A+ for learning
7 tips to help you help your child rock this school year

BY CHRISTY L. BONSTELL

It used to be parents were encouraged to try and navigate the map that is their child's brain. If you watched your child long enough, administered enough tests and trials, and asked the right questions, you might arrive at a magical formula that would allow your child to fulfill his or her learning potential.

Except, over the years, many children didn't fit any one profile. Or, they did, only to change the following year.

Did parents ask the wrong questions? Did they misunderstand their child?

The answer decidedly is no, says Michele Kane, associate professor, coordinator of gifted programs in the Department of Special Education at Northeastern Illinois University. The problem might be that the theory of "learning styles" isn't the best way to encourage our children to learn.

Learning styles once dominated early childhood education but, in the last five years, have come up against some criticism. For one, it's hard to pin down any one person into a specific learning style. In reality, you'd end up with as many "styles" as there are children.

"Depending on all these different types of learning styles, what many psychologists are saying is that there's just not a lot of evidence about the validity or reliability of these models," Kane says. "Teachers or parents will create a lesson plan based on these theories, but a lot of times, the research isn't there."

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