

# LEARNING STYLE ANALYSIS PILOT PROJECT

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to objectively test and trial the LSA as an educational profiling tool. I am keen to establish the effectiveness of the process but more importantly the quality of the information that it provides. It is promoted as a valuable insight into the complex needs of individuals but with that comes the responsibility of how to apply and cater for these needs.

My ultimate aim is to find out how schools can use this mechanism and what it's possible or potential impact will, or could, be.

I have coordinated this pilot in four schools in the Wansbeck area and identified possible areas of impact such as staff development, ethos of the workplace, school systems and procedures, learning environment, building staff confidence, pupil attainment and teaching and learning.

## Involvement

The project was offered to the Wansbeck Pyramid of schools. This consists of Alexandra First, Coulson Park First, Welbeck Community First and Seaton Hirst Middle School. As the project itself is a pilot, funding has been provided by the Wansbeck Project, Newcastle, UK.

## WHAT IS LEARNING STYLE ANALYSIS?

The Learning Styles Analysis is designed by Barbara Prashnig and has been created following rigorous research with leading experts testing both theory and practice. It is based upon a Pyramid Model of Learning which highlights the different elements relating to each layer.

The layers from top to bottom are:

- brain processing
- sensory modalities
- physical needs
- environmental needs
- social aspects
- attitudes

This model identifies the top four layers as being genetic and biological characteristics that individuals are born with. The bottom two layers are

conditioned and may be changed. It is argued that everyone has an individual Learning Style based on the composition of these layers.

The needs that are highlighted in the biological layers can not be changed and these needs must be met if individuals are to learn challenging or new and difficult things. Pupils can be trained or almost conditioned to work out of their preferred style but in any situation that puts them under pressure they will automatically revert to their biological style. For example, a test, exam or even an independent activity that challenges them.

If the learning of a concept or subject has been through the incorrect style then in stressful situations they will have no cognitive links or associations that make any sense to them. They will therefore be unable to succeed.

This tool offers a detailed profile of individual needs across the six key areas. It claims to identify a uniquely different learning style for every person which addresses how they learn, concentrate and process information in different ways.

The Learning Style Analysis (LSA) is based on an on-line questionnaire, which takes between 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Participants have to read a series of statements and then opt for the one which applies most to them.

The LSA generates instant results with a unique personal profile for each person. It can also provide a diagnostic summary of a group of individuals and what that groups preferences and non-preferences would be. This is exceptionally useful to raise awareness of the needs of the group both individually and collectively.

The LSA guidelines then help translate the findings into the perfect learning environment, encouraging teachers to use the most suited techniques and strategies for their pupils' needs.

There are a number of different surveys on offer from *networkpress.co.uk*. These are aimed at different audiences and a range of settings.

Available questionnaires:

- Learning Style Analysis- Junior (7-14 years)
- Learning Style Analysis- Senior (15-17 years)
- Learning Style Analysis- Adult (18+ years)
- Teaching Style Analysis- Education
- Working Style Analysis- Corporate version

### [Selecting Appropriate Profiles](#)

I aim to find out how accurate the profiling tools are and how they can then be applied. For the purposes of the pilot project I am going to use the Junior

profile with pupils. I am also going to work with staff using both the Adult profile and the Teaching Style profile. I wanted to establish if the surveys can be used to encourage staff development. I will therefore rely on staff to be reflective and honest about the profiles they use and the information they contain.

Following discussions with the Head Teacher of each school taking part the following profiles were used in each school. The school selected their own target group of pupils.

#### Alexandra First School

Teaching staff- Adult LSA and TSA

Support staff- Adult LSA

Year 3 Pupils - Junior LSA

#### Coulson Park First School

Teaching staff- Adult LSA and TSA

Support staff- Adult LSA

Year 3 Pupils - Junior LSA

#### Welbeck Community First School

Teaching staff- Adult LSA and TSA

Key Stage 2 Pupils - Junior LSA

#### Seaton Hirst Middle School

Teaching staff- Teaching Style Analysis

Support staff - Teaching Style Analysis

All pupils - Junior LSA

#### The Approach

I recommended that each school would need support to implement the LSA in order to raise awareness and understanding at an appropriate level. This would also establish a whole school approach from a shared experience. It would encourage staff development and equality of opportunity.

