



Project BRAIN Program

Building Roots Achieves Inner Nourishment

At Ocean Partnership for Children (OPC), we believe empowered youth build stronger, healthier communities. **Project BRAIN** (Building Roots Achieves Inner Nourishment) is a two-year, school-based initiative that transforms school climate using a strength-based, trauma-informed approach grounded in the Nurtured Heart Approach™.

Partnering with two Ocean County schools, Project BRAIN creates internal **Champion Teams** of educators and school leaders who lead sustainable culture change. Teams receive training, mentorship, and practical tools to strengthen positive behavior practices, increase recognition, and reduce staff burnout. Through monthly meetings and daily integration, these strategies become part of classroom routines and school-wide systems.

The program supports student success by prioritizing social-emotional health and mental wellness while building staff capacity. Educators gain skills in emotional regulation, resilience, and trauma-informed care—helping them better support students facing behavioral and environmental challenges. At the same time, the program promotes staff wellness, creating a more stable and supported workforce.

Schools are selected through an application process and commit to full participation over two academic years. The program begins with onboarding before the school year and continues with consistent, on-site implementation to ensure long-term impact.

By addressing school climate, attendance, and overall morale, Project BRAIN shifts environments from reactive to proactive—fostering connection, accountability, and resilience. Ultimately, it strengthens schools' ability to support students affected by trauma while building a positive, sustainable culture where both students and educators can thrive.

Location & Implementation

Project BRAIN is delivered on-site in participating Ocean County schools to ensure accessibility and sustainability. All activities are embedded within the school day structure, with meetings held before or after school to avoid instructional disruption.

Each school forms a **Champion Team** of 8–10 staff (up to 15), including school leadership, to guide implementation. A foundational six-hour training and ongoing sessions are conducted on-site, with flexible, responsive support tailored to each school's needs.

No specialized facilities are required. Resources and tools are provided for use in classrooms and across the school community, making it easy to integrate practices into daily routines.

Program History

Project BRAIN builds on the success of OPC's DREAMS Initiative, expanding it into a comprehensive, no-cost model focused on student well-being, staff support, and school climate.

During the 2025–2026 pilot year, the program was implemented in three schools serving diverse age groups, demonstrating its adaptability and impact. Schools introduced initiatives such as sensory spaces and calming corners to support self-regulation for both students and staff.

Program Staff

Project BRAIN is led by a dedicated team of trained professionals who provide consistent, relationship-based support within schools. A Lead Mentor oversees Mentors who work directly with staff to model strategies, facilitate team meetings, and build long-term capacity.

The team brings expertise in trauma-informed care, child development, and the Nurtured Heart Approach™, ensuring high-quality implementation and meaningful, lasting change.