



February 24, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

Hello. My name is Amanda Jacobs. I am currently the Director of Language Arts and Social Studies at GOAL Academy. I work out of the Greeley location. I am also a doctoral student in the Educational Psychology department at the University of Northern Colorado.

I am currently preparing to implement my comps project in the fall of 2016. I am interested in implementing a curriculum, called BrainWise, in the Greeley site. BrainWise is a proven, evidence-based program for building critical thinking and decision making skills in children and youth. It has been implemented in schools and facilities serving students across the state of Colorado. It is a program developed by Dr. Patricia Gorman Barry, with whom I have a professional working relationship. The curriculum focuses on teaching students how to analyze situations and approach them in ways that utilizes critical thinking and solid decision making foundations. These are skills from which I strongly feel the students of GOAL would benefit. BrainWise has been shown to improve executive functions and social-emotional skills, two areas

associated with successful academic performance. More information can be gathered from www.BrainWise-plc.org.

I am seeking permission to conduct this research project out of the Greeley location in the fall of 2016. It would involve me teaching ten sessions to a group of students. There will be no limit on the number of students who wish to participate. Each face to face class will focus on one strategy students can utilize in order to develop their thinking and decision making skills. Measures will include Pairin scores, time spent in their online classes, and student grades. A control group will consist of students who do not participate in the ten sessions. I hypothesize that students who participate in the BrainWise sessions will have stronger Pairin scores, more time spent in classes, and higher grades than the control. Gathering these measures will not involve any additional data gathering on behalf of the student; it will all be data we will have in our systems to begin with. I will teach the lessons at the beginning of the school year and will have completed gathering data by the middle of December.

My supervising professor is Dr. Marilyn Welsh. She can be contacted at Marilyn.Welsh@unco.edu. I have also provided material that delivers additional information on the BrainWise curriculum. Please feel free to contact me if you should have any questions.

Thank you.

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Study Proposal Revision October 2016

Since this first request in February, the design of my study has been refined in order to create a well designed and valid research project. I feel the design has been improved in order to ascertain valid results that can be used in order to make assumptions about the effectiveness of the BrainWise program. As it stands now, this is what I propose to do:

I would like to have two treatment groups, one in Greeley and one in Longmont. I would like to teach the BrainWise curriculum at both of these sites. I have expanded to two sites in order to collect a large enough sample size of students. I am hoping to gather at least 15 students from each site in order to have a treatment size of 30. A larger sample size will allow me to gain more statistical power which in turn will allow the results to have more validity.

Additionally, I would like to pull a control group out of Pueblo. I have chosen Pueblo because the student population is similar in terms of general demographics to Greeley and Longmont. I would like to create a control group from students who are not in the treatment sites in order to avoid any influence of BrainWise on students who do not participate in the curriculum. The control group would not participate in the BrainWise program, but I would be using data, such as Star360 and Pairin Scores, in order to determine if BrainWise has had any effect on the treatment group. I would hope to pull at least 30 students for a control group from the various sites in Pueblo. Of course, student names will not be associated with data, and their identity will not be known.

In addition to the quantitative component of this study, I would like to incorporate a qualitative component also. This will involve one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with six to eight students. Questions I will ask will included and be along the lines of:

- Do you use the strategies you learned in BrainWise in your academic and/or personal and social life?
- Which strategies do you find yourself using the most?
- Do you feel you have more control over your life and your decisions since completing the BrainWise program?

Again, student names and identities will be kept confidential at all times. For the qualitative component, I will pursue student assent and parental consent (if the student is under 18) and informed consent from the student if they are 18 or over.

I have been working closely with Cameron McLaughlin and Kifi Kanagy in order to arrange times to work with teachers and to come in to teach the actual BrainWise class. I feel BrainWise has the potential to be very effective in teaching GOAL students critical thinking, good decision making, and positive social emotional skills. I do not foresee any of this project encumbering or interfering with daily operations at GOAL.

Please feel free to contact me or my advisor, Marilyn Welsh, with any questions or concerns that you may have. Thank you!