

Information for parents

Strategies for parents to implement to encourage learning

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The following suggestions can be implemented by parents to help their children learn more easily, especially in the area of literacy and, as a result, hopefully to enjoy the whole process of learning.

Learn about your child's disabilities if your child has been diagnosed with a disability, so that you can understand that your child may not learn in the same way as other children. Find out what tasks and activities will be more difficult for your child to learn and what you can do to make learning and literacy easier and fun for your child.

Become an unobtrusive detective: Observe your child and look for clues that may tell you how your child learns best. Does he or she like to look at things, hear things explained and does he or she want to touch and feel things? What is your child's best way of learning and what area causes difficulty? You can use this information to motivate and encourage your child's learning.

Teach through your child's strengths: Please do not force reading and make your child hold a book and read for five or ten minutes every night because the teacher said so. This is placing him or her in a failure situation. Instead, allow your child to listen to an audio book and watch a video. Captioned videos can be very useful for some children as they are seeing the printed word and hearing it at the same time.

Find out your child's natural intelligence and respect and challenge that intelligence: Learning does not always have to take place through reading. Many children with difficulties learning have average intelligence and they can be challenged through the use of a multisensory approach. Use all your child's senses: Touch, taste, seeing, hearing, and moving as means of gathering information. Think about Howard's Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI). Gardner suggests each human being operates with several distinct forms of intelligence*. The development of these intelligences depends to a large extent on the culture of which the child is part, the particular environment the child inhabits, and the extent to which each child is considered a valued and

valuable part of his or her world. You need also to remember that the intelligences are not mutually exclusive – they act in consort.

Please remember that mistakes do not equal failure: Many children see their mistakes as huge, if not gigantic failures. You can show your child, through modelling and through a good-humoured acceptance that we all make mistakes. They are not the end of the world. Mistakes can often lead to new solutions. Your child needs to learn that mistakes are expected, inspected and respected.

Recognise that there may be some things that your child will not be able to do or will have great difficulty doing all his or her life: Help your child understand that just because he or she cannot do something it does not mean he or she is a failure. Every one of us has a number of things he or she cannot do. Remember the things your child can do and not the things he or she cannot do. Remember the glass is half full, not half empty.

Try not to struggle with homework and activities that will draw you into an adversarial position with your son or daughter: You will both end up upset and angry and you will send yet another message to your child that he or she has failed. Share with and work with the teachers and other members of your child's educational team.

Encourage your child to read, but make sure what he or she reads is at his or her reading level: Many children with difficulties learning are reading below their year level. Find out what books your son or daughter enjoys reading. Let him or her choose his or her own books and go for books that have pictures and larger print.

Use television creatively: Do not be afraid to use videos and television as a medium of learning for your child. Your child may learn to focus, sustain attention, listen carefully, increase his or her vocabulary, and see how things fit together through looking at television. He or she can also learn about sequencing and task analysis, reading a television program and even learning to tell the time to find out when a particular program may be on. If your child has watched a video or a specific



program remember to ask what happened at the end. How did the film end? What happened first, second, third etc? If you ask such questions your child will learn about sequencing etc. Remember to be patient and gradually increase the complexity of the questions you ask and the responses you expect. The use of captioned programs may also help your child and can help to develop reading skills.

Encourage your son or daughter to develop a hobby such as stamp collecting, coin collecting, collecting pandas or VWs.

Develop your child's special talent or skill. What does he or she enjoy doing? Find an area in which he or she can shine or excel.

Develop "twinkle wrinkles" around your eyes. Your child will pick up on your twinkles.

Listen, listen, listen and listen to your child.

Above all, value your child's uniqueness and individuality and remember that your child probably needs love most when he or she deserves it least!

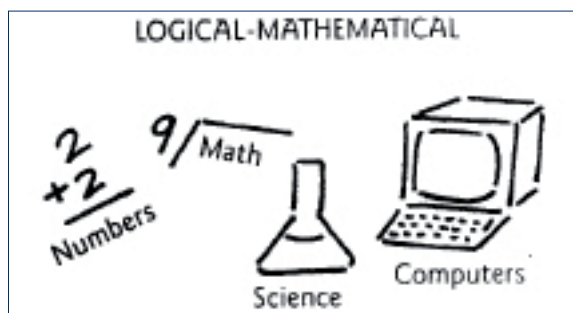
* Gardner, H. (1983). Frames of mind. New York: Basic Books Inc.

Gardner's Eight Intelligences:



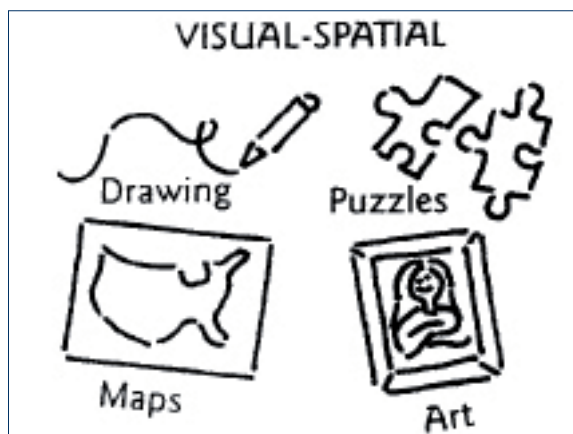
Linguistic:

Language, the basis of all understanding and communication.



Logical-mathematical:

Patterns and relationships in concrete and symbolic forms.



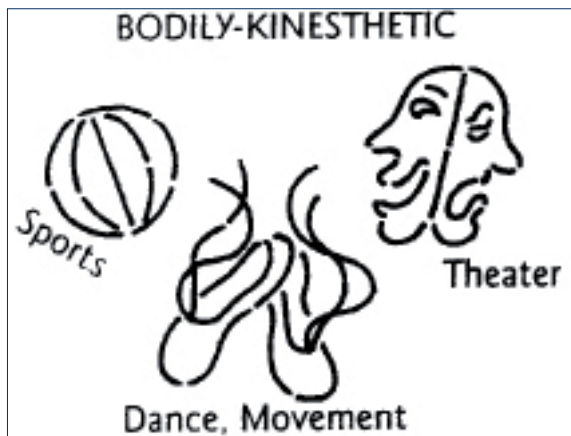
Spatial:

Visual imagination and location of self and other objects.



Musical:

Appreciation and creation of patterns of sound used as a means of expression.



Bodily-kinesthetic:

Movement and bodily control for tasks, play and expression, from writing to sport and dance.



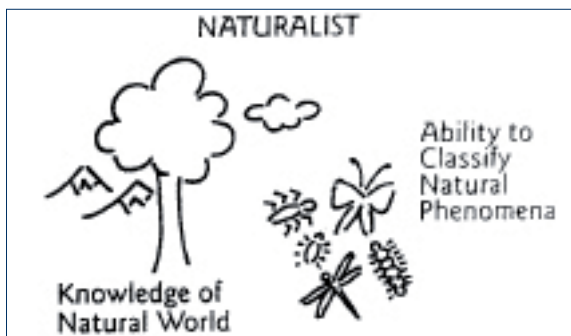
Intrapersonal:

Being in touch with emotions, thoughts and goals: knowing ourselves.



Interpersonal:

The ability to understand, empathise with and relate to other people.



Naturalistic:

The ability to identify and classify

Illustrations taken from Winebrenner, S., (1996). Teaching kids with learning difficulties in the regular classroom. Minneapolis, M.N., Free Spirit Publishing Inc., p.51.

For more Information

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