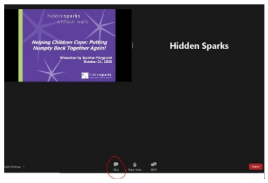
Welcome to Hidden Sparks Without Walls. We will be starting at 8:30pm.

To alleviate background noise and ensure a quiet session, your audio connection has been muted.



Chat: Asking Questions & Sharing Thoughts
You are encouraged to ask questions and share your thoughts on the chat.
Please activate the chat feature on the bottom of the screen. You may choose to chat to panelists and all attendees or just panelists.

Audio:
If you would like to call in via phone for audio, please look up the call in number, webinar id, and passcode information on your webinar invite.

© 2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

1

About Hidden Sparks

Hidden Sparks helps educators and Jewish day schools nurture the Hidden Spark within each student, facilitating professional development to increase understanding and support for the broad range of learners in the classroom.

Offerings include:

- award-winning **Learning Lenses** course on understanding learning and behavior
- 1:1 **coaching** for teachers
- **Internal** and **Peer Coach mentoring** within schools
- workshop on **Differentiating Instruction**
- **Hidden Sparks Without Walls** webinar series
- **Parent Learning Center** (PLC)

© 2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

2

hiddensparks without walls

The Visual Literacy Classroom: From Pictures to Words

Presented by Hollis Dannaham
Tuesday, April 26, 2026

hiddensparks
helping children reach their potential™

3

Our Guest: Hollis Dannaham



Hollis Dannaham, M.Ed., is a special education and literacy consultant, coach, mentor, and workshop facilitator for Hidden Sparks. She has been empowering complex learners for 40 years as a learning/reading specialist, special educator, administrator, and consultant in public, private, Jewish Day, and charter schools. Along with her work for Hidden Sparks, Hollis currently is the Director of Learning Support at the Middle Way School in Saugerties, NY, and has a thriving tutoring practice. Career highlights include working as a learning specialist at the Student Success Center of All Kinds of Minds, opening the Carmel Alternative High School, and being the founding Director of Academic support at a Brooklyn charter school. Hollis' goal is to support joyful learning for all children and joyful teaching for all teachers..

2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

4

Objectives of the Session

- Participants will be able to define visual literacy and visual thinking.
- Participants will be able to explain how visual thinking strategies help to build literacy skills.
- Participants will walk away with strategies to promote visual literacy and visual thinking in their classrooms.



2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

5

Overview of the Session

- Symbols
- What is visual literacy?
- What is visual thinking?
- Visual thinking strategies

2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

6

The Power of Symbols - Inferencing





2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

7

The Power of Symbols - Making Connections



2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

8

The Power of Symbols - Identifying Feelings



2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

9

Visual Literacy is…

… a staple of 21st century skills. Students must be able to:

Read
Recognize
Appreciate
Interpret
Understand
Analyze
and Evaluate



information presented through visible actions, objects and symbols.

2026 Hidden Sparks

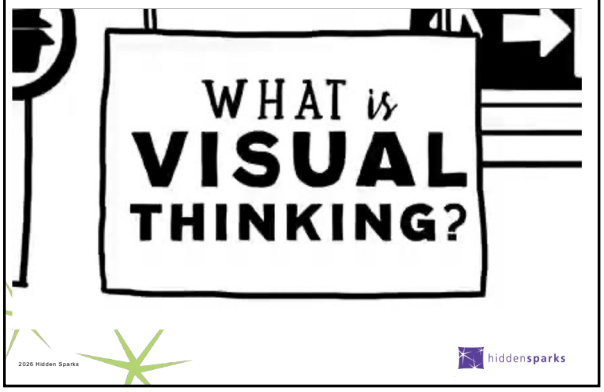
10

Examples



11

What is Visual Thinking?

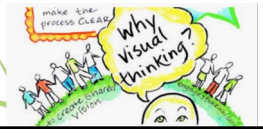


2026 Hidden Sparks

12

Research Shows…

- Visual information is processed faster than text.
- Students write more and at a higher level as a result of discussions using visual thinking.
- Students benefit from interaction with multiple representations of information and concepts.
- VT helps students learn about complex systems.
- Creating visual explanations improves retention of information and deeper understanding of of complex concepts.

