

# Introduction to the 3rd Edition

This book has emerged from my work over the past 23 years in applying Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences to the nuts-and-bolts issues of classroom teaching. I was initially attracted to MI theory in 1985 when I saw that it provided a language for talking about the inner gifts of children, especially those students who have been given labels such as “LD” and “ADHD” during their school careers (Armstrong, 1987a, 1987b, 1988, 1997, 1999b). It was as a learning disabilities specialist during the late 1970s and early 1980s that I began to feel the need to disassociate myself from what I considered to be a deficit-oriented paradigm in special education. I wanted to forge a new model based on what I plainly saw were the many gifts of these so-called disabled children.

I didn’t have to create a new model. Howard Gardner had already done it for me. In 1979, as a Harvard researcher, Gardner was asked by a Dutch philanthropic group, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, to investigate human potential. This invitation led to the founding of Harvard Project Zero, which served as the institutional midwife for the theory of multiple intelligences. Although Gardner had been thinking about the notion of “many kinds of minds” since at least the mid-1970s (see Gardner, 1989, p. 96), the publication in 1983 of his book *Frames of Mind* marked the effective birthdate of

## Identifying Your Multiple Intelligences

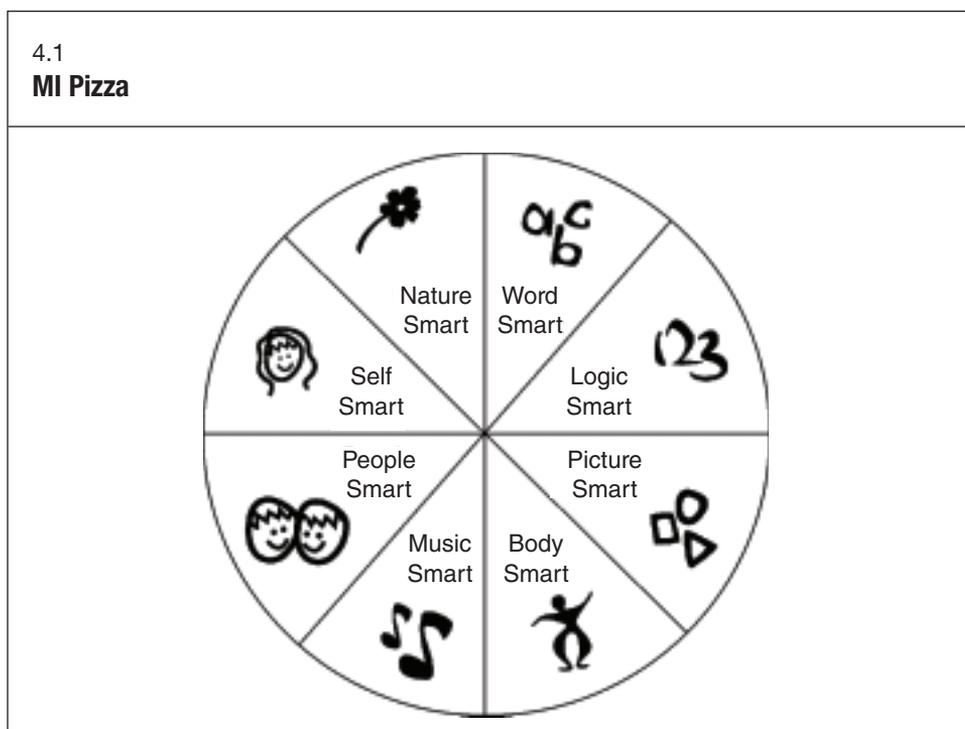
As you will see in the later chapters on student assessment (Chapters 3 and 10), developing a profile of a person's multiple intelligences is not a simple matter. No test can accurately determine the nature or quality of a person's intelligences. As Howard Gardner has repeatedly pointed out, standardized tests measure only a small part of the total spectrum of abilities. The best way to assess your own multiple intelligences, therefore, is through a realistic appraisal of your performance in the many kinds of tasks, activities, and experiences associated with each intelligence. Rather than perform several artificial learning tasks, look back over the kinds of real-life experiences you've already had involving these eight intelligences. The MI inventory in Figure 2.1 can assist you in doing this.

It's important to keep in mind that this inventory is *not* a test and that quantitative information (such as the number of checks for each intelligence) has no bearing on determining your intelligence or lack of intelligence in each category. The purpose of the inventory is to begin to connect you to your own life experiences with the eight intelligences. What sorts of memories, feelings, and ideas emerge from this process?

