IT'S A NO-BRAINER!

A class of “brainy” kids – it’s every teacher’s dream.

While all students have one ... it’s how they use it that counts.

Experts now believe teachers should know how the brain is “wired” if they’re to get the best results from their pupils.

A lot of factors can influence how students think in the classroom, says the director of Flinders University’s Centre for Science Education in the 21st Century, Professor Martin Westwell.

He says improvements in student literacy, numeracy, creativity and problem-solving skills will come if teachers learn about the science of learning.

Professor Westwell is one of a panel of experts working with a new Independent school “think tank” in Adelaide to help maximise the learning capacity of students.

The Centre of Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning will be launched in the city tonight by the Association of Independent Schools of SA.

Beginning next month, Professor Westwell will run a “Future of the Mind” program for teachers, principals and curriculum co-ordinators at the state’s 96 independent schools

“The big gains are to be made when the knowledge, experience and expertise of the teacher comes together with the science of learning,” he says.

“Our environment shapes the way we think, and as the world changes at a rapid rate, we need to keep up with the change and understand how it can influence our thinking.”

Association Executive Director Gary Le Duff says the new Centre aims to ensure SA’s Independent schools are leaders in innovative approaches to education.

“It will provide our schools with the very latest information from throughout Australia and overseas,” he said.

The Centre’s first program, on early childhood learning, will be conducted today by Dr Kerith Power, of Melbourne’s Monash University.
Mr Le Duff says the Association is launching the new Centre as part of a continuous program of improvement for the 41,000 students enrolled in its schools.

“Our vision is to be a forceful and inspirational voice of education in SA and to achieve some great things for our students,” he said.

Initial programs are being developed following a round of consultations with school principals on professional development to ensure schools proactively meet student learning needs.

The Centre, based at the Association’s headquarters on Unley Rd at Malvern, plans to use external providers to run programs as new research and learning methods emerge.

High on the list will be a forum to help teachers understand how they can use national literacy data to drive improvements in educational outcomes.

“It’s one thing to have this data, but it’s another for schools and teachers to know how to use it in the classroom to improve their teaching methods,” Mr Le Duff said.

He hopes the Centre will allow schools and school communities to take greater control over programs they particularly want to develop but have previously been unable to access.

“We will work together to explore and promote imaginative and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, undertake research to assist our schools build on their existing reputations and establish and maintain networks both here and overseas to share ideas,” Mr Le Duff said.

Contact: Garry Le Duff, Tel: 8179 1402(W), 8339 2106(A/H) or 0419 806 419