

Assessing The Multiple Intelligences: What Good Can Come of It?

In The Teachers' Own Words

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This question was recently posed to eight teachers in northeast Ohio following their participation in a yearlong multiple intelligences (MI) project. These fourth through 12th grade teachers volunteered to add activities related to the multiple intelligences to their busy schedules and planned curriculums. By all accounts these veteran teachers are already very successful so why would they take on the additional burdens of after-school meetings, altering lesson plans and giving up valuable class time? One teacher put it this way: *"After 16 years of teaching, I feel so lucky to be excited about teaching again that I'm ready for another 16 years!"*

The idea of multiple intelligences has been found to be powerful medicine for the disaffection that ails our educational system today. After nearly 15 years of growing enthusiasm and classroom practice since the publication of *Frames of Mind* (Gardner, 1983) it is hard to dismiss MI theory as "just another fad". Even common sense tells us that to reject the importance of the "non-academic" intelligences such as musical activities, kinesthetic performances, self-awareness, interpersonal understanding, visual-spatial abilities and understanding the natural world would be foolhardy. It is a risk, however, to think outside the IQ box and integrate non-traditional learning activities into the academic curriculum. The results of the efforts of these eight teachers to stretch their thinking and teaching (along with the stories of countless others) provides strong support for the positive influence that MI can have over the learning / teaching enterprise.

"I wanted to do this project because I think using MI will be a better technique of teaching reading. I want students to know themselves better so they can help themselves to deal with their reading / math problems. I want to give them other ideas and options for studying- especially in the areas of their strengths. I also want them to be able to let others know what their strengths are- especially their peers. This helps to give them a confidence boost."

Lisa Reid, Elementary Academic Skills teacher.

As the tide of school reform gains momentum in the United States there are a lot of high minded ideas and admonitions to "teach better" broadcast to the educational community. While few would argue against positive change it is hard to translate slogans and ideals into practice. Where are the bridges that will span the gap from our existing model of industrial revolution education to the mysteries of what the 21st century will bring to our schools?

Just as the vastness of space has been reduced in size via inter-planetary travel so too the complexities of the neural circuitry of the human brain have been revealed by new technology necessitating that our old theories of "mind" must be revised to fit the data. Just as Newtonian physics have had to be assimilated into the broader picture of relativity theory and quantum mechanics so too IQ theory is being shed to make way for the expansive and dynamic MI perspective. Instruments once considered essential to the scientist of the Newtonian age have since been drastically modified, altered in function or relegated to the museum of historical curiosities.

The fate of the IQ examination and paper and pencil tests remains to be seen but for now it can be said with confidence that we can no longer assume they provide a complete and unvarnished version of *truth* upon which to base the enterprise of education. In the final analysis, there is no "objective" view of reality without accounting for the limitations, intentions, values and the effects of the observer on that which is observed and measured. The end of the myth of objectivity is not merely of academic interest, however, for it has and continues to cause untold suffering and injustice for legions of individuals and entire races that have been classified as "merely average", "subnormal", "inferior" and "uneducatable" based upon a narrow gauge concept of what constitutes intelligence.

The *Multiple Intelligences Developmental Assessment Scales* (MIDAS) were created in 1987 to provide a practical and valid method of describing a person's MI profile in both descriptive and quantitative terms. It provides an assessment of the individual's perceived intellectual disposition that serves to promote "a dialogue of discovery". The MIDAS is not a one shot quick fix that pretends to represent "truth" but rather an interesting and useful method for facilitating the *discovery* of truth. The MIDAS is a method of structured inquiry and reflection that allows a student (teacher or parent) to carefully describe his/her abilities, involvements and enthusiasms.

The MIDAS is **not** a de-contextualized test of abilities but rather a systematic strategy for describing a person's intellectual and creative life in the real world. After completion the student is assisted with validating the information via reflection, feedback and discussion. The resulting "verified MI profile" then serves as a self-discovered focus for curriculum development, instructional approaches and career planning. Accompanying interpretative materials are uniquely designed to promote the development of Intrapersonal understanding. Additional materials assist teachers, parents and counselors in understanding, teaching and guiding the student.

