

'People Smarts' – How to Identify and Foster Interpersonal intelligence in Children



The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people. Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the USA

Howard Gardner, American developmental psychologist and Harvard University education professor, first posited the theory of multiple intelligences in the 1980s. Gardner proposed that intelligence was not made up of one factor, but nine. (See previous *How Smart Are You? How Are You Smart?*) Interpersonal intelligence is one of the nine intelligences that he identified. Although, to many, it may not seem as important as mathematical or linguistic intelligence, studies have found that the quality of life of people with high interpersonal intelligence is usually much better than those who are not strong in this area.

Interpersonal means 'between people', and interpersonal intelligence refers to the ability of a person to relate well to other people and to manage relationships. People with interpersonal intelligence can easily adapt to social situations, and seem to stand out in a crowd as people with lots of friends. They communicate effectively and enjoy participating in discussions and debates. They are usually adept at collaboration and are characterised by their sensitivity to other people's moods, temperaments, motivations, and feelings. Individuals with high interpersonal intelligence are often referred to as being 'people smart'. This goes beyond basic conversation and people skills. 'People smart' individuals have the capacity to 'read' the emotions and actions of others and to understand their behaviour, motivations, intentions and desires. This ability strengthens their overall influence. They are acutely aware of body language and facial expressions, and can use that information to read between the lines and 'hear' what may not be said aloud.

A 'People smart' individual is one who:

- ✚ People come to for advice.
- ✚ Prefers group sports to solo sports.
- ✚ Prefers talking to people about a problem rather than figuring it out on his/her own.
- ✚ Has at least three close friends.
- ✚ Prefers social activities to individual pursuits.
- ✚ Enjoys teaching others what he/she can do well.
- ✚ Is considered to be a leader.

- ✚ Feels comfortable in a crowd.
- ✚ Prefers to spend time with others than alone.
- ✚ Establishes rapport with strangers easily.
- ✚ Is good at 'reading' people, understanding others and showing empathy.

If you recognise yourself in the above, then, it is very likely that you possess high interpersonal intelligence, and are regarded by others as being 'people smart'.

In his 2006 book entitled *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons in Theory and Practice*, Gardner identified Anne Sullivan as a person with high interpersonal intelligence. Anne Sullivan (1866-1936) was an American teacher, best known for being the instructor and lifelong companion of Helen Keller. Due to an illness, Helen Keller lost her sight and hearing before the age of two, and struggled to communicate. In 1887, 20-year-old Sullivan, a recent graduate of the Perkins Institution for the Blind, arrived at Keller's Alabama home to become the young girl's teacher. Keller was initially argumentative and uncooperative, but eventually associated water flowing over her hand with Anne using her fingers to spell the word "water" on her palm. This breakthrough provided a means for Keller to communicate with others and unlocked her abilities. Anne Sullivan exhibited high interpersonal intelligence when dealing with Keller, understanding her needs, moods, temperament, and motivations. She said: *Children require guidance and sympathy far more than instruction.* Through her interpersonal intelligence, Sullivan helped Keller become one of the leading authors and lecturers of the 20th Century.



Anne Sullivan with Helen Keller

Characteristics of 'People Smart' Learners



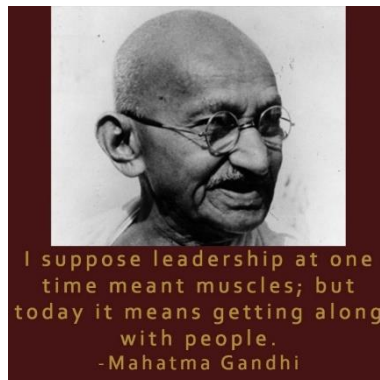
How do we identify 'people smart' learners at home and in the classroom? Children and adults with high interpersonal intelligence learn best through interaction, dialogue and lively discussions. They are enthusiastic and lively. They are good at making others feel welcome, and often reach out to outsiders. They have the attitude of 'The more the merrier'!