Seaton Hirst Middle School favoured an in-house approach as this could then be led directly by management and reflect whole heartedly the schools aims and principles.

#### Starting The Project

I worked with Senior Management to establish an appropriate approach at each school. The three first schools were happy to benefit from the support offered.

One in particular stressed that they felt it would be better to have someone who was not on their staff to implement the project as I would have no pre-

conceived ideas or opinions. Staff would therefore see this as a transparent project with no hidden agenda. I should point out that one of the schools is where I am based as a teacher. I will therefore be able to provide two accounts, one where staff are familiar and one where they are not. This could inform schools who are considering becoming involved in LSA and are interested in how to approach it.

The schools felt it was important to have several sessions of whole school training. This was done with teaching and support staff separately, as the nature of these two jobs are different in a number of ways. The focus of training was different in each also.

In the two schools who involved their support staff they were extremely keen and enthusiastic. Several commented on how pleased they were to be involved in whole school training as they felt this really valued their role in school. They were happy to be included and receive training designed specifically for them, highlighting the nature and importance of their support.

Teacher groups received four twilight sessions where they were introduced to each type of questionnaire and provided detailed feedback on the findings. I addressed the current climate in education and the need for change. Staff considered what this meant in terms of how they teach, how they communicate with pupils and how they assess children appropriately.

### ARISING ISSUES IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT

One of the biggest areas of training was establishing what both teaching and learning style were. I then wanted to highlight how these shape you as a human being in all of your dealings with others, as a teacher and as a person. They are crucial in all areas of our lives and provide a huge insight into human diversity.

#### Learning Styles

One of the sessions established that Learning Style is dependent upon a person biological make-up. It also includes emotional, sociological, physiological and psychological characteristics. Everything that controls how individuals concentrate on, process and remember new and difficult information contributes to their learning style.

It is commonly accepted that learning experiences need to be challenging for pupils to organise and construct their thoughts and responses. It could be argued then that according to this no real learning can take place unless individual learning styles are met.

### Assessment Measures

LSA offers a sophisticated way to identify unique learning styles. Each style offers particular strengths and this serves to remind us that these are not always 'academic' subjects as our education system and assessment procedures may suggest. It reinforces the conflict many teachers experience between their beliefs and the expectations that are enforced on them. This was common to each of the schools I worked in and led to staff debating in depth about their pedagogy. They talked passionately about their beliefs, experiences and philosophy of education and powerful learning.

Staff expressed frustration at an education system which is making positive and dramatic changes in teaching and learning approaches but that does not have an appropriate assessment measure to compliment or support these changes.

A year 3 teacher said "we are using lots of exciting techniques to capture children's imagination and promote integrated approaches that address visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners and yet we are still assessing the children in one way- an old fashioned way."

Most teachers felt that assessment methods were inappropriate and counter productive to identifying children's learning.

"We are using thinking for learning approaches to make learning relevant and challenging but the assessments we have to do don't give the children any opportunity to thrive." (Year 2 teacher)

"A child's response is either right or wrong. Our teaching is supposed to promote negotiation, independent thought and communication with others. The measures we use to determine success actually look for and identify failure." (Reception/Year 1 teacher.)

### The six key areas

The LSA measures a combination of 48 elements across the six layers of the Pyramid Model. Staff spent time being introduced to the aspects within the model.

- o Brain Dominance

This determines whether an individual has sequential or simultaneous brain processing strategies.

It looks at reflective or impulsive thinking styles and whether learning style is more analytic or holistic.

It focuses on left and right brain characteristics and identifies if there is any integration between these.