The overall goal for this MIDAS project was to see how an MI assessment could enhance classroom instruction and self directed learning. The first two objectives were to use The MIDAS to increase student's Intrapersonal understanding and awareness of the multiple intelligences as elements of learning and performance in everyday life. The second was to see if this knowledge by both students and teachers would have a positive impact on the classroom experience. Teachers were asked to do three things. First, both teachers and students completed The MIDAS on themselves. Second, students completed activities in the *Stepping Stones* interactive workbook. This is a non-traditional workbook that provides guided steps to MIDAS interpretation, verification, fun activities, study strategies and career opportunities. Middle and high school students also completed *The Challenge!* which is a career exploration workbook that focuses students on using his/her MI strengths for career planning, course selection and college decision-making. The third element of this project was for teachers to provide feedback to students regarding their profiles and then evaluate their response to these materials and activities.

Over 165 students including "at risk", "academically talented" and "typical" classrooms were involved in this project in order to determine who might most benefit and how. The results? Let's listen to what the teachers have to say.

Cindy Baer, High School teacher "Choices Program" for at-risk sophomores

Cindy Baer is high school home economics teacher who recently designed a new "Choices" program for freshmen and sophomores in the public school who are considered to be "at risk" due to academic difficulties. This program provides a supportive yet challenging curriculum designed to assist students with finding positive ways for engaging in the academic and social life of the school. All 44 Choices students completed The MIDAS near the beginning of the school year and then again at the end. They also completed both The Challenge! and Stepping Stones workbooks.

"The MIDAS is a great way to work with these students because it focuses on their strengths. They feel good about it and they say it gives them confidence. I know they're all doing more with it than they realize but because we're still learning the vocabulary we're not labeling it and unpacking our thinking about it as much as we could be doing. We're actually using it without being aware that's what we're doing.

Our ultimate goal is to improve academic performance so I think that more self reporting by students and progress tracking will help me to take a stronger leadership role in guiding them in use of their intellectual strengths to do better in school. I will keep their MI profiles in the front of my mind as they work on their individual goals.

The idea of creating a positive comfort zone first thing in the year by accentuating their strengths serves to draw students into dealing more effectively with their *scary* academic weaknesses. This is *so* important for our students because there is a lot of negative baggage that they bring with them. They need to see that they have strengths right away so that they *see* they can be more successful. They *want* to be successful. Having an official Profile that describes strengths is really helpful and powerful for them. The whole idea of coming at them with their strengths is very important. It's really key.

Student Profile: Anthony, the underachiever.

Anthony had a terrible first semester of his freshman year but then he started to turn it around a little second semester when he got on the football team. He was then primed for this program.

I thought I knew Anthony well but I learned from his MIDAS profile of this skill in music. (see Profile) It was good to learn this about him. His strength in Kinesthetic made sense because he plays sports but his Logical-mathematical was really higher than his grade in math class. We talked about why that was happening and attributed it to all his absences. If you're not there in class then it's hard to make sense of things.

His Spatial is high and that made him feel good because he could see how it connected to careers he'd like to do. He then could begin to feel good about working. He's going into the Carpentry program. His family life is very difficult. His mother totally disowns him. His father is chemically dependent so he lives with his grandparents. He never gets the right kind of reinforcement for doing well and being where he's supposed to be. His big question has always been, "Why does my mom disown me? Why doesn't she love me?" The MIDAS said to him, "You have

strengths. You are worthwhile." Throughout this year Anthony has been one of our leaders and I think that is because he does have strengths and now he feels confident having seen it down on paper.

It's like he's turned a corner and The MIDAS Profile was a sign to help him make that turn. It's a reinforcement from the "establishment" that he can do well. In his freshman year he didn't get much of that.

Many of Anthony's profile scores went up the second time he completed the questionnaire except that the Musical went down. Actually I think that he became more realistic about his abilities. He said that he wanted to verify where his strengths actually were and to find out more about himself. He's into being "strong of character" now. He's going to try to graduate early so he's come a long way from practically flunking out his freshman year to graduating ahead of his class. He's figured out how to use school for what it's really for: to pass through and get what you need to do what you want to in life.

When a class is a challenge for Anthony now he looks at it and says to himself, "How can I overcome this challenge?" rather than thinking that the teacher is out to get him or whatever the line of negative thinking is that many kids are into that leads to failure. Not only does he have the confidence that he can take on the challenge but he and the other students now have actual tools that they can use to be successful. Whereas before whether they felt intelligent or not they for sure didn't think they had the necessary skills. Now they are not only confident they can do it but also they have practical ways they can look at school and learning differently.

