



Nurturing your child's

eight

Intelligences

Identify strengths and encourage maximum fun learning

By Mary Anne Duggan

The color, graphics, music, and metaphors of software games put learning into a context that makes it easier for children to grasp, based on their own strengths.

Even during a fun study of vehicles in my kindergarten classroom, Steven was tuned out. When I read *The Little Engine That Could*, he couldn't have shown less interest, preferring instead to pull his shirt over his knees or stretch his shoelaces until they reached his nose. Finally, we ended our study by creating our own automobile assembly line, and formerly fidgety Steven deemed himself foreman and took over the operation. "Try coloring the whole wheel" and "Hurry up with that axle," Steven was heard saying as he rushed up and down the line, keeping his employees productive.

Steven is strong in his bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, meaning he uses his body to solve problems or make products. When Steven's body is engaged, maximum learning occurs. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is not measured by formal IQ tests, but it is one of the "multiple intelligences" now being recognized by education professionals around the country.

The theory, first put forth by Harvard researcher Howard Gardner in his 1983 book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, states that intelligence has many faces and can't be measured by a single test score. In addition, we all possess each of the intelligences in varying degrees. The best news is that everyone can nurture and develop *all* of the intelligences.

In the past, schools have emphasized

two intelligences — verbal-linguistic and mathematical-logical. Children who marched to a different beat suffered from labels, such as "underachiever" or "unmotivated." Today, teachers are tapping into their students' many ways of being smart in order to help all children succeed. But the theory of multiple intelligences is not for teachers alone.

"Parents tend to encourage strengths in their children that they can conceptualize themselves, such as verbal or mathematical strengths," says Mindy Kornhaver of the Project Zero Development Group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. "Especially with young children, it is important to think broadly," Kornhaver continues. "When we take a narrow view of children's abilities, there is a range of other strengths not being addressed."

The interactive nature of software, such as *Dr. Brain Thinking Games*, the *Blaster Learning System*, and the *JumpStart Learning System*, provides many gateways for learners to use their multiple intelligences. Color, graphics, music, and metaphors put learning into a context that makes it easier for children to grasp, based on their own strengths.

Which intelligences does your child use most regularly? How can you help her use her strongest intelligences, while also nurturing all the others? First, you need to understand the eight intelligences identified

so far. Gardner's work at Harvard first identified seven intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. In 1987, researchers identified "naturalist" learning strengths, and added the eighth intelligence.

Identifying intelligences

As a parent, you're in the best position to recognize several — or all — of the intelligences in your child. Everyone possesses all intelligences, but we come to depend on our strongest ones. We've compiled some tips for recognizing different intelligences in your child and ways you can nurture each intelligence.

Everyone has **linguistic intelligence**, but some people are naturally more versed in using words effectively. Linguistic children love to play with words and often can be quite persuasive with them. They enjoy storytelling, word puzzles, and, of course, reading and writing. Poets, such as Maya Angelou, have well developed linguistic intelligences.

Linguistic learners tend to be very verbal, talking in complex sentences and recalling stories and conversations in great detail. They catch on to word plays and puns, and ask questions about abstract word meanings at an early age.

To nurture this intelligence, continue to read together with your child. Encourage lots of dialogue, especially if you're raising a son (studies indicate that adults tend to have more involved conversations when playing with girls). Discuss common and imagined things, as well as trying to incorporate conversation in playacting.

Linguistic learners benefit from a well-stocked supply of paper and pencils. They love tongue twisters, poetry, word games, plays on words, and board games that involve spelling and sentence structure.

But perhaps your son prefers number games. Or maybe your daughter is an adept problem solver. **Logical-mathematical** thinkers feel for numbers what linguistics feel for words. They ask questions in a logical manner and their reasoning is solid. Think of the quintessential logical-mathematical thinker: Albert Einstein.

Being able to easily recognize patterns — colors, numbers, designs — is a key signal of logical-mathematical intelligence. Perhaps your daughter has a talent for pointing out your most minute logical errors. If she does, you can further encourage your logical/mathematical child's sense of order by asking her to organize the silverware drawer. Logical-mathematical children enjoy real-life activities involving measurement,

such as cooking and gardening. They are excited by finding patterns, doing number games, and working with a calculator. Money management stimulates logical-mathematical children.

More than words and numbers

If your child is gifted with high **spatial intelligence**, he or she responds to visual cues. The ability to see the world and graphically represent it in some form (as in a painting or a model) is a mark of spatial intelligence. Often these children have a talent for art. Frank Lloyd Wright was a famous "spatialist."

Your child might be strong in this area if he loves to draw, doodle, build, and do puzzles. Since spatial children are often drawn to art, have plenty of arts and crafts supplies on hand. Create a junk box for inventing "stuff." Spatial children enjoy map and globe reading, puzzles, and mazes. Color coding helps these children get organized. They leap at the chance to decorate their own bedrooms, including arranging the furniture.

