

# Learning Strengths

## Try this:

Fold your arms.  
Look at the arm that's on top.  
Refold your arms so that  
your other arm is on top.  
How does it feel?



Fold your hands.  
Look at the thumb that's on top.  
Refold your hands so your other  
thumb is on top.  
How does it feel?



All of us have developed our own preferred ways of doing things. These ways are comfortable to us. To do it a different way seems uncomfortable. This applies to learning and teaching too. When we must learn or concentrate on something, we rely on our preferred ways of learning. Since we learn best in these ways, we tend to teach in these same ways.

But all people are not alike. Their learning strengths may be different from ours. How can we use children's learning strengths to communicate more effectively with them?

## A Scripture to Think About

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully" (Romans 12:6-8).

- What does this tell you about people's differences?
- What does this have to do with your classroom?

## How to **USE** this Folder

- If you are a teacher, use this folder to help you to understand children better and to use variety in your classroom. If you are a teacher trainer, use this folder as a guide to help you train your teachers to understand children better and to use variety in their classrooms.
- By the end of the unit, you should know a variety of factors that affect learning, desire to use variety and flexibility in class, identify your own weaknesses and strengths, use variety and flexibility in class.

**This folder contains material for multiple teacher training sessions.**

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# Who Are You?

Read the three dialogues.

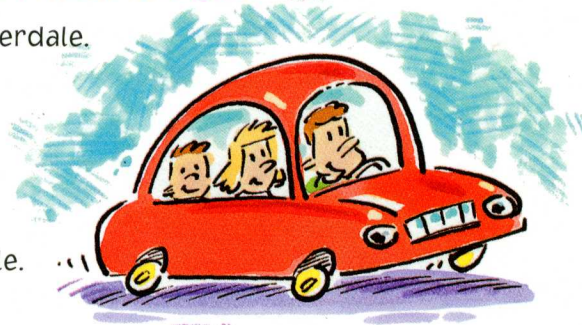
Circle the numbers by the people who are most like you.

A family is going to a friend's new house in Cloverdale.

Mom: Are you sure you know how to get there?

You didn't write down the directions.

1. Dad: I'm sure. Pete told me how to get there when he called this afternoon.
2. Mom: Well, I'm going to take the map. See? It appears to be a long way to Cloverdale.
3. Son: Let me drive. I can handle this job. I have a feel for how to get there.



There's a new computer at the office, but something is not working properly. Kathy is at the computer. Steve is looking through the computer manual. Dan is on the phone.

4. Kathy: I think I've got a handle on where things broke down. I'll just go back to this command and I'm sure I'll be able to iron things out.
5. Steve: Look! See this diagram? I think it will show us where we went wrong.
6. Dan: I've got technical support on the phone. They're going to tell me how to get around this problem.



Brenda has just started eating at a luncheon.

7. Brenda: I've got to get Susan to tell me how she made this casserole. I heard her say it was chicken parmesan.
8. Laura: It looks like it's pretty simple. I see some rice and cheese and tomatoes. And there appears to be some pepper in it too.
9. Trish: This is what Susan brought to the harvest party. The very next day, I went into the kitchen and tried to figure out how to make it. It took a few times before I got it just right. But it's not hard to make.



- Dad, Dan, and Brenda preferred to listen in order to learn.  
If you circled 1, 6, and 7, you are mainly an **auditory learner**. You learn best by simply listening. You probably teach by talking and expect the children to learn by listening.
- Mom, Steve, and Laura preferred to look in order to learn.  
If you circled 2, 5, and 8, you are mainly a **visual learner**. You learn best by seeing something and you probably use lots of visuals when you teach.
- The son, Kathy, and Trish preferred the hands-on approach.  
If you circled 3, 4, and 9, you are a **tactile-kinesthetic learner**. You learn best by touching and doing. You probably use lots of hands-on activities when you teach.
- **You could be some combination of auditory, visual, and kinesthetic.**



# The Fact Is . . .

- All young children are tactile-kinesthetic. They learn best by touching and doing.
- In the first few grades of school, some children will begin to show a strength in the visual area. They learn best by watching and seeing.
- At around ten to twelve years of age, some children will begin to show a strength in the auditory area. They learn best by listening.
- Among all people over ten years old, 20 percent learn best by hearing, 40 percent learn best by seeing, and 40 percent learn best by moving and doing.\*

## Think About It

- How has most of our teaching traditionally been done?
- Do we need to change the way we teach? If so, why?
- How can we more effectively teach children who learn differently than we do?

