

15th Annual
Hawker Brownlow
**Thinking &
Learning**
Conference

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DONNA WILSON

FRIDAY 18 MAY

Session 2

Positive Mindsets for Struggling Students

MELBOURNE

DR DONNA WILSON

Donna Wilson, PhD, is an educational and school psychologist whose work in cognitive education focuses on areas including cognition in the classroom, metacognition, attention, memory, motivation, and improving teaching and learning. She is an adjunct professor and lead developer of graduate programs with majors in brain-based teaching with Nova Southeastern University and head of academic affairs for the Center for Innovative Education and Prevention.



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Positive Mindsets for Struggling Students

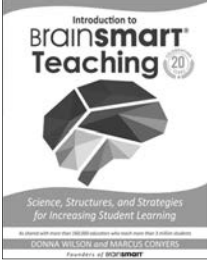
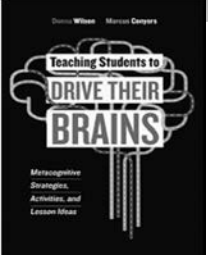
In schools today, up to 40% of students arrive in the classroom without the family and community support, prior knowledge or thinking and learning tools to be successful at school. In this workshop, we will discuss our findings about the importance of teaching students about the power of their amazing brains and provide hands-on examples of how teachers are doing so. Practical strategies for establishing high expectations, encouraging positive growth mindsets, and empowering students with the Drive Your Brain framework for increasing learning will be discussed. You will leave with strategies you can use right away.

Objectives and Outcomes:

- **Setting up high expectations for struggling students**
- **Ten teaching strategies to assist with learning engagement**
- **Drive Your Brain as a system and strategies for empowering all students to become more independent learners**

Positive Mindsets for Struggling Students

Presentation by Donna Wilson, PhD

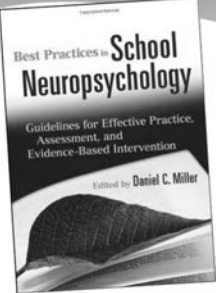



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Objectives and Outcomes

- * Setting up high expectations for struggling students
- * 10 teaching strategies to assist with learning engagement
- * Drive Your Brain® as a system and strategies for empowering all students to become more independent learners

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Psychology and brain studies really engaged me and transformed my life as I began to have a growth mindset and to use strategies for more successful learning.

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A Major Challenge


- * In schools where we have worked, a great number of students arrive in the classroom without the family and community support, prior knowledge, or thinking and learning tools to be successful at school.

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- * How many students do you think come to your school or classroom without necessary skills and knowledge to succeed?

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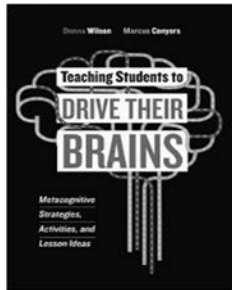
Encouraging Positive Growth Mindsets By...



1. Teaching in ways the brain naturally learns
2. Guiding students to engage and learn how to learn

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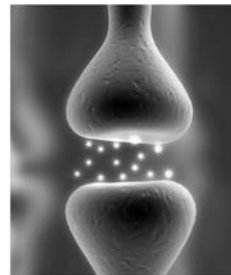
Our *Drive Your Brain* framework helps create growth mindsets and supports teachers with tools to teach students how to learn.



- * In this session, we'll discuss teaching students with learning challenges...
- * about their amazing brains,
- * the importance of effort, and
- * strategies for learning especially created to help students to have a positive growth mindset.

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Experience Dependent Synaptogenesis



Each human becomes different depending on their genetics *and* learning environment.

- * Vocabulary development
- * Reading comprehension
- * Playing a musical instrument

Wilson, D.L. & Conyers, M.A. (2013). *Five Big Ideas for Effective Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.

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Nobel Prize Winner Carl E. Wieman On Misconceptions in Policy & Practice

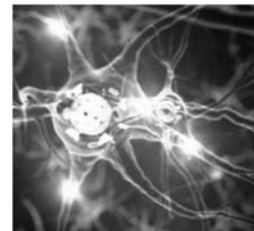
“The lack of expertise leads to a lot of misconceptions about learning that permeate government and the public.”