The MIDAS is a good bridge for these students. It helps them stop the downward spiral because it connects them with their strengths. Often times when people try to help these kids it ends up crushing them because they focus on the negatives only. The message is, "You don't have this skill, you're doing this behavior that's bad. You're bad." The MIDAS can help them walk that bridge and make that connection (between fantasy/reality, success/failure) easier because it says, "OK, we're not all going to be strong in all of our areas but let's look at where we are strong and how we can use that in almost any situation." Yes. That's a good Ah-Ha!"

Sierra, sophomore artist in Choices program.

"I've never been book smart but I know I'm not stupid. I now have a better understanding of myself in general. I didn't think I was big in Linguistic so hadn't put much effort into before. When I saw that my score on the Linguistic Writing scale was higher and that I might be good at it then I concentrated more on it and it worked! My English teacher has praised me on my stories. It gave me confidence to try something that I wouldn't."

Sally Huston, Assistant Principal, Regina High School.

Sally Huston is the assistant principal at female Catholic school in Cleveland, Ohio. It has a large minority student population. The teachers at Regina have been working to incorporate MI activities into their lesson plans and instruction for over four years. Students who first completed The MIDAS during their freshman year are now graduating seniors. They have adopted a comprehensive system to infuse The MIDAS into the structure of their school. The use of MI is not considered to be a "special project" or innovation but rather an essential aspect of their philosophy of educating the "whole" student.

"There have been two overarching goals for our use of The MIDAS: 1) helping students to be more responsible for their learning and 2) helping teachers to improve how they deliver the critical information and material that must be covered. The first year we administered The MIDAS to all faculty and the entire student body. Now we give all new and incoming students The MIDAS and some students the opportunity to take it a second time.

There are two main goals for students. First, we want students and faculty to develop skill in the use of the MI language to describe their learning. Second, we want students to learn to understand their learning style so they may take more responsibility for their learning and what works best for them. Also, by knowing their weaknesses they may supplement with other intelligences or really build up their weak skills.

We use the MIDAS with all students in grades 9th through 12th but our focus is different each year. During the **Freshman** year we introduce the theory to students so they can become familiar with the language, what it is all about and why it is important. We administer the MIDAS so they can have some objective means to better understand themselves.

The emphasis during the **Sophomore** year is in developing awareness of the different study skills associated with each intelligence. Students are given help in understanding that a variety of different study strategies may best serve them according to their strengths. We are considering having some students create a "Study Skills Action Plan" that could be followed-up on throughout the year by a designated teacher or in conference with parents.

In the **Junior** year, our goal is to begin to have students relate their MI profile to possible career choices. We want to help them to capitalize on their strengths and really focus on matching them to careers where they would be happy because they would be using their strengths. We use the MIDAS in conjunction with other career inventories that can help students choose based on their pattern of strengths and weaknesses.

Our final goal during the **Senior** year is to actually use The MIDAS to help students select a

college that will meet their needs so they can achieve their career objectives or at least have it narrowed down to 2 or 3 possible careers. Seniors also put together a Portfolio that will illustrate and showcase their best work in terms of projects, assignments and extracurricular involvements. This is an opportunity to showcase them as a person and display their strengths. The MIDAS Profile is part of their portfolio as a foundation for the Intrapersonal section. Our last goal is to have them retake The MIDAS as part of their Junior or Senior year so they can see how they've developed over the course of their high school career. Hopefully, they'll have a more realistic understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

We've always had self-reflection as a part of our curriculum because we believe it's important to choosing careers and defining who they are as people. Many courses require a lot of journaling. The MIDAS project has helped to reinforce this importance and MI has given us a language so students may describe themselves better. MI gives us a powerful framework for describing and reflecting.

The other big piece of this project is that teachers not only teach about MI but are also actually using MI approaches in their classrooms. I've seen teaching and learning improve. This year we are also trying to expand ways of assessing student knowledge and performance that reflect their learning. They don't learn everything by writing, in fact, students probably learn better by many other activities. We need to find alternative ways to assess this learning that goes beyond tests and writing. This has been a big push for the faculty this year.

MI is helping our teachers to teach better so that students get the best they can out of their education and we need to be able to describe and document that progress.

