
Learning Styles of Students

As students are making connections and going through the process of synaptic pruning, WMU's curriculum is designed to allow students to further learn how to act on what they have been taught in the church. In order to best teach these values, it is important to incorporate lessons and activities that are appropriate for the adolescent's development while also engaging students with potentially different kinds of "smarts."

Many have heard of the different learning styles. For this article, rather than focusing on the learning styles, there will be an emphasis on eight types of smarts that may be more identifiable in some students than others. Being familiar with and incorporating all of them into your activities, you have the opportunity to continue to help adolescents become familiar with more than just their natural inclinations while also encouraging their gifts and providing them with opportunities to use them.

Some students are more inclined to be **people smart**. They are relational and enjoy group activities that allow them to engage in dialogue and discussions that give them the chance to learn within the group. They enjoy learning about and helping people. They often identify with individuals within stories and consider how those people may feel or what they may be going through. Adolescents in this group will often enjoy hands-on missions projects and serving others.

Other students may be **music smart**. These students are harmonic and rhythmic in their approach to learning. They like to play instruments, sing, and enjoy rhythm. Playing music at the beginning of the session will help them connect. Contemporary songs that carry related messages to the lesson may appeal to this type of learner. Great activities include those where students write lyrics, select music for a session, or create a rap. Projects that include the opportunity for students to lead music activities with children in outreach events or plan and lead music for senior adult ministry events are activities that may resonate with these music smart learners.

Students who are **logic smart** may prefer organizing, comparing and contrasting, reasoning, analyzing, evaluating, ranking, classifying, and debating. They are generally reasonable in their approach to learning. Puzzles, solving problems, and figuring out how to do things often appeal to them. Providing them with an opportunity to learn to help with planning outreach events may especially interest these students.

Some adolescents are **nature smart**. They dig, touch, sort, classify, observe, protect, plan, cultivate, and conserve. They prefer the outdoors and are natural in their approach to learning. Planting a vegetable garden to provide for people in need and taking children on nature walks are both opportunities for these students to serve others that may interest them. These students can passionately share about God's creation with others.

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Other students may be more **picture smart**. They observe, diagram, draw and illustrate, storyboard, paint, spot, and view. They are generally visual in their approach to learning. They would rather look at a map than read directions about how to get to a destination and enjoy stories that have pictures to accompany them. They would rather see a graph or chart than to read statistics. They may enjoy drawing, painting, and leading activities with others to use these skills. They may enjoy creating scrapbooks, taking photographs, or making bulletin boards and setting up displays about the missionaries or ministries you are studying each month.

Some students are **word smart**. These students typically listen well and enjoying writing. They tend to use humor and tell stories in conversation with others. They also like reading, reciting, labeling, and dialogue. Their preferable approach to learning is verbal and they prefer words to images. They are often comfortable speaking in public or sharing their testimonies, both being a unique way to get these students involved in missions discipleship.

Some students are **body smart**. This can be understood in connection to the traditional kinesthetic and tactile learning styles as these students are more physically active and prefer to use their sense of touch while learning. They prefer and are often good at dancing, exercising, recreating, dramatizing, moving, and playing games. These students learn by doing. They may learn better by getting up out of their chairs, playing games, moving around, and building things. They may be more inclined to lead games and activities with children during a Backyard Bible Club or mission trip.

Lastly, some students are **self smart**. These students evaluate themselves, journal, study, contemplate, personalize, dream, and set goals. They are generally reflective and introspective in their approach to learning. They often enjoy journaling and writing personal prayers. Each group of students will have a unique blend of these different smarts. By incorporating learning and missions opportunities specific to their smarts into your time together, students will have the opportunity to try new ways to share God's love with their friends and families.

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