

Multiple Intelligences

While many learning theorists believe that intelligence is the general ability to learn—to acquire and use new knowledge—others believe that “conventional notions of intelligence are incomplete and hence inadequate. [One’s] ability to achieve success depends on capitalizing on one’s strengths and correcting or compensating for one’s weaknesses through a balance of analytical, creative, and practical abilities” (Sternberg, 2002, pp. 447–448). For example, in response to cognitive theories of learning, which he believed were limited to logical-mathematical or scientific forms of intelligence valued in the West, Howard Gardner proposed in *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1983/1993a, p. 8) that “there is persuasive evidence for the existence of several relatively autonomous human intellectual competencies, [referred to] as ‘human intelligences.’ . . . [The] exact nature and breadth of each has not so far been satisfactorily established, nor has the precise number of intelligences been fixed.” Gardner suggested that there were at least seven human intelligences: logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. In the mid-1990s, he identified an eighth intelligence, that of the naturalist. And, in *The Disciplined Mind: What All Students Should Understand* (Gardner, 1999, p. 72), he suggests that “it is possible that human beings also exhibit a ninth, existential intelligence—the proclivity to pose (and ponder) questions about life, death, and ultimate realities” and a tenth, spiritual intelligence. According to Gardner, every person possesses at least the eight intelligences, yet each person has his or her particular blend of the intelligences.

The concept of multiple intelligences is clearly useful in curriculum planning and teaching. However, in his reflections twelve years after the publication of *Frames of Mind* (Gardner, 1995, p. 206), Gardner asserted that “MI [multiple intelligences] theory is in no way an educational prescription. [E]ducators are in the best position to determine the uses to which MI theory should be put. . . .” And in “Probing More Deeply into the Theory of Multiple Intelligences” in this chapter, Gardner states that “educators should be cautious about characterizing the intellectual profiles of students.” Moreover, in “Multiple Intelligences, the Mozart Effect, and Emotional Intelligence: A Critical Review” in this chapter, Lynn Waterhouse reminds us that “any improvement in student learning under an MI framework is confounded with the positive effects of the novelty of a new method engendered by teacher enthusiasm and student excitement. Furthermore, it is also possible that some MI applications have been successful by serendipity, that is, they have induced improved learning because, coincidentally, some aspect of that method was effective independent of the MI framework of the application.”

Curriculum Leadership Strategy

Periodically review the curriculum to ensure that it addresses students’ multiple intelligences and varied learning styles.