'People Smart' Learners:

- ✚ Get along with everyone in the class and are inclusive.
- ✚ Have strong communication skills: can convey to others what they are trying to say in a way that the listener can understand.
- ✚ Are highly empathetic and sensitive to others.
- ✚ Learn best in pairs or groups – love to 'buddy up'.
- ✚ Have good verbal *and* non-verbal communication.
- ✚ Enjoy social events and may serve as a magnet for the social activities of others.
- ✚ Are the children you would choose to help a class/club newcomer to settle in!
- ✚ Like to interact with others and usually have many friends.
- ✚ Enjoy team sports and make good 'captains'.
- ✚ Counsel others – people come to them for advice, help and comfort.
- ✚ Tend to be street-smart, 'clued-in' to people's intentions, or savvy!
- ✚ Show concern and empathy for others and hate injustice.
- ✚ Like being a member of a club or organisation.
- ✚ Demonstrate leadership qualities and are good people organisers.
- ✚ Love crowds and enjoy meeting new people.
- ✚ Are adept at conflict resolution – will be the peacemakers or negotiators in classroom, schoolyard and family squabbles.
- ✚ Pick up on moods, characteristics, emotions and intentions of those around them.
- ✚ Enjoy teaching other children, either peers or younger children in school or at home.
- ✚ Like working in teams to accomplish tasks.
- ✚ Make very persuasive arguments.

Famous People with High Interpersonal Intelligence

Mahatma Gandhi



Mahatma Gandhi (1869 – 1948) was a lawyer and activist who led the Indian independence movement against British colonial rule. He helped his country achieve independence by employing non-violent civil disobedience at a time when other countries were using violence against the colonialists. Despite being imprisoned on many occasions, Gandhi inspired his community to demand self-rule. Through his interpersonal intelligence, he inspired civil rights and freedom movements across the world.

Martin Luther King Jr.



People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other, they don't know each other because they have not communicated with each other. Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. (1929 – 1968) was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1929. He was a pivotal advocate for African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. King experienced racism from an early age, and those events influenced him, and eventually brought him to a life of activism. After graduating college with a doctorate degree in theology, he became a pastor in Alabama. He began a series of peaceful protests in the south that eventually changed many laws dealing with the equality of African Americans. King gave hundreds of powerful speeches across the country, and in 1964 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Although he died in 1968, the work that he had accomplished changed the nation. King will be remembered not only for his commitment to the cause of equality for African Americans but also for his profound speeches that moved so many.

Mother Teresa



A life not lived for others is not a life. Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa (1910- 1997), Saint Teresa of Calcutta, was an Albanian-Indian Roman Catholic nun and missionary, best known for her charity work and her ability to understand the feelings of the poor. In the course of her work, Mother Teresa moved from the convent to go and live with the poor. She helped establish schools for the poor, orphanages, hospices, dispensaries, mobile clinics and leper houses. Mother Teresa shared how difficult life was for her living among the poor; she received no income, begged for food, experienced loneliness, and even had temptations to return to the convent. She founded the Missionaries of Charity, a religious congregation that manages homes for people living with HIV/AIDS, leprosy, TB, and other diseases. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 and accepted the award *'in the name of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, the leprous, of all these people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for'*. Considered one of the greatest humanitarians of the 20th Century, she was beatified in 2003 by Pope John Paul II, and canonised as Saint Teresa of Calcutta by Pope Francis in 2016.

Oprah Winfrey



Oprah Winfrey is a media mogul, actress, producer, and the host of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. She became hugely popular because of her ability to listen, talk, and to relate to others. Her show became the highest-rated television programme in history from 1986- 2011. Although she had a difficult childhood, she has been credited with creating an intimate confessional form of media communication. Through her popular tabloid talk show, she broke many 20th century taboos by allowing marginalised people enter the media space. She, in turn, was influenced greatly by the woman she referred to as her 'mentor-mother-sister-friend' and

‘the quintessential teacher’; Maya Angelou. Oprah said of her ‘She will always be the rainbow in my clouds’.

