Mentor Teacher Group Guide

Adult Multiple Intelligences

by Judy Hofer

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The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy is a nonprofit organization that provides technical assistance to literacy and adult basic education programs throughout the state of New Mexico.
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Goal of NCSALL Mentor Teacher Groups

The goal of NCSALL is to improve the quality of practice in adult education through research (both university-based and practitioner research). We want to ensure that practitioners – teachers, counselors, program administrators, and others – have an opportunity to learn about and, where appropriate, use the results of research in their work. Therefore, the goal of the NCSALL Mentor Teacher Groups is to help adult basic education practitioners learn about theories and concepts related to or coming out of NCSALL’s research and to discuss how such concepts can be applied to practice and policy in adult basic education.

Getting practitioners involved in reading and thinking about the uses of research in their practice is important for ensuring that research is actually influencing practice. When we have talked to practitioners in the field of adult literacy about what they need research to do for them, we hear that they need techniques, strategies, and practical suggestions that they can use immediately. Yet, research often produces reports, articles, and other documents that provide primarily theories, concepts, ideas, and sometimes implications for practice.

NCSALL feels that there needs to be a process that “translates” theoretical concepts into practical suggestions and that practitioners should be involved in that process. The prime vehicles for translating research theories into practical suggestions for practitioners or feedback for university-based researchers are activities such as practitioner research and Mentor Teacher Groups where practitioners can learn about, discuss, and/or try out ideas from research. The following diagram depicts this process:
We at NCSALL believe that we need to do more than publish and disseminate magazines, reports, and research updates if research is to inform practice and policy. We have a responsibility to help design and sponsor “live” mechanisms for practitioners to really read, think about, and discuss with each other what research findings mean and whether they are useful or applicable to adult education instructional settings and programs.

Thanks for being part of the process of connecting practice and research.

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**Research produces:**
- Theories, concepts and ideas in
  - Articles
  - Reports
  - Presentations

**Practitioners need:**
- Techniques, strategies, and suggestions in
  - Articles
  - Workshops
  - Web Sites

**Translation through:**
Practitioner Research and Mentor Teacher Groups which produce practical recommendations for other practitioners and for researchers
Information About NCSALL

The Mission of NCSALL. NCSALL’s purpose is to improve practice in educational programs that serve adults with limited literacy and English language skills, and those without a high school diploma. NCSALL is meeting this purpose through basic and applied research, dissemination of research findings, and leadership within the field of adult learning and literacy.

NCSALL is a collaborative effort between the Harvard Graduate School of Education, World Education, The Center for Literacy Studies at The University of Tennessee, Rutgers University, and Portland State University. NCSALL is funded by the U.S. Department of Education through its Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI).

NCSALL’s Research Projects. The goal of NCSALL’s research is to provide information that is used to improve practice in programs that offer adult basic education (ABE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and adult secondary education services. In pursuit of this goal, NCSALL has undertaken research projects in four areas: (1) learner motivation, (2) instructional practice and the teaching/learning interaction, (3) staff development, and (4) assessment.

Dissemination Initiative. NCSALL’s dissemination initiative focuses on ensuring that practitioners, administrators, policymakers, and scholars of adult education can access, understand, judge and use research findings. NCSALL publishes Focus on Basics, a quarterly magazine for practitioners; Focus on Policy, a twice-yearly magazine for policymakers; Review of Adult Learning and Literacy, an annual scholarly review of major issues, current research and best practices; and NCSALL Reports and Occasional Papers, periodic publications of research reports and articles. NCSALL also sponsors the Connecting Practice, Policy, and Research Initiative, designed to help practitioners and policymakers apply findings from research in their instructional settings and programs.

For more information about NCSALL, to download free copies of NCSALL publications, or to purchase bound copies, please visit:

http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu
Introduction to the Mentor Teacher Group Guide: Adult Multiple Intelligences

This Mentor Teacher Group Guide was created by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) and the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy (NMCL) as part of the Connecting Practice, Policy, and Research Initiative (CPPR). It was piloted with five Mentor Teacher Groups throughout the state of New Mexico in the winter of 2002, and the suggested revisions were incorporated into this version. The Guide is part of a national effort to help connect research and practice in the field of adult basic education and adult literacy.

This Mentor Teacher Group Guide addresses Howard Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) and its application in the practice of adult basic education. The readings from *Multiple Intelligences and Adult Literacy. A Sourcebook for Practitioners* (referred to throughout this Guide as the “AMI Sourcebook”) introduce MI theory and discuss experiences of practitioner researchers as they apply the theory in a variety of adult basic education contexts. This AMI study is the first systematic application of Gardner’s MI theory in the adult literacy field. The AMI Sourcebook is an honest report of the successes and challenges of using MI theory to inform instruction and self-reflection among ESOL, ABE, and GED adult learners.

Each meeting of the Mentor Teacher Group includes discussion of the readings and how ideas generated from the readings can be applied to the program contexts of group members. The direction of the discussions will vary with the concerns of each group. It is important that discussions and activities meet the needs of all the group members. The facilitator needs to be flexible and may need to modify some activities to fit the needs and learning styles of participants. This Mentor Teacher Group Guide should be used as a guide, not a rigid script.

What is a Mentor Teacher Group?
A Mentor Teacher Group is a combination of a Study Circle, where a group of practitioners come together to read articles and talk about theories and strategies on a particular topic, and mentoring, where an experienced teacher comes to each participant’s classroom, observes her teaching, and provides feedback that helps the teacher apply those theories and strategies and learn from her own practice.
The strength of this model is that it offers participants the opportunity to learn not only from the mentor teacher during the classroom observations but also from one another during the group meetings. This professional development model recognizes that teachers do not operate in a vacuum. They work in programs and systems that present supports and also challenges for doing the best job possible. The strength of the individualized mentoring process is that it supports teachers in integrating their learning directly and immediately into their own unique contexts. The group component supports teachers by giving them the opportunity to share ideas with their colleagues.

When possible, we strongly recommend incorporating an additional component in which participating teachers also visit the mentor teacher’s classroom and provide her with feedback as well. In this way, all participants, including the mentor, have a chance to learn from one another directly through classroom observation and feedback. With the addition of this two-way observation component, the model becomes more like peer coaching in which all participants are seen as having relatively equal amounts of expertise and authority.

Who Should Participate in a Mentor Teacher Group?
The Mentor Teacher Group consists of a mentor teacher and five to six teacher participants. The mentor teacher is experienced in the field of adult basic education and, preferably, has prior experience leading professional development activities for groups of teachers. Because the Mentor Teacher Group model is based on the idea of teachers sharing with and learning from one another, it is essential that the mentor teacher be a current teacher. The mentor teacher should have a strong foundation in learner-centered instruction and experience in developing innovative curriculum based on the needs of students with whom she or he works. We suggest that the mentor teacher also demonstrate the qualities that make teachers effective, e.g., the ability to listen well to others, to provide constructive feedback, to model how to learn from mistakes, and to create a trusting and supportive environment.

Teacher participants should also be current teachers in the field of adult basic education and literacy. This would include literacy and family literacy, GED, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers. Although most of the activities are designed for teachers who provide group instruction, teachers or tutors who work in one-on-one situations can also participate in this Mentor Teacher Group, with the caveat that the mentor teacher adapt the activities accordingly. To ensure that teacher participants feel as safe as possible while being
observed and do not need to worry that they are being evaluated, we have found that the model works best when the mentor teacher does NOT work in the same program as the teacher participants.

How Should a Mentor Teacher Group Be Started?
We recommend a careful recruiting process. This type of professional development may be new to many teachers, and we have found that putting out a simple flyer announcing dates and times is not enough. Any recruitment materials need to clearly describe the components of the Mentor Teacher Group, the time commitment, and the responsibilities that teacher participants will be expected to fulfill. For example, it is crucial that participating teachers be both willing and able to have the mentor teacher observe them teaching in their classrooms and provide them with feedback. Some participants may need their supervisor’s approval for the mentor teacher to come and observe.

We suggest that each group be made up of five or six participants. More than that becomes too time-consuming for the mentor teacher to be able to visit each participant for a total of eight hours on two separate occasions. Fewer than five participants affects the quality of the group experience.

Teachers may be recruited from a variety of programs or from the same program. An advantage of teachers coming from a variety of programs is that teachers have the opportunity to learn from the differing contexts. An advantage of teachers all being in the same program is that they can continue to work together between sessions and support one another as they try out new ideas, reflect on their learning, and possibly make changes on a program level.

We recommend that the first two meetings be held relatively close together (approximately two weeks apart) to allow participants to delve into the topic and plan for the first classroom observation. The first round of classroom observations should be held three to four weeks after the second meeting, allowing participants time to plan their strategy. The round of classroom observations should be followed up rather quickly by the third meeting (a week after the classroom observations) to build on the momentum generated by the observations. Allow about another month for the second round of classroom observations. The fourth and final meeting could be held anytime up to one month after the final round of classroom observations.

It is best to schedule the first two meetings when recruiting teacher participants. The dates for the third and fourth meetings, as well as the classroom observations, can be decided during the first meetings.
What Do Each of the Meetings and the Classroom Observations Cover?
The Guide details a 20-hour professional development experience consisting of four group meetings and two individual classroom observations. Each participant should commit to all 20 hours. The 20 hours are divided into the following components:

1. **Two initial three-hour meetings of the group – mentor teacher and five to six teacher participants**. (6 hours) These meetings provide participants with the chance to get to know one another, an overview of the Mentor Teacher Group, including the mentoring process, and an introduction to Adult Multiple Intelligences.

2. **Individual pre-observation conference, classroom observation, and post-observation conference between mentor teacher and each teacher participant**. (4 hours) Each participant meets individually with the mentor teacher for one hour before the class session that the mentor teacher will be observing to identify particular areas for feedback. After the class session, they meet again to discuss the feedback from those areas. For the classroom observation, the teacher is asked to try out one of the activities learned in the previous group meetings for talking about MI theory with students.

3. **Third group meeting**. (3 hours) Participants discuss what they learned from the mentoring experience and classroom observation and learn more about the promises and challenges of using MI-based instruction in their classrooms.

4. **Individual pre-observation conference, classroom observation, and post-observation conference**. (4 hours) The process is similar to the first classroom observation, except this time the teacher participant is encouraged to try out an MI-inspired lesson with students.

5. **Fourth group meeting**. (3 hours) Participants reflect on their learning and develop a plan of action to continue to develop MI-based practices.

What’s the Best Way to Use This Guide?
The Guide is laid out in four group meetings and two classroom observations with detailed, step-by-step instructions for each activity. A specific format for conducting the classroom observations, including the pre-and post-observation conferences, is also provided. For some mentor teachers, this level of detail may be welcomed. For others, it may feel too prescriptive. No matter what your preference, we urge you to adapt this
Guide to your group and to participants’ needs. This means that you will need to encourage open dialogue so that participants can share their experiences, concerns, and suggestions for how to make the Mentor Teacher Group more relevant to their needs.

Newsprints to be prepared before the group meetings are always depicted in shaded boxes within the steps.

Objectives for Meeting One

Questions or points the facilitator should use to guide discussion during the meetings and classroom observations are depicted with a preceding question mark in the following way:

? What insights did you gain…

Handouts are preceded with a handout symbol:  

Readings are preceded with a book symbol:  

Handouts are in the appendices at the end of the Guide: Meeting One Handouts in Appendices A and B, Meeting Two Handouts in Appendix C, and Meeting Three Handouts in Appendix D.

* Copies of the AMI Sourcebook can be obtained in one of two ways:
  
  • From publisher: Copies can be ordered from Teachers College Press (TCP), the publisher of the AMI Sourcebook, from TCP’s Web site (http://www.teacherscollegepress.com). The cost is $27.95 per copy.
  
  • From NCSALL: Copies can be ordered from NCSALL/World Education by contacting NCSALL’s distribution associate at (617) 482-9485, ext. 278. The cost is $20 per copy, which represents a 25% discount off the publisher’s listed price.

Suggestion for facilitator: You may want to order the appropriate number of sourcebooks for your participants (and yourself) and distribute them at the first meeting. That way, you can be certain that all Mentor Teacher Group participants have the AMI Sourcebook in hand for all four meetings.

If your agency will be covering the cost of the sourcebooks, be sure to let participants know. Otherwise, participants should be advised that they are responsible for reimbursing you.
What Tips Should a Mentor Teacher Keep in Mind When Facilitating a Group?

- Be flexible when organizing the classroom observations to allow pre- and post-observation conferences to happen over the phone if necessary.

- Most of the preparation for each meeting needs to be done before the day of the meeting.

- At the first meeting, circulate a contact sheet for people to share names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. Type and photocopy the list to give back to participants at the second meeting.

- We suggest you create a newsprint to record questions and important ideas that participants raise that cannot be addressed at the time but should not be forgotten. We call this newsprint a “parking lot,” meaning a place to “park” or capture these ideas until you can refer back to them later in the group meetings.

Feel free to make changes to the design to best meet the needs of the participants.
Meeting and Observation Guide for Facilitating the Adult Multiple Intelligences Mentor Teacher Group
Adult Multiple Intelligences
Mentor Teacher Group: Outline

Meeting One

OBJECTIVES: • Participants will get to know one another and learn how the Mentor Teacher Group will be run.

• Participants will get an introduction to the Adult Multiple Intelligences (AMI) Research Project and Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory.

• Participants will learn what makes the mentoring process and classroom observations successful.

TIME: 3 hours

25 minutes 1. Welcome and Introductions
15 minutes 2. Meeting One Objectives, Agenda, and Setting Group Guidelines
20 minutes 3. Overview of the AMI Mentor Teacher Group
45 minutes 4. A New View of Intelligence
15 minutes BREAK
45 minutes 5. Making Mentoring and Classroom Observations Successful
15 minutes 6. Readings for Meeting Two and Evaluation
Meeting Two

OBJECTIVES:  
• Participants will learn more about MI theory.
• Participants will develop an understanding of the promises and challenges of talking explicitly about MI theory with students.
• Participants will consider strategies to support students’ own understanding of their intelligences.
• Participants will learn more about the classroom observations.

TIME:  
3 hours

10 minutes  1. Welcome, Meeting Two Objectives, and Agenda
40 minutes  2. MI Reflections: How Are You Smart?
40 minutes  3. Issues Teachers Addressed When Applying MI-Reflection Activities
10 minutes  BREAK
30 minutes  4. MI-Reflection Activities
25 minutes  5. Implementing MI Theory in Your Contexts: Constraints and Supports
25 minutes  6. Planning for Classroom Observations and the Third Group Meeting and Evaluation

First Classroom Observation

Participants try out an MI-Reflection activity in which learners explicitly learn about MI Theory and their own strengths.
Meeting Three

OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will discuss the mentoring experience and what they have learned.
- Participants will learn about MI-inspired lessons and ways to translate MI theory into practice.
- Participants will plan next steps for using MI-inspired practices and prepare for the second classroom observation.

TIME: 3 hours

10 minutes 1. Welcome, Meeting Three Objectives, and Agenda
50 minutes 2. How was the Mentoring Experience?
50 minutes 3. MI-Inspired Lessons
15 minutes  BREAK
45 minutes 4. Planning for the Second Classroom Observation
10 minutes 5. Next Steps and Evaluation

Second Classroom Observation

Participants try out an MI-inspired lesson.
Meeting Four

OBJECTIVES:  
• Participants will reflect on their mentoring experience and what they have learned.

• Participants will learn about the dominant features of MI-informed practice.

• Participants will plan next steps for applying MI theory in their programs.

• Participants will make a plan for the group’s next steps.

