

See and Learn:

The Power of Visual Learning and Storytelling in Early Childhood Education

presented by author

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I See I Learn, Charlesbridge Publishing

MathStart, HarperCollins Children's Books



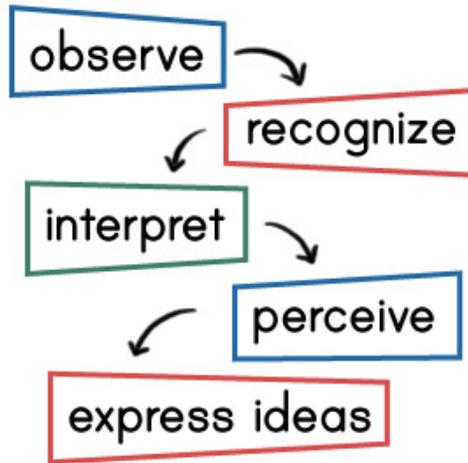
Throughout history, people have used visual images to communicate. From simple drawings on cave walls to complex computer-generated representations, pictures and graphics are an efficient and intuitive approach to sharing data and expressing ideas.

Visual learning is about how we gather and process information from illustrations, graphs, symbols, photographs, icons and other visual models.

Long before young children can read—or even speak many words—they are able to assimilate visual information with ease. Visual learning strategies and storytelling make a dynamic combination that helps prepare children to succeed in school—and in life.

- Stuart

5 Key Visual Learning Skills



- **Observation is about seeing:** What is that?” “What makes it what it is?” “How is it made?” “What are the details of what I see?” *Look at that truck. It’s red and has ladders. It’s a fire truck.*

- **Recognition helps us to recall something based on our observations.** “I’ve seen that before.”

“I know what it is because it has those same attributes”
I know the first letter of my name. I have seen it many times. I know lots of other letters, too. Maybe I can write my own name.

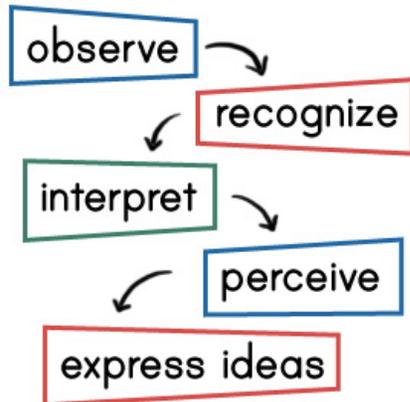
- **Interpretation relies on comprehension and enhances our understanding of something based on what we see.** “What does this mean?” “Are there more meanings than one?” *I see those children playing together. They are being nice to one another. They are having fun.*

- **Perception uses visual analysis to help us make predictions and expand our thinking beyond what we see.** “How do I make sense of that?” “What might happen next?” *I saw someone go down the slide the wrong way. He fell and hurt his leg. If I play safely in the playground, I won’t get hurt.*

- **Visual self-expression, drawing and image making, allows us to share our ideas and demonstrate our creativity.** “This is how I feel.” “That’s what it’s about!” *This is a picture of my family. We are at the beach. We are all happy!*



How to Read a Book to a Child Using **Visual Learning Strategies**



We all know that children who are read to become better readers. But did you know that adding **visual learning strategies** to the mix can help them become **better learners, too?**

It is easy—and *fun*—to read books to young children using visual learning strategies that help them better understand the material while developing their visual learning skills.

1. Read a story you have read before with your child or class, but this time ask critical questions about the illustrations. For example:

- How do you think the dog feels?
- How do you know?

- Where are the children playing?
- How do you know they are at the beach?

- What can you tell about Clara from her bedroom?
- What are your favorite things in Clara’s bedroom? Why?

- Where is David going?
- How can you tell?

These questions promote the **observation skills** of children, encouraging them to look carefully at details and think about what they mean.

2. When we see something for a second time in an illustration, ask your child or class if they remember what it is and what it means. For example:

- Whose house is that?
- How do you know?

- What does that sign mean?
- What does it tell you to do?

- What is Charlie *still* doing?

- We saw that truck before. What is inside it?

Based on careful observation, children can recall the meaning of visual images and displays. Developing **recognition skills** helps children take advantage of prior knowledge and experiences.

3. Illustrations often provide key information about a story. Icons, inset drawings, and other visual learning strategies are sometimes used to add extra meaning and to clarify intent.

- Why do you think Sarah looks scared?

- Look at the scene out the window. What does it tell you about the day?

- There's Mike's family. Who is younger than Mike? Who is older? How do you know?

- What would you do in this situation? Why?

The ability of children to understand situations is enhanced by **interpretation skills**. Children can see a situation, analyze it and form conclusions.

4. Visual images can provide clues about sequence—what happened before and after—prompting children to think about what might happen next and bringing deeper meaning to a story. For example:

- What are all those things doing in the car?
- Where do you think they are going?

- Let's look at the little inset picture. What do they tell us about what is going on?

- Look at the bear. What do you think is going to happen now?

- There's Bob's bicycle. What do you think he is going to do?

Asking questions about illustrations and visual models can cause children to project their ideas beyond the story. It builds **perception skills**, which helps them make sense of a story, make predictions and consider new possibilities.

5. Children find meaning in the images they create, and can express their thinking to others through their image-making. For example:

- Draw a picture showing how Sammie felt at the end of the story.

- Can you make a picture of that scene?

- Act out what the cow was doing.

- Make a sketch of yourself in that situation.

Helping children develop **visual self-expression skills** provides them with the opportunity to share ideas and demonstrate their creativity.

