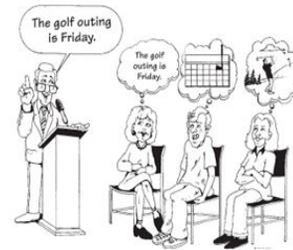

Approaches to Parental Learning Styles



Welcome to Approaches to Parental Learning Styles: A lesson designed to help you navigate the various possible learning styles of the parents of your students or any communication partners you may have. I am teaching learning styles not to put people in a box, but rather, to prepare you with the tools you'll need to accommodate styles when providing information to parents. Today we will cover: The 4 most common learning styles, why they are relevant in early intervention, tips for how to teach for each learning style, give an example of a framework of teaching for all styles at once and provide some recommended readings and takeaway points from this presentation. I will include some activities and a real-life application scenario to help facilitate your learning.

Learning Objectives

1. Early Intervention (EI) professionals will clearly understand some learning styles and how they can influence each individual.
2. EI professionals will be better able to adapt their communication styles to meet the learning styles of the families they are working with.
3. EI professionals will learn how to provide resources for the parent based on their appropriate learning style.

Today we are going to focus on having you clearly understand the different learning styles and how they can influence each individual. This understanding will help you communicate more effectively with parents and motivate their involvement in their child's EI program, and you will learn how to provide resources for parents based on different learning styles.

These objectives will help better serve you as EI professionals delivering information. This training will also help you communicate information in other areas of your life: with friends, collaborating with other professionals, etc.

Activity



Let's make a paper airplane!

1. Follow instructions diagrams
2. Follow directions read out loud
3. Read written step-by-step instructions
4. View demonstration video / Follow instructor's demonstration

Before we start the activity, I would like to leave you with an example of a piece of information you can share while incorporating all the learning styles.

I will use a "how to" example to show that all types of information can be shared with the learning styles in mind.

When teaching someone how to make a paper airplane, you can consider visual learners by putting images on the board, for aural learners you can explain the directions out loud (and focus on intonation and stress patterns that will help the learner hear the important points), for a reading/writing learner you can have them take notes as you speak (and provide them with a list of written directions). Finally for kinesthetic learners, you can physically demonstrate making it in front of the class or show a demonstration video to the class.

At the end of the activity, ask participants which round they did best. Then, introduce the idea of learning styles. See the next slide.

***See separate document: "Paper Airplane Activity" for details on this activity. To ensure novelty, use different type of airplanes for each round. See www.foldnfly.com for different types of airplanes.**

What is a Learning Style?

Learning style relates to the way in which different individuals learn and process information (Boneva and Mihova, 2012). Learning style is an approach to learning unique to each individual.

The idea of learning styles is controversial. Nevertheless, being aware of different modalities of learning could benefit learners as well as teachers.

Many different learning style models have been developed over the past few decades. The most well-known include the VARK, the Kolb's Experiential Model, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, Dunn and Dunn, etc. (Hawk and Shah, 2007; Boneva and Mihova, 2012).

Some of you may have some familiarity with learning styles while others may be asking "what is a learning style?"

Learning styles relate to the way in which different individuals learn (Boneva and Mihova, 2012). Learning style is an approach to learning unique to each individual, and is often based on strengths, weaknesses, and preferences.

We all know that people learn differently. Learning styles compartmentalize the way people learn based on strategies they use to absorb information.

The idea of learning styles is controversial. Some people do not think that they exist. Nevertheless, thinking about different modalities of learning could benefit a variety of learners, as well as teachers. Being aware that each individual learns differently and prefers certain modalities when it comes to learning, can help make teaching and learning process more efficient and effective.

Although there are many learning style models that have been developed, today we are going to talk about the 4 most common learning styles according to the VARK guide to learning styles developed by Neil Fleming in 1992.

The four most common learning styles according to the VARK are visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic.

Why are learning styles relevant to E.I.?

Parents are unique, in that they have different learning preferences/styles.

Understanding parents' learning styles and matching EI delivery method with the learning styles may help:

- Create more effective communication with parents
- Increase parents' motivation to participate or be involved in EI for their child
- Aid parents' learning and retaining information

Why are learning styles relevant to your profession?