TIME: 3 hours

5 minutes 1. Welcome, Meeting Four Objectives, and Agenda
10 minutes 2. Seven Emerging Features from the AMI Study
60 minutes 3. What Have We Learned?
10 minutes BREAK
60 minutes 4. Next Steps – An Action Quilt
20 minutes 5. A Plan for Our Group
15 minutes 6. Final Evaluation
Meeting One – Preparation

☐ Newsprints  (Prepare ahead of time)
  ___ Objectives for Meeting One  (p. 19)
  ___ Meeting One Agenda  (p. 20)
  ___ Purpose of the AMI Mentor Teacher Group  (p. 21)
  ___ MI Theory’s Definition of Intelligence  (p. 24)
  ___ New View of Intelligence  (p. 24)
  ___ Discussion Questions  (p. 24)
  ___ Thoughts about the Mentoring Process  (p. 25)
  ___ Format for Classroom Observations  (p. 26)
  ___ Useful – How To Improve  (p. 29)

حفظ Handouts  (Make copies for each participant)
  ___ Handout A: “Sample Ground Rules” by the Study Circle Resource Center”  (p. 78)
  ___ Handout B: “Agenda for Mentor Teacher Group”  (p. 79)
  ___ Handout C: “Guidelines for Mentoring and Classroom Observation”  (p. 80)
  ___ Handout D: “Format for Mentoring and Classroom Observation”  (p. 81)
  ___ Handout E: “Case Study of Mentoring and Classroom Observation”  (p. 82)
  ___ Handout F: “Readings for Meeting Two”  (p. 84)
  ___ “Handouts and Articles on Classroom Observation, Peer Coaching, and Mentoring” (in Appendix B, pp. 85–102)

Materials
  ___ One copy of the AMI Sourcebook for each participant
  ___ Blank newsprint sheets
  ___ Newsprint easel
  ___ Markers, pens, tape
Meeting One – Process

OBJECTIVES:  • Participants will get to know one another and learn how the Mentor Teacher Group will be run.
  • Participants will get an introduction to the Adult Multiple Intelligences (AMI) Research Project and Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory.
  • Participants will learn what makes the mentoring process and classroom observations successful.

TIME: 3 hours

STEPS:

1. Welcome and Introductions (25 minutes)

  • Welcome participants to the first meeting of the AMI Mentor Teacher Group. Explain that soon you will be providing an overview of the first meeting and the professional development experience as a whole, but you would like to begin with an activity to get to know each other.

  • Ask participants to taking a moment to find something “on their person” (in their wallet, clothes, etc.) that indicates something that they do well (e.g., a runner may choose a watch, or a musician may choose her hands). Then ask each participant to introduce herself by saying her name, program, what she teaches, and showing the object she has chosen, explaining how the object represents something she does well. You may want to model the introductions by going first.
• After the introductions, ask for just a few comments about what participants heard:

? What impressed you about each other’s strengths?

? Were there a number of similarities or a large range in strengths?

2. Meeting One Objectives, Agenda, and Setting Group Guidelines (15 minutes)

• Post the Objectives for Meeting One newsprint. Go over the objectives briefly with the group.

Objectives for Meeting One
Participants will:

• Get to know one another and learn how the Mentor Teacher Group will be run.
• Get an introduction to the Adult Multiple Intelligences (AMI) Research Project and MI theory.
• Learn what makes the mentoring process and classroom observations successful.

Explain that the primary purpose of Meeting One is to provide participants with an overview of the Mentor Teacher Group and what to expect from the meetings and classroom observations. Only a very small portion of time is devoted to learning about the Adult Multiple Intelligences research. In subsequent meetings, participants will have far greater opportunity to talk about the actual topic of Adult Multiple Intelligences.

“I decided to participate because I knew AMI would allow me additional ways to reach and capitalize on the unique strengths of my learner population. Being successful in the ways that they are more naturally smart breeds success in other areas, including having the confidence to take and pass their GED test.”

—Participant Teacher
New Mexico
• **Post the Meeting One Agenda newsprint.** Describe each activity briefly. Ask if people have any questions about the agenda.

  **Meeting One Agenda**
  - Introductions (Done!)
  - Objectives, Agenda, and Setting Group Guidelines (Doing)
  - A New View of Intelligence
  - Break
  - What Makes Mentoring and Classroom Observation Sessions Successful
  - Evaluation, Readings for Meeting Two, and Closure

• **Explain that one of the things that will help the group to run smoothly** is an agreement among participants about guidelines to follow during the meetings and discussions.

• **Distribute Handout A: “Sample Ground Rules.”** After giving participants a few minutes to look it over, ask if there are any ground rules they would like to add to or delete from the list. Write these on newsprint as they are mentioned.

• **Ask if everyone agrees with these ground rules.** Use the “I can live with that one” criterion, i.e., you might not be crazy about one or more of these but you can “live with it” and agree to abide by it. The discussion should be only around those ground rules that participants find objectionable and “can’t live by.” Let participants know that it is your job, as facilitator, to remind them of these guidelines if you see them being broken.
3. Overview of the AMI Mentor Teacher Group  (20 minutes)

- **Post the Purpose of the AMI Mentor Teacher Group newsprint.** Go over the purpose with participants.

  ![Purpose of the AMI Mentor Teacher Group](attachment:image)

- **Tell how you hope this Mentor Teacher Group will help participants increase** their knowledge about the topic, improve their ability to critically examine their practice and learn from their own experience, and take action to address students’ intelligences. Explain that the specific activities for all four meetings and for the two classroom observations have been designed to meet these core objectives. Use the arrows going in different directions on the newsprint to point out that the learning process is not linear; rather, the learning goes back and forth between knowledge and reflection, and action and reflection.

  “There's a lot more to learning and teaching than I had thought.”

  —*Participant Teacher*
  
  *New Mexico*
Explain that, in addition to achieving the core objectives, NCSALL hopes that participants in each Mentor Teacher Group will generate information or feedback either for other practitioners or for researchers.

• Distribute Handout B: “Agenda for Mentor Teacher Group” which explains how the group is going to do all of this. Go over the handout with participants and then make the following points:

  ▪ A Mentor Teacher Group is a combination of a Study Circle (where a group of practitioners reads articles and discusses them) and peer coaching and mentoring (where an experienced teacher observes your class and gives you feedback).

  ▪ The group meetings and classroom observations will all focus on the topic of Adult Multiple Intelligences.

  ▪ There are four group meetings, interspersed with two one-on-one classroom observations.

  ▪ For the first classroom observation, participants are asked to try out an activity with students that focuses on teaching about MI theory (called “MI Reflections). For the second classroom observation, they are asked to try out a lesson that addresses students’ intelligences.

• Discuss the possibility of participants coming to your own classroom to observe. Make the following points:

  ▪ Invite them to come to your own classroom to observe your teaching and to also give you feedback.

  ▪ Whereas the observation of your own classroom is optional, you would welcome the opportunity, since it would make this learning experience more like peer coaching, in which colleagues help one another, than mentoring in which one person is considered to have greater expertise.

  ▪ At the end of the meeting you will hand around a schedule that indicates what you teach and when you are available for them to observe you teaching.

“The program is the frame for students to reach their dreams, but within that frame we as teachers have to inspire a lot more freedom and creativity.”
—Participant Teacher New Mexico

“I felt good about the change in emotional tenor of the group from initial hesitation and reluctance to enthusiasm and buy-in.”
—Mentor Teacher New Mexico
A D U L T   M U L T I P L E   I N T E L L I G E N C E S

- People can sign up for when they would like to visit your classroom. You can talk more about the details with them individually during their first post-observation conference.

- Remind participants that you will be talking more about mentoring during this meeting and the next, but ask if they have any questions about the basic concepts of what a Mentor Teacher Group is and how it operates, or if they have any concerns about their participation in it. Start a sheet of newsprint called the “parking lot.” Use this to record questions that arise that you do not have the time to immediately address but want to “park” so that they are not forgotten.

4. A New View of Intelligence (45 minutes)

- Tell participants that now you would like to shift the focus of the group to the topic of Adult Multiple Intelligences. Introduce the research project by telling participants that this Mentor Teacher Group is based on research conducted by teachers to see how MI theory applies to the ABE and ESOL classrooms. Explain that the Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory was developed by a Harvard researcher, Howard Gardner. It is a theory about intelligence but does not include information about how the theory applies to teaching. NCSALL’s AMI research project investigated how Gardner’s theory of intelligence applies to teaching in ABE.

Point out that ABE and ESOL teachers were the practitioner researchers. They, along with the students in their classes, did the research, trying to learn how MI theory can be applied in the real-life context of an ABE or ESOL learning environment. The lessons that the practitioner researchers learned, insights gained about how this theory applies to ABE, and strategies they created and used are compiled in the AMI Sourcebook.

Explain that the term ABE is used throughout the AMI Sourcebook to refer to the broad spectrum of literacy services for adults with a reading level anywhere between 0 and 12th grade and includes instruction in basic literacy, pre-GED, and GED.

Explain that this first activity is designed to allow participants to talk about about Gardner’s view of intelligence and how it resonates with the learners with whom they work.

“MI practice frees students to be able to identify personal academic achievements in many areas besides those of the Western European academic model and enables them to find fulfillment in their particular choice(s).” —Participant Teachers New Mexico
• Post the following two newsprints and read the quotes with the group.

**MI Theory’s Definition of Intelligence**

Intelligence is the biological potential to process information in certain ways that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or make products that are valued in a culture.

*AMI Sourcebook, Chapter 1*

**New View of Intelligence**

MI theory claims that there are many ways to be smart and that those abilities are expressed in our performances, products, and ideas (Gardner, 1993). With MI theory, the question moves from “How smart are you?” to “How are you smart?”

*AMI Sourcebook, Chapter 1*

• Facilitate a 30-minute discussion with participants about the two quotes about intelligence using the discussion questions on the newsprint below. Consider whether you would prefer to divide participants into two smaller groups to discuss the questions among themselves and report back to the whole group.

**Discussion Questions**

- How does Gardner’s definition of intelligence differ from the traditional view of intelligence? What do you think of his view?

- What evidence have you seen with the learners in your program that supports the belief that there are many ways to be “smart”?

“*We shared a number of personal stories which reflected the many ways our learners are smart. . . These powerful stories helped all of us to see how crucial it is for we as teachers to believe in a learner’s potential. . . Seeing a person’s potential through an MI lens greatly expands the possibilities.*”

—Susan Finn Miller
Facilitator, Pennsylvania

**BREAK:** 15 minutes
5. Making Mentoring and Classroom Observations Successful (45 minutes)

- **Tell participants that to form realistic expectations of the mentoring experience** and get a clear understanding of the roles both the mentor and the participant teacher play, it would be helpful to discuss the mentoring process.

  Ask participants to brainstorm thoughts about the mentoring process. Write what they think of when they hear the word “mentor” on one side of a newsprint sheet. On the other side of the newsprint sheet, write what they think of when they hear the words “classroom observation.” Write people’s responses exactly as they are said.

- **Distribute Handout C: “Guidelines for Mentoring and Classroom Observation”** and ask participants to take two minutes to read it over. Make the following points:

  - A mentor teacher should see herself as a colleague who doesn’t have all the answers but can provide another set of eyes and ears to help participant teachers think through concerns about their teaching and about applying MI theory in their class and program.

  - As an observer in the participant teacher’s classroom, the mentor teacher is not there to evaluate the teacher but rather to look at how the students are learning. This observation of how students learn will itself provide good feedback to the teacher.
Mentoring is a two-way relationship. It requires the participant teacher to be a good communicator and to be open to feedback, and it requires that the mentor teacher do her best to live up to the qualities of a good mentor (as outlined in Handout C).

The honest dialogue that occurs between mentor teacher and participant teacher is critical to making the mentoring valuable.

- **Answer any questions participants have** about the role of the mentor teacher and classroom observations.

- **Explain that now you will be looking at the format for classroom observations.** Post the Format for Classroom Observations newsprint and explain each step of the process. Let people know you will be giving them a handout of this format so they don’t have to copy it.

### Format for Classroom Observations

- **Pre-observation conference:** Discuss and make a plan for the observation. Decide what aspect of the class on which teacher wants feedback.  **1 hour**
- **Classroom observation:** Class happens, observed by mentor teacher.  **Approximately 2 hours**
- **Post-observation conference:** Discuss how the class went and what teacher’s next steps will be.  **1 hour**

Talk through the classroom observation process and answer questions. Let participants know that, due to scheduling, it may be impossible to have four continuous hours for the classroom observation and you may need to do the pre- and/or post-observation conferences over the phone at another time.

- **Tell participants that you will talk more about the scheduling** of the classroom observations at the next meeting. But for now, you want to share with them the best times for you. Either write these up on newsprint or, if it’s complicated, prepare a handout beforehand that lists your availability. Ask participants to jot down on a piece of paper their teaching schedules and the classes where they would most prefer to be observed. Ask them to include phone number(s) and e-mail where they can be reached.

“I realized that it is important to try and let go and let the students do the work.”

—Participant Teacher

New Mexico
• Collect participants’ schedules and classroom observation preferences. Tell them that you will look these over and suggest observation times the next time you meet. Let them know that you will do your best to meet their preferences, but there may need to be some negotiation to settle on a time that works for all of you.

• Distribute Handout D: “Format for Mentoring and Classroom Observation,” Handout E: “Case Study of Mentoring and Classroom Observation,” and the set of handouts that can be found in Appendix B (“Handouts and Articles on Classroom Observation, Peer Coaching, and Mentoring”). Ask participants to read or leaf through these handouts and articles before the next meeting. Explain that the case study provides an example of what could take place between a mentor and participant teacher during the pre- and post-observation sessions. Some of what happens in the case study may be good and some of what happens could be improved. There will also be time in the next meeting to talk more in-depth about the mentoring experience.

6. Readings for Meeting Two and Evaluation (15 minutes)

• Explain to participants that, in the time left, you would like to go over the readings for next sessions and get feedback from them about this first session. You will use this feedback in shaping the next three sessions of the Mentor Teacher Group.

• Distribute Handout F: “Readings for Meeting Two” and make sure each participant has a copy of the AMI Sourcebook.* Go through the readings, pointing out which ones are “required” and will be discussed at the next meeting versus those that are suggested as background reading.

• Refer participants to these other resources for further information about MI theory in adult basic education practice and findings from the Adult Multiple Intelligences Study:

* Suggestion for facilitator: You may want to order the appropriate number of sourcebooks for your participants (and yourself) and distribute them at this first meeting. If your agency will be covering the cost of the sourcebooks, be sure to let participants know. Otherwise, participants should be advised that they are responsible for reimbursing you. Copies can be ordered from the publisher (Teachers College Press (http://www.teacherscollegepress.com) or from NCSALL (617-482-9485, ext. 278).
• **MI Research Report:** *Open to Interpretation: Multiple Intelligences Theory in Adult Literacy Education* (NCSALL Reports #21, Kallenbach, Silja & Viens, Julie, May 2002). Details findings from the Adult Multiple Intelligences Study, the first systematic effort to examine how multiple intelligences theory can support adult literacy education. Available on NCSALL’s Web site at: http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/research/report21.pdf

• **Teacher’s Stories:** *Multiple Intelligences in Practice – Teacher Research Reports from the Adult Multiple Intelligences Study* (NCSALL Occasional Paper, Kallenbach, Silja & Viens, Julie, eds., February 2001). Provides richly detailed accounts of the research experiences undergone by the teachers who participated in the Adult Multiple Intelligences Study. Available on NCSALL’s Web site at: http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/research/op_kallen.html


• **AMI Study Web Site:** The Adult Multiple Intelligences Study has also established a Web site. Information about the study (background, purposes, methods) and its teacher-participants can be found here, as well as more detailed information about the AMI Sourcebook and other MI-related resources. The Study’s Web site can be found at: http://pzweb.harvard.edu/ami/
• **Remind participants of the date, time, and location of Meeting Two.** If applicable, explain the process you will use for canceling and rescheduling the next meeting in the event of bad weather. Be sure that you have everyone’s home and/or work phone numbers so that you can reach them in case of cancellation.

• **To schedule visits to your classroom (the mentor’s),** pass around your calendar and a sign-up sheet for participants to select a time they would like to visit you. **Remind them that visiting your classroom is optional.** Explain that if a teacher participant is unsure about when she would be able to visit your classroom, she can arrange the date and time with you during the first classroom observation.

• **Post the Useful – How To Improve newsprint.**

![Useful How To Improve](image)

Ask participants first to tell you what was useful or helpful to them about the design of this first session of the Mentor Teacher Group. Write their comments, without response from you, on the newsprint under “Useful.”

• **Then ask participants for suggestions on how to improve this design.** Write their comments, without response from you, on the newsprint under “How To Improve.” If anyone makes a negative comment that’s not in the form of a suggestion, ask the person to rephrase it as a suggestion for improvement, and then write the suggestion on the newsprint.
• **Do not make any response to participants’ comments during this evaluation.** It is VERY important that you do not defend or justify anything you have done in the Mentor Teacher Group meeting or anything about the design, as this may cut off further suggestions. If anyone makes a suggestion you don’t agree with, just nod your head. If you feel some response is needed, rephrase their concern: “So you feel that what we should do instead of the small group discussion is...? Is that right?”