- **Sensory Modalities**

This highlights the dimensions and aspects of each modality and identifies that there are *external* and *internal* features of each that must be promoted. Many people are aware of the VAK approach but LSA strongly advocates 4 modalities. These are:

1. Auditory

- Hearing - *listening*
- External - *talking, discussing*
- Internal - *self-talk, inner dialogue, thoughts*

2. Visual

- Words - *reading*
- External - *seeing, watching*
- Internal - *visualising, imagination*

3. Tactile

- Touching - *manipulating, handling*

4. Kinaesthetic

- External - *experiencing, doing*
- Internal - *feeling, intuition*

- **Physical Needs**

This identifies needs for mobility, preferences for moving or being stationary. Looks at intake to identify if eating, nibbling, drinking or chewing are preferences.

LSA highlights the best time of day dependent upon personal biorhythm.

- **Environment**

Reveals preferences for sound levels and if music or sound are needed or if quiet is wanted.

Aspects of light and temperature are identified.

The working area is crucial, for example if an informal or formal area is needed with comfortable seating and furniture.

- **Social Groupings**

This includes preferences for working alone, in a pair, with peers, or in a team.

It also looks at authority and if learning with a teacher or a parent is needed to promote learning.

- **Attitudes**

LSA shows motivation and if this needs to be internally or externally generated. It looks at persistence levels and whether these are high, fluctuating or low.

This section highlights elements of conformity and how this affects learning. It is important to establish if structure needs to be self-directed, or if directions

or guidance are needed from others. Variety looks at needing routine or consistency or being change orientated and needing variety.

Providing an insight into each of the elements of the Pyramid Model raises awareness and understanding among staff. Without this the implementation of LSA would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. This training addresses the complexity of diversity and providing experiences and an environment that is appropriate.

It is in these areas that I expect to see changes and developments as the project progresses.

## APPLICATION AND EXPERIENCES OF LSA

### Teacher Style

The findings of the teaching style profiles (TSA) were very informative. It was felt by most participants that the section where you score your own teaching was self evident. The results in part two were exactly what had been provided and therefore depend on your own awareness and attitude of your own teaching.

"It acted as a good reflective task but did not serve to inform me of anything new." (Year 3 teacher)

Staff found part one of the questionnaire to be very interesting. It allowed staff time to reflect on how they teach and more importantly, why.

"This is something that is not normally possible due to the nature of the job but it is essential if you are to develop your practice." (Deputy Head)

"Teachers must strive to get better at what they do by careful and informed reflection. This is not a static job and nor should your teaching be". (Reception Teacher)

Many members of staff found the information provided by the profile to be extremely accurate- "it's a bit like reading your horoscope, only its true".

I found that the results were sophisticated and provided insight that staff would not have found in any other way. This was true in the school where I was familiar with staff and also the schools where I was not. In the school where I was based the results were detailed, informed and accurate.

In each school staff commented on the accuracy of the results. Some were sceptical and suggested that you could input data that would give you a positive report. Although this would obviously be possible I would question what the

benefit of that would be. If teachers took part I would anticipate that they would be looking for benefits that are practical and realistic.

I worked with several members of staff who felt undervalued and they said they had found the profile to be enlightening and motivating. "This has reminded me why I joined this profession. Thank you very much."

"This has been a personal and professional journey for me. You have given me new confidence and clarity about myself as a teacher and a person." (Year 3 Teacher)

The profile analyses teaching style and shows the way individuals teach in relation to brain dominance. It was evident that most teachers teach in their own preference style, which can be very limiting to pupils. Lots of discussion was generated about the traditional education system and how effective it is. Many people quite rightly identified that it is set up to support the left brain more analytical thinkers.

One or two staff had experienced negative feedback during lesson observations. "I understand now why I teach differently from other people. I am a very holistic person." It was suggested that some changes in the criteria and measures for lesson observations should be introduced. Many staff felt the aspects within the pyramid model should be reflected and valued.