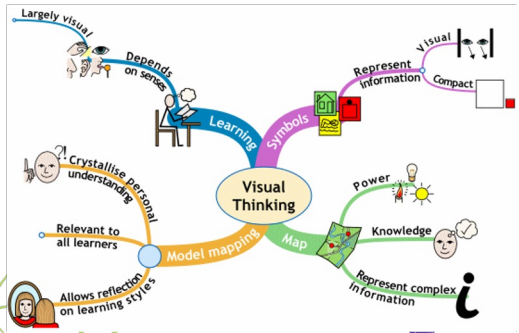


2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

13

Visual Thinking



2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

14

Old vs. New





2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

15

Research Shows

- …what highly engaged readers do as they read is intensely creative, visual, and dramatic in nature. Natural readers demonstrated intense visualization of particular characters, settings, and scenes but that the reluctant reader tended to take little interests in a story (Enciso (1992).
- Mental imaging has been shown to encourage the use of a reader's prior knowledge, increase comprehension, and to enhance the ability to infer, predict and remember what has been read (Gambrell, 1981; Gambrell & Bales, 1986; Pressley, 1976; Sadoski, 1985).
- The ability to use imagery is a central difference between good and poor readers (Jacob, 1976).

2026 Hidden Sparks

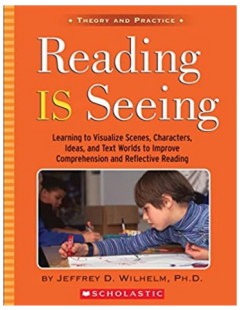
hiddensparks

16

Reading is Seeing

"Findings suggest that artistic response activities may help less proficient and less engaged readers to respond on various dimensions to enter, evoke, comprehend, remember, elaborate, and reflect upon the experience of reading."

Jeffrey Wilhelm



2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

17

Visual Thinking Strategies



hiddensparks

18

What are Visual Thinking Strategies

- VTS encourages students to think beyond the literal by discussing multiple meanings, metaphors and symbols.
- Used with all ages -- elementary students up to Harvard medical students
- Documented to have a positive effect on both teachers and students
- Employs habitual thinking skills that show transfer from lesson to lesson



2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

19

What is VTS

- Teacher-facilitated discussions of art images
- Collaborative interactions among peers
- Strategies are transferrable
- Enables students to use existing visual and cognitive skills to develop confidence and experience
- Start with what they know now to figure out what they don't
- Includes rigorous group 'problem-solving' process
- Students cultivate a willingness and ability to present their own ideas, while respecting and learning from the perspectives of others

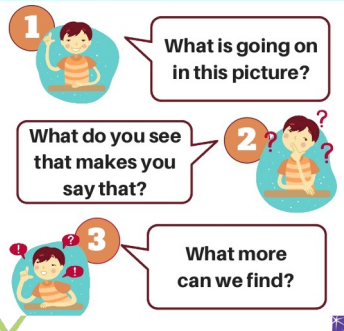
2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

20

Visual Thinking Strategies

How-To "Read" an Image



2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

21

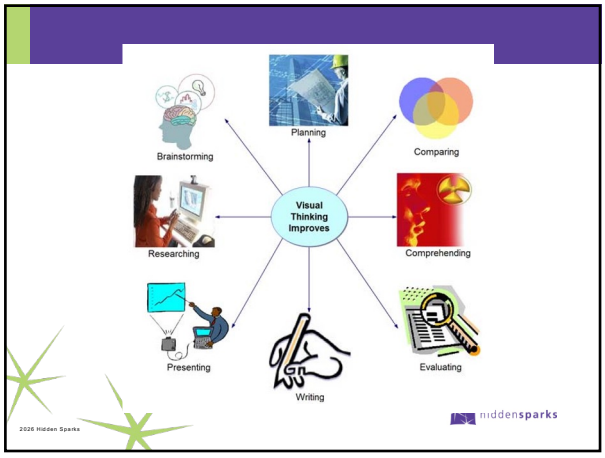


22

VTS in action



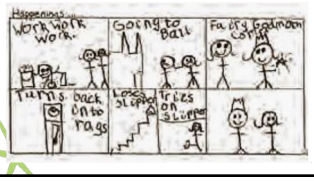
23



24

Visual Strategies to Build Reading Comprehension and Engaged Readers

- Graphic Novels
- Use of picture books with and without words
- Create story board or comic to summarize story
- Illustrate an unillustrated story
- Create and illustrate and original story
- Visual Protocols - at key parts of a text have the student draw their visual impressions/ideas



