FINDING THE SMART PART IN EVERY CHILD

The “three R’s” aren’t the only measure of intelligence. Perhaps your little Einstein is actually “music smart” or “body smart.” By Marge Kennedy

point out that traditional teaching and testing focus only on two of the seven kinds of intelligence people possess—language and logic skills. So kids who don’t learn in a style that relies on language and logic are labeled deficient.

According to Armstrong, it’s teaching methods, not the kids, that are faulty. “In traditional education, we try to re-make children to get them to learn in our way. In fact, we need to ре-make the way we teach so that it fits the

SMART WAYS KIDS LEARN
As the title of Armstrong’s book suggests, there are seven styles of learning—seven distinct intelligences—that students bring with them to the task of learning. Verbal abilities and logic skills, which make up the traditional “three R’s: reading, writing, and arith-

It’s up to parents and teachers to discover the learning style that allows each child’s abilities to shine.
**Finding the Smart Part in Every Child**

Have been like to be a Civil War soldier or an explorer at the North Pole? **All kids have each of these learning styles to some degree, but obviously room requires a shift in attitude,** Armstrong explains. **“With MI we work from kids’ strengths, rather than trying to compensate for weaknesses.”** It’s not necessary, MI supporters point out, to teach every new concept in a way that draws on each learning style. A history lesson, for example, might draw on words, picture, people, and self smarts, while a math concept might be facilitated by calling on logic and body smarts. “Over the course of the day, all children should be able to bring their unique balance of learning styles into play,” adds Thomas Hoerr, principal of the New City School in St. Louis, which has incorporated MI into its curriculum.

**What Parents Can Do**

The parents’ role in this, suggests Armstrong, is to become a “cooperative advocate” for their kids at school. For your picture-smart child, as an example, you might say to the teacher, “I know my child really learns by drawing. Are there ways to let him use drawing in his math work?” If the reaction is negative, provide your child the opportunities to explore learning using his particular smarts at home.

One last warning: Armstrong is concerned that MI could become another exercise in labeling. “Tagging a child an artistic learner or any of the other ones defeats the purpose of MI,” he stresses. “Our goal is to broaden, not limit, each learner’s potential. Let children use their special gifts, but also encourage them to explore all of the intelligences. That’s the road to discovery.”

**Which smarts come naturally to your child?**

Whatever they are, use them as a springboard to help him learn.

**Music Smart.** You’ll find that background music doesn’t distract these kids; it helps them absorb their studies! Information presented melodically—whether in ditties or even rap songs—hits home with music-smart kids. Try clapping out anything that can be put to rhythm—times tables, perhaps?—and watch this child “get” it.

**Body Smart.** The child who suddenly catches on to today’s lesson as she walks home from school probably has body smarts. She also needs plenty of hands-on opportunities for learning through performing in skits and other physical experiences. Be sure these kids have breaks to stretch and move throughout the day to keep their learning focus sharp.

**People Smart.** Group projects, which require kids to compare notes, discuss, and decide, are ideal routes to learning for people-smart kids. They are very sociable, and learning as part of a group rates high for them.

**Self Smart.** Ask the self-smart child how a situation would feel to him and he’ll grasp the lesson immediately. This child is often accused of daydreaming when, in fact, he is absorbing his lessons by personalizing them. What would it