• **Thank participants for** their feedback and for participating in the Mentor Teacher Group and tell them that you are looking forward to the next meeting.
Meeting Two – Preparation

- **Newsprints** (Prepare ahead of time)
  - Objectives for Meeting Two (p. 33)
  - Meeting Two Agenda (p. 33)
  - Reasons for Introducing MI Theory (p. 37)
  - Questions for MI-Reflection Activities (p. 38)
  - Supports and Constraints to Implementing MI Theory (p. 39)
  - Questions for Case Study (p. 40)
  - The Most Helpful Thing I Walk Away With (p. 42)
  - Next Time, Please . . . (p. 42)

- **Handouts** (Make copies for each participant)
  - Handout G: “Preparation for Classroom Observation” (p. 104)
  - Handout H: “Readings for Meeting Three” (p. 105)
  - Handout I: Required readings for Meeting Three not in AMI Sourcebook (pp. 106-114):
    - “MI-Informed Practices and Commercially Available Resources”
    - “Two AMI Teachers’ Perspectives: Multiple Ways Around Resistance Through Multiple Intelligences”

**Materials**
- Three signs: AGREE, DISAGREE, NOT SURE
- Extra copy of the AMI Sourcebook
- Blank newsprint sheets
- Newsprint easel
- Markers, pens, tape, and sticky-note pads
Meeting Two – Process

OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will learn more about MI theory.
- Participants will develop an understanding of the promises and challenges of talking explicitly about MI theory with students.
- Participants will consider strategies to support students’ own understanding of their intelligences.
- Participants will learn more about the classroom observations.

TIME: 3 hours

STEPS:

1. Welcome, Meeting Two Objectives, and Agenda (10 minutes)

   - Welcome participants back to the Mentor Teacher Group and ask them to reintroduce themselves by saying their names and sharing the one thing they’ve been thinking about most on the topic of Adult Multiple Intelligences since the last meeting. Ask them not to respond to what others say but, rather, just listen to what is on everyone’s minds. You should also introduce yourself again and add what has been on your mind. Summarize what you’ve heard (e.g., “It seems that most of you have been thinking about X”).

   - Post the Objectives for Meeting Two newsprint. Go over the objectives briefly with the group.

   “MI practice facilitates the learner in perceiving her/himself as ‘smart.’”
   —Participant Teachers
   New Mexico
Explain that the focus of the meeting will be on “MI Reflections,” the promises and challenges of teaching about MI theory, and using it as a tool for student reflection and self-understanding.

- **Post the Meeting Two Agenda newsprint.** Describe each activity briefly. Ask if people have any questions about the agenda.
2. MI Reflections: How Are You Smart?  (40 minutes)

- **Explain that one of the issues the teacher researchers had to consider** was whether they would present MI theory to their students explicitly, rather than weave it into the curriculum. The teacher researchers called the activities and strategies they used to teach students about MI theory, MI Reflections. Explain to participants that before they discuss their thoughts about teaching students about MI, you first want them to experience an MI Reflection activity and in the process, learn more about the eight intelligences.

- **Explain that the next activity represents an MI-Reflection activity** designed to help students reflect on their intelligences. The activity will also give participants an opportunity to better understand the eight intelligences in Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences and the relationship among the different intelligences. Participants may want to refer to the description of the eight intelligences in the AMI Sourcebook, Chapter 1, “MI Basics – Multiple Intelligences: The Theory Behind the Practice” (p. 2). Make the point that this activity represents an MI-Reflection activity in that it was designed to help students learn about their unique collection of strengths.

- **Explain that participants will now have an opportunity to assess their own intelligences.** They will be using a survey that comes from Thomas Armstrong’s book, Seven Kinds of Smart. It was adapted by Meg Constanzo, one of the teachers involved in the AMI research project, for use with her GED level students at the Tutorial Center in Vermont.

- **Distribute “MIR Activities: AMI Survey – How Are You Smart?”** (Note to facilitator: this survey can be found in the AMI Sourcebook, pp. 44–47. You should make the appropriate number of copies and pass them out to participants.)

  Tell participants you would like them to complete this survey individually during the next 20 minutes. Go over the following tasks:
  - Read the AMI Survey: Selections #1-#8.
  - Answer the AMI Survey questions.
  - Plot your responses from the questions on the AMI Survey grid.

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**Note to Facilitator**

If discussions develop around learning styles vs. MI theory, refer participants to the section in the reading assigned for Meeting Two: *Bridging Students’ Areas of Strength to Areas of Challenge: Myths and Misconceptions* (AMI Sourcebook, Chapter 1, p. 19). You may also want to say that, although this is a good question, continued research is needed to develop a good answer.

**Another Idea**

Hand out copies of the AMI Survey response page. Tell participants that you are going to read selections that describe each of the eight intelligences.

As you read these selections, they are to mark how well each selection describes them. Explain that they will not be asked to share their responses with the group.

When you have read all eight selections, pass out copies of the AMI Survey profile grid. Ask participants to plot their responses on this grid.
Explain that they will not be asked to share their responses with the group.

- **When participants have finished plotting their responses on the grid, provide an opportunity for them to react to their experience with the Survey.** Use the following questions as a discussion guide.

  - What insights did you gain about the eight intelligences or about the basics of MI theory from assessing your own intelligences with the AMI Survey?
  
  - What other intelligences can you think of which are not included in these eight intelligences, i.e., not yet been “proven”?
  
  - What might the learners in your program gain by doing a survey like this?
  
  - What could be some disadvantages of asking learners to do this activity? In what other ways could you help learners assess their intelligences?
  
  - How would you adapt this survey for your student populations?

### 3. Issues Teachers Addressed When Applying MI-Reflection Activities (40 minutes)

- **Explain that the next activity is designed for participants to discuss the promises and challenges involved in using MI-Reflections activities.**

- **Use the “live Likert scale” format** for a discussion of the challenges to implementing MI-Reflection activities, as set out in Chapter 2 of the AMI Sourcebook. Put up around the room three signs in large letters as follows:
  - on the right wall: AGREE.
  - on the back wall: NOT SURE.
  - on the left wall: DISAGREE.

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**Note to Facilitator**
You may want to put up these signs before the meeting begins.
• **Ask everyone to stand up.** Move desks or chairs if necessary so that people can move easily around the room. Explain that this next activity is purely for promoting discussion and there are no right or wrong answers. You will read a statement aloud twice. They are to listen to the statement and then move to the sign that corresponds with how they feel about the statement: AGREE, DISAGREE, or NOT SURE. It is OK to stand between signs to indicate that one agrees with aspects of the statement while disagreeing with others. Emphasize that the statements have been deliberately written to generate discussion.

• **After everyone has chosen where to stand, ask one or two people near the AGREE sign to explain why they agree with the statement.** Tell participants that, if they change their mind after listening to the explanations, they may move to another sign reflecting their new opinion. Continue around the room to the NOT SURE and DISAGREE signs, asking one or two people standing near each sign why they are standing there. There will not be time for all participants to state their opinion. Feel free to let participants “dialogue” with each other from different sides of the room; in other words, they are not trying to convince you but each other.

• **Draw the discussion of a statement to a close after approximately 10 minutes and read another statement.** Continue until all three statements have been discussed or until 30 minutes has passed, whichever comes first. If the discussion around one statement is particularly rich, you may want to let it go on and skip one of the other statements. Similarly, if there is little discussion about a statement, just move on to the next.

The three statements for discussion with the “live Likert Scale” activity are:

**Statement 1.**

*Teachers should explicitly discuss the basics of MI theory with their students because it is the best way for students to grasp that there are many ways they can be “smart.”*

**Statement 2.**

*If students resist MI-inspired teaching, the teacher should retreat to more traditional methods.*

**Another idea**

If the discussion is slow, consider asking the following questions:

**Statement 1**

- What examples did teachers give of using MI as content in the reading *To Be or Not to Be Explicit about MI theory?*

**Statement 2**

- What reasons did the teachers (Meg and Diane) give for and against developing intelligence profiles for their students?

- How could you find out why students resist MI-inspired teaching?

**Statement 3**

- How do you think GED students in your program would feel about this?

- How important in helping students pass the GED are the intelligences that society values less?
Statement 3.

*Society values some intelligences more than others. To focus on those less valued is ultimately a disservice to students who need to pass the GED or get a job.*

**BREAK:** 10 minutes

4. **MI-Reflection Activities** (30 minutes)

- **Remind participants that for the first classroom observation,** they will be asked to try out an MI-Reflection activity. They could choose to use one that is in the AMI Sourcebook or they may create something that they feel is more suitable for their own context.

- **Post the Reasons for Introducing MI Theory newsprint.** Explain that the AMI teacher researchers introduced MI theory for three different reasons.

  - **Reasons for Introducing MI Theory**
    1. to learn about MI: helping students understand the rationale for unconventional learning activities and encouraging them consider the activities a promising change
    2. to learn about ourselves: supporting students as they learn about themselves and their strengths, thereby building students’ sense of worth and self-efficacy
    3. to learn about our ways of learning: helping students connect their strengths with effective learning strategies.

- **Explain that the purpose of this next activity** is for participants to discuss the various activities and strategies the teacher researchers developed to introduce MI theory to students and to consider how these activities would work in their own contexts.

  “MI-based instruction can be delivered explicitly or implicitly.”

  —Participant Teachers New Mexico
• **Ask participants which of the three reasons** for introducing MI theory to students they are most drawn to, and group participants by the reason they select. Because reason 3: “to learn about ways of learning” has few suggested activities and is tied to reason 2: “to learn about ourselves,” it may work out best to form two groups, one that explores reason 1 and the other that explores both reason 2 and reason 3. If all participants are interested in exploring the same reason, they can work together as a whole group or pair off if they would rather work with fewer people.

• **Post the Questions for MI-Reflection Activities newsprint.** Explain that the task of each group is to discuss the MI-Reflection activities in the AMI Sourcebook, Chapter 2, “MI Reflections,” pp. 33-48, that correspond to their selected reason for introducing MI theory. Ask them to use the following questions as a guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions For MI-Reflection Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What are your reactions to this activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What questions or concerns do you have about how to do the activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How could you adapt this activity to fit your own context?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggest that they first skim through the activities that fall under their chosen area and then pick three activities that seem interesting to discuss. Allow 20 minutes for participants to read through and discuss each of the activities they have chosen.

• **Reconvene the whole group.** Ask each person to share what she thinks she may want to try out for the upcoming classroom observation. It could be one of the activities from the AMI Sourcebook or it may be something that she would like to adapt or create. If some participants are not yet sure, reassure them that they will have more time to think about it later and ask them to share just their preliminary thoughts about what they may like to do.

“From the reading we learned that one of the challenges is figuring out how explicit to be with [ABE] learners about MI. For some of the teachers in the pilot study, it was important to talk explicitly about MI with their students. For others talking to learners about MI was not effective. We learned that culture often plays a role in this decision as does consideration of the learners’ ability to understand English.”

—Susan Finn Miller
Facilitator, Pennsylvania
5. Implementing MI Theory in Your Contexts: Constraints and Supports (25 minutes)

- Explain that the next activity is designed to help participants consider the contexts in which they work and what will help or hinder them in trying out a new strategy. The activity is called a “force field analysis” and will help them to brainstorm and strategize about how to deal with those factors that would hinder and support them in implementing MI theory in their own classes and programs. Student resistance to MI instruction is one type of constraint. Lack of prep time to prepare MI-inspired lessons is another type of constraint.

- Post the Supports and Constraints to Implementing MI Theory newsprint.

“...We identified the barriers (much of which we had discussed as challenges) and the supports we would welcome as we try to integrate MI into our work. We didn't have ready solutions to the time and resources problem; however, we decided that having a team (or at least one other colleague) to work with would be enormously helpful.”

—Susan Finn Miller
Facilitator, Pennsylvania

- Begin by asking the group to brainstorm all of the constraints (factors that may hinder them) they may face when implementing MI theory. These may be classroom constraints, program constraints, or policy constraints. Write each constraint mentioned under the “minus” sign on the right side of the newsprint. Take no more than five minutes to list constraints.

- Then ask the group to brainstorm all of the supports (factors that will help them) they will have when implementing MI theory. Write these on the left side of the newsprint, under the “plus” sign. Take no more than five minutes to list supports.
• **Lead a discussion with the whole group about how constraining forces can be reduced, and how supporting forces can be increased.** This discussion should be based on the notion that many constraining forces cannot be removed or eliminated (such as lack of time) but, rather, may be lessened through actions the teachers or their programs can take.

• **Keep the Supports and Constraints newsprint for re-posting during Meeting Three.**

**6. Planning for Classroom Observations and the Third Group Meeting and Evaluation (25 minutes)**

• **Explain that now that they have thought about an activity that they may want to try out for the classroom observation and have considered what will help and make it difficult for them to do so, you would like to spend the last part of this meeting to prepare for the classroom observations.**

• **Post the Questions for Case Study newsprint.** Explain that you would like to take a few minutes to discuss Handout F: Case Study of Mentoring and Classroom Observation that they read for today’s meeting. Facilitate a 10-minute discussion, using the following questions as a guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Case Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What strikes you about this case study?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What suggestions do you have either for the mentor or the participant teacher as to how this observation session could be improved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What questions do you have about each of the three steps of the observation session (pre, during, and post)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remind them of the handouts on peer coaching and mentoring that were given out in the Handout G packet at the end of Meeting One. Ask if they have questions or comments about the readings.
• **Schedule the first classroom observation.** Hand out an observation calendar that you have created which lists each participant’s name and the date and time when you can come and observe her class. Include a phone number where you can be reached in case they need to cancel the observation. This master list allows everyone to see when you will be visiting each member of the group and, in the event of scheduling difficulties, it may be helpful for them to know when, for example, you are in the area. If there are still unresolved scheduling conflicts, take a few minutes now to see if you can arrange a time that works. In the event that the four contiguous hours for the observation process were not doable in some instances, try to arrange a time now for the pre- and/or post-observation conferences (either in person or over the phone).

  **If after a few minutes there are still scheduling difficulties,** arrange a time either immediately after the meeting or over the phone to figure things out rather than take time away from the group.

• **Distribute Handout G: “Preparation for Classroom Observation.”** Tell them that they will not take the time now to consider their responses to these questions, but ask them to review the questions once they are back home to prepare for the observation.

  Ask if there are any questions about how to prepare for the classroom observation or the next group meeting.

• **Distribute Handout H: “Readings for Meeting Three”** and briefly go over the readings that will be covered in the next meeting. Tell them that, whereas the focus for today and the first classroom observation is on MI-Reflection activities, the focus next time will be on MI-inspired lessons.

  Remind participants of the date, time, and location of Meeting Three.
• Post the two newsprints, *The Most Helpful Thing I Walk Away With* and *Next Time, Please*, side by side on a wall close to where participants will be leaving.

As a way of ending, ask participants to each take two sticky notes. On one sticky note, ask them to write the most helpful thing that the person is taking away from today’s meeting. It could be a new insight or technique or a connection made with someone in the group, etc.

On the other sticky note, ask them to write the one thing that they would like to see done differently during the next time they meet as a group. Ask them to take a few minutes to write their responses and, on the way out, to post them on the corresponding newsprint at the front of the room.

• **Thank participants for** their work today and tell them that you are looking forward to the classroom observations.
FIRST CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Pre-Observation Conference: Guidelines and Suggested Questions

TIME: 1 hour

Consider structuring the pre-observation conference as follows. Remember, the most important objective of your discussion with the teacher is to create a comfortable, non-judgmental working relationship.

- Review with the teacher participant the structure of the classroom observation and agree on what to include in the pre-observation conference. (5 minutes)

  Thank the teacher for having you and check how both of you are doing. Briefly review the structure of the entire observation process: a pre-observation conference, followed by classroom observation, followed by a post-observation conference.

  Explain that in this pre-observation conference, you would like to do the following:
  - Better understand the teacher’s context.
  - Learn about what the teacher is planning to do.
  - Help the teacher identify the focus of the observation.
  - Figure out best ways to collect observation data.
  - Prepare to be in the classroom.

