

Child's own learning style deserves special attention

What all children need beginning early in their lives, says Thomas Armstrong, is "someone who believes in them and supports the way in which they learn best."

The author of *In Their Own Way* contends that because that kind of flexibility is rare in today's schools, parents must accept that responsibility. "Parents first need to develop their own inner love of learning—that is the single most important thing they can do to help their kids," says Armstrong.

Beyond that, he says, parents need to recognize and encourage the particular learning style of their child. Armstrong warns that it is a mistake to pigeonhole a child into any one of the seven varieties of intelligence—no matter that he may write well but stumble on the dance floor, read poorly but tell a great story.

Children possess all seven intelligences to varying degrees, though they usually will show obvious strengths in two or three—not just one. Armstrong's advice on identifying and nurturing a child's personal learning style in each of the seven intelligences:

● **Linguistic Intelligence.** Verbally gifted, they demonstrate highly developed auditory skills and enjoy playing with sounds and words. They like to write and read, tell stories, play word games, and can remember facts and trivia.

"Children strong in this area learn best by saying, hearing and seeing words," says Armstrong. Motivate them by talking with them, providing them with books, recordings and opportunities to use their writing abilities. Pencils and pens, tape-recorders and typewriters are their tools.

● **Logical-Mathematical Intelligence.** Conceptual thinkers who explore patterns and relationships, ex-

perimenting with things in an orderly and controlled manner. They question natural events: "Where does the universe end?" or "When did time begin?" They typically compute arithmetic in their heads and reason out other problems.

They learn by forming concepts and distinguishing patterns, so provide them with time and concrete materials for their experiments—like science kits, games such as chess, Clue and brain teasers, a computer and collecting materials (stamps, coins, insects) they can classify and categorize.

● **Spatial Intelligence.** They think in mental pictures and images. Rearrange the furniture and they'll either love or hate it—nothing in between. Drawing and artwork, designing things, building-block projects and simply daydreaming all comes naturally.

The key is learning visually. Teach these children with images, pictures and color. Films, videos, diagrams, maps and charts motivate them. Provide them with cameras, telescopes, three-dimensional building supplies and art supplies. Family exercise: Share vivid descriptions of dreams.

● **Musical Intelligence.** They often sing, hum or whistle melodies to themselves. Some react outwardly to music, singing along and moving to the beat. Others show appreciation and voice strong opinions about different kinds of music. They may play musical instruments or want to. They also are sensitive to non-verbal sounds that others overlook—crickets chirping, a bird singing, distant bells.

This group of youngsters learns through rhythm and melody. Memorization comes easier when sung out. Study is often more effective with music in the background. Records, tapes, musical instruments motivate them.

● **Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence.** Breakfast-table squirmers and the first on the playground,

they pick up knowledge through bodily sensations. Athletically gifted, they show interest in sports, dance, acting—anything physical. They communicate using gestures and body language, like to act out their thoughts and are clever mimics. Occasionally, they express their skills in crafts, like woodworking or sewing. Without appropriate outlets, they may be labeled hyperactive.

Learning comes with touching and moving. Motivate them through "role play, dramatic improvisation, creative movement and all kinds of physical activity," says Armstrong. Hands-on activities are their learning opportunities.

● **Interpersonal Intelligence.** These are "people people" who frequently become leaders of the classroom, playground, neighborhood kids. They know how to organize, communicate, mediate and manipulate. They have a lot of friends.

Learning comes through relating, cooperating and interacting with others. Provide them with opportunities in peer-group dynamics. School and community activities open learning doors for them. Family activities can explore anything of interest—as long as the family goes together.

● **Intrapersonal Intelligence.** Another strong personality group, but these independent kids with a powerful sense of self shy away from groups and prefer to work alone, even isolated. Their inner life is rich—dreams, intuition, feelings and ideas. They are the diary writers, self-confident kids who always seem to have something semi-secretive going on.

These self-motivating children learn best by themselves. "It's very important for them to have their own private space at home where they can work on hobbies and interests undisturbed and spend time in quiet introspection," says Armstrong. Respect their privacy and acknowledge to them that it is all right to be independent.