Kathy Frazier, Teacher of Academically Talented middle school students

Kathy was recently named the 1997 Gifted Teacher of the Year by the Ohio Association of Gifted Children. She has been incorporating The MIDAS into her curriculum for several years. This year she expanded the project to include the students as "consultants" in the critique and development of the Stepping Stones workbook.

The MI approach is very valuable for these kids even though they already do well academically. We talk a lot in this class about metacognition and how we think. This project fit right in. Some of these students are perfectionists and very self-critical. It can help some kids who are very strong in one area like language but they have to struggle with math. They're frustrated because the math doesn't come as easy as they expect. It's not that they're not good in math but they don't just get it as easy as, say, the language arts. It helps with that. Some students get really down on themselves when they must struggle in one subject while everything else comes very easily. They think, "I'm really, really, really bad at this". I have to tell that "No, it's just more challenging".

One boy who was working on an art project said that he wanted to give up because "This is hard for me because I'm not strong in my Spatial intelligence". I had a talk with him and pointed out that accepting challenges to improve even those areas where we are not strong is an important part of

your education. They should select those weaker areas sometimes and not always take the road of what they're best in.

What MI theory and the MIDAS profile points out is that we all have strengths as well as weaknesses and that it's OK to have areas where you're not so good. It makes it more acceptable to the self-critical student.

The other interesting thing about using The MIDAS was discussing with students that they were selected for inclusion in the Academically Talented program because they have strengths in Logical-mathematical and Linguistic areas. Other kids have strengths too but they may not be in these academic skills areas. The sports program provides an outlet for those strong Kinesthetically and drama for those Interpersonally adept. Especially for middle school students they sometimes feel labeled or pulled out and they feel stigmatized by it even though they love it. We were able to discuss how this is just another piece that meets the needs for their education.

When you give this type of student reasons and techniques for understanding why they think the way they do- it is very powerful. It's like The MIDAS *normalized* them so they don't feel too different or abnormal. We talk a lot about thinking-about-thinking and being the non-conforming, round peg in the square hole of the classroom. This helps them to be not so frustrated. We talked about how they might approach a teacher about doing alternative projects that better match their learning skills so they're not so frustrated by the standard assignments. A teacher might still say "no" but it will give her something to think about and maybe find ways to help the student who is frustrated in her class. This gives students a tool that they can take the initiative with.

I think that the MI approach is very valuable for teachers. It is important that teachers use this paradigm when creating lessons that reflect more than what's in the textbook and try to connect with the personality of the class. This is very motivating for the students. Teachers can also use the Profile to get to know their students. If I had the Profile right at the beginning of the year it would be really useful for planning how to help them to grow. I think this is maybe one of the biggest benefits of it."

Debbie Walker, 7th grade literacy teacher

Debbie teaches in a "typical" 7th grade literacy class designed to improve students' skills in critical reading, responding and writing. She has taught in the public schools for over 20 years and is an instructor in the College of Education at Kent State.

First, I administered The MIDAS, and then students created their Brief Learning Summaries. This was useful to do because students were able to actually see and write down their areas of strength and weakness. They then discussed their Profile with their friends and shared it. This was very good for them. It helped their ownership of the material. The Profile really promoted students' awareness of themselves but we have to be careful about the use of scores and words such as High and Low. We want to promote their "within self" comparison of strengths rather than comparison to others. Unconsciously it affected the way they think about themselves. The Profile got them to think more carefully about their strengths even if they didn't agree with everything. It got them

thinking and that's a good aspect of this project.

Even though many students are not aware of their MI strengths - and they aren't - the utilization of them can only make a more positive and effective educational environment. For all teachers it is very important to be aware of these strengths of their students. Whatever you can do in today's educational realm to get them *focused* is important. You know the family is changing and the student is changing and it is difficult to keep these kids focused. Even with the advanced students it is really hard to keep them focused because a teacher is competing with a whole lot more media out there than you can ever possibly be.

With the MIDAS you can become more aware of what really turns them on - *even though they're not aware of it* - you've got an edge on them and you need it more today than ever. That's a great aspect of this project. You can really capture their attention by touching them in a deeply personal way and bringing that out. You've got their attention. It's hard today to be one step ahead of them because they are so street or media-wise. These kids have seen everything via movies and have had information and stimulation overload. But, on the other hand, these kids have been alone a lot more than previous generations not physically or care wise, but emotionally alone.