2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

25

Creating Your Own

Making graphic representations helps students clarify ideas with or without words

- Use symbols to represent something important
- Use symbols to represent a concept or a word
- Use symbols to express feelings, ideas

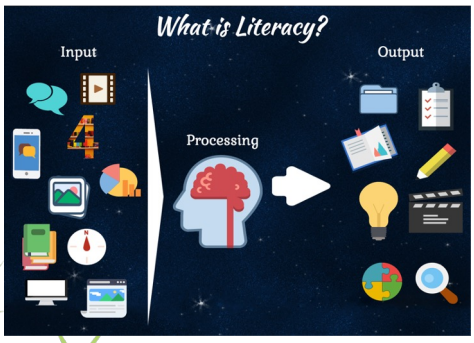


2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

26

Infographic - Picture Mapping



2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

27

Symbolic Story Representation

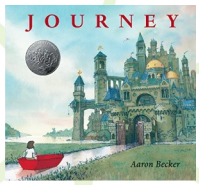
- Cut out images of key features in the text - characters, setting, ideas
- Dramatize the story using the cut outs
- Student creates a cut out to represent herself
- Student inserts herself into the story and interacts with the story

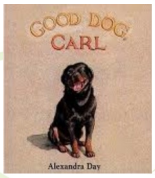


2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

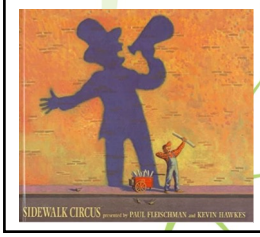
28







Wordless Books





hiddensparks

29

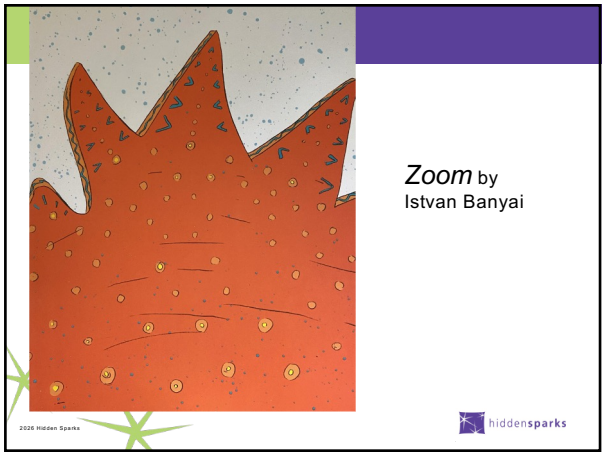
My Dog Carl - by Alexandra Day



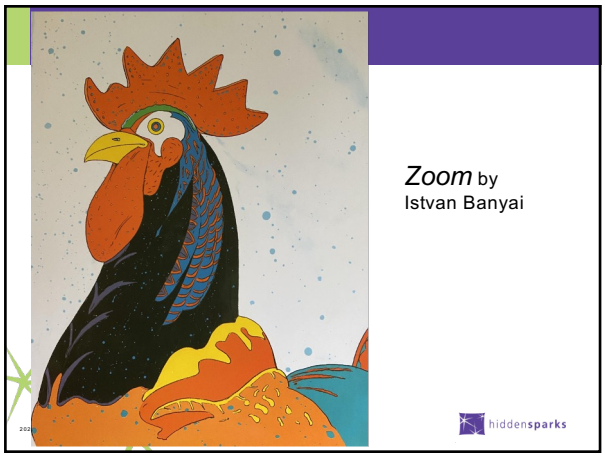
2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