"I struggle with lots of areas of my work. I don't like unnecessary paperwork or assessments that don't inform my teaching." (Reception Teacher)

Lots of teachers said they had learnt a lot about themselves and their colleagues. It was felt that this would help them. "We need to look at the strengths of our staff and build on these. The key is how we communicate with others." (Head Teacher)

One school requested to spend time looking at the make up of the staff and how they compliment each other. The Head and Deputy were interested to find out about the composition of the senior management team. They looked at the characteristics of those staff and how they relate to each other as a team. "That makes perfect sense, we must address peoples needs when we communicate with them."

At this school there was a raised awareness of the needs of the teaching staff. There were staff who needed to know the big picture rather than little details in order to see its relevance. "This is fascinating and explains why staff respond differently to the same information."

Some staff expressed concerns that the information from the profiles would not induce any change. I would suggest that raised communication is required to

ensure all staff feel valued. Through effective communication individuals are able to share their ideas and actively contribute towards the working ethos and learn from each other. This is possible in schools where the management is willing to take into account the opinions of others.

The teaching style profile also makes suggestions. Some staff used these to develop performance management targets which would be beneficial to their personal and professional development. Staff have tried to use different modalities more in their teaching.

"I found it quite difficult to teach out of my preferred style at first. I wasn't really even aware that I relied so much on one style until I did my profile. Once I realised I felt I had to do something about it." (Year 4 Teacher)

### Adult Learning Style

This profile analysed each aspect of the pyramid model and related to each individual's needs. It made suggestions and recommendations. I felt that the information was very pertinent and precise. Staff had lots of questions so I would strongly recommend that feedback is given by someone who has had training.

Due to the personal nature of the information I tried to promote an environment that valued and respected each individual. Some staff did not choose to share their information with their colleagues. I encouraged staff to do this only if they wanted to. I think it is important to be aware of others' strengths and limitations and to show sensitivity towards these.

In one school the staff were very interested to choose areas from the profile to develop to see if this had an impact on learning. Some staff introduced changes in the organisation of the classroom.

One member of staff who found it very difficult to work in the afternoon decided to re-organise her time table. This had a staggering impact on her energy levels and mental attitude towards work.

"The children are so much more responsive. I wouldn't have thought such improvements in attainment and attitude were possible from such a simple change!" (Year 3 Teacher)

Many staff could apply the principles of LSA to their personal relationships. "I can see now why my husband reads near a window. He likes the natural light."  
"It is so interesting that everyone really is so different."

I spent time talking about the reasons why so many children fail in our current education system. I identified the most important factor as being a mismatch of

learning styles. Many people found this quite challenging and provocative while others felt greatly relieved that this was identified and highlighted.

Lots of staff could relate feelings of failure to their own education. "Because I have had feelings of failure myself at school I strive to ensure my own pupils do not have the same negative experiences of school as I had." (Head Teacher)

Teachers and support staff were very perceptive. "If you think about it, it's the left brain children, and teachers, who thrive in our education system. There is little room for creativity or spontaneity." (Year 1 Teacher)

### Pupil Learning Style Analysis

The pupils completed their own on-line surveys and each school introduced LSA in their chosen way.

At the middle school the ICT Coordinator led the project with the whole school. Each child saw their feedback at the end of the session.

In Coulson Park the class teacher worked with the pupils so that she was involved in the process and could communicate the results to the children.

At Alexandra First I supported the children to complete their profiles. This was not ideal as I had no previous knowledge of the pupils. I provided print outs of the report for staff to go through with pupils at a later date.

At Welbeck First I introduced the project to pupils and parents. This was very productive as I knew the pupils and had previous knowledge of them. They were also secure with me as I was a familiar adult.

Parents were keen to find out about the project and were very interested in the results.

"Since reading my sons report I now know why he takes so long to answer me, he is thinking and having dialogue with himself in his head."

"I have changed the way I talk to my daughter. She must have thought I was mad telling her all about the whys and the wherefores when she wasn't interested in the big picture!"

"I thought my child had to sit at a desk with a bright light to be able to concentrate on his homework. How wrong could I be?"

The LSA has enabled parents to become more involved in their child's learning experiences. They enjoyed being involved in the project and gaining an insight

into how their child's mind works. Many felt able to support them at home in ways that promote positive and productive learning.