  Ask if there is anything else she would like to discuss before the classroom observation and adjust the pre-observation conference accordingly. Remind her that you are here as a colleague to offer a listening ear and perhaps another perspective, that you are a co-learner and not the expert.
• **Develop a general understanding of the teacher participant’s context.** Here are some questions you might ask: (10 minutes)

  ? What kind of a class or tutoring situation is this (e.g., ABE, GED, High School Diploma, ESOL)?

  ? Who are the learners (e.g., U.S.-born/immigrants, male/female, white/people of color, under/over 21)?

  ? How large is the class?

  ? How often do you meet?

  ? What is going well in the class?

• **Explore with the teacher plans for this class session and the possibility of trying an MI-Reflection activity.** (10 minutes)

  ? What are you planning to do in this class session? What are you working on today?

  ? How is that similar to or different from what you have been working on?

If the lesson is to **include** an MI-Reflection activity, ask:

  ? Do you have any questions about doing this activity?

If the lesson will **not include** an MI-Reflection activity, ask:

  ? Why have you decided not to include an MI-Reflection activity for today’s observation?

  ? How are you trying to include MI theory in your classroom?

  ? OR, Is there anything I can do to support you to try an MI-Reflection activity?
• Help the participant teacher identify the focus of the classroom observation. (20 minutes)

  ? What aspect of the students’ learning would you like me to pay attention to? Why?

• To assess whether what she wants feedback on meets the criteria for a good focus, ask:

  ? Does the focus reflect something that you are genuinely curious about, interested in, or find perplexing? How so?

  ? Is there information that can be collected in this classroom observation that would help answer your question or provide some insight into your concern?

  ? Is the scope of the focus too narrow (i.e., the information gathered would not be enough for you to gain new insights into your practice and possible changes) or too broad (i.e., it would entail collecting information about too many things eliminating the opportunity for more depth)?

If necessary, refine the focus of the classroom observation so that it is both doable and meaningful.

Discuss a fallback plan in the event that unexpected circumstances may make the observation focus untenable for this class session.

• Discuss with the participant teacher how you will gather information that matches the desired focus. (5 minutes)

Discuss options for gathering information. Decide together which instrument makes the most sense to use. Refer to the handout in Appendix B: “Ways to Gather Information During Class Observations,” if helpful.
• **Prepare to meet and be with the class.** (10 minutes)

  ? What, if anything, have you been able to do to prepare learners for my visit?

  ? How would you like me to be introduced (e.g., whether she or you will do that, whether learners also introduce themselves, etc.)?

  ? What should my role be during the class (e.g., should I sit with learners or away from learners, should I participate in any of the activities)?

  ? Is there anything in particular I can do to make you feel more comfortable with the classroom observation?
Post-Observation Conference: Guidelines and Suggested Questions

TIME: 1 hour

• Begin with a general discussion of the class session. (20 minutes)
  • In your mind, how did the class go? What worked and what did not work? How do you know?
  • How did learners’ behaviors compare to what you had hoped for?
  • How did your own teaching strategies and behaviors compare to what you had planned/hoped for?
  • What did you learn about applying MI theory? Any surprises?
  • What did you learn from doing this activity?

• Discuss the focus of the classroom observation and provide feedback. Share with the teacher what you observed. Discuss together your observations and possible interpretations for what you both saw and perceived. (20 minutes)
  • You said that you wanted feedback on X. What did you see? What insights did you get about X?
  • When you did X, what were you thinking about? What were you trying to do?
  • How do you think it went?

“When teachers are allowed to shine, the students are allowed to shine.”
—Participant Teacher
New Mexico
• **Discuss the implications of what you both observed.** (10 minutes)

  ? What questions does this information raise?

  ? How could you gather information yourself to answer those questions?

  ? Based on our observations, what changes, if any, do you need or want to make?

• **Plan for next steps.** (7 minutes)

  ? What might you do next?

  Together you could refer to the AMI Sourcebook to get ideas for MI-inspired instruction and lessons that may build on what the teacher has already done.

  Remind the teacher that she is also welcome to observe one of your classes. Ask if she is interested and, if so, set up a time she can visit you before the final group meeting.

• **Get feedback on the entire classroom observation process.**
  (3 minutes)

  ? What did I do that was helpful for you during this classroom observation process?

  ? Did I do anything that was not helpful, or that got in the way of what you were trying to do?

  ? What could I do to be more helpful?

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**Note to Facilitator**

You may offer your own suggestions as well.
Meeting Three – Preparation

☐ Newsprints  (Prepare ahead of time)
   __ Objectives for Meeting Three  (p. 50)
   __ Meeting Three Agenda  (p. 51)
   __ Questions about the Mentoring Experience  (p. 51)
   __ Teaching to Students’ Strengths  (p. 52)
   __ Building Community in the Classroom  (p. 52)
   __ Impressions and Questions About Process  (p. 54)
   __ Impressions and Questions About Challenges  (p. 54)
   __ Impressions and Questions About Outcomes  (p. 54)
   __ Preparing Students for MI  (p. 56)
   __ Evaluation of Meeting Three: What Are You Taking Away With You?  (p. 57)

📝 Handouts  (For each participant)
   __ Handout J: “Readings for Meeting Four”  (p. 116)

Materials
   __ Copies of the AMI Sourcebook
   __ Newsprint from Meeting Two, “Supports and Constraints”
   __ 4” x 6” sticky note pads (or blank strips of paper)
   __ Blank newsprint sheets
   __ Newsprint easel
   __ Markers, pens, tape
Meeting Three – Process

OBJECTIVES:  
• Participants will discuss the mentoring experience and what they have learned.
• Participants will learn about MI-inspired lessons and ways to translate MI theory into practice.
• Participants will plan next steps for using MI-inspired practices and prepare for the second classroom observation.

TIME:  
3 hours

STEPS:

1. Welcome, Meeting Three Objectives, and Agenda (10 minutes)
   - Welcome participants back to the Mentor Teacher Group.
   - Post the Objectives for Meeting Three newsprint. Go over the objectives briefly with the group.

   **Objectives for Meeting Three**
   Participants will:
   - Discuss the mentoring experience and what they have learned.
   - Learn about MI-inspired lessons and ways to translate MI theory into practice.
   - Plan next steps for using MI-inspired practices and prepare for the second observation.

   Explain that the focus up to this point has been about teaching students about MI. For the rest of the meetings and the second classroom observation, you will be exploring MI-based lessons and the challenges and promises of using such lessons in the classroom.
• **Post the Meeting Three Agenda newsprint.** Describe each activity briefly. Ask participants if they have any questions about the agenda.

```
Meeting Three Agenda
• Objectives and Agenda for Meeting Three
• How was the Mentoring Experience?
• MI-Inspired Lessons
  Break
• Planning for the Second Classroom Observation
• Next Steps and Evaluation
```

2. **How was the Mentoring Experience?** (50 minutes)

• **Post the Questions about the Mentoring Experience newsprint.** Ask participants to share their experiences during the classroom observations so that participants can learn from one another. Let them know that they will each have five minutes to talk about being observed by the mentor teacher. Explain that there will be a few minutes after each report-back for other participants to ask brief questions. When everyone has had the chance to share, there will be a group discussion about what they all have heard. Ask participants to use the posted questions to guide their sharing.

```
Questions about the Mentoring Experience
• What did you do in your classroom during the observation?
• What did you learn about yourself and your teaching from the mentoring process?
• Were you able to try out an MI-Reflection activity or an MI-based lesson either during the observation session or at any time since the last meeting? What did you learn about applying MI?
• How did students react? What did they get out of it?
```

“I learned more about my own intelligences, and when I work from my strengths or feed my strengths, it makes me a calmer person.”
—Participant Teacher
New Mexico
• Once everyone has shared, facilitate a 15-minute discussion using the following questions as prompts. Record participants’ responses on newsprint.

? What advice would you pass on to other practitioners about using MI activities to help students learn about the theory and their intelligences?

? What questions or next steps are you now left with about applying MI?

3. MI-Inspired Lessons (50 minutes)

• Post the Teaching to Students’ Strengths and Building Community in the Classroom newsprints. Explain that before you talk about the readings and the ways in which the teacher researchers translated MI theory into lessons, you would like to begin by hearing from the participants about the ways in which their practice is already MI inspired. Begin by asking teachers to brainstorm a list of the ways in which they teach to students’ strengths.

Explain that several AMI teachers found that building trust and community in the classroom is necessary for students to embrace MI-based instruction. Ask participants to brainstorm another list of the ways in which they build a sense of trust and community in their own classrooms.

“AMI-inspired instruction is not just about lesson plans; it is about creating an environment where students feel safe to reflect on their learning, [to] challenge the teacher and pose other ideas about how and what they want to learn, and feel safe to make mistakes.”

—Participant Teacher
New Mexico
• **Tell participants that they will now have the chance to discuss the teacher researchers’ experiences** with MI-inspired lessons. Explain that this discussion is based on the required readings for meeting three listed in Handout H. These include three sections of the AMI Sourcebook (Chapter 3, “MI-Inspired Instruction,” Chapter 4, “MI-Inspired Lessons,” and Chapter 5, “Student Responses to MI Practices: The AMI Experience”) and the two readings contained in Appendix C to this Guide (Handout I). If participants indicate that they would like some time to review the readings, allow ten minutes for silent review.

• **Give each participant several blank strips of paper or a pad of 4” x 6” sticky notes.** Ask participants to take a few minutes to write down on the strips or sticky notes things that really impressed them about:
  • the PROCESS that teachers used
  • CHALLENGES teachers or students faced
  • OUTCOMES teachers and students experienced

In addition to their impressions, ask participants to also write down questions they have about the teachers’ experiences. These could be questions about why and how teachers did what they did or questions about how the teachers’ experiences might relate to their own teaching contexts.

Tell participants to use a separate strip or sticky note for each impression or question. Remind them to write in print that is large enough to be read from several yards away.

Allow ten minutes for participants to work in silence, writing their impressions and questions.

“It is a challenge for GED instructors especially to deviate from test-taking approach to instruction. Some of the resistance came from students, but some also from administration that pressures teachers to achieve a high number of graduates and does not allow them to deviate from required curriculum. Need to find ways to incorporate GED test-taking skills into MI-based instruction.”  
—Participant Teacher  
New Mexico
• Before the session or as participants are working, post these three newsprint sheets around the room:

  Impressions and Questions About Process

  Impressions and Questions About Challenges

  Impressions and Questions About Outcomes

• After ten minutes, ask participants to tape their strips or put their sticky notes on the three newsprint sheets. Then give the group time to walk around the three newsprint sheets and read all the postings silently.

• Reconvene the group for a discussion about their impressions and questions. This discussion can go on for about 15 minutes.

  ? What impressions were common to more than one person?

  ? Why do you think these experiences of the practitioner researchers struck such a chord?

  ? What impressed you about the ways teachers addressed the issue of student resistance?

“I was impressed, as the facilitator, because they asked each other to clarify or explain why they were impressed by such and such. They questioned and challenged each other but supported each other as well.”

—Nicole Graves
Facilitator, Massachusetts
What questions did the activities bring to light about implementing MI inspired lessons within the constraints of adult basic education settings (e.g., issues of turbulence such as students continually stopping/dropping out and new students continually enrolling, issues of student resistance to MI inspired methods, etc.)?

What examples about the process of lesson planning “spoke to” your own process of developing lessons with your students?

Bring the discussion to a close by telling participants that they will have a chance in the next activity to think about what steps they would like to take to apply MI in their own classrooms.

BREAK: 15 minutes

4. Planning for the Second Classroom Observation (45 minutes)

- Repost the Supports and Constraints newsprint that participants generated in the last meeting. Tell participants that, in this next activity, they will be working in groups by context (i.e., ESOL teachers in one group, GED teachers in another) to think about MI-inspired lessons that they would like to try in their own classrooms, including what they would like to do for the second classroom observation. Ask them to refer to the Supports and Constraints newsprint to consider their contexts while planning. Suggest that they also refer to sample lessons in the AMI Sourcebook for ideas about what to do.

Tell them they will have 20 minutes to talk together and make individual action plans. Each teacher should write some notes about her action plan. Let participants know that they will be asked to share the MI-inspired lesson they plan on doing for their second classroom observation.

Suggest that a part of their planning should include discussion about how to continue to build trust and community in the classroom and other ways to help prepare students for MI-inspired instruction.

Another Idea
Conduct a brainstorming session with the entire group to generate this list of action steps.
• **Divide the whole group into smaller groups by context.** If all teachers are from a single context or there is only one teacher from a context, divide them into pairs.

After 20 minutes, reconvene the group. Ask each person to share her ideas for what she would like to try out for her second classroom observation session.

• **Have participants consider the help they may need** to implement these next steps, for example, materials, resources, contact with other teachers, etc. Encourage discussion about ways to get supports that are needed.

• **Post the Preparing Students for MI newsprint** and ask the group to brainstorm a list of the ways they could prepare students for MI-inspired instruction.

5. **Next Steps and Evaluation** *(10 minutes)*

• **As you did in the second meeting, give participants a handout that you have already prepared suggesting the times that you will observe them.** Ask if there are any problems with what you have proposed. Arrange to talk with these people immediately after the meeting or arrange a time right now to talk over the phone to come up with a better time for the second classroom observation.

• **Ask if anyone has questions about the next classroom observation session.**

• **Distribute Handout J: “Readings for Meeting Four.”** Remind them of the date, time, and location of the fourth and final group meeting.
• Post the Evaluation of Meeting Three: What Are You Taking Away With You? Newsprint. Ask participants to evaluate today’s meeting.

Evaluation of Meeting Three:
What Are You Taking Away With You?

New thoughts or Knowledge

New Skills

New Attitudes

“I have tried to expand the scope of my lessons – beyond writing, reading, role plays, and conversation – to include more art work.”

—Participant Teacher
New Mexico

Ask participants to consider what they are taking away with them after this group meeting: new thoughts or knowledge, new feelings or attitudes, and new skills. Give each participant a pad of sticky notes, and ask them to write new knowledge, attitudes, or skills, one to each sticky note, and then put them up on the newsprint.

Allow a few minutes for them to think, write, and put up their sticky notes. Then read aloud to the participants everyone’s responses.

Thank everyone for coming.
SECOND CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Pre-Observation Conference: Guidelines and Suggested Questions

Time: 1 hour

The format of this classroom observation process is very similar to the first one. You should encourage the participant teacher to try out an MI-inspired lesson. If she is not interested or unable, first explore why. Then try to think of ways you might support her to try something related to MI theory. Otherwise, just follow her lead and try to provide her with the help she feels she most needs.

- **Review the format for this classroom observation.** (5 minutes)
  Thank the participant teacher for having you and briefly check-in with how the both of you are doing. Explain that the format of this classroom observation process is similar to the last one and ask if there is anything that you should do differently during this pre-observation conference.

- **Get an update from the teacher about next steps she has taken since the last time you met on AMI and her focus of concern.** (10 minutes)

  ? What is working with your MI-inspired instruction? What is not working? How do you know?

  ? If you haven’t been able to take any next steps for adapting MI theory into the classroom, what is hindering you from doing so?

  ? What do you think could help you take action?

  ? Is there something I could do now to help you?

  ? Let’s also talk about the focus of your first classroom observation and what has been going on in that area since the last time I was here. Your focus was X and you said that you were interested in doing Y. Have you been able to take some next steps? What happened? What questions do you now have?

Note to Facilitator

Bring your copy of the AMI Sourcebook to the Observation.
• **Explore with the teacher her plans for this class session.**
  (15 minutes)

  ? What are you planning to do in this class session?

  ? Is there anything about today’s activity that you’d like to talk through?

  ? Is there anything about your class that has changed since the last time I was here that you think I should know?

• **Help the teacher identify the focus of the classroom observation.**  (20 minutes)

  ? What would you like me to pay attention to in today’s class? Why?

  Revisit the criteria for a good focus:

  ? Does the focus reflect something that you are genuinely curious about, interested in, or find perplexing? How so?

  ? Is there information that can be collected in this classroom observation that would help answer your question or provide some insight into your concern?

  ? Is the scope of the focus too narrow (meaning, the information gathered would not be enough for you to gain new insights into your practice and possible changes) or too broad (meaning, it would entail collecting information about too many things eliminating the opportunity for more depth)?

  If necessary, refine the focus of the classroom observation so that it is both doable and meaningful.