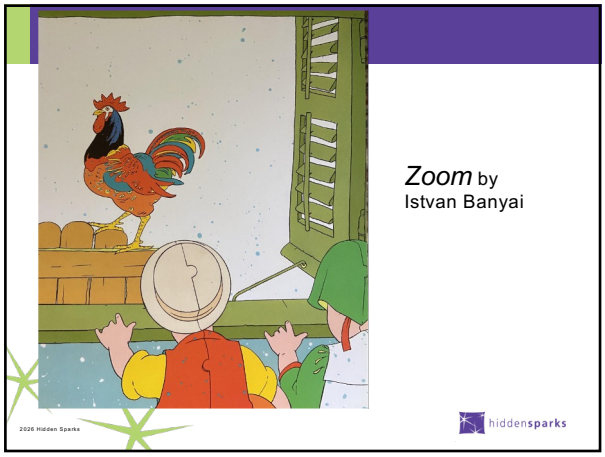
30


Zoom by
Istvan Banyai
hiddensparks

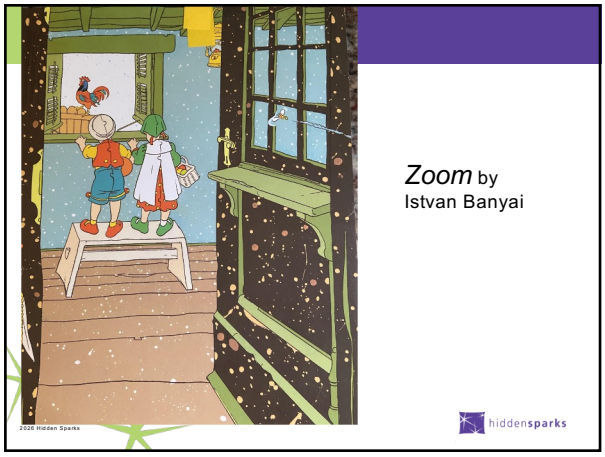
31


Zoom by
Istvan Banyai
hiddensparks

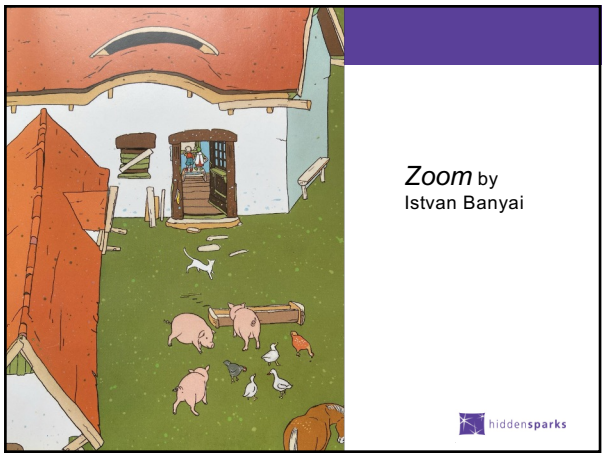
32


Zoom by
Istvan Banyai
hiddensparks

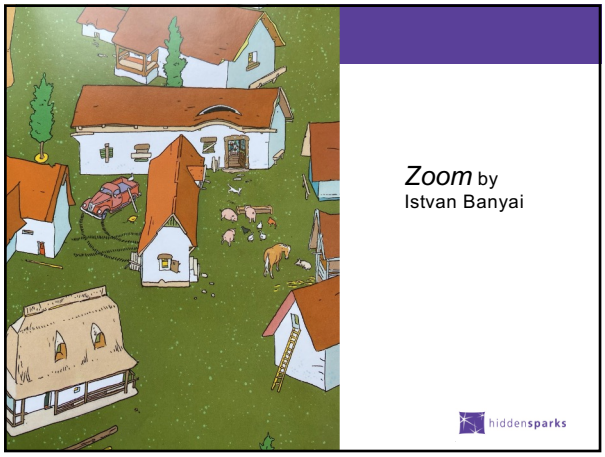
33


Zoom by
Istvan Banyai
hiddensparks

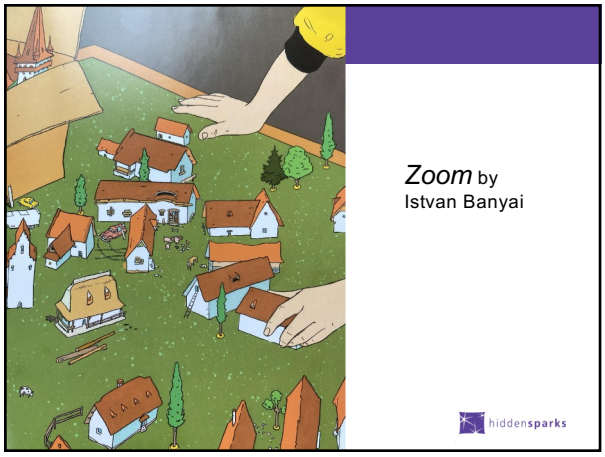
34


Zoom by
Istvan Banyai
hiddensparks

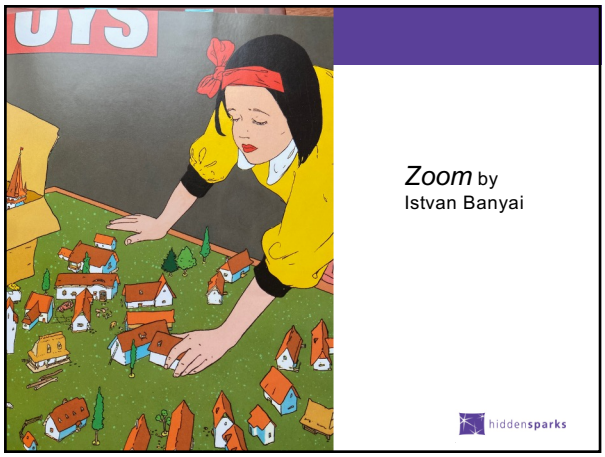
35


Zoom by
Istvan Banyai
hiddensparks

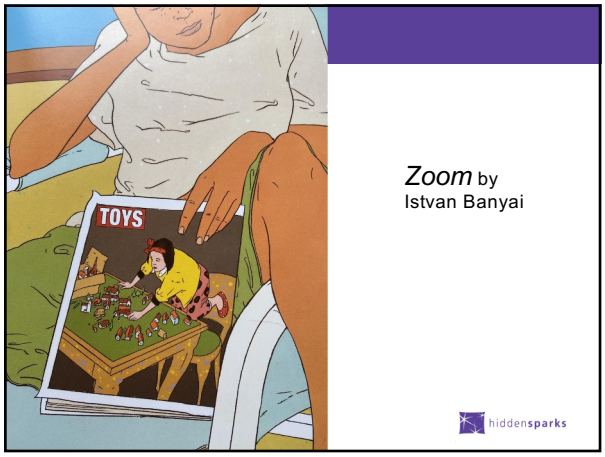
36


Zoom by
Istvan Banyai
hiddensparks

37


Zoom by
Istvan Banyai
hiddensparks

38


TOYS
Zoom by
Istvan Banyai
hiddensparks

39

Collaging - David Luhman

- Use a piece of text - poem, an excerpt, something that may be difficult
- Read the text together; have students read it again on their own
- Have students choose at least 3 pictures that represent the text
- Use the pictures to make a collage
- Have students share their collages
- Write from the collage
- Discuss how the writing compares to the text



2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

40

Photo Analysis - Questioning

- What am I looking at?
- What does this image mean to me?
- What is the message?
- What elements of the photo stand out?
