

Teaching for Different Ways of Learning

Multiple Intelligence theory helps educators cultivate students' unique talents and gifts

By Dr. Regina McDuffie, Academic Dean



In 1983, Howard Gardner's book *Frames of Mind* provided readers with a unique perspective on intelligence. Since the work of Alfred Binet in the early 20th century, intelligence was considered one-dimensional and capable of being designated a number in an IQ score. Gardner's work changed how psychologists and educators thought

about the idea of intelligence.

According to Gardner, individuals demonstrate intelligence in multiple ways, and each person possesses eight forms of intelligence that can be developed to a level of competency. **Linguistic intelligence** is the ability to manipulate the syntax or structure of language either orally or in writing. **Logical-mathematical intelligence** is the ability to see logical patterns and relationships and to use numbers to reason and solve problems. **Spatial intelligence** is the ability to see color, line, space, form, and shape and the relationship between these elements. **Kinesthetic intelligence** is the ability to use one's whole body to express ideas or to use one's hands to produce or transform things. **Musical intelligence** is the ability to discriminate rhythm, pitch, melody, and tone of a musical piece. **Interpersonal intelligence** is the ability to perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, motivations and feelings of other people. **Intrapersonal intelligence** is the ability to know one's one strengths and limitations. **Naturalist intelligence** is the ability to recognize and classify the flora and fauna in the environment, with a sensitivity to natural phenomena.

In Preschool and Lower School, MI theory is used to teach letters and words, which can be sung to a familiar tune (musical); be visualized on a mental screen in the mind's eye (spatial); be digitalized or coded using a series of numbers to represent letters (mathematical); be spelled out using natural materials such as sticks (naturalist); or be traced in the sand (kinesthetic).



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Multiple Intelligence theory, or MI, provides a language for cultivating students' unique talents and gifts. St. Margaret's curriculum provides opportunities for students to learn in multiple modalities. Using the Understanding by Design model for curriculum planning, teachers base lessons on enduring understandings and objectives, but they shift the method of instruction to meet students' needs based on their unique talents and gifts.

In the Middle School and Upper School, teachers might use the digital white board to display a computer presentation with class notes (linguistic) and visuals (spatial) for the first few minutes of the lesson; they might play a video to further illustrate an idea (spatial and linguistic). A hands-on experience may follow, in which students move and interact with classmates in a simulation or laboratory experiment (kinesthetic and interpersonal). Finally, at the end of the lesson, as music plays in the background (musical), teachers may ask students to self-reflect (intrapersonal) on what they learned.

For more information on multiple intelligences, read Thomas Armstrong's 2009 book *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*, and Howard Gardner's 1983 book *Frames of Mind*, which are sources of ideas expressed in this article.