The auditory learner will respond well to

- singing and music
- discussion and guided conversation
- storytelling
- pretending and imagining
- audio and videotapes



The visual learner will respond well to

- story pictures and application pictures
- bulletin boards
- videotapes
- demonstrations
- puppets and story figures
- chalk talks
- books



The tactile-kinesthetic learner will respond well to

- blocks and toys he can manipulate
- active games
- finger plays
- dress-ups and dramatic play



\*See *Learning Styles* by Marlene D. LeFever (David C. Cook).

# Physical and Environmental Strengths\*

## Other elements that affect learning include

- **Physical position**  
Some people learn best lying flat on their stomachs. Some learn best sprawled on a soft couch. Some concentrate best when they're sitting up straight.
- **Movement**  
Some people learn best when they are moving.
- **Eating or chewing**  
Some people concentrate best when they are eating or chewing something.
- **Sound**  
Some people learn best in silence. Others learn best with background sound.
- **Time of day**  
Some people are morning learners. Others concentrate best at night.
- **Room design**  
Some people learn best in a formal desk-chair setting. Others learn best in an informal setting.



How can I provide for all these different kinds of learners at the same time?

The key word is . . . VARIETY!

- Provide a time when the children can sit in chairs and a time when the children can sit cross-legged or lie on their stomachs on the floor.
- Alternate activities that involve movement with activities that are more restful.
- Do some of your learning while snacking or chewing.
- Play background music during part of the class time, and at other times, have no background sound.
- Sometimes tell the story by flashlight, with the room lights dimmed.
- Change settings for activities, moving around the room, switching from table and chairs to the floor and even outside.



\*Based on information from researchers Dr. Rita Dunn and Dr. Kenneth Dunn as reported in *Learning Styles* by Marlene D. LeFever (David C. Cook Publishing Co.).



# Strengths and Intelligence

There are seven areas in the brain in which a person can develop intelligence.\* Most people operate most intelligently out of a few of these areas. However, it is possible to be *smart* in all seven areas. As you read the following descriptions, write down the name of someone you think might be intelligent in that area.

## The linguistic person

- is skilled at working and playing with sounds and words.
- likes to say, hear, and see words as he learns.
- enjoys writing, reading, and listening.

I think \_\_\_\_\_ may have linguistic intelligence.



## The logical-mathematical person

- likes to explore patterns.
- likes to experiment and think through problems.
- enjoys science kits, brain teasers, and computers.
- enjoys collecting and categorizing.

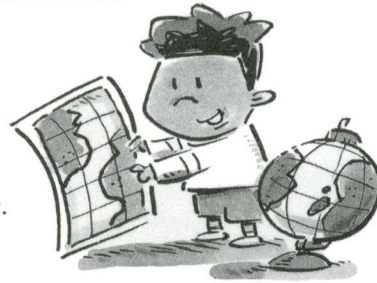
I think \_\_\_\_\_ may be strongly logical-mathematical.



## The spatial person

- enjoy films, videos, and cameras.
- likes to use maps.
- is skilled at using art supplies and building supplies.

I think \_\_\_\_\_ may have spatial intelligence.



## The musical person

- likes humming and singing.
- enjoys playing instruments.
- likes rhythm and melody.
- is sensitive to sound.



I think \_\_\_\_\_ may have musical intelligence.

## The bodily-kinesthetic person

- likes to learn through her senses.
- wants to touch, do, and move.
- enjoys role play and creative movement.
- likes hands-on activities.

