

Respecting Diversity



Program Manual

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Respecting Diversity: Creating Compassionate Learning Communities

To educate means “to develop and cultivate” (Merriam-Webster, 1978). To teach, on the other hand, is defined as “to cause to know; to show how; to guide; to make to know the consequences of” (Merriam-Webster). Education, therefore, includes more than instruction in academic subjects; and teaching includes more than just content delivery. Education must develop the whole child and cultivate all of the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary for successful integration into society. Thus, practices such as inclusion that aim to educate students in the full sense of the word must promote their social, emotional, and physical development, in addition to their academic achievement.

It is important that we all recognize that diversity, or diverse learners, does NOT refer only to children with exceptional needs! All children are diverse – fat/thin, rich/poor, personalities, ethnicities, languages, family constructions, and learning styles all contribute to the makeup of a diverse classroom. What we know from brain research is that even a group of so-called “typical” learners from Caucasian, middle class families would be diverse in how they learn best.

*Thus, teaching to diversity requires that teachers create a learning climate and activities that allow **ALL** children to feel safe, respected, and valued for what they have to contribute.*

**** A note on multiple intelligences:** There has been a great deal of debate around the science of MI. However, we are not using it as a scientific pedagogy. We are using it as a language for talking about diversity and strength. As such, it provides a culturally neutral, and intellectually neutral language. Instead of math and linguistic abilities being "intelligent" and kinesthetic, musical, and artistic strengths being "talents", it recognizes that composing a master symphony requires as much intelligence as writing a novel. This is important for students to develop respect for self and other.

THE RESPECTING DIVERSITY (RD) PROGRAM

Lesson 1: What Does “Smart” Mean?

Rationale

This lesson introduces the language to describe *intelligence*, to discuss different levels of intelligence, different interests, different abilities, different feelings, different strengths, needs, and values. As students expand their ideas of what *smart* means, they understand there are many ways to acquire and demonstrate one’s knowledge and abilities, and each way is equally valuable in contributing to one’s overall intelligence. The ways (or modalities) may overlap, but it is helpful to distinguish among them.

Well-Being Foci

self-worth, hope, sense of purpose, common language

Materials

student journals, chart paper, chart-paper stands, coloured markers

Process

1. Brainstorm. Ask: “What does *smart* mean to you?” As students respond, record their answers on chart paper as a web. As you write, begin to group the responses into MI categories (e.g., group “can read well,” “knows lots of words,” “can spell accurately” together because they are all part of verbal-linguistic intelligence). Use a different coloured marker for each intelligence to make each stand out visually.
2. When the students run out of ideas, ask questions such as: “What other ways can people be smart?” “How do you learn best?” “What things are you good at?” (If a student says “hockey,” for example, group it with other sports, eventually identified as bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.)
3. Prompt students until you have listed examples of all nine intelligences, filling in as necessary (e.g., “Does anyone here play piano?” “I have a friend who likes to draw.”).
4. Introduce the nine MIs. Discuss each separately. Circle phrases from the students’ brainstorming session that relate to that intelligence, and discuss what activities or skills help define this group of people. Name the intelligence by saying something like: “You’re right, some people are word smart, they are good at _____ (e.g., spelling, writing, reading). We say these people have ‘verbal-linguistic intelligence.’”

Discussion and Journal Reflection

Have students reflect on the following question and draw or write their response in their journal: What strengths do you think you have?

Tiered Supports

Students with significant disabilities can listen to the discussion and communicate their likes and interests by using visual aids or matching their classmates’ pictures to pictures of activities they like.

Figure 6.7 Kindergarten students' brainstorm of what "smart" means.

