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MI Activities for the Australian Classroom: Introduction

Traditional assessment involves multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank type questions only including information deemed 'necessary knowledge'. While this form of assessment is certainly worthy of inclusion, a quick consideration of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences would suggest that schools using *only* these forms of assessment are teaching in an entirely inefficient way.

The units of work contained in this book have been developed to meet the educational needs of many different types of learners through the use of MI. They reflect the belief that all children are talented in their own way and that the most important mission of teaching is to nurture the individual abilities and personal development of each child. The aim of using MI in the classroom is to develop student learning to a deeper and more comprehensive level. And giving students a choice of activities gives them greater control over their own learning and can be highly motivating. *Education works better if these differences in metacognition and strengths are taken into account rather than denied or ignored.*

Some advantages of teaching using multiple intelligences:

1. Children use their preferred style of learning and presenting information
2. Time-management skills are developed
3. Ownership of learning is increased
4. Motivation of students is increased
5. Parents are happier
6. Differences among individuals are taken seriously
7. Higher order thinking skills (HOTS) are developed
8. Individual learning styles are catered for
9. Multiple intelligences are recognised and developed
10. Creativity and imagination are encouraged



11. Problem solving skills are developed
12. Resource-based, cooperative and collaborate learning techniques can be used
13. Self-esteem and confidence are raised
14. Statements and profiles are easily integrated into the theory
15. Successful group work is facilitated
16. Students negotiate with the teacher
17. Students use other process skills such as comparison, application, sequencing, analysis, evaluation, justification etc.
18. Study research strategies are learnt
19. Risk taking and independence are encouraged
20. Students experience contact with others of like ability

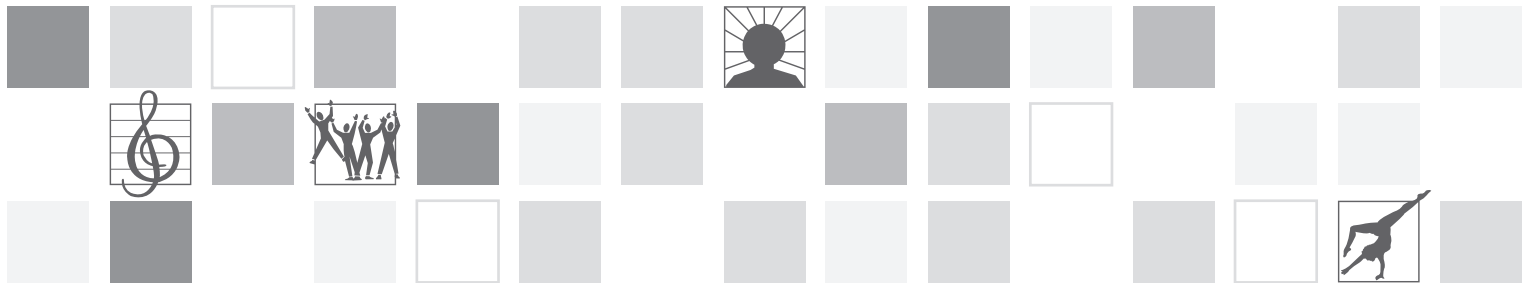
Traditional classroom practice of knowledge *instruction* – where teachers dispense facts to their students – is now moving towards knowledge *construction* – where teachers assist and guide their students in constructing their own knowledge base. The pure skill of teaching, or facilitating learning, is becoming more important than specific subject knowledge. Rather than teaching from a knowledge base, teachers are becoming guides who help students discover information for themselves and use it appropriately.

There are many opportunities to practise traditional methods of research- and resource-based, cooperative and collaborative learning. However, there are also many non-traditional ways of presenting information, which give greater scope for children to present information in a way that is comfortable for them. As well as providing choice, it is suggested that you attempt to stick to the following percentages when structuring and planning a curriculum:

Competitive activities 20%

Individual activities 20%

Cooperative assignments 60%.