"I can work with my son rather than against him now. I can help him with his school work and talk to him about his learning. I can make suggestions that really help him."

Staff spent a lot of time reflecting on the information the LSA provided. They were very perceptive and noticed connections between success and failure of lots of pupils.

"The children that we label as having Special Educational Needs are, more often than not, right brained. Many of them only have SEN because we do not provide for their needs as we should." (SEN support)

"The children who can't sit still are children who need tactile stimulation." (Nursery Teacher)

"Look at all these children and all of these needs. We have to do something to change this." (Year 2 Teacher)

"At last something which dares to be different! This gives us permission to do what we know is right." (Reception Teacher)

## IMPLICATIONS

### Technical support

The biggest setback was of a technical nature. There were incidents in one school where staff and pupils could not access the LSA on-line due to maintenance being carried out on the website in New Zealand. Unfortunately this could not be avoided but I would recommend contacting Network Press before starting sessions as a precaution.

The effectiveness of internet connections could also impact on the speed of software. These types of problems were not common but can impact on the experience of completing the questionnaire and effect the results.

Preparations had to be made in each school to ensure they could access the website. This involved adding information to the schools 'safelist' of internet addresses. Without doing this it would not be possible to access the questionnaires.

As long as the questionnaires have been ordered there should be no problems accessing and completing them. There is both telephone and e-mail support

which is extremely good. On the occasions I contacted network press my questions were dealt with very quickly and efficiently. I felt quite secure that help was available if I needed it.

It is possible to carry out paper copies of each questionnaire by downloading them. The results then need to be entered into the system before any results can be created. None of the schools opted to do this as they chose to assess the merits of working on-line.

### Time

Staff obviously had to plan when and how to introduce this to pupils. There is a need to ensure appropriate time is allowed for completion for each person. Some will take much longer than others. Once one questionnaire is started it has to be finished, it is not possible to go back to it. The information relates to tasks that are new and difficult and that should be the focus when completing the questionnaires.

I would suggest that it is very important to ensure that the answers to the questions are confidential. Both staff and pupils need to be reassured that this is not a test and that there are no right answers. This is not easy as I found pupils have expectations that what the teacher thinks is right. They therefore try to please rather than give realistic responses.

The questionnaire relies on the pupils having good reading skills. Pupils who need support need someone who can work objectively with them. Pupils need to be made to feel secure and encouraged to answer their own questions.

### Staff reflection

If the LSA is to be beneficial all participants need to know they are valued. It should be introduced as a journey to find out more about oneself. It must be based on true responses. It is not a means to tell people what they do wrong and how they must change it.

In relation to staff development this must be sensitive to the needs of all staff. Individual styles need to be recognised to raise awareness. There will be examples of different styles of teaching in most staff groups. It is important to use these, what one person finds relatively easy someone else may find very difficult. Try to use each other as examples of good practice.

In the schools who trailed LSA reflection and discussion was encouraged. This gave staff the opportunity to learn more about their colleague's strengths. It is important to respect diversity but also ensure that the needs of pupils are met. Teaching is a highly demanding job and a willingness to develop and change is vital. It is not enough to simply be aware.

It is fair to say that involvement with LSA and the information that will be gained should lead to some form of change. This could be involving the children more in the process of learning through the introduction of LSA. On the other hand the level of impact is very much up to individual schools. Aspects could relate to the School Development Plan, Performance Management or could be evolved from the training and involvement in the experience.

#### Support staff

In schools where support staff were involved the project had a higher impact on classroom practice. Staff could support each other and share their experiences. The support staff could do exactly that. They could support teaching and learning because they now understood the implications of different learning styles and how to address these.

#### Whole school issues

The learning pyramid provided a huge insight into the range of needs for different types of learning styles. At an individual level staff were encouraged to explore one or two areas of interest or scepticism.

It is essential to remember that LSA relates to experiences that are new and difficult. Therefore when introducing new concepts it is best to address the learning style of individuals through matched instruction and multi-sensory techniques.