Parents are unique in their strategies for understanding/storing information

As an EI professional, you will need to communicate a lot of information to parents about their child's goals and progress.

You can increase parents' motivation to be involved in EI for their child

You want to establish effective communication of information with parents to ensure they retain the information you are providing.

The Four Learning Styles According to the VARK

- Visual
- Auditory (Aural)
- Reading/ Writing
- Kinesthetic

(Fleming, 1992)

Let's take a look at each learning style in more depth...

As mentioned, today we will cover the four most common learning styles according to the VARK Model developed by Neil Fleming in 1992. The learning styles we will be discussing today are.... See *slide*.

Type #1: Visual Learner

- Learns best through visual representations of information.
 - Prefers using graphics, charts or diagrams, written information, and spatial understanding.
-

The first learning style we are going to look at is visual.

Visual learners tend to absorb information best if they are able to actually see it. This preference uses symbolism and different formats, fonts and colors to emphasise important points. It does not include video and pictures that show real images and it is not Visual merely because it is shown on a screen. Visual learners also like to draw and make diagrams to memorize

Type #2: Auditory (Aural) Learner

- Learns best when information is presented via auditory means.
 - Prefers learning through listening, discussions, auditory repetition, etc.
-

The next type of learning style is auditory or aural. These learners absorb information best through sound. That could mean through other people giving instructions, or music. They also find speaking to others helpful in learning. Teaching others could also be a preference of learning things more in depth.

Type #3: Reading/ Writing Learner

- Learns best when they receive and convey information through written or printed form.
 - Prefers reading and/or taking notes.
-

The third type of learning style is reading/writing. Reading/writing learners prefer to receive information through written or printed forms. Note taking is helpful and re-reading or rewriting material.

Type #4: Kinesthetic Learner

- Learns best by doing or through hands-on activities.
- Prefers learning by physical movements and using the senses.

The last type of learning style we are covering is kinesthetic. Kinesthetic learners absorb information best if they are able to physically perform actions or imagine actually performing actions related to the information. They prefer to see someone act out what is expected, get a chance to try it themselves, or use their senses when learning new information.

What's Your Learning Style?

1. Fill out the VARK Questionnaire.
2. Calculate # of V, A, R, K.
3. Find out what your learning style is!
4. Break into groups based on your learning style.
5. Brainstorming Activity

Activity Outline: The instructor will engage EI professionals in the following activity. Each EI professional takes the VARK quiz themselves in order to find out their own learning style. Then, the instructor will have the employees split into four groups based on their learning style. Each group will brainstorm some effective ways to present information to individuals with their learning style. Each group should also keep in mind that they will be presenting information to parents, and therefore should come up with strategies relevant to educating parents. Each group will then share their strategies with the class facilitated by the instructor. After each group has their turn, the instructor will then show the next slides with strategies on how to teach each learner and will present whichever ones were missed in the activity.

Script: Now, I am going to hand out a questionnaire for all of you to fill out in order to find out what your learning style is. As mentioned, there are many different types of learning styles questionnaires out there developed based on different models. The questionnaire we will be using today is called the VARK questionnaire based on the VARK learning styles model and covers the four learning styles we've discussed so far.

Once you are done answering the questions, you will find a chart that shows you which learning style (represented by V, A, R, K) is tied to each response. You will circle the letter of VARK corresponding to your answer. Then, add up the number of

Vs As Rs and Ks to determine your dominant style(s).

Once you have found out what type of learning style you have, I will have you break into four groups based on your learning style and you will brainstorm some effective strategies that can be helpful when presenting information to parents who have the same learning style as you. Keep in mind how you learn best yourselves and try to put yourself in the parents' shoes. We will do the brainstorming for about 5 minutes. Each group will then share their strategies with everyone.

***Also available online at <http://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/>**

Strategies for Teaching a Visual Learner

- Use diagrams, flow charts, or other infographics to organize and convey information to parents.
- Highlight and color code handouts or books for parents.
- Make sure that information is organized neatly on paper. Provide enough white space and avoid putting too much information on a single sheet of paper.
- Write out checklists.

