



## Learning styles differ for children

At the start of a new school and church year, this may be a time to reflect on how we share God's word with our children through Sunday school and other ministry activities. We might ask ourselves:

- Are all the children engaged in the activities I have planned?
- Do I expect the children to do table activities for 45 minutes?
- Are there some children who never like what I have planned?
- Do I really understand how the children I teach can learn best?

We have the most important message to share with the children we teach and often little time to do it. Therefore, we need to maximize our efforts and really understand each child who comes to us. We must take the time to know how each one learns so that we can reach our goals of sharing God's word to the fullest extent in order for the children to grow spiritually. How are we to do this? The key is determining and then planning for the learning styles of individual children.

A source for ascertaining childhood learning styles is Howard Gardner's book, *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*. In it he notes that in addition to linguistic intelligence and logical-mathematical intelligence well known in our world, there are also kinesthetic, visual-spatial, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. In 1997 he added the naturalist intelligence, and in 1999, the existentialist intelligence.

Following are the various intelligences described and some professionals associated with each:

**Linguistic** — thinking verbally and using words to express complicated meanings (journalists)

### Resources

- Campbell, Bruce. *The Multiple Intelligences Handbook*. Campbell and Associates, 1994.
- Lamb, Annette. "Technology and Multiple Intelligences." January 2004.  
<http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic68h.htm>.  
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**Logical-mathematical** — using orderly reasoning skills to carry out a task or process or to make connections; using conceptual symbolic thought to understand the world (scientists)

**Kinesthetic** — maneuvering objects to create timing, rhythm and body-mind harmony (surgeons and athletes)

**Visual-spatial** — thinking three-dimensionally, making and maneuvering mental/imaginary pictures (pilots, painters)

**Musical** — discriminating between the qualities of sound to compose, contemplate and reproduce music (composers, musicians)

**Interpersonal** — interacting with others successfully by considering a variety of perspectives and using verbal and non-verbal clues (teachers, actors)

**Intrapersonal** — understanding and knowing oneself in order to give direction to life and the awareness of the human condition (psychologists, philosophers)

**Naturalist** — finding patterns and meaning in the created world (gardeners, veterinarians)

**Existentialist** — asking the large ("big picture" / "why") questions about the world encountered

While everyone possesses each of these intelligences to a degree, some are stronger in each person. As teachers, we want every child to feel successful and excited about studying God's word. Therefore, we want to plan activities that will allow each child to learn out of his or her strength.

To learn about their individual strengths, we can talk with the children about their

activities and hobbies or ask them to check off activities they would like to do from the lists below.

- conduct newspaper reports; compose scripts; read and research Bible stories; write Bible stories in their own words; solve Bible word puzzles; voice dramatic readings (*linguistic*)
- sequence Bible stories; prepare time lines; compare and contrast Bible people or events; play memory games; solve hypothetical situations; make connections between biblical and present-day times (*logical-mathematical*)
- invent dances to tell Bible stories; participate in "buzzer"-answer Bible fact games; create cheers related to Bible lessons; play paper square Bible game; go on Bible scavenger hunts (*kinesthetic*)
- create pictures of Bible stories or events; design collages; construct mobiles; assemble bulletin boards; produce videotapes (*visual-spatial*)
- play background music; write new songs or lyrics to a familiar tune about Bible topics; produce finger plays (*musical*)
- perform group projects; interview Bible characters; work in think-share pairs to reflect on Bible topics (*interpersonal*)
- keep a journal of things learned in the classroom; reflect on the value of Bible study topics outside the classroom (*intrapersonal*)
- take pretend walks (ex: places Jesus went, wilderness wandering); prepare Bible foods; participate in a live nativity (*naturalist*)
- brainstorm "why" questions; suggest ideas for Bible projects (*existentialist*)

Although we cannot plan for each type of intelligence every week, we can make sure all children are able to work from their strengths throughout the year by offering a variety and balance of activities. This plan will help children to feel welcome and excited about God and learning God's word. **BT**

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