

Explaining journeys visually

When it comes to thinking about our future, most of us visualise it rather than hear it or feel it. For this reason, when we talk about destinations and journeys with our learners, visual explanations tend to be the most effective. Making the learning journey graphic is particularly useful for things like projects and thematic learning topics. The example below, created by Claire Hodgson for an art class, uses the familiar map of the London Underground to create a clear understanding of the route and the destination. We love the simplicity of this visual. Learners can refer to it throughout their journey through the topic, understanding what 'stop' they are currently at, what they need to do to get to the next one, and where they'll finally end up. Visual journeys like this enable confident, purposeful conversations between teacher and learners, learners and learners, and even learners and inspectors!

Notice that while this example is primarily visual, there is a significant verbal contribution and a powerful emotional pull: 'We hope you enjoy your learning journey with Garforth Academy Art Department.'

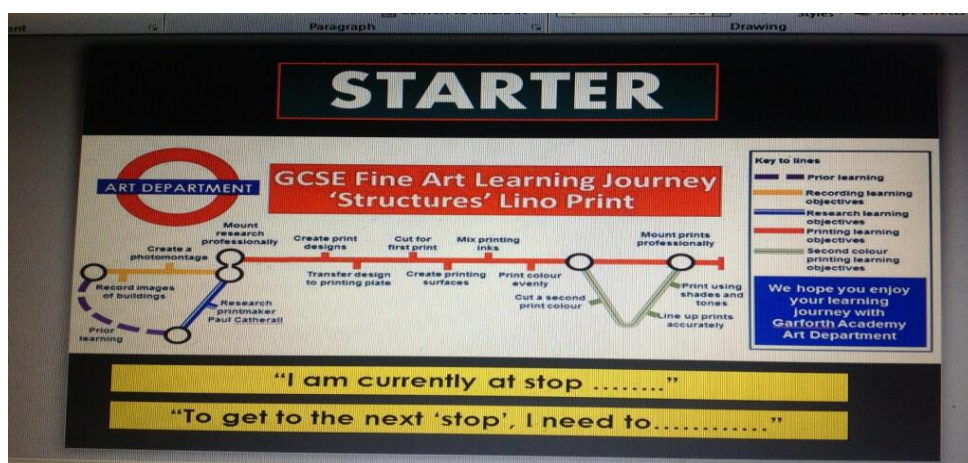


Photo: Claire Hodgson.

Using visuals to reflect on the journey ahead

Most people, learners included, find it helpful to think about the journey ahead, and consider what challenges or difficulties may arise, instead of just rushing into it. When learners get into the habit of looking before they leap it can save time and energy and greatly enhance the quality of their work. As we've already mentioned, we're great fans of visual organisers. They're a wonderfully useful and versatile tool for planning, sequencing, and structuring thinking and can be applied to a wide range of subjects. Visual organisers, such as flow diagrams for breaking a process into a series of manageable steps, can really help learners to achieve clarity and structure in their thinking.

Another way visual organisers can be used is in modelling pre-writing strategies. A spidergram or mind map, for instance, can assist learners to think about what features need to be included in their written work and in what sequence. This visual way of organising material will benefit many learners compared with producing a written plan.

As we've seen, the most successful teachers are up front about what they want their learners to do. They usually start their lessons or topics of learning with a good explanation

before learners embark on their journey. And where journeys are concerned, most of us find it helpful to have a clear visual map of the road ahead.



Try making your own underground map for an upcoming topic. This link will help:

<http://beno.org.uk/metromapcreator/>