- What words describe the photo?
- How does this make me feel?



2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

41

Photo Analysis - Questioning

Photo Analysis: Questioning

- What am I looking at?
- What does this image mean to me?
- What is the message?
- What elements of the photo stand out?
- What words describe the photo?
- How does this make me feel?

Photo Analysis: Compare and Contrast

- What are the similarities?
- What are the difference?
- What do I feel when I look at each photo?
- What elements change the mood?
- What are the messages?





2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

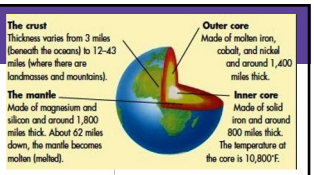
42

Captions and Thought Bubbles



43

NTQ In Use

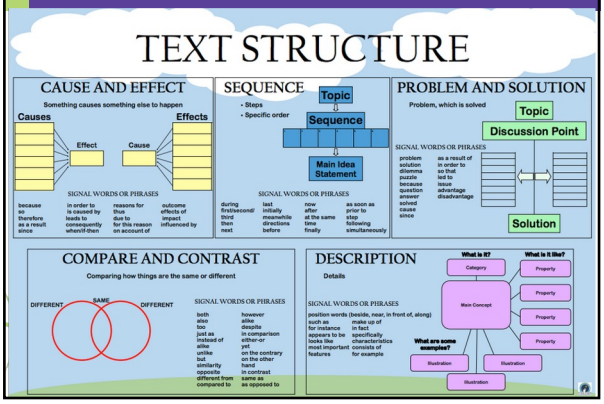


Notice	Think	Question
• The earth has layers • Each layer is made up different things • The layers have different temperatures and thicknesses	• The layers of the earth remind me of an apple • The crust seems very thin compared to the other layers • The mantle is made of melted rock, which doesn't seem stable • Molten rock reminds me of lava	• Does the earth's crust moves because of the mantle? • Why is the crust so thin? • Are the layers changing ever? • Is the inner core cooling down or has it always been that hot?

