

Multiple Modalities in Studies Weekly



How students learn is as unique as their fingerprints. Some students enjoy learning by listening to a teacher's lecture. Still, most do best when they engage in multiple modalities — when they participate in some combination of visual, aural, kinesthetic, and reading/writing activities. Humans take in information through our senses, and the more senses we use, the better.

Using multiple modalities takes students beyond memorizing discrete facts. The goal in school is to achieve more; "cognitive scientists think of deep learning — or what you might call 'learning for understanding' — as the ability to organize discrete pieces of knowledge into a larger schema of understanding." (Meta & Fine, 2019)

"Learning for understanding" occurs when new information is connected to existing knowledge and thinking patterns. When new information can be accessed using the students' preferred avenues of information intake, it makes them not only more aware of information but also more able to incorporate it into their existing schema. Each piece of information becomes easier to retrieve and use — both because it's in a network of established relationships and because the learning can function as a whole.

Some modalities, as defined by the VARK Learning Styles established by Neil Fleming, include:

- **Kinesthetic:** The learner feels or moves during the learning process. We often call this hands-on or tactile learning, but this modality also includes images, videos, and other simulations and examples of experiences.

- **Visual:** Graphic design elements such as charts and infographics. Additionally, "[l]ayout, whitespace, headings, patterns, designs and color are important in establishing meaning" (Marsh et al., 2019).
- **Aural:** Things that are spoken or heard. Emails and texts can also function this way if they mimic a "chat" speech pattern.
- **Read/Write:** Anything with written words, such as textbooks, brochures, handouts, and so on. (Marsh et al., 2019)

While teachers know the value of using multiple modalities, it can be challenging to provide them. Teachers need the time to prepare materials, collect and interpret data, observe students individually, communicate with parents and caregivers, and teach using universal design principles.

This is where the value of using curricula to curate materials and instructional strategies comes in. It frees teachers to focus their time on personal interactions — the area where their efforts are most valuable. When both the curriculum and the teacher are functioning effectively, deeper learning occurs.

Studies Weekly materials are specifically designed to teach using multiple modalities. Students are invited to learn through the modes of **reading/writing** as they read articles and often write about them.

They engage in **aural** learning by listening to human-recorded versions of the articles, and through teacher presentations and classroom or small-group discussions in which the students actively participate in

Ways Studies Weekly Uses Multiple Modalities

VISUAL



- Maps
- Diagrams
- Charts
- Graphs
- Images
- Videos
- Slide Decks

AURAL

- Text-to-speech tools
- Podcasts
- Closed-caption videos
- Socratic seminars
- Small-group discussions



READING & WRITING

- Articles
- Writing prompts
- Inquiry questions
- Annotation tools
- Vocabulary support



KINESTHETIC

- Games
- Physical activities
- Printables
- Interactive online tools
- Positive reinforcements

OTHER SUPPLEMENTS

- Customizable content
- Slide decks
- Professional development



both speaking and listening, rather than passively listening to a lecture.

Visual elements in the Studies Weekly publications, including maps, timelines, data tables, infographics, and graphic organizers, help students visualize information. For example, students use both a map and timeline to understand how France and England colonized North America and analyze how France became critical to the success of the American Revolution.

Many lesson plans use movement and images to support learning, which VARK classifies as a **kinesthetic** simulation of an experience.

For example, one lesson plan has the teacher take the class on a tour of the school using a map as a guide. The students build on this experience by creating a map of another place they are familiar with. The Studies Weekly Online platform also includes many videos and supplemental images.

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