

## **MIND MATTERS: TEACHERS PROMOTING ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING CREATIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM**

Creativity enhances well-being and contributes to the positive experiences of adolescents at school. Many teachers have expressed concerns about focusing on SOLs at the expense of some of the more creative learning activities that they engaged in at one time during their teaching career. As students before the SOL age, some of us recall the teacher that shared with us their interests in bird watching, a musical instrument, or poetry writing. How do we capture the 'good ole' days' of creativity in the classroom?

It may be helpful to think of SOLs as the 'WHAT' of teaching and creativity as the 'HOW' to teach it. Many school districts have met the expectation of the 'WHAT,' but at what sacrifice? It is up to us as educators to polish the instructional process and reclaim the creativity in learning as we march along with our SOL objectives.

Teachers are the most **dedicated** and creative individuals found in any profession. It is a great challenge to not only bring the SOLs into the classroom, but to do it in a creative way. One of the approaches that can be helpful in doing this is through the use of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences model. An excellent resource is *Integrating Curricula with Multiple Intelligences* by Robin Fogarty & Judy Stoehr, ISBN 0-932935-81-8. The information below is from this reference.

This approach requires consideration of all **eight areas of intelligence** identified by Howard Gardner:

- Verbal/ Linguistic: Who says? This describes students who excel with words, speaking, writing, listening, reading, speeches, memos, newsletters, lyrics, and foreign languages.
- Visual/Spatial: Show me! This describes students who excel with images, maps, charts, drawings, films, videos, graphs, puzzles, and designs.
- Interpersonal/Social: Can we talk? This describes students who excel in interacting, understanding, talking, crowds, leading, following, sharing, working together, and clubs.
- Intrapersonal/Introspective: What's in it for me? This describes students who excel in self-assessment, poetry, songs, commentaries, working alone, reflecting, and stories.
- Mathematical/Logical: Why bother? This describes students who excel with reasoning, data, sequencing, ranking, organizing, analyzing, proofs, evaluations, and assessments.
- Musical/Rhythmic: I hear it! This describes students who excel in music, rhythm, beats, pacing, rap, chorus, melody, tunes, ads, and jingles.
- Bodily/Kinesthetic: Just do it! This describes students who excel in activity, experiments, hands-on, performing, sports, toss, manipulate, touch, and assemble.
- Naturalist/Physical World: Let's go outside! This describes students who excel in nature walks, forecasting, collecting, planting, uncovering, comparing, observing, and categorizing.

## **MIND MATTERS: TEACHERS PROMOTING ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING CREATIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM (continued)**

The challenge is to take each area of intelligence and cross reference it with each subject area you teach. Then use your **imagination** to develop activities that represent each area of intelligence as related to the subject area. Examples of this for the subject of government might include inviting a local official to answer questions developed by students (Verbal); gathering data and graphing opinions on a local issue (Logical/Math); creating a jingle (Music); designing a poster of the structure of a governmental body (Visual); physically moving students to form a human graph representing opinions (Bodily); staging an election (Interpersonal); journaling about personal reflections of current topics (Intrapersonal); and examining the functioning structure of ants (Nature).

Any subject area and objective can be turned into a creative activity. Of course time is a critical issue in the classroom. Therefore **choosing** the best activities to meet the needs and thinking styles of your students is critical. There is a time investment, but the learning that occurs will be long-lasting and the level of understanding will be greater.

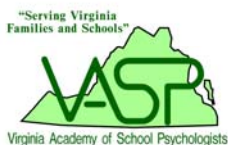
Start small and begin to **integrate** creative learning activities into the daily structure. Consider your own preferences for learning and teaching style. It will be easier to create activities that reflect your own interests and talents. Consider the learning styles of the students who struggle the most in your classroom and try to integrate activities that are consistent with their strengths, too.

When introducing a new topic for study, ask students how they would like to explore/learn about this area. Students can be very creative about developing their own learning activities! It may work to have some students pursue a topic using one approach, while other students participate in a completely different type of activity and then have them share with one another.

Teachers are artists, creating images on the canvases of students' minds everyday. **Share** your thoughts with your fellow teachers. Work together to create new learning opportunities. Consult with your school psychologist to understand the various intelligence styles of your students. Ask them about learning style inventories available to help determine the needs of your students. Your classroom can be the exciting learning environment you always dreamed it would be!

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.” -- Albert Einstein

Creative teaching websites: [www.creativelearning.com](http://www.creativelearning.com) [www.creativelearningonline.com](http://www.creativelearningonline.com)



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