

SEN. Session Report. 22.05.03 Lorna Hambling

According to section 156 of the 93 Education Act a child has a learning difficulty if he or she: Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or has a disability which either prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities of a kind provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority.

Sue Goble took this highly valuable session and introduced the idea of multi-intelligence theory:

Pupils with these intelligences prefer the following learning methods:

Mathematical-Problem solving, logic

Linguistic- Language, the written word

Visual- Display, taking away the linguistic

Musical- Experimenting with sound and rhythm

Kinaesthetic- Exploring through touch and movement

Intra-personal- strong sense of beliefs, philosophy and theory

Inter-personal- They prefer working in groups or with partners

Sue advised us to visit a Primary school to see these learning preferences being addressed consistently by teachers in the classroom.

As teachers we must think of how to bring in learning strategies to our lessons to target a pupil's specific learning intelligence.

Mathematical: Pupil's with this kind of intelligence appreciate harmony in the classroom and prefer order in their immediate environment. How can we organise our classrooms to ensure they are environments where learning can take place?

Activities in an English lesson: Problem solving with words, making predictions of a text, numeracy in poetry-counting syllables, rhyme and meter.

Linguistic: A Pupil who has a linguistic intelligence will prefer the written word and looking more closely at language. How can we support those pupils of high ability in pushing them on further with their learning?

Activities in an English lesson: Reading of challenging texts, studying language and its effects in a passage.

Visual: These pupils learn best with the linguistic taken away. Using pictures as a stimulus to learn a concept first-before bringing in the written word. How can we use wall displays in our classrooms to aid these types of learners?

Activities in an English lesson: Learning a poem orally, picture mnemonics, artistic response to characters in a text.

Musical: How can we bring in music to our lessons? It can be a background stimulus for creativity or a calming measure for when the class enter and leave the classroom. Activities in an English lesson: Rhythm and sound in poetry, listening to a piece of music that builds tension in the same way that language in a good story.

Kinaesthetic: Pupil's who need to be 'doing' something in a lesson need to be considered when planning a lesson. What strategies can we use to address the needs of these pupils?

Activities in an English lesson: Reading lines while walking to feel the rhythm, sorting lines from poems into the right order. Drama activities-hotseating and role play.

Intra-personal: A pupil with an intra-personal intelligence enjoys thinking more deeply about certain issues. How we can bring in sociology and Philosophy into our English lessons?

Activities in an English lesson: Diary writing, reflection on poetry and prose, debates on topical issues.

Inter-personal: These pupils enjoy listening and responding to the views of others. How can we bring in more group work into our lessons?

Activities in an English lesson: Ask the class to find a reading buddy - they must speak to everyone in the group asking them questions about their reading habits. Group reading of a poem to the class.

Differentiation

¹Learning strategies demonstrate how pupils react to, and interact with, the learning environment and, in particular, the teaching decisions that are made in order to drive the learning process forward. If we can gain knowledge of how and why pupils learn first from this we will be able to successfully differentiate.

This term arises from the entitlement laid out in the 1988 Education Act, which states that all pupils are entitled to a curriculum that is broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated. ²This is to ensure that teaching aims match learning needs and that all pupils receive education that is tailored to them as individuals.

Sue referred to the importance of considering the Skills, Attitude, Concepts, and Knowledge of a class when differentiating. Pupils should see themselves as young writers in an English lesson and young scientists in a science lesson. They should feel comfortable in their learning environment in order to achieve their potential.

¹ As above

² P Benton and T O'Brien 'SEN and The beginning Teacher'

Teaching Experience

In my own teaching experience I try to use as many different learning strategies in my lessons as possible in order to address pupils different learning preferences.

Examples of strategies I already use are:

Whole class brainstorm: Sharing ideas as a class and learning from others.

Hot seating: A drama technique that allows pupils to get into the role of a character with the rest of the class asking them questions while on the hot seat.

Group and pair work: Sifting and sorting jumbled poems or text, role-play of a scene from a text, oral presentations.

Visualisation: To aid the creative process when visualising a plot for a story or ideas for a poem.

The best way to teach a new concept to a class is to have them doing an activity. For example in a Primary school the teacher might have the class get into groups and split themselves into quarters, halves, and eighths to demonstrate the mathematical concept of fractions. This can work in a secondary school if you know the class will respond well.

Finally the plenary of a lesson should be an opportunity to reflect and assimilate the learning that has taken place. It might be useful to ask individuals what they feel they have got out of the lesson or what new skills they think they have developed. This may bring up any unintended outcomes of the lesson positive or otherwise!

References:

'Special Needs And The Beginning Teacher' Edited by Peter Benton and Tim O'Brien