Maya Angelou



Maya Angelou (1928 – 2014) was a civil rights activist, novelist, poet, songwriter, playwright, actress, dancer and singer. She performed her poem *On the Pulse of Morning* at the 1993 inauguration of Bill Clinton. The poem asserts that human beings can change for the better, and that by working with Nature (rock, river and tree) and learning from the past, great things can be accomplished together. She said: *In my work, in everything I do, I mean to say that human beings are more alike than we are unlike, and to use that statement to break down the walls we set between ourselves because we are different.*

Many of those privileged to meet Angelou spoke of her ‘presence’ and her ‘ability to move souls’. Upon Maya Angelou’s death in 2014, Oprah Winfrey stated: *The world knows her as a poet but at the heart of her she was a teacher. ‘When you learn, teach. When you get, give’, is one of the best lessons from her.* Using the title of her 1978 poem, Oprah described Angelou as a ‘Phenomenal Woman’.

Jurgen Klopp



I’ve thought sometimes about what I like about football, and it’s playing together. Jurgen Klopp

Love them or loathe them, many people credit Liverpool's recent success to the management skills of manager **Jurgen Klopp**. Prior to managing Liverpool, he managed Borussia Dortmund, and in his first season in charge led Dortmund to silverware, beating Bayern Munich in the German SuperCup final. They won consecutive Bundesliga titles in 2010-11 and 2011-12. More recently, his ability to inspire the players at Liverpool to work as a team has been written about extensively, and has led the team to winning the Champions League in 2019, and to the cusp of winning the Premier League in 2020, for the first time in Liverpool's history. Klopp has spoken of creating an atmosphere of trust among the players, how he rewards motivation and concentration, and the need for players to believe in their ability, individually and as a team. He has said: *I'm not a one-man show. I was never that in my life, and I never want to be that.*

Jim Gavin



Dublin Senior football manager Jim Gavin will no doubt go down as one of the greatest GAA managers ever. From 2012 – 2019 he became the country's most successful manager in terms of major titles won. He led the 'boys in blue' to winning five All-Ireland titles in a row, a historic feat which may, hopefully, never be beaten! Tomás Ó Se summarised Gavin's achievements thus: *Gavin's greatest achievement was that Dublin were always greater than the sum of their parts. They had an idea of what they wanted to be and how they wanted to get there and everyone worked towards it.*

The Dublin team's success is, in large part, attributable to Jim Gavin's ability to inspire ambition and hard work in his team members, and to get the best out of the individual players in order to get the best out of the team collectively. He has said: *'Football is about the collective too. We're not individuals in a sporting sense. And yet we are in a personal sense. It's about the person. We take a very player-centred approach in Dublin, as I'm sure all the intercounty managers do. It's about the individual, satisfying his needs, having respect and building up his self-esteem to the point where he can be creative.In the management team, our job is to get the players not to sell themselves short. To be the best they can be.*

How To Foster 'People Smarts' In Children



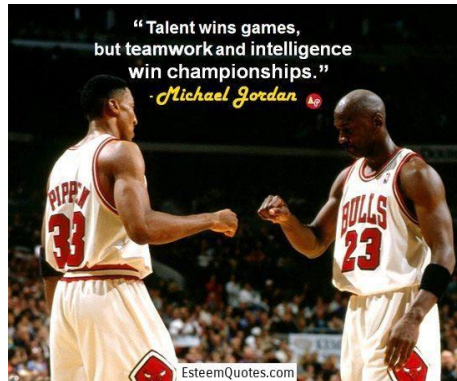
As children, most of us are sensitive to the emotions and situations of the people in our lives. This is a biological aspect of growth that's very important for development. We are easily able to notice our parents' and siblings' moods and emotions. However, it is important that we, as parents and teachers, continue to actively cultivate 'people smarts' at home and in the classroom, since high interpersonal intelligence is linked to better personal relationships and a greater quality of life. The good news is that no expensive equipment is needed to develop this intelligence. As parents, we can involve children in playing the following 'people-skills' games, from a young age.