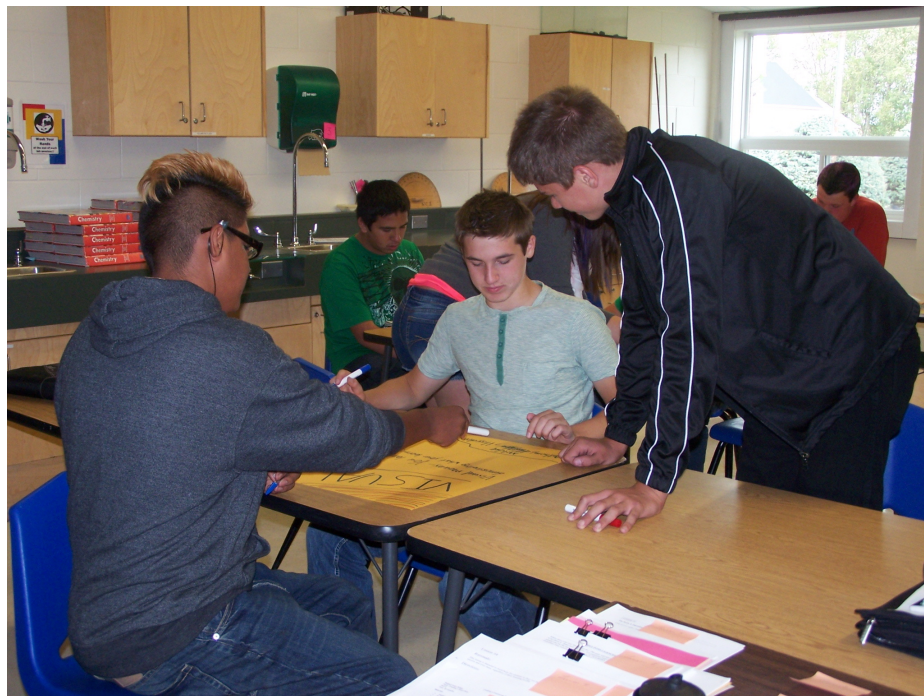


Figure 6.8 After students did some brainstorming about what it means to be smart, the teacher discussed the different intelligences to them and had them reflect on which intelligence they felt was their strength. A few students shared theirs with the class.

Lesson 2: Who Am I as a Learner?

Rationale

In this lesson, students respond to a survey designed as a tool for metacognition and reflection on their interests. Individual demystification allows children to develop self-perception and a realistic self-concept by recognizing their strengths, needs, and values; they increase self-efficacy as self-awareness grows. As well, journal reflections give students a chance to identify and recognize their emotions, and evaluate their reactions regarding their learning profile.

Well-Being Foci

self-worth, self-awareness, sense of purpose

Materials

student journals, Multiple Intelligence Survey (see appendix B) at the appropriate level for your students (provide each student with a copy, but do not make this a reading task), and including Part 4, Intelligence Profile graph.

Process

1. Tell students the survey is not a competition. Have them think about each statement and decide as best they can whether it describes them, or how they think or feel. Read the instructions for Part 1 of the survey with the students.
2. Remind students that everyone has strengths and challenges. Emphasize that it's okay. If you don't make this emphasis, students will answer according to what they think you want them to say, not what they actually believe. With the students, read each statement in each section of the survey aloud, and have them put the number 1 on the line if they believe the statement is true for them most of the time, or leave it blank if the statement is not true or not very often true.
3. At the end of each section, have students add the 1s and write the total. Tell them it is not important how many statements in each section they have marked.
4. When students have finished the nine sections (90 statements), have them transfer all their totals to the table in Part 2, then shade in the portion of each column that matches their totals in the bar graph in Part 4. To avoid students comparing scores, tell them the scores don't matter. What *does* matter is their relative strengths and challenges.

Discussion and Journal Reflection

Have students reflect on the following questions and draw or write their responses in their journal: Were your predictions of your strengths correct? Were there any surprises for you? Why do you think this happened? (e.g., Survey is wrong; Had not thought myself good at that.) How do you feel about your learning profile?