  Discuss a fallback plan in the event that unexpected circumstances may make the observation focus untenable for this classroom session.
• **Discuss with the teacher how you will gather information that matches the desired focus.** (5 minutes)

Discuss options for gathering information with the teacher. Decide together which instrument makes the most sense to use. Refer to the handout in Handout G: Packet of Handouts and Articles on Classroom Observations: “Ways to Gather Information During Class Observations,” if helpful.

• **Prepare to be with the class.** (5 minutes)

  ? Would you like my role to be different than the last time I was in your class? If yes, how so (e.g., whether you should sit with learners or away from learners, whether you should participate in some of the activities)?

  ? What else would make this classroom observation a helpful learning experience for you?
Post-Observation Conference: Guidelines and Suggested Questions

**Time:** 1 hour

- **Begin with a general discussion of the classroom session.** (7 minutes)
  
  - In your mind, how did the class go? What worked and what did not work? How do you know?
  
  - How did learners’ behaviors compare to what you had hoped for?
  
  - How did your own teaching strategies and behaviors compare with what you had planned/hoped for?
  
  - What did you learn from doing this activity?

- **Discuss the focus of the classroom observation and provide feedback.** (30 minutes)
  
  - You said that you wanted feedback on X. What did you see? Or, what insights did you get about X?

  Discuss your observations together and possible interpretations for what you both saw and perceived. You might begin by sharing what you observed. Then ask such questions as:

  - When you did X, what were you thinking about? What were you trying to do?

  - How do you think it went?”
• Discuss the implications of what you both observed. (10 minutes)

? What questions does this information raise?

? How could you gather information yourself to answer those questions?

? Based on our observations, what changes, if any, do you need or want to make?

• Plan for next steps. (10 minutes)

? What might you do next? What are some immediate next steps?

? What might you do to continue to translate MI theory into practice over the long haul?

? What help do you think you may need to continue to take action?

? How might you get that help?

• Get feedback on the entire classroom observation process. (3 minutes)

? It would be very helpful for me to hear from you what I did that was helpful for you during this classroom observation process.

? What could I have done to be more helpful?

Note to Facilitator
You may offer your own suggestions as well.
Meeting Four – Preparation

☐ Newsprints (Prepare ahead of time)
  ___ Objectives for Meeting Four  (p. 64)
  ___ Meeting Four Agenda  (p. 65)
  ___ Seven Emerging Features of MI-Informed Practice  (p. 65)
  ___ Questions about the Second Classroom Observation/Questions about the
      Topic  (p. 66)
  ___ Creating a Plan of Action Square  (p. 68)
  ___ Responding to Plans  (p. 69)
  ___ Ideas for Our Group’s Next Steps  (p. 70)
  ___ What I Found Most Useful Was  (p. 73)
  ___ It Would Have Been More Effective If…  (p. 73)

Materials

  Materials for the Action Quilt:
  ___ Six 8½” by 8½” squares made from 8½” by 11” colored paper. The color
      should be light enough for ink to be legible.
  ___ Materials to use for creating squares such as scraps of fabric, tissue
      paper, old greeting cards, ribbons, buttons, glitter
  ___ Three glue sticks (at least)
  ___ Three pairs of scissors (at least)
  ___ Colored pens or markers
  ___ Camera (optional)

  Other materials:
  ___ AMI Sourcebook
  ___ Blank newsprint sheets
  ___ Newsprint easel
  ___ Markers, pens, tape
Meeting Four – Process

OBJECTIVES: • Participants will reflect on their mentoring experience and what they have learned.

• Participants will learn about the dominant features of MI-informed practice.

• Participants will plan next steps for applying MI theory in their programs.

• Participants will make a plan for the group’s next steps.

TIME: 3 hours

STEPS:

1. Welcome, Meeting Four Objectives, and Agenda (5 minutes)

   • Welcome the group. Acknowledge that this is the group’s last time together and that it is a time to celebrate their hard work and what they’ve learned. Say that you would like most of this last meeting to be devoted to their reflecting on and sharing with each other what they have learned.

   • Post the Objectives for Meeting Four newsprint. Briefly go over the objectives for this final meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives for Meeting Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants will:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Reflect on their mentoring experience and what they have learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Learn about the dominant features of MI-informed practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Plan next steps for applying MI theory in their programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Make a plan for the group’s next steps.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


• **Post the Meeting Four Agenda newsprint.** Describe each activity briefly. Ask participants if they have any questions about the agenda.

```
Meeting Four Agenda
- Objectives and Agenda for Meeting Four
- Seven Emerging Features from the AMI Study
- What Have We Learned?
  Break
- Next Steps – An Action Quilt
- A Plan for Our Group
- Final Evaluation
```

2. **Seven Emerging Features from the AMI Study Agenda**

   (10 minutes)

   - **📖 Refer participants to the reading assigned for Meeting Four (AMI Sourcebook, Chapter 3, “MI-Inspired Instruction – The AMI Experience,” p. 50).** Explain that, to help the group think about what it learned about MI theory and its applications in the adult education setting, you want to briefly review the seven findings that emerged from the AMI study.

   - **Post the Seven Emerging Features of MI-Informed Practice newsprint.**

```
Seven Emerging Features of MI-Informed Practice
1. Using MI theory leads teachers to offer a greater variety of learning activities.
2. The most engaging MI-based lessons use content and approaches that are meaningful to students.
3. MI-based approaches advance learning goals.
4. Implementing MI-informed practices involves teachers taking risks.
5. Persistence pays off with MI-based instruction.
6. MI-informed learning activities increase student initiative and control over the content or direction of the activities.
7. Building trust and community in the classroom supports MI-based instruction.
```
• Ask participants to quietly consider which of the seven findings “speak to” them and their own experience. Let them know that, in the next activity when they share what they have learned, they will have the opportunity to talk about which of these findings resonated with them and why.

3. What Have We Learned? (60 minutes)

• Explain that, just as in Meeting Three, they will each have five minutes of uninterrupted time to share with the group what they have learned from the second classroom observation and their experiences since the last time you met as a group.

• Post the Questions about the Second Classroom Observation and Questions about the Topic newsprint.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions about the Second Classroom Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ What did you do in your classroom during the observation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What did you learn from the mentoring process about yourself and your teaching?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions about the Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ What action(s) did you take to apply MI theory in your classrooms and/or programs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What difference did it make for students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What did you learn about the topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Which, if any, of the Seven Features just discussed “spoke to” your own experience and why?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I was impressed as the facilitator because they asked each other to clarify or explain why they were impressed by such and such. They questioned and challenged each other but supported each other as well.” —Nicole Graves Facilitator, Massachusetts

• After each participant has shared, allow two minutes for others in the group to ask questions or give brief positive and constructive feedback.
• Facilitate a ten-minute discussion with participants about their response to the following question:

  ? What stands out for you in each other’s experiences with implementing MI?

**BREAK:** 10 minutes

### 4. Next Steps – An Action Quilt (60 minutes)

• **Tell participants that now is the time** to reflect on how they intend to continue developing MI-inspired classrooms and programs. Explain that each of them will describe a plan of action on a paper square that, when put together with the others participants’ squares, will form a paper Action Quilt.

Encourage participants to think of meaningful next steps for themselves. It may be to create new MI-inspired lessons or their efforts may extend beyond their classrooms to involve other teachers within their program or within other programs. Invite participants to consider how they can develop a support system to continue with MI-related work. For example, they may want to form a group with colleagues within their program to talk about what they have learned, or they may want to stay connected with each other in this group to continue sharing MI-inspired practices and challenges.

• **Give specific directions for how to create their “plan of action” square.** Each participant’s square needs to show what she hopes to do to create MI-inspired classrooms and programs. After creating individual squares, each participant will explain her square to the others and glue it onto the blank newsprint sheet to create a collective “Action Quilt.”
• Post the Creating a Plan of Action Square newsprint and go over the directions with participants.

Creating a Plan of Action Square

- In the center, draw a picture or make a collage of the activities that you would like to develop to continue creating an MI-inspired classroom or program and/or to share what you have learned with other programs.

- In the left hand border, write the specific SUPPORTS that you have or plan to garner to help you take these actions.

- In the right-hand border, write your NAME (first name only is OK).

- In the top border, write what you hope that those whom you involve in your efforts will get out of the activities. This could be learners in your classroom, other teachers, or administrators.

- In the bottom border, write what you personally hope to get out of your actions.

For learners (or other teachers or administrators), I hope that . . .

S U P P O R T S

MI-inspired activities

N A M E

For myself, I hope that . . .

“...We need to get the support of program administrators for MI-based teaching, as teachers can only go so far when administration is resistant or unaware of the possibilities for MI-based instruction.”

—Participant Teachers New Mexico

• Spread the materials on a table so that each person can access fabric, paper, and whatever else you have included to make the collages. Encourage people to select the materials that they are drawn to, and to create a visual of their next steps by cutting and gluing the materials onto their square. Explain that they will have 20 minutes to create their individual squares. They may talk with others quietly as they work, especially if they are still thinking through what they plan to do, or they may wish to find a quiet spot where they can work individually.
Place the blank newsprint sheet on another table and have the group gather around this table. Ask participants to share what they have put on their squares. As each person shares, ask them to glue their square onto the newsprint to create a large paper "quilt." Explain that each person has just a few minutes to talk about her square, after which the other participants may respond by completing one of the two sentences on the following newsprint.

Post the Responding to Plans newsprint.

Not everyone needs to respond to every square. Explain to the group that "I wonder" questions come from genuine curiosity, such as "I wonder how you will talk to other teachers in your program about what you plan to do." Good "I wonder" questions are often difficult for people because we tend to disguise as curiosity what are really criticisms. For example, if someone wanted you to cut your hair and said, "I wonder what you would look like with short hair," you know that the person is really saying, "I don’t like the way you look with long hair."

Emphasize again that their "I wonder" questions need to express genuine curiosity about how the plan will be carried out, and not criticisms of the plan itself.

Allow 25 minutes for sharing and responding to everyone’s plan.
After everyone has shared their plan and heard responses from the others, facilitate a whole group discussion, using the following questions as a guide:

- What stands out for you about the Action Quilt?
- What do you think about the range of activities mentioned for continuing to develop MI-based practices in classrooms and programs?
- How could you adapt this Action Quilt activity to use with learners?

Tell participants that they may take their square with them as a reminder of what they will do. But first, if you are prepared to do so, take a photo of the whole quilt. You may want to combine this with a photo of the whole group, if participants are willing.

5. A Plan for Our Group (20 minutes)

- Post the newsprint “Ideas for Our Group’s Next Steps.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas for Our Group’s Next Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Schedule a follow-up meeting to share what happened when participants enacted their individual plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organize an e-mail list so participants can stay in touch and share ideas via e-mail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Summarize what we’ve learned – something practical – that can be shared with other practitioners or policymakers in our programs or in the state.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explain that now that the individual participants have plans for what they will do when back in their classrooms and programs, the group needs to make a plan about its next steps.

- Ask the group if they want to add other ideas to this list for the group to consider. Write them up on the newsprint. When the list is
complete, suggest to the group that they choose one or two to implement, and that you will use “dot” voting to do this.

- **Hand out a sticky “dots” to each participant** and ask them to put their dot next to the idea they would most like the group to do. If they don’t want to do any of the activities, they should not put their “dot” on the newsprint.

- **Lead the group in organizing its choice:**
  - If they choose to schedule a follow-up meeting, set the date, time and place for the meeting, and brainstorm an agenda for the meeting. Determine who will definitely be coming, and who will take the responsibility to cancel the meeting in case of bad weather.
  
  - If they chose to organize an e-mail list, pass around a sheet for everyone to write their e-mail address. Decide who is going to start the first posting, and discuss what types of discussions or postings people would like to see (e.g., questions about how to try out something in their classroom, describing what happened after they tried it, sharing other resources they might find about multiple intelligences, etc.).

  - If they chose to produce a list of strategies or policy changes, put up a blank sheet of newsprint and start the brainstorm. When the brainstorm is done, have participants decide as a group what they want to do with the list (e.g., someone type it up and send around to people so they can share with other teachers in their program, send it to the State Department of Education to reprint in the state newsletter, send it with someone’s program director to the next state-wide directors’ meeting; forward to the next reading study circle organized by the state, etc.).

---

**Note to Facilitator**

If the group chooses to schedule a follow-up meeting or an e-mail list, then the third option—producing a summary—can be done at the follow-up meeting or via e-mail. If the group decides not to meet again, they could brainstorm their summary in the next few minutes.
6. Final Evaluation  

(15 minutes)

- **Explain that, as the final evaluation, you would like to give participants the opportunity to hear from one another about what each has learned** from participating in this Mentor Teacher Group.

- **Ask that everyone take one minute to silently consider the most important thing that they have learned from this experience.** They could summarize the learning in one or two sentences, draw a picture of what they learned, or act it out. It could be about the topic, about their own teaching, about mentoring, or about something entirely different. After one minute of silence, ask each person, including yourself, to share her learning in whatever form she most prefers without others commenting on what is said.

After everyone has shared, ask if anyone could summarize what participants have learned.
Tell the group that you would like to use the last few minutes to get their feedback about this professional development experience. Ask everyone to consider which aspects were most useful. Ask them to be as specific as possible. For example, rather than saying, “the classroom observation,” ask them to try to identify what in particular about the classroom observation was effective. Record their responses on newsprint:

What I Found Most Useful Was:

Now ask them to suggest ways that the professional development experience could have been more effective. Again, ask them to be specific and constructive. Record their responses on newsprint:

It Would Have Been More Effective if:

Thank participants very much for their participation in the Mentor Teacher Group.
Appendices
Appendix A

To be handed out at Meeting One of the Mentor Teacher Group

Meeting One Handouts

Contents

Handout A: “Sample Ground Rules” by the Study Circle Resource Center

Handout B: “Agenda for Mentor Teacher Group”

Handout C: “Guidelines for Mentoring and Classroom Observation”

Handout D: “Format for Mentoring and Classroom Observation”

Handout E: “Case Study of Mentoring and Classroom Observation”

Handout F: “Readings for Meeting Two”
Sample Ground Rules

• Speak your mind freely, but don’t monopolize the discussion.
• Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
• Help keep the discussion on track.
• If you are offended, say so, and say why.
• You can disagree, but don’t personalize it; stick to the issues.
• No name-calling, stereotyping, or referring to groups as “those people.”
• Speak for yourself, not for others.
• Communicate your needs to the facilitator and/or group.
• What is said in the group stays here, unless everyone agrees to change that.

Agenda for Mentor Teacher Group

Meeting One  (3 hours)
• Discuss the Mentor Teacher Group and the mentoring process.
• Get an introduction to the AMI Research Project and Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory

Meeting Two  (3 hours)
• Learn about MI theory and strategies teachers used to talk about MI with students.
• Prepare for the first classroom observation.

First Classroom Observation  (4 hours)
• Mentor teacher and participant teacher meet just prior to the classroom observation to discuss the focus of the observation (1 hour); the mentor teacher observes the class session (up to 2 hours); and just after class, the mentor teacher and participant teacher meet to discuss how the class went (1 hour).
• Ideally, the participant teacher chooses to be observed while trying out an “MI-Reflections” activity.

Meeting Three  (3 hours)
• Discuss what was learned from the mentoring experience.
• Learn about MI-inspired lessons and instruction.
• Prepare for the second classroom observation.

Second Classroom Observation  (4 hours)
• Mentor teacher and participant teacher meet just prior to the classroom observation to discuss the focus of the observation (1 hour); the mentor teacher observes the class/tutoring session (up to 2 hours); and just after class, the mentor teacher and participant teacher meet to discuss how the class went (1 hour).
• Ideally, the participant teacher chooses to be observed while trying out an MI-inspired lesson.

Meeting Four  (3 hours)
• Discuss the mentoring experience overall.
• Plan next steps for continuing to develop MI-inspired practices in the classroom and program.
Guidelines for Mentoring and Classroom Observation

Mentoring is:
- X providing guidance
- X offering advice
- X thinking and learning together with a colleague
- X problem solving

Mentoring is NOT:
- X supervision
- X evaluation
- X lecturing
- X giving someone THE answer

Classroom observations are:
- X based on one issue in the class
- X designed to collect information about what happens related to that issue
- X focused on learning, not teaching (e.g., looks at how well students are learning, not how well the teacher is teaching)
- X confidential between mentor teacher and participant teacher
- X done with students’ awareness and permission

Classroom observations are NOT:
- X peer- or co-teaching
- X observer forming opinions about all aspects of teaching and learning in the class
- X formally documented for others’ review
Format for Mentoring and Classroom Observation

1. **Pre-Observation Conference** (1 hour)
   Meet with the mentor teacher just prior to the classroom observation to discuss the focus of the observation, the lesson plan, concerns, etc. Make a plan for the observation (what the mentor teacher should pay attention to, how the mentor teacher will be introduced to the class, what role the mentor teacher should play).

