



Boston University Henry M. Goldman
School of Dental Medicine

An Introduction to Visual Thinking Strategies:

A Teaching Tool for Engaging Group Discussions and Critical Thinking, with Art

Overview:

This workshop was offered to sixty faculty at Boston University School of Dentistry in December, 2014. The objectives were to promote active teaching methods related to skill in observation and communication, to energize a professional learning community among teachers, and to support existing out-of-classroom work at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. Participants learned the basics of the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) protocol, reviewed key studies related to VTS impact on student learning, practiced VTS teaching tools among their colleagues, contributed to and received constructive feedback on teacher practice among a professional learning community, and engaged in group discussions about teaching and learning at BUSDM. A follow-up session will be held in June, 2014.

Key Findings:

Surveys administered following the workshop (n=44) revealed the following:

On a 1-5 scale, 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”:

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| • “The workshop material will help me teach more effectively” | 4.24 |
| • “I learned about my own communication habits” | 4.04 |
| • “I learned usable skills” | 4.04 |

72% of participants stated that, following the workshop, they

- Were more likely to visit an art museum.
- Felt more comfortable looking at art.

Faculty Feedback on what was most useful:

- “To learn to listen more”
- “Realizing the validity of varying insights.”
- “Trying to use a different method of teaching; working with great group of people.”
- “Learned that visual critical thinking is important in teaching; learned the right questions to ask”

Unexpected Outcomes:

Faculty grappled over key pedagogical conflicts, apparently triggered by the open-ended nature of Visual Thinking Strategies. For example:

- “Do we teach how to think or what to think?”
- “When we want a student to learn, do we tell them what to see or ask them what they see?”
- “How do we integrate the teaching of both intuitive and systematic diagnosis skills?”
- “Is there a right answer? And who provides it?”
- “How do we help learners acknowledge and navigate uncertainty in the clinic?”

Another unexpected outcome was that new conversations emerged between the Schools of Dentistry and of Medicine. Boston University School of Medicine had, the year previously, undertaken a VTS-based workshop series with ArtsPractica (n=29, over three full days). Now stakeholders at both schools have engaged one another in broader conversations around critical thinking, teaching and art.

Suggested Resources

Miller, Alexa, Hershman, Warren, and Yadavalli, Gopal, "Fresh Eyes: An Arts-Based Workshop Series for Clinical Faculty," in *Keeping Reflection Fresh: Top Educators Share Their Innovations in Health Professional Education*, Kent State Press. Volume forthcoming (est. 11/14).

Yenawine, Philip, [Visual Thinking Strategies: Using art to deepen learning across school disciplines](#), Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2013. See also www.vtshome.org

Miller, Alexa, Grohe, Michelle, Khoshbin, Shah, and Katz, Joel, "From the Galleries to the Clinic: Applying Art Museum Lessons To Patient Care: Pedagogical Example from *Training the Eye: Improving the Art of Diagnosis*," *Journal of Medical Humanities*, Vol. 34, Issue 4, 2013.

Naghshineh S., Hafler J.P., Miller A.R., Blanco M.A., Lipsitz SR, Dubroff R.P., Khoshbin S., Katz J.T. Formal art observation training improves medical students' visual diagnostic skills. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 2008; 23:991-997.

SIDM Clinical Reasoning Toolkit, compiled by the Society for Improved Diagnosis in Medicine <http://www.improvediagnosis.org/?ClinicalReasoning>

Craig M. Klugman, PhD, Jennifer Peel, PhD, MS, Diana Beckmann-Mendez, PhD, MSN, RN, FNP-BC, Art Rounds: Teaching Interprofessional Students Visual Thinking Strategies at One School, *ACADEMIC MEDICINE* October 2011; 86(10): 1266-1271

Housen, Abigail. Aesthetic thought, critical thinking and transfer. *Arts and Learning Journal*. 2002; 18(1).

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