More strategies include:

- Have parents pick out keywords or main points and highlight them in different colors to help them retain information.
- Write out and use flash cards for review of material.
- Draw pictures or cartoons of concepts.
- Use different font styles and sizes when creating handouts to enhance readability.

Can you think of other strategies?

***See separate take home handout for a list of strategies.**

Strategies for Teaching an Auditory Learner

- Engage parents in conversation about the subject matter.
- Read material aloud to them.
- Q & A with parents.
- Have parents record sessions and review them with you.
- Have parents record themselves doing intervention and review it together with you.

More strategies include:

- Engage parents in conversation about the subject matter.
- Question parents about the material.
- Ask for oral summaries of material.
- Have parents record sessions and review them with you.
- Have parents record themselves doing intervention and review it together with you.
- Read material aloud to them.

Can you think of other strategies?

***See separate take home handout for a list of strategies.**

Strategies for Teaching a Reading/Writing Learner

- Provide parents with handouts with information arranged into hierarchies and points. Use clear headings, bullet points, etc.
- Make lists.
- Turn diagrams and charts into words.
- Provide glossaries or a list of definitions.
- Have parents take notes during EI sessions.

More strategies include:

- Provide parents with handouts with clearly typed words, headings and paragraphs division.
- When preparing a handout, arrange information into hierarchies and points.
- Create clear lists using bullet points or numbering.
- Turn diagrams and charts into words.
- Provide glossaries or a list of definitions.
- Rewrite main ideas or key points into other words.
- Have parents take notes during EI sessions.

Can you think of other strategies?

***See separate take home handout for a list of strategies.**

Strategies for Teaching a Kinesthetic Learner

- Invite parent to be present during EI session and watch the intervention.
- Ask parent to try to do the intervention during the session.
- Have parents record a video of themselves doing intervention with their child and review it together with you later.
- Use some form of body movement (snapping fingers, pacing, mouthing ideas) to aid learning and retaining new information.

More strategies include:

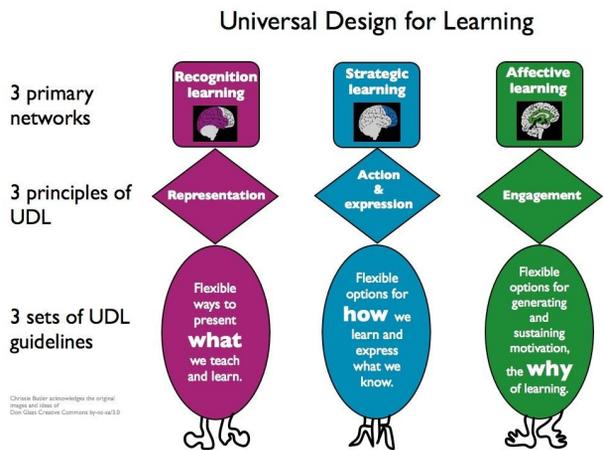
- Invite parent to be present during EI session and watch the intervention.
- Ask parent to try to do the intervention during the session.
- Have parents record a video of themselves doing intervention with their child and review it together with you.
- Have parent take notes (on paper, tablet, or computer) while reading or listening.
- Use some form of body movement (snapping fingers, pacing, mouthing ideas) to aid learning and retaining new information.

Can you think of other strategies?

***See separate take home handout for a list of strategies.**

How can you efficiently teach so many learning styles at once?

- Universal Design of Learning (UDL)
 - A set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn
 - Suggests everyone is unique in learning
 - Provides strategies for incorporating all learning styles in a single presentation
- 3 Core Principles in UDL



When sharing information with parents, it is important to consider all possible ways of learning. Instead of simply speaking to the parent, you should present the information using different modalities. For example, provide some visual aids and written instructions on how to practice some skills with their child at home. If you get the chance in the classroom, you may also be able to show them how to engage in certain learning activities with their child by modeling it for them.

The UDL (Universal Design of Learning) is an established method teachers use in the classroom to ensure the accommodation of all learning styles at once. The UDL, through its 3 core principles, gives you an idea of how a person can teach for all learning styles in one presentation of material. These principles are:

Principle I : Representation refers to the “what” of learning and how we gather facts and categorize what we see, hear and read. The goal is to provide multiple means of representation. For example, provide options by activating/supplying background knowledge, using multiple media, offering alternatives for auditory or visual information, clarifying vocabulary and symbols, etc.