Members of staff have explored environmental aspects of the learning pyramid such as light, temperature and sound. Staff expressed concerns about changing the work areas they offer to pupils.

This is going to happen in one of the schools with one particular class. This is because the teacher believes that a formal environment is inhibiting and stressful to the group of pupils she has.

"My class has a lot of kinaesthetic and tactile children. They prefer some noise and need to be mobile. I am going to assess the impact of introducing bean bags and cushions to create more informal areas to work in. This will mean these children won't have to struggle to sit at a desk." (Year 1/Reception Teacher)

From my experience with LSA project any informed changes staff have made have had a very positive impact on the learning environment. These have been in all of the areas within the learning pyramid.

#### Developing school networks

I have encouraged the four schools that have been involved in the project to set up a network. Staff have had the opportunity to share their experiences and

develop their practice. The senior management teams can liaise to ensure there is consistency and progression for pupils.

The Head Teacher at Seaton Hirst has expressed an interest in developing a policy that compliments the practice and ethos of each school. This would mean the schools could benefit from each other to develop.

## IMPACT OF LEARNING STYLE ANALYSIS

### Senior Management

Management have learnt more about their staff and their strengths. One school looked closely at each individual and how the senior management team could best meet staffs needs. Staff were encouraged to seek support to use their teaching style or adult learning style feedback to feed into their performance management targets. The LSA provided an insight into the diversity of staff teams. This highlights how to communicate effectively with individuals to ensure they feel respected.

### Communication Systems

In any school there will be some members who need to know the big picture before they can approach a task. They need to see its value and relevance. There are other staff members who would prefer to know only what they need to enable them to complete tasks.

It is obvious that one approach will not suit all. Therefore some flexibility and sensitivity is needed when discussing issues with staff. Communication is the key to any successful school. An atmosphere where all staff feel they are making valued contributions is essential.

### School Policies and Procedures

In each of the three schools staff saw the need to review the teaching and learning policy. They felt this needed to highlight the range of diversity and how pupils' needs could be met.

A multi-sensory approach had to be highlighted as staff felt this communicated the reason why the climate of learning was established as it was. There had to be reference to the aspects of visual, auditory, kinaesthetic learners but also to tactile learners. "It is these children who are at a huge disadvantage and fail in our education system. Or rather we fail them." (Year 1 Teacher)

It was necessary to include a paragraph about the culture of school and how this is achieved. This identifies the working environment for staff as well as pupils. "It is important to communicate the needs of staff and how these are met to all audiences. It is our ethos that makes us successful. Staff should feel appreciated." (Head Teacher)

Staff felt that issues such as flexibility, timetabling, resource allocation and the standards in school should impact on the learning opportunities they can provide in relation to the aspects in the learning pyramid.

"The policies and systems in school should mirror the needs of all staff and pupils." (Head Teacher)

### Shared School Ethos

All staff at all levels contribute to the ethos of school and should portray its collective aims and philosophy. "It is through involvement and contribution that ownership and trust are fostered." (Year 3 Teacher)

One Head Teacher expressed how enlightening it had been finding out about her staff needs. "It has confirmed why we work so well together. We have the same beliefs."

A culture which respects beliefs is vital and leads to further growth. It is expected that all issues and situations are dealt with, by all members in a way which nurtures the schools philosophy. This must be shared and agreed by all staff.

"Being involved in this project has clarified my vision and direction. It has also made me share that with my colleagues. We now have a common vision." (Year 4 Teacher)

### Performance Management

I encouraged teaching staff in one school to try to incorporate at least one aspect of the LSA in their Performance Management targets.

One teacher had children who struggled to sit still and could not readily access information during lessons. These children were always fidgeting and needed mobility. One of her targets was to introduce objects that would promote tactile learners to engage in sessions.

She collected a range of resources such as wool, pipe cleaners, felt, paper clips, blu-tac and foam. She put these into containers for children to help themselves to if they needed something to fiddle with when they were learning. She introduced these as 'concentration boxes' and monitored their use this year.