- What would you do? (Describe a dilemma, e.g. your friend dares you/someone else to swim in a dangerous river, lake, what would you do?)
- What are they feeling? Reading the facial expressions and body language of people on television, in a film, in a painting, etc.
- Interview someone interesting to them, e.g. a grandparent, a neighbour.
- Assign teamwork tasks: e.g. build a fort inside or outside.
- Body language charades. (What am I telling you?, using non-verbal clues)

Classrooms offer a platform for students with high interpersonal intelligence to showcase their skill set. For children strong in people smarts, direct interaction, discussions with others, and team efforts are the best pathways to help them learn. Teachers can help students develop and put interpersonal intelligence into use through a variety of activities:

- ✚ Use collaborative teaching strategies, such as 'Think, Pair, Share', and Cooperative Learning groups.
- ✚ Assign group rather than solo project work.
- ✚ Try 'dual learning': have two children learn about two different topics, and then teach the topics to each other.
- ✚ Encourage them to share their perspectives and receive feedback on their performance, following group work.
- ✚ Encourage them to join school and community clubs and societies.
- ✚ Play board games, including those designed to specifically promote social skills. (see Resources Section)

- ✚ 'Buddy-up'! Allow them to teach other children, perhaps tutoring younger students, classmates or younger siblings.
- ✚ Seek out extra-curricular activities that allow kids who want to flex their interpersonal intelligence 'muscles' to develop their talents in a group setting.
- ✚ Encourage them to play team sports.

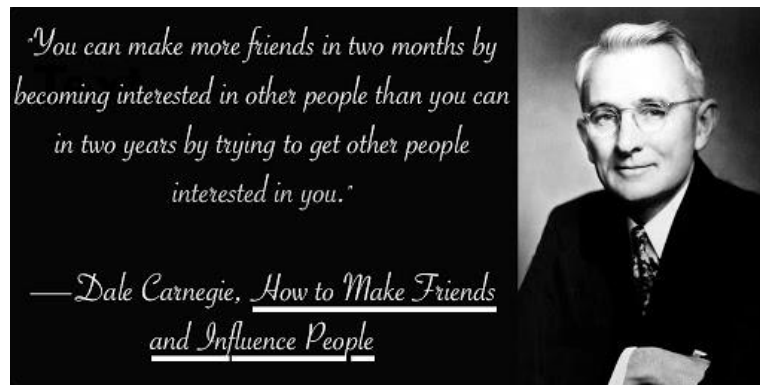


- ✚ Encourage them to run for school committees, or to lead a team or committee where they can show their leadership qualities (e.g. Green Schools, Student Council, etc.)
- ✚ Assign activities that require them to meet and interact with other people, e.g. interviewing people in the local area, doing surveys, etc.
- ✚ Have them explain to others what they have learned or discovered.
- ✚ Teach other subjects through their strengths: teach history, science, art, music, etc. through famous inventors, astronomers, artists, and musicians, to stimulate their interest in the human dimension to these subjects.
- ✚ Write potential dialogues between historical characters and act them out.
- ✚ Role-play dilemmas and possible solutions. This allows them to interact with their peers and practice their listening skills.
- ✚ Encourage them to research the lives of people in the past who demonstrated high interpersonal intelligence, and those who do so today.

Pupils with good 'people smarts' will be effective in organising group project work, especially when it comes to delegating duties and holding the group members together. Where there are conflicts among members, these individuals can reconcile any disagreements and encourage members to stay focussed on the ultimate goal.



Career Choices for People with High Interpersonal Intelligence



Being ‘people smart’ is a multifaceted intelligence, not limited to your political skills, or your social graces, but including the following eight interpersonal skills:

- Understanding people
- Expressing yourself clearly
- Asserting your needs
- Exchanging feedback
- Influencing others
- Resolving conflict
- Being a team player
- Being flexible and accommodating: understanding that there are ‘different strokes for different folks’.

These integrated abilities help establish and maintain strong relationships in all areas of life, both personal and professional. People with strong interpersonal intelligence have a natural ability to interact with, relate to, and get along with others effectively. Their communication skills give them a distinct advantage when it comes to conflict resolution and forming strong relationships. They have a knack for finding balanced compromises. They use their insights about others to negotiate, persuade, and obtain information, and demonstrate the potential for effective leadership. According to Howard Gardner, people with such skills are naturally inclined to become politicians, teachers, therapists, diplomats, salespeople, and negotiators – occupations that require people to look at situations differently and take an adaptive approach. While ‘people smarts’ are important in every job, the following careers are particularly suitable for those with high interpersonal intelligence:

