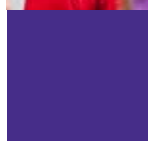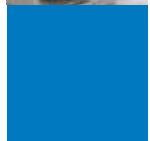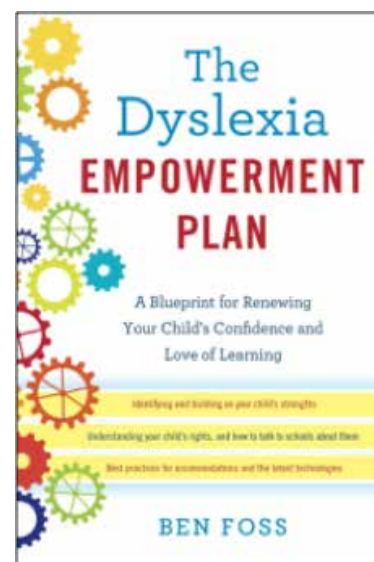# Strengths Star

Learning where your child's strengths lie will allow you to determine where your child will thrive. By giving her a pathway to learning that she'll enjoy, you'll quickly see that she will relish learning and do well with it. It is based, in part, on more than two hundred interviews with dyslexic individuals from my days at Intel, as well as on my own reading of the current research and the thousands of folks in the dyslexia community I've met during my travels. From the eight categories of strengths, you'll identify your child's top three. If this assessment identified only your child's top strength, you'd be missing good complementary strengths. If you identify more than three, you might dilute the effectiveness of understanding those top three.

This test will also help you map the best pathways into your child's head and the most effective pathways for him to express his thoughts. Think of your child's brain as a geographical location. You're trying to get information in, and you quickly learn that some paths are easier to follow than others. The reading path may turn out to be rocky and craggy, with terrible weather; it's just plain hard to get through. But the listening path might be a flat, flower-filled sunny meadow. So why would you continually choose the craggy, hard, cold route when you have this perfectly good, warm, easy-to-navigate path that you could be using on a regular basis?

This questionnaire asks you to rate things on a scale of "that's very accurate for my child" to "that's not at all accurate for my child." This exercise will most likely uncover for you two or three areas where your child's score is under 15 points (that is, most answers at the "moderately" or "slightly accurate" level) and two or three where the score is over 15 points (with some answers in the "extremely accurate" or "very accurate" range); in rare cases you might have one area scoring at 25 points or one category at 5 points. Having as clear a picture as possible will help you see the path for your child better and will allow her to work with her strongest assets as you try to support her in school and beyond.

The Strength Star Assessment

Verbal Skills

How accurate is each of the following statements about your child?

5 Extremely accurate

4 Very accurate

3 Moderately accurate

2 Slightly accurate

1 Not at all accurate

Your child:

A. Enjoys opportunities to talk to adults or large groups of kids— e.g., wants to be in the school play, gets up onstage, or is comfortable speaking to a large group at a family reunion.

1   2   3   4   5

B. Is at ease while talking to a group, smiling and appearing happy and very calm while talking.

1   2   3   4   5

C. Has a large vocabulary, easily using in conversation new words she encounters.

1   2   3   4   5

D. Seeks out and quotes dialogue from films or cartoons, repeating entire sections word for word.

1   2   3   4   5

E. Describes remembering events in terms of a verbal record of what happened, as though it was a radio program or a speech.

1   2   3   4   5

Add above five scores to generate the Verbal Skills Score: ____

Social Skills

How accurate is each of the following statements about your child?

5 Extremely accurate
4 Very accurate
3 Moderately accurate
2 Slightly accurate
1 Not at all accurate

Your child:

A. Reads people's emotions and needs quickly and responds appropriately.

1   2   3   4   5

B. Can talk to anyone, be it a close friend or new person, with ease.

1   2   3   4   5

C. Is attuned to who has social power in a situation—who the cool kids are, which teachers are important, or how extended family members relate to each other.

1   2   3   4   5

D. Likes complex social stories and can tell you about all the relationships between characters in a movie or story—for example, easily naming all of Harry Potter's friends and their houses at Hogwarts.

1   2   3   4   5

E. Is excited to interact with new people and sees this as a chance to learn and make friends.

1   2   3   4   5

Add above five scores to generate the Social Skills Score: ____

Narrative Skills

How accurate is each of the following statements about your child?

5 Extremely accurate
4 Very accurate
3 Moderately accurate
2 Slightly accurate
1 Not at all accurate

Your child:

A. Tells, writes, or draws detailed stories with many characters and plot twists.

1   2   3   4   5

B. Serves as a family historian, remembering who said what, when, and to whom, or where an event happened and what happened there.

1   2   3   4   5

C. Loves biography, history, or fiction in fi lm, plays, or TV, watching them constantly to learn about how and why things happened or to explore the world of imagination.

1   2   3   4   5

D. Remembers everything as a story, including science or math, using elements from his own life to give context to abstract concepts— for example, "Grandpa served in the navy and used a compass; compasses tell you which way is north."

1   2   3   4   5

E. Sees patterns and forecasts how systems might play out, based on recombined memories—for example, "Everyone in school picks a Halloween costume based on movies, so Batman will be popular this year."

1   2   3   4   5

Add above five scores to generate the Narrative Skills Score: _____

Spatial Skills

How accurate is each of the following statements about your child?

5 Extremely accurate
4 Very accurate
3 Moderately accurate
2 Slightly accurate
1 Not at all accurate

Your child:

A. Wants to tinker with, take apart, and put back together toys or anything electronic or mechanical.

1   2   3   4   5

B. Sets up experiments around the house with physical elements— for example, playing with mirrors, building large Lego creations, or becoming an expert in knot tying.

1   2   3   4   5

C. Loves models and miniatures— for example, playing with dollhouses or toy dump trucks, or building his own from kits or from scratch.