Tiered Supports

Students with disabilities can use visual aids, PicSyms, or PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) to communicate their likes and interests. Participation depends on the student's level of functioning and degree of training with PECS, which has to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Lesson 3: Community Brain

Rationale

This lesson follows up on what the students have learned about their strong interests and abilities. It develops students' awareness of social relationships and of the skills that foster a sense of community – their interdependence as members of their community. All students have a chance to be the helper at times, and at other times to ask for help, which reinforces the idea that everyone has strengths and challenges. Students can use a positive framework to manage cooperative relationships, to develop communication with their peers, and to foster social engagement and inclusion.

Well-Being Foci

self-worth, sense of purpose, sense of belonging, respect for diversity, generosity, class culture, positive relationships

Materials

Plasticine (enough for each student to contribute to the model of a brain), paper “flags” or sticky notes and toothpicks (for students to make flags. With very young children (K–1), prepare the flags in advance, or have a parent volunteer present to help.)

Process

1. Work together to create a model of the brain from Plasticine. Give each student a piece of the Plasticine to roll into a snake. Then, have them add their strip as you build up the layers into a multi-fold brain.
2. Have students write their name and dominant intelligence strength on a flag. Holding their flag, bring students together into a circle. Tell students they will be placing their flags into the brain. First, though, you have two important points to make:
 - “Everyone in this room has something to contribute, something to be proud of. Whatever you wrote on your flag shows us what you have to contribute to the community.” Give examples of actions characteristic of someone with a particular type of intelligence. For example: “If you are ‘interpersonal,’ you can be a friend to a new student or to one who needs someone to hang out with at recess. If you are ‘bodily-kinesthetic,’ you can coach others in your skill. We all have strengths and challenges, so all of us will be helpers sometimes, and ‘helpees’ at other times. When you need help in an activity we are engaged in, look for someone with strength in that area.”
 - “This is a commitment to our community and to yourself: When someone asks you for help with a task, leadership means you will not make fun of them, nor will you do the task for them. But, you will help them learn how to do what you are able to do, or to understand what you have learned.”
3. Have students place their flag in the appropriate area of the Plasticine brain.

NOTE: Be sure to call on your students for help at times (e.g., to draw on a chart for you, or to fix something), using the brain model.



Figure 6.9 Colour-coded Brain Anatomy



Figure 6.10 All Kinds of Brains!

Tiered Supports

For students who are significantly disabled and who may have marked only a few statements in any category of the survey, consider what emotions they evoke in other students. For instance, do they make others smile? Are they willing to interact with others? If so, their profile might be “interpersonal.”

Indigenizing the Lesson

Indigenous cultures recognize important moments to the community with ceremonies. One teacher recognized the importance of this lesson, so she turned it into a ceremony. She laid out a table with the community brain, and added candles and flowers. Students prepared the flags, and a treatise called “Community Commitment” was written and signed by the class. You can find out more on her blog <https://sheila-vick.com/>



Figure 6.11a, 6.11b Community Commitment Ceremony

Lesson 4: Diversity, Intelligences, and Careers

Rationale

This lesson develops self-motivation and resiliency by building hope for students; they see there will be opportunities for success and even fame, regardless of their learning profile.

Have students explore career options and life paths open to those with diverse learning profiles. When students can identify role models who have learning profiles similar to theirs and who have been successful, they may begin to develop self-efficacy and emotional resiliency.

Well-Being Foci

self-worth, hope, sense of purpose, belonging, generosity, develop interests

Materials

chart (from lesson 1; see figure 6.7), photographs of public figures and people in different areas of work, the arts, and community endeavours (collected by you and/or students)

Process

1. Have students sit in a circle around the chart created in lesson 1. Discuss the range of activities involved in different types of work done by well-known people in your community. Ask: What strengths might each have in one or more of the intelligence categories?
2. As you go around the circle, brainstorm careers for each category. Identify some well-known people who have strengths in each field: a popular radio presenter (strong verbal-linguistic abilities); a soccer coach (strong bodily-kinesthetic abilities); and so forth. It is critical, during this discussion, to point out to students that, no matter the nature of their profile, they can be successful in whatever work or career they choose to pursue and train for.
3. If students need help, hand out photographs of public figures they may recognize, or figures in settings that help identify their field (e.g., sports; music; technology; sciences; local, provincial, national politics). Have students discuss that person's career and what their learning profile (strengths and challenges) might be.
4. As an extension, have students research and write a brief biography of someone with a profile similar to their own. This task might help them see that someone just like them can be successful.

