

## More Productive ELA Classes Using “Kid Smarts”

(a.k.a. Multiple Intelligences)

I hope you took the opportunity to survey your students to ascertain which “smarts” are present in your class. Children always enjoy these kinds of surveys because, after all, it’s about them! They get to learn how they learn and are more apt to accept your differentiation in the classroom. As promised in the last issue, we’ll peruse the logical-mathematical, the verbal-linguistic and the bodily-



kinesthetic “smarts” here, and also supply more attention getters (ATs): those techniques to use when *hocus- pocus- everybody-focus* gets old.

***Logical-Mathematical:*** Besides the obvious gift of enjoying numbers, these students have an inquisitive nature. They want to know how things work, they ask lots of questions, and think precisely and methodically. How can you target this MI when it’s not math time?

In ELA class students could:

- construct a time line of story events. (You’ll be pleased with how precise it is.)
- draw a floor plan of a room in the story; sketch a map to scale of a scene from the story. Remember that these children aren’t necessarily artistic, so reassure them that they are not being judged on that ability.
- create a code for the dialogue in the text. They can use numbers or design their own symbols. This is especially enjoyable if it’s a mystery story! (If Egypt is part of your Social Studies curriculum, you can connect this to hieroglyphics.)
- benefit from learning roots or base words. This appeals to their sense of logic, because once the root is learned it has the same meaning every time it’s encountered. (Loyola Press publishes two excellent resources for Latin and Greek roots and base words: *Voyages In English* and *Vocabulary In Action*.)

***Here's a management tip:*** As stated above, these children are inquisitive and ask many questions. It seems their hands are always up, until sometimes you're running out of patience and time. Do you ever feel like saying, "Let me continue the lesson and your question might get answered"? Try this. Have a *quiet, confidential chat* as you give these children an index card. (You don't want to embarrass them, or make them think they're in trouble.) On the card they write down key words about questions they have. As you teach, if a question gets answered they cross it out. When you *do* pause for questions, they may ask the **one** or **two** *burning* questions that are uppermost on the list. This requires decision making and prioritizing skills as well.

ATs: Because these learners are focused on detail and accomplishing tasks, these may be helpful.

T: *A mistake is a chance* Ss: *to try harder.*

T: *If you can't make a mistake* Ss: *you can't make anything.*

T: *To infinity...* Ss: *and beyond.*

***Verbal-Linguistic:*** In addition to being generally good writers and readers these students use expanded vocabulary, and enjoy word games, puns and riddles. They have a sensitivity to the meaning and order of words, and they like to be read to.

They are fascinated by etymology (origins of words). So spice up a lesson by tossing in a little trivia, even if it's not ELA class. For example in Social Studies as you're covering the Civil War, tell the students that it's during this period when the term "sideburns" originated. The Civil War General Burnside wore long facial hair below his ears. The soldiers reversed the syllables in his name, and "sideburns" was born. In math class they'll be fascinated to realize that calculate comes from the Latin root *calculus* but it doesn't mean compute. It means pebble! Pebbles were used in the first abacus on which computations were done.

Because they are verbal, these children may whisper while reading. In days gone by, it used to be said that these students had a reading difficulty, but that's not always the case. When we recognize the "verbal smarts" from which they operate, we realize that the words they hear in their minds are coming alive through their lips. So encourage the whispering of a passage with expression.

In ELA class, students could:

- write a radio ad or news article for the story/book telling why others should read it.
- create a word list related to or characteristic of the story using all the letters A-Z. (The words don't have to be from the story. They'll love to find colorful words in a thesaurus.)
- retell their favorite (or least favorite) part in their own words.
- talk through a process. This is especially helpful in math, since that's not their "smart". But their verbal ability will help them understand a complicated process if they can talk it out. Then they can summarize it and even write it out. Give them a prompt such as "This concept didn't click until I realized that..."

ATs:

T: *Chicka chicka*                      Ss: *Boom boom*

T: *Hakuna*                                Ss: *Matata*

T: *Hi ho, hi ho*                        Ss: *It's off to work we go.*

***Bodily-Kinesthetic:*** These children are skilled in using their bodies: they can fix things, will try new activities, enjoy physical rewards, and are often good athletes. It may be annoying that they tap their pencil or foot while learning/studying, but this is how they process the learning... through their bodies. It's motion that makes the learning stick!

In ELA class, students could:

- enact one scene from the story quickly (no props or costumes for time sake); create a tableau of the scene, freeze and take a picture.
- make a model of a scene or character from the text. (This could be part of a center activity, since it may take some time.)
- choose 4 or 5 letter sounds that you've been working on in the primary grades. You then whisper each sound to a child until everyone has a sound. At your signal, children make their sound and circulate until they find classmates with the matching sound.
- practice spelling words while pretending to dribble and shoot a basketball, jump rope or play with a yo-yo.
- pace across the back of the room while studying spelling or vocabulary.

- play charades: act out the verb in the sentence, or a vocabulary word and the class has to guess what the word is. This helps tremendously with shades of meaning for standardized testing: e.g. *stride*, *amble*, *lope*, *saunter* etc.
- spell out loud as they stand for a vowel and sit for a consonant.

ATs:

T: *Are you ready, class?* Ss: (while saluting) *Aye! Aye! Captain!*

T: *Everybody rock...* Ss: (while moving arms in circle) *...everybody roll.*

T: *If we all don't row...* Ss: (while rowing with pretend oars) *...then we don't go.*

In the next issue, we'll take a look at the remaining "smarts": interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist. Until then try again to move out of your comfort zone with an idea or two above. Good luck!

