

Working With Different Student Sensory/Modality Strengths and Limitations *by Jane Bluestein, Ph.D. Reprinted with permission.*

Verbal Ability

Strong Verbal

- Left-brain, right-hand dominant
- Strong verbal skills
- Can communicate even under stress
- Like to talk about what they're learning
- May be overreactive to noise, touch, visual input (difficulty paying attention)

Verbal/Communications Limited

- Right-brain, left-hand dominant (stronger kinesthetically)
- Left-brain, left-hand or right-brain, right-hand dominant (may also be kinesthetically limited)
- May need more time to think, respond
- May be able to demonstrate understanding in other ways
- May do better in conversation than in front of the class or "on the spot"

Visual Ability

Strong Visual

- Left-brain, right-eye dominant
- Can take in and understand visual input, even under stress
- May notice visual dimensions of an experience (ex: scenery, lighting)
- Receive info by looking, watching, reading or being shown
- Need eye contact, need to see speaker
- Do well with maps, charts, diagrams

Visually Limited

- Right-brain, right-eye dominant or left-brain, left-eye dominant
- Can overload in a "busy" environment
- May look away from teacher or close eyes to concentrate
- Keep maps, charts and diagrams simple
- Provide verbal directions

Auditory Ability

Strong Auditory

- Left-brain, right-ear dominant
- Can take in and understand auditory input, even under stress
- May notice auditory dimensions of an experience (ex: dialogue)
- Receive info by listening or being told
- Process with self-talk, inner voice
- May need to look away (shut out visual distractions) or not look at speaker

Auditory Ability, cont.

Auditory Limitations

- Right-brain, right-ear dominant or left-brain, left-ear dominant
- May tune out speaker
- May close eyes to concentrate, turn dominant ear toward speaker
- Put directions in writing, make visual info avail, allow to create mental image

Kinesthetic Ability

Strong Kinesthetic

- Often right-brain, left-hand dominant
- Would rather touch than look
- May notice kinesthetic dimensions of an experience (ex: action scenes)
- Receive info by touch, movement
- Often described as hyperactive
- May have difficulty with visual or auditory input if kinesthetic needs are not met (especially if movement is restricted for a long time)
- Provide kinesthetic outlets (ex: playing with string, clay, beanbag; chewing gum) during non-kinesthetic activities

Kinesthetically Limited

- Fewer kinesthetic demands in traditional classroom, so will generally do OK (may have trouble in classes that demand fine- or gross-motor skills)
- Work from their strengths

Keeping Modality Channels Open

- Minimize stress in environment (weaker channels shut down under threat). Do integration activities to “wake up” different parts of the brain.
- Accommodate more than one modality whenever possible (ex: saying and writing directions). Teach kids to self-regulate (without disturbing anyone else).
- Provide outlets, various ways of paying attention (options you can live with, options that will not disturb other learners).

Excerpted from *Creating Emotionally Safe Schools*, by Jane Bluestein, Ph.D.

Buy the book at: <http://janebluestein.com/2012/book-creating-emotionally-safe-schools/>.