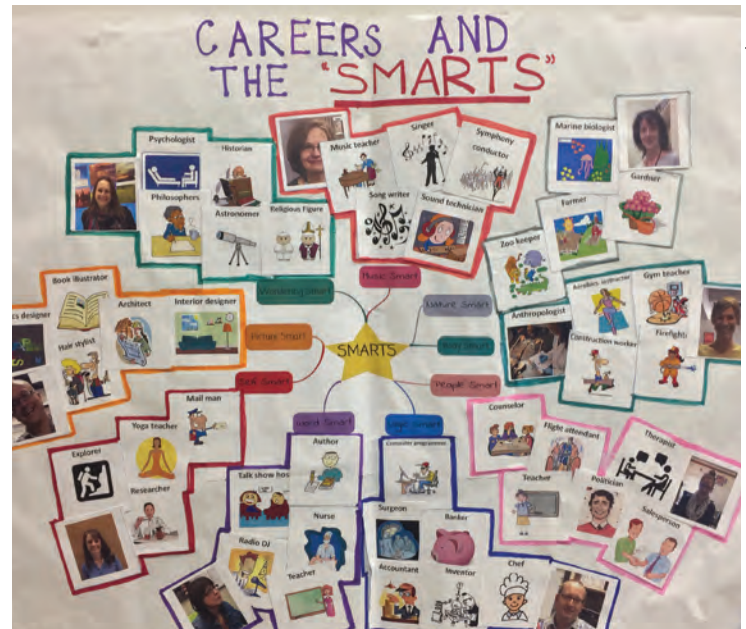



Figure 6.12 One teacher gave students pictures of careers and had them sort them by intelligences.

From Rachel Thomas,
Your Guide to TV Dramas.
FREE Newsletter. [Sign Up Now!](#)

CSI: William Petersen stars as Gil Grissom



© 2005 CBS Broadcasting Inc.
William Petersen stars as Gil Grissom in "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation"

Handwritten notes and diagram:

- Character — mathematical logical
- Character — naturalist
- Character — conservative
- William Petersen (circled) — interpersonal
- William Petersen (circled) — actor, person
- William Petersen (circled) — verbal linguistic

- William Petersen plays the role of Gilbert Grissom on CSI.
As a character, he is mathematical and logical since he needs to use high-tech machines

Figure 6.13 A student's web for a biography of a television character he thought shared his profile of being logical-mathematical and interpersonal.

Tiered Supports

Students who are significantly disabled can take part in the discussion and brainstorming. When writing biographies, have them work with a partner who has similar strengths (e.g., they both enjoy music), or they can find out about other persons with disabilities similar to their own (e.g., autism, Down syndrome).

Lesson 5: Interdependence in Learning Teams

Rationale

In this lesson, we focus on respect for others and respect for diversity. School-age children are naturally egocentric; they think everyone should know, like, and believe what they do (e.g., “How could you not like hockey? What’s wrong with you?”) We cannot teach students to value diversity until we teach them to see that their life and the world are better for it. As students become aware that a community actually requires diversity to function, they learn to value people who are different from themselves. This focus helps create social awareness of the value of diversity and helps students develop respect for others.

