

# VTS: *Visual Thinking Strategies*

## Guide to Videotaping

by VUE staff

Videotaping is one of the most effective ways of collecting data and capturing the classroom experience. It allows you, and others, to revisit the data many times. Offering both visual and audio documentation, it enables students' and teachers' comments to be recorded, together with gestures, facial expressions, body language, and overall class dynamics—details which might be missed when taking notes or audiotaping. Once made, the tapes may be viewed repeatedly; they can also be stopped at any point for reflection and discussion.

In order to tape effectively, find a camera with the capacity to record in low light. Before the lesson begins do a test to find out how much light you must have in the classroom to have a viewable tape. (If you're using slides, be careful not to let in so much that the images cannot be seen well.) The camera should also have a good multidirectional microphone. If it is possible technically, you might want to use additional microphones, one to record the teachers and one closer to the students. Do a sound check.

If possible, use two cameras: one to film the teacher and one for the students. If you have one camera, the camera should be situated in front of the group, somewhat off to the side so it can swing from a view of the teacher and the image on the screen to the students. Do not move around the room with the camera during the lesson. The camera should follow the teacher's movements and actions to some degree, but it is important to concentrate on the students, and what they are doing; pay special attention to the one who is talking. Zooming in on individual students is not necessary. It will cause you to miss everything else that is going on in the room. While taping, try to be as unobtrusive as possible.

Remember that it is often possible to edit in a high quality version of the image being discussed, so getting close footage of the image itself is less important.

Good audio, however, is very important. Without good audio, the video is useless, however the opposite is not as true.

The first time that you make a tape let students introduce themselves, each one saying their name to the camera. Allow them to clown around a bit; it will help them to get over their excitement at having a camera in the room. (It will also help to identify students and to match students to aesthetic development interviews if they are being collected for research purposes).

Label all tapes with your name, date, school, teacher, and VTS Lesson number. A timecoded tape is necessary for logging and data analysis.