The results were quite astounding. Children who had been disruptive and had contributed very little to lessons through choice were engaged. They were able to articulate themselves more clearly with language they had struggled to use before. They were notably more focused, not just in lessons but in all aspects of school life, moving around school and at playtimes.

Another teacher had children who had very poor listening skills and were unable to organise their thoughts into words effectively. She chose to include a range of thinking for learning approaches to develop their accuracy skills. She introduced a number of graphic visual organisers to her class over the year. These allowed them to organise their thoughts and develop their speaking and listening skills because there was less focus on writing skills and more focus on articulation.

A numeracy consultant worked with her class and was surprised by their ability to talk through their thoughts and responses. "The children were amazing, such clear confident communication. It is quite untypical for children of this age to be so advanced." (David Lewis)

These two members of staff felt inspired by the LSA and showed commitment to developing their practice.

#### School Improvement Plan

One school created an action plan to develop Thinking For Learning across school. This highlighted the need to use a range of teaching styles to meet the needs of pupils. It highlighted using visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and now tactile approaches as a result of the LSA training.

Staff have been introduced to a range of graphic visual organisers to allow pupils to record information in more appropriate ways. This allows them to think and respond to their experiences, rather than feel under pressure to produce writing. The focus at this school is moving away from traditional methods of teaching and recording and embracing new approaches which are more suited to support learning.

Any aspect or issue arising from the LSA could be incorporated into a School Development Plan.

#### Learning Environment

Staff who have been involved in the project have given thought to the environment they provide. Many have made changes and are both pleased and proud of the results. Most staff felt the need to change at least one aspect of their classroom.

Many teachers expressed concerns about the issue of making classrooms less formal. It was felt this would be very difficult as education was typically more formal.

I would suggest that this would only be the case because it isn't the expected norm in the past. Education is currently undergoing lots of change so this would seem an appropriate time to address the environment that schools provide.

Classrooms can be informal and still focussed places to learn and work. I would argue that for many children classrooms are very uncomfortable and even stressful places to be. Where are the cushioned chairs in most schools?

### Teaching Techniques

The teaching styles questionnaire provided a lot of information for reflection. Many staff said they did not routinely get time to think because they had to move straight on to the next thing.

"Reflecting on your practice is essential if you wish to develop because education is not static." (Nursery Teacher)

"It is important to show a willingness to change and develop your practice and learn from others by sharing good practice." (Year 4 Teacher)

Staff felt more aware of how they preferred to teach and what they need to do to address the learning styles of all pupils.

## DEVELOPMENTS IN PRACTICE USING THE PYRAMID MODEL

### Brain Dominance

- Introducing concepts in brain friendly ways
- Using approaches that integrate left and right hemispheres of the brain
- Use of brain gym activities to promote learning
- Providing the big picture
- Giving required details only
- Writing key words
- Underlining and colour coding important facts
- Revisiting regularly
- Relating information to experience
- Providing an overview
- Using thinking maps

### Sensory Modalities

#### Auditory

- Listen to the teacher
- Listen to peers
- Listen to audiotape
- Talking to others
- Inner dialogue with self

- Giving time to think
- Explaining to someone else
- Philosophy for children
- Explaining to someone else
- Reading aloud
- Making tape recordings or oral reports
- Recording through song, poetry, play or report

#### Visual

- Read from text, whiteboard, books, computer etc.
- Watch a video or dvd
- Visualise situations
- Seeing things happen
- Use of graphic visual organisers
- Written accounts rather than oral reports
- Writing poetry, letters or story
- Create an advert or a review
- Showing information in form of pictures, mind maps or graphs
- Producing illustrations, cartoons and posters
- Making costumes

#### Tactile

- Manipulating objects
- Fiddling with pipecleaners
- Using textiles to support learning
- Touching wool, silk, felt
- Moulding playdough or blu-tac
- Using clay
- Making own memory aids
- Finger painting
- Making electro boards