hiddensparks

44

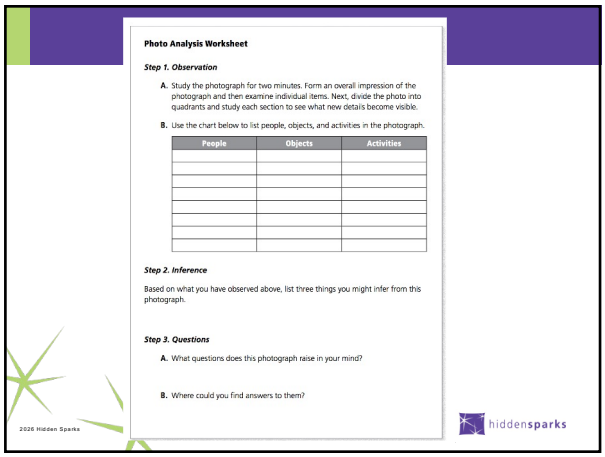
Looking at the Visuals of Text Structure



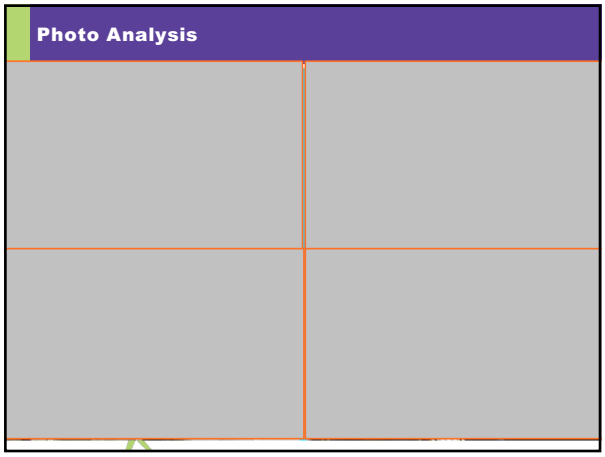
45


Picture Walks
Look at the way this text uses pictures
Do they help with understanding?
How so?
Biomimicry
This microscopic view shows the antireflective surface of a moth's eye.
The newly designed Shinkansen train pulls into a Tokyo train station.
The Mass Landing power plant in California (right) was one of the first to turn carbon dioxide into cement using a process similar to one that corals use (left).
2026 Hidden Sparks
hiddensparks

46


Photo Analysis Worksheet
Step 1. Observation
A. Study the photograph for two minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.
B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.
People
Objects
Activities
Step 2. Inference
Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.
Step 3. Questions
A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?
B. Where could you find answers to them?
2026 Hidden Sparks
hiddensparks

47


Photo Analysis

48

Resources

- Reading is Seeing by Jeffrey Wilhelm https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10862969509547896
- New York Times, "Whats Going On With this Picture https://www.nytimes.com/column/learning-whats-going-on-in-this-picture
- https://www.toledomuseum.org/education/visual-literacy/why-visual-literacy
- https://vtshome.org/
- https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/visual-thinking/
- https://www.nuiteq.com/company/blog/what-we-know-about-visual-thinking-and-learning

2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

49

	We look forward to seeing you for our 2026-27 HSWOW presentations.
	Please check our extensive HSWOW Archive for teachers and parents. https://www.hiddensparks.org/webinars

If you are interested in bringing Hidden Sparks to your school or city, please contact us:
212-767-7707 or rabbihus@hiddensparks.org

2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

50

Contacting Hidden Sparks

Contact Presenter:
Hollis Dannaham
hdannaham@gmail.com
www.hiddensparks.org
news@hiddensparks.org (212) 767-7707
www.facebook.com/HiddenSparks

"like" us on facebook

2026 Hidden Sparks

hiddensparks

51


Hidden Sparks would like to thank our Donors, Supporters and Partners
OUR SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS
GEORGE ROHR FOUNDATION
FJC
Gitter Foundation
LEO OPPENHEIMER & FLORA OPPENHEIMER HAAS FOUNDATION
Tobin Family Foundation
SHEMESH
PROUDLY FUNDED BY
UJA Federation NEW YORK
2026 Hidden Sparks
hiddensparks

52