2. **Classroom Observation**: (Approximately 2 hours)
   Class happens, observed by mentor teacher.

3. **Post-Observation Conference** (1 hour)
   Just after class, meet again with the mentor teacher to:
   - discuss how the class went,
   - look over any specific observations the mentor teacher made,
   - discuss what you learned from the students, and
   - discuss what next steps might be for addressing the issue.
Case Study of Mentoring and Classroom Observation

Mentor

Chris is a 42-year-old white woman who has been teaching ESOL for eleven years at a corrections facility.

Inviting Teacher

Maria is a 50-year-old African-American woman who just began teaching GED at a community-based organization after having taught in the K-12 system for many years. Although she is new to adult education, she is a long-time community organizer.

Pre-Observation Conference

During the first pre-observation conference, Maria told Chris that she wanted to try an activity where learners would learn a bit about MI theory and identify their strong intelligences. She explained to Chris that she was a bit nervous about trying out the activity, as the learners were very intent on getting their GEDs as quickly as possible. Up to this point, Maria explained, she had been working straight from the GED book with students. She was worried how the class would respond. Chris reassured her not to worry, as surely the group would be interested in talking about something as important to their own learning. Maria asked Chris to keep notes on how learners responded to the activity. Who was and was not engaged? How could she tell? At what points was the energy high or low? Maria also wanted to know what Chris considered to be critical moments for learning and how Maria handled them.

Classroom Observation

Five of the nine learners turned up for class. Maria described MI theory briefly to students and said she would like them to try an activity where they would identify their own strengths. Learners were quiet as she talked. She handed out an AMI survey and asked students to work individually to complete the survey. She let them know that afterwards they would talk about it. When one learner, Pat, asked what this had to do with the GED, Maria responded that she thought it would be helpful for them to see the many ways in which they were smart. All the learners filled out the forms, but Pat did it very quickly, put her pen down with a bang, and then gazed out the window waiting for the others.
Case Study of Mentoring and Classroom Observation  
(continued)

Classroom Observation (continued)

Once everyone had finished, Maria asked them to describe their intelligences profile and what they had learned about themselves. Three of the students eagerly spoke up and shared their strengths. One described how, even when he was young, he was already drawing pictures, doodling wherever he could. When Maria called on Barbara, Barbara quietly said she liked to dance. Pat said she thought the activity was dumb and who cared if she liked music. She just needed to pass the test. Maria thanked the group for sharing and said now they would spend the rest of class in the math section of the GED.

Post-Observation Conference

Maria felt discouraged about the class and told Chris that she did not feel that she had done a good job. Chris reassured her that she thought the class went fine and every class has some hard students. Chris pointed out how three of the students were engaged and even Barbara who was reticent to share, seemed absorbed in her work. “At least Barbara cooperated,” Chris told Maria. Then Chris talked about how she always has students that are like the Pats in the world. Chris suggested that the best thing to have done would have been to let Pat work in the book while the others tried out the new activity.

Maria wondered what she would do the next time the class met. She told Chris that she knew the group just wanted to be in the books, but it just did not feel right to her to teach that way. Chris asked her what ideas she had for next steps. Maria said she wanted to go back to the profiles the students had created and try to build from there. Maybe she could do a writing activity based on the profiles. Chris said she thought that was a great idea. As Maria had to run off to teach another class, they ended the discussion here and thanked each other.
Readings for Meeting Two

Meeting Two of the Mentor Teacher Group
Date: __________________________
Time: __________________________
Location: ________________________

Required Reading before Meeting Two:
In the AMI Sourcebook:
- All of Chapter 2, “MI Reflections” (p. 22)
- Chapter 5, “Student Responses to MI Practices: The AMI Experience – How Students Responded to MI Reflections” (p. 130)
- Chapter 1, “MI Basics – The Journey From Theory to Practice” (first five pages only) (p. 16)

Handouts:
- Handout E: “Case Study of Mentoring and Classroom Observation”

Suggested Reading:
In the AMI Sourcebook:
Read the following sections for more information about the AMI study and MI theory:
- Preface – “What Is the AMI Study?” (p. ix)
- Chapter 1, “MI Basics – Multiple Intelligences: The Theory Behind the Practice” (p. 2)

Handouts:
For more information about the mentoring process, read:
- Appendix B: “Handouts And Articles on Classroom Observation, Peer Coaching, and Mentoring”

Bring to Meeting Two:
- AMI Sourcebook
- Your calendar for scheduling classroom observations and future meetings
- Handout E: “Case Study of Mentoring and Classroom Observation”
Handouts and Articles on Classroom Observation, Peer Coaching, and Mentoring

Handouts

(from *Peer Coaching*, National Staff Development Council)
“A Comparison of Peer Coaching and Evaluation”
“Principles of Coaching”
“Peer Coaching Cycle”
“‘Rules’ for Peer Coaching”
“Pre-Observation Questions”
“Post-Observation Questions”

(from *Observation Guide*, NCSALL)
“Focus Areas and Sample Questions”

(from *NCSALL Mentor Teacher Group on Learner Motivation, Retention, and Persistence*, NCSALL)
“Ways to Gather Information During Class Observations”

Articles

“Teachers as Learners,” from *Rethinking Schools*
“When Good Intentions Go Awry,” from *Rethinking Schools*
“The Hows and Whys of Peer Mentoring,” from *Rethinking Schools*
A Comparison of Peer Coaching and Evaluation*

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PRINCIPLES OF COACHING

Common language

Focus

Hard Evidence

Interaction

Predictability/reliability

Reciprocity
PEER COACHING CYCLE
“RULES” FOR PEER COACHING

THE STANCE

1. We’re engaging in exploration, not criticism. We’re unraveling a mystery (teaching and learning) together, not monitoring each other.

2. An observed lesson is a shared resource; both teacher and coach should take something of value away from any discussion of it.

3. Look for, describe, and assess the practice and its results, not the person’s competence.

THE TALK

1. Describe first, discuss details later. First describe what happened, using your data. The teacher can take or leave that. Only then discuss what the results were, and only if the teacher initiates the discussion.

2. Talk specifically and concretely. (“You called on Will three times,” rather than “You tend to call on boys a lot.”)

3. Talk about things which can be changed and which are worth changing. (e.g., Ignore personal mannerisms, unless they are interfering with student learning.)

4. Remember to comment on strengths. Important learning comes from building on our strengths as well as from addressing areas of weakness.

5. Check to insure clear communication. Paraphrase a lot: “Are you saying that…?” “Let me see if I understand you…”

6. Interact. The basic human interaction skills of attending, listening, responding, and acknowledging are important for both the coach and the teacher.
PRE-OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

1. How can I be of help to you?

2. What specifically do you wish me to look for?

3. What specifically do you wish me to know?

4. Is there a particular student you would like me to watch?

5. What are your objectives and expectations for the lesson?

6. How long would you like me to observe?

7. When can we get together after the lesson?
POST-OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think the lesson went?

2. Can you recall what the students were doing that made you feel this way?

3. What do you remember about what you did or the strategies you used?

4. How does this compare with what you expected would happen?

5. What could be some reasons it happened this way?

6. Would you like me to share what I observed?
Focus Areas and Sample Questions*
Page 1

CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENT

• What is the set-up of the desks and chairs?

• How far do students sit from each other? From the teacher? Are students clustered in some way?

• What does the classroom look like? What things are on the wall? What resources (i.e., technological, books) are available in the room?

• Is there a lot of noise in the room? Are there interruptions from outside the classroom?

• Are the chairs comfortable? Is there enough lighting and work space in the classroom?

• Where do people choose to sit? (Does it change over time?)

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT / AUTHORITY

• What is the classroom agenda? Who sets it, and how is it?

• Is the agenda flexible? When a question is asked or a topic raised which diverges from the agenda, what is the response (by teachers, by students)?

• What is the daily routine (e.g., signing in, signing out)?

• What are the classroom rules? Who decides them? How are they communicated?

• How do participants call each other (by name, by title)?

• In what configurations do students work – individually, in a large group, or in small groups?

• What evidence reflects issues of authority in this classroom?

Focus Areas and Sample Questions
Page 2

CLASSROOM TALK

- Who talks? To whom, and for how long?

- What is the interaction pattern – one person talking at a time, many people at one time, or a mix? Who regulates this pattern? How is turn-taking managed?

- How do participants talk to one another (active listening, interrupting, building on what another says)?

- What do participants talk about (lesson activities, personal experiences, etc.)?

- How often are there silences and how are they handled?

- How are multiple perspectives handled?

- How often are there disagreements? What are they about? How do instructors handle disagreement?

TEACHER TALK

- How does the teacher greet students?

- What kinds of questions does the teacher ask (e.g., yes/no questions, questions with one right answer, open-ended probing questions)?

- To whom does the teacher direct questions?

- What kind of feedback does the teacher give to questions?

- How does the teacher show s/he is listening?

- How does the teacher give directions? (What kind?)

- How does the teacher encourage discussion?
LEARNER TALK

- What kinds of questions does the student ask? How often?
- What kinds of answers do the learners give? How long are their responses?
- How often do learners initiate new topics/offer opinions? What topics/opinions? How do they make connections?
- Who’s talking, and how often?
- Are there differences in the amount of learner talk across these variables: male/female, native/non-native, age, etc.?
- How do learners respond to teacher feedback?

LEARNER ENGAGEMENT / SENSE OF COMMUNITY

- How do learners interact with each other?
- How much movement is there in the classroom? What kind?
- What is the affect of the students?
- How busy are students and what are they doing?
- Do learners receive equal amounts of contact with the teacher?
- How do learners elicit help? By asking another student, raising their hand, waiting for the teacher to circulate?
- Does the learner help make decisions about the class activities and lesson topics?
WAYS TO GATHER INFORMATION DURING CLASS OBSERVATIONS*

- **Selective Verbatim:**
  Word-for-word record of what individual learners and/or the teacher say about a particular issue or some other are of focus (e.g., the observer records the exact wording of how the teacher asks questions and how a particular learner responds, keeps note of the questions that learners ask, records the exact conversation between specific learners, etc.).

- **Anecdotal Record:**
  Description of events or episodes that occur during the class (e.g., the observer records the story of what happens among learners when the teacher leaves the classroom, or records the behaviors and conversation between learners as they negotiate how to work in small groups).

- **Verbal Flow:**
  A written or visual description of who talks with whom (e.g., the observer maps who initiates the conversation, who responds, who follows, who is silent, who is addressed, who is left out, etc.).

- **Class Traffic:**
  A written record of who moves inside the room at what times (e.g., who enters and exits, movement from large group to small groups, who goes where). This description can include the rationale for the traffic (if provided) and how learners and the teacher respond to the traffic.

- **Event Count:**
  A record of the number of times something in particular occurs (e.g., the number of times the teacher interrupts a learner, the number of times learners interrupt one another, the number of times learners initiate a discussion, the number of times there are periods of silence, etc.).

- **Duration:**
  A record of how much time is spent on a particular event or activity (e.g., the amount of time learners talk informally versus “on task,” the amount of time the teacher speaks versus learners, the amount of time learners have to quietly reflect, the amount of time learners have to work with one another, etc.).

- **Time Sample:**
  A record of what occurs at specific intervals of time (e.g., a record of what learners are doing every five minutes, or what is happening in the classroom every five minutes).

- **Physical Map:**
  A drawing or map of where tables and chairs are located and the activities that happen there.

* Excerpted from *NCSALL Mentor Teacher Group on Learner Motivation, Retention, and Persistence*, NCSALL.
Teachers As Learners*

How Peer Mentoring Can Improve Teaching
By Marc Osten and Eric Gidseg

The separation of a school into clearly defined classrooms creates a culture that reinforces isolation. Teachers tend to teach in ways that they have found successful, with little feedback from others. We generally do what we think is best and silently bear our own feelings of superiority or inferiority.

It doesn’t have to be this way. The two of us, along with several other colleagues from our K-3 public school in upstate New York, have embarked on a peer-observation and mentoring process that has radically changed how we teach.

One of the key issues facing the teaching profession is how best to improve the quality of teaching and to provide ways for ongoing professional development. Debate has been particularly strong within the National Education Association over the issue of peer evaluation. While our process did not replace the traditional evaluation process in our school or district, we believe that it nonetheless offers insight into the potentials of peer evaluation.

Following are two separate essays on how the peer observation/mentoring process helped each of us with a specific problem we were having in the classroom. For more on the structure and philosophy of our peer observation and mentoring, see the article “The Hows and Whys of Peer Mentoring.”

When Quiet Children Get Lost
By Mark Osten

The children in my second grade classroom work together in cooperative groups. My goal is to ensure that each student pulls their weight in the group, but in a way that still nurtures the enhanced creativity and energy that can come from working together. One of the struggles in cooperative learning is finding a way to engage quiet students so that they are not overwhelmed by more dominant personalities. It takes time to teach the students the necessary group skills and social skills that are needed for cooperative learning.

Sounds nice in theory. In practice though, last year I found myself succumbing to the growing pressures to make sure the kids scored well on standardized testing. I started cutting time from things that I knew were central to my classroom, but which weren’t essential to higher test scores.

On one level, I might have been considered a success. The reading scores in my classroom went up. But the overall social and academic environment suffered.

* From Rethinking Schools, 12 (Summer 1998). © 2002 Rethinking Schools, 1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212 * Ph: (414) 964-9646 or (800) 669-4192 * Fax: (414) 964-7220 * E-mail: webrs@execpc.com. Reprinted with permission.
Even though I had not put as much time into teaching students necessary group skills, I still thrust them into cooperative groups. In essence, without ever realizing it I set them up for failure. There was more bickering at team tables. Students were less engaged in projects than in the past. Dominant students like Emma and Matt (the names of the children have been changed) often took control of their group, were becoming impatient and bossy. Quieter students like Brian or Marion were uninvolved. My assumption – that quieter students would be better off in small groups – was out of synch with reality.

I went to my peer mentoring team for help. I asked that the next time they came to observe my class, they focus on two things: how the groups seemed to work overall, and specifically how my two quiet students, Brian and Marion, seemed to fare. (The three observers came while their own classes were at an activity such as gym or music or lunch. They each came once a week, at different times, for 30-45 minutes.)

After a week of observing my class, the team confirmed my worst fears. They noticed that quieter children like Brian were totally uninvolved. In one instance Brian was seen playing with a pencil in his desk for eight minutes and Marion fell asleep for a minute on her desk. Two of the three observing teachers noted the lack of verbal contact at several groups. All three remarked that most students were focused on their individual work but rarely came together to share ideas or get help. When I asked student teams to put their “heads together” to discuss each person’s progress on a task, one observer remarked that the children became very frustrated with Brian’s silence.

I was surprised and upset – and a little embarrassed – by what my colleagues had seen. As I listened to all the vignettes, I wondered to myself: “Where was I when this was all going on?” I had prided myself on my use of cooperative groups only to find the process in disarray.

Fortunately, our peer process involves not just observation but mentoring. As a result, our “debriefing” session moved from observer reports to suggestions. I started to feel better.

One team member suggested I revisit my cooperative group project plans. Another reminded me to carefully structure cooperative work so kids had individual tasks but also had to collaborate. One teacher advised me to help the quieter children by giving them specific language to use with their groups. Specifically, the teacher suggested I tape an index card to their desk that had sentence starts such as, “I think that...,” “My opinion is...,” or “I need....”

The various suggestions stimulated a discussion that led to other ideas. One colleague mentioned that the index card idea would also be helpful with more dominant children. Sentence starts for these students might be, “What do you think...?” or “Do you have an opinion?” In this way, the more dominant children could help inspire discussion rather than close off conversations. Another idea was to develop specific, nonverbal team roles that would help quieter students stay involved.