Most young children appear to be **bodily-kinesthetic** at first glance. This intelligence is marked by physical activity. Bodily-kinesthetic learners get more out of a lesson if they are moving while learning. Touching and feeling are important ways of gaining information for bodily-kinesthetic learners. Dancers, such as Martha Graham, and the Michael Jordans of the world have a high level of bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Steven, the kindergartner at the beginning of this article, is a kinesthetic learner who involves his body and uses movement to solve problems and work on projects.

If your child's teacher tells you she "just can't sit still" or if she moves when pleading a case with you, your child may be a bodily-kinesthetic learner. These children often enjoy dancing and acting, or they may feel a pull toward sports. Bodily-kinesthetics revel in charades and role-playing. Chores are more likely to be completed if they are physical, such as sweeping or window washing. A flexible homework area with room to move while thinking is a must for bodily-kinesthetics.

Foot-tappers and children who can recall lyrics and melodies are using their **musical intelligence**. These children thrive in an environment filled with rhythm and song. It sometimes seems as though they can memorize anything, if put to a beat. They like listening to the sounds around them. Mozart had musical intelligence running through his veins.

To nurture musical intelligence, take the

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lead in tapping out rhythms on a variety of surfaces — table tops, your child's back. Encourage songwriting in your young musician, and provide an audience for performances. Anything requiring memorization can be put to familiar tunes or rhythms.

Relating to people and nature

Interpersonal intelligence involves the ability to “read” another person and respond appropriately. Students with this intelligence are social and are often good leaders. Does your daughter have a variety of friends? Can your son easily empathize with others? These are the “street smart” kids. Oprah Winfrey is interpersonal intelligence personified.

Interpersonal children relish family game night. They also take part in family discussions and love to debate. Give your child the responsibility of helping to solve interpersonal problems in your home.

On the other hand, **intrapersonal learners** love to spend time alone. They have a good understanding of who they are and why they behave as they do. They are often self-motivated and can entertain themselves for long periods of time. These children can be perceived as different, due to the fact that they like to spend time alone. Sigmund Freud was an intrapersonal learner.

Above all, intrapersonal children need their solitude respected. Rather than viewing

playing alone as dysfunctional, consider that this might be your child's way of coming to know the world.

What child doesn't love bugs and animals? Some have long-term infatuations with rocks, plants, and insects. Some are true animal lovers. Those children with a sensitivity to the natural world and who enjoy discriminating between living and non-living things are strong in **naturalist intelligence**. This intelligence has traditionally been more valued in an agricultural society, but certainly has its place in science and other pursuits. Charles Darwin had lots of naturalist intelligence.

A naturalist child's dream is a special unkempt area in the outdoors for exploration. Equip your young naturalist with bug jars, magnifying glasses, magnets, and other objects for discovering nature. Encourage collecting of small, natural objects such as rocks, leaves, and pine cones. Learn about nature crafts you can do with your child.

The theory of multiple intelligences gives us insight into each child's individual learning strengths. It can be an enriching experience to find your child's dominant intelligences and then watch new ways of learning unfold. ☐

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Intelligence I.D.

We all possess the eight different intelligences outlined in the theory of multiple intelligences. However, each person has dominant intelligences. Identifying your child's type of intelligence can make it easier to help him or her learn.

Here are some general cues to identify your child's different intelligences:

Linguistic intelligence

Your child may be strong in this area if...

- you've ever had to say “My ears need a rest, dear,” after he has been chatting for hours.
- she catches on to word plays or puns that you just barely understand.

Logical-mathematical intelligence

Your child may be strong in this area if...

- he has a talent for pointing out your most minute logical errors.
- she recognizes patterns easily.

Spatial intelligence

Your child may be strong in this area if...

- he doodles incessantly.
- she could navigate the way home from the toddler car seat.

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence

Your child may be strong in this area if...

- your child's teacher told you she “just can't sit still.”
- he hops, spins, gestures, and/or wiggles when pleading a case with you.

Musical intelligence

Your child may be strong in this area if...

- her foot taps unconsciously to music.
- he recalls lyrics and melodies, and often can't get them out of his head.

Interpersonal intelligence

Your child may be strong in this area if...

- he has a variety of loyal friends.
- she is able to show empathy when someone else is hurt.

Intrapersonal intelligence

Your child may be strong in this area if...

- you've ever worried about how much time she spends alone.
- you've bragged to others about his ability to “entertain himself.”

Naturalist intelligence

Your child may be strong in this area if...

- she has had a long-term infatuation with rocks, seeds, or bugs.
- he has been labeled an “animal lover” by others.