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Teaching, Leadership, and  
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**A STUDY OF HOW SIXTH-GRADE STUDENTS CONSTRUCT MEANING  
THROUGH AESTHETIC READER RESPONSE PROJECTS (225 PP.)**

Director of Dissertation: Nancy D. Padak, Ph. D.

This study described how sixth-grade students constructed meaning in response to a text through visual/spatial activities. In addition, this study was meant to see how these same students give evidence of active, aesthetic reading. Ten sixth-grade students, ages 11 through 13, were included in this study. Data were collected through the students' projects created in response to the short stories, their writing explaining the projects created, interviews conducted with each student within two hours after the project was completed, and a post-study survey. Two students were chosen for case studies based on their ability to successfully create a visual-spatial project as well as their ability to verbalize their thought processes involved in the creation process. In this descriptive study, the researcher was a participant-observer in their language arts class which met for two periods, a total of 96 minutes daily for a period of eight days, two days per short story read. Data were collected and field notes were taken during and immediately after the class period.

Analysis of the data was conducted using qualitative methods. Question one utilized constant-comparison of student interviews, writing, and projects, analysis of student interviews and writing by pre-determined categories of aesthetic reading, and case study. Data for question two were analyzed according

to pre-determined categories: what the student sees, what the student hears, what the student feels, what the student tastes, and what the student smells.

Data analysis revealed the following conclusions:

1. Students constructed meaning through visual/spatial activities by making sense of the stories read.
2. Students constructed meaning through visual/spatial activities by making connections between the text and their own lives or some other media.
3. Students constructed meaning through visual/spatial activities by elaborating on the story.
4. Students constructed meaning through visual/spatial activities by using mental imagery to create some aspect of the text thereby making generalizations beyond the text and themselves to the world-at-large.
5. Students constructed meaning through showing empathy with a character or situation in a story by sharing and/or understanding the feelings or physical sensations depicted.
6. Visual/spatial activities helped these students explain how they constructed meaning.
7. Creating visual/spatial projects did not elicit many physical sensations.