

Lesson Plan: Creating a “Learner Profile” to Understand Your Child’s Unique Brain

A Note for Pam: This lesson is designed to empower you as a homeschool educator. It is crucial to understand that formal learning disability assessments are complex tools administered by licensed professionals like educational psychologists. Our goal today is not to create a diagnostic "test," which can be misleading and stressful, but to do something far more powerful: to become a keen observer of your children's unique learning styles. We will create a comprehensive “Learner Profile” for each child. This positive, strength-based approach will help you better understand their needs, adapt your teaching, and gather clear, specific information if you decide to seek a professional consultation in the future.

Materials Needed

- Two binders or notebooks (one for each child)
 - Binder dividers with tabs
 - Printer and paper
 - Computer with internet access for research
 - Links to reputable resources (provided below)
 - Your own deep knowledge and love for your children!
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Part 1: The Foundation - Shifting from "Testing" to "Observing" (Approx. 45 minutes)

Learning Objective:

Differentiate between a learning challenge, a learning style, and the signs that may point toward a formal learning disability.

Activity: Research & Reflect

1. **Understanding the Landscape:** Start by exploring what learning disabilities are (and are not). They are not related to intelligence! They are neurological differences in how the brain processes information. Spend about 30 minutes on the website [Understood.org](https://understood.org). It is a fantastic, parent-friendly resource.
 - **For your 9-year-old:** Look up signs of dyslexia (reading), dysgraphia (writing), and dyscalculia (math) in elementary school students.
 - **For your 15-year-old:** Look up the same conditions, but also research "Executive Function." Challenges with organization, planning, and time management often become more apparent in the teen years.
 2. **Reflection Journal:** In your own notebook, answer these questions:
 - "Based on my initial reading, what is the difference between my child finding a subject 'hard' versus potentially having a true processing challenge?"
 - "What strengths do I see in my children that might be the *other side* of their challenges? (e.g., A creative, out-of-the-box thinker who struggles with spelling; a
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brilliant verbal storyteller who struggles to get ideas on paper)."

Part 2: The Project - Building the Learner Profile (Ongoing Project)

Learning Objective:

Create a comprehensive, evidence-based "Learner Profile" for each child that documents strengths, challenges, and preferences.

Activity: Assemble and Populate the Profile Binders

Set up each child's binder with the following sections. Your task is to gather information and observations over the next couple of weeks to fill them out. Don't rely on memory—be a detective and document what you see in real-time!

Section 1: All About Me - The Whole Child

- **What are their passions?** (Art, video games, animals, building things?)
- **What are they naturally good at?** (Problem-solving, comforting a friend, telling jokes, physical coordination?)
- **How do they learn best?** (Watching a video, doing a hands-on project, talking it through, reading about it?) This is their learning preference.
- **In their own words:** Ask them! "What's your favorite way to learn something new?" and "What part of school feels tricky or boring, and why?" Write down their exact words.

Section 2: Academic Strengths - Where They Shine

For each school subject, create a page. For the next two weeks, make a specific note of every success, no matter how small.

- **Example (Math):** "Today, my 9-year-old easily understood fractions when we used a pizza. The visual and tangible model clicked instantly."
- **Example (History):** "My 15-year-old gave an incredibly detailed and passionate verbal summary of the documentary we watched. He remembers names, dates, and motivations effortlessly when he hears them."

Section 3: Observable Challenges - "I Notice That..."

This is the most important section for gathering clear data. Avoid labels. Just state the facts. Use this "I notice..." framework to stay objective.

- **Instead of:** "He's lazy about writing."
Try: "I notice that when asked to write a paragraph, he spends 15 minutes sharpening pencils, getting a drink, and rearranging his desk before writing his first sentence." (This points to potential task initiation or avoidance issues).
- **Instead of:** "She's bad at math."
Try: "I notice that she can explain the concept of multiplication but reverses numbers (21 for 12) when writing down the answer." (This is a specific, observable pattern).
- **Instead of:** "He doesn't listen to directions."
Try: "I notice he can successfully follow one-step directions, but if I give him three directions at once, he only completes the last one he heard." (This points to a potential working memory challenge).

Section 4: Work Samples

Collect 3-5 samples of work for each child that illustrate both a strength and a challenge. A math worksheet with a specific type of error, a wonderfully creative story with many spelling mistakes, a beautifully drawn diagram that explains a science concept.

Part 3: The Application - Using the Profile for Creative Solutions (Approx. 60 minutes)

Learning Objective:

Analyze the collected data in the Learner Profile to brainstorm and implement new, supportive teaching strategies.

Activity: Connect the Dots and Take Action

1. **Review the Evidence:** Sit down with one child's completed Learner Profile. Read it from start to finish. What patterns emerge? What story does it tell?
 2. **Brainstorm Solutions:** Based on your observations, think of creative ways to "teach around" the challenges by leaning into the strengths.
 - **If you observed...** your 15-year-old is a great verbal storyteller but struggles with writing.
Creative Solution: Let him use voice-to-text software (like Google's or Microsoft Word's built-in tool) to get his ideas down for a first draft. The "work" then becomes editing and organizing, not the physical act of writing.
 - **If you observed...** your 9-year-old struggles with math facts but loves to build.
Creative Solution: Use LEGO bricks to teach multiplication and division. Let her build and physically manipulate the arrays. Make math kinesthetic.
 3. **Implement One New Strategy:** Choose ONE new strategy for each child to try this week. Don't overwhelm them (or yourself). See how it goes and make a note in the Profile binder.
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Conclusion & Next Steps

Learning Objective:

Identify the appropriate next steps for seeking professional guidance if concerns persist.

You have now created a powerful, dynamic portrait of your children as learners—something far more useful than a score on a single test. This Learner Profile is your guide to creating a more effective and joyful homeschool environment.

When to Seek Professional Help:

If, after implementing new strategies based on your observations, your child's challenges continue to cause significant frustration, fall well behind age-level expectations, or impact their self-esteem, it

may be time to seek a formal evaluation. Your Learner Profile binder is now the single best tool you can have for this conversation. You won't be saying, "I think something is wrong." You will be able to provide a professional with specific, documented examples of your child's learning process, which will make any formal assessment far more accurate and efficient.