#### Kinaesthetic

- Expressing feelings
- Showing emotion
- Large body movements to support learning
- Practical experiences
- Attaching emotion to experiences
- Hands on activities
- Sharing experiences with pupils

#### Physical Needs

- Allowing children to move
- Avoiding sitting still for long periods of time
- Providing formal areas to work

- Providing informal areas to work
- Introducing beanbags and cushions
- Using dividers to separate classroom off
- Encourage pupils to drink only water
- Introduce healthy snacks for children to nibble on
- Provide grapes, carrots, bananas or raisins to eat
- Allow pupils to eat and drink when they are learning
- Re-organise the timetable
- Have variety in the timetable

### Environment

- Use of music as background noise
- Encourage children to talk to generate own noise
- Have quiet time if pupils need it
- Select music with sound vibrations that promote learning
- Have music on very low volume
- Not using fluorescent lights
- Using low light areas
- Working without lights on
- Decorate walls in a light quiet colour
- Open blinds or curtains
- Open windows
- Monitor temperature for group- cool or warm?
- Introduce informal areas
- Use formal areas
- Use beanbags and cushions
- Use dividers to separate room
- Introduce the use of earplugs

### Social Aspects

- Find out how the pupils prefer to work
- Team work with peers
- Team work where someone leads
- Work in a pair
- Work alone
- Working with an authority figure- parent or adult
- Vary social groupings

### Attitudes to school

- Allow pupils to motivate themselves
- Use of reward systems
- Praise
- Provide external motivation
- Show awareness for persistence levels
- Understand reasons for non-conformity

- Provide self-directed tasks
- Introduce variety and change if needed
- Follow a routine or structure if appropriate

### SUMMARY OF PROJECT

The LSA is a highly informative educational profiling tool. The information it provides is detailed and precise. There are several generalisations but each profile is unique to the individual.

Teachers can use the profiles to communicate learning to children and to articulate how learning occurs. This enables the child to have ownership over their experiences and to make informed decisions that will support their learning.

Involving pupils in the implementation of the six areas of learning is important. The children can provide ideas and suggestions about how to develop their learning experiences and the learning environment. Communicating throughout the project is vital to ensure the pupils know changes are to support their learning and the impact that these could have.

The level of staff development that occurs is dependent upon commitment and interest in the project. Most of the staff involved spent a lot of time reviewing and reflecting upon their practice. Many were keen to introduce changes in order to make improvements.

The use of group profiles has been instrumental in meeting the needs of anywhere from 6 to 36 or more pupils. Many teachers have found this extremely beneficial when planning for different groups or classes. It indicates where strong preferences and non-preferences are and promote meaningful learning opportunities.

I would advocate that someone who has had relevant training and experience in this form of Learning Style Analysis should lead the project. This means that one person has an overview and an understanding of the needs of those involved. It also ensures that the results can be interpreted correctly.

This has been a very exciting project to lead. I have felt privileged to work with hard working and dedicated staff. Lots of changes have been introduced and are being implemented at all levels in the schools I have worked in.

The impact on staff morale has been high. Many people have told me how motivated and inspired they have felt. It has changed their perspective of teaching and learning and given them the confidence to try something new.

I would certainly recommend this model of LSA. It is thorough and confirms the important issues that schools need to address in order to promote enthusiastic and independent life long learners. Its principles are the very foundation of an education system that is challenging and wholly appropriate to the needs of both the teacher and the learner.

The work of the LSA pilot project has introduced new enthusiasm and motivation to teachers who strive to develop their practice in innovative ways. When I met with Barbara Prashnig to discuss the findings of the project she was keen to cite examples of excellent practice. She said the work teachers in the Wansbeck area had been doing was very exciting.

"These developments are pioneering and revolutionary. Staff and teachers will be inspired by the achievements of the project." Barbara Prashnig.

I would like to thank the management and staff at Alexandra First, Coulson Park First, Welbeck Community First and Seaton Hirst Middle School for their involvement in this pilot project. It is their experiences that have created this report.

# Analysis Pilot Project

# Learning Styles