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Home schooling – Not all children fit in the same box!

MARTIE DU PLESSIS

Acknowledgements to Cynthia Tobias, author of *The Way They Learn* and *Every Child Can Succeed*.

When I take my children to the shoe store and the shoes don't fit, I can't change their feet. Of course, they can't just go barefoot. I must find the shoes that match the design of their feet instead of insisting that their feet conform to the design of a specific shoe.

Unfortunately, education offers very few styles of shoes. When a child's foot doesn't fit the shoe that's offered, we are told, "Change the foot."

It's time to change the shoe.

You don't have to figure out what specific learning style each particular child is – just listen to how they communicate with you and each other. Even if you never remember any formal terms, you can increase effectiveness with virtually all styles of learners simply by observing their behaviours and reactions, and being responsive to their needs. Sharpen your observation skills, and keep an open mind as we take a look at some of the most obvious characteristics children will show us that reveal their unique learning styles.

The Gotta-have-a plan , just-say-what-you-mean, do-it-by-the-book kids:

These children are nothing if not predictable. They don't like surprises, and

they do their best when they know exactly what to expect. They are very practical and concerned with standards and rules. You will keep them happiest when you provide a schedule and agenda, or at least a quick overview of what you will be teaching. The more concrete examples you can provide for them, the clearer their understanding will be. Tangible rewards like stickers, charts and completed checklists are usually very effective for motivation.

The let-me-think-about-it, don't-rush-me, how-do-I-know-this-is-the-best-way kids:

These kids are dedicated to being as thorough and deliberate as possible in almost everything they do. They usually prefer to take their time, even if it means accepting a penalty for being late. Since they thrive on learning for learning's sake, they will often ask you questions that call for complicated and lengthy answers. Even very young children may not be satisfied with simple stickers on a chart as proof that they are learning. These logical, systematic minds avoid highly charged, emotional situations. Because of their inherent need to analyse and think through situations, you may have to use more patience in your approach to them, giving them sufficient time to complete each task.

The all-for-one-one for all, why-can't-we-all-just-get-along, let's-make-sure-everyone-is-happy kids:

These tender souls are not nearly as concerned about facts and details as they are about the people involved. Although they are just as smart and capable as any

other style, they prefer to not waste their intelligence on anything they don't personally care about or see an application for in their lives. They are highly motivated by the fact that what they do will please those they most love and respect. Most admit they would work like crazy trying to excel for a parent or teacher who loved them. Learning is a highly social experience, so they have to consciously dedicate themselves to completing work that must be done independently. One of the greatest motivations to get tasks completed is to let them work together as a group, enjoying the process of achieving a common goal.

Their natural empathy and compassion will make them stand out in a group as natural helpers.

The boredom-is-my-greatest-enemy, how-much-is-really-necessary, I've-got-a-great-idea kids:

These children are driven by a need to keep things moving. With quick and usually accurate instincts, they rarely spend much time researching or debating options – they just go for it, accepting risk as a natural part of life.

Because these kids have a difficult time hiding their boredom and they rarely have the discipline to sit through a lengthy explanation, they often get dubbed as troublemakers or attention deficit. They are rarely motivated to deal with anything that is already in the past; the future is much more appealing.

The greatest motivation for learning often comes from working with a teacher or parent who has developed a special and

unique relationship with them. When we minister or teach children, we partake in one of the most precious and important aspects of the Great Commission. These are young lives that need our direction as well as our love.