A Guide for Getting To Know *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. **You have permission to copy and distribute this Profile for personal and small group/classroom use, as long as you do not use or sell the Profile commercially, revise the Profile in any way, or, except as specifically provided above, use the Profile in a manner that is inconsistent with the rights granted the author under 17 U.S.C.§ 106.** 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.

### I. How Do You Best Concentrate?

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early morning</th>
<th>Late evening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need to eat or drink</th>
<th>Distracted by eating or drinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bright light</th>
<th>Dim light</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### II. How Do You Best Remember?

**When trying to remember or review, is successful most often when allowed to**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>Almost never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>Almost never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>Almost never</th>
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</thead>
</table>

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III. 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, be able to repeat things word for word.

Almost always  Almost never

When being read to, often
likes to have the story abbreviated or paraphrased; prefers stories of personal interest.

Almost always  Almost never

wants to hear every word with 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

IV. 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 especially to need clear and specific rules and expectations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>Almost never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>confidence in the ability and position of the authority figure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>Almost never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reassurance of love and personal worth despite making a mistake.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>Almost never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to feel that the person in authority respects and seeks input on the issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. Strengths and Preferences

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

___ Blocks ___ Legos/other construction materials ___ Puzzles ___ Computer
___ Books ___ Alphabet blocks/manipulative letters ___ Sandbox ___ Nature/Science activities
___ Drawing, coloring, creating with art materials ___ Outdoor play ___ Sports
___ Lacing/sewing cards, stringing beads, pegboards ___ Role-playing or play-acting
___ Playing with dolls  
___ Other: ________________________________

My child’s favorite toys________________________________________________________

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:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

I feel my child needs encouragement in the following areas:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

My goals for my child’s school year include:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

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

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Talking to the Teacher or Caregiver

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, 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 I could 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 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, go ahead and make up the necessary assignment sheets so that the teacher will need only 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 of 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 be preparing 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. Published by Focus on the Family.