

Using Multiple Intelligences in the Educational Process

Introduction

For some time now, best practice for educational instruction has included the use of Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (*Multiple Intelligences*, New York: Basic Books, 1993). Gardner theorizes that students learn in a multitude of ways (different kinds of smarts) and identifies eight ways to think and learn called intelligences: verbal / linguistic, logical / mathematical, musical, bodily / kinesthetic, visual / spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Gardner theorizes that every person possesses all eight intelligences to some degree. However, it is important for educators to use all of the intelligences through which students learn, thus engaging every type of learner in the classroom.

Catholic religion teachers were further introduced to this topic through the publication *Gifts of the Spirit: Multiple Intelligences in Religious Education* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 1999), authored by Fr. Ronald Nuzzi. In his book, Father Nuzzi cites specific examples of ways to use Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences in the delivery of religious instruction. He emphasizes the need to teach in the way students learn best so that religious educators can be as successful as possible.

Method

1. In preparing lessons, first determine what you want the students to know and be able to do as a result of the lesson or activity. Identify the expected learning outcomes.
2. Once you know the outcomes, think about various ways to differentiate your instruction to meet the various intelligences and learning styles of your students. It takes time to get to know the students and to focus on each student's learning strengths and weaknesses.
3. Consult the "Chart of Ideas for Using Multiple Intelligences in Religious Education" to determine if you are meeting the variety of learning styles and to gain ideas for exercises appropriate to meet each style.

Conclusion

Studying and using Howard Gardner's work on Multiple Intelligences is a way to learn more about your students, plan instruction to meet the needs of all students, differentiate instruction to make sure your message is incorporated into their lives, exhibit an ethic of care as a teacher, and ensure that all will experience success.



Bibliography

Nuzzi, Rev. Ronald. *Gifts of the Spirits: Multiple Intelligences in Religious Education*. Washington DC: National Catholic Educational Association, 1999.

Gardner, Howard. *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

Heacox, Diane. *Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom: How to Reach and Teach All Learners, Grades 3–12*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2002.

Chart of Ideas for Using Multiple Intelligences in Religious Education

Type of Intelligences	Ideas for Religious Education Instruction		
Linguistic / Verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • printed words / readings • essays • discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • word games • interviews • quick writes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • storytelling • prayers • PowerPoints
Logical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze and interpret • critical thought • problem solve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web quests • manuals • discoveries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • computer games for religion
Spatial/Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shapes / colors • religious symbols • religious statues • interactive notebooks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mind maps • photography • relationship maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visual arts • videos • demonstrations • timelines
Musical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • musical composition • musical instruments • liturgical music • hip-hop / rap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small groups create songs to teach information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • background music • Christian music videos



Bodily / Kinesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hands-on exercises • physical movements • role-plays • rituals • tableaux 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • role-plays dances • sculptures • learning games • gestures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-enactments • stations • carousel • skits
Interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cooperative learning • interactive learning • small group projects • tea party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • icebreakers / team building • group prayer services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service projects • pair-shares • triads • jigsaws
Intrapersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contemplation • meditations • guided imagery meditations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • journal writing • self-directed work • prayer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spiritual reflection • self-assessment exercises
Naturalistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creation walks • outdoor meditations • outdoor activities • outdoor memorials / monuments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church symbols such as water and fire • recycling projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nature • field trips • object find

