

Approaches to Parental Learning Styles: Takeaway Points

1. Understanding parents' learning styles and matching EI delivery method with them 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
2. When it comes to learning, people have different ways in which they learn best. Some learn better by listening, while others by viewing diagrams or flowcharts. These "ways" are often called modalities, which refers to sensory channels or pathways through which individuals send, receive and store information. Perception, memory and sensation comprise the concept of modality. The modalities include visual, auditory, tactile/kinesthetic, smell and taste.
3. There are many different learning modalities/styles inventories. One of the most popular ones is the VARK learning style inventory developed by Neil Fleming in 1987, published in 1992. The VARK stands for Visual, Auditory (aural), Read/write, and Kinesthetic sensory modalities that are used for learning information.
 - **Visual Learner:** Prefers to learn information presented using diagrams, charts, or other types of infographics. This does not simply include photographs or videos, but is more about visual representations of information or knowledge.
 - **Auditory (Aural) Learner:** Prefers to learn information that is heard or spoken.
 - **Read/write Learner:** Prefers to learn information displayed as words.
 - **Kinesthetic Learner:** Prefers to learn information by doing. This includes physical movements, hands-on practice, simulation, etc.

Note that these learning styles do not have hard and fast boundaries. In fact, more often than not, people have more than one dominant learning styles. This is called multimodality.

4. Find out what your learning style is according to the VARK inventory, by taking the VARK questionnaire: <http://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/>
5. In general, you should aim to communicate all information with every learning style in mind.
6. If you find yourself in a scenario where it may be appropriate to do so, you can try to recognize a parent's learning style--either by observation, asking them directly, or having them take the VARK questionnaire--then you can use strategies to accommodate that learning style. Below are some suggested strategies for the four most common learning styles:

Learning Style	Strategies for Accommodating Parents with the Learning Style
<p>Visual - A visual learner has a preference for visual representations of information, e.g. diagrams, infographics, demonstrations, displays, charts, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use diagrams, flow charts, or other infographics to organize and convey information to parents. ● Highlight and color code handouts or books for parents. ● Have parents pick out keywords or main points and highlight them in different colors to help them retain information. ● Make sure that information is organized neatly. Provide enough white space and avoid putting too much information on a single sheet of paper. ● Write out checklists. ● 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.
<p>Auditory - An Auditory learner has a preference for the transfer of information through auditory cues/listening and speaking, i.e. spoken words of self or others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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.
<p>Read/Write - A Read/write learner prefers to learn information that is displayed as words.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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.

<p>Kinesthetic - A Kinesthetic learner has a preference for learning by doing and using their touch/feel sense, e.g. physical movements, touching, feeling, holding, practical hands-on experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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.
---	---

Resources:

UMass Dartmouth. (n.d.). Tips for educators on accommodating different learning styles. Retrieved from

<http://www.umassd.edu/dss/resources/facultystaff/howtoteachandaccommodate/howtoaccommodatedifferentlearningstyles/>

Anderson, Margaret. (n.d.). Modalities. Retrieved from

<http://facultyweb.cortland.edu/andersmd/learning/Modalities.htm>

Vark Learn Limited. (n.d.). The VARK questionnaire. Retrieved from

<http://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/>

Vark Learn Limited. (n.d.). VARK strategies: Strategies matched to VARK preferences. Retrieved from

<http://vark-learn.com/strategies/>