Well-Being Foci

sense of purpose; belonging; generosity; respect for diversity, class culture; positive relationships, perspective-taking, collaborative and cooperative skills

Materials

nine paper slips, each with a different MI written on it, and placed in a small container

Process

1. Place students in nine groups. Have a student from each group pick a slip of paper (intelligence) from the container. Each group is to develop and write a role-play, based on the MI selected, which they will perform. Prompt students by asking:
 - What if everyone were (e.g., verbal-linguistic)? What would the world be like?”
2. Have all groups perform their role-plays. Ask students the following questions, and discuss as a class:
 - What are the pros and cons of everyone being the same? (e.g., everyone would be talking; there would be no roads, no cars, which would lead to chaos and disorganization)
 - How does diversity benefit a community? How do diverse others support our lives? (e.g., someone builds our houses; performs on TV, programs computers). You want students to see how diversity benefits *them*.
3. Have students write and perform a second role-play. They can focus on the same intelligence, or you can place the slips back in the container and ask them to redraw. This time, ask the students to create role-plays answering the questions “What would the world be like without people who have strength in (e.g., musical-rhythmic)?”

Discussion and Journal Reflection

After all groups have performed their role-plays, discuss: What would be missing from the world and from your life if other people did not have likes and abilities different from yours?

Here our goal is to have students recognize that they would be missed if they were not exactly who they are, and that they would miss other students with different abilities than them.

Ask students: Why is diversity necessary? How would your life be more difficult without it?

(e.g., “I would have to build my own house”; “...make my own music.”)

Have them draw or write their responses in their journal.



Lesson 6: Valuing Diversity

Rationale

In this lesson, students reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of working with others who may be similar to or different from them. The ability to work with diverse people is important. For instance, a technology company might have different departments – software, programming, graphic design, marketing and promotion, and sales. Within each department, employees will share many of the same strengths, but to create a successful product, the developers will have to collaborate with others who have different strengths, such as graphic designers and programmers.

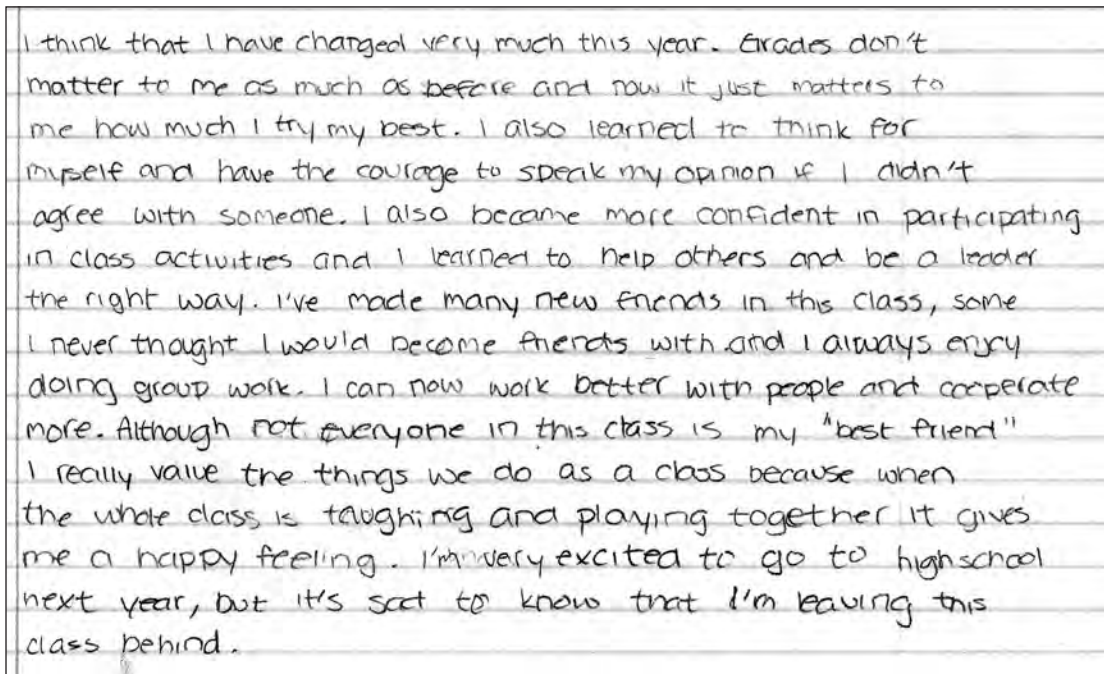
Students, too, must learn to negotiate with their peers about when and how to choose and work with partners and group members, whether they have similar or differing learning profiles. By doing so, students build explicit awareness of the value of diversity, explore the pros and cons of working with similar and different types of learners, and see value in all. Students develop social awareness and relationship management skills.