“Among the myths: the belief that ability is inborn, that reading comes naturally, that young children can't think abstractly, and particularly, the belief that brains are fixed at birth.”

* Wieman, C. E. (2011, Sept. 24). *The torturous path from cognitive science to educational improvement*. Keynote address, presented at the Cognitive Neuroscience of Learning: Implications for Education Symposium, New York Academy of Science and Aspen Brain Forum Foundation, Aspen, Colorado.

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Setting High Expectations for Struggling Students



Teach students about the power of their amazing brains and minds.

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Strategy 1: Teach Students About the Brain's Amazing Power!

Elementary class “Group Brain”



A key aspect of our Drive Your Brain framework is about helping students to understand the power of their brilliant brains in order to set high expectations for *all* students.

Photo credit: Diane Dahl

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- * Our graduate, Diane Dahl, decided to systematically teach students about their brains and how to use power strategies alongside content each day. She reports student test scores have gone up.

Conyers, M.A. & Wilson, D.L. (2016). *Smarter Teacher Leadership*. New York: Teachers College Press.

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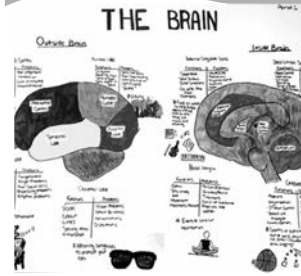
Middle School Students Learn About Their Brain Connections



Photo credit: Nicole Galincin

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Secondary School Brain Unit



Students are learning ...

- Knowledge about their brains;
- How to keep their brains healthy and safe; and
- How to perform at peak levels.

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Basic Diagram for Use Across Grade Levels

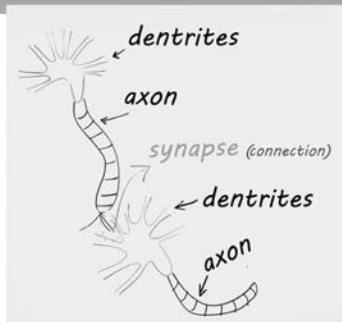


Photo credit: Nicole Galincin

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Brain Plasticity: Metacognitive Checkpoint

3 Guiding Questions for Students:

1. Are there subjects in school that are tough for me? Does that mean I'll never do well in those classes? How can I get better?

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2. What does the research on brain plasticity mean for me as a student?

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3. What can I learn and apply from past experiences in which I learned a new skill or overcame a difficult challenge?

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<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/neuroplasticity-engage-brains-enhance-learning-donna-wilson>

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You can follow-up with me online for more after 2018 conference...



Engaging Brains: How to Enhance Learning by Teaching Kids About Neuroplasticity

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About being alert, motivated, and engaged ...

Student Voices Say...

I'm an emotional and social person.

- * Clearly love what you do.
- * Understand me.
- * Set up an environment so I can work with peers.
- * Be human.

Help me stay attentive.

- * Get me out of my seat!
- * Offer students choice.
- * Bring in visuals.
- * Mix it up [teaching strategies].

Help me make meaning and succeed in the world.

- * Connect to the real world, and ...
- * Work with technology
 - * Hands-on
 - * Social media

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Wolpert-Gawron, H. "Kids Speak Out on Student Engagement" Edutopia

**Strategy 2:
Model Optimism
About Learning**

- * Model practical optimism and point out examples of this approach in action. For example, say, "We knew this would be a tough project, but we stuck with it and worked hard. Just look at what we've accomplished!"

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- * Share examples of how you have overcome learning obstacles. It's helpful for struggling students to realize that everyone occasionally faces learning challenges.

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Effort Versus Ability



Research on effort versus ability: What is more likely to contribute to success?

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Strategy 3: Reinforce effort and provide recognition



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Facilitation: Praising effort

- * John, I noticed you spent a lot of time studying for the test. Look how it paid off with a better grade!
- * Sue, you mentioned your goal is to make an A in this class. I think you are well on your way, given the way you are reading ahead.

