

***The Way They Learn*** by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias, M.Ed.**Communicating With Your Child's Teacher: An Early Childhood Profile**

The following is based on information in *The Way They Learn* by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias. It is designed to be a guide for parents in describing each individual child's strengths and preferences to a teacher.

As you share this information with your child's teacher, remember, you are sharing what you know about your child and asking the teacher for insights that may aid you in helping your child understand, appreciate and cope with demands in the classroom that may or may not match his or her natural learning style. The following should be filled out by you as you carefully observe and talk with your child.

**Child's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

*Each line represents a continuum—place a mark somewhere between the extremes.*

**How do you best concentrate?**

Seems most alert during which time(s) of day?

Early morning \_\_\_\_\_ Late evening

When concentrating, even at play, needs or doesn't need some sort of intake (food or drink).

Needs to eat or drink \_\_\_\_\_ Distracted by eating or drinking

Seems to be able to concentrate and play best in bright or dim light.

Bright light \_\_\_\_\_ Dim light

**How do you best remember?**

**When trying to remember or review, is successful most often when he or she can:**

Repeat the words aloud, or turn the information into a song or rhyme.

Almost always \_\_\_\_\_ Almost never

See a picture of what is meant, draw or cut out pictures, or use colorful folders, stickers, etc., to organize toys or materials.

Almost always \_\_\_\_\_ Almost never

Keep on the move, take frequent breaks, work in spurts of great energy, shift positions.

Almost always \_\_\_\_\_ Almost never

## How do you process and interact with information?

### When listening to information or directions, usually seems to

Get the gist of things, understand the main idea.

Almost always

Almost never

Remember specific details, can repeat things word for word.

Almost always

Almost never

### When being read to, often:

Doesn't mind if story is abbreviated or paraphrased; prefers stories of personal interest.

Almost always

Almost never

Wants to hear every word, no variation from printed story, prefers nonfiction subjects.

Almost always

Almost never

### When playing or creating, usually:

Prefers a variety of projects all at once; spreads materials out over several work areas.

Almost always

Almost never

Prefers one project at a time; works best with a schedule; needs efficient work space.

Almost always

Almost never

## How do you understand and communicate what you know?

### On a day-to-day basis, prefers:

Having a parent or teacher provide predictable plans and routines.

Almost always

Almost never

Understanding the purpose for and having time to complete the schedule and routines.

Almost always

Almost never

Knowing and doing what will make everyone else happy.

Almost always

Almost never

Doing what the inspiration of the moment dictates.

Almost always

Almost never

**When it comes to responding to authority figures, seems to especially need:**

Clear and specific rules and expectations.

Almost always

Almost never

Confidence in the ability and position of the authority figure.

Almost always

Almost never

Reassurance of love and personal worth despite making a mistake.

Almost always

Almost never

To feel that the person in authority respects and seeks input on the issues.

Almost always

Almost never

**Strengths and Preferences**

**Which of the following are your child's favorite types of free time activities?**

- Blocks
- Computer
- Sandbox
- Playing with dolls
- Nature/Science activities
- My child's favorite toys \_\_\_\_\_
- Puzzles
- Books
- Outdoor play
- Sports
- Legos/other construction materials
- Alphabet blocks/manipulative letters
- Drawing, coloring, creating with art materials
- Lacing/sewing cards, stringing beads, pegboards
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Most often, my child prefers to play**

\_\_\_ alone \_\_\_ with other children \_\_\_ with adults

## Summary

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I would consider the following to be among my child's greatest strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

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I feel my child needs encouragement in the following areas: \_\_\_\_\_

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My goals for my child's school year include: \_\_\_\_\_

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Here is what I feel is most important for you as a teacher to know about my child: \_\_\_\_\_

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### When talking to your child's teacher or caregiver, keep the following in mind:

1. Treat the teacher as the expert. Assume the best, and approach the teacher in a positive, upbeat way.
2. Let the teacher know what you have read about learning styles, and ask for his or her opinion. (Perhaps even loan the teacher a copy of *The Way They Learn!*) Ask the teacher to give you some ideas for further reading.
3. When discussing your child, start many of your questions with the same four words: "What can I do?" For example, "Jane's learning style is very different from your teaching style. I think it's great that she is learning how to deal with lots of different approaches. I'm wondering, though, what could I do to help her understand the way you teach? What could I do at home that might help her succeed better in your classroom?" Let the teacher know you and your child are taking the responsibility for learning and coping with the classroom demands.
4. Recognize that there are very practical limitations on what the teacher can do for your child. Try to make it as easy as possible for the teacher to accommodate your child's learning style while still meeting bottom-line outcomes. For example, if you have discovered that your child needs to follow a certain system for recording and keeping track of homework, you go ahead and make up the necessary assignment sheets so that the teacher would only need to fill in a couple blanks and sign the bottom.
5. Remember, every teacher is a lesson in learning for your child. The more variety he or she experiences in the classroom, the more opportunities your child will have to discover and develop natural style strengths and to use them to cope with uncomfortable style demands. Instead of resenting a different teaching approach, do your best to help your child understand and value a variety of methods. By helping children discover and appreciate their teachers' unique styles, you can prepare them to face a world of differences with the confidence of knowing they can use their strengths to cope with almost anything!

—Excerpted from *Every Child Can Succeed: Making the Most of Your Child's Learning Style* by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias.

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