A New Environment So Everyone Learns:
Using Multiple Intelligences in the Library

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How many times have you thought that you've just got too much to do in the school library information centre? We've all been there. School library budgets seem to be shrinking, while the demands on our time are increasing. How can we possibly succeed given these conditions, you may ask? I have found a way.

In 1989 Howard Gardner defined intelligence as "the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural setting" (Gardner and Hatch, 1989). Using this definition and further research, Gardner came up with what are now eight well-known forms of intelligence. They are: Logical intelligence, Linguistic intelligence, Spatial intelligence, Musical intelligence, Kinesthetic intelligence, Interpersonal Intrapersonal intelligence, and Naturalist intelligence.

Brualdi (1996) studied how Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences affected the classroom teacher. In order to adjust for students' learning styles, especially in the library setting, teachers will need to be information literate. Carr (1998) reveals that being information literate means to "know how knowledge is organized, how to find information, and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from it" (p1).

It is the students' ability to assess information and use it effectively that is the focus of Kumbar (2006). Kumbar believes that multiple intelligences help to develop analytical skills used in library research (p1). She suggests that the library must play a big role in learning activities to the point of being the central point of education.

After reviewing the literature, I made some simple preliminary conclusions. First, students must be engaged in the library activities. Second, students must be given an environment that will allow them to analyze the information they are gathering. Many accommodations could be made in the library since each student has a different combination of intelligences. I conducted research to fill some of the environment gaps left by the review of literature, intending to develop a positive library environment to ensure student success.

I chose to observe 31 grade seven students at Dr. S.J. Phillips Public School for 20 consecutive teaching days over a four-week period. In that time the class was working in the library at least three days a week. The first step in the study was to observe five students a day, for the first five days of the observation period. Step two was to observe the students, all the time making anecdotal notes on their actions and responses. I kept a tally for each student to categorize each according to their Multiple Intelligence. The third step was a quick interview with each student at the end of the 20-day observation period. Each student was brought to the library and asked to give their insight. I then