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- * Tim, I noticed you rushed through this type of problem yesterday. After we discussed strategies for improvement, today you self-corrected and asked for help. Good job.

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What often doesn't work as well... talking about ability.

- * John, I know you are smart! Way to go!
- * Sue, you are just like your mother. Brilliant! You will always sail through your studies.

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- * And... Tim, you are often impulsive. I really don't think you are capable of this work. Just take a lower level. There is nothing you can do to help yourself.

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Strategy 4: Maintain Success Folders



- * Students take pride in keeping track of what they consider to be their school successes and monitoring their own growth.

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Strategy 5: Use Growth Assessments

Growth assessment is the term we use for formative assessments that help guide student learning and monitor progress. Teachers ...

- * Check in often, and
- * Provide additional instruction and feedback when necessary

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Growth assessments help students identify their strengths and areas of weakness that need further practice and reinforcement. Use ...

- * Class discussions,
- * Interviews with individual students, and
- * Observations of how students are applying what they've learned.

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Students Can ...

Use self-assessments such as:

- * Journal entries, and
 - * Personal checklists
- ... to keep track of their growth, including learning challenges they have overcome, helps to foster a growth mindset.

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Strategy 6: Success Seat



Use the Success Seat strategy to change students' mindsets about school work.

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Strategy 7: 'Control' and 'Acknowledge' to reduce stress and increase optimism



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Where there is student stress, there is usually teacher stress. Check out our article for support ...



- * Positive Strategies to Avoid Stress, Anxiety, and Burn-out

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Strategy 8: Assist Students to Hang Worries Outside the Classroom Door



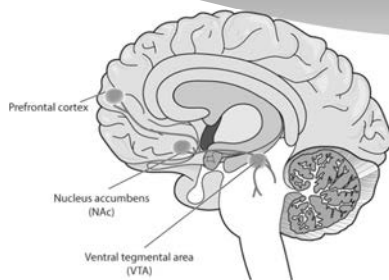
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Strategy 9: Assist Students to Create Fulfilling Goals

When teachers help students connect to classroom goals in a way that has personal meaning for them, there is a much greater chance that they will be motivated to engage in the sometimes hard work required in learning.

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The Brain's Reward System



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Biological Basis: Intrinsic Motivation

The brain's "reward circuit," is a part of a pathway that stimulates the production of the neurotransmitter dopamine in response to rewarding experiences—such as celebrating success in achieving a learning goal.

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* Dopamine is involved in many brain functions and is known for its role in important aspects of learning, including motivation, memory, and attention.

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Strategy 10: Students can learn to control the SAVE and delete keys of their lives.



- Save Successes
- Deal with Problems
- Delete Negatives
- T.he N.ext T.ime I Will

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For article postings on positive growth mindsets and more see my blog ...



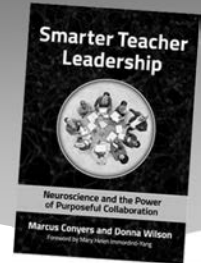
Blogspot:
[We promote the Importance of a Growth Mindset](#)



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On Teachers' positive mindsets!
Our POWER Model,
Teachers' sea of strengths,
Opportunities for leadership,
Working together, and
Adult brain plasticity

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Positive Mindsets for Struggling Students

Developing a positive mindset is essential for struggling students if they are to become more successful at learning. Having a positive mindset is about exhibiting a belief that individuals can improve, change, and grow through application and experience, no matter what their initial performance, interests, talents and skills may be. My workshop, *Positive Mindsets for Struggling Students*, is intended to focus on empowering educators with opportunities to help students to develop a positive mindset.

Donna's Story

I graduated from high school in one of the poorest counties in a poor state in the U.S., one of a handful of students in a class of 80 to go on to college out of high school. Most of my time in school was spent listening to monotone lectures and filling in worksheets in contrast to the emphasis in high-performing schools today on active, "hands-on/minds-on" learning to facilitate engagement, make meaning of new concepts, and facilitate retention of lesson content for transfer. Those performance-enhancing practices were not in place at my school—certainly not for a girl and certainly not what school was "about."

