



Visual Understanding in Education
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Assessing Growth

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VTS is designed to promote growth in thinking and communication skills, as well as aesthetic development. Standard measures of achievement have limited use in assessing this growth. Much of it will be known to you only as you hear and remember what students say, and to a lesser degree, study what they write. This kind of assessment may be new to you.

Paraphrasing is the main tool you have for keeping track of individuals in terms of oral language abilities, kinds of thoughts and concerns, and methods of processing information and ideas. Linking further helps you understand how thinking progresses during any given discussion, how individuals relate to the group, and how any given student changes over time. There are exercises built into the lesson plans to help you develop your capacity for paraphrasing and linking.

Regularly recording what you observe is an essential part of this process. Use the pages provided with each lesson to collect and write down your thoughts about your process, as well as that of individual students and the group. You will likely want to keep an additional journal to make detailed notations on individual students.

After each lesson, jot down observations about the art, the students, yourself, and/or the process. Here are some topics you might cover:

- Provide examples of students' comments, particularly ones you did not expect.
- Describe class interactions and student behaviors, and whether you have noticed them before or find them surprising. Make note of how the discussions develop.
- Compare behaviors shown during the VTS lessons to those in other classes.
- Make note of instances where both you and your students apply VTS strategies in other classes and subjects, particularly when students are not prompted to do so.
- Note questions you have about the VTS, about these materials, or about the images for later discussion with your colleagues.

- Write about your own experience teaching the VTS, and about comments shared by other teachers.

You will be asked to refer to your notes frequently. Such documentation will provide the data for assessment of the changes taking place; changes in yourself as well as individual students and your class as a whole. It will also be the basis for learning additional, more structured assessment that becomes useful later.

For further information about assessment, consult the VTS website:

<http://www.vtskids.org>, password “teacher”. Many additional insights, tools, and practice opportunities are provided there.