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# Foreword

Since the establishment of the nation, we have confronted the challenge of establishing an educational system that meets our country's democratic ideals. Jefferson's 1820 statement serves as a touchstone:

I know of no safe repository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves, and if we think [the people] not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. (Letter to William C. Jarvis, 28 September 1820; in Tozer, Violas, & Senese, 1995, p. 29)

To be sure, the concept of "the people" has changed dramatically during the centuries since Jefferson contemplated this notion. Women, poor people, and a variety of ethnic minorities are now included under the umbrella of that phrase, which now comes closer to encompassing "all the people."

This practical book presents constructivist approaches to early literacy instruction against the background of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences as a strategy for the education of all the people in the most fundamental of educational arenas—*literacy*. The proposition is that individuals differ in how they relate to the environment and that effective instructional practice must attend to these differences. The proposition illustrates the tension between defined curriculum outcomes and individual differences. "Informed discretion" sounds like a pretty high standard to me, and I think that Teele would agree that her aim is the achievement of high standards by all. As of this writing, federal policy would seem to conform to this ideal; by the end of the decade, according to the dictates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), virtually all students must meet high levels of performance on standardized measures—or else! The problem is that

few observers believe that this mandate is possible, and they do not trust the validity of the measures.

The idea in this book is rather different from NCLB, and responds more directly to the Jeffersonian challenge—authentically high standards, with consistent expectations for all students moderated by accommodations to student differences. The book provides a variety of ideas, resources, anecdotes, and classroom strategies for approaching this task, and as such should serve as a useful resource for several audiences.

Mentioned above was the tension between outcomes and inputs, between expected achievements and student capabilities. Another point of view centers on students—while individuals clearly differ along many dimensions, there are also some fundamental constancies (Calfee & Nelson-Barber, 1991). For instance, Teele presents information on brain structure that relies on trustworthy consistencies in the gray-matter foundations for human thought and action. The functional constancies are equally important, including the organization and operation of memory into long-term, short-term, and (more mysterious) working memory systems. Another constancy is found in the linguistic domain: Virtually every human being demonstrates competence in phonology, semantics, syntax, and discourse. Any discussion of differences must be cast against the grain of these constancies.

Schooling begins with these realities and complexities. Again, one tension centers on societal expectations—“one size fits all” or “different strokes for different folks.” A second tension centers on the characterization of individuals, whether to emphasize similarities or differences. From my perspective, the way to resolve these tensions for purposes of schooling is to decide on the curriculum “skeleton” that best accommodates constancies for achievements and individuals, and then focus on the variations that matter most. Should expectations focus on minimum competencies or high standards of achievement? Should individual variations focus on physical, psychological, or social-demographic factors?

Debate and recommendations about both of these matters are the point of Teele’s book. With regard to the curricular skeleton, the book recommends framing the literacy curriculum around outcomes that engage students in the attainment of higher-level capabilities, rather than relying on rote instruction to promote basic skills. As to strategies for realizing this goal against the grain of individual differences, one can imagine three approaches: (a) ignore student differences, (b) accommodate differences “around the edges,” or (c) pick a source of variations to highlight in curriculum design (e.g., gender, style, or multiple intelligences). Teele’s recommendations fall between the second and the third strategies. After reviewing what is known about multiple intelligences as the focal source

of individual differences affecting academic learning, Teele presents her definition of an early literacy curriculum, and then proceeds to consider ways in which student variations can be woven into this curriculum. Her definition is consonant with what is typically labeled a constructivist method, in which students' backgrounds and interests are an inherent element in the instructional process. "Constant curriculum" techniques—the same objectives taught in the same manner—are much less amenable to including student variations. One can increase the amount of time for students who appear to be learning more slowly (remediation), or allow alterations in the outcomes ("Exceptional" to "Below basic"). Teele's proposal differs from both of these options. Her hypothesis is that the combination of a constructivist curriculum incorporating multiple intelligences dimensions will allow all students to reach high levels of learning in an efficient manner, without the need for either remediation or failure.

This agenda may seem ambitious, but the book provides substantial support to assist readers in understanding and implementing the concepts. First is an extensive set of review resources, including critical analyses of the literature, translations of the work of others, and extensions of ideas from outside the educational arena. The inclusion of ideas from outside the United States is particularly noteworthy. Second is the range of anecdotes, personal and otherwise, that provide life to the ideas along the way. Finally, and appropriate to the intended audience, is the rich array of classroom examples and techniques, including graphics. These examples transform abstract concepts into practical activities.

Chapter 8, "Strategies for Integrating the Theory of Multiple Intelligences Into Teaching Reading," is the centerpiece of the book, and is especially rich in the variety of illustrations. From my perspective, it also suggests a particular way of thinking about Teele's ideas. For many years, researchers have investigated the Aptitude-Treatment-Interaction (ATI) hypothesis (Cronbach & Snow, 1977). The ATI idea is that student predilections and interests call for corresponding curriculum variations. In the simplest variation, one can imagine visual learners who will be most effectively taught by visual methods, and auditory learners who will benefit from auditory methods. The long research tradition designed to investigate this hypothesis has turned up a dry well. I do not read Teele's proposals in this way. Instead, she describes techniques for creating "rich" classroom environments, designed to support a full range of multiple-intelligences dimensions. The result offers curriculum niches that conform to individual styles for students with particular predilections, while providing all students with a variety of experiences that reflect the real world.

As an example, consider the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions in the model, which correspond roughly to an individual's

tendencies to be “inner-” or “outer-directed.” First, any individual experiences variations along these dimensions; we all have days when we want to be with others, and times when we need to be alone. But individuals also have typicalities—loners versus groupies. Teachers must deal with all of these patterns, which means respecting the variations, but also ensuring that every student can learn to handle a variety of situations.

That is the message that I find in Chapter 8. For example, phonemic awareness is presented as a kinesthetic activity. The idea is that, in order to understand the difference between /p/ as in *pat* and /f/ as in *fat*, students should think about differences in how they produce the two sounds—“making your lips ‘pop’ or ‘shush.’” Some students may immediately pick up the kinesthetic difference, others will “see” the variations in how the mouth moves, and then there are those who profit especially from talking about the process. Whatever the impact of preferential styles, the point is that all students are likely to benefit from the full range of experiences. Practically speaking, Teele describes activities that span this range, never with the advice to deny an activity to any student, or to group students based on their multiple-intelligence profile.

Finally, a comment about the importance of the teacher in adapting instruction to student variations in order to achieve constant outcomes for all: The final chapter presents a From-To table focused on reading, but with much broader implications. It summarizes several facets of Teele’s argument, but the underlying theme throughout the book is the role of the knowledgeable teacher as the centerpiece for adaptive instruction, where “learning and literacy are equitable for all students.” Teele refers only occasionally to the concept of *equity*, but her underlying purpose is to complicate education, to move beyond “one size for all,” which springs from the aim of ensuring genuine success for all. This volume contains substantial resources to assist in attaining this goal.

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