

## EDUCATIONAL METHODS TO SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF NONVERBALLY GIFTED CHILDREN



**“Reading, writing, and arithmetic . . .  
served us well as society evolved  
from an oral tradition to a written one,  
but they are insufficient for success  
in the new age.”**

--Linda Silverman in  
*Upside-Down Brilliance: The Visual-Spatial Learner*,  
Denver: DeLeon Publishing, 2002.

Words and numbers rule the classroom as they have . . . well . . . forever. School is not made for our nonverbally gifted children who often favor a visual-spatial style over an auditory-sequential style. But are schools becoming a more comfortable place for our visually and spatially strong student with the advent of *21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning* and a call for more STEM? We may need to wait for the *22<sup>nd</sup> Century* to answer that one. In the meantime, life flows by in downloads, broadcasts, pixels, graphics, video, and text messages. Are schools embracing this “new age?”

Let’s start with a disclaimer. I’m not criticizing the teaching of reading and writing. Hey, I have a degree in literature and taught high school English for nine years, for goodness sake! I’m not criticizing mathematics either. I love challenging gifted and talented students with numbers. The methods to support the growth of nonverbally gifted children detailed in this chapter are effective methods for teaching *21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners* in any subject area . . . period. Reading, writing, and arithmetic remain core components of learning. As an advocate for high nonverbal ability learners, however, I am concerned we use an effective *variety of methods* to teach the core standards. If we do not, we could be short-changing a large percentage of our best and brightest students.

That said . . . sure, there are stories out there of students who’ve managed to slide by and build successful careers while barely able to scribble out a sentence. I bet no one—including that same successful student—would recommend that path, though. There simply is no substitute. One learns writing by writing, or, as Brian Goodwin states in *Simply Better: Doing What Matters Most to Change the*

*Odds for Student Success (2011): "A baseball coach is unlikely to help a child with a weak throwing arm (but who is good at math) make a better throw from third base to first base by asking him to write mathematical formulas of an orb in flight."* I do not advocate throwing away the traditional methods. Let's just go about them in a different way. If our aforementioned child can't make the throw from first to third, he's going to get mighty discouraged if he is required to work on it day after day after day after day and then get a grade for it. It's going to take him some time to develop the arm strength and the necessary techniques, and he's going to need a good coach, too. So while he is learning that throw from third to first, we better make sure as teachers that he also has the opportunity to use his math skills and express his talents in a way that will keep him energized. In the end, he will never be a major leaguer, but he just may be someone who designs a whole baseball stadium!

### Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning

#### Core Subjects and 21st Century Themes

Learning and Innovation Skills:  
Creativity and Innovation,  
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving,  
Communication and Collaboration Information

Media and Technology Skills:  
Information Literacy,  
Media Literacy,  
ICT Literacy

Life and Career Skills

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*"Write it down. Show your work."* There are so many ways to show what one knows or understands. Aren't successful products themselves enough sometimes? An Olympian breaks the world record in the decathlon. Afterwards, should he have written how he had broken the record so we are sure he really knew what he was doing? A high school student qualifies for the national speech championships. Should she write out a log of her practice times and thought processes she used in preparation? Just so we're sure, just in case? Roger Bannister hooked himself up to a face mask which deprived him of oxygen in training to become the first to break the 4-minute-mile. Should all distance runners use his training method? There are many processes to become successful. There are many ways to show what we know. The journey to success or failure always matters, and there are lessons to be learned through the process.

This chapter details methods teachers and parents can draw upon to help their nonverbally gifted students find success through the use of their innate gifts.