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Educators learn to animate lessons, make memories

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LAFAYETTE — Math lessons won't be the same for students in Carencro Middle School teacher Michelle Lakhotia's class.

Lakhotia was one of more than 100 teachers who took part in a two-day workshop this week titled BrainSMART, a systematic approach to boosting student achievement based on how students learn.

The workshops were moderated by Donna Wilson, co-author of the BrainSMART program.

"What we are really passionate about is giving teachers and parents an opportunity to learn research-based strategies that increase student achievement," Wilson said. This is accomplished by using methods that capitalize on how the brain functions, she said.

Stressing the importance of reading and showing students how to make inferences based on what they read, Wilson provided the teachers with animated ways to present lessons.

"When learners use clues to make inferences, they make new knowledge," she said. Demonstrating some of the strategies to teachers at the workshop, the group talked about how to use the techniques to get students to learn.

"I plan on bringing it back to my classroom," Lakhotia said. "I got a lot out of it, and I can't wait to bring it back to my classroom."

Some of the tips teachers said they planned to focus on were teaching students to be more optimistic, emphasizing health and nutrition and how it can impact learning using visual activities and movement.

"I think it was awesome," said L. Leo Judice Elementary School teacher Paula Guidry. "I want to add more energy to what I do. I learned to add a lot of drama and to act out things I do in the classroom."

Pam Sanders, a science teacher at Broussard Middle School, said the introductory session she attended peaked her interest in BrainSMART.

"I just wanted more information," Sanders said. "I want to look for ways to use it in my classroom."

Charles M. Burke Elementary teacher Jacqué Toliver said she plans to improve how she teaches reading.

"I got a lot of strategies for teaching reading and how to actively engage the students in reading," Toliver said. "I learned to do more theatrical things because it helps students to remember."

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