Well-Being Foci

sense of purpose, belonging, generosity; respect for diversity, class culture, positive relationships; perspective-taking, collaborative and cooperative skills

Process

1. Break the class into groups according to MI strengths in learning profiles (i.e., all the kinesthetic learners work together, and so on).
2. Assign a topic to each group. Prompt students by saying something like: Show me what you know about _____. Choose a curricular topic the class is going to study, and use this as a formative assessment to see what your students know. Tell students they must use at least two intelligences in their presentation (e.g., draw and write; act and speak).



I think that I have changed very much this year. Grades don't matter to me as much as before and now it just matters to me how much I try my best. I also learned to think for myself and have the courage to speak my opinion if I didn't agree with someone. I also became more confident in participating in class activities and I learned to help others and be a leader the right way. I've made many new friends in this class, some I never thought I would become friends with and I always enjoy doing group work. I can now work better with people and cooperate more. Although not everyone in this class is my "best friend" I really value the things we do as a class because when the whole class is laughing and playing together it gives me a happy feeling. I'm very excited to go to high school next year, but it's sad to know that I'm leaving this class behind.

Figure 6.14 A grade seven student's journal entry about making friends and working with diverse others.

3. Discuss: What were the advantages and disadvantages of working with people of like mind/ learning style to you? (Possible response: “Well, it was easy to decide what we wanted to do, but then everyone wanted to draw and no one wanted to write.”)
4. Re-arrange the students into groups of mixed intelligences.
 - Assign a second topic (e.g., Show me what you know about _____).
 - Tell students they must use at least two intelligences in their presentation on the topic selected (e.g., Draw and write, or act and speak).
 - Discuss: What were the advantages and disadvantages of working with people with mind/ learning strengths different from yours? (e.g., Possible response: “Well, it was hard to decide what we wanted to do, but then it was easy to divide the labour.”)

Discuss: We have to be able to work with and relate to both people who think like us or do what we do, and people who think and work differently. Sometimes, it is useful to work with people who have the same interests as you, and, sometimes, it is useful to find partners or team members who have complementary skill sets. You cannot have a hockey team made up only of goalies.



Lesson 7: Goal-Setting

Rationale

This lesson develops students' self-awareness, particularly their ability to set goals, to plan and organize, to recognize the need to develop strength in these areas, and to challenge themselves in areas of weakness. They begin to share goals as they learn to count on others for help, accept that they can be vulnerable, and become the kinds of friends who can be strong for each other. This, in turn, creates a sense of interdependence.

It is vital that we allow, encourage, and expect students to set goals in areas of strength. Too often, we imply that goal-setting is all about getting better "at what you're not good at." But greatness is achieved by setting goals in areas of strength. If someone had said to Mozart: "You are good enough at music, but you need to work on your spelling," the world would have lost a great talent! Give students the opportunity to reflect on what is important to them and to set goals in their strengths. Help them learn to use their strengths to overcome challenges and explore stress-management techniques for dealing with challenge goals.

Well-Being Foci

sense of purpose, respect for diversity, generosity, class culture, positive relationships, sense of belonging perspective-taking, collaborative and cooperative skills

