



part 1 of 2—

## Letting Them Learn

by Sandy Friesen

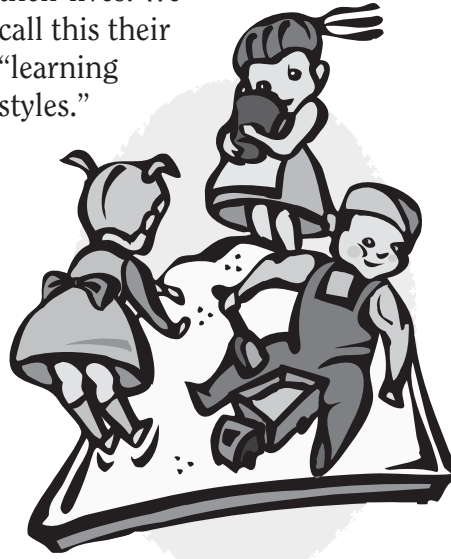
Over the years, understanding children and our roles in their development has been passionately debated. Some have said that children are born without personalities or learning preferences; it is up to the parents and teachers to create the child's personality. Others argue that children are born with a set personality and learning style; parents and teachers should step aside and let nature take its course.

But as in most issues, the truth probably rests somewhere between the extremes. For the purpose of this article, we make the following assumptions: Children are probably born with temperament tendencies, learning styles, and personality preferences. Parents and teachers are responsible to guide, direct, and help the child fulfill Christ's commission to love God and love others as themselves.

### Where does the teacher begin in the process of developing the child?

Historically, to train a child meant that the process was emphasized and the child was

adapted to the process. In recent years a paradigm shift has taken place. We began to think about "training" differently. This new paradigm emphasizes understanding the individual child. An important understanding has resulted—individuals develop learning preferences that stay relatively constant throughout their lives. We call this their "learning styles."



### Discover who the child is

By using the latest research, we can glean some important understandings.

Several learning style models

are relevant to the development and teaching of children. Research has shown that children have preferences (much like being right-handed or left-handed) that they favor throughout their lives.

One of the most influential factors in a child's learning is his perceptual modality preference. A perceptual modality is defined as the sense (hearing, sight, touch, experiential) through which a child learns most effectively.

### Auditory children learn through hearing.

They perceive their world through the sounds that come at them. These students will listen attentively (unless they are familiar with the information, at which point they will most likely become bored). These learners rarely take notes, and do not ask for a written copy, map, or pictorial presentation. The auditory teacher will use auditory language to communicate, e.g., "Is everyone listening?"

### Visual learners process information through sight.

These children "see" their

world. They will notice the classroom decorations and will be enthralled with videos, TV,

books, and pictures. They will notice color, design, and what people wear. They will watch

what you do. The visual teacher will use visual language, e.g., “I need everyone’s eyes on me.”

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### **Questions for Further Study—**

1. Are you an auditory or visual learner?
2. Do you incorporate teaching methods that will reach the auditory and visual learner?
3. Do you have children who are not presently responding to your ministry? What steps can you take to determine the learning styles of those children and implementing teaching techniques to reach them?

part 2 of 2—

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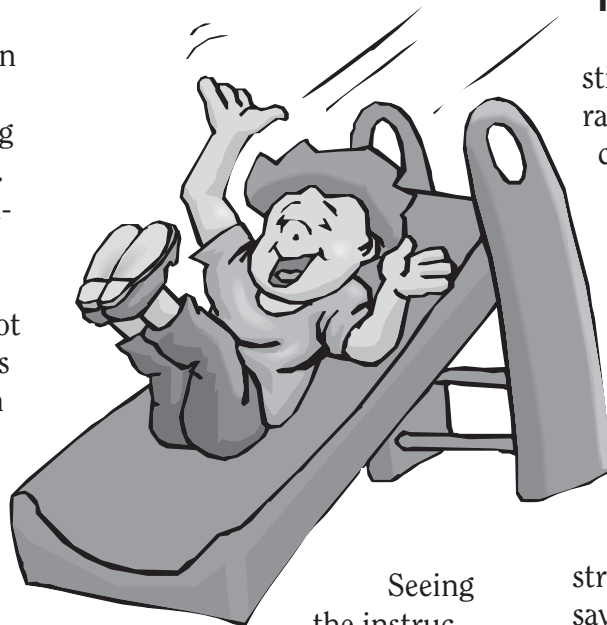
### Tactful learners explore their world through touch.

For these children to grasp new and difficult information, they need to “get in touch” with the concept. For example, if you were trying to teach a child the difference between “soft” and “rough,” he would need to be presented with a piece of cotton and a piece of sandpaper. Feeling and comparing would bring about quick, effective learning. Another aspect of tactual learners is their need to “feel good” about what they are learning. Whereas some children may not care if the information pertains to them, some tactual children find this an important aspect of the process. The tactual teacher will communicate tactually, e.g., “Are you all grasping this information?”

### Kinesthetic students prefer large body movement or an actual experience.

Large body movement would mean that for these children to grasp information, they would have to act it out (e.g., run in place while thinking about the concept; use their bodies to become a “storm at sea”). To ex-

perience learning, these children need to walk through the process for new and difficult information. For example, if you were making chocolate chip cookies, just hearing the instructions would not teach these children.



Seeing the instructions would not make a lasting impression, just as touching a cookie would not help them learn. These children need to make the cookies. The kinesthetic teacher communicates kinesthetically, e.g., “Are you all getting into this?” The most commonly misunderstood children are “Touch Dominant”

children. These learners exhibit several of the tactual and kinesthetic qualities of learning. These active children keep the teacher on her toes.

### Young children tend to favor a multimodal approach to learning.

Indeed all senses should be stimulated to encourage a full range of skills in the developing child. However, understanding the perceptual modality preference will help teachers understand the choices made by some of their more challenging students.

For example, Joshua is an auditory child. This means that to teach Joshua is a pleasant experience. He takes verbal instruction well. When the teacher says, “Joshua, it’s story time; come and sit down,” Joshua runs to take his seat, usually clapping enthusiastically.

On the other hand, Heather is a tactual-kinesthetic child. She walks around touching, pulling, and knocking over everybody and everything in sight. When instructed to sit down to listen to the story, she acts as if