Fortunately, although wide disparities between poor, middle-class, and wealthy school districts persist, today there is growing recognition of the need for postsecondary education and training to prepare young people with the skills they will need to thrive in work and life in the 21st century. When I think about my own challenges postsecondary school to become an effective thinker, creative problem solver, communicator and collaborator, I feel the necessity to do what I can to support teachers to open up pathways for success for all students.

Fortunately, current research on the science of learning, especially new understanding about neuroplasticity, provides the foundation for setting high expectations for students and guiding their progress with effective instruction. Wherever each of us is on our own personal and professional odyssey of learning, we have the capabilities to achieve the goals we set for ourselves, even if they start, as mine did in unlikely classrooms and circumstances.

Research and Benefits

My research aligns with Carol Dweck's work on growth mindset—acting on the belief that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. As a practicing psychologist, earlier in my career, I came to believe that success in school is largely determined by the learning strategies students employ, and not by some innate talent for academics. Students across the continuum of current performance can learn and improve effective problem-solving and study skills to nudge their grades in a positive direction.

Key to Marcus Conyers' and my work is that over the past twenty years, we have created *practical strategies* that support educators to help struggling students develop positive mindsets. These strategies help students to sustain positivity as they experience learning successes over time. As students internalize successful learning experiences, they begin to exhibit positive growth mindsets.

A positive mindset focuses on the gains that are possible when students persevere through learning challenges. It's important to maintain a positive mindset, even when school can be difficult, and for teachers to help students remain motivated to work hard to persevere through those difficulties. Personally, I have found that as we have supported others to develop positive mindsets through the years, there has been a positive "bounce-back" to me many times over.

BrainSMART® Original Strategies

from Dr. Donna Wilson's Workshop

Positive Mindsets for Struggling Students

- ◆ **Teach students about the capacity of their amazing brains.** This can be accomplished by assisting students to learn about connections that are made in the brain during learning.
- ◆ **Model optimism about learning.** You can do this by exhibiting practical optimism, sharing examples of how you overcame learning obstacles, and maintaining a positive learning atmosphere.
- ◆ **Reinforce effort and provide recognition.** For example, "Sue, you mentioned your goal is to make an A in this class. I think you are well on your way, given the way you are reading ahead." "Tim, I noticed you rushed through this type of problem yesterday. After we discussed strategies for improvement, today you self-corrected and asked for help. Good job."
- ◆ **Maintain success files.** This contains evidence that helps students internalize and remember their learning successes.
- ◆ **Use growth assessments.** This will help students identify their strengths and areas of weakness that need further practice and reinforcement. Check in often, and provide additional instruction and feedback when necessary.
- ◆ **Use the success seat strategy** to help students figuratively wipe the slate clean in order to begin to accumulate successes in their new seat!
- ◆ **Coach students to become aware of when stressors are something they can control by exhibiting more appropriate behaviors.** By the same token, assist them to be aware when they should acknowledge that the situation is not within their control to change.
- ◆ **Support students to leave their worries outside the classroom door.** A concrete way to do so is through the use of our "Coat Hanger Strategy" to remind students to hang their worries outside the classroom door.
- ◆ **Assist students to set personally fulfilling and motivating goals.** When teachers help students connect to classroom goals in a way that has personal meaning for them, there is a much greater chance that they will be motivated to engage in the hard work sometimes required in learning.
- ◆ **Teach students to learn more effectively.** We like the metaphor of teaching students how to "drive their brains" through the use of cognitive strategies. For example, it can be of great benefit for struggling students to learn the "The Next Time" strategy (described below).