I think \_\_\_\_\_ may be strongly bodily-kinesthetic.



## The interpersonal person

- likes to organize and communicate.
- enjoys other people and has lots of friends.
- learns well by interacting with others.

I think \_\_\_\_\_ may be strongly interpersonal.



## The intrapersonal person

- likes to work alone.
- is self-motivated.
- has deep thoughts, ideas, and dreams.

I think \_\_\_\_\_ may be strongly intrapersonal.



\*Based on Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. See *Seven Kinds of Smart* by Thomas Armstrong (Penguin Books).

# Planning for Variety

Let's say you're going to teach a lesson about Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 as recorded in John 6:1-13. Your focus is on the little boy who shared his loaves and fish. Your goal is to help the children understand that God is happy when we share with others and to encourage them to share. In each column below, write as many ideas as you can about how to communicate the story and the goal with the children, each of whom has a unique combination of learning strengths.\*

- If you are interpersonal, you may brainstorm with a few other people.
- If you are intrapersonal, you may prefer to work alone.
- As you work, take the physical position you feel most comfortable in.
- Move around if you like. And feel free to eat or chew something.
- Background sound will be provided by the quiet buzz of people discussing this activity. If you prefer not to have background noise, either go to another room where you can have quiet, put cotton in your ears, or try to ignore the sound.



Auditory

Visual

Tactile-Kinesthetic

\*Suggestion: Use these categories to help you think of ideas for activities. You may think of others.

Art/Craft    Cooking    Dramatization    Active Games  
Quiet Games    Science    Listening    Music and Movement



# Four Angles

Each person looks at things **from his own angle.**



When a person learns something, he will usually approach it from one of these four angles.\*

## The Point Is

- God made each of us to be different from others.
- God made each of us to be unique.
- How does realizing this help us be more effective communicators?
  
- What changes can you make in your classroom, your material, your class routine, and your teaching style to help you communicate more effectively to the unique children in your class?



### I Am Unique

Tell your middle name.  
Tell why that name was given to you.

If you have a small group, share this information with everyone. If you have a large group, divide into smaller groups to share.

\*Based on the research of David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Prentice Hall) and Bernice McCarthy, *The 4MAT System: Teaching to Learning Styles With Right/Left Mode Techniques* (Excel, Inc.).



# Games



## It All Ads Up

**Do:** Divide into pairs. Give each pair some scissors, two safety pins, and a magazine that has advertisements in it. Ask them to look through the ads. Each person cuts out the advertising slogan that he thinks best describes himself. Then he pins that slogan under his name tag.

**Talk about:** Look around. Look at how unique we all are. Why did you choose the slogan you did? Do you think the other person's slogan fits him? Why or why not? Can you think of a better ad slogan for him? What kinds of labels do we sometimes put on children in class? What is dangerous about a label?

## Good for You

**Do:** Get into small groups. Each small group should sit in a circle. Give each small group a large candle. Play an audio tape and ask the group to begin passing the candle around the circle. When you stop the music, people in the group tell the person holding the candle what they like about her. When the music starts again, continue passing the candle around the circle, stopping again when the music stops. Try to let everyone have a chance to hold the candle.

**Talk about:** Listen to what others like about you. These are some of your strengths. How does it make you feel when someone points out your strengths? What happens when you marry someone, work with someone, or teach someone who has different learning strengths? Could conflict result? How? How does that translate to your classroom?



## To Label or Not to Label

**Do:** Give each person a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask each person to do the following:

1. List three words that describe your favorite color.
2. List three words that describe your favorite animal.
3. List three words that describe your favorite city.

Now tell each person that list #1 shows how other people see him. List #2 shows how he sees himself. List #3 shows how he feels about his teaching.

**Talk about:** Do you think these lists were descriptive of you and your teaching? Is there a danger in labeling people by their learning strengths? Why or why not?

ORANGE



### Teacher Training Series **Learning Strengths**

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