

Considering Learning Styles During Assessment

Using Observation as an Assessment Tool

Students' learning styles can be accommodated through the ways that we provide instruction. Learning Styles can also be considered during assessment as well. Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory supports the belief that students should be able to show competence in a specific skill, subject, content area, or domain in any one of a variety of ways.

“Observation can provide a powerful authentic assessment for students' learning styles. For instance, you might notice how students play a logical board game, how they interact with a machine, how they dance, or how they cope with a dispute in a cooperative learning group. Observing students solving problems or fashioning products in naturalistic contexts provides the best picture of student competencies in the range of subjects taught in school.”

Thomas Armstrong, Multiple Intelligence in the Classroom

Additional Assessment Options

Think about how students' learning styles can be addressed in some of the following assessment options:

- Anecdotal Records
- Work Samples
- Audio Cassettes
- Videotapes
- Criterion
- Referenced Assessments
- Student Journals
- Socio-grams
- Informal Tests
- Student Interviews
- Photography

Note: When doing the assignments, you can choose to design to VARK, Multiple Intelligences, or Kolb—whichever theory resonates with you.

Considering Learning Styles with Standardized Tests

The biggest shortcoming of standardized tests is that they require students to show in a narrowly defined way what they've learned during the year.

"Standardized tests usually demand that students be seated at a desk, that they complete the test within a specific amount of time, and that they speak to no one during the test. The tests themselves usually contain largely linguistic questions or test items that students must answer by filling in bubbles on computer-coded forms."

Thomas Armstrong, Multiple Intelligence in the Classroom

Consider How the Following Learning Objective Can Be Assessed in a Variety of Ways

Learning Objective:

Demonstrate understanding of the character Huck Finn in the Mark Twain novel.

Standardized Assessment:

Choose the word that best describe Huck Finn in the novel: a. sensitive b. jealous c. erudite d. fidgety

MI Theory suggests 7 ways to demonstrate understanding:

Linguistic Demonstration: Describe Huck Finn in your own words.

Logical Mathematical: If Huck Finn were a scientific principle, law, or theorem, which one would he be?

Spatial: Draw a quick sketch showing something you think Huck Finn would enjoy doing that's not included in the novel.

Bodily Kinesthetic: Pantomime how you think Huck Finn would act in the classroom.

Musical: If Huck Finn were a musical phrase, what would he sound like or what song would he be?

Interpersonal: Who does Huck Finn remind you of in your own life (friends, family, other students, TV characters)?

Intrapersonal: Describe in a few words your personal feelings toward Huck Finn.