## Tapping MI Resources

The theory of multiple intelligences is an especially good model for looking at teaching strengths as well as for examining areas needing improvement. Perhaps you avoid drawing pictures on the blackboard or stay away from using highly graphic materials in your presentations because spatial intelligence is not particularly well developed in your life. Or possibly you gravitate toward cooperative learning strategies or ecological activities because you are an interpersonal or naturalist sort of learner/teacher yourself. Use MI theory to survey your own teaching style, and see how it matches up with the eight intelligences. While you don't have to be a master in all eight intelligences, you probably should know how to tap resources in the intelligences you typically shy away from in the classroom. Here are some ways to do this:

**Draw on colleagues' expertise.** If you don't have ideas for bringing music into the classroom because your musical intelligence is undeveloped,



Here are the simple terms for each of the intelligences and some questions that I use in my presentations:

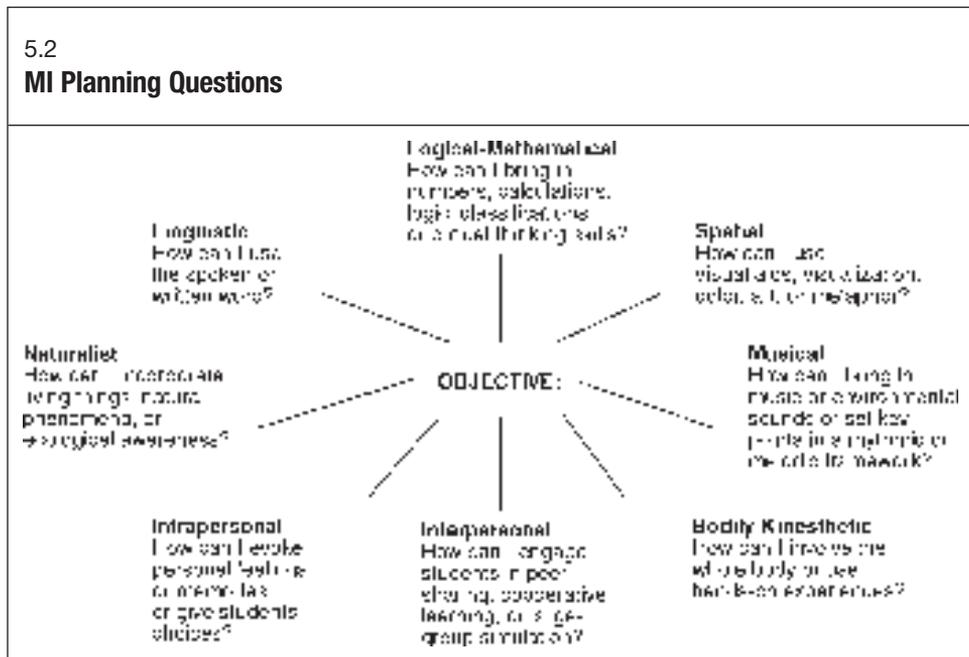
- *Linguistic*—Word Smart (see questions above)
- *Logical-mathematical*—Number Smart or Logic Smart: “How many of you can do math?” “How many people here have done a science experiment?”
- *Spatial*—Picture Smart: “How many of you draw?” “How many of you can see pictures in your heads when you close your eyes?” “How many of you enjoy watching television and films or playing video games?”
- *Bodily-kinesthetic*—Body Smart, Sports Smart, or Hand Smart (each term represents a different aspect of this intelligence): “How many of you like sports?” “How many of you enjoy making things with your hands, like models or Lego structures?”
- *Musical*—Music Smart: “How many of you enjoy listening to music?” “How many of you have ever played a musical instrument or sung a song?”

**1. Focus on a specific objective or topic.** You might want to develop curricula on a large scale (e.g., for a year-long theme) or create a program for reaching a specific instructional objective (e.g., for a student's individualized education plan). Whether you have chosen "ecology" or "the schwa sound" as a focus, however, make sure you have clearly and concisely stated the objective. Place the objective or topic in the center of a sheet of paper, as shown in Figure 5.2.

**2. Ask key MI questions.** Figure 5.2 shows the kinds of questions to ask when developing a curriculum for a specific objective or topic. These questions can help prime the creative pump for the next steps.

**3. Consider the possibilities.** Look over the questions in Figure 5.2, the list of MI techniques and materials in Figure 5.1, and the descriptions of specific strategies in Chapter 6. Which of the methods and materials seem most appropriate? Think also of other possibilities not listed.

**4. Brainstorm.** Using an MI Planning Sheet like the one shown in Figure 5.3, begin listing as many teaching approaches as possible for each intelligence. You should end up with something like the sheet shown in Figure 5.4.



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## MI Theory Around the Globe

I have had the opportunity . . . to travel to many other nations. It has been fascinating to discover the ways in which [MI] theory has been interpreted and the activities that it has catalyzed.

—Howard Gardner

One of the most exciting developments of the theory of multiple intelligences has been its international impact. MI theory is now a part of the educational scene to one degree or another in most of the nations of the world. In some cases, its impact has been at the governmental level, with MI incorporated into the national education initiatives of some countries. In other cases, its impact has been more local, with individual schools and teachers taking the theory and applying it to the unique requirements of their own culture. In this chapter, we'll look at several ways in which MI theory has been applied in cultures around the world.

### **MI Theory at the Policymaking Level**

There have been a number of cases in which MI theory has been incorporated at the highest levels of a nation's or international body's policymaking