

INSET

Training Course information

Roland E. Mann
The Well Cottage
Doghurst Lane
Chipstead
Surrey CR5 3PL

01737 550840

In-Depth Learning Profiles

Creating and interpreting learning profiles

Preliminary Note

If you are interested in a training on specific issues relevant to your particular school, I shall be very happy to adapt the material as appropriate, given sufficient notice of your needs.

Overview

This material will provide the teacher with:

- An understanding how a child acquires a particular learning style
- A very fast method (about 2 minutes) of reliably identifying a child's sensory-motor preferences for a given subject/task
- The ability to interpret this information, so as to understand how the child is interacting with her environment and other people
- Ways in which the information can be usefully applied in a learning context

One of the great values of this material is that it enables the individuality and unique potential of the child to be perceived, understood and celebrated at a deep level.

VAK Learning Styles and their limitations

We all know that stress inhibits learning, and in recent years much has been written about addressing 'learning styles'. These styles fall into three main categories, summarised by the VAK acronym – visual, auditory and kinesthetic.

The object of this is to improve the communication between teacher and child, and afford the child the best possibilities to learn. Although the VAK approach represents only a very simplistic level of understanding of learning styles, even this information is naturally of great value to a teacher, who can tailor learning to the preferred style of a child. But how easy is it to identify and use these styles?

In truth our learning styles do not easily fit into three groups, and to add to the complexity learning styles frequently change radically from subject to subject. Labelling a child as 'visual' 'auditory' or 'kinesthetic' will therefore have its uses, but is only a small part of the overall picture.

The origin of learning styles

The child interacts with teachers, other children, materials and the learning environment through her *senses* and through *movement*.

Thus a much more useful way of understanding how a child learns is to examine the relationship between the child's sensory-motor preferences – in other words to study the way in which the child prefers to interact with the world. This is the true origin of the learning style.

This information gives us both the key to communicating with the child in the way that best suits her, and an understanding of the limitations that child may have in coping with the learning environment.

Learning profiles

Establishing for a given subject which is the child's preferred (or dominant) hand, foot, eye, ear and brain hemisphere, which can be done in about two minutes, gives us enough information reliably to understand and predict a remarkable amount of the child's learning behaviour and social choices.

The key to interpreting this information is in understanding the specialised natures of the brain hemispheres. Generally speaking, the left hemisphere processes logic and sequential information. The right handles the 'whole picture', colour, rhythm etc. The right hemisphere controls the left side of the body, and the left hemisphere the right side.

For any given task we all have a preference for the use of one hemisphere in particular, which as it were 'takes the lead', and colours our behaviour relating to the task. Under stress, the function in the non-preferred hemisphere becomes considerably reduced, and sensory/motor function opposite it becomes limited, often massively.

For example, a child may have a general preference for using the left hemisphere. If she also has a preference for using the left ear, then under stress her hearing will be limited, as the non-preferred right hemisphere, which processes most of the information from the left ear, 'switches off'. This child may therefore appear to have difficulty hearing when under stress, and thus would *not* choose auditory information as a learning preference. If this same child has a dominant right eye, she is very likely to be a visual learner. The dominant left hemisphere would colour this visual preference with a need for sequential, ordered information so, for example, this child would probably enjoy using Mind Maps.

There are, taking into account only hand, foot, eye, ear and hemispherical dominance, thirty-two different permutations. If you add fine and gross co-ordination, and include the probability that for some tasks a child will have a preference for avoiding not just one, but both sides of a sense, the number of permutations is vast, and is in no small part responsible for the uniqueness of each individual. The good thing is that when we understand the relationships, the apparently formidable task of interpreting this information becomes really very simple.

Using the information

The information from a learning profile can identify a huge range of probable preferences, which can all be deduced from the relationship of the dominant senses/limbs to each other. I have even found it possible to deduce with quite high probability information as diverse as the characteristics of the subject's best friend, and where they prefer to sit in a cinema or classroom.

Armed with this information the teacher can:

- Make better choices in deciding how to teach specific material
- Understand the difficulties children have in tackling specific tasks and reconfigure them to the child's needs
- Perceive why some children need certain props – like something to fiddle with, or doodling – or behave in frustrating ways, such as looking out of the window while you're talking to them.
- Educate the children to recognise, respect and value each other's learning profiles
- Understand the huge significance of stress on the ability to learn, and use the information from the profile to reduce stress
- Understand how life long learning blocks can be unintentionally created by failing to recognise the child's unique learning process

Further information

For further information on arranging an INSET training, please feel free to ring me or e-mail me:

01737 550840

roland@kensho.org.uk