Multiple Intelligences

I have no doubt whatsoever that most people live . . . in a very restricted circle of their potential being. They make use of a very small portion of their possible consciousness . . . much like a person who, out of the whole body organism, should get into the habit of using and moving only the little finger. We all have reservoirs of life to draw upon of which we do not draw.

–William James

Multiple Intelligence Theory is based on the work of Howard Gardener at Harvard, and his book Frames of Mind. Asked to study human intelligence, Gardener determined that all humans have a number of different intelligences (he identified seven; current theory recognizes eight with two others under consideration). Typically both individuals and cultures tend to develop some intelligences more than others. However, all intelligences are available to all of us and we can use our more developed intelligences to enhance our less developed intelligences.

Multiple Intelligence Theory is important to educators because it suggests that effective instruction is that which empowers the human cognitive potential of all students.

Did You Know . . .

Teachers and peers don’t always recognize creativity and imagination in young children. In fact many children don’t enjoy or excel in school, finding it boring and mundane. History is full of examples of people who didn’t take, or weren’t given, the chance to experience the joy of learning during their school years. Did you know that . . .

Albert Einstein was four years old before he could speak and seven before he could read.

Beethoven’s music teacher once said of him, “As a composer, he is hopeless.”

Leo Tolstoy flunked out of college.

A newspaper editor fired Wait Disney because he had “no good ideas!”

Louisa May Alcott was told by an editor that she would never write anything that had popular appeal.

Winston Churchill failed the sixth grade.
Teaching Literacy Skills Using Multiple Intelligence Strategies

For many years, I required students to only use their verbal-linguistic intelligence to learn reading, writing, and speaking skills. This seemed obvious, and it worked just fine for the students who walked into my classroom with a natural verbal-linguistic strength. But after working with the MI theory, I realized that many of my students need to use their particular intelligence strengths to master the worlds of sound, words, and language acquisition.

For example, a few years ago I had a sixth-grade student who was reading at a second grade level. She had a wonderful sight vocabulary and was one of the strongest oral readers in my class. Yet she did not understand one word she read. Her self-esteem was low, and she instantly hung her head when I asked questions about a literature selection. Luckily, by the time she came to my class, I was using multiple intelligences techniques and was able to assess her in terms of intelligence strengths. I found that her natural intelligence strengths were spatial and bodily-kinesthetic. Instead of focusing only on the verbal-linguistic methods—methods that had failed her in the past—I was able to use these to help her.

Although she could read words easily, she didn’t know the meanings of many common words used often in literature. So developing her vocabulary was my starting point in devising activities that took advantage of her strengths. For months I had her write words; make flash cards that included the word, its meaning, and a picture; act out meanings; and help younger students with their vocabulary activities. Once her vocabulary began to increase, we began to read easier books, making mind maps and graphic organizers of the events in the story. Several of my other students also benefited from these lessons. Within a few months, this sixth grader’s comprehension had jumped from the second- to the fourth-grade level and she was gaining confidence in her reading abilities.

Because of this young girl and many others like her, I now provide avenues for students to master reading, writing, and learning the English language using more than just the verbal-linguistic intelligence. The following lists provide simple activities and strategies to help students learn to read, appreciate literature, and enjoy the world of words using multiple intelligences strategies as guides. Many of these strategies can serve as a foundation for second-language learners to use their natural knowledge and skills. For the

Multiple Intelligences
majority of my students primary- and second-language learners, they have opened doors and windows to the world of language.

**UPPER-GRADE MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES READING STRATEGIES**

**BODILY-KINESTHETIC INTELLIGENCE**
- Have students act out/role play the story.
- Have students create tableaus explaining the main plot.
- Have students track their reading with their finger or a bookmark.
- Have students physically embody different linguistic concepts. For example, they can act out their spelling and vocabulary words.
- Have students impersonate a character in the story to explain how she or he is feeling.

**SPATIAL INTELLIGENCE**
- Have students use graphic organizers (Venn diagrams, flow charts, graphs, mind maps).
- Have students show their comprehension through various art forms.
- Have students predict the next chapter and picture it in their minds.
- Have students build a scene for the setting of a story.
- Have students role-play having imaginary conversations with book characters.
- Have students keep a long-term collage that they add to as the story progresses.
- Have students keep an art journal in which they draw scenes from the story as they read it.
- Have students create posters and brochures to explain phonetic rules, the writing process, and grammar rules.
- Have students create visual flash cards with the word on one side and a picture of it on the other—of words they are learning.

