

# VTS *Visual Thinking Strategies*

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## ***Summaries of Selected VTS Research***

VTS has been field tested since 1991 in longitudinal studies employing experimental and control groups in multiple sites in the United States and other countries. Multiple studies have produced corroborating and complementary findings.

The studies have found that VTS builds critical thinking skills that students transfer to other settings and other subjects, including writing, math, social studies, and science. VTS produces measurable academic growth in students with varying ethnicities, income levels, and school achievement, including those with limited English skills and poor prior standardized test performance. Over two to three years, VTS students demonstrate significantly greater academic growth than control groups.

### **Aesthetic Thought, Critical Thinking and Transfer:**

Byron, Minnesota; 1993-1998

In 1993, VUE found evidence that VTS causes the growth of critical thinking. Moreover, VTS enables transfer of critical thinking to other contexts and content. In a five-year partnership between the Byron (Minnesota) School District, the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts, and VUE, the opportunity arose to design and implement a longitudinal study to look for evidence that VTS develops critical thinking and its transfer, in addition to testing the effect of VTS in stimulating aesthetic growth.

The results from the study support the hypothesis that VTS accelerates aesthetic growth. Ultimately, the results serve as both a window into the kinds of thinking and learning that occur when elementary-age students respond to works of art over an extended period, but also how learning in the arts can enable students to move beyond the interpretation of images into critical thinking in other areas.

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### **Artful Citizenship Project: Three-Year Project Report:**

Miami, Florida; 2005

The Artful Citizenship Project is a pilot educational program funded by the US DOE and developed in partnership with The Wolfsonian-FIU and the Miami-Dade County Public School system. The Project undertook to understand the relationship between visual literacy and other academic skills.

VTS was a major component of the Artful Citizenship project and the study produced significant findings about the efficacy of the VTS curriculum. Students who received VTS for three years had significantly higher growth rates in visual literacy than comparison group students; there was a strong relationship between growth in visual literacy and growth in both reading and mathematics; VTS promoted good citizenship skills, cooperation, respect, and tolerance for the views of others; and VTS was especially effective with students with limited English proficiency. The study concluded that curriculum enhancements like VTS, may be “the best test preparation the schools can provide.”

*Program Evaluation conducted by Curva and Associates*

### **Aesthetic Development and Creative and Critical Thinking Skills Study:**

San Antonio, Texas: 2000 to 2002

San Antonio Independent School District students in grades three through five who completed VTS lessons significantly outperformed students who did not have VTS lessons in both aesthetic and critical thinking growth. The students who received the VTS curriculum transferred critical thinking skills--such as supported observations and speculations--to their individual art-viewing experiences—independent of the group or a teacher. They students also transferred critical thinking skills fostered by VTS discussions about art to individual viewing experiences of non-art objects. Being “at risk” and coming to school speaking a language other than English did not interfere with San Antonio VTS students’ development of critical thinking strategies. They clearly demonstrated steps in the process of learning to learn. VTS, which mirrors and strengthens best practices for teaching “at risk” and students with limited English proficiency, supplies a missing component needed in schools. The data from this study convinced the San Antonio Independent School District to implement VTS system-wide.

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### **Bronx Museum of the Arts Cross-Cultural Connections Study**

Bronx, NY: 1995-1996

Researchers conducted a one-year VTS program with a group of tenth graders at an arts academy in a large urban high school with a high percentage of at-risk students. Approximately half of the experimental group listed Spanish as their preferred language. Post-study interviews showed a significant change in aesthetic development over the course of the three-month implementation of the program. Pre- and post-study comparison revealed a phenomenon—the students who scored the lowest in pre-study interviews demonstrated the most improvement. Teachers who participated in VTS were responsive and enthusiastic about the connections between the strategies in the VTS curriculum and their subjects, including math and history. They found that the training in aesthetic literacy also improved critical thinking required in other subjects.

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### **Museum of Modern Art NY Pilot Visual Thinking Curriculum Study**

New York, NY: 1991-1994

The Museum of Modern Art's education department implemented VTS curriculum with a group of approximately 60 fourth to sixth graders, with a control of approximately a hundred non-participants of the same age group. Researchers found a significant gain in the aesthetic development of students using Visual Thinking Strategies. In addition to an increased interest and positive attitude regarding art, experiment subjects also demonstrated an increase in speculative thinking, questioning comments, justifications and formal remarks noted by teachers, administrators and parents. School principals also reported school change, which they attributed to the program.

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