Increasing Student Learning by Applying Cognitive Neuroscience

Here a three-year plan focuses on equipping teams from selected schools with ongoing training and support designed to increase the number of students passing 3rd grade FCAT is put into a grant proposal. The teams are to be trained in BrainSMART Teaching so that teachers can teach in ways that support optimum student learning and in Thinking for Results so students acquire the cognitive assets for higher academic achievement. Once this has been evaluated the plan is to expand throughout the district and across the U.S. as a model program.

2 Client: Florida Department of Education

Intervention: *BrainSMART Health Wise*

Following the success of a previous 3-year statewide intervention the BrainSMART Health Wise program was chosen as part of a multi year grant. This program is also being considered as part of an upcoming project with the Center for Disease Control. Here the BrainSMART model is used to bring critical information about nutrition, exercise, and positive behaviors to schools. This is directed toward increasing student achievement and learning.

3 Client: Southwick Elementary Ft. Wayne, Indiana

Intervention: *Celebrate Increase in Student Achievement*

BrainSMART principal, Jeanne Zehr, gleefully reported that her efforts and those of her staff have led to a significant increase in student achievement scores. Jeanne focused on teaching in the ways the brain naturally learns best and on coaching the cognitive assets that increase student learning. We celebrated the success by sending yellow roses to Southwick, one for each teacher. Jeanne Zehr is a mentor faculty in the BrainSMART M.S. in Education Program with NSU.

4 Client: Greenville Public Schools in Michigan
Intervention: Keynote *BrainSMART Teaching*

Here an early morning meeting with administrators lays out a plan for increasing reading achievement through BrainSMART Teaching. This is followed by a keynote and workshop for all teachers and support personnel. Follow up plans are discussed.

5 Client: Title 1 and Central Florida Parent Involvement in Orlando, Florida
Intervention: Keynote and workshops *BrainSMART in the House* with many strategies for parents and educators in Title 1 schools.

Here a dynamic keynote is given to more than 1,000 parents and teachers from 10 counties in central Florida. Parents and teachers leave with practical tools they can use right away. The new book *BrainSMART in the House: The Family Guide to Helping Student Succeed in School and in Life* is launched.

6 Client: St. Tammany Parish Schools in Covington, Louisiana
Intervention: *BrainSMART* and *Thinking for Results* workshops for teachers

Continued planning for summer workshops that include a BrainSMART workshop for new teachers and paraprofessionals as well as a follow-up workshop for educators who have experienced our BrainSMART workshops in previous years in St. Tammany Parish.

7 Client: Muscogee County School District in Columbus, Georgia
Intervention: BrainSMART and BrainSMART Health Wise Workshops

Planning for summer workshops that include an introduction to BrainSMART Teaching as well as a session in BrainSMART Health Wise.

8 Client: Oakland County Schools in Michigan
Intervention: Introduction to *Thinking for Results*

Here a group of educators and administrators from across the county begin to learn how cognitive neuroscience has been translated into the Thinking for Results model for raising student achievement. The participants leave with tools they can use right away. Many are intending to enroll in the BrainSMART M.S. in Education and ED.S. in Instructional Leadership through Nova Southeastern University.

9 Client: Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

Interventions: *Leading for Results* workshop and Lunchtime Parent Keynote

Here all administrators engage in a workshop about how to Lead for Results in times of change. At lunchtime a keynote on how to help students cope with changes is shared. A group of administrators plan the next steps for bringing BrainSMART into their schools.

10 Client: Palm Beach County Public Schools Florida Department of Safe Schools

Intervention: *Systems Organized for Behavior, Education, Intervention, and Treatment (SOBEIT)*

BrainSMART Teaching and Thinking for Results have been chosen as part of a three-year federally funded intervention. This program is designed to 1) form collaborative partnerships, 2) improve academic achievement and pro social behaviors, and 3) develop single multi disciplinary school based teams.

Summary and Next Steps

We know that every district is unique. Contact Dr. Donna Wilson to receive a copy of our brochure and to discuss how we might work with you in your school district. Contact us at drdonnawilson@aol.com. Phone toll free at 1-866-SMART61 or call at 407 740 8428. You can reach us by mail at 127 W. Fairbanks Ave. #235 Winter Park, FL. 32789.