Teaching Endocrinology Using a Multiple-Intelligences Approach

A nursing instructor finds that MI works in college-level classes, too

To illustrate how learning occurs through the use of multiple intelligences, I incorporated several of the intelligences in a review of the anatomy and function of the endocrine glands. I began with a brief lecture using transparencies. Then I had the students divide into groups of four or five and cut out colored paper the size and shape of the endocrine glands. They were to write the name and function of the glands on the paper and to tape each gland shape to someone in the group. I then had the students with the glands taped to them come to the front, where I compared and evaluated the positioning and function of each gland. During this brief lesson, I demonstrated the use of linguistic, spatial/visual, kinesthetic, and interpersonal intelligences.

Subsequent classes always included the use of a variety of intelligences: videos, interviews, artwork, journaling, etc. I modeled the use of the intelligences so that students would see different ways to present their assignments in class. This gave them permission to learn, and subsequently present, the content in a way that was meaningful and useful to them.

I then asked them to suggest...
ways they could learn the material and make class presentations. I compiled the ideas and gave the list to each student. Groups were assigned to present the topics that I would normally cover by lecture. The only requirement was that at least three of the seven intelligences had to be incorporated in each presentation. Groups were graded on how thoroughly the topic was covered and how well they incorporated the various intelligences.

Here are some examples of types of student presentations, along with the intelligences used:

- Dramatic presentations—linguistic, kinesthetic, spatial/visual
- Role-playing—patients and caregiver—interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic
- Poster—pictures, word list, diagrams, and picture stories—logical/math, spatial/visual, linguistic
- Lectures with overheads and poster—linguistic, interpersonal, logical/math
- Composing of lyrics to a song—linguistic, musical, interpersonal
- Composing and performing a rap song—linguistic, musical, interpersonal, kinesthetic
- A video-TV interview—interpersonal, kinesthetic, spatial/visual, logical, linguistic
- Aerobics presentation—kinesthetic, musical, linguistic, interpersonal

Students made these presentations throughout the semester. As might be expected, this changed the tenor of the class from teacher-centered to student-centered. Other changes were apparent, too. One busy student who worked full time and had a family did not doze in this class as he often did in others. The socializing that took place among the students now focused on the presentations and content of the course. Initially, the students were assignments that they knew the material when they were allowed to respond through intelligences other than the traditional linguistic area usually stressed in tests and term papers.

I realized that ultimately the students would have to pass a linguistic
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Some students thought that more lectures would improve the course. Others recommended that better guidelines be given for the presentations, along with suggestions for the spatial/visual projects. Not one suggested that I should return completely to the traditional method of teaching.

Did more learning take place as a result of my experiment? I have no quantitative measurements on which to judge this. Since it is not possible to compare grades from previous years, further work needs to be done in this area. Certainly, students who had seen the class as just

and a better understanding of the topics. They reported that they enjoyed the class immensely, even though the material was difficult. They said that diseases and symptoms were easier to remember because the presentations had used the various intelligences.

passive learning and "another hoop to jump through" showed more positive attitudes toward the subject.

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