

BrainWise is a comprehensive program that teaches essential critical thinking skills called, “executive functions.” Knowing and practicing these skills greatly benefits students throughout their lives. At different points throughout the year Mrs. Gould enters grades K-4 to support students in learning a different “Wise Way” to use when encountering a problem.

The first 4 lessons touch on language that is often used in the classroom. For example, “Your body is telling me that you might be on a level 7, maybe you could try taking a break in the Amygdala Reset area.” Another way you can use this language is when a child is problem solving after a situation has occurred. You support your child in recognizing the messages their body was sending to alert them a problem was occurring, and what part of their brain they were using. Continuing to build these connections during moments of calm will support them in being able to use these tools in more difficult moments.

Week 1: Wizard Brain Instead Of Lizard Brain

During the first session students learn different parts of the brain and how they work together. The three specific parts discussed are:

1. **Thalamus (nickname: The Relay Center):** Students learn that our body sends information to our Thalamus through our 5 senses (taste, touch, smell, hear and sight). Our Thalamus acts as a Relay Center that sends this information to other parts of our brain. The areas we specifically identify are the Limbic System and the Prefrontal Cortex.
2. **Limbic System (nickname: The Lizard Brain):** The Limbic System is our brain's alert system that keeps us safe. The two parts we discuss specifically are the:
 - i. Hypothalamus: It's job is to activate our Fight, Flight, Freeze response
 - ii. Amygdala: Responsible for our Emotions

The Limbic System is active from the moment we are born and helps us identify potential threats, and then puts us into action for protection. For example, if we are crossing the street but suddenly see a car speeding down the road we run to the sidewalk to stay safe. This occurs because our sense of sight (and possibly sound) sends a message to our Thalamus, who in turn sends it to the Limbic System. The Limbic System then keeps us safe by having us run to the sidewalk. The reason we are able to do this is because our Amygdala tells us we are scared and our Hypothalamus has us Flight (or run from the danger). We nickname this part of our Brain the “Lizard Brain” because even reptiles have this alert system to keep them safe.

3. **Prefrontal Cortex (nickname: The Wizard Brain):** The Prefrontal Cortex is the part of our brain that is located right behind our forehead. This part of our brain helps us to make “wise” choices and problem solve. The only unfortunate piece of this part of our brain is that it is not connected to our Thalamus in the same way our Limbic System is. In fact, we have to build connections to this part of our brain. Since the Prefrontal Cortex does not fully start developing until 3 years of age your student(s) is at a prime age to build these problem solving skills!

Week 2: Our Constellation of Support

During Week 2 we discuss the people in our lives who support us during difficult moments. Students recognize that it can be hard to remember these supports when they are

having big feelings and might be stuck in their Lizard Brain. This activity focuses on identifying a support network of people, both inside and outside of school, whom they can depend on during difficult moments.

Week 3: Identifying Red Flag Warnings

The third lesson is spent learning about Red Flag Warnings. Red Flag Warnings can be both “outside” and “inside”. An Outside Red Flag would be something we can see, such as facial expressions and body language. An Inside Red Flag is something we feel in our body, such as a fast heart rate or a belly ache. Red Flag Warnings give us clues that something is wrong and might be about to happen, and awareness of these warning signs give us time to stop and think.

Week 4: The Emotions Elevator

During the fourth lesson students learn about the Emotions Elevator. Imagining our emotions as an elevator, and as we ride the elevator up the building our emotion becomes bigger and bigger. For example, on the first floor you might feel annoyed. But as the elevator rises you become frustrated, then angry, and then at level 10 you are feeling furious! Knowing what floor we are on helps us recognize what kind of tools we need to use to calm down. The students learn that once they are on floors 7 and above they would no longer be using their Prefrontal Cortex (their Wizard Brain) and would need help lowering the elevator and exiting the building.

[BRAIN \(diagram\)](#)

[RED FLAG WARNINGS/EMOTIONS ELEVATOR \(diagram\)](#)