I also think the creativity of the kids overall has diminished over the past 25 years. Except for the top academic kids, they are not able to come up with ideas of their own. Since the media does all their imaginative thinking for them I've seen how they can just sit back and be passive. It's all done for them and they can just remote control it. They can be passive receivers and merely change the channels when they want to. There isn't the activating force to create for themselves.

I think that making kids aware of their strengths will stimulate more of their creativity. This will push that activating button to take the initiative and they will also have the trust and sense of confidence within a nurturing environment so they can take the risk to express their strength creatively. You need to take risks to be creative. You can't sit back, play it safe, be remote and be creative. They all have some of that creative potential within them but they need that context that provides the tools and safe emotional environment. When they know that you've given them an area where they can't fail, then, they will work. You say, 'Hey, you're strong here. You can't fail. You may not even know it but try it, try it'.

Another great thing it did was give the students much better awareness of themselves. They are now able to see themselves differently. They now have a language for understanding themselves and a comparison with others. *Stepping Stones* helped to go into deeper detail and go beyond stereotypes, surface understanding. It gave actual strategies and activities. I think the dialogue is very important. You need to discuss their profiles with them and they absolutely need to discuss them among themselves. They like the sharing. I got more excitement from them when I found ways for them to work together with it.

To sum up, the first benefit was that it reaffirmed my approach of using alternative teaching and assessment methods to show me what students know and what they can do. I am also now better at defining my goals for students. I have a better background for each student and it helps me to be more *defined* when I do alternative assessment. I know now that I'm doing it right for each student. This project has helped me to fine tune my use of projects in the curriculum."

Jim Fox, OWA teacher for "at risk" Middle School students

Jim is both a public school teacher and musician in a local blues band. His Occupational Work Activities (OWA) class strives to provide 8th students with real world work experience while enhancing their ability to succeed academically in school classes.

"When teachers identify areas of strength for students on The MIDAS and refer to them as an 'intelligence', this provides a basis for the building up of genuine confidence inspiring experiences. All of my students have some sort of diagnosis such as LD or ADHD. They need to hear about their strengths.

Carlos, one of my students, is very hyperactive and received rock bottom low scores on his profile. I noticed that his highest scale was Kinesthetic. I asked him if that made sense. He said, "I dunno". I asked what he was always doing when I saw him around town. He said, "skateboarding". I told him that you have to have a lot of skill in using and controlling your body to leap over walls, ride railings and such. Of course, this fits him. As he and I went through this interpretation process exploring the ways in which the intelligences are used in everyday life that's when Carlos got up out of his desk and read the workbook while walking up and down the aisle. He really, really struggles with reading. I realized then that this kid, who often sleeps during most classes, is truly understanding and believing this experience. He knows it's true. He was using his Bodily intelligence to help him to read. This has added a lot to his dignity and self worth. He loves to play the role of "the fool". Less now than at the beginning of the year. This project was very successful for him.

For all of these students I can see it in their eyes. I can sense the joy, dignity and self-respect that has emerged as a result of this project. Part of this dignity has probably come from the recognition that their strengths are also important in the world in terms of jobs and possible careers. When we discuss the question: Why not find a job that is compatible with your strengths? This really engages them in a positive way.

When you're trying to teach these kids something and they're not catching on they will let you know in a big hurry. The glaze returns. They start talking and their focus disintegrates in front of you. When they are going along with you, you know they are engaged and not doing it just to play the 'academic game'. They've rejected that a long time ago because they knew they couldn't win it. That glaze keeps them from becoming engaged but it also is their defense against losing.

The MIDAS and *Stepping Stones* give the kids the chance to tap into their souls. It gives them a way to connect to their 'shining human potential', their strength that will unlock their potential development. This project has been a good introduction so they may find things out about themselves that they didn't know or were hidden.

I'll tell you story from my own life. My father was an immensely successful person in the athletic world: football, coaching, officiating, etc. He was in the hall of fame in all of those areas. I remember being in third grade. We were sitting around the dinner table and he was quizzing me about each class. I told him we were taking a musical aptitude test the next day. He said, "I don't want you to do well on that test. You're not getting into music." So I shut music off from my life from that day on other than just listening to it. Now thirty years later I'm a professional musician making use of this desire and ability that is within me. What my father said to me might be called a 'paralyzing experience' that shut that part of me off for a very long time.