- Coach
- Teacher
- Politician
- Psychologist
- Counsellor
- Psychiatrist
- Diplomat
- Entrepreneur
- Interviewer
- Actor
- Customer service representative
- Receptionist
- Substance abuse, behavioural disorder and mental health counsellor
- Waiter

- Salesperson
- Religious leader
- Judge
- Therapist
- Nurse
- Social worker
- Public relations advisor

In an article entitled *Why Soft Skills are Harder Than They Look*, (12/7/18) Darcy Eikenberg details the results of research data into skill shortages, as perceived by 2000 business leaders, in 100 major cities across the United States of America. LinkedIn CEO Jeff Weiner stated: *Somewhat surprisingly, some people may not realise that interpersonal skills is where we're seeing the biggest imbalances.* Four 'gaps' were identified: leadership, communication, collaboration and time management. Weiner also quoted Elon Musk, Tesla CEO, who, cutting back on his production expectations after automation efforts failed, said: *It turns out human beings are underrated.*

Closer to home, the heading of an Irish Times article in February, 2020 declared *Graduates not well-equipped for future workplaces.* (25/2/20) The Accenture report found that the 'soft skills' of communication, work ethic, teamwork, and problem-solving, would be the most needed for the workforce of the changing world. The article concluded that this was not merely a research announcement, but a call to action!

It seems human talents need to be combined with technical and professional skills for the businesses of the future to succeed. Increasingly, success will depend on being 'people smart'.



We don't live in a vacuum or work in isolation. Even in today's technical world, we are always communicating in some way. The ability to communicate and connect with others at home and at school makes a child happier. It helps build a sense of community and gain the support of others when it is needed. As adults, we need some degree of 'people smarts' to do all of the following tasks in life:

- Attending a party
- Chatting on the internet
- Being a customer
- Working on a team
- Interacting with co-workers or classmates

- Dealing with the boss
- Supervising employees
- Parenting children
- Being in a relationship
- Obtaining business
- Networking
- Relating to doctors, nurses, and mental health professionals.

The list goes on!



The good news is that we can actively develop and improve our interpersonal intelligence. While interpersonal intelligence has a value of its own, a person has the ability to develop all nine multiple intelligences as identified by Howard Gardner. Even if your child is 'people smart', it doesn't mean that they won't excel in another, or many, of the eight other intelligences that Gardner proposed. Rather, we can use the innate strengths of 'people smart' children to develop and nurture the whole child.



RESOURCES TO HELP IMPROVE INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

6 Social Skills Board Games (SMART KIDS)

<https://www.smartkids.co.uk/products/6-social-skills-board-games#:~:text=This%20great%20value%20set%20of,consolidation%20of%20those%20already%20learnt.>

This set of 6 board games models good social skills and behaviour. The six games include morals, manners, empathy, friendship, showing emotions, and managing emotions. Each game supports the development of social and emotional skills and the consolidation of those already learnt.

6 Personal and Emotional Skills Board Games (SMART KIDS)

<https://www.smartkids.co.uk/products/6-personal-emotional-skills-board-games>

6 Personal and Emotional Skills Board Games develops children's social awareness in a vibrant, enjoyable format. These are competitive and fun games that teach essentials for learning and life. All instructions are printed on the game boards so will never be lost. Contains 6 games, 24 counters and die.

Games Include:

- Getting On
- Good to be Me
- Changes
- Keeping Calm
- Going for Goals
- Say NO to Bullying

5 Highly-Rated Kids Games For Practicing Social Skills

- Mad Dragon: An Anger Control Card Game
- The Art of Children's Conversation
- Q's Race to the Top Educational Board Game with Book
- Totika Self-Esteem Game
- Feelings Playing Cards

<https://educationandbehavior.com/games-to-play-with-social-skills-group/>

101 Ways to Teach Social Skills – Scoilnet

101 activities to help teach students about social skills. The book is divided into 9 sections: communicating, non-verbal communication, being part of a group, expressing your feelings, caring about yourself, problem solving, listening, standing up for yourself and managing conflict. Activity sheets can be printed and used to aid the teaching of the social skill.

