14. Multiply intelligences

Allow students time and space to choose what they want to do—their choices will illuminate their individual strengths.

HS: Sometimes, it is still appropriate for students to sit in rows listening to their teachers talk from the front of a classroom. But being the “sage on the stage” is only one way to teach. Brain research is giving us great insights into how we can vary teaching methods to meet the needs of different learning styles. Good lessons need exquisite design—so that teachers can stretch students in their dominant and preferred learning styles, and also in their non-dominant styles. And of course good lessons also get students to access their right- and-left-brain hemispheres.

RD: Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences Theory is implicitly asking the designer of the learning environment to consider a variety of learning spaces—spaces in diverse sizes, materials, and colors, as well as spaces with different transparency, connectivity, and agility. The one-size-fits-all idea really isn’t acceptable any more.

—Helen Hirsh Spence, educational consultant to VS Furniture and Rick Dewar, OWP/P