Sample BrainSMART® strategies from Dr. Wilson's Workshop

STRATEGY

Maintain Success Files

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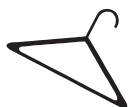


A success file is a continually updated collection that provides ready evidence to help students internalize and remember their learning successes. Here is one way to use this strategy:

- Give every student a folder to use as a success file.
- Ask students to write the word "success" on their file and/or draw a picture that represents success for them.
- Every day, when possible, ask students to add to their folders examples of successful learning, such as tasks completed, examples of learning gains, and assignments that support their personal definitions of success.
- At the start of each school day or class, remind students to look through their success file. The more students can reconnect to their previous achievements, the more positive their mindsets can become and the more successful they'll be in the long run.

STRATEGY

Support students to leave their worries outside the classroom door



Here is a first-person account from a teacher leader who uses the “Coat Hanger Strategy” to enhance learning for her students.

“Attending a BrainSMART professional development session helped to transform my classroom and teaching. As we know, true learning cannot take place until basic needs are met and we feel safe. So, over the last couple of years, I have really focused on the social and emotional needs of my second-grade students. I believe that these skills are as important as math and reading (and are necessary for students to learn well in the content areas).

“In our session, Dr. Donna taught a number of teaching principles and original strategies. One of the tools I have found very helpful is called the “Coat Hanger Strategy.” After our professional development session, I immediately taught my students how to use this tool so we could leave our worries outside the classroom door each and every day. First, I hung a coat hanger outside my door.

“Each morning since, my students can figuratively hang any problems that burden them on the hanger outside my room before we begin the school day. This leaves them free to focus on learning rather than on worrying!

“While this is a fabulous strategy for my students, I have found it very beneficial personally as well. My many stressors need to be left outside the room too. For example, the problems I have with my car, or the fact that I did not get a good night's sleep should not impact the learning in my class. Now, I have a strategy for leaving my worries outside the classroom door too.”

—Stacey Schumacher Wartenbee, Washington State

STRATEGY

Teach Students to Learn More Effectively

Sample Strategy: The Next Time (TNT)

The purpose of this strategy is to ensure effective transfer of skills and strategies and create positive change.

Step 1: The Next Time (TNT) is a dynamic idea for changing behavior.

Step 2: When you find yourself frustrated about making mistakes, stop. Deal with the situation at hand and say, “The next time, I will...” See yourself doing something different. Notice how you feel about it. Make it real.

Step 3: Practice this process over and over again until it becomes automatic.

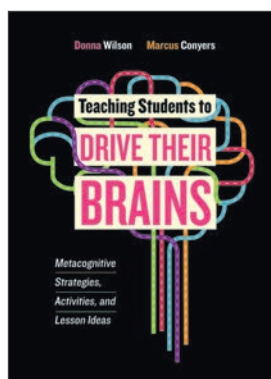
Step 4: Use this system with your students to help them create change.

Note: Research suggests that little time is spent specifically working on TNTs. This strategy is a powerful, practical, and concrete way to make a positive difference by learning from mistakes.

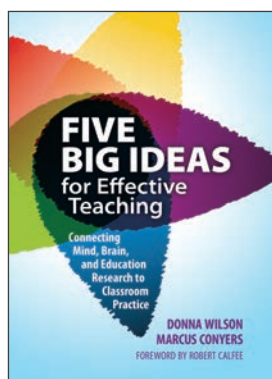


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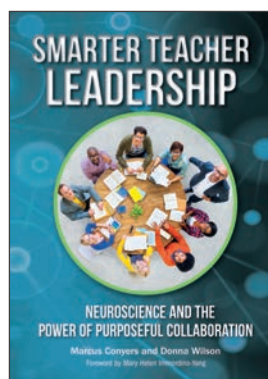
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	TCP0676	Five Big Ideas for Effective Teaching: Connecting Mind, Brain and Education Research to Classroom Practice	\$32.95
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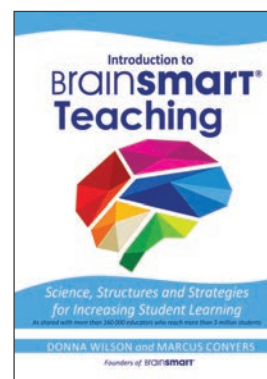
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