**MUSICAL INTELLIGENCE**
- Play music that has a tone that relates to a story you’ve just read to the class.
- Have students find music that depicts the tone of the story.
- Put the story to music and sing or play it.
- Have students associate various kinds of music and rhythm with different characters parts of the story, parts of the writing process, phonetic rules, and so on.
- Use song lyrics to teach phonetic rules or how to use words.
- Have students sing the words in the book.
• Use poetry to teach rhyming and repeated words

VERBAL-LINGUISTIC INTELLIGENCE
• Read stories together and ask comprehension and thinking questions.
• Use worksheets to provide repetitive practice.
• Have students write a summary of a story.
• Have students debate the decisions characters made during the story
• Have students read aloud into a tape recorder, and then play back the tape and assess their oral reading skills.
• Have students take home and listen to a book tape-recorded by a classmate.
• Have students retell the story in their own words.
• Have students predict what will happen as the story progresses
• Model oral reading skills to students. Talk to them about reading fluency embellishment, and varied intonations. Have them identify when you are using these skills.
• Reread books or parts of a book for guided reading practice.
• Use dialogue reading. Assign students a specific book character’s dialogue to read aloud.
• Reader’s Theater. Assign students parts of the script to read aloud.

MATHEMATICAL-LOGICAL INTELLIGENCE
• Ask students questions in the form of syllogisms: “If_______, then ______.”
• Use similarities and comparisons between characters or stories to demonstrate comprehension.
• Have students make a time line to show the order of events.
• Have students create character charts outlining the story characters’ important characteristics.
• Present words in list form, showing similarities and differences between word families. For example, act, react, and deactivate would be listed together.
• Use Venn diagrams to show similarities and differences.
• Use the pretest-study-lest sequence.

INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE
• Have students read with partners and discuss the story events.
• Use reading groups.
• Have students read books aloud to a partner.

Multiple Intelligences
• Designate Reading Days when students read and are read to all day.
• Have students help younger students with their reading.
• Have Mock Talk Show Days with characters from the story, and have them explain what is happening in the story.
• Use Oral-Reading Partner Tutoring. Have students read aloud to another student. The listening student assesses the oral reading and offers advice. The student tries again with the advice in mind. Students alternate reading aloud.
• Use Popcorn Reading. The whole class reads a literature selection aloud. One student reads and then calls on another student to continue reading.
• Use choral reading. Students read passages together.
• Have students form Literature Circles, in which groups of students read and discuss passages from literature selections they’re reading independently. Each student contributes thoughts about the characters the author, and any other aspect of the selection. Students discuss how they like the story, theme, or conflict.
• Use Jigsaw Reading in which a group of students reads a literature selection together. Then each student becomes an expert on one section and is responsible for teaching the other students about that section.

INTRAPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE
• Designate Reading Nooks in the classroom that are private and comfortable.
• Have students choose a way to show that they understand the story.
• Provide time for silent reading.
• Have students keep a Word Log or Book Log to show the words they are learning and the books they are reading.
• Have students write a summary of a story they read, describing their favorite parts and explaining why they like those parts.
• Have students use multimodality techniques to learn spelling and vocabulary independently.
• Have students assess their own reading strengths and areas of improvement.
• Have students listen to a tape-recorded story and follow along in the book.
Multiple Intelligences
Have you used your seven intelligences?

1. Logical-Mathematical
   - Ability to deal with numbers, symbols, and logic.

2. Visual-Spatial
   - Ability to work with visual information, like maps and diagrams.

3. Musical
   - Ability to work with the rhythm and pitch of music.

4. Bodily-Kinesthetic
   - Ability to work with the body, like dance or sports.

5. Verbal-Linguistic
   - Ability to work with language, like reading and writing.

6. Intrapersonal
   - Ability to work with oneself, like self-awareness and self-regulation.

7. Interpersonal
   - Ability to work with others, like social skills.

Some people hypothesize that we should be teaching about these intelligences, not just to students, but to parents and future educators as well.