How is this child smart?

The concept of **Multiple Intelligences** presumes that all children are smart, *just in different ways*.

This theory was developed in 1983 by Dr. Howard Gardner, a professor of education at Harvard University. It suggests that the traditional notion of intelligence, based on I.Q. testing, is far too limited. Instead, Dr. Gardner proposes eight different intelligences to account for a broader range of human potential in children and adults and open the door to different ways of teaching and learning.

While some experts take issue with Gardner’s concept, it can be a helpful way to become clearer how children are smart. That understanding helps everyone in the child’s life—regular and special education teachers, related service specialists and families—figure out how to differentiate instruction at school, at home and in the community.

Gardner’s **Eight Multiple Intelligences** with examples of associated interests and learning style characteristics:

1. **Linguistic Intelligence** ("word smart")
   - Like words and writing
   - Spin tall tales and/or tell jokes, stories
   - Have a good memory for names, places, dates or other trivia
   - Enjoy reading books in spare time (including listening to recorded book)
   - Spell words accurately and easily
   - Appreciate nonsense rhymes and tongue twisters

2. **Logical-Mathematical Intelligence** ("number/reasoning smart")
   - Like numbers and logic
   - Compute math problems quickly in one’s head
   - Enjoy using computers
   - Ask questions such as “Where does the universe end?”, “What happens after we die?” and “When did life begin?”
   - Play chess, checkers, or other strategy games, and win
   - Reason things out logically and clearly
   - Devise experiments to test out things that are not understood
   - Spend lots of time working on logic puzzles such as Rubik’s cube
3. Spatial Intelligence ("picture smart")
   - Like pictures
   - Spend free time engaged in art and crafts activities
   - Report clear visual images when thinking about something
   - Easily read maps, charts and diagrams
   - Draw accurate representations of people or things
   - Like to use movies, slides, or photographs to understand things and concepts
   - Enjoy doing jigsaw puzzles or mazes
   - Daydream a lot

4. Bodily–Kinesthetic intelligence ("body smart")
   - Do well in competitive sports
   - Move, twitch, tap or fidget while sitting in a chair
   - Engage in physical activities such as swimming, biking, hiking or skateboarding
   - Touch people when talking to them
   - Enjoy scary amusement rides
   - Demonstrate skills in crafts like woodworking, sewing, carving

5. Musical Intelligence ("music smart")
   - Drawn to music
   - Play a musical instrument
   - Remember melodies of a song
   - Can tell when a musical note is off key
   - Like to have music on in order to study
   - Collect CDs
   - Sing songs to self
   - Keep time rhythmically to music

6. Interpersonal Intelligence ("people smart")
   - Like social experiences
   - Have lots of friends
   - Socialize a great deal at school and/or around the neighborhood
   - Are “streetwise” and understand and respond appropriately to the culture of the neighborhood
   - Get involved in after-school group activities
   - Enjoy playing group games with others
   - Have lots of empathy for the feelings of others
7. Intrapersonal Intelligence ("self smart")
   - Engage in self-reflection
   - Display a sense of independence and/or a strong will
   - React with strong opinions when controversial topics are being discussed
   - Like to be alone to pursue some personal interest, hobby or project
   - Have a deep sense of self-confidence
   - March to the beat of a different drummer in their own style
   - Motivate themselves to do well on independent study projects

8. Naturalist Intelligence ("nature smart")
   - Like experiences in the natural world
   - Create observation notebooks of various environmental events, objects, or situations
   - Describe changes in local or global environment
   - Care for pets, wildlife, gardens or parks
   - Use binoculars, telescopes, or magnifiers to understand their environment
   - Draw or photograph natural objects to represent how they understand and see the world

Ways to gather information about how kids are smart:

- Observe and make notes of children’s preferences and strengths while they are engaged in different activities and ways of learning
- Observe, record, reflect on occasions when students behave in ways that are contrary to classroom norms
- Interview with children and/or their families about child’s strengths, interests and preferences

Sources and Resources:


For more information, please contact:

exceptional children’s assistance center
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