**CONNECTING VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES TO THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

Did you know that educators who use Visual Thinking Strategies in their classrooms, art rooms, and in their museum teaching are addressing the ***Common Core State Standards for Reading, Speaking, and Listening*** and in many cases, simultaneously? Did you know that when implemented by trained, knowledgeable VTS teachers, Visual Thinking Strategies can also be purposefully and strategically applied to support the ***Common Core State Standards for Writing and Language*** as well?

Here is just a taste of how Visual Thinking Strategies supports the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR READING:

As they engage in VTS discussions facilitated by trained VTS teachers, students learn, practice, and demonstrate with increasing mastery and independence the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading as described below:

* CCR Anchor Standard for Reading #1:

As they engage in VTS, students routinely read visual texts closely, determining not only what the text communicates explicitly, but also making logical inferences from the text, citing specific textual evidence to support their conclusions (CCSS, 2010, p. 10). Furthermore, the VTS teaching method is flexible enough that it can be effortlessly applied to print media in the forms of poetry, fiction, non-fiction and to informational and multimedia texts.

* CCR Anchor Standard for Reading #2:

As they engage in VTS, students collaboratively ascertain the “*central idea and themes of a text and analyze their development*,” routinely offering “*key supporting details and ideas*” (CCSS, 2010, p. 10). As they become practiced and proficient readers of texts in the collaborative VTS setting, they increase the likelihood of applying these comprehension skills independently.

* CCR Anchor Standard for Reading #3:

As they engage in VTS, students are provided with authentic, problem-centered opportunities to “*analyze how and why individuals, events and ideas interact in a text”* (CCSS, 2010, p. 10), frequently speculating through evidential reasoning about what happened before and predicting what is likely to happen after what is communicated explicitly in the text.

* CCR Anchor Standard for Reading #4:

Prescribed VTS teacher behaviors scaffold student interpretations of “*words and phrases”* that are used in the text-based discussions. This includes “*determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings”* of words and phrases (CCSS, 2010, p. 10). Because these words and phrases are introduced and applied in an authentic, problem-based, communicative context, they constitute *comprehensible input* which is accessible to both English language learners and learners in the mainstream language as well.

* *CCR Anchor Standard for Reading #6:*

As they engage in VTS facilitated by a trained and knowledgeable VTS teacher, students can easily discuss and “*assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text” (CCSS, 2010, p. 10).*

* CCR Anchor Standard for Reading #7:

As they engage in VTS facilitated by a trained and knowledgeable VTS teacher, students can “*integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats”* including visually, quantitatively and verbally (CCSS, 2010, p. 10).

* CCR Anchor Standard for Reading #8:

When implemented by a trained and knowledgeable VTS teacher and applied to examples from contemporary culture such as advertising and the media, students can “*delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a te*xt” (CCSS, 2010, p. 10). This evaluation can include discerning the “*validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence*” (CCSS, 2010, p.10).

This list is by no means exhaustive and shows only one category of CCR Anchor Standards. Equally solid connections can be made to the other CCRR Anchor Standards categories.

In addition to addressing the Common Core State Standards, Visual Thinking Strategies differentiates instruction seamlessly by permitting all students to enter the discussion from their current level of understanding. As active participants, student learning is scaffolded to higher levels by more able peers within their zone of proximal development. Additionally, facilitated by a trained and knowledgeable teacher, VTS can be nuanced to address multiple student needs within the context of a single VTS discussion.

So why is ART at the heart of VTS?

Art is visually engaging and accessible; it is intriguing, layered, ambiguous and has many possible answers whose meaningfulness and relevance are determined by the knowledge and experience of the viewer. Because of this, it is a perfect medium for teaching thinking, reasoning, collaborative communication skills, thought revision and respectful debate; all essential 21st century skills. Furthermore, VTS engages the thinking, wondering, and imaginations of students who may not yet be able to proficiently express what they understand and know in the mainstream language.

Again, this explanation is not exhaustive, but in view of these strengths, why NOT art?

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