The glaze that we see in many students is the result of being paralyzed by these kinds of experiences. They've had so many negative experiences much more dramatic than mine. They've heard over and over again, "You're dumb. You're stupid. You're idiotic." Then they take a math test and it proves them right. The old school of motivating people by tearing you down then building you up, it just doesn't work.

The MIDAS project isn't just for students. The MIDAS Profile can also sensitize teachers to their own weaknesses and help them to empathize with their students who are struggling. It helps to enhance that relationship so teacher and student can see each other as 'real people' and take one step closer to each other in a positive way. The teacher isn't the unapproachable only intelligent person in the classroom.

I shared my Profile with them and that was worth doing. It was good for them to see that there were many areas where I didn't do well. I think they see me more as a real person now. I see my students differently, more as real people, too. It was a two way street. It is comforting and refreshing and it makes you feel good to recognize their strengths. It's hard teaching kids like this day after day where their weaknesses are all too apparent. The Profile helps you to see beyond the negatives. If you get stuck with the negative then the game of school is lost. Enlightenment is not about being negative.

I found it interesting that every student in this class without hesitation said, "Mr. Fox should do this project again next year". They weren't telling us that to make us happy or win points because they don't care if we're happy or not. They may have had a hard time verbalizing how it's helped them but you can hear it in their voices that it's made a difference. The MIDAS is one of those ideas that makes you wonder 'Why didn't I think of this? Why hasn't someone done this before?' This is a creative approach that will benefit both teachers and students."

Dan McKeen, Resource Room teacher for elementary students

Dan is 26-year veteran of the public elementary schools. He teaches 5th and 6th grade students with learning problems in a resource room that serves as an adjunct to their regular class. He also consults with each student's homeroom teacher. His students self completed The MIDAS as Dan read the questions out loud early in the school year.

"I chose to participate in this project so I could formalize my use of MI in my classroom. I hoped it would motivate me to use it more directly in ways that I might not otherwise do. It hasn't worked out the way I had expected but it has been beneficial in more of a back door sort of way rather than in the way it was designed. I used it as a complement to the existing curriculum to design new methodology and activities. I thought about things differently. One example. We were reading about Louis Armstrong in our basal reader and I realized that these kids don't know what jazz music is so I brought in some of my old records from home for them to hear it. At first, I was hesitant because I thought they would get out of control but instead it was just the opposite. They loved it. They wanted to hear more and more. I ended up playing one of their favorite selections about 3 times and as a part of this they were very much on task and getting their other work done. It worked well to activate their musical intelligence as we were reading about it in the book.

MI sparks more active participation. Kids who seem to be just sitting there taking up space really get more involved. One student who was a real do nothing before got all fired up with these projects because they keyed into his other intelligences, e.g., interpersonal skills, etc. This is the strengths versus deficits approach in action. We covered the content more thoroughly and more in-depth and at the same time got the kids thinking more and problem-solving more. They came away from it with more information and held on to it better and had more of a sense of ownership of it. The more of the multiple intelligences that were involved the higher levels of thinking could also be incorporated.

Assessment was harder to build into this. Traditional tests don't really capture what students get out of an experience. We used a lot of different types of assessment this year, e.g., peer and self evaluations using rubrics. We varied the kinds of products that kids could choose from to demonstrate their learning so we could better understand what they were getting out of each activity.

It would have been interesting to have the students take the MIDAS assessment again at the end of the school year to gauge the degree of change. From the first assessment it was obvious that improving self-awareness was going to be a focus of curriculum. Self-awareness is such an important factor in being successful in life perhaps more so that actual skills in many instances. I find that it's critical that students' have adequate Intrapersonal and Interpersonal skills and I teach to that.

I think that multiple intelligences can really help to improve both the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal intelligences. The MIDAS can serve to make these more explicit aspects of the school curriculum. It can contribute to changing expectations and perceptions in positive ways. This is a very powerful instrument that can help teachers and students and parents. Collaboration is a critical factor in this but very tough to pull off. Of course, aren't the best things the toughest to do?

I've been teaching kids with special needs for 26 years and I still love it. I enjoy going to work 90% of the time. Why is that? It is because of the way I look at things. Multiple intelligences is an important part of how I frame things and it's really helped to keep me alive in the classroom and given me new ways of looking at things."

