



MANUEL HERRERA

Using Visual Thinking to Unlock Powerful Learning

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A little bit about Manuel

- ❑ Innovation Coordinator and Design Space Facilitator for the Affton School District, a suburban St. Louis school district.
- ❑ An adjunct professor at Webster University teaching Digital Video for Educators and Designing Ed-Tech Facilities. In addition to these roles,
- ❑ Communications and Design Lead for Connected Learning, an educational non-profit located in St. Louis.

Visual thinking is a way of expressing what you're learning. Drawing is a way to do this but other mediums can be used.

- You can move the images around in a way that creates even deeper thinking and learning.
- Other ways to think visually:
 - Writing on sticky notes and sorting them.
 - Drawing on the whiteboard in front of students.
 - You can also use a paper to draw out what you hear your students saying. Students can add to the drawing to build upon your drawing to communicate more ideas.
 - Doesn't always mean a picture. It can also be thought or speech bubbles.
 - Using Google Drawings to arrange icons in a way that organizes your thinking.
- Written language is just a visual representation of the spoken word.
- **You don't have to be a "great artist" to get your ideas across visually.**
 - Icons can be an easy way to represent thinking. It doesn't have to look "perfect" as long as you know what it represents.

Practical ways to use visual thinking in the classroom.

- Introduce storyboarding to your students.

- Ask students to plan out something in design class, writing, video creation or other subject areas using a storyboard.
 - **Use a storyboard to plan out writing.**
 - Begin by just drawing it out as you retell the story orally. Small details will come out as you are drawing that might otherwise be included.
 - **Use emojis to add emotions to pictures that you will include in your story.**
 - Apply visual thinking mathematics and science to draw out your thinking as you solve problems through storyboarding.
 - Students can use sticky notes, whiteboard markers and a surface they can easily write on. Students can use whiteboard markers to write on the desk surface as they create their storyboard.
- **Graphic organizers are STILL great ways to learn** and they don't have to be on a device. Ask students to create their own graphic organizers and they can be as big or as small as they need.
 - Teachers can create their own graphic organizers too that fit the lesson you are teaching.
 - A folded piece of paper can be used as a graphic organizer.
 - Using the coordinate grid to retell a story using the x-axis to retell the events and the y-axis and emojis to retell how the characters felt and their reactions, high points, and low points to events in the story.
- **Use notecards or half of an index card to create a brain dump as students recall information.** They can then organize their thoughts for the activity or assignment.

Helping students build a visual library.

- We have to equip students with the tools to be able to think visually without getting stuck on the “artistic” part of it.
- We want our kids to be able to call up an image quickly to be able to use in their visual thinking.
 - Introduce some of the concepts before you begin thinking. Have students create, or create yourself, a visual representation of the concepts.
 - There is some work on the front end prepping kids to be able to think visually but it will pay off in the end.
- After a lesson is finished have students draw out or add a bit of text on the board to share their key takeaway.

Resources:

- Visual thinking to manage learning. A series of blog posts sharing resources for using visual thinking in your classroom can be found at www.sadiecreates.com

Related posts on the Ditch That Textbook blog:

- [Google Slides icon boards for low-prep, visual thinking](#)