<https://www.scoilnet.ie/ga/search/resource/entity/show/Lre/19120/>

TWINKL Resources Relevant to Interpersonal Intelligence

- ✚ Mahatma Gandhi Quotes Display Poster
- ✚ Non-violence Information Sheet
- ✚ The Life of Gandhi PowerPoint
- ✚ Gandhi Differentiated Reading Comprehension Activity
- ✚ The Life of Gandhi PowerPoint (English/Hindi)
- ✚ Martin Luther King Differentiated Reading Comprehension Activity
- ✚ Martin Luther King Significant Individual Fact Sheet
- ✚ *I have a Dream* Illustrated Writing Prompt
- ✚ Nelson Mandela Differentiated Reading Comprehension Activity
- ✚ Nelson Mandela - Life Story PowerPoint
- ✚ Helen Keller PowerPoint
- ✚ Famous Black History Figure Celebrity Topics (Oprah Winfrey)
- ✚ Oprah Winfrey Mindfulness Graduation Quote Illustration
- ✚ The Champions League – Twinkl Newsroom
- ✚ Extraordinary Lives – Maya Angelou Illustration
- ✚ Maya Angelou - Differentiated Reading Comprehension Activity
- ✚ About the Author Maya Angelou

The Talkabout Programme

<https://www.otb.ie/shop/talkabout/>

Talkabout by Alex Kelly is a complete programme for developing self-esteem, social and friendship skills. It is based on teaching children or young adults in groups in school or college but can be adapted for 1:1 sessions or for use at home. It uses a hierarchical method of developing skills where basic or foundation skills are taught before more complicated skills.

More Information on Interpersonal Intelligence

https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/multiple_intelligences/#gs.8qlrfh

<https://www.parentree.in/Blogs/796-teaching-children-through-interpersonal-intelligence-multiple-intelligence-activities-toys-materials-examples>

<https://personalitymax.com/multiple-intelligences/interpersonal/>

<http://blog.kidzmet.com/core-beliefs/multiple-intelligences/interpersonal-intelligence/#:~:text=Also%20known%20as%20%E2%80%9Cpeople%20smart,as%20part%20of%20a%20group.>

<https://iraparenting.com/school-going/activities-interpersonal-intelligence-children/>

<https://www.parentingscience.com/social-skills-activities.html>

<https://youaremom.com/children/interpersonal-intelligence/>

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/interpersonal-skills>

<https://positivepsychology.com/interpersonal-effectiveness/>

<https://www.basicknowledge101.com/categories/peoplesmart.html>

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/clip-save-checklist-learning-activities-connect-multiple-intelligences/>

<https://www.institute4learning.com/resources/articles/multiple-intelligences/>

<https://goodparentingbrighterchildren.com/multiple-intelligences/>

<http://growingwithyourchild.com/5-activities-that-develop-childrens-people-smarts/>

<https://www.google.com/search?biw=1366&bih=625&source=univ&tbm=isch&q=famous+people+with+interpersonal+intelligence&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwigv9CYgITqAhUTmVwKHe5IDMUQsAR6BAgFEAE>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/interpersonal-intelligence-8091>

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/interpersonal-intelligence-definition-examples-characteristics.html>

<http://multiplesintelligences.blogspot.com/2014/07/famous-people-who-have-interpersonal.html>

<https://www.nexalearning.com/blog/bid/51162/interpersonal-skills-at-work-quotes>

<https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/careers/soft-skills/interpersonal-intelligence/>

Slideshare on Activities to Develop Interpersonal Intelligence in Young Children

<https://www.slideshare.net/lraparenting/11-activities-to-develop-interpersonal-intelligence-in-children-92853983>

Articles on Interpersonal Skills Shortages

Graduates not well-equipped for future workplace. Irish Times, February 25, 2020

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/graduates-not-well-equipped-for-future-workplace-1.4183717>

Why Soft Skills Are Harder Than They Look by Darcy Eikenberg on Forbes.com 12/07/18

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2018/07/12/why-soft-skills-are-harder-than-they-look/>

Books on Multiple Intelligences (General)

Gardner H. *A Multiplicity of Intelligences* Published 2004

Gardner H. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (Third Edition) New York: Basic Books; 2011

Gardner H. *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century.* New York: Basic Books; 1999