Sandi Goodrich, Fourth grade teacher

Sandi has taught elementary students for many years and is now the president of the local teachers' association. She has a special interest in using cooperative learning strategies in her typical fourth grade classroom.

"I wanted to do the MIDAS Project because I knew something about MI and that some of my strengths are not typical for school. I wanted to draw that out of my students, too. I also wanted it to force me to think about MI because I need that prompting. Yes, it was *one more thing* to do but I decided that I needed to make the time to fit it in. I feel that some of the students really need it especially those who don't shine in classroom. Even the strong students can learn new ways to be successful.

A real advantage this year was in composing cooperative work groups. Sometimes I chose the groups and other times they are self-selected. This year they knew the strengths of each other. They talked among themselves and shared what they were good at doing it. They would say, "Hey, Sarah's really good at art let's get her on our team". They spread themselves around. Sharing their Profiles during peer review really increased their knowledge and appreciation for each other. We spent quite a bit of time talking about it as a group. I would make comments that accentuated their strengths and then they would kind of try to live up to it and prove to themselves and everyone that they were good at. They also checked each other out to see if indeed the Profile was true. They would say, "Hey, you really are good at singing and when we do this project I want you on my team". The Profile really enhanced the cooperative grouping.

This group has really worked together better than any other that I have had. We were working together pretty well before this project but I honestly feel that the MIDAS helped them work together because they honored each other more. Even the kid who isn't strong academically can gain respect for what they can contribute."

Lisa Reid, Academic skills teacher for elementary students

Lisa provides special group instruction and individual tutoring for fourth through sixth grade students with learning and academic difficulties.

"The MIDAS Profile really helped by defining their strengths not only to themselves but also to others. It also gave students the opportunity to give a boost back to someone else when they learned about their strengths. What really helped them was to actually work with their profiles and move the information around and to put them in the correct order. Then they could much better understand where their strengths and weaknesses were. It's well worth the time involved. Kids need to get their hands on it, move the scales around and *work with this information* to make it real or it will just be in and out of their heads. Quick and easy won't work.

The best thing the MIDAS project did for the students was boost their confidence in themselves. It also boosted respect for each other because they not only came to know their own strengths but also to appreciate the strengths of others. They also got to know their teacher in the same way and it made her more real. It also helped them to base study choices on areas of strength. Hopefully, this will make it a little easier for them which should increase success then confidence again will be boosted. It also helped them to make better choices in literature and what they would

do with it. It increased participation and interest levels as well as motivation. It created an all around great atmosphere within which to work for both students and teacher.

The MIDAS does more than just identify interest areas to improve motivation. It's describes *them* and how they *think* so they can use their strengths to be successful. This project would be great to begin at the start of school and then carry it on throughout the year. This would be a good way to get to know all the students and for them to get to know each other and the teacher, too. It would help to set that positive atmosphere early in the year."

In conclusion, it is obvious that these teachers find many benefits from incorporating a multiple intelligences assessment into their classes. There are a number of important results that are worth highlighting. First, we heard over and over again of the significance of emphasizing a student's intellectual *strengths* as playing a vital role in successfully engaging students in learning. Secondly, the MI perspective promotes an enhanced sense of mutual respect in the classroom in a number of ways. A student gains vital self-confidence from appreciating his/her own best learning abilities in a way that IQ does not. Students respect the gifts of their peers even if they happen to not be in the traditional academic areas. Students and teachers engage each other in a positively charged circle of mutual respect so that some students are not marginalized. In this way, learning can occur with less fear and a greater sense of belonging and competency. In addition to "creating an all around great atmosphere" for the classroom it goes the next step and provides "actual tools that everyone can use to be successful".

The MIDAS Brief Learning Summary

Name: Anthony Date: _____ # 7

The following Profile was compiled from data provided by you. It represents areas of strength

and limitation as described by you. This is preliminary information to be confirmed by way of discussion and further exploration.

	MAIN	SPECIFIC
HIGH	Interpersonal Spatial Musical Intrapersonal Kinesthetic	Persuasion Personal Knowledge Musical activities Athletics Spatial Awareness Personal
Effectiveness	Linguistic Logical-math	

MIDDLE

LOW

Preferred Activities: General Logic, Leadership, Innovation

Football
Rock and Roll drummer
Carpentry