VTS
Visual Thinking Strategies

Basic VTS at a Glance

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Starting the Discussion

Introduce VTS to the group: VTS allows people to examine art, think, contribute observations and ideas, listen, and build understandings together.

Show the first image. Always give participants a moment to look in silence before inviting them to speak.

Asking Questions

After they have examined the image, ask the question: ***What's going on in this picture?***

Whenever participants make an inference (a comment drawing conclusions based on observations), respond first by paraphrasing, and then ask: ***What do you see that makes you say…?***

In order to keep participants searching for more observations, frequently ask: ***What more can you find?***

Responding to Participant Comments

Listen carefully to particiants, making sure that you hear all of what they say and that you understand it accurately.

Point to what they observe in the image, pinpointing precisely, even if the observations are not new. Use encouraging body language and facial expressions to nurture participation.

Paraphrase each comment. Change the wording, but not the meaning of what is said. In rephrasing, demonstrate proper sentence structure and vocabulary to assist participants with language development.

Accept each comment neutrally. Remember that this process emphasizes a useful pattern of thinking, not right answers. Participants are learning to make detailed observations, sorting out and applying what they know. Articulating their thoughts leads to growth even when they make mistakes.

Link answers that relate, including both agreements and disagreements. In your paraphrase, show how participant thinking evolves, how some observations and ideas stimulate others, how opinions change and build.

Concluding the Discussion

Thank the group for their participation. Encourage them to think of viewing art as an ongoing, open-ended process. Avoid summarizing the discussion; linking throughout is enough to show how conversations build.