Process

1. Discuss the process of setting goals.
 - It is important to set goals in both strengths ("How are you going to develop your talents?") and challenges ("What do you want to get better at?").
 - Emphasize setting goals in one's strengths! Tell students: "There would be no Mozart, no LeBron James if someone had said to them: 'You're already good enough in music/basketball. You really need to work on _____'!"
 - Students tend to write goals they think their teachers or parents want to hear (e.g., "getting better at math.") Remind them: "Goals must matter to you, or you won't work toward them."
2. Goal #1
 - Have students each set a goal in their strength. How will they develop their talent? (If a strength is athletics/hockey, what do they want to get better at? Conditioning? Stickhandling?) Have them make a plan for how they will do that.
3. Goal #2
 - Discuss goals in areas that we find challenging – the areas we cannot improve on our own. (Goals in challenge areas require community support. You have to plan who will help you, how they might help you, and how you can gain their support.) Have students set a goal in a challenge area. Ask: What is important to you? Make a plan, and decide who you need help from.
4. Class discussion
 - Gather students in a circle. Ask them, one at a time, to share their goals. After the student has shared, ask: "How can we help you?" It is important to have students articulate how their peers can help them, as this builds trust and teaches students how to communicate their needs. Emphasize that everyone in the classroom community is responsible for supporting everyone else to reach their goals.

Lesson 8: Social Influence

OPTIONAL: for older students

Rationale

In this lesson, students develop an awareness of common misconceptions about what intelligence is, and they are made aware about the diversity of learning profiles. Students explore concepts such as societal bias and its influence on individuals. They also explore societal views of intelligence, and reflect on how society's views have influenced their own view of themselves and others.

Well-Being Foci

respect for diversity, generosity, class culture, positive relationships, perspective-taking

Process

1. Have students create their own survey on MI. They can pose one or more questions that explore definitions of intelligence (e.g., Which of the following activities is your favourite? Who do you think is the smartest, Mozart or Shakespeare?). Students can then survey classmates, friends, other students in the school, teachers, or family.
2. Tally the results.
3. Record the results, using a variety of graph types.
4. Discuss:
 - What does this say about how we view intelligence and the distribution of intelligences? (e.g., We think Einstein is smarter than Michael Jordan, but more people are bodily-kinesthetic than logical-mathematical. Or: Out of 50 people I surveyed, 48 said verbal-linguistic was more important than naturalistic).
 - Would the results be different in another culture? (i.e., Is bodily-kinesthetic intelligence viewed more positively than logical-mathematical intelligence in some societies?)

Discussion and Journal Reflection

Have students reflect on how the culture and society in which they are growing up has influenced how they think about themselves and others. They can write or draw their reflections in their journal.

Lesson 9: The Brain and Disabilities

Rationale

In this lesson, students develop social awareness of and empathy for the challenges that people with disabilities face. We try to encourage students to reflect on their personal, moral, and ethical responsibilities within diverse communities. At the same time, we must make students aware that someone with a challenge in one area does not mean they are challenged in all areas – people with mental or physical challenges can be capable in many ways. It is important to help students become aware of the relationship between the intelligences and some of the disabilities their peers and classmates may have. Research into the outcomes of the Respecting Diversity (RD) strategy indicate students find this discussion to be one of the most powerful.

Well-Being Foci

respect for diversity, generosity, class culture, positive relationships, perspective-taking, collaborative and cooperative skills

Process

1. Discuss with students the following: We all have strengths and challenges, but what would it be like to have a severe challenge in any one of the intelligences?
2. Work through each intelligence, noting associated disabilities, and the potential abilities. (e.g., If you are quadriplegic and in a wheelchair, does it mean you are not intelligent? No, because you can be smart in these other ways.....) Then, have students work with partners, or in groups to role-play what it would be like to be:
 - Verbal-Linguistic: learning disabled, hearing impaired, mute
 - Visual-Spatial: visually impaired
 - Logical-Mathematical: dyscalculia
 - Bodily-Kinesthetic: physically challenged, ADHD
 - Musical-Rhythmic: tone deaf
 - Interpersonal: conduct disorder, nonverbal learning disability (NVLD), autism spectrum disorder
 - Intrapersonal: anxiety disorder, mood disorders, autism spectrum disorder
 - Naturalistic: phobias
 - Existential: developmental delays; challenges with conceptual understanding, higher-order thinking

Discussion and Journal Reflection

Have students reflect on the following questions and draw or write their responses in their journal: If you had a severe challenge in one of the nine intelligences, what other activities could you do to prepare for a career? As a person without disabilities, what could you do to support community members with disabilities?