Instructions on how to use the units

Each unit of work contains a set of background questions which need to be covered in order to begin the unit of work. These questions will provide students with a core knowledge base on the topic of study. This will give students enough information to allow them to answer the elective questions that are set as further extension to the topic. The elective questions are based on the multiple intelligences theory, which can and should be incorporated into every teacher's repertoire.

Once the background questions have been covered, children may choose to complete as many extension elective questions as they can in the time allocated for this unit of work. The convention of giving students choice of questions is a powerful motivation tool. Flexibility is an important part of teaching using MI. Encourage students to work cooperatively in both the background and elective questions as often as possible.

These units of work can be used in two main formats. Firstly, as a five-week topic which enables coverage of two topics per term. This will mean completing two questions per week. And secondly, as a whole term topic, which requires completing one question per week.

The units of work have been specifically designed to cater for a range of age levels from middle primary to lower secondary (years 4–8). There is an obvious difference of abilities within this range but being flexible in your management and expectations of your year level will enable students at any level to successfully complete the units.



Assessment

Whenever you use constructed-response assessment questions, you need criteria. Some of these can be very simple, such as **checklists**. However, some assessment methods need to be more complex in order to cover the differences in the quality of student work. **Rubrics** assess quality and carefully define levels of performance in these terms. *It is vital that students are aware of how their work is to be assessed before they begin the assignment.*

Checklist

Checklists are a list of all the components that must be present in a product or performance. They are simple to use and create; however, they can only be used when a judgment of 'present' or 'absent' is sufficient. There is no actual judgment of the quality of the work.

Checklist	Yes	No
Information presented in a clear and organised way.		
Content presented in a suitable form (e.g. paper report, model, multimedia etc.)		
A variety of ideas presented in a creative way.		
Work completed with care and attention to detail.		
Multiple resources used in developing ideas.		
A degree of interest, relevance and value for the audience.		
Correct use of spelling, grammar, vocabulary and punctuation.		
Visuals of a high quality.		
Obvious energy and enthusiasm for the topic.		
Excellent classroom work habits.		

Rubrics

Rubrics contain criteria and a performance scale that allows judgment of the most important components that comprise *complex* performances and products. They provide a description of the levels of performance, as well as assuring consistency and improvement of scoring in the classroom. There is an example rubric on the following page. Using criteria based in this example it is simple to design your own rubric to suit the needs of your class.

Assessment rubric

Information and skills being assessed	Work quality shows low development of skills	Work shows increasing levels of development	Work quality shows advanced levels of skills development	SCORE
Possible score range	1–3	4–7	8–10	
Quality of information	Information lacks relevance.	Relevant information and some detail gathered.	Very detailed and accurate information gathered.	
Amount of information	Additional information required to complete questions correctly.	All questions are addressed and most criteria are covered.	All questions are addressed and all criteria are covered.	
Mechanics: Sentence structure	Very little information is written in correct sentences.	Most of the information is written in correct sentences.	Nearly all information is written in correct sentences.	
Mechanics: Grammar and punctuation	Many grammatical and punctuation errors.	Few grammatical or punctuation errors.	Almost no grammatical or punctuation errors.	
Mechanics: Spelling	Many spelling errors.	Few spelling errors.	Almost no spelling errors.	
Headings	A lack of relevant headings and labels.	Some relevant headings and labels.	Headings and labels that relate to questions.	
Organisation	Presentation of information lacks organisation and is untidily written or typed showing little care.	Information is mostly organised with suitable headings and shows care has been taken with neatness.	Information is very well organised and is neatly written or typed.	
Sources	Sources of information are not documented.	Some documentation is provided.	Sources of information are clearly documented.	
Presentation	Presentation shows little care taken with planning and a lack of satisfactory illustrations.	Presentation shows some effort has been put into planning with some illustrations.	Presentation is well planned with many accurate illustrations and work is visually attractive.	
Work habits and time management	Work was incomplete and/or late; lack of effort in class.	Most work completed on time and sound work in class.	All work completed on time and high concentration levels in class.	
Final teacher comment			Mark	Effort