I returned to my classroom invigorated. I led mini-lessons and role plays so students could work with the index cards. I went back to regularly using a routine called “pairs check” in which I give each student time to ask questions and share their progress and knowledge with a teammate. I started to assign one student in each cooperative group as a “checker.” This person would make sure every team is involved by confirming that each member has completed their work or
has had a chance to share ideas. Finally, I started to watch things more carefully. I decided to do
more direct intervention to help individuals, pairs, or teams stuck “in process.”

Things improved immediately. During the role plays, students perked up and became more
animated. During one role play, Brian asked, “Can I bring this index card to recess and use it on
the playground?”

During a study of plants I noticed several positive outcomes. In one experiment, I observed
Marion look at the index card taped to her desk and say to her partner, “I think that the seed will
sprout in ten days.” Months earlier she would have quietly mumbled a few words that her
partner might or might not hear.

At another table, a heated discussion was taking place about what order in which to share
predictions. One student yelled at another, “I want to go first.” Brian, meanwhile, had been
given the nonverbal team job of “quiet captain.” (In this nonverbal role, the student slowly
raises, then brings his or her two hands together to show teammates that they need to speak in
more respectful and quieter voices.) After the student’s complaint, Brian became involved and
showed how he was an important member of the team by giving the non-verbal signal for quiet
voices and more respect.

Matt, a verbal and often bossy student, was also finding more productive ways to work in
groups. During an art project about plants, Matt’s team of four students each had a very specific
task: Matt was responsible for the roots while the other three students worked on the stem,
leaves, and flower parts. Because each student had a very specific topic, it was virtually
impossible for Matt to be domineering.

After completing their drawings, I put Matt and Brian together for “pairs check.” This gave
Brian a chance to gain confidence in his verbal presentation before sharing his drawing with the
whole class.

Early in the school year, it had been unimaginable for Brian to stand up in front of the class and
present work he completed by himself. On this special day, he sat excitedly and waited patiently
for Matt to finish explaining how his sunflower roots draw water from the ground. Brian then
got up and in a proud and clear voice made his presentation about a sunflower’s stem. It was a
breakthrough moment for him.

During the year, the team helped me improve my teaching in other areas beyond cooperative
groups. For example, I received specific suggestions on improving my technique with small
reading groups. The team also helped me increase my use of open-ended questions and gave
specific recommendations about handling a student with discipline problems.

The bottom line was that my students benefited. By becoming a learner, I had become a better
teacher.

Marc Osten has taught 2nd and 3rd grade for several years. Previous to working in education, he worked on
consumer and environmental protection concerns for national and international organizations.
When Good Intentions Go Awry

By Eric Gidseg

Peer observations often provide insights that are quite painful to hear but which can improve our teaching. I learned this the hard way.

In my class of 21 kindergartners, there was a child whom I felt was unreachable in the context of whole class or group activities. I asked the team to help me out.

I use a large group setting, what I call my morning circle, as the primary teaching modality in my classroom. After the large group, the children go to “center” activities which provide an opportunity for practice and exploration. Since this child was apparently getting little from our morning circle, her entire morning was affected. She moved through centers with little understanding or direction.

As we sat together on the rug each day to hear stories and discuss current explorations, this little girl (whom I will call Jennifer), often sat on the periphery. She would look down at her hands and generally appeared lost in her own inner world.

Jennifer was a child who carried a lot of emotional baggage, and her home life was troubled and unstable. She was generally unable or unwilling to participate in classroom activities, especially verbal ones. When things became stressful for her, she would “act in,” crossing her arms across her chest and making a sour face.

I felt on the verge of giving up with Jennifer. All my attempts to get her to participate had failed. To some extent, I had allowed myself to give less thought to her. Just as she had banished herself from the center of the class, so had I pushed her to the periphery of my awareness.

I knew I needed help. I hoped that my peers had experience with children who were as reticent as Jennifer and could offer concrete suggestions. What I received from my team was quite shocking and caused me to look at my own failures and to re-examine my teaching.

During the observations, my peers noted that although Jennifer was passive and seemingly inattentive for much of the time, there were several brief moments where Jennifer had tried to make contact. But I had failed to recognize her attempts. For example, at one point I had been reading a book to the class. One peer observer later reported that Jennifer quietly said during the reading, “Guess what, Mr. Gidseg?” But I apparently didn’t hear her, or at least didn’t respond.

I asked myself, “How could I have missed such an event?” Jennifer had made a significant step outwards and I had failed to recognize it. I then asked myself, “How long had she been reaching out only to find herself ignored by me?” The peer observer went on to report that Jennifer approached me later, apparently to ask me something. I did not recognize this and instead I spoke to her. I asked her to be my special helper at our listening center. She crossed her arms and moved angrily away from me. I remembered the incident. At the time, I was mystified by Jennifer’s behavior.

At the debriefing, my reaction was visceral. I buried my head in my hands and said, “This is like a knife in my heart.” It’s still painful for me to watch the tape of my debriefing. My colleagues were tremendously supportive, as always. My teammate who watched me miss opportunities
with Jennifer told me that as he watched these events, he knew that they would be painful for me to hear. Another observer expressed that Jennifer was careful not to let even her reaching out become too obvious.

I received many ideas from my peers about how to help Jennifer. These ranged from being sure that she sat in front of me during our morning circle time to privately meeting with Jennifer before or after our circle to be sure that she received enough direction to do productive work for the day.

As I had time to process the feelings, observations, and ideas that were generated from my debriefing, I realized that the significant information that I received was the recognition that Jennifer was, in fact, reaching out. It was now up to me to be attentive to her as much as possible.

I resolved to have her near me as much as possible, to not allow her to become part of the periphery. I created small time frames where she and I could chat, in private, about the work for the day. The changes were remarkable in a short period of time. Not only was I giving more attention to the details of her behavior, I also found more room in my heart for her. The team had helped me to see her in a new light.

There was a lot going on inside of Jennifer and I was determined to reach her. As she became more tuned in to the workings of the class, she began to make friends. She suddenly found herself to be fairly popular. Her self esteem was given quite a boost.

Jennifer’s relationship with me also improved. She began talking to me each morning, little bits at first. She spoke about her family and her friends. On one occasion she brought pictures for me that she made at home. She quickly started to ask questions and enjoyed reading books with me. She had begun to learn. She was able, for the first time, to write her name correctly. Jennifer maintained her reticence towards “performing” in front of the class, but she was no longer afraid to speak.

As a veteran teacher with 20 years of early childhood experience, I was humbled by the effect that the team had on my awareness and teaching. Through their supportive critique, my eyes were opened to some of my own blind spots. And Jennifer was the fortunate recipient of a more enlightened approach from a newly revitalized teacher.

Eric Gidseg has taught kindergarten and first grade for 20 years. For 11 years he taught kindergarten in faculty administered Waldorf schools, where he first discovered the potential of professional development.
The Hows and Whys of Peer Mentoring

Our peer observations were organized in a simple fashion. Every week the person being observed informed the team of what to look for when visiting. Sometimes we wanted a certain child observed. Sometimes the focus was on a curriculum matter. Other times we wanted to address issues such as methods of class management.

During the week, the three observers would separately come to the observee’s classroom and take careful notes for 30 minutes. At the beginning of the following week, the team held a “debriefing” meeting and each observer recounted what they had seen. We rotated the process so that each team member was observed every month or so.

Scheduling was one of our first obstacles. We each looked carefully at our “specials” such as music, at our teaching assistant times and at lunch schedules to determine when it would be possible to leave the classroom. During a mid-winter team evaluation, we decided that 30 minutes was not enough time to observe. We solved this problem with two major adjustments: We increased our observations to 45 minutes and we chose a focus topic that the other teachers would watch for throughout the rest of the year.

Scheduling became a bit trickier but we carefully calculated ways to cover for one another. Sometimes we swapped teaching assistants, covered each others’ classes at recess, or ate our lunches during observations. The administration has been supportive, although all the work to organize and institutionalize the process has fallen on our team. Our union (we are members of the American Federation of Teachers) has not really been aware of the project.

Benefits of Peer Mentoring

The primary goal of the peer observation project is to rethink the way we do things and adapt to changing times, students, and circumstances. The benefits of observing went both ways. Not only did observed teachers get specific feedback but those doing the observing were exposed to an increased number of children of varying ages, learning styles, and academic, developmental, and emotional levels. All of us have benefited from seeing a variety of teaching methods and all have enhanced our “bag of tricks,” so to speak.

There have also been what one might call “hidden benefits.”

After a few months of observing each other, we recognized that we tended to over-prepare for the time we were observed. We wanted to impress each other and keep our “warts” hidden. As trust built, this need to appear perfect dissipated and we became more comfortable with letting down our defenses. This led to an unexpected development: Team members found that while teaching unobserved, they helped maintain their focus by pretending that someone was observing them.

Another interesting benefit was how our colleagues acted as a “reality check.” For example, one teacher said she felt as if she were always yelling at her students. The observers reported something very different. They saw a teacher who appeared to be patient and tolerant. Clearly, her own thoughts and frustration had shaded her view of her teaching. The team discussed this further and helped the teacher to focus on the reasons for her frustrations.
A third hidden benefit is that the children see their teachers practicing what they preach. We make it a point to be very open with the students about our observations and our team mentoring. In essence, we are modeling important lessons such as teamwork and learning through observation. These are the same skills we want our students to learn. Seeing their teachers struggle to improve and work with their peers is a powerful example.

**New Challenges**

We are now ending our second year of peer observation and mentoring. Our peer observation work has led us to look at many issues in a new light. How, for example, might we use our experience with peer mentoring to help effect reform throughout the school and district? How do we help other teachers question their teaching practices and place learning and self-reflection at the top of their priority list? Do we simply model what we believe the role of teachers should be or do we become assertive advocates of change?

Peer mentoring has also raised broader social and political issues. Poverty, child abuse, and other societal problems constantly surface and relate to the stresses that our children face. We constantly grapple with what to do with these understandings. Do we simply concentrate on our own little classroom or do we work more aggressively with parents, health practitioners, and government officials to take a holistic view of the needs of children? What role should we play in social change movements to improve the lives of our children out of the classroom?

As we reinvent and grow as learners and teachers, we find it increasingly difficult to ignore this most critical of questions. Are teachers passive observers of the world beyond our schools, or should we work to improve the overall lives of the children we serve? And how best do we do so?

— Marc Osten and Eric Gidseg
Appendix C

To be handed out at Meeting Two of the Mentor Teacher Group

Meeting Two Handouts

Contents

Handout G: “Preparation for Classroom Observation”

Handout H: “Readings for Meeting Three”

Handout I: Required readings for Meeting Three not in AMI Sourcebook:
  • “MI-Informed Practices and Commercially Available Resources”
  • “Two AMI Teachers’ Perspectives: Multiple Ways Around Resistance Through Multiple Intelligences”
Preparation for Classroom Observation

Take the time to consider these questions and points between now and the time of your classroom observation. You and your mentor teacher will discuss your ideas about these questions during the pre-observation conference.

X Before the classroom observation, what do you want to tell learners about who is coming and why? How would you like the mentor teacher to be introduced during the class? What else might you need to do to prepare learners for the mentor teacher’s visit? (Note: Because the mentor teacher will be taking notes during class, let learners know that the information being gathered is to help you to learn about your own teaching. The observation notes will NOT be used for any other purposes.)

X How will you let your program director know that you will be being observed by the mentor teacher? Do you need to get any special permission or clearance for a visitor to come to class?

X What questions or concerns do you have for the classroom observation?

X What activity or activities do you plan to do during the class that will be observed? Will you be trying out an MI-Reflection activity? If so, what (if any) questions do you have about doing the activity?

X Rather than focusing on everything related to your teaching or to the activity you will be doing, the mentor teacher will focus on (collect information about) one specific part of the class related to how the students are learning (e.g., how do students participate in the class? How well did they seem to understand the activities?) What would you like the mentor teacher to focus on during the class?

X It is difficult to predict what will happen on any given day. For example, on the day of the observation, too few learners might come to class for you to do the planned activity. Do you have a “Plan B”?

X How do you want the mentor teacher to be involved in the class during the observation (e.g., observe from a distance, sit with learners, participate in activities but not co-teach, etc.)?

Any questions you still have about the process can be discussed during your pre-observation conference.
Readings for Meeting Three

Meeting Three of the Mentor Teacher Group

Date: ________________________________

Time: ________________________________

Location: ________________________________

Required Reading before Meeting Three:

In the AMI Sourcebook:

- Chapter 3, “MI-Inspired Instruction – Two AMI Teachers’ Perspectives: Planning Curriculum With MI Theory” (p. 57)
- Chapter 4, “MI-inspired Lessons”
  - “MI Lesson Formats” (p. 62)
  - “MI-Inspired Language Arts and ESOL Lessons” (p. 70)
    Note: Those who teach this content should read this section; others at least skim through to gain ideas.
  - “MI-Inspired Math and Science Lessons” (p. 91)
    Note: Those who teach this content should read this section; others at least skim through to gain ideas.
  - “MI-Inspired Thematic Units” (p. 109)
- Chapter 5, “Student Responses to MI Practices: The AMI Experience” (p. 129)

In Mentor Teacher Guide, Appendix C, Handout I:

- “MI-Informed Practices and Commercially Available Resources” (p. 106)
- “Two AMI Teachers’ Perspectives: Multiple Ways Around Resistance Through Multiple Intelligences” (p. 109)

Suggested Reading:

In the AMI Sourcebook:

- Chapter 1, “MI Basics – The Journey from Theory to Practice” (p. 16)
MI-INFORMED PRACTICES AND-commercially available resources

Meg Costanzo

In Jan Tucker’s ABE classroom, students enthusiastically use hinged mirrors and pattern blocks to explore angles. The students work at their own pace, moving about the room to trade materials and share their findings with each other. Although Jan recognizes that this constructivist approach to learning takes more time, she also understands that her students “are learning in a way that lasts.”

Robert Hoffman’s students at the Community Correction Center work industriously in small groups to meet the challenge he has put on them:

With 20 sheets of 8½” x 11” paper (plain printer or photocopy paper) and a roll of scotch tape, design and build a structure with paper on which you can stack several large textbooks or encyclopedias. The structure must be 11” high and cannot be wider or longer than one sheet of paper. The team whose structure can support the most books win this competition!

Robert is encouraged by his students’ immediate involvement in this task. In the end, all those involved are amazed by the winning design that holds more than 50 heavy books. The students run out of ceiling clearance and never know how many more books that could have added to the pile.

In Multiple Intelligences and Adult Literacy, the authors refer to MI theory as a lens through which we view and understand our students, and through which we analyze and add to our repertoire of teaching and learning strategies. Creating an MI-informed classroom means applying the MI lens to your goals and analyzing your offerings to build on – not replace – current practices. “Going MI” does not require creating activities anew or implementing activities that are marketed as “MI lessons.” In fact, there are many excellent resources available commercially that fit in an MI-informed classroom.

Let’s return to our two AMI pilot classrooms with which we started out. Jan Tucker wants to use constructivist approaches that she feels MI theory suggests. Rather than create or find “MI Algebra” activities, Jan mines geometry resources and finds an excellent resource that aligns with the important aspects of MI theory that she wants to bring to her classroom (Burns & Humphreys, 1990). Jan may continue with this resource as her group moves onto other math topics. She may also want to find other entry points into a topic such as algebra (for example, using music to explore mathematical relationships) (Beall, 2000).

As an instructor working in a correctional setting, Robert Hoffman is always looking for innovative teaching ideas that work with his student population. He learned about the Tower Activity (NYC Board of Education, 2000) during an AMI Study Institute. He saw that it emphasized hands-on, small group work and engaged students in an authentic task using physics and math principles. Although he saw this lesson presented in a different context (as primarily an elementary school teachers’ professional development activity), Robert successfully integrated the Tower activity into his adult education classroom.
Our primary point is that neither Jan nor Robert, nor any other teacher, needs to develop “MI activities” from scratch. Indeed, bringing together excellent resources from different subject areas or domains is, for most teachers using MI theory, a basic function of the “MI lens.” Moreover, considering available resources from an MI perspective gives teachers insight into how particular students or groups of students might benefit from these resources. In the two examples found above, teachers took materials that are conventionally used with younger students and adapted them for use in an adult learning context. Materials that teachers might have previously dismissed as too juvenile for adult learners, when viewed through an MI lens, can be seen as valuable resources for teachers who are working with adult populations.

