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**Learning Styles – why are they important to your child?**

What is a learning style? Put simply, it is the way a person (student) absorbs, understands, expresses and remembers information.

There are three principle learning styles:

1. Visual – See it
2. Auditory – Hear it
3. Kinaesthetic – Do it

1. Visual Learners

Visual learners learn best by observing your body language, facial expression as well as the information in simple visual displays including illustrations, videos, charts or graphs. Visual learners tend to get distracted easily and requires a disturbance and obstruction free workspace.

2. Auditory Learners

Students who prefer auditory learning learns best through discussion, talking, asking questions, and listening attentively to the information. Auditory learners interpret underlying meanings through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These students benefit more from reading information aloud or listening to audio recordings of the information.

3. Kinaesthetic Learners

These learners - also referred to as “tactile learners” – learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted easily by their need for activity or exploration.

As we can see, these learning styles differ tremendously. Take, for example, a kinaesthetic learner and place him/her in a classroom where they must sit still and not be allowed to ask questions or make any comments. All their energy goes into trying to sit still without making a sound or satisfy their burning curiosity. They are unable to concentrate on the lesson and will not store any of the information presented.

When we don't acknowledge a student's preferred learning style, he/she **will not progress and learn**. In fact, we are sending them the message that their way of learning is wrong and that there is something wrong with them. The result may manifest in frustration, depression, lack of interest, regression and

misconduct by the student. The reality is that when we do make the effort to accommodate a student's learning style, we are educating in their perspective.

The first step to reaching this point is to help the student to identify and develop the understanding of their own learning style. Then, with some tests and observation of how they interact with their world we can determine what their learning style is. To do that, we will be testing each student with the assistance of the attached test (this will be completed in centre in the first week), a verbal discussion and detailed observation to see which category he/she falls in.

We strive to accommodate each student with their own learning style. And we make them aware of what works best for them. While all three aspects are required with each curriculum, we make them aware of the other styles and sometimes combine the learning styles to benefit the student. For example, when we teach a math problem, we will explain it first (auditory), then we show the student – depending on the grade (by means of counters, shapes, graphs or charts, pictures or videos – Visual) and then we ask them to attempt solving it on their own while showing us how they do it (kinaesthetic). Once we see that they have grasped the concept we will move on or give them additional activities to try on their own. It is crucial for the students to master their learning styles, as they need the skill when they are writing tests or exams and they must solve the given problem by using their learning style to understand, process and answer the questions correctly. They need the ability to be independent.

This informal training will last a few weeks depending on each student.

Students with **dyslexia** are usually visual or multisensory learners. They think in pictures rather than words. They are imaginative, creative, and solve problems by looking at the whole picture rather than working step-by-step. They struggle to absorb and retain spoken and written information, and benefits greatly when using senses like touch, and movement alongside sight and hearing. Students with Dyslexia often has no self-confidence, as they have experienced failure and frustration. Therefore, they often don't believe that they are capable of learning. We strive to re-establish their confidence by providing opportunities to succeed in specific tasks. We try our best to teach them to read as fluent as possible without embarrassing them when they misread. We also teach them organizational skills – to keep things together to avoid losing or misplacing items. Because these students are verbally bright but struggles to put things in writing, we allow more time for completing assignments (not tests or exams – unless a concession was approved by the examination board) and assist them to organise their thoughts before writing it down.

Students with **ADHD** are affected by the disorder as it inhibits the student's ability to hold focus. Not paying attention results in missed information during lessons, due dates, instructions etc. We make sure that each student understands every instruction given and teach them to keep a logical record of what needs to be done. Because of their constant need for movement, it is difficult for them to control their movements. Regular breaks where they can alleviate their energy is important. Ultimately, our goal as parents and educators is to train the students to behave and communicate well. They often tend to appear naughty as they easily interrupt while someone is talking or misbehaves if they are unwilling to obey instructions. We train the students to identify reasons for taking instructions seriously while making them aware of what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. Positive praise for genuine efforts is important as it builds on the progress and effort the student makes to become more acceptable.

Whether a student has dyslexia, ADHD or another condition or challenge, the best way to assist them to make progress academically is to find their learning style. Through this we can convey information, instructions and expectations to them in a way that they can absorb, process and understand. Once they understand that they are capable, they find fulfilment in what they do and this often improves their self-esteem, progress academically and otherwise, behaviour, mood and skills.

We are confident that this training will benefit our students and their families.