1   2   3   4   5

D. Wants to play with machines and tools in the house; talks about wanting to work in crafts or mechanical shops.

1   2   3   4   5

E. Talks about being able to see three- dimensional objects in her mind, putting together toys or furniture without assembly instructions.

1   2   3   4   5

Add above five scores to generate the Spatial Skills Score: ____

Kinesthetic Skills

How accurate is each of the following statements about your child?
5 Extremely accurate
4 Very accurate
3 Moderately accurate
2 Slightly accurate
1 Not at all accurate

Your child:

A. Is a natural athlete who learns new sports or dances with ease, quickly mastering complex foot patterns or displaying good handeye coordination.

1   2   3   4   5

B. Must move around to explain or learn, moving objects or himself to make a point or tell a story.

1   2   3   4   5

C. Practices dance moves or sports moves around the house, repeating until she is satisfied she has them perfect.

1   2   3   4   5
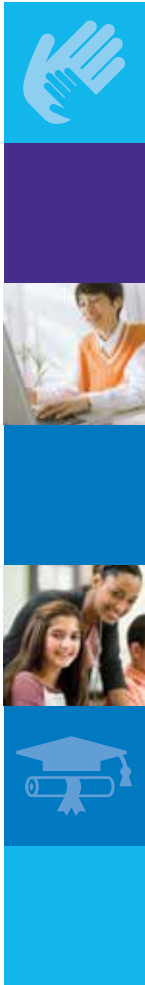
D. Always moving, climbing, running, jumping, or lifting things, rarely if ever sitting still for more than five minutes.

1   2   3   4   5

E. Loves science experiments, field trips, or crafts, preferring to touch, smell, and manipulate objects instead of studying an abstraction of a process.

1   2   3   4   5

Add above five scores to generate the Kinesthetic Skills Score: ____

Visual Skills

How accurate is each of the following statements about your child?
5 Extremely accurate
4 Very accurate
3 Moderately accurate
2 Slightly accurate
1 Not at all accurate

Your child:
A. Is skilled at drawing and painting and takes time on her own to create visual art.

1   2   3   4   5

B. Keenly focuses on hobbies in the visual arts, such as photography, video game making, graphic novels, or animation.

1   2   3   4   5

C. Describes seeing things in pictures or talks about his thoughts as colors, maps, or drawings as a primary way to understand the world.

1   2   3   4   5

D. Solves visual puzzles quickly, always finding Waldo in Where's Waldo? or seeing the quickest route to a location on a map with ease.

1   2   3   4   5

E. Dresses in a visually distinctive way, picking colors and styles that communicate something specific about the wearer to others, regardless of whether it is a conventional or outlandish message.

1   2   3   4   5

Add above five scores to generate the Visual Skills Score: ____
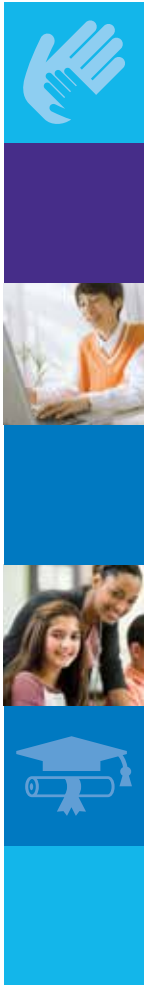
Mathematical/Scientific Skills

How accurate is each of the following statements about your child?
5 Extremely accurate
4 Very accurate
3 Moderately accurate
2 Slightly accurate
1 Not at all accurate

Your child:
A. Loves logic puzzles and computer games that involve math or science.

1   2   3   4   5

B. Excels in explaining math concepts, talking about physical relationships or patterns in numbers long before his peers begin noticing these relationships.

1   2   3   4   5

C. Relishes going to the science museum and doing experiments in school or at home, even if they are just pretend.

1   2   3   4   5

D. Focuses on hobbies in the natural world— for example, learning about butterflies, dinosaurs, or astronomy— and shows an uncanny ability to explain these biological or physical systems.

1   2   3   4   5

E. Enjoys math or science classes, especially when they are hands- on and involve visual or verbal presentations of math— for example, explaining a math problem rather than writing one.

1   2   3   4   5

Add above five scores to generate the Mathematical/Scientific Skills Score: ____

Musical Skills

How accurate is each of the following statements about your child?

5 Extremely accurate

4 Very accurate

3 Moderately accurate

2 Slightly accurate

1 Not at all accurate

Your child:

A. Greatly enjoys singing or playing music, making up his own songs and practicing his music skills with gusto.

1   2   3   4   5

B. Is a hug fan DJs or musicians, listening to their work and discussing their styles in detail.

1   2   3   4   5

C. Likes to put on shows or concerts featuring music or singing for siblings or friends.

1   2   3   4   5

D. Skilled at using sounds for learning— for example, knows bird songs, animal calls, the fight songs of sports teams, or the sounds of specific engines or machines.

1   2   3   4   5

E. Notices sounds in an environment before others and with greater skill, or notices rhythm in unusual places— for example, dancing to the rhythm of the washing machine, or naming a song before others can.

1   2   3   4   5

Add above five scores to generate the Musical Skills Score: ____

Verbal	Social	Narrative	Spatial
Kinesthetic	Visual	Mathematical/ Scientific	Musical

To make your child's star, take the final numbers in each section and draw a point on the corresponding line. For example, if the verbal score is 18 and the social score is 12, put a point at 18 on the verbal line and 12 on the social line. Once you have marked each, draw a line connecting the point on the axis to the one to the right and left of it. Someone who has equal strengths in all eight categories would mark dots on the axis that would connect to form an evenly sided octagon. But no one has a completely even profile.

Name: _____

Verbal

Musical

Mathematical/ Scientific