

## **Intelligent?**

*Isaac Zayachkowski, Superintendent, Alberta Conference, Red Deer County, AB*

Many theories have been proposed over the centuries as to how one would recognize or determine one's intelligence. One philosophy supports the idea that a person's I.Q. (Intelligence Quotient) can be determined by taking a battery of tests that determines an early modern child's intelligence, which serves as a predictor of future educational achievement. Another theory supports the philosophy of Multiple Intelligences--Howard Gardner's broader view of human potential.



Please consider with me what these two trains of thought mean to the students in our classrooms. Assessment that may or may not be biased due to culture, economic status or experience communicates a minimal amount of information: I am below average, average or gifted. Now what?

The philosophy proposed by Gardner suggests that each person possesses a capacity in all eight intelligences. These eight intelligences function in ways unique to each person. Some may bemoan the fact that they do not possess strengths in a particular area of their choosing. There is hope, for Gardner also suggests that everyone has the capacity to perform at a reasonably high level in all eight intelligences with appropriate encouragement, enrichment and instruction.

In a discussion of learning styles, the question of how to determine what is best for each individual always arises. My tongue-in-cheek response to the question is, try observing how each child misbehaves in class! A child who is word smart (linguistic) will most likely be speaking out of turn, a student who is body smart (bodily-kinesthetic) will likely be wondering around the classroom, and the student who is picture smart (spatial) will likely be doodling or looking out the window. All joking aside, observation of the above behaviors are actual indicators of student's best learning strengths. Observing students in their learning environment is an excellent form of assessment. I realize that time constraints make it difficult to observe all your students in a large school. In such cases, you might consider focusing first on one or two of the most challenging students. Write a few lines each time you observe those student and their interaction in class. Over a period of few weeks, you should be able to get a good picture of how each student responds to different learning climates.

Other assessment strategies can provide you with a fuller picture of your student's strengths. You may consider collecting documentation such as audio/video samples, sketches, samples of schoolwork, photos and special projects. You can also look at a student's cumulative record. As dry as this document may seem, you should be able to check consistent strengths in course content just by observing his/her academic performance over a number of years. Another resource for information are the people closest to the students--their parents, teachers and

themselves. Taking the time to dialogue with them about your goal(s) and about their lives both in and out of school will give you a much more complete picture of their unique intelligences.

A final strategy I would suggest is to teach a key point through the eight different intelligences to see how your focus students respond. As a trained professional, you can easily determine when their eyes light up and when they go to sleep or start acting up because they do not understand the concept.

In this New Year, dare to make a difference, not just for the student, but for you and your Lord!