Principle II : Action and Expression refers to the “how” of learning and how we organize and express our ideas. The goal is to provide multiple means of action and expression. For example, provide options by setting appropriate goals, monitoring progress, using multiple media or tools for communication, optimizing access to technologies as learning tool, etc.

Principle III : Engagement refers to the “why” of learning and how learners get engaged and stay motivated. The goal is to provide multiple means of engagement. For example, provide options by developing self-assessment or reflection tools.

optimizing individual choice and autonomy, etc.

***See http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/udlguidelines_theorypractice for more information on UDL strategies.**

Scenario

- A parent of a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Having difficulty with child outbursts
- Parent is reading/writing learner

Here are some ways you can incorporate the parent's learning style to this situation:

- Provide written list of steps of intervention
- Ask the parent for notes on the environment when outbursts occur
- Provide readings

Now, I will present a scenario you may encounter as EI professionals. In some particular cases such as this, it can be beneficial for you to point parents into the direction of determining their own learning style so you can provide the most helpful resources to them.

The scenario is: A parent with a child who was recently diagnosed with ASD is struggling with their child's outbursts. You have helped the parent determine they are a reading/writing learner. During your individual session with the parent, as well as working with the child, you are thinking of ways to help the parent communicate with their child.

Based on their learning style as a reading writing/reading learner, you can provide some helpful resources such as: written steps for approaching the situation, have them take notes at home about the environment (e.g. potential triggers and how they currently handle the outbursts), and provide them with readings on some helpful strategies other parents of children with ASD use.

Let's Practice!

Role Playing Activity:

- Split into pairs.
- Try to partner up with someone of a different learning style.
- You will think of strategies for presenting information to parents and present them to your partner.

Activity Outline: Employees will partner up, preferably with someone of a different learning style. Each person will take a turn at being the parent and the EI professional. The EI professional will think of some news or information they need to share with the parent, e.g. an intervention, their child's progress, upcoming events that may be beneficial to them/their child, etc. In the interest of time, each person will get their list of news at the same time and, depending on the learning style of their partner, they will get 2 minutes to design a brief way to share the news. They will take turns playing each role and then give each other feedback.

Script: Now, we are going to engage in a role playing activity. Please partner up, preferably with someone of a different learning style. You will each take turns playing the role of the EI professional and the parent.

The EI professional will think of some news or information they need to share with the parent, e.g. an intervention, their child's progress, upcoming events that may be beneficial to them/their child, etc. Please take a minute to do so and then, think of how you will convey the information to the parent applying the strategies we've talked about (or ones that you already knew). Make sure to consider the learning style of the person you are paired with. Provide "the parent" with the information. The parent will then give you feedback on what was helpful or not helpful. Then, switch roles.

Takeaway Points

- People learn differently. Don't make assumptions about learning style or reading ability. Instead, consider their learning styles.
- Learning styles are preferences -- not to be mistaken with deficits.
- Whether or not you believe in learning styles, keep in mind that everyone's brain functions a little differently.

After the presentation today, there are a few bits of information we hope you are able to keep with you throughout your personal life and professional career.

1. Everyone learns differently. Don't make assumptions for how someone learns. Instead, incorporate all the styles in one presentation of information. Sometimes, as in the described scenario, you may find it beneficial to have the parent determine their learning style. Also, making reading as accessible as possible, always providing visual aids if possible.
2. Learning styles are preferences, and refer to the unique way in which different individuals learn and process information. Learning styles are not deficits.
3. The idea of learning styles is controversial. Nevertheless, being aware of different modalities of learning could benefit learners as well as teachers. Whether or not you believe in the psychology behind learning styles, we can all agree everyone learns differently and this should impact how you communicate.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Universal Design for Learning: Meeting the Needs of All Students
By: Patti Ralabate, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Balasubramaniam, G. & Indhu, K. (2016). A study of learning style preferences among first year undergraduate medical students using VARK model. *Education in Medicine Journal*, 8(4), 15-21. doi: 10.5959/eimj.v8i4.440

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