Many of the adult educators involved in the AMI Study experienced success when incorporating into their lessons materials typically aimed at a middle school population. They found that their students responded especially positively to those materials that fostered classroom interaction. The activities also drew the students more closely into the learning process. Jan Tucker reported that her students benefited from having the opportunity to “mess around” with learning materials during “hands-on” exploratory sessions. For Jan, these were important criteria to consider when searching available commercial resources for her MI-informed practices.

Teacher researcher Diane Marlowe experienced similar success when she adapted a lesson from *Multiple Intelligences in the Mathematics Classroom* (Martin, 1996), another instructional resource geared to middle school age children. Diane expanded the two lessons on tangrams into a one term interdisciplinary project that infused literature, writing, and art into the math curriculum. Because Diane worked with adults, she was able to take the basic lessons suggested for use with school-age children and adapt them into a unit that reflected the interests, talents, and abilities of her students. Instead of merely making a display out of paper blocks made from tangram pieces, her class assembled an intricate tangram quilt constructed from fabric squares that the students designed and sewed themselves. The project allowed the students to draw upon their strongest intelligences as they worked together to complete the quilt. Diane wrote about this experience saying, “Students worked together and created a product that was useful and beautiful – and this created a bond that ‘group work’ would not have achieved” (Marlowe, 1997).

Teachers also adapted manipulative materials normally marketed for elementary school-age children and used them in adult classrooms. I had success using Fraction Stax® with my adult learners. This resource is a set of pieces representing commonly used fractions which, when stacked side by side on pegs, together equal one whole. Because I taught a multi-level GED/Adult Diploma class, I frequently had students working at different levels in math. By making up task cards that correlated with materials like the Fraction Stax®, I was able to have my students work independently on those specific skills which they needed to master and review. An example of one of these task cards is found below.

**EXAMPLE OF FRACTION STAX® CARD**

*Work alone, in pairs, or in small groups to complete the following activity:*

*Using the Fraction Stax®, find the fraction piece that represents ½.*

*Combining different fraction pieces, how many fractions can you form that are greater than one-half? (For example, ¼ and ½ = ¾. By placing the*
stacks side by side, you can see that \( \frac{3}{4} \) is greater than \( \frac{1}{2} \). Record your findings in your math journal.

What do you notice about the relationship between the numerator and denominator for each of these fractions? In your own words, develop a general rule for determining whether or not a fraction is greater than \( \frac{1}{2} \). Write down the rule in your math journal.

Think of other fractions with denominators different from the ones found in the stacks. Using these denominators, name any five other fractions that are greater than \( \frac{1}{2} \).

Using manipulative materials such as the Fraction Stax® helps bridge bodily-kinesthetic and spatial intelligences with logical-mathematical intelligence. Adult students often need an opportunity to make this connection before they can truly understand the mathematical concepts they need to master.

The teachers involved in the AMI Study learned that even the most inexpensive classroom materials can be used to generate MI-inspired lessons. Jean Voekel, another pilot teacher who works with Robert Hoffman at the Community Correction Center in Ohio, developed a two-week unit from a bulletin board set illustrating the solar system. In the past, to introduce this topic, Jean simply would have hung up the paper cutouts included in the set herself. However, after considering the materials through an “MI lens,” she decided to give her students, males ranging in age from 18 to 56, the challenge of finding a way to display the cutouts. After learning how to interpret information regarding the scale used in the set, they devised a way to suspend the cutouts of the planets from the ceiling in the correct order and distance from the Sun. After working cooperatively to answer questions about the solar system, they researched additional information about specific planets, adding their findings to an information grid that Jean had started for them. Finally, using this newly found information, they wrote brief reports about the planets and helped each other edit their work. This richer education experience had its advantages. At the end, Jean wrote, “Although we spent much more time on this project because of the extra work, “ I believe, from observations and comments of the students as they worked, that they enjoyed the unit much more” (Voelkel, 2000).

When determining the advantages of using a particular teaching resource with adult students, teachers would do well to consider the following questions, which loosely map onto MI tenets and related goals (see *Multiple Intelligences and Adult Literacy*, Chapter 1, MI Basics):

Do the materials…

address the learning goals?
encourage students to work in groups?
provide for “hands-on” learning experiences?
allow students to explore concepts at their own pace?
present “open-ended” assignments with no one right answer?
offer students a choice in how they demonstrate their knowledge?
invite students to solve an interesting problem that adults would find challenging and relevant?
develop critical thinking and problem solving skills?
If the fit is right, integrate the material into your practice. After all, every MI journey does not require reinvention of the wheel.
TWO AMI TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES: MULTIPLE WAYS AROUND RESISTANCE THROUGH MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Wendy Quiñones and Elizabeth (Betsy) Cornwell

In this article Wendy Quinones and Betsy Cornwell share the new understanding they developed in the course of their AMI teacher research. Both teachers faced an incongruous form of student resistance to learning skills that seemed to be well within students’ reach and stated goals. They came to believe that for many “resistant” students, success in academics threatened their social relationships and sense of self in complex and puzzling ways. Betsy and Wendy found that MI-based learning activities offered a promising way to sidestep this resistance. They developed non-traditional activities that lowered the presumed threat to self by circumventing paper and pencil tasks and tapping the students’ strengths rather than expecting them to change their disposition. For one of the students featured in this article, the MI-based learning activity became the watershed event that paved the way to her successful completion of the geography coursework she previously resisted.

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In a language arts class, Sue has just spent a half-hour or so working on homonyms. Because Sue is masterful at creating things with her hands (spatial and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences) her teacher suggested an exercise of modeling the letters for there, their, and they’re in play dough and arranging them according to their different usages. Sue seems to both enjoy the exercise, and gain a clear understanding of which word to use where. But later, when making corrections to a letter she’s writing to the housing authority in her town, she struggles with the same homonyms. “There,” the teacher says. “You know this; we just finished working on it. Is this the right word here?” Sue throws down her pencil and refuses to think further about the problem. She says angrily, “I can’t do this. I never can do things like this. I’m just too stupid.”

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Diane is determined to earn her adult diploma this year and has only the world geography unit to complete. Punctual, enthusiastic, and diligent in most things, she is late for appointments to work on geography at the library, is sullen and unresponsive during the lessons at her home, and procrastinates in doing the worksheets. The deadline for graduation passes with the unit still incomplete. Diane grousers in her learning log, “I asked why I would ever need geography for my life. She [the teacher] won’t answer me about geography. She [the teacher] won’t answer me about geography. She is up to spring something on me that I don’t know about yet.”

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Any teacher in adult education has stories like these: students refusing to attempt or to master tasks well within their reach, students seemingly unwilling to learn subjects required for achieving their stated learning goals. These students frustrate, exhaust, and discourage us, for they seem so capable – and yet they seem to refuse to succeed and resist what we thought were our best efforts to help them reach their own goals. In our research, we found that combining a new understanding of the source of this resistance...
with the use of MI-inspired lessons provided a wealth of exciting avenues for helping students work toward their goals.

Let us be clear about the phenomenon we are discussing here. The student who fails to learn – whose abilities are not up to her ambitions – is not our topic. Rather, we are seeking to understand the student who, while she may be cooperative in many other ways, is in at least one area actively, willfully, consciously refusing to learn what we are attempting to teach. These are students who, according Herbert Kohl (1994), are actively engaged in “not-learning.” Such not-learning is no easy feat, says Kohl: “Learning how to not-learn is an intellectual and social challenge; sometimes you have to work very hard at it” (p.2). He continues, “It can require actively refusing to pay attention, acting dumb, scrambling one’s thoughts, and overriding curiosity” (p. 4).

For us, teachers who have devoted such a large part of our lives to the process of learning, such an attitude seems incomprehensible. These students say they want to learn, but our methods, which work well with other students, don’t seem to work for them. What’s the problem?

We believe the issue revolves around the resistance generated by conflicts between students’ desire to learn and “the larger context of the choices they make as they create lives and identities for themselves” (Kohl, p. 10). A rich academic literature of what is called “resistance theory” focuses on issues of race, gender, culture, and language conflict in education shaped by the dominant culture. According to that theory, for example, the standard American teaching about Christopher Columbus might conflict with a native American student’s beliefs and historical perspective. For a Latino child, learning English might compromise a sense of loyalty to family and native country. Resistance in these cases could be anticipated, even seen as a healthy response. While questions like these certainly play a part in the not-learning we see among our students, we believe, as does Kohl, that education may raise many other “unavoidable challenges to adults’ personal and family loyalties, integrity, and identity” (p. 6).

Sue, for example, is the single mom of a toddler. Although she has a diploma from a vocational high school, she is nearly illiterate. Determined to improve her reading, she has been both attending Wendy’s 20-hour a week education program and working with a special reading tutor; her reading ability is improving markedly. Her son’s father does not support the family economically, but he is actively involved with both Sue and the child. He seems threatened by Sue’s increasing skills and self-confidence. He tells her the teachers are lying when they say her reading is improving – she is really just as stupid as she ever was. Furthermore, he insists, she shouldn’t be in an education program anyway – she can’t be a good mother unless she’s home full-time with her child. Sue herself grew up as the child of a single mom, and she is determined that her son will have his father. She also wants very much to improve her reading and go on to college. These goals are in direct conflict. She honors her learning goal by coming to the program; perhaps her not-learning is an attempt to placate her son’s father and thus honor her family goal.

Diane participates in a family literacy program in rural Maine. Both an early childhood specialist and Betsy, an adult education teacher, come each week to the cluttered, tumbledown house trailer Diane shares with her husband and four children. Diane has indicated her suspicion and contempt for what she calls “smart people” – those who know everything and never need to ask questions because they know how to find things in books. Going to the library, looking in atlases, even acknowledging that she
owns a complete and current encyclopedia, may simply place her too close to that category of “smart people” she scorns.

In other words, what to us seem like simple learning activities in pursuit of a set of stated goals are, for Sue and Diane, threats to other, perhaps unstated, goals and familiar identities. In willfully refusing the tasks we set for them, they are not merely being irrationally oppositional or defiant, fearing failure, or engaging in power struggles. Although these may play a part in not-learning, it is critical for teachers to realize that the not-learning student is, as Richard Everhart (1983) says, acting as an agent “with the ability to interpret the meaning of social situations and to take action based on those meanings” (p. 20). Our not-learning student is interpreting what we are asking her to do from a system of goals, beliefs, and values different not only from ours but also perhaps different from – even in conflict with – others she has stated. The actions she takes based on her interpretation – her not-learning – provide a satisfaction far different from the feelings produced by failure to learn. According to Kohl, the personal consequences of failure “are most often a loss of self-confidence accompanied by a sense of inferiority and inadequacy” (p.6). Not-learning, by contrast, “tends to strengthen the will, clarify one’s definition of self, reinforce self-discipline” (p. 6).

So what’s a teacher to do? We are, after all, not therapists. Many of the factors that influence our students’ decisions about learning are simply beyond the scope of schools and teachers. It’s not for us to insist that Sue get rid of her son’s verbally abusive father so that she can learn. It’s not for us to force Diane to accept an identity she despises so that she can learn. Directly confronting students with these conflicts before they are themselves ready to acknowledge and resolve them is likely to produce only more and more passionate not-learning.

It is, however, precisely for us to acknowledge and respect the fact that Sue and Diane do have reasons for their not-learning. These reasons may or may not appear valid to us, but they are valid to the not-learning student – even when neither she nor we can precisely identify them. Identification isn’t important. Respect is. Once we respect that the motivation behind the student’s behavior is valid for her, we can abandon the efforts to change or ignore it, efforts which produce precisely the not-learning that frustrates us. Instead, we can acknowledge and move around the conflict to concentrate on the learning goals we share with the student, concentrating on her interests and strengths.

And here is where MI comes in. There are many avenues to learning; MI-based activities allow us access to many more of them than do more traditional methods. Sue, for example, is gifted and enthusiastic in artistic and dramatic endeavors. Give her play dough, markers, craft materials, or the assignment to produce a skit, and she can participate in and even design successful learning activities. Translate the same material to paper-and-pencil tasks, and all of her energy goes into not-learning. Sue’s interpretation of learning seems to dictate that competency with paper and pencil (linguistic intelligence) threatens her goal of retaining a relationship with her son’s father while competency with play dough, markers, crafts, and skits (spatial, interpersonal, bodily-kinesthetic) does not. Therefore, when we use these ways to teach, she will learn. When we switch to paper and pencil, she will not-learn – throwing her pencil down in disgust, doodling, or telling jokes to diffuse the conflict she feels and to prevent herself from learning.

Similarly, while Diane refused to go to the library to “find things in books” about the countries she needed to research for her geography unit, she happily (and on her own) cut and saved items out of newspapers and magazines. Although at first the cuttings seemed
to be chosen at random, Diane eventually (and again on her own) demonstrated her collection strategy by organizing them into folders labeled with the subjects that interested her – Princess Diana, the Unabomber, JonBenet Ramsey, and Terry Nichols, among others. Building on Diane’s strong interpersonal intelligence, Betsy was then able to organize geography lessons around people and current events, evidently without threatening to make Diane into a “smart person.” In addition, being able to do research in her own home with the newspaper, her encyclopedia, and stacks of old National Geographic magazines bought at yard sales also apparently avoided threatening Diane’s identity as a stay-at-home mom. She noted with satisfaction in her log,

Today I learned how to find places on the world map….On places that current events happened that was of interesting to me…Learn to use a map can be fun and interesting to do. Being able to travel to different places without having to get on the plane myself. Because I can do it from my kitchen table in my home.

We have presented these cases as if they were easy to figure out. They weren’t! More importantly, we believe that “figuring them out” in the way we have done here is not always necessary and, in many cases, impossible. The circumstances surrounding the relationships between these two students and their teachers made it possible for the teachers to know a great deal more about their students than might normally be the case. But that knowledge about individual students isn’t crucial to a teacher’s ability to find successful learning strategies. We don’t have to know students’ individual histories.

We believe two things to be important, however. First, we must acknowledge that not-learning serves an important function in the lives and identities of our students. By honoring our students’ stated and unstated goals even when they conflict with our own -- and with each other -- we are expressing our confidence that our adult learners are capable of incorporating education into their own unique world views. Second, we must be willing and flexible enough to expand the number and variety of learning strategies we offer to our students so they may find their own paths to growth. We ask our students to take ownership for their own learning. For many, however, their only educational experience has been one that denied them responsibility for what and how they learned. For these students, resistance may be the only way they know how to achieve ownership. As Kohl says, “To agree to learn from a stranger who does not respect your integrity causes a major loss of self. The only alternative is to not-learn and reject the stranger’s world.” (p.6). A teacher’s recognition that resistance has purpose may be the beginning of helping the student discover a way of learning that she can own without that “major loss of self.”

Will the use of MI mean that teachers can successfully skirt all not-learning? Probably not. The evidence is mixed even in our own examples, and there are many more issues for these students than the ones we have presented so far. Sue, for example, was homeless and seeking housing while she attended Wendy’s program, and in addition to everything else seems to have a profound learning disability. Giving priority to her family goals, Sue relocated to out-of-town housing before the success of alternative MI-based activities could be tested. We hope she will be able to transfer her learning about homonyms from play dough to pen and paper, but we have no way of knowing. It is not possible for us to predict her future competence with pen and paper. But what seems equally apparent is that through MI, there are other avenues for her to learn other types of skills and content that might elude her if her only options for learning are reading and writing.
Diane is the survivor of childhood physical and sexual abuse. She endures flashbacks and other aftereffects that make it very difficult for her to hold a job or to accept criticism without becoming almost uncontrollably angry. Nevertheless, through Betsy’s use of MI Diane found a way to avoid what are to her negative characteristics of “smart people” in order to complete her geography unit and earn her high school diploma.

Our experiences with MI make us hopeful that we can duplicate Diane’s success with other students. We do not hope for unalloyed success – what teacher can expect that? But with the deepened respect for our students that this understanding permits, and with a wide array of MI-based learning strategies, we are optimistic that we can find ways around resistance and not-learning so we can help our students move closer to achieving their goals.

References:


Appendix D

To be handed out at
Meeting Three of the Mentor Teacher Group

Meeting Three Handouts

Contents

Handout J: “Readings for Meeting Four”
Readings for Meeting Four

Meeting Four of the Mentor Teacher Group

Date: ________________________________
Time: ________________________________
Location: ______________________________

Required Reading before Meeting Four:

In the AMI Sourcebook:

- Chapter 3, “MI-inspired Instruction – The AMI Experience”