

VALUING AND NURTURING OUR STUDENTS
THROUGH MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE PEDAGOGY

Kirsten A. Dauphinais
University of North Dakota

Introduction:

This presentation would be derived from my article *Valuing and Nurturing Multiple Intelligences: A Paradigm Shift*, 11 WASH. & LEE RACE & ETHNIC ANC. L. J. 1 (2005) applying Harvard educational psychologist Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) to legal education. My article proposes that using MI theory to take a new, more expansive approach to recognizing and evaluating student capabilities could help us to provide a better and more humane legal education in several arenas. Utilizing this theory could enable us to render our students the ultimate service of recognizing their unique potentials and tailoring their legal education in our teaching and mentoring to nurture their individual talents.

Description of Presentation:

This Power Point and interactive presentation will be divided into three sections: 1) describing traditional intelligence theory and how Gardner redefined it; 2) exploring his nine identified intelligences and how each of them might contribute to successful lawyering; and 3) identifying teaching and mentoring techniques in which MI theory could be employed to provide a more inclusive experience for students and could create a learning environment that fosters the wide array of skills and talents practicing lawyers need in today's competitive environment.

DESCRIPTION OF HANDOUT MATERIALS

Along with my presentation, I will provide a bibliography of leading sources for further information on multiple intelligence theory and legal pedagogy. I will also include a multiple intelligence self-inventory for participants to complete for their information. Finally, I will include PowerPoint handouts with miniatures of my slides covering:

1) Traditional Intelligence Theory and the Gardner Redux

I will spend the first minutes of my presentation discussing traditional IQ theory, as characterized by Binet, Piaget, and others, and how that theory has become entrenched in institutions of higher education, including law schools, particularly in light of the paramount role played by standardized testing. I will then introduce Gardner's MI theory and his criticisms of the traditional model. I will, however, explore potential criticisms of Gardner as well, particularly those positing that we should retain the status quo.

2) The Nine Intelligences

Gardner has identified nine distinct intelligences: logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, inter- and intrapersonal, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, natural, spiritual, and existential.

I will explore each of these in turn and, with the audience, brainstorm about the different manners in which each of these intelligences could aid a lawyer in being better at her craft.

3) Legal Education

For the final portion of my presentation, I will describe realms of legal education where MI theory could be employed to make law school a more beneficial and inclusive experience for a greater number of students.

a. Instruction and Evaluation

There are methods of instruction and evaluation that we can employ which are more reflective of legal skills and mastery of material than traditional pedagogical methods. Langdell's Socratic Method and the bluebook examination have both been criticized as discriminatory and favoring a small group of intelligences to the exclusion of others. I will solicit views from the audience as to how we could engage each one of the intelligences in our classroom teaching and will particularly highlight simulations, both brief and extended, as a possible means of better educating and testing our students.

b. Career Mentoring

Finally, we professors are uniquely situated to advise students what legal careers might be best suited to their constellations of